

July 9th

ICL Formed July 9, 1968

International Computers Limited (ICL) was a large British computer company created through the merger of several companies, including International Computers and Tabulators (ICT [Feb 27]), English Electric Leo Marconi (EELM), and Elliott Automation [Oct 00]. EELM was itself a merger of the computer divisions of English Electric [May 10], LEO [Sept 5], and Marconi [Dec 11].

The hope of the UK's Labour Government was that ICL could compete with major world manufacturers like IBM, and for a while it did quite well.

Its most successful product line was the ICL 2900 series announced on October 9, 1974. It combined features from a variety of sources, including Burroughs [Jan 28] mainframes, Multics [Nov 30], and the MU5 [June 16] developed at the University of Manchester.

However, ICL's mainframe base came to be dominated by large contracts from the UK public sector, which contracted significantly with the rise of the PC. The company was acquired by Fujitsu [Oct 00] at the end of the 1990s.

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In 1993, Andreessen and Eric Bina [Oct 25] developed the Mosaic web browser [Sept 28] at NCSA [Jan 15]. The next year, Andreessen joined James Clark [March 23] to co-found Mosaic Communications [March 25], which later changed its name to Netscape Communications Corporation. Its Netscape

Navigator browser [Sept 18] soon became the industry leader.

Andreessen authored a popular op-ed piece for *The Wall Street Journal* in August 2011, "Why Software Is Eating the World".



Marc Andreessen (2008). Photo by Joi. CC BY 2.0.

A 2015 *New Yorker* piece, "Tomorrow's Advance Man," pointed out that he is "six feet five inches tall, with a cranium so large, bald, and oblong that you can't help but think of words like "Jumbo" and "Grade A.""

Donkey Kong Released July 9, 1981

"Donkey Kong" was created by Shigeru Miyamoto at Nintendo, a Japanese playing card and toy company turned video game enterprise. The original idea was to write a game involving the Popeye characters, but they couldn't obtain a license.

"Donkey Kong" was named after the game's villain, a gorilla gone rogue (a bit like Popeye's Blutto). The game's hero was originally a carpenter called Jumpman, but was renamed Mario when Nintendo wanted to use the character in other games.

The story goes that the name "Mario" was chosen by Minoru Arakawa, head of "Nintendo

America", after the owner of the Seattle business park housing Nintendo's US operation, Mario Segale, demanded payment of a late rental bill.

There is, of course, no donkey in "Donkey Kong", so why "donkey"? Miyamoto apparently wanted to include "donkey" to convey stubbornness. When he first suggested it, he was laughed at, but the name stuck.

Tron Released July 9, 1982

Tron (or TRON) is a 1982 sci-fi film directed by Steven Lisberger, and partly inspired by his love of Pong [Nov 29]. Jeff Bridges, a loveably roguish programmer, is transported into the nightmarish software world of a mainframe.

Tron was one of the first movies to make 'extensive' use of computer animation – about 20 minutes worth, CGI was used for the mainframe's "terrain," and vehicles such as light-cycles and tanks, replacing the traditional utilization of miniatures and matte paintings.

Prior to the film's release, Disney stock dropped by 4% after several Wall Street analysts attended a screening and were unimpressed. The day after its release, Disney stock fell another 2.5 points.

Although the film was a failure, the video game based on it proved to be a tremendous hit, and actually out-grossed the film. The poor box office caused Disney to re-release the movie in February 1983, with even worse results.

The Motion Picture Academy refused to nominate TRON for a special-effects award because, as Lisberger put it, "The Academy thought we cheated by using computers." But in 1997, Ken Perlin of MAGI (one of the four companies involved in the CGI) won an Academy Award for Technical Achievement for his invention of Perlin noise, which was first used in TRON.

There's been some debate over the origin of the TRON name. Some historians point to the TRON debugging command in old dialects of BASIC (short for TRace ON). However, Lisberger has stated that he took the name from the word "electronic".

Co-writer Bonnie MacBird suggested to Lisberger that they hire Alan Kay [May 17] as a consultant on the film. MacBird sent versions of the script to Xerox PARC [July 1] electronically over phone lines via acoustic coupler where Kay and MacBird subsequently edited them on an Alto [March 1]. This may make MacBird the first screenwriter to edit a screenplay on a computer. Kay and MacBird married in 1983.

The movie's character Alan Bradley, who wrote the TRON program, was based in part on Kay, and the lab in the film was modelled after Kay's lab at Xerox PARC.

TRON features the first appearance of the word "hacking" in a movie [Nov 20]. Kevin Flynn (Jeff Bridges) is describing his intention to break into a computer system, saying "I've been doing a little hacking here". He's referring to CLU (Codified Likeness Utility) which looks like Flynn, but talks in a different voice and is rendered with yellow colored circuitry.

Video gaming Easter eggs in the movie include a glimpse of Pac-Man [April 3] and a surveillance machine that looks a bit like Donkey Kong [July 9].
