
Reporter-Herald

Wednesday, March 23, 2005 - default Edition - Edition: (RH)- Page: 6-B

Pinball lovers find heaven in Lyons

Rachel Carter

I'm really too young to remember — truly remember — pinball's heyday.

Heck, I was born in 1979, so I missed out on a lot of things: Three Mile Island, Saturday Night Fever, Sugar Hill Gang and, for the most part, pinball.

Come to think of it, I missed out on pinball, Pong and PacMan.

By the time I was old enough to play pinball, Nintendo had taken over the arcade. I would sit on the couch in my brother's (somewhat stinky) room, playing Super Mario Brothers on his Nintendo 64.

But somehow, somewhere, between Duck Hunt and Tekken 2, I developed a penchant for pinball. I think it's because I grew up next door to people who had a pinball machine in their basement.

Although I was too young to play (or even see over the flippers), I was fascinated by the bling-bling, the ding-ding, the click-clack, and I was especially — especially — intrigued by that ever-elusive shiny silver ball.

So, no, I don't have memories of feathering my hair and wriggling into skin-tight jeans to rock out with my KISS-loving boyfriend at the local arcade.

But I love pinball. Compared to digital, cartoonish video games, there is something so sensory, so tactile about pinball.

Luckily for weirdos like myself, we have a reliable resource: Lyons Classic Pinball.

Kevin and Carole Carroll opened their vintage '70s arcade in March 2003 — and they recently expanded their arcade in downtown Lyons to include another room.

The place is a dream: Strobes and lights; bells and whistles; ramps and pits; things that pop up, things that spin around. I'm drooling; it's total sensory tilt.

Lyons Classic Pinball has more than 30 different pinball games that range from early games — the arcade's oldest is a 1961 electromagnetic game called "Kismet" — to the newest of machines — the 1999 doozy, "Revenge from Mars" with little wriggly aliens.

The arcade offers creepy classics like "The Addams Family" and "The Twilight Zone," movie classics like "Indiana Jones" and "Batman Forever," and rock-n-roll classics like "KISS" and "Captain Fantastic," a 1976 game featuring Elton John in some serious bell-bottoms and oogle-eyed glasses.

I'm not the "I'm-going-to-get-high-score-on-this-thing-if-it-kills-me" type. I tend to stick to the games that intrigue me, like Elvira and the Party Monsters pinball game. (No, it's not the cleavage; I think it's the trunk full of bats and the spinning spider web. Wheel!)

Besides, I've got the Elvira game down: Elton John kicks my butt.

With 30 different games to try out, I plan on spending at least \$10 each time I go — but take a twenty with me, just in case.

And let me tell you, I love the feeling of a roll of quarters in my pocket.