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A few players from the area have become regulars, and the Merry Time sees a lot of visitors to Astoria and the coast. By his admission, Robinett plays pinball at the Merry Time about three nights a week. “I’m trying to build something with local people,” Robinett said.

A minimum of eight players is ideal to hold a bracketed tournament. Eleven of the 12 machines get randomly selected for play, including Jungle Lord, a vintage 1981 gem, the newest game, Godzilla, this year’s model, and Medieval Madness, which is, according to Robinett, “probably the greatest pinball machine ever made.”

Merry Time is one of two pinball tournaments on the North Coast, the other being held at North Coast Pinball, a dedicated arcade in Nehalem.

The rise of pinball after the Great Recession coincided with that of vinyl records, retrocomputing and similar retro-oriented phenomena.

Though Robinett jokingly attributes it to “hipster culture,” you don’t have to be a hipster or have supple wrists to participate in the pinball tournament at Merry Time. Just show up on Sunday and have fun.

The Illahee Apartments



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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A ‘Ghostbusters’ pinball machine. Todd Robinett opens up one of the pinball machines. Robinett plays one of the pinball machines. Pinball tournaments have become popular on the North Coast.

Photos by Peter Korchnak