VIDEO GAMES™

VG's BIG SCREEN TV GUIDE

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TOY FARE
Cartoons, Comics, Muppets & Puppets Play The Games

Sci-Fi's Game Of Life Or Death

SPECIAL SECTION:
Video Sports Games Illustrated

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VIDEO GAMES

Volume 1, Number 8 May 1983

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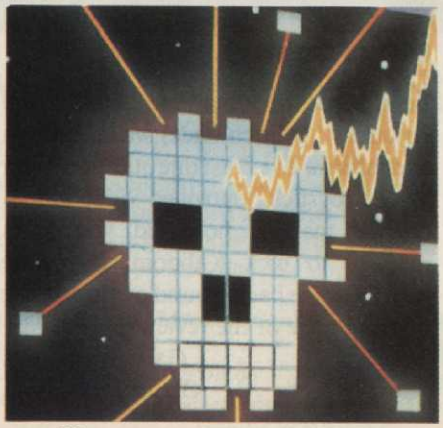

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Double Speak

Level Headed

In your feature "Rating The Joysticks" (March issue) you said you tested a joystick on ColecoVision. How can you choose the level you want without changing the joystick? Do you have to change it back after you decide which level you want, or is there a joystick available which can choose what level you want?

Brian Armer
Danville, Calif.

Unplug the back joystick and replace it with your replacement model. Now use the front original stick for choosing the level you want, then play with the replacement stick. By the way, the replacement sticks will work with games needing only one or no fire buttons. Games such as Cosmic Avenger can't be played with replacement sticks since they require two fire buttons. However some of the replacement stick companies do plan to produce dual fire button sticks, but you'll still have to keep in one of the original standard Coleco joysticks for choosing levels. For two-player games though you can remove the original stick, once you've chosen the level you want, and both players can then use replacement sticks.

Out of Control

Perry Greenberg's article "Rating the Joysticks" (March issue) was thorough and informative. Just one question: with all the joystick-controlled video games on the market, how did you folks manage to pick Kaboom, a *paddle* game, for the background picture on the opening page of the review?!

Gary Symbouras
Ozone Park, N.Y.

Someone should put a paddle to us for that one. What else can we say?—Ed.

Can't Shake the Feeling

I would like to commend *VIDEO GAMES'* staff and editors for putting out an informative and excellent magazine. However, I can't shake the feeling that the magazine is very Atari biased. True, you do publish a few articles on other systems, but being an Intellivision fanatic, it just doesn't come across as enough. I know there are probably more Atari nuts than there are Intelly freaks. But, if you did more articles on Intellivision, sooner or later, those Atari nuts would see the light and realize that Intellivision can run circles around the VCS.

Frank Duren
San Diego, Calif.

One Happy Customer

I am probably the strongest Intellivisionist you have ever received a letter from. After having played all other existing video games, I am 100 percent convinced that Mattel's system is the best and most promising system in the whole world. The spectacular Intellivision game library is ever increasing. I recall when I first obtained the system, I bought all 12 available cartridges and now I have more than 50 games without taking into account the fascinating Intellivoice games. I still have not seen any sports games that can compare with those Intellivision has to offer. I also think that Intellivision's space and action games are unique, interesting and have the brightest graphics ever.

Some of my fellow Intellivisionists inform me that there will soon be many surprises, such as a keyboard and also an adaptor to play all Atari-compatible cartridges, as well as a special hand-controller with a joystick for Intellivision. There's even a new version of the master component called "Intellivision II!"

I cannot believe the many complaints I read about there not being many one-player games for Intellivision. I can lend them all that they wish. What about Astrosmash, Space Armada, Snafu, Bowling, Utopia, Horse Racing, Golf, Sub Hunt, Checkers, Star Strike, Skiing, Lock N' Chase, Space Hawk, Triple Action, Reversi, Night Stalker, Space Battle, Auto Racing, Frog Bog, Dungeons & Dragons, Tron Deadly Discs and Royal Dealer?

Ever since I got rid of my Atari 2600 VCS and acquired Intellivision my neighbors and I are having a videogaming ball. Now, don't you agree with me that Intellivision is the best?

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your fascinating magazine as it is informative, interesting and even irrestible. I really enjoy every page and look forward to each continued issue.

Benjamin Steinmetz
Caracas 1010A, Venezuela

PlayCable Boy

In your February issue, I read your article on PlayCable ("Playing Games with Cable"). In it you said several areas already offer this system. Can you tell me which ones they are?

Todd Shaw
Portage, Ind.

Nearly all of the PlayCable franchises are located in the New York metropolitan area. For specific information, write: PlayCable, 1775 Broadway, N.Y., N.Y. —Ed. ▲

