

Your Guide to the Ultimate Home Game Room

# GAMEROOM

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## SHOWTIME!

GAMEROOM SHOW

### GameRoom Attends Carlisle and PinExpo



**The Hottest Game Room Toys**

GameRoom's Gift Buying Guide

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## PinExpo 2006 Highlights

**The Market for “Better than Perfect” Pinball is growing** or so it seems at the Expo 2006 exhibit hall. A couple of years ago, Keller Restorations wowed those in attendance, winning a best exhibitor award at the banquet. This year Chris Hutchins’ High End Pins and HSA Pinball (winning best exhibitor) joined Keller Restorations once again in taunting pinheads with amazing restorations. A great example is the machine *Funhouse*, where most left the production without much playfield protection. There were at least 3 restorations at the show that shined with glossy clearcoats covering perfect playfield art. New ramps, decals, and in some cases, all new coils and switches.

**Ultra-Pin and Zizzle’s Mini-Pins** were busy new attractions. Zizzle had a number of their \$300 pinball machines across from the Flip-Out tournament area and featured their own kids tournament. John Popadiuk was very present in the area which alone brought interest to the product. In the main exhibit hall were three Ultra-Pin machines from Global VR.

In a show where there were over 100 real pinball machines (complete with a live action ball), the Ultra-Pin flat panel plasmas still had players the entire time. Even without supervision, these machines played perfectly (No stuck balls or burnt coils on a video!) Still, I walked away after playing 3 of the 6 included Visual Pinball (modified) tables feeling like I was stuck in a very flat world. I’m impressed by the concept, but still unable to grasp the package. Perhaps it’s the constant exposure to real pinball over the past 9 years that prevents me from getting the full impact of it all. Still, I’m happy for what it can potentially do for pinball if customers and operators are willing to pay the price.

**Pacak hauled in a winner with Spinball’s Jolly Park!** Mike Pacak has been known to bring the rare and bizarre to the show over the years. Machines like *Joust*, *King Kong*, and *Ramp Warriors* come to mind. While none of those were there this year, he did bring *Rat Race* (only 10 produced), *Stern Cue* (only 6 produced), and the Spanish pleasure *Jolly Park* from Spinball.

It was *Jolly Park* that had everyone’s attention, with plenty of eye candy and playfield toys. This game was similar to a mid-90’s Williams SuperPin in size, and jam packed with some very interesting shots including a series of wireforms that led to spinning multi-level cylinder with a bottom level that contained magnetic control ala *Twilight*



The Saturday autograph session featured a “who’s-who” of pinball talent



From past to present, the autograph session featured an amazing line-up of pinball artisans



GameRoom columnist Rob Craig battles it out in the Pinball Tournament

Zone's "The Power", only backwards in terms of flipper / magnetic control. Everyone I spoke with thought the game was beautiful and interesting with others seemingly ready to dump thousands to get their very own. One of my sources tells me that Stern Pinball is ready to receive the Jolly Park machine in order to "study" it a bit more closely.

**The Expo Banquet celebrates Gary Stern's 20 years in the Biz, Paul Faris inducted into the Expo Hall of Fame, and our own Kevin Steele lands a deal that puts his face on the cover of a certain pinball magazine.** This year's banquet was loaded with surprises right from the start with a very generous group donating cash to the Make-A-Wish foundation in return for pinball industry goodies. Topping the list was a wooden sanding block donated by Mark Bakula and Don Caldwell that GameRoom Editor Kevin Steele purchased for \$150!

