

Steel Wheel

Owner's Manual

1.1



Welcome!

Congratulations on your procurement of this Steel Wheel Virtual Pinball Table. Yet again, you have shown your good taste! ;)

Steel Wheel is a remake of the table of the same name from “Pinball Dreams”, the legendary game that first appeared for the Amiga computer back in 1992 – by many considered the first “serious” attempt at pinball emulation in software for a home computer. The layout is very much based on the Williams' 1989 table “Bad Cats”, but with an entirely different theme and rules. Also, the upper portion differs greatly between the two tables.

Since this is a remake and not a clone, expect some differences – see the FAQ in this manual for more information.

The sound of the original has been sourced partly from music files created by mod rippers (extracting the tunes directly from the Amiga game code), and partly by recording Pinball Dreams sessions live with the software running on the WinUAE Amiga emulator.

Before You Play

- Steel Wheel 1.0 is optimized for Future Pinball 1.7.
- Note that "Flares on Playfield Lights" in the FP Video/Rendering options must be checked for the backglass lighting to work as intended.

Credits

Thanks to Digital Illusions for the original table (and especially Olof Gustafsson, whose music and FX were unceremoniously borrowed for this creation).

Thanks to Black and Lio for Future Pinball.

The Playfield



How To Play

Start Game

The original Pinball Dreams' tables did not muck about with fake credits or credit awards for high scores, and neither does this one: It is permanently set to Free Play, and all you have to do is press the Future Pinball **Start Game** key. Your only rewards will be any number of extra balls, and a highscore shown in the attract sequence display at the end of it all!

Note: The original added a different number of players on pressing F1-F8. This version follows standard Future Pinball procedure: Pressing the **Start Game** key repeatedly while the first ball has not expired will add up to four players.

Toggle Music

The main background music (not the sound effects) can be toggled on and off at any time during the game by pressing Future Pinball's **Special1** key.

The Segment Displays

There is one large HUD segment display active by default when you first start the table, covering the entire top part of the screen.

If you plan to play in Future Pinball Fixed View, and prefer to view the identical in-game display placed on the lower part of the backbox instead, just press Future Pinball's **Toggle HUD** key to get rid of the HUD.

The Camera Mode

If you want to disable Future Pinball's scrolling camera, press the **Special2** key to toggle between scrolling and fixed views.

A small status display in the bottom left corner of the screen will show a message whenever one of the above settings is changed.

Game Status Information

All information about player up and ball in progress is shown on the main segment display while the ball is in the plunger lane. In addition, there are four simple number displays on the backbox that just tally the scores and a number in front of each that lights up to indicate “player up”.

Idle Display Mode

When the ball is on the playfield, the display will switch to Idle Display Mode if nothing happens for 7 seconds (“nothing” in this case defined as “no flippers flipped and no bumpers hit”). This mode will show current player, ball in play, current jackpot size, and the table highscores.

The normal way to get this information during play is to capture the ball with a flipper and hold it until Idle Display Mode mode kicks in. Once the flipper is released, the display will go back to showing player score.

Game Over Display

When a game is over, each player's score will be shown briefly in the display. The winner's score is the one that flashes. (There's really no need to pay attention to this, really: In this version you can also look at the backbox, where all the scores are listed!)

High Score Entry

When you get one of the four highest scores, you are prompted to enter your initials. Use the flipper keys to select a letter for the first initial, then press the Start Game key to move on to the next initial, and so on until all three character spaces have been filled. (Character choices are the letters of the alphabet, an asterisk, or a blank.)

Power Switch

You can make the game “dark and cold” with the power switch key (by default, “P”). Press “P” again to switch power back on – there will be a short self-test period where the display shows version info, before the table enters attract mode.

For your safety, the power switch is only operational when no game is in progress. (It's very difficult to manually lift the glass and retrieve stuck balls in Future Pinball!)

You can make the game start cold and dark by changing a constant at the top of the script. There, you can also change the key code used for the power switch.