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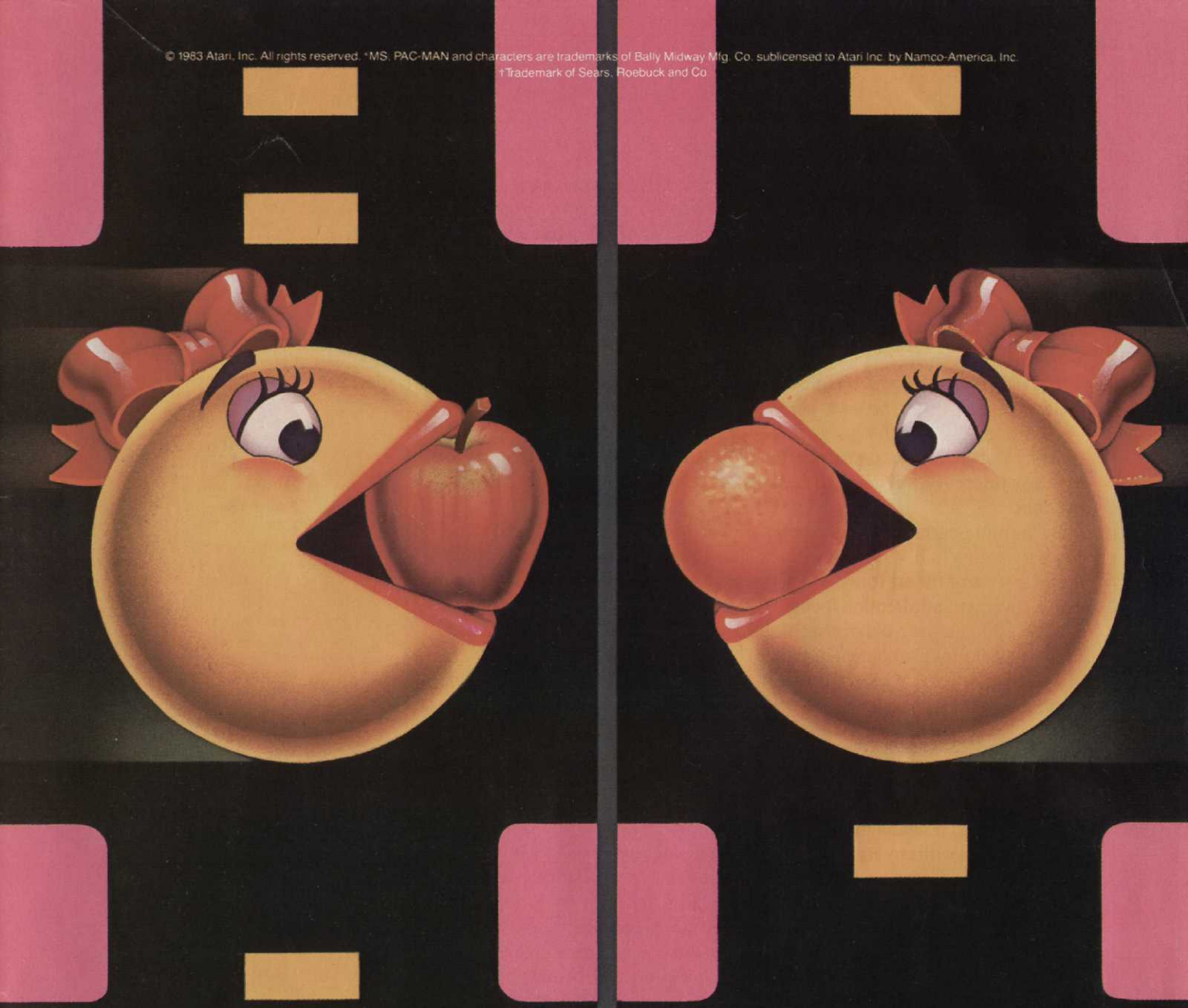

Which player is eating twice as much?

Think fast. Here comes MS. PAC-MAN* from Atari.®

Meet the new home version of MS. PAC-MAN. She looks and plays so much like the arcade, she's unlike any home video game you've ever played before. And she's only from Atari for use with the ATARI® 2600,™ and the Sears Video Arcade† systems.

You get four ghosts. Four mazes. Escape tunnels. And lots of floating munchies. Pears to pretzels, apples to oranges. To get the top banana, worth 5000 points, you have to know your little lady backward and forward.

The way the player on the left does. He gets 1000 points for the apple. While the player on the right gets only half as much for the orange. But plenty of indigestion.

So escort MS. PAC-MAN out of the arcade.

Because this woman's place is in the home.

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HYPERSPACE

In 1972, video games inauspiciously began to infiltrate the arcades. Rather than being viewed as the potential savior of a then-fading coin-op industry, they were seen as only novelty attractions on the order of rifle games, baseball machines and even skee-ball. To bring the total picture into perspective and up to date, it's important to also realize that such major metropolitan cities as New York and Chicago were without the benefit of pinball machines, while Los Angeles, in the same year, finally agreed to let the flipper games back after a-more-than-three-decade absence.

The old silverball wonders were crucial to the growth and prosperity of the industry. Even though there was something mildly decadent about them, they were also childlike in their appeal and pinball had a recognizeable dimensionality and texture to its existence. Everyone *knew* pinball and if video was to have any future—it was going to need the old favorite as a way to get a foot in the door.

By the mid-Seventies, with the popularity of *Tommy* in full stride and game players wanting to be "pinball wizards," there was a dramatic resurgence in the awareness of the art form, which was marked by a proliferation of books, media coverage and attention focused on discovering the wonders of what had become a 40-plus-year-old overnight sensation. Then, just as rapidly as it had become a cultural phenomenon, pinball began to feel the effects of video.

There was a new TV generation to appeal to who didn't care about old-line arcade and game room staples. They wanted video; better yet—they wanted a *Star Wars* fantasy of their very own and only the electronic machines could give it to them. Not the upgraded digital display pinball machines from another era, but the new raster and then vector graphic video games. It was time for pinball to move aside for the next wave—a visual future of unlimited possibilities and potentialities.

As is the case with any craze, the inevitable publicity hype soon followed and not only were we surrounded by video in the game rooms, on television, in newspapers and magazines, but there was also the birth of a new platform—the home audience—and with it came a glut of hand-held variations on a theme along with a staggering amount of home game systems and cartridges.

