

# ROGUL

hack and slash across the wilderness on Atari

## Introduction

*Wojciech Bociański lives near Gliwice, Śląskie, Poland and has been programming Atari 8bit computers for many years. He has created many interesting games and applications that utilize the FujiNet. Bocianu (his handle) has recently released a new rogue-like game for the Atari called Rogul at the Last Party held the first week of 2025. These are his answers to some questions I send him in order to learn more about the person behind this amazing game....*

### 1. What inspired Rogul? Why did you do it? What is Rogul's favorite thing to eat?

That's a lot of questions at once, but I'll try to answer them one by one. Rogul was inspired by my love for the rogue-like genre. I've spent countless hours playing NetHack, ADOM, and other rogue-likes from that era. In fact, I still occasionally play NetHack to this day. Oddly enough, the rogue-like genre is quite neglected on the Atari 8-bit platform, so I decided to create something of my own. I also drew inspiration from more contemporary titles like Ziggurat and Pixel Dungeon.

And it turned out pretty well - I managed to pack in more features than I initially planned. Despite its apparent simplicity, the game has great replay-ability. Of course, it's best suited for those who enjoy frequent deaths and aren't afraid to trust in the hands of the RNG gods.

That answers two of your questions - now onto the important one. Rogul's favorite food? Viennese cheesecake, but he wouldn't say no to a good brownie either.

### 2. Flob was another great game that came out in 2021. Does it take three years to come out with a polished game for the Atari?

Since Flob, I've written several other games - mostly smaller ones - like Hangmad for the Atari and a few games for the neo6502 platform.

If you're asking how long it takes to develop a game like this, it usually takes a few months. But, of course, I don't work on it full-time; it's still just a hobby, and I usually only put in a few hours a week.

I spent nine months on Flob, while Rogul took me 11 months. However, during those 11 months, there were periods where I didn't touch the code at all. The most intense part of development is usually the final month, when the game is essentially functional, and all that's left is the tedious and least enjoyable part - level design and balancing.

### 3. What was your first Atari, and why do you still love it today?

My first Atari was an 800XL, which I got around 1985/86. Back then, I lived behind the Iron Curtain, where such devices typically arrived through unofficial channels and with considerable delay. Legal software availability? Virtually non-existent.

That first Atari essentially determined my career as a programmer and my lifelong work with computers, and that sentimental attachment has stayed with me.

I transitioned straight from my 8-bit Atari to 386 machines and beyond, the Atari faded into the background. About 10 years ago, the memories came flooding back. I discovered that hundreds of people in Poland were still using these machines, meeting at demo parties, and creating fantastic software. I decided to be part of this movement. I wrote my first game in cc65, Turbo Snail, attended a demo party, and got hooked.

### 4. You kickstarted the FujiNet era with some of its most famous apps. What drew you to the FujiNet at the beginning?

FujiNet is an incredible device that bridges two eras of hardware in a tiny box with huge capabilities. I'd often wondered if there was a way to connect the Atari to the internet, and suddenly, this marvel appeared. It turned out to be incredibly easy to use and program.

The first app that came to mind was a weather client. It seemed simple enough to implement, even with automatic location detection via IP, and it turned out to be a hit. I still don't fully understand the magic behind its popularity, but it seems like everyone needed it.

### 5. You do all your work in MADs/Pascal. What is it about MADs that you enjoy more than, say, using cc65?

When I returned to the Atari, it felt natural to look for something akin to C since I primarily worked with C-like languages in my professional career. My first game was written in cc65. Despite being a simple text-based game, I encountered performance issues and had to fight hard to overcome them.

Moreover, the compiler and linker weren't particularly user-friendly, which left me somewhat disillusioned. My second game, 5-dots, was written entirely in assembly language - partly to refresh my skills and partly because I had lost some trust in compilers.

Then someone sent me a link to Mad-Pascal. I gave it a try, and despite not being a fan of the "begin-end" syntax, I found the compiler incredibly fast and convenient to use. It came with a solid library of functions right out of the box.

After writing a game in raw assembly, moving to a higher level of abstraction was a welcome change. Mad-Pascal is well-optimized and makes prototyping much faster. In the end, I usually rewrite critical sections in assembly anyway, but Mad-Pascal allows me to do so inline, without additional headaches.

Of course, like any compiler, it has its quirks, but it's continuously developed and supported by its creator (thanks, TeBe!). I highly recommend trying it out. In recent years, several interesting projects have been developed with it, like Time Wizard - a true masterpiece.

### 6. The Atari scene in Poland is amazing (compared to us). What do you think is driving all the innovation and work from your country for the Atari 8-bits?

Yes, the Atari scene in Poland is still thriving. Great games, demos, and tools are being created, though fewer people are using them. That's just the fate of veteran systems, I suppose.

Why is the scene so vibrant in Poland? I think there are a few reasons. First, living behind the Iron Curtain meant that our first computers stayed with us much longer than in countries where other machines were more accessible, and incomes were higher. So, there's a stronger sense of nostalgia.

Secondly, when Atari was already being consigned to attics and dumpsters in the West, fledgling capitalist Poland saw companies still producing games for these machines - and some were excellent titles. The Atari platform lived here longer than it should have.

We have a tradition of creating great games for the Atari, and I'm trying to keep that alive. Sometimes it turns out better, sometimes worse, but I don't regret a single moment spent with the Atari.

It's a unique hobby, and through it, I've met amazing people. There's a special joy when

someone picks up one of my titles, even for just a few minutes.

### 7. What is your development cycle like? Coding on a laptop? Running via Emulator? Do you use an IDE on the laptop?

I use two machines for coding on the Atari. When I work from home, I use a desktop PC running Windows. For parties, I take my laptop. On both machines, I use VSCode. VSCode offers features that facilitate development and has several useful plugins.

As my primary emulator during coding, I use Altirra because it provides convenient debugging tools and probably the highest compatibility among all available emulators. Of course, I also test the software on actual hardware. My main machine, currently sitting on my desk, is an Atari 600XL with expanded memory and stereo POKEY. And naturally, it's equipped with FujiNet and an AVG cart.

### Rogul and Bocianu's apps are available at:

<http://bocianu.atari.pl/>  
and  
<https://gitlab.com/bocianu>

### If you have a FujiNet Rogul on TNFS:

[http://fujinet.diller.org/ATARI/GAMES/rogul\\_1.0a.xex](http://fujinet.diller.org/ATARI/GAMES/rogul_1.0a.xex)