Light Test Switch

During the attract mode, you can toggle the light test switch to make all playfield lights light up and stay on – very handy to check for burned-out bulbs! ;) Press the light test switch again to return to normal display mode.

The default key for the light test switch is “T”. This key code can also be changed with a constant at the very top of the script.

Light test mode must be OFF before any game can be started.

Operator Menu

Via the operator menu, you can select the number of balls per game (3 or 5), and reset the statistics.

To reach the operator menu, turn the power off (“P” key described above) and then on again. Hold BOTH flipper keys pressed until you hear a gunshot and the operator menu appears on the display/HUD. Choose a menu option with the flipper keys (the current choice is the flashing one), and select it using the Start Game key. When you select <EXIT> to quit the operator menu, the game will reboot.

Note that the right apron info card automatically changes to display the correct number of balls per game, and that changing number of balls per game also resets the statistics.

Game Rules

The Top Lanes

Each rollover normally scores 5 000. When launching the ball, hitting the lane with the flashing arrow in the **Top Lane Lights** scores as follows:

- 1st time hit 1 000 000
- 2nd time hit 2 000 000
- 3rd time hit 3 000 000
- 4th time hit 5 000 000
- 5th time hit 10 000 000
- 6th time hit 20 000 000
- Each subsequent hit scores 1 000 000.

Completing the Top Lane Lights increases the bonus multiplier from 2x all the way up to 7x each time the lights are completed.

Subsequent completions then score 1 000 000.

When the ball is in play (not during the flashing arrow skillshot launch), you can rotate the **Top Lane Lights** lit by pressing the flipper keys.

The Tunnel

Shooting the ball through **The Tunnel** lights the **Extra Carrier Light** for the **Right Ball Trap** and the **Spin Wheel Light** for the **Wheel Ball Trap**.

If the **Jackpot Light** is flashing, you score the Jackpot.

If the **Extra Ball Light** is flashing, you get an extra ball (and the Back On Track light is lit).

Each pass through The Tunnel adds 2 000 to the bonus.

The S-T-E-A-M Drop Targets

Complete these targets to increase the ticket price.

When the ticket price is already at maximum, completing the targets light the **Extra Ball Light** award in **The Tunnel**.

Each target dropped scores 20 000 and adds 5 000 to the bonus.

The Left Ramp and the Ticket Price

The **Left Ramp** scores the current ticket price as indicated by the *flashing Ticket Light*. Shooting the ramp several times in rapid succession scores 1 million extra for each loop.

The ticket price may be increased in three ways:

- By completing the **S-T-E-A-M Drop Targets**.
- By scoring the Ticket award in the **Wheel Ball Trap**.
- By Scoring the Ticket green bonus in the **Right Ball Trap**.

Each loop on the ramp will add 20 000 to the bonus (aka “1 Bonus Mile”).

The Right Drop Targets

When completed, these targets enables the next green bonus for collection in the **Right Ball Trap**.

Each time the targets are completed, the light for one of four additional awards are also enabled:

- The **Double Bonus Light** for the **Wheel Ball Trap**.
- The **Hold Bonus Light** for the **Wheel Ball Trap**.
- The **Score Bonus Light** for the **Wheel Ball Trap**.
- The **Jackpot Light** in **The Tunnel**.

These awards are then cycled, so the fifth time the targets are completed, the **Double Bonus Light** will light up again (if not enabled already).

Each target dropped scores 20 000 and adds 5 000 to the bonus.

The Right Ball Trap

The right ball trap collects the award corresponding to the lowest flashing **Green Bonus Light**. (Green bonuses are enabled by completing the **Right Drop Targets**.)

The green bonuses are (in order):

- One million
- Raise the ticket price
- Five million
- Extra ball

If all green bonuses have already been claimed, shooting the ball trap again lights the **Jackpot Light** award in **The Tunnel**.

The Right Ball Trap also adds a carrier to the train if the **Extra Carrier Light** is flashing. The **Extra Carrier Light** is enabled by shooting the ball through **The Tunnel**.