The movement was in full swing when the books arrived, heralding tips on how to play and "everything you ever wanted to know" manuals before a select group of specialty magazines appeared to provide answers, information and updates on existing products as well as technological developments. *VIDEO GAMES* was at the forefront.

However, a new era has begun and with it comes a promise and commitment to bring you even more in each issue of *VG*. Where we might have been too serious in the past, we're ready to bring back the fun to video games as evidenced by this month's cover and lead-off feature by Robert Greenberger ("Cartoons, Comics, Muppets and Puppets Come Home" beginning on page 26). After all, if we're going to be barraged at home and in the game rooms with video funnies, we might as well enjoy it.

There's also an entire round-up of what you'll be seeing in all areas of video games in the coming months (Toy Fare on page 34) as well as a host of game reviews to keep you ahead of the action. But there's still more as *VG* set its sights on the big picture with a host of *screen gems* guaranteed to put your video gaming into another dimension.

And, if that weren't enough, *VG* takes great pleasure in presenting its first work of video-inspired science fiction. J. Ray Dettling, currently developing new video game concepts for Data Age, has penned a stirring and very special short story exclusively for *VIDEO GAMES*. Catch it on page 52.

And keep catching us and see if you'll like the *new VIDEO GAMES*—we hope so.

VIDEO GAMES

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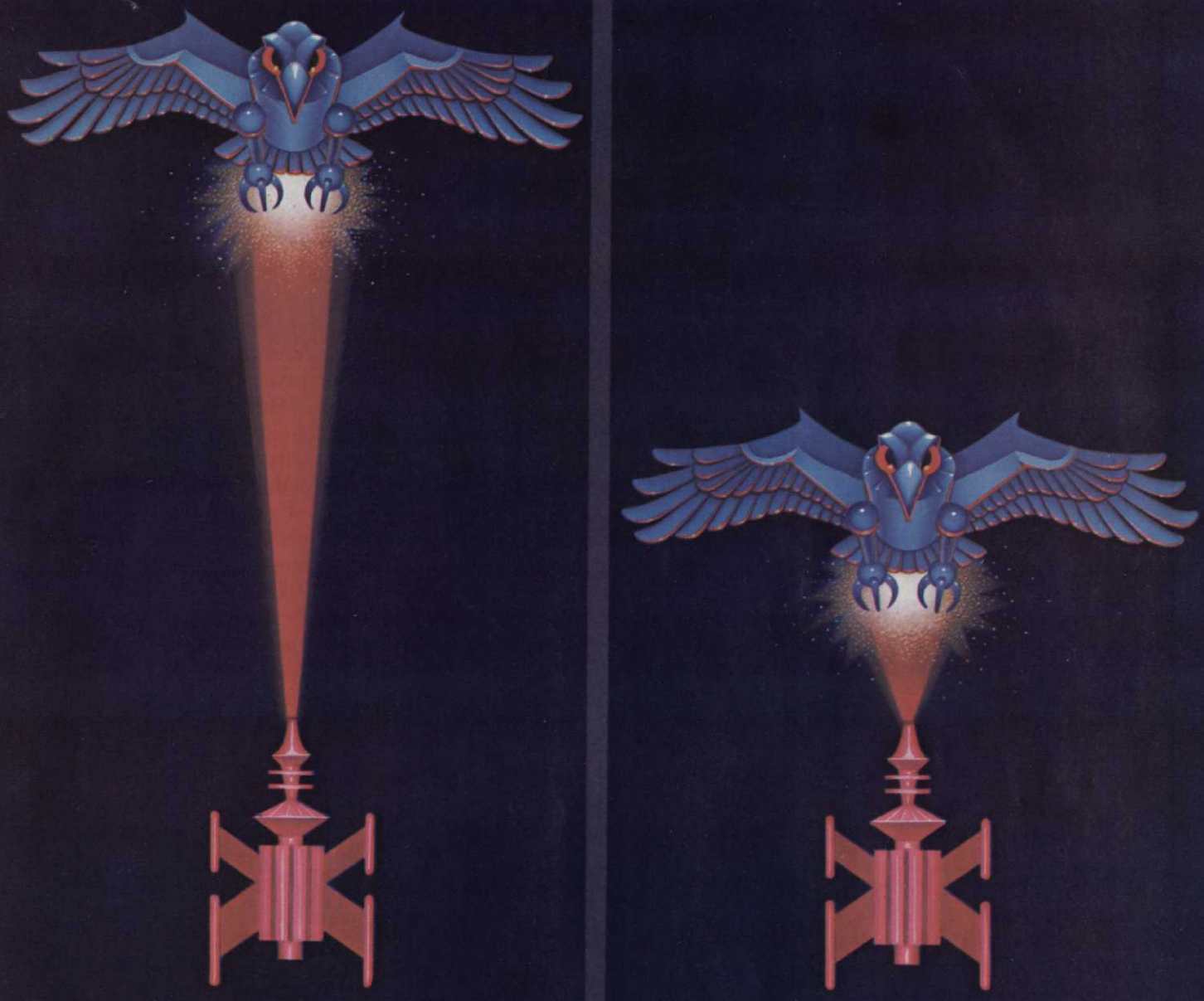

Which player's score is about to take flight?

Quick, figure it out. Here comes Phoenix* from Atari.

Duck. Here comes Phoenix. The famous arcade sensation that's now a home sensation. And it's only from Atari for use with the ATARI® 2600™ and Sears Video Arcade† systems.

This is a spectacular arcade replica. With four waves of awesome warbirds. Flapping wings that grow back seconds after you shoot them off. And even a forcefield.

