

Pinscore Display Unit & Driver Board Review

Words and Photos by

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Having battled up the M6 and M55 and beyond to Fleetwood on a miserable wet and blustery November night I wondered if the Flash cabinet and playfield would be worth all the effort. Surely a 35 quid Ebay punt had to be worth it? I was one of only two bidders as the blurred photo had put off most people. It was impossible to say if the mark across the playfield was appalling wear or an unfortunate reflection.

As the seller opened the doors to the wooden outbuilding he explained he was doing a clearance in a café that had once been an arcade. A new wall and a staircase had prevented many of the larger arcade games from being easily removed and he had been left with some pinball cabinets and playfields but regrettably with heads gone! We moved amongst the bric a brac until we found the pins.

I couldn't see the Flash at first, but my pulse quickened as a near-mint Zaccaria Ski Jump, Williams Time Warp, Stern Nugent, followed by a Gorgar were shifted before Flash was finally revealed. I had never seen such clean, scratch-free cabinets in pins of this age. The guy explained they had been left untouched since 1989 so probably hadn't seen a lot of use. He needed to make room for more house clearance furniture so would I be interested in the other machines before they ended up being placed in a skip?

Of course I agreed to take all the Williams machines and the Stern but how was I going to explain my purchase to the wife? I had a long wet journey home to work that one out!



The Pinscore units are available in several different kits and I was sent the following:

PS-8000-P -- suitable for the following Williams games...

Contact, World Cup, Stellar Wars, Laser Ball, Disco Fever, Flash, Blackout, Scorpion, Hot Tip, Phoenix, Firepower, Time Warp, Lucky 7, Pokerino, Gorgar, Tri-Zone (I decided to fit this to Firepower).

and containing

- 1 PS-8000 Pinscore Master Driver and Display board
- 4 PS-8019 6 digit LED Display boards
- 2 PS-CABLE2 18" 20 pin ribbon cable
- 2 PS-CABLE3 24" 20 pin ribbon cable
- 5 PS-LS-6 Foam light shield for PS-8000 Credit/Ball Display
- 20 PS-W8-MNT Fibre mounting washers

PS-8363-P -- suitable for these Williams games...

Algar, Cosmic Gunfight, Pharaoh, Warlock, Alien Poker, Firepower II, Solar King, Space Shuttle*, Barracora, Jungle Lord, Star Light, Sorcerer*, Black Knight, Laser Cue, Time Fantasy, Comet* (this kit went in Black Knight).

and containing

- 1 PS-8363 Pinscore Master Driver board
- 4 PS-8364 Pinscore 7 digit LED Display board
- 1 PS-8365 Pinscore 4 digit LED Display board
- 1 PS-LS-6 Foam light shield for 4 or 6 digit Display board
- 4 PS-LS-7 Foam light shield for 7 digit Display board

*These games may need a different Pinscore model depending on your original part number.



My collection of system 4 to 7 Williams games had just risen rapidly to seven machines (well, four machines plus three halves) and quite fortuitously, at nearly the same time, the chance to evaluate the new Pinscore display and driver boards was offered to members of the UK Pinball Forum. I grasped the opportunity with both hands as I was certain to be needing some new displays in the not to distant future.

Installation Instructions consist of a single A4 sheet, about half of which is taken up with machine suitability etc. Obviously, the first job is to remove the old displays, driver board and connecting cables. Nuts and washers are not provided with the kits so it is worth saving the old ones as you remove them. Installation of the new equipment was just as simple as promised although fitting the ribbon cables was slightly more awkward than the original round wire and a couple of clips would be useful to make sure the ribbon cables did not block the lamps (photo [img_1221.jpg](#)). The installation took about 25 minutes using a 1/4" nut driver and was successful first time with Firepower!

