

On the attempts to resurrect Space Cadet Pinball

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Since the unfortunate demise of Space Cadet Pinball, there have been occasional efforts to resurrect the popular game.

Space Cadet Pinball was not originally written by Microsoft, but was rather obtained via licensing from a company then-known as Cinematronics. This means that there are restrictions on what can be done with the program, as spelled out by the license agreement.

That license agreement turns 24 years old tomorrow, and the paper on which it was written is probably in need of some museum-quality archiving. I haven't personally seen the original license agreement, but then again, I'm not a museum-quality archivist.

Anyway, there was a Garage project to resurrect Space Cadet Pinball, basically by repackaging the working x86 version. They didn't try to fix the bugs in the x64 version.

When they were done, they wanted to know whether they could release it to the public. This entailed contacting the legal department and performing a close reading of the original contract.

Sadly, the license agreement does not permit releasing the game as an independent entity. The agreement was for including Space Cadet Pinball in Windows 95, with options to include it in the Microsoft Plus! pack for Windows 95, as well as extending the distribution rights to successor products of Windows and the Plus! pack. History tells us that Microsoft chose to exercise all the options clauses, which earned the original licensor some extra pocket change.

Unfortunately, release as an independent product was not included in the terms of the deal.

Sorry, Space Cadet Pinball fans. I miss that game as much as you do.

Bonus chatter: The license also does not permit releasing the source code to the public.

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