But in Phoenix you can't just wing it. You can't shoot like the player on the left. Because he'll get only 100 points for a bird high in the sky. While the player on the right will shoot the same bird low in the sky for 500 points. And a feather in his cap.

So whether you aim high or low, aim to get Phoenix home. Any other idea is for the birds.

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BLIPS

The Buck Starts Here

It's Saturday morning in Hawaii, and where are all the gamers? In the arcade getting an early lead on the Q*bert high score? Plugged into their home systems with the latest game cartridge? Nooooo! They're gathered around the radio, tuned in to station KZHI, listening to people talk about everyone's favorite subject on "Electronic Games World."

Broadcast from Honolulu, to all the Hawaiian islands, "Electronic Games World" is the brainchild of program director/host Buck Buchanan, an avid game player who traces his love affair back to 1973, when a Pong machine gulped his first coin-op quarter. Buchanan's idea was to have a program that featured game and system reviews, interviews with industry spokespeople and also time set aside for listeners to phone in and ask their own questions. Well, the concept took off like a rocket and it didn't take too long before the one-hour format was expanded to two (9-11 a.m.). The second half, co-hosted with Preston Hill, formerly Atari's Pacific Northwest representative, is devoted solely to computers.

"The one unique feature of Hawaii," Buchanan boasts, "is that electronic gaming continues 365 days a year. An arcade in a mainland city is much busier during the winter compared to summer, only because of the weather. Here, we take it for granted. After all, we have 365 days of great temperatures. In fact, the low last year was in October when we had a 'chilling' 57 degrees at the airport. We don't have a peak season; it's always hot."

Buchanan, who spends about 18 hours a week performing hands-on research, opens up the program with reviews. What he looks at is playability, longevity, graphic design and instructions. His philosophy has been to tell it like it is. "You're looking at a very expensive hobby. The hardware unit can cost anywhere from $200 to $300. Then when you come to the games, we're talking anywhere from $25 to $40 for a cartridge. When people are spending that kind of hard-earned money, we feel we have a responsibility to really look at the game and let them know what they're paying for."

Illustration by Armando Baez

However, Buchanan also gives credit where it's due, with "Electronic Games World" sending a certificate of achievement to the company responsible for each month's pick-hit. Mattel's Advanced Dungeons and Dragons was December's Game of the Month; Imagic's Dragonfire took January, and February went to Activision's River Raid. "EGW" has an exclusive contract with the latter company for sponsorship of the first hour through '83, with an option for next year, but that doesn't affect Buchanan's choices. "If they did have editorial control," he points out, "then the game of the month for December would have been Skyjinx and January would be Spider Fighter. That isn't what's happening here—it's what's best in the market."

Following the reviews, Buchanan introduces a guest from a game company whether it be a producer of hardware or software. So far Atari's Ron Stringari, Mattel's Allison Hill, Imagic's Bill Grubb and GCE's (makers of Vectrex) Hope Neiman and many others have joined Buchanan on the program. After that, listeners are invited to phone in and ask questions of Buck and his guests.

Back in October of last

(continued on page 10)

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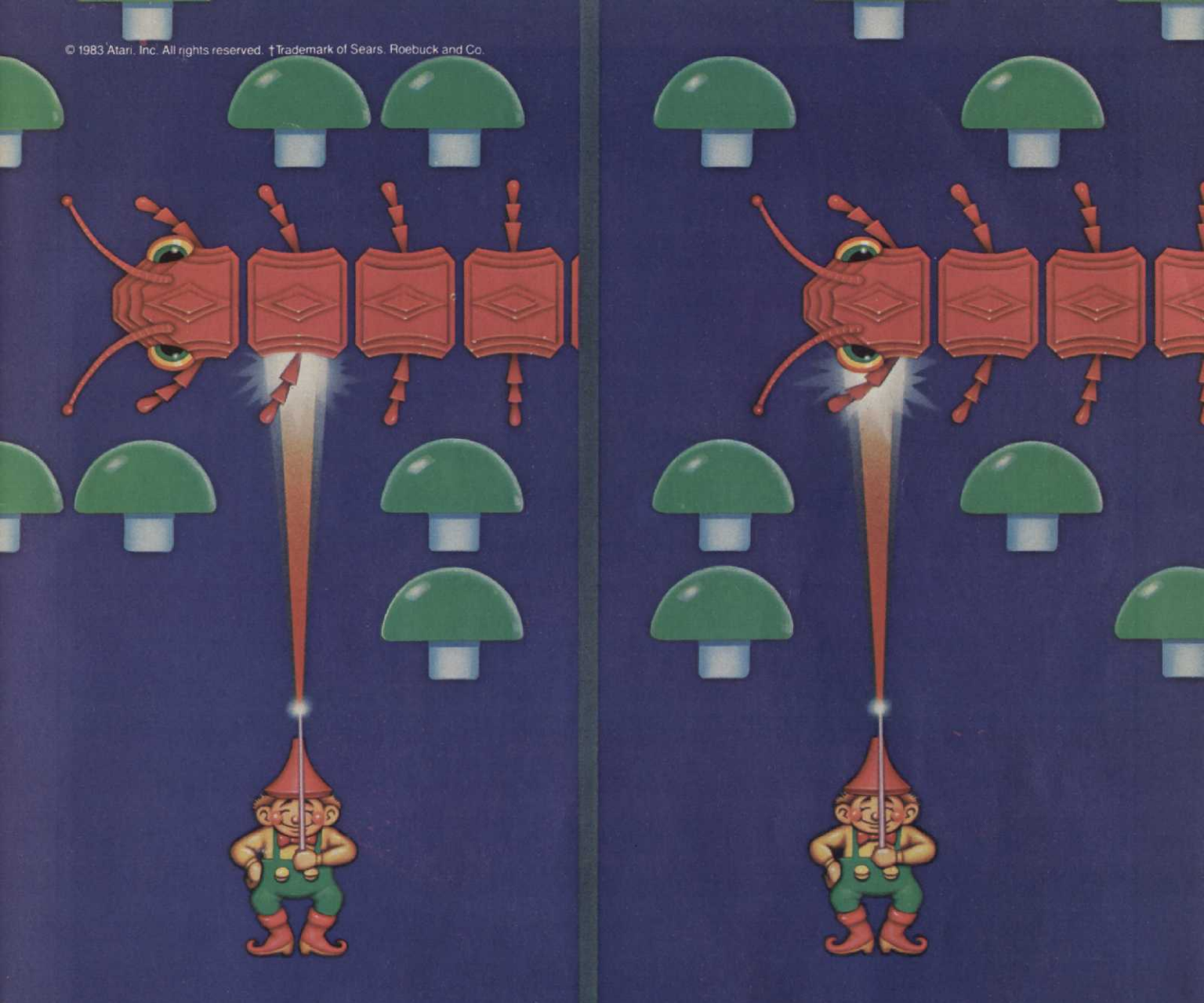

