



# Timeline of Pinball History



See <https://www.bmigaming.com/pinballhistory.htm>

**1750's-1770's**

The game Bagatelle was invented in France as well as the spring launcher

**1800's**

The "ball shooter" was patented

**1931**

The first commercially successful pinball machine, "Baffle Ball", is introduced by Gottlieb.

**1933**

The first mechanical "tilt" mechanism is introduced by Gottlieb in "Broker's Tip", and the very first electrical tilt mechanism is introduced by ABT Manufacturing in "Autocount".

**1936**

The first "bumpers" in a pinball machine are introduced by Bally in "Bumper".

**1947**

The first pinball machine to use ball "flippers" is seen in "Humpty Dumpty" by Gottlieb.

**1948**

**The first use of "active" or rebounding, bumpers is introduced by Williams in "Rainbow".**

**1951**

**The first playfield "slingshot" kickers (mostly triangular shaped in modern games) are introduced with the "Double Feature" pinball machine made by Gottlieb**

**1953**

**The first two-player pinball machine is released. (pinball machines before this were strictly one-player affairs) and the first use of "score wheels" ("Army Navy" - Williams) and also, the first use of "ramps" on playfields ("Nine Sisters" from Williams Manufacturing.)**

**1954**

**The first multiple-player pinball machine, "Super Jumbo", is released by D. Gottlieb.**

**1956**

**The first "multiball" feature is featured on Bally's "Balls-A-Poppin" pinball machine.**

**1957**

**The first use of a "match" bonus feature (a number in your final score is matched at random to a number the machine picks, resulting in a free game, or "credit") in pinball is introduced.**

**1960**

The first moving target in pinball is introduced with the "Magic Clock" from Williams. The first "add-a-ball" (extra ball) game called "Flipper" is developed by D. Gottlieb. The add-a-ball award was developed to counter various laws in effect during this period that made it illegal for a game to award replays in certain parts of the country because it was considered a "gambling" activity, especially in New York City

**1962**

The first "drop targets" are introduced by Williams Manufacturing in "Vagabond".

**1963**

The first "spinners" on a pinball playfield are introduced.

**1964**

The first "mushroom" bumper (common in all of today's modern games) is introduced by Bally.

**1966**

The first digital scoring pinball machine, "Rally Girl" is produced by a French company called Rally, using "Nixie Tube" (cold-cathode) glowing display tubes.

**1968**

The first modern flippers (3 inches) are introduced on "Hayburners II" by Williams.

**1979**

**The first "talking" or electronic speech game, which included 7 words, is introduced by Williams and is called "Gorgar", along with the first pinball machines to have a continuous electronic background "soundtrack". This is also the year in which the very last electro-mechanical (EM) pinball machine is made by Gottlieb. And finally, the largest commercially-produced pinball machine, "Hercules" is introduced by Atari.**

**1980**

**The first "multi-level" pinball machine, along with the first "magna-save" player-controlled ball magnet feature is introduced by Williams in "Black Knight", along with the first "lane advance" feature introduced in "Firepower", also by Williams Manufacturing.**

**1982**

**The first combination of a mechanical pinball machine with a video arcade game is introduced in a hybrid pinball machine game called "Caveman" by Gottlieb**

**1984**

**Colombia Pictures, owner of D. Gottlieb, decides to close the firm. The company is then taken over by Premier Technology, but the Gottlieb name remains alive.**

**1985**

**The first "alphanumeric" digital pinball machine scoring display is introduced by Gottlieb in the "Chicago Cubs Triple Play" pinball machine**

## 1975

The first solid-state, or electronic pinball machine, "Spirit of 76", is first introduced by Micro Games. It marks the beginning of the switch from electromechanical (EM) machines to electronic (or "solid-state") pinball machines. And the first pinball to be based on a licensed movie "theme", "Wizard!", is introduced by Bally.

The Magnificent Marble Machine, the largest non-commercial pinball machine ever made (20' high x 12' long) is introduced on a NBC TV show of the same name.