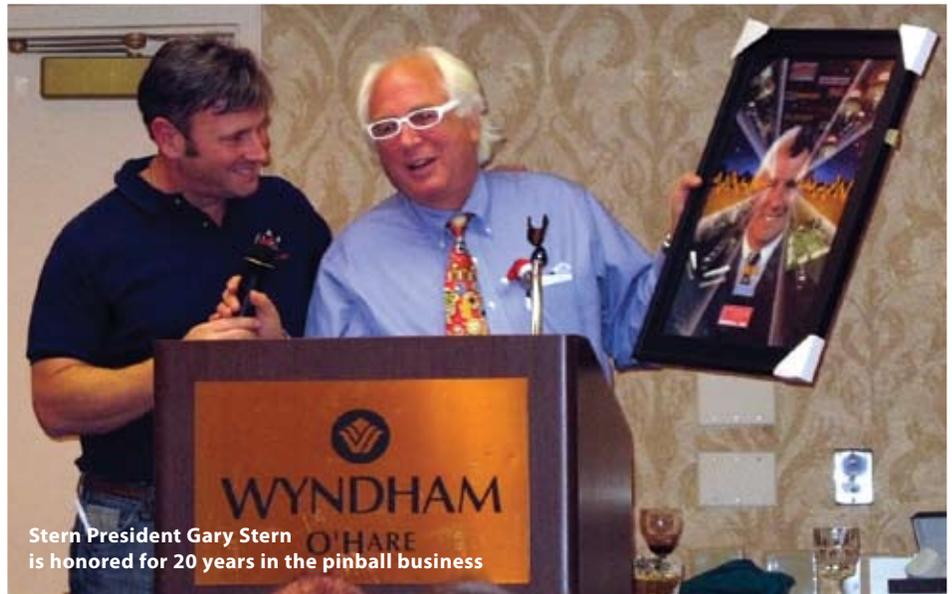
Before you start stressing about your subscription payments, understand that Rob Berk (auctioneer) received confirmation from Jim Schelberg, PinGame Journal's publisher, that the winner would be on the front cover of an upcoming issue. Later, Kevin agreed to the same if Jim Schelberg won the auction.

We all thought there would be a bidding war, but Mr. Schelberg conceded early in the running. Great investment Kevin! Still topping this was the \$5000 purchase by five overly generous men of the POTC translite light box (containing the entire team's autographs). Gary Stern was among the five.

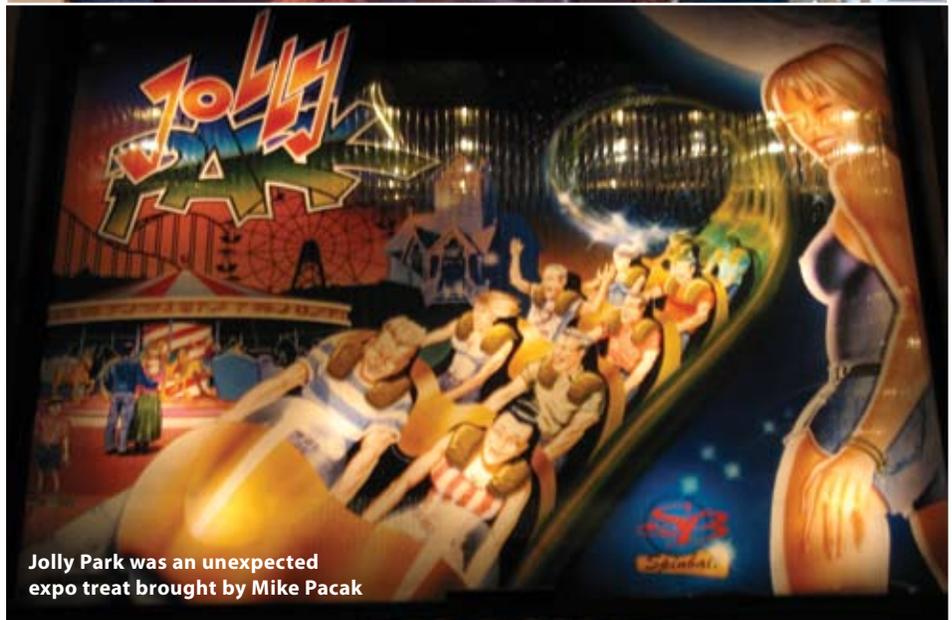
The night went on with Gary being commended for his 20 year effort in the pinball industry. Stern's speech was strong on the operator impact on future pinball production and the insignificance of today's collector, leaving many at the banquet unsettled.

Later, Joe Kaminkow returned to usher Paul Faris into the Hall of Fame. Faris is responsible for great pinball art (*Paragon*, *Phantom of the Opera*, and *James Bond - Goldeneye* to name a few) but also for his leadership in Bally's art department in the early 80's which gave them an obvious edge in their ability to reproduce full color backlasses through modern color separation processes.