Which player is heading for victory?

Better find out. Here comes Centipede™ from Atari.

Look out. Centipede's escaping from the arcade. Grabbing every great arcade feature it can. And it's only from Atari, for use with the ATARI® 2600,™ Sears Video Arcade† systems, and the ATARI 5200™ SuperSystem.

There's the same relentless attack of centipedes, scorpions, fleas, and spiders. A mushroom garden. Changing screen colors with each new centipede. And each new one gets faster. So points get tougher.

And if it's points you want, you can get 10 times more by shooting for the head. Like the player on the right. He's about to hit the head for 100 points. But the player on the left is about to hit a body segment for a measly 10 points. A cheap shot.

So don't let Centipede get away. That wouldn't be using your head.

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year, when the program premiered, EGW had a 13-year-old electronics game wiz providing reviews and overviews. Everything was going smoothly until report card season. "His first report card showed he had dropped in two subjects," Buchanan recalls. "So we said,'Okay, kiddo, when you're doing well in Algebra and Geography, and also doing well with your Pac-Man score, then we'll talk. All three have to go hand-in-hand.' So we put him on hold. We have a philosophy at the radio station—that education is primary and if anything gets in the way of that, you have to let what's getting in the way loose and get back to reading, writing and arithmetic."

Buck Buchanan, program director of KZHI, tells it like it is on "Electronic Games World." Here, he and his feathered friend have a hit on their hands with Activision's Megamania.

One thing the program doesn't do is give playing tips. Buchanan feels that it takes something out of the games. "Half the fun is learning your own strategy. I go through many publications which give me charts on how to beat Donkey Kong or the proper patterns to beat Pac-Man. That takes the fun away for me. After I've mastered a game, I don't want to play the game anymore. I want to get in there every week, put that Pac-Man cartridge in and, by myself with the cartridge, say 'I haven't mastered it yet, but this week I scored 2,000 more points than I did last week!' "

Buchanan is talking with syndication companies about bringing the program to the mainland, and he's already been in the TV studio taping segments for possible distribution. Until then, our friends in the Pacific have two things on the rest of us—video games on the air and 365 days of nice weather. Aloha.

—Sue Adamo

Handy Craft

If you weren't confused already by VHS, VCR, VCS and other *initial* video-inspired forms of entertainment, there's yet another to consider—Palmtex's (1167 Chess Drive, Foster City, Calif. 94404, 415-341-3366) new little wonder, the PVS (not to be confused with PBS). The world's first palm-sized programmable video game system, it features a liquid crystal display, color graphics and three-dimensional effects in a compact case that's always handy. When opened for play, the lower panel provides a full set of easy-to-use controls, while the top panel accepts plug-in game cartridges along with their own color display screen. With plans calling for availability by this spring, the PVS system will initially have five different game cartridges to choose from: Crystals of Morga, a fantasy adventure with 49 different mazes; Star Trooper, a spaceship dogfight battle; Mayday!, a coastal defense challenge; Spellbound, a word scramble game; and Mine Field, where hidden dangers and suspense reign supreme. (The PVS will be about $30; the add-on game cartridges about $20 each.) *—Roger C. Sharpe*

An artist's rendering of Palmtex's PVS—the world's first palm-sized programmable game system.

IF STRATEGY ISN'T YOUR GAME, CRYPTS OF CHAOS WILL EAT YOU ALIVE.

It took the master at Fox video games to create Crypts of Chaos—the new strategy game that would challenge the mind of a sorcerer. It's a dark fantasy world of wondrous wizards and terrible trolls. There is treasure there. But to win it you will have to be very very clever. For it's guarded by dragons. And they have had their fill of witless players.

FOR YOUR ATARI VCS.

20th CENTURY FOX™

Games of the Century

Live And Learn

Junior comes in the door after school and, instead of grabbing a non-nutritional snack and flopping down in front of a *Gilligan's Island* rerun or a shoot-'em-up video game, he grabs a non-nutritional snack and heads for his family's Atari 400/800 or Apple II Plus computer and slaps in an educational program. Sound like a far-off vision from some scholarly prognosticator?

Well, Scholastic, Inc., the people who for years have kept youngsters occupied in doctors' offices throughout the land with *Highlights* magazine, are ready to make the vision a reality with *Microzine* — a computer magazine for eight-to-14 year olds that's been designed to make learning about a computer's capabilities more fun and less threatening.

