

THE SMITHSONIAN AND ACADEMY OF INTERACTIVE ARTS & SCIENCES HONOR *SPACEWAR!* CREATORS

Celebration at Smithsonian's National Museum of American History Scheduled for November 29th

WASHINGTON, D.C. and LOS ANGELES – November 26, 2018 – The Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences (AIAS) will present Pioneer Awards to the creators of *Spacewar!* during an event hosted by the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. The celebration will bring together the *Spacewar!* developers for the first time since its creation during a reception, panel discussion, and hands-on opportunity with the game. The event titled *Innovative Lives: The Pioneers of Spacewar!* takes place later this month on Thursday, November 29th at the Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation.

Spacewar! was a 1962 game that helped launch the multi-billion-dollar video games industry. Now, almost sixty-years later, the seven remaining creators are reuniting for the very first time, for one extraordinary evening. This is, truly, a once-in-a-lifetime event.

Dan Edwards, Martin (“Shag”) Graetz, Steven Piner, Steve (“Slug”) Russell, Peter Samson, Robert Saunders and Wayne Wiitanen, spry Octogenarians all, will discuss how *Spacewar!* was created in their “spare time” when MIT received its first PDP-1 computer. Moderated by Christopher Weaver, founder of Bethesda Softworks, the group will also reflect upon the growth of computer games and the transformation of computer technology over the past half- century.

“In the course of only 50 years, video games grew from the idea of a few pioneers, to an industry that educates and entertains billions of people worldwide”, said Arthur Daemmrich, director of the Lemelson Center. “We are honored and delighted to host the “*Spacewar!*” team for this memorable event.”

The evening will include questions from the audience, both live and online, and those attending will have the opportunity to play historic games...perhaps against the creators of the games themselves!

This exclusive event is part of the larger Videogame Pioneers Initiative (VPI) at the Smithsonian, created to preserve the beginnings and evolution of the industry in the words of its founders. The first-hand recollections and personal artifacts of these Pioneers will allow scholars and the public to understand the personalities, technologies and social forces that came together to make interactive entertainment one of the largest and most lucrative industries of all time.

“Many common things in our daily lives, such as the smart phone, owe a substantial part of their development to the computer game industry,” said Christopher Weaver, a Lemelson Center Distinguished Scholar and co-Director of the VPI, “Society owes a debt of gratitude to early innovators such as the *Spacewar!* “boys,” who not only helped provide the foundation upon which the computer games industry is built, but have inspired generations of computer scientists, engineers, artists and mathematicians in the process.”

The award will be presented by Meggan Scavio, president of the Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences. “The Pioneer Award is one of the ways the Academy brings attention to the history of video games and celebrate the individuals who helped shape the interactive industry,” said Meggan Scavio. “Partnering with The Smithsonian’s Lemelson Center for this special event helps to further share these historical events for future posterity for video game enthusiasts. It allows for a 360 degree viewpoint through intimate interviews, video footage and the ability to experience these games first hand.”

The AIAS' Pioneer Award is reserved for individuals whose career-spanning work has helped shape and define the interactive entertainment industry through the creation of a technological approach or the introduction of a new genre. The *Spacewar!* creators will be the AIAS' ninth through fifteenth Pioneer Award recipients for their seminal work and contributions to the interactive entertainment industry. Past AIAS Pioneer Award recipients include the creators of Magnavox Odyssey, the *Zork* series, *PONG* and stand-up arcade games like *Centipede* and *Defender*.

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The Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation [<http://invention.si.edu>] Arthur Daemmrich, Director

The Videogame Pioneers Initiative [<http://invention.si.edu/videogame-pioneers-initiative>]

An initiative to preserve the legacy of video game pioneers through extensive oral histories and preservation of original documents and other materials. The *Initiative* is integral to the Lemelson Center's work to understand invention as a process, the making of inventors and innovators, and the role of risk-taking in inventive work.

The VPI Advisory Group includes luminaries, museum scholars and educators.

David Brock, Don Daglow, Jon-Paul Dyson, Richard Garriott, Jim Gee, Brenda Gunn, Richard Hilleman, Brenda Laurel, Henry Lowood, Ted Price, Brenda Romero, John Romero, Steve Meretzky, Sid Meier, Warren Spector, Christopher Weaver

More information on the Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences and its Pioneer Award can be found here: www.interactive.org.