You know, it's practically impossible to condense everything that happened in the four days of PinExpo into just a single article, so please just consider this brief overview as an appetizer: The "full course" is yet to come. Stay tuned—we'll present more details and PinExpo stories in an upcoming GameRoom Magazine.— Rob Craig



Stern President Gary Stern is honored for 20 years in the pinball business



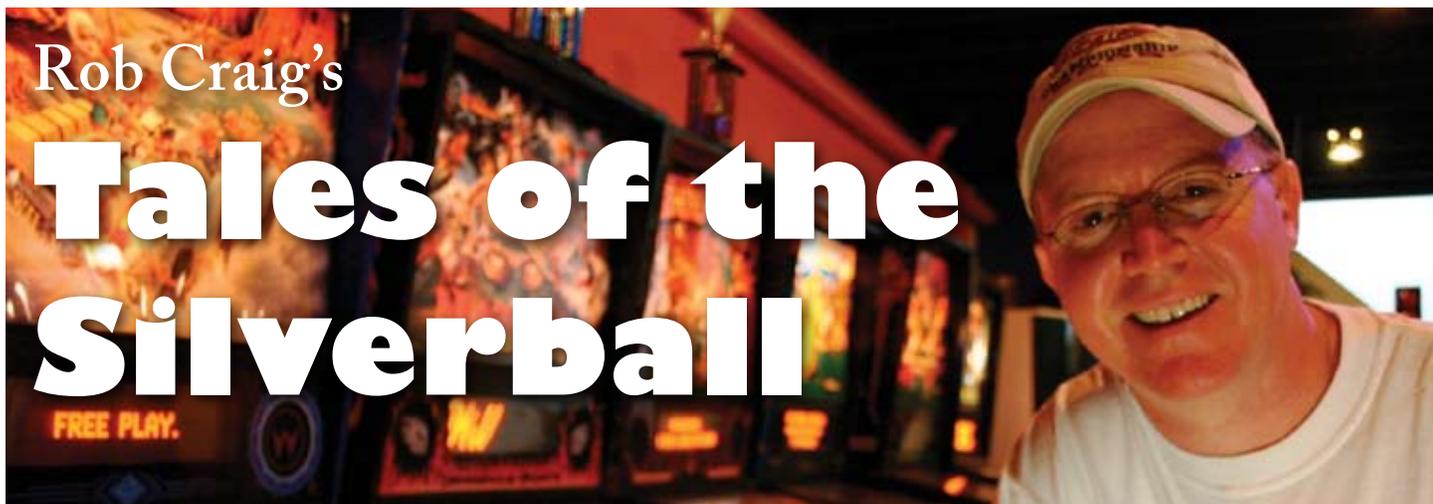
Jolly Park was an unexpected expo treat brought by Mike Pacak



Charity Auction Goodies  
Inset: the infamous \$150 wood block

Rob Craig's

# Tales of the Silverball



## *The Game, Reflected*—Kevin Tiell's Surreal Pinball Photography

There's something about pinball that reaches all kinds of people. Visitors to my house often end up in my basement pinball arcade, eyes popping over the amazing art and illuminated glamour. Its colorful glow is as magnetic as neon lights in a bar room. The sheet of glass covering these masterpieces seem to secure a miniature amusement park of excitement, and it's often enough for those intimidated by their own fear of flipper failure to simply drink up the view and sounds as others play the machine.