The bi-monthly creation is one of six Wizware children's software programs introduced by the company and aimed at the many families who will purchase home computers in 1983. "We think they will welcome an educational alternative to the arcade games which currently dominate the children's software market," says Scholastic president Richard Robinson. Each edition of *Microzine,* he explained, will offer educational activities camouflaged in a manner appealing to kids.

For instance, in each issue, *Microzine* readers / users will be able to interview a personality. The first is Robert McNaughton, the oldest son in the movie *E.T.* What is interesting is that children determine succeeding questions from guest personalities' previous answers, and following the Q and A session, can participate in an interactive conversation with the celebrity.

And for the kid who can't get enough privacy, *Microzine* offers what's called a "secret files" feature—a cross-referencing system allowing anyone to record personal facts and information, create a simple database, store lists of movies they've seen and so on, to create what in essence would be an electronic diary.

The premiere issue's Haunted House game forces players to decide outcomes and decisions, much like an adult's adventure game. The drama goes something like this: "As you step onto the porch, the lights and radio go dead. It's so dark you can barely read a newly painted sign which says: RING BELL. What do you want to do? 1. Ring bell. 2. Sneak around side of house and look in a window." This probably will have parents sneaking into the kids' room in the middle of the night in order to play.

By using simple programming language in a feature called "poster," *Microzine* readers get a crash course in creating computer graphics. Or children may have the opportunity to simulate activities such as riding in a hot air balloon by programming its flight.

The first issue of *Microzine* will be available in April for about $40. —*Anne Krueger*

Reader's Digests

Paging all video game players: The Numb Thumb News, a 12-page, full-color magazine, is now rolling off the presses from Imagic, the award-winning home-entertainment software manufacturer. Edited by Armand Hans III, the firm's television spokesman, it's overflowing with hints for expert players, as well as stories on high scorers, contest applications and exclusive offers on Imagic products. For a one-year's subscription, send a check or money order for $2 to Imagic Numb Thumb Club, P.O. Box 2055, Saratoga, Calif. 95070.... ColecoVision, too, has a new printout, Experience, which similarly features game strategies, new product reviews and previews, quizzes and special offers. Send $6 to ColecoVision Video Club, P.O. Box 4025, Syosset, N.Y. 11791, for one-year's issues.

—*Nicholas Crawford*

GO ONE-ON-ONE.
MAN-TO-MAN.
NON-STOP.
TRIGGER MISSILES.
FIRE CANNON.
ATTACK.
ESCAPE. EXPLODE.
DEFEND. DESTROY.
GO
M.A.D.

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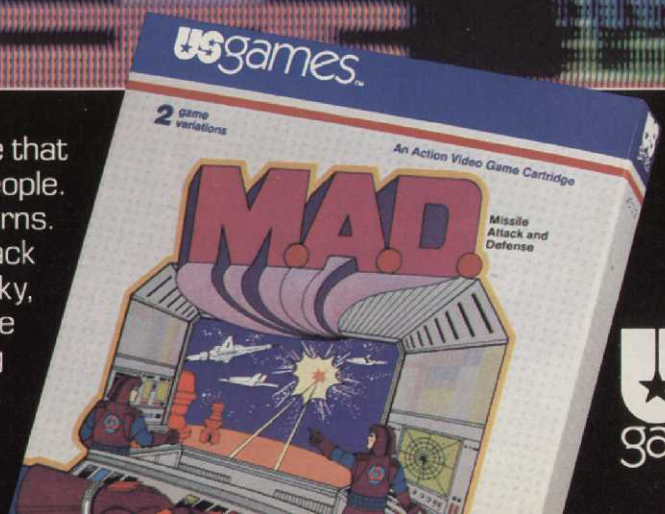
M.A.D. is the combat game that works like real combat: Two people. Head-to-head. At the same time. No waiting turns. Your evil opponent launches attack missiles. You blast them out of the sky, then try your hand at being bad guy while he defends. It's constant action, no playing benchwarmer. One and two-player programs. To make your Atari 2600 go M.A.D.



Manufactured for the Atari® Video Computer System Model 2600 by U.S. Games. U.S. Games is not affiliated with Atari, Inc.

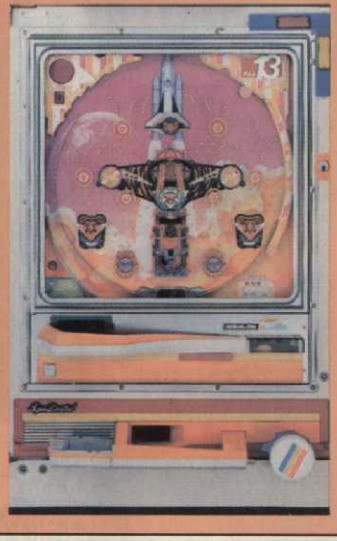
US games™

Snap To It

You're a game freak stuck for some reason in Tokyo. You find yourself in front of the main entrance of the Imperial Palace, itching for action. Where can you get relief? Simple. Hop onto the next train on the Marunouchi line and look for Shinjuku Station. (Or Shinjuku-sanchome.) Get off the train and head for the street. You are now in Tokyo's Shinjuku District, the Orient's game and arcade capital.

