Pinball Wizardry

“You’re a wizard, Harry”
Historical Stuff (OG machines)
Quick History

• 1930s: Baffle Ball!
• 1933: Electrification
• 1947: First flippers introduced
• 1970s: Solid state electronics: circuit boards, displays
• 1990s: Sales slow down
• 2000s: Pinball Revival
Is Pinball Gambling?

- Pinball was banned in many US cities from 1940s to 1970s
  - Machines were collected and destroyed
- Ban was lifted in 1976 NYC: pinball proved as game as skill
  - A player testified in court by playing a game, and calling shots before making them
Fundamental Pinball Components
Flippers

Bumpers

Slingshots
Ramps
Sinkholes/Locks
Top Lanes
Inlane/Outlane
Lights

Display

BLACKWATER
PHASE 1
SHOOT GREEN JACKPOTS

136,890,350
A Theme!
Putting it together:
(Star Trek 2013)

- Flippers
- Ramps
- Bumpers
- Slingshots
- Orbits
- Sinkholes
- Ball locks
Pinball Rules

- Hit targets for points
  - Thematic missions
  - Rewards increase as you go
- 3 balls, one at a time:
  - Extra balls
Putting on the pressure

- “Item Lit”
  - Hit 10 targets, then reward is lit (available)
  - Extra ball, multiball, bonuses
- Limited bonuses
  - E.g. 2x ramps for rest of ball
Putting on the pressure

- **Hurry-ups**
  - Limited time to hit target
- **Multiball**
  - Launch many balls into play
  - Bonus scoring runs out when on last ball
- **Most bonuses end once ball lost**....
Example: Funhouse (1991)
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  - But: it can’t be hit from right flipper
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  - Orbit from left flipper to upper flipper
- What if on right flipper?
  - Use transfer ramp
  - Can also use passes (shown later)
Know the Table

● Once the basics are down, a big part of pinball fun is learning and planning:
  ○ Stop-and-go machines vs flow machines
  ○ Practicing/understanding your most confident shots (L/R transfer ramps)
  ○ “Death shots”, important shots, safe shots, etc.
  ○ Planning when to trigger modes/combos
    ■ “I’ll only go for multiball once the 2x ramps is triggered”

● Hard to do at an arcade/bar: you will lose a lot of money
  ○ Pinball is too bougie :(
Seattle Pinball Museum

- Tons of machines
- $15 for all you can play all day
- In the heart of Seattle Chinatown
  - Pinball + Chinatown lunch
  - = Heaven on earth
Pinball Terms & Techniques
Beginner Pinball Technique

- Whenever the ball gets near the bottom, smack flippers, knock ball away
  - Repeat until all 3 balls dead
Beginner Pinball Technique

- Mainly comprises of 3 elements:
  - Aiming
  - Control
  - Nudging (and illegal moves)
Aiming

- Shots closer to the hinge:
  - Weaker
  - Goes to the right
- Shots closer to the tip:
  - Stronger
  - Goes towards left
- Also depends on ball approach
  - Best from cradle (shown)
Control

- Trapping:
  - Cradling
  - Catching ball
    - Drop catch, stall

- Passing: transfer ball between flippers
  - Dead drop
  - Flick pass
Control

- Great examples:
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2ZJQYk6OMk
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbyKhPE921w
  - https://youtu.be/kowB0HmJ1wY?t=6m47s
Nudging

- Influence ball motion by nudging the table
  - Upwards on lanes
  - Sideways when ball is between flippers
Nudging - TILT!

- Be careful!
- A tilt bob inside machine detects excessive movement
- Tilting the machine results in ball loss
Illegal Nudge Moves

● Bang Back:
  ○ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KB8Xp4PMvbQ

● Death Save:
  ○ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZljaPDYpXs
Bonus: Cool Machine Elements
Junkyard (1996)
NBA (2009)