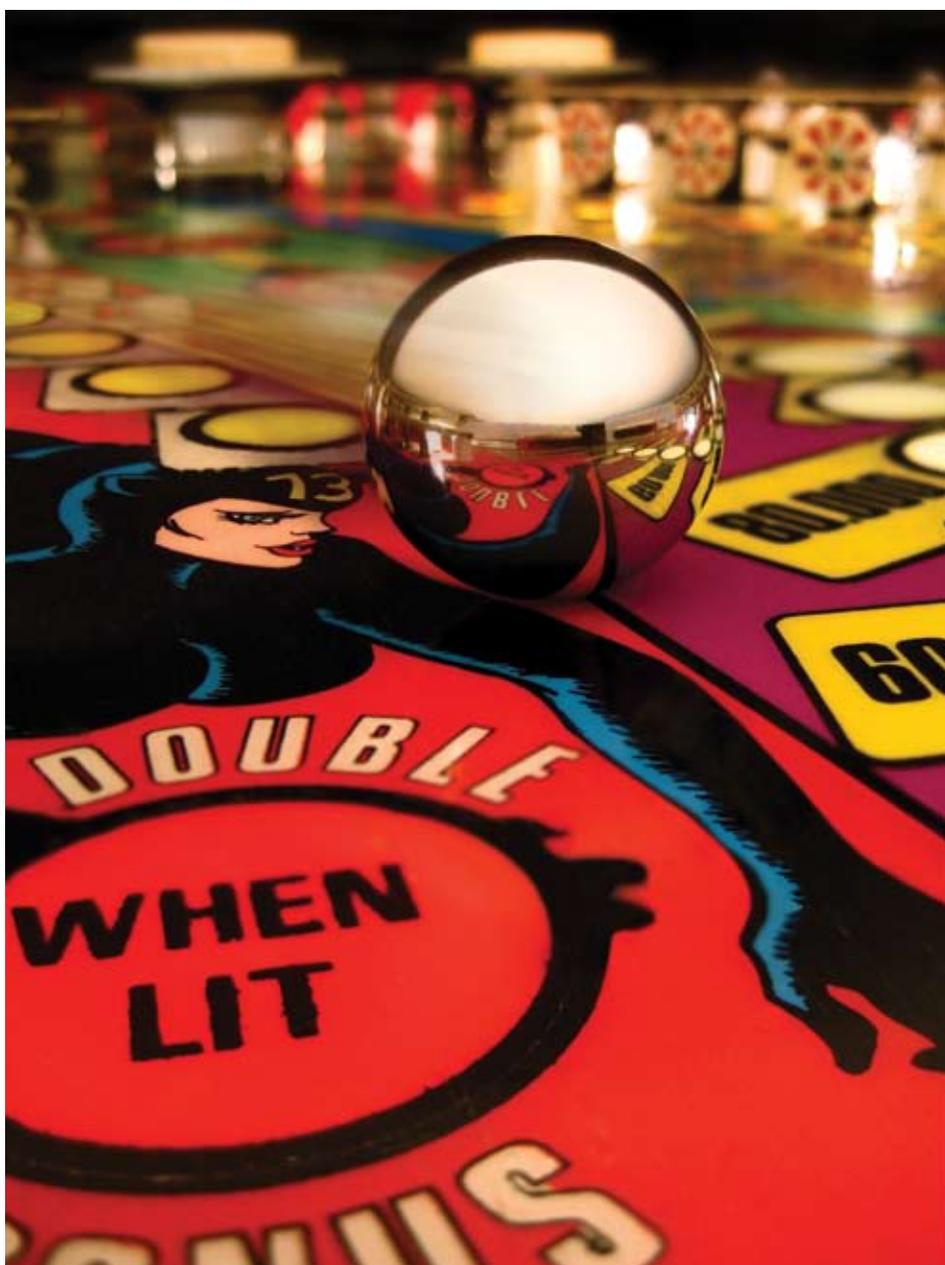
More than once have I marveled at the static machine enough to set up a camera and shoot away. But my ability to photograph doesn't do the scene any justice. In fact, it would only be luck if I happened to snap a shot worthy of a portrait reproduction. But along comes Kevin Tiell, who has managed to merge his all-pro talent in photography with his interest in pinball.