Shinjuku comes to life as the sun goes down, resembling a carnival scene shot on a very expensive sci-fi movie set. There is even a soundtrack of sorts: lots of "meep-meep" noises from all those Japanese cars snarled in traffic, and prerecorded birdcalls at street corners that let you know when to cross the street. Dwarfed by towering office structures, a maze of tiny streets fans out from Shinjuku Station lined with two- and three-story arcades and other pleasure domes. Most arcades offer a wide selection of games, including international favorites like Pac-Man, Donkey Kong, Robotron, and Asteroids, with instructions in Japanese and English. Japanese favorites include video chess, mah-jongg, golf, and baseball.

The most popular game in



Photos by Martin/Kenny's International Japan

the Shinjuku arcades is not a video game at all. Pachinko is Japan's version of pinball; it is a national obsession. Pachinko's name comes from the Japanese word meaning "snap." To play the game, you buy a tray of small steel balls, put them into a feeder tray, and "snap" them up into the playing area using a spring lever. The steel balls hit a maze of nails in their downward path; a correct hit releases a whistle, bell, or clicking noise. The proper combination releases a jackpot of balls which are traded in for prizes.

Most Americans can't understand Japan's love for pachinko, especially since pinball has recently been eclipsed by video games in the U.S. As one American put it, "The attraction of the game totally escapes rational description." Pachinko was first played in the industrial city of Nagoya—Japan's Detroit—shortly after World War II, satisfying a need to kill unexpected leisure time. It was—and still is—a cheap and mesmerizing diversion. One of Shinjuku's largest pachinko halls, with the un-Japanese name of Aladdin's, has over 400 games, and the noise is truly deafening. Special insulation and doors are used to keep the neighbors sane. Sometimes, over the whistles and bells and sound of thousands of crashing metal balls, you can hear a stirring march popular with pachinko players. It is the fast-paced "Imperial Navy March." Usually, however, the music is disco. Regardless of the style, the best is always quick, just like the game itself.

Like most things Japanese, pachinko has its rituals. The games are usually set in long rows where players sit like telephone operators in a Twilight Zone exchange. They come from all walks of life to sit silently in front of their machines for hours at a time, snapping in countless metal balls. They pride themselves on showing no reaction while playing. In most arcades, male employees keep track of the winners, and women distribute prizes to the lucky ones and more metal balls for the losers. At day's end, a kugishi (nail man) checks each machine to adjust key nails the balls must strike properly in order to score. The machines are drained of the metal balls, and a new "number" is placed inside each morning (the number, of course, affects the tilt of the machine, which can affect play).

Professional pachinko players, many of them ex-kugishi, "read" nails in the machines and know how to get them in position to win. Like successful casino gamblers, some are barred from playing by game room operators; others are treated as national heroes. Oh lucky few! They can live on their addiction. —*Josh Martin*

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Free For All

How do you fit hundreds of game players into an arcade on a chilly Saturday morning? Well, if you're Sega, you install a line of new Star Trek coin-op games and put them on free play all day long.

During the weekends of January 29th through February 12th, 350 Trek machines were featured in a total of 20 cities, including New York, San Francisco, Dallas, Miami, Detroit, Boston and Seattle. The first 100 players to enter the selected arcades received free t-shirts, while the next 500 took home *Star Trek*: the poster. But all had a chance to play the game for free from 9 a.m. until midnight.

Photo by Perry Greenberg

VIDEO GAMES caught up with a few of the players who took advantage of the promotional event at the 52nd Street Broadway Arcade in New York City. Fifteen-year-old David Davies gave the game a favorable review and said that Star Trek would be receiving his quarters in the future. Mark Caso, 16, and a Stargate lover at heart, found it difficult to master at first, but later gave it four stars. George Calderon, 14, said he'd be sticking to Ms. Pac-Man and leave Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock to other space farers, while one 12-year-old was so caught up in the simulated battle against the Klingons that he could only take time to offer his first name—Tommy. It wasn't until a security guard persuaded him to let fellow arcaders take a turn on his machine that Tommy reluctantly gave up the controls of the Enterprise.

Meanwhile, Sega was very pleased with the attendance and reaction around the country. In fact, reports have it that similar events will be staged in the future for other games. Also, expect to see the game featured in trailers accompanying films from Sega's movie star sister, Paramount. —*Perry Greenberg*

