

*James T. Hawes was a technical writer and technical support technician at Williams. In February/March 2012, he contacted us about a July 1985 date that we had indicated for **Still Crazy**. - Editor*

James: Your date for the intriguing **Still Crazy** might be a year off. In early 1984, I wrote the prototype manual for "**Still Crazy**," a vertical pinball / pachinko / novelty game. The first version that I saw was a playable whitewood with a clock radio for the scoring display. There was no computer inside! (For me, that was part of the machine's allure. The engineers actually called it "the electromechanical project." I thought that we were stealthily returning to an earlier era. Nope.)

The version that I eventually documented must have been part of the sample run. This machine had a real cabinet, sophisticated software, and a System-8 computer. All details, plastics, decals, rubber rings, etc. were present, just as in an arcade model. Yet after the sample run, the orders were less than gratifying. The machine never went into production. As far as I know, we didn't commercially print a manual. I know that I didn't, and I was the usual print producer. Our engineers designed System 8 for **Still Crazy**.

Williams might have tried to sell the machine after that point, possibly resulting in your 1985 date. For example, sample machines could have appeared at the 1984 and 1985 AMOA shows. (I don't know, because in the second half of 1984, I became a contractor. Afterward, I missed some shows. Also, I'm not privy to sales information.)

I also recall seeing a quite detailed mockup of **Break Street**. This novelty machine is a 1984 follow-up to **Still Crazy**. The vertical concept is the same. Maybe even the software is identical. The machine that I saw even had playfield art and decals. In one corner (top-left maybe?) was a spinning disc with a break dancer inside. This could have been a first article. Or it might have been part of a sample run of 25. Yet again, due to lack of demand, the company never proceeded to manufacturing. **Break Street** is even rarer than **Still Crazy**. I never had the opportunity to write a **Break Street** manual. A year or two ago, a **Break Street** turned up at Pinball Expo. Maybe this machine was the same one that I well remember.

Jay: Your manual is dated May 3, 1984. What date does this represent? The date the manual was finished?

James: The cover date was the approximate completion date. Often this was when I ran the last master, but not exactly the date of publication. I still had to send the manual to the printer. In those days, printing would take about two weeks beyond the cover date. For draft manuals, the cover date was approximately the date when I circulated the manual for review.

Jay: I did change our date from "July 1985" to just "1984" because that year was shown in several places on the game. Though, I have heard that it is possible on pinball games that the

copyright may have occurred in the year the parts were ordered and made, while the following year the game was actually on the production line.

James: The game machine could go into production at any time, without relation to the manual copyright. Sometimes the revised manuals only differed in cosmetics from previous editions. Other times, a new book included new material that applied to all machines of one type. The only effect of production on copyright was indirect: For instance, design changes could lead to manual revisions. In that case, I'd revise the book or release a manual amendment. The revision didn't necessarily apply to older versions of the machine. That is, an operator needed the right version of the manual for his machine. (For example, we published several versions of the **Sinistar** videogame manual. I think we produced three versions. **Star Light** pinball machines with System 7 used my manual. **Star Light** machines from two years later had System 9 and used Fritz Runyon's manual.)

*We subsequently scanned a copy of the **Still Crazy** manual to James. He replied in December 2013:*

James: How nice to see the **Still Crazy** manual again! This indeed looks like my book, and the style is what I remember for that time. In 1984, our publications department was a rather unsophisticated operation. Where you see bullet text, I probably hand-filled the bullets! Style features include the typical order and standard tables such as ROM summary, game adjustments and switch matrix. My Williams style also capitalized button names. I used initial caps on mode names. In 1984, I still permitted passive voice. (I now disdain it.)

Thanks for sending the scan. What a thoughtful gesture! I might still locate a copy of the later edition, but it hasn't turned up. What you have is a middle-of-the-run edition. Plain though it is, the book was pretty far along at that point.

We didn't have a dollar between us for typesetting. The master document came right off the Wang word processor! One of the guys, probably John H. Clark III, copied and side-stitched the books by hand. A few days later, I started using cover art from Herb Foss. Herb was our quality manager, but he's also a serious gadget guy. He was very skilled at the Wang graphics terminal in Accounting. There he'd produce display letters for our covers during this period. Our own Wang terminal only had a daisy wheel printer. This printer was incapable of any but the most rudimentary graphics. Since we couldn't afford the art studio or typesetting, I'd sometimes hand-sketch "screen shots" for video games. As I remember, the **Star Rider** video game manuals include some examples.

These chores sound like very routine matters. They weren't. In 1984, Williams was capital-shy. In Spring, 1984, a knob broke off the Wang, and one of our daisy wheels snapped a few petals. I made do with what was left. These facts might explain the oddly wide word spacing in the **Still Crazy** manual. The management had necessarily deferred repairs on the Wang word processor and the Kodak copier. The copier hung up so frequently that a manual run could take all day!

Fortunately, we didn't need too many **Still Crazy** books. Yet during development and as sample games turned up, I continuously improved the book.

Among casualties of the Friday, November 4, 1983 layoff was our purchasing representative Brad Wheeler. Meanwhile, my manual budget dropped from thousands to \$500, and then to zero. Each expense required VP Joe Dillon's personal approval. I was then the only publisher in what remained of our service department. A few months later, I became manager. Of all people, the great George Petro was my part-time employee! (I've since worked for George at his Play Mechanix studio.) Our two help desk technicians Gary Messling and John H. Clark III would occasionally help, too. Soon, another layoff (Friday, July 6, 1984) left me managing myself.

George continued with part-time help, but became involved with game programming. That summer, he was between high school and college. Steve Kordek and Dick Valosek recognized George's talent and appreciated his potential and zeal. They gave George his first game programming assignment. It was sort of a test, because the chance of a game release was small. One day, I visited George's lab and found a two-player table game like **Defender** pin. I don't know what system the new machine used. The game name was **Arena**. Maybe that's another one to add to your list of little-known machines.

Between my assignments and Steve's, George was also programming a video display with the Williams logo. He was going to submit this logo as part of a service database program for our then-boss Tom Cahill. For the task, George had borrowed an early Apple II from another programmer. We had plenty of empty desks in Service. George liked our drafting table with its spacious, angled surface. I remember watching him as he laboriously added pixels, one at a time. He was building the red circle around the renowned Williams "W." In another month or so, I was off to Lucitron to join Williams alumnus and machinist Doug Yates. George left for college. He continued his database project as a consultant. I'd show up at Williams on weekends while composing The Pinball Troubleshooting & Reference Manual. In the afternoon or evening, I'd drop a note on Butch Ortega's desk, asking for illustrations. During the week, Butch would finish the drawings and leave them for me in an envelope. In those days, most everything was on paper. Imagine: No PCs, no Internet, and no email. But we had a shop full of brand new pinball machines!

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