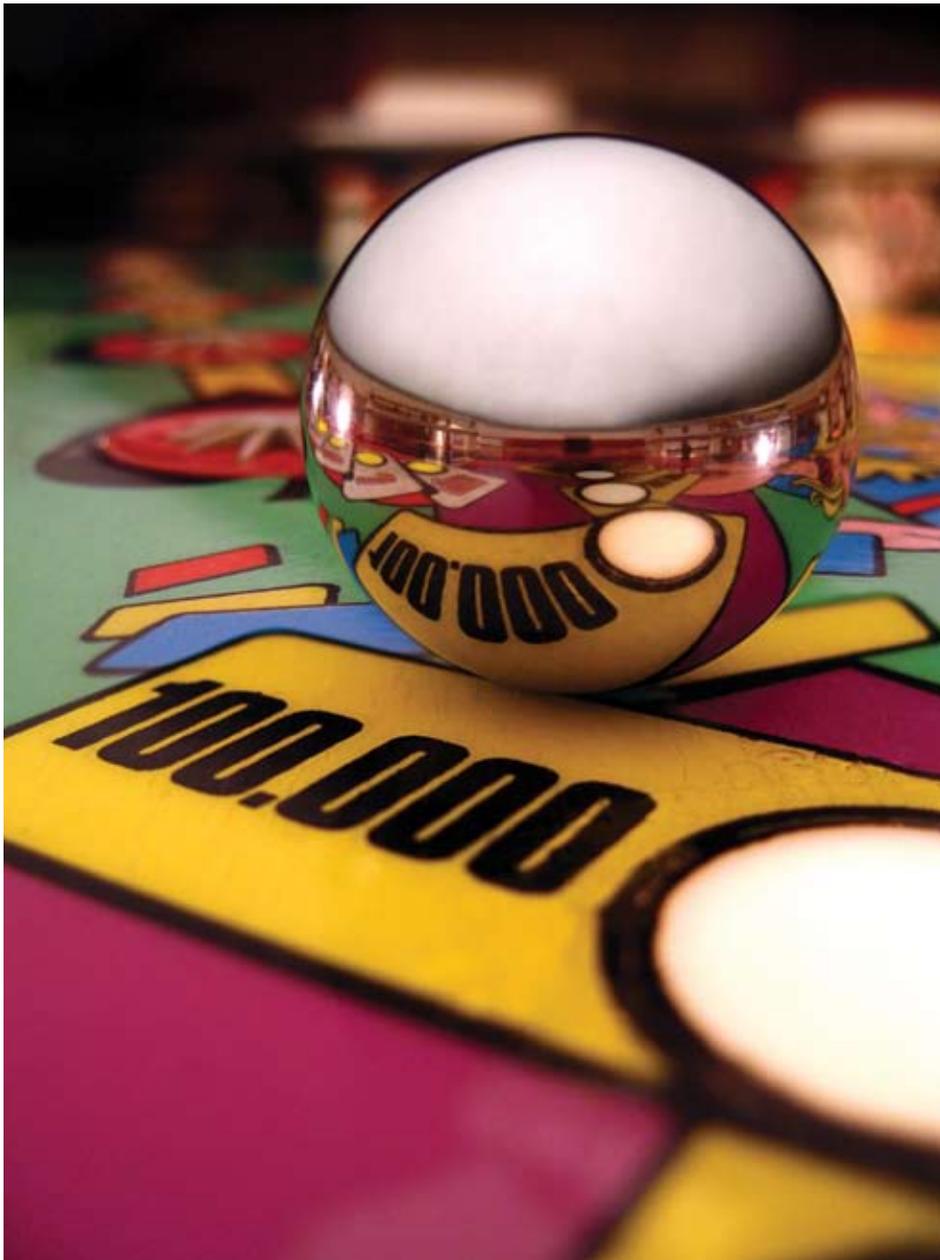
Kevin grew up with a dad who was the family photographer. He mentions that looking back at his father's family photos inspired him to pick up a course in photography in college.

Like many of us, however, he didn't realize his true passion until he entered the workforce in a different occupation altogether. He packed up and moved from Ohio to California, nearly going broke trying to get into the trade.

Then, after picking up an unrelated job, Kevin moonlighted in college learning photography fundamentals, which eventually afforded him the opportunity to quit his day job and start freelancing as a photography assistant.

As a kid, he played pinball and just recently has realized how intriguing it is as a photography subject. "Growing up, my





family told stories about my grandfather's habit of gambling on pinball machines in the 1930's. Supposedly, he lost numerous paychecks attempting to win credits or payouts. Two years ago, I decided to learn how that was possible.

"While researching, I located the game he played—A Bally's pin called *Bumper*. I also saw countless websites with less-than-stellar images of pinball machines and decided to produce better photos. I've been playing pinball since childhood and decided that photographing a metal sphere within the architecture of the playfield would be good practice and education for a career in photography."

