

## 'Tetris' still a videogame star at age 25

June 2 2009, by Glenn Chapman

---



File photo shows a Japanese woman holding up a mobile phone with the game "Tetris". It was spring in what was then the Soviet Union when a mathematician in Moscow with a penchant for puzzles created a "Tetris" computer game still going strong 25 years later.

It was spring in what was then the Soviet Union when a mathematician in Moscow with a penchant for puzzles created a "Tetris" computer game still going strong 25 years later.

"For me, it was just a moment ago," said Alexey Pajitnov, who noted that he was 29 years old when he crafted the [computer code](#) for Tetris in June 1984.

"I was very fascinated with all kinds of puzzles, brain teasers. Mainly, it was just a diversion from the main work," said Pajitnov, who was employed at the time at a government institute researching [artificial intelligence](#) and computer [speech recognition](#).

He was inspired by a classic puzzle consisting of a box made of five plastic pieces that could be assembled in myriad ways. The challenge was to reassemble the box.

"It was really hard," Pajitnov said. "I was in love with this puzzle for a number of years. I was just fascinated by how to manipulate the pieces on the screen."

Pajitnov made a computer program that he came to call Tetris, which basically involves a player manipulating variously shaped blocks dropping along a screen with the goal of getting them to mesh into rows without gaps.

Blue Planet Software chief executive Henk Rogers was at a major Consumer Electronics Show in 1988 when he spied Tetris. He was scouring the event for videogames for the Japan market.

"My job was to find many games, but I kept coming back to Tetris," Rogers said. "I realized I was hooked on it. It totally mesmerized me."

Rogers arranged to publish versions of Tetris for computer games. Early in 1989, he and Minoru Arakawa of Nintendo of America went to Moscow to license the rights to the videogame.

Nintendo saw Tetris as an ideal fit for its [Game Boy](#) handheld devices.

Since Pajitnov's game was considered Russian property, licensing was negotiated with government officials.

"At that time, [Russia](#) was a little behind," Arakawa recalled. "We brought computers, printers and lawyers with us so we could type the draft, change it and have a final copy to sign. It took a few days."

Tetris became a [computer game](#) hit and has stayed that way, commanding about 10 percent of the market, according to Rogers.

"Tetris is so popular because it transcends culture," Rogers said. "There is no violence, no ideology; the player creates order out of chaos."

Rogers and Pajitnov kicked off a Tetris 25th anniversary celebration on Tuesday at the opening of a premier E3 videogame industry gathering in Los Angeles.

"It's awesome when you look at the industry and everyone spending millions on graphics and music and more and here we are with Tetris just kicking ass," Rogers said. "It is an enviable position."

Blue Planet is working on international Tetris Games along the lines of an Olympics or World Cup.

"We are looking to turn Tetris into a spectator sport," Rogers said.

Pajitnov now divides his time between homes in Moscow and Seattle.

He and Rogers, through Blue Planet, license Tetris rights to game makers such as Nintendo and Electronic Arts (EA).

"Tetris is the best selling mobile phone game of all time, showing continued growth year after year all around the world," said Adam Sussman, vice president of worldwide publishing for EA Mobile.

"Tetris has had "a significant impact on the entire video game industry,"

he added.

More than a million Tetris games are reportedly played daily at a tetrisfriends.com website launched in March.

"I never supposed it would be this big" Pajitnov said. "I was the best Tetris player in the world at one point. Now, I'm a good player but not a great player."

*(c) 2009 AFP*

Citation: 'Tetris' still a videogame star at age 25 (2009, June 2) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-06-tetris-videogame-star-age.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.