

In January, Royal Mail premiered a set of retro gaming stamps. While the UK was the first country to first issue postage stamps, it was not the first to issue videogame

stamps, which has an uncoordinated history dating over three decades Words By Michael Barron



It's unsurprising that a character as popular as Mario would end up getting celebrated as a stamp set



» [NES] A number of licensed videogames, including Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, have been immortalised

he first stamp to feature a videogame dates back to 1988 with Pac-Man as part of the Dutch Youth Care Campaign series of three stamps. Two years later in 1990 Israel issued a set of three stamps. Each one was devoted to an individual computer game, and Chess. Volleyball and Car Races were celebrated in all their 8-bit glory. The Nineties would see a few videogame stamps from unassuming nations like Uganda, Guernsey, Central African Republic and Palau, but the majority of these sets would not see the light of day until the turn of the century.

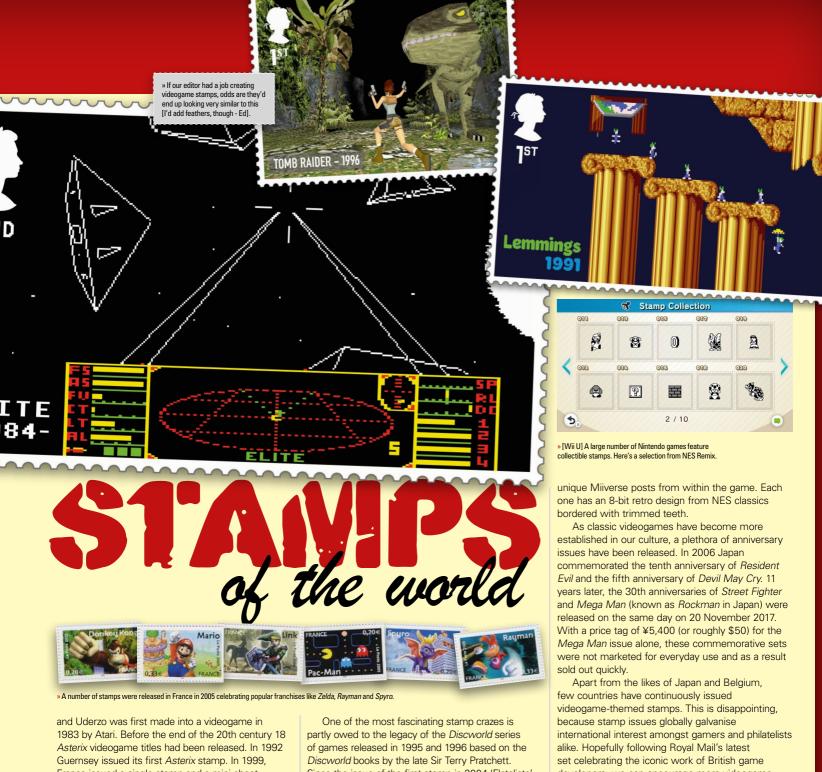
The history of videogame stamps is intertwined with individual nations' fascination with technology, particularly early computers. In 1987 India celebrated 100 years of Service To The Blind by issuing one stamp out of a set of two with a computer, demonstrating how computers can help those who are disadvantaged in society. In the same year, Australia issued a set of four stamps celebrating microchips and robotics amongst other technological innovations. Philatelists (stamp collectors) themselves have been widely using microcomputers to assist with stamp collecting since the early Eighties.

The advent of the 21st century saw a different approach to gaming. Previously, people - mostly

children and teenagers - celebrated games as something new. But as time went on they began to commemorate gaming as something that has been normalised as a part of everyday living and a pastime for adults as well as children. With the advancement of computers and growing popularity of video-sharing platforms such as YouTube, videogame enthusiasts have used the template of the humble postage stamp to design their own videogame-themed stamps whilst sharing step-by-step guides for others to make their own designs

Online platforms such as DeviantArt - where users upload their stamp designs, among many other art forms - are in such high demand they have strict rules limiting the number of daily uploads. Rules also cover stamp design which must have the appropriate 'teeth' surrounding them. People in the USA - despite the country not issuing a complete set of videogame-themed stamps - have caught onto the idea that people want to design (or get graphic designers to create) their own personal stamps and send them out to their social circles through Zazzle.

The biggest, oldest and geographically dispersed videogame-related stamp designs are linked to titles that are based on TV shows or comic books. For instance the comic book series Asterix by Goscinny



France issued a single stamp and a mini-sheet. Belgium followed suit in 2005. Ten years later, Deutsche Post issued its own Asterix stamp set.

In 1990, Capcom released the videogame Chip 'N Dale Rescue Rangers based on the Disney TV series. Whilst countries including Redonda, Caicos Islands, Gambia and the Maldives had previously issued Chip 'N Dale-themed stamps, countries including Saint Vincent were inspired by the game and released their own stamps in 1992. In 1989 Konami released the first Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles game on the NES (1990 on Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Commodore 64, PC and ZX Spectrum) based on the original Eighties children's cartoon series. The 25th anniversary of the original TV series and 20th anniversary as a videogame prompted anniversary stamp issues in 2009 in Palau, Gambia and Saint Vincent.

Since the issue of the first stamp in 2004 'Flatalists' have collected stamps which now comprise of two volumes of stamp catalogues. The ongoing interest

in these stamps based on the descriptions in the Discworld books (especially Going Postal) is partly down to the stamp designers adding lots of special little printing errors known as 'sports'.

Videogames and stamps have become so intertwined that stamps have been incorporated into videogames themselves. Nintendo has created so many games with stamps there is a wiki page dedicated to them. On NES Remix alone gamers can collect 100 different stamps. These are unlocked by collecting 'Bits' earned from completing challenges and achieving high scores. Stamps can be used to create

developers, we can encourage more videogame stamps packages in the near future. \*

» The Royal Mail's recent series of sta