Installation of the display units and driver board from the second kit was just as easy as the first but this kit did not come complete with ribbon cables which was disappointing. Having to re-fit 25 year old ribbon cables and plugs onto a \$199 kit seemed a little penny pinching! On removing the old cables and examining the corroded pins on the old displays on my Black Knight I suspected this installation would not be quite as straight forward. Since the display driver board on BK is on

the reverse of the light board door and the ribbon cables run predominantly on the reverse side. They are then pushed through slots and onto the new display units so there were no cable routing problems as experienced with Firepower

On fitting the cables, it was clear that all was not well with my installation and several digits on the display flickered intermittently. What could be wrong? Perhaps the on-board diagnostic button could help? The button causes all the displays

to show 888888 when pressed, enabling faulty connections to be identified. Sure enough, Display 1 was missing the same segments from each character which suggested a bad connection. After re-seating the plugs on the old ribbon cables several times ... presto! ... all the displays were now working perfectly! At least for a little while. As everyone with any experience with older electronic games knows, dodgy connections have a way of revisiting until you eventually give in, do the right thing and completely fix the problem. (Great Plains Electronics supplies excellent ribbon cable kits for pinball machines of all ages at very reasonable prices)

Having successfully fitted both kits in my machines, how did they look?

When lit, both displays looked perfect with no different to a fully functioning original display. Nice sharp orange characters with the added advantage that the brightness of the displays could be adjusted according to the ambient light conditions. In a well-illuminated room or where machines are located against a sunny window the extra intensity is clearly beneficial.

Only with the games switched off could the Pinscore displays be seen to be different from the original units. When viewed from the front, the characters are slightly lighter than the originals. On viewing the displays from an angle the white sides of the individual character

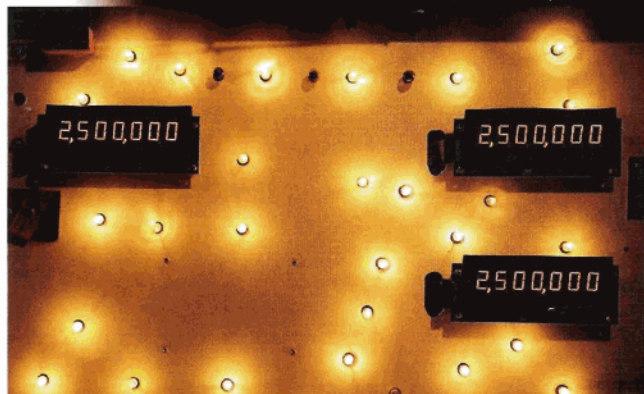
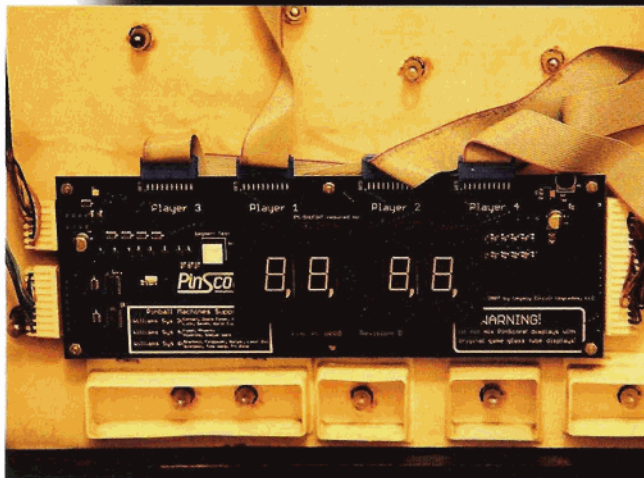


units look a little odd (see photo [img_1252.jpg](#) or [white digits.jpg](#)). This could easily be rectified with a touch of black paint or some black foam inserted around each digit. So with a little more attention to detail, the Pinscore displays should appeal to even the most discerning collector.

You may be thinking, "Why should I buy them?"

- You have two or more old displays dim or dying?
- You have display driver board problems?
- Pinscore has adjustable brightness.
- They are warranted reliability for five years.
- You hate soldering! There are 32 tabs to be de-soldered and re-soldered before a replacement conventional display unit glass can be fitted. After completing this operation there is still a significant chance that you will also have a driver board problem!
- Pinscore displays run on 5V and generate little or no heat.

Overall, these displays offer an excellent replacement for ageing displays. They are easy to install and with single old-style displays selling for over £25 (\$50) for each unit, they offer guaranteed reliability at a reasonable price. **PGJ**



Contact Pinscore
through their
web site at

www.pinscore.com