Working with many talented photographers has allowed Kevin to find success with capturing the infinite reflections of the

silverball. "This pinball series, entitled *The Game, Reflected*, is my first attempt at publicly showing work and has been extremely well received by pinball aficionados and the artistic community at large."

And what games does Kevin choose to shoot? "Inherently, the most interesting games to photograph are the same that inspire game play and move the industry forward. Those with dazzling graphics, innovative playfields, and groundbreaking mechanics whose creators gave their heart and soul, lend themselves to better images.

"That being said, these games push me to improve my photography and post-production skills in order to aptly characterize these advancements. Each game lends itself unique angles, compositions, and fresh perspectives. These games also reflect the time period and

culture in which they were created.

"I approach each game with a curiosity to find the best combination of these elements while attempting to convey the emotional response of playing. Before I photograph a game, I research its history, dimensions, and color palette, and try to incorporate that information into my composition and lighting style. Because these games are lit internally, I mostly light to compliment the features already there."

When Kevin first started shooting pinball in March 2005, he was setting up at a local arcade and shooting right through the glass. "This technique did not give me results I'd envisioned so I contacted an amusement game dealer in South San Francisco who let me photograph a machine without glass. This effort provided my first satisfactory images and enabled me to propose this project to Michael Schiess, owner of The Lucky JuJu pinball arcade and gallery in Alameda. ([www.ujuju.com](http://www.ujuju.com))

"He provided me the opportunity to photograph his machines, and most of the images currently in my collection are from his games. Ken Chaney has been another huge supporter of this project and has invited me to exhibit and lecture at California Extreme in San Jose—an annual celebration of coin operated pinball machines, video games, and other novelties found in classic arcades. ([www.caxtreme.org](http://www.caxtreme.org)) This year, I met many collectors and enthusiasts who offered to let me photograph their collections of games and I'll be including these images in upcoming exhibitions."

From an artistic point of view, reflections can be very interesting in terms of what message they want to project in their work. So I had to ask Kevin about his message in *The Game, Reflected*; "This project started as an exploration of pinball from the ball's perspective. The reflections in the ball should not detract from that ideal.

"As a photographer, I want the ball to reflect only its truest, most natural perspective, void of human interference, and I work to afford it that ability. In that same breath, I believe the camera should not be allowed a presence in the ball's reflection. Controlling the reflections of a metal sphere is one of the most technically challenging aspects of being a photographer. Each perspective yields a unique reflection.

"While working on this project, I've realized that these images could be interpreted as a metaphor for life. They remind us that we all choose our favorite game/career, and invariably we get scratched and beat up, like

the ball. I try to capture what I see and leave the rest to chance. Not every game is a perfect restoration or a freshly-minted offering. The imperfections reflect the life of the ball and the people who have played.”

So you think you want to take some shots like Kevin? Consider this: each shot takes between 6 and 10 hours of post production work in Photoshop. And capturing ball in motion is almost impossible. “Initially, I tried capturing the ball in motion to create the effect naturally. This blur tended to be less than sexy and made composition during capture too arduous.

“Over many patient and persistent hours of Photoshop practice, I eventually created blur that closely approximates my idea of the ball’s true color and opacity as it moves. I use the effect sparingly and only apply it where I think it will work well. My yardstick for measuring my proficiency and effectiveness occurs when people ask, ‘Is the ball moving?’”

Some prints are available now with more coming in 2007. Contact him at [Kevin@tiell.com](mailto:Kevin@tiell.com). And if you would like to see more of Kevin Tiell’s work, visit the official website at [www.kevin.tiell.com](http://www.kevin.tiell.com). **GR**



Geras Tousignant Gallery Presents

## The Game, Reflected: Photography by Kevin Tiell



Showcasing the beauty and design of pinball machines, these images attempt to reveal the environment that has captivated players for decades.

The photographs in this collection examine color and composition within the architecture of the playfield from the ball’s perspective.



Limited Edition Digital C-Prints on Kodak Professional Endura Metallic Paper | 16”x20” | 20”x30”

For print prices and inquiries, please visit our website or call the gallery.

Geras Tousignant Gallery | 437 Pacific Ave., San Francisco, CA 94133 | 415.986.1647 | [www.gtfineart.com](http://www.gtfineart.com)