If all carriers have already been added, shooting the ball trap again when the **Extra Carrier Light** is flashing scores the jackpot.

If neither any **Green Bonus Lights** nor the **Extra Carrier Light** are flashing, the ball trap increases the jackpot with a random amount.

The Wheel Ball Trap

Hitting the Wheel Ball Trap when the Spin Wheel Light is flashing starts the wheel-of-fortune spinning. It will stop on one of the following awards:

- Extra Ball (The Back On Track light will light up)
- One million
- Jackpot (scores the jackpot)
- Two million
- Ticket (raises the ticket price)
- Three million

In addition, you will collect the awards according to any flashing **Bonus Award Lights**.

- **Score Bonus:** A bonus countdown is initiated (and the bonus kept for subsequent end-of-ball bonus).
- **Double Bonus:** The bonus amount is doubled.
- **Hold Bonus:** When the bonus is next counted down, the countdown will be performed twice.

(Note that the Score Bonus award is always collected/processed first, if there are other flashing bonuses as well.)

If no ball trap lights are flashing, hitting the ball trap will build up the jackpot with a random amount.

The Centre Ramp and the Carrier Level

The **Left Ramp** scores the current carrier level as indicated by the *flashing Carrier Light*. Shooting the ramp several times in rapid succession scores 1 million extra for each loop.

The carrier level is increased by shooting the **Right Ball Trap** when the **Extra Carrier Light** is flashing.

Each loop on the ramp will add 20 000 to the bonus (aka “1 Bonus Mile”).

Note: The states of the **Carrier Lights** and the **Extra Carrier Light** are the only things saved from one player ball to the next – regardless of whether this next ball is an extra ball or an ordinary one.

The Bottom Rollover Lanes

Each rollover scores 20 000.

The Outer Rollover Lanes add 2 000 to the bonus.

The Bumpers

The bumpers score 500.

The Slingshots

The slingshots score 5.

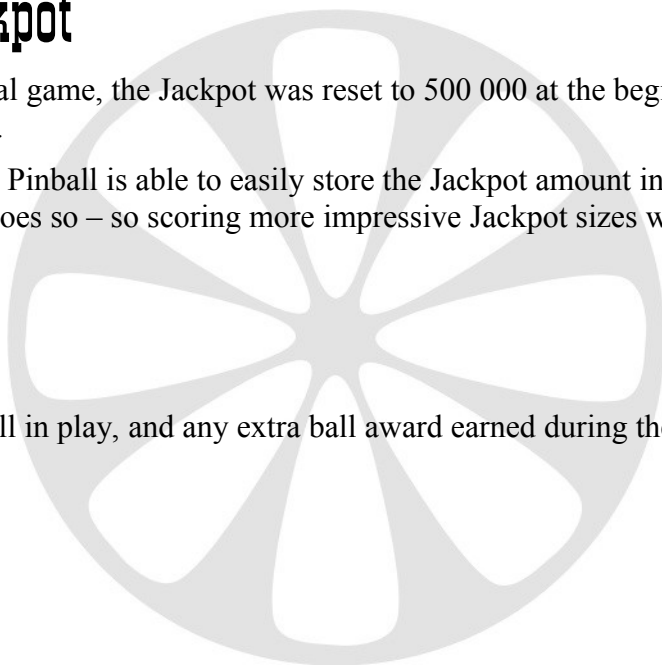
The Jackpot

In the original game, the Jackpot was reset to 500 000 at the beginning of each session.

Since Future Pinball is able to easily store the Jackpot amount in between sessions, it does so – so scoring more impressive Jackpot sizes will be more common!

Tilt

Tilt voids ball in play, and any extra ball award earned during the ball is lost as well.



FAQ

This Version Compared to the Original

Q: Are there any major differences in table layout between this and the original?

A: Apart from the fact that the table dimensions of the original were very “squashed” and relied on fake physics and “canned effects” to work, only one:

In the original, a ball trapped in the Wheel Ball Trap gets ejected again from underneath the left ramp and into the bumper cluster. With a sensible, real-world ramp design as implemented in Future Pinball, a ball eject mechanism simply does not fit under the ramp: The ball is kicked out straight from the Wheel Ball Trap onto the left flipper instead. This has virtually no impact on the gameplay as a whole.