## 1976

The first widely available "solid state" pinball machine is introduced by Bally and is called "Freedom". Many of the games from the mid 70's were produced in two separate versions (both electronic and electromechanical), including Freedom.

The first "wide-body" pinball, "The Atarians" is introduced by Atari. Also in this year, the long-time pinball machine manufacturer Chicago Coin makes its very last game, and Chicago Coin is taken over by Sam Stern (father of Gary Stern), and renamed "Stern Electronics" (now Stern Pinball). Also, Gottlieb is sold to Columbia Pictures.

## 1977

The first electronically produced sounds in a pinball machine are introduced, and the first photographic / "3D" backglass display is introduced by Bally on "Lost World".



## **1986**

**The first automatic replay percentage feature, along with the first use of a commercial soundtrack and songs, and the first "jackpot" to carryover between games, are introduced in "High Speed" by Williams. Also, the first pinball machine to use an actual photograph duplicated on the pinball backglass is introduced with "Raven" by Premier Technology**

## **1987**

**The first pinball machine with digital stereo sound ("Laser War") is introduced by Data-East, and the first automatic ball-save feature is seen in "F-14 Tomcat" by Williams.**

## **1988**

**Bally Manufacturing is taken over by Williams Electronics, but the two companies continue to produce separate lines of pinball machines under both names.**

**Also in this year, the first pinball machine with a video scoring display monitor is seen in the "Dakar" pinball machine made by Mr. Game, a firm based in Bologna, Italy.**

## **1989**

**The first "wizard" (or expert) mode is introduced in "Black Knight 2000" by Williams**

**1990**

**The first solid-state (electronic) flippers are introduced by Data-East.**

**1991**

**The first "dot-matrix" scoring display is introduced by Data-East in "Checkpoint" along with video "modes" that animate certain parts of the game part on screen.**

**Also in the year, electronic plungers become common and the "ball-saver" feature is introduced, in part due to laws in the UK (England) governing games of chance.**

**1993**

**The first use of a ceramic, or non-magnetic pinball, called the "Powerball" is first introduced in the "Twilight Zone" pinball machine from Bally Manufacturing. Also in this year, the first player-controlled "mini playfield" is seen in "Indiana Jones".**

**1994**

**Sega buys out Data-East and is renamed "Sega Pinball".**

**1996**

**Gottlieb (Premier Technology) goes out of business for good.**

**1998**

**The first pinball machine with a video screen integrated into the playfield design is introduced by Williams in their new "Pinball 2000" series pinball machines.**

## **1999**

**After just two Pinball 2000 releases, Williams Manufacturing (WMS) exits the pinball machine business for good, but continues on as a maker of gaming devices for the global gambling industry. Also in this year, Gary Stern buys Sega Pinball, renames the combined firms as Stern Pinball and continues on as the only large scale commercial pinball producer in the world in for most of the new decade.**

## **2002**

**A prototype of the first truly digital pinball machine, "Virtual Pinball" is introduced at the 2002 IAAPA Amusement Show in Orlando by TAB Austria, and comes with a flat panel monitor replicating the playfield and housed in a non-standard cabinet.**

## **2006**

**The first digital video pinball machine that replicates the look, play and feel of a traditional pinball machine on a flat screen monitor that replaces the traditional playfield called "UltraPin", is introduced by UltraCade (GlobalVR), and features 12 digitally re-created classic pinball machine playfields from Funhouse, Eight Ball, Pin-Bot, Medieval Madness, Black Knight 2000, Attack from Mars, F-14 Tomcat, Fathom, Firepower, Strikes and Spares, Sorcerer and Xenon, all in one unit.**



**2013**

**The first "new age" pinball machine that replaces the static "backboard" or marquee of a pinball machine with a LCD Monitor and also introduced full, multi-colored LED lighting throughout the entire playfield along with other innovative pinball machine enchantments is introduced by Jersey Jack Pinball, and called the "Wizard Of Oz".**