Q: Any other differences in the design?

A: The graphics are completely new, although the major design ideas from the original playfield is incorporated in this one (USA map, old town main street, steam locomotive, rail tracks in the plunger lane...). However, rather than sticking with the rather drab look of the original graphics (forced on the artists by the low resolution and a palette of only 32 colours!), this table is designed to look like a recreation of something that actually existed in real life.

There are also lots of small differences concerning the segment display, sound mixing and sound effects usage. I've tried to capture the atmosphere and feel of the original, not replicate every tiny detail.

Smaller design changes include:

- In the original, the flashing “Go” light pointing at the tunnel never goes out, which kind of defeats its purpose. In this version, it is off when both the Wheel Ball Trap Spin Light and the Extra Carrier Light are already flashing.

- The Jackpot is saved in the table's fpRAM file between sessions.

Q: What are the major differences to how the game actually plays?

A: The only thing that really strikes me is that drop targets are much easier to hit in this version. The ramp, ramp combo, ball trap and tunnel shots all seem about as easy (or hard!) as in the original. Also, the overall pace of this version is a bit slower, as many surfaces are less “bouncy”.

Sound

Q: What's with the sound and the strange panning of sound effects?

A: The Amiga had four sample playing channels, grouped as two stereo pairs and no mixing capabilities. Normally, all single-channel Amiga sounds are hard panned either left or right, and the sounds re-recorded especially for this table keeps most of that quality: What you hear is much how it was with the original.

However, some of the main music files were sourced from “mod rips” already on the Internet, and these happen to be mono.

Bonus Miles

Q: Bonus miles are shown during bonus countdown, but don't seem to add anything to the score?

A: The bonus points for the bonus miles (20 000 per mile) was already included in the score previously counted down. The “Bonus Miles x ...” is just a rather useless information display telling you how many loops you made. (All according to the original.)

Top Lane Lights

Q: Shouldn't the lights be rotated different ways according to which flipper key is used?

A: No. (This also according to the original.)

Extra Ball

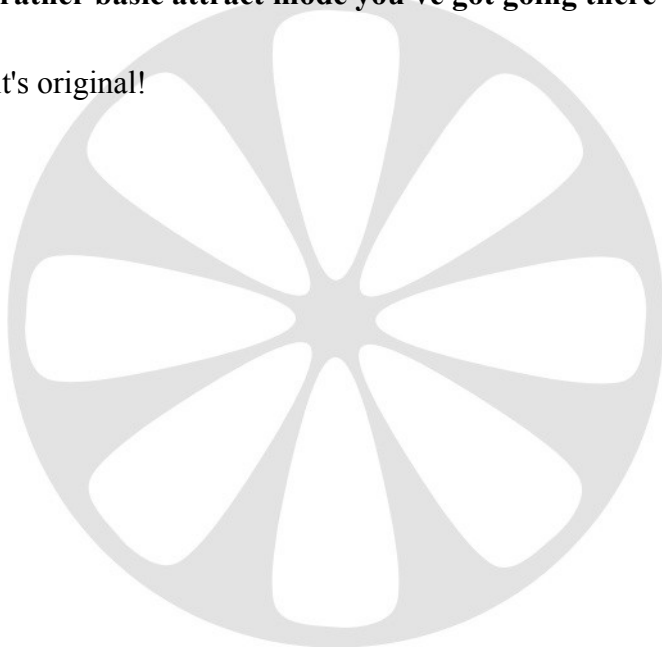
Q: The table is reset when the Extra Ball is launched? Is this right?

A: Yes. (The only things not reset between balls are the **Carrier Lights** and the **Extra Carrier Light**. But this is the same whether the ball is an “extra ball” or not.)

Attract Mode

Q: That's a rather basic attract mode you've got going there on the playfield?

A: Yes, but it's original!



Legalese

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