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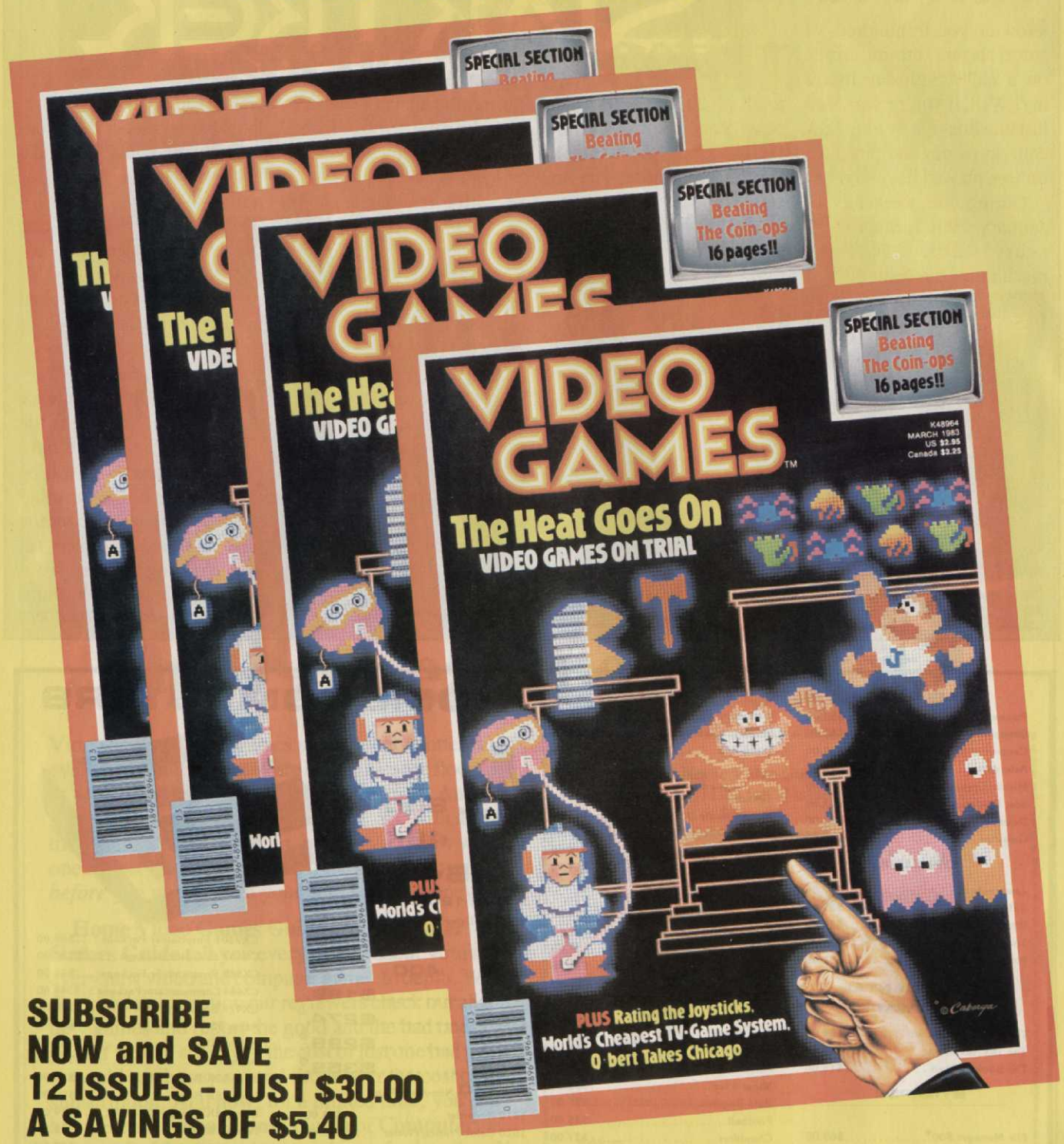

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DEADLY DISC

Vidmax's Interactive Video Game Puts You in the Picture

By Sue Adamo

It's spring in 1936, and all of Europe braces for the next maneuverings of Germany's psychotic leader, while in America, vows of neutrality have replaced the lingering memories of the Great Depression. In Hollywood, talk has already begun regarding the performance of a young Humphrey Bogart in *Petrified Forest* and Bing Crosby lends his talents to what will be the original *Pennies from Heaven*. Across the continent, the literary elite regularly holds fort at the Algonquin Hotel's Round Table in New York City, while in Morris County, New Jersey, the upper crust and power brokers of the world, such as millionaire industrialist Derrick Reardon, are living in the lap of luxury.

The sprawling Reardon estate is like many others in the area, with a mansion of parlors and porches, a private gallery and pool, balconies and bedrooms—but there's something different. If it is the perfect setting for lavish parties, it is also the ideal spot for something much darker — murder — Derrick Reardon's own. And on April 10th, Reardon's body is discovered in his second floor bedroom.

Cut from the same model as Philip Marlowe or Mike Hammer, private detective Stew Cavanaugh is hired on the case and summoned to the scene to track down the person, or persons, responsible for abruptly ending Derrick Reardon's life. There are eight possible suspects, although the problem, as Cavanaugh sees it, is that "there are 16 possible solutions, depending on which direction I go in my investigation.

"Take Reardon's wife. In one story she's having an affair with her husband's brother. In another story, she's the devoted wife and it's Reardon who is having the affair. Every time I go through this case, it's a different story, with 16 diabolically clever solutions."

Illustration by Armando Baez

Hy Conrad . . . a mystery buff, suggested that a whodunit might be the perfect vehicle for such an undertaking . . .

Now wait a minute. If there was a murder, and we know there was, how could there be different "stories" or different murderers. Either someone did it or they didn't. But nothing is ever that hard-and-fast a rule when you're dealing in the recreated world of interactive video discs. Almost anything is possible which just might make this form of visual entertainment the wave of the future.

After all, imagine, if you can, a video game with the production values of a full-length feature film, only *you* control the outcome of a cast of live actors to any of 16 possible conclusions. Sound fantastic and too far-fetched to believe? Well, it is *fantastic* and you can believe it because "Murder, Anyone?" is very real and totally new game-playing experience.

In fact, released at the end of 1982, it's just the first of five planned MysteryDiscs from Vidmax (36 East 4th Street, Suite 734, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202, 513-421-3999), a company whose founders, Eric Nowlin and Robert Robbins, have a vision of the future—interactive laser disc technology — and are undeterred by the public's initially slow acceptance.

One half of the team, New York City-based Eric Nowlin, who received his doctorate in communications theory at Northwestern University, credits a major consulting assignment for RCA as an important experience in learning about the new video technologies and their potential applications. "It was the best contract I ever had," he says, "a carte blanche study to investigate non-consumer markets for the company's new video disc player before it was even available. My job was to tell RCA what those markets were, where they were, how big they were and how the machine might have to be changed, if at all, as well as what kind of software they should have, how it would work, and much more. It was a year-long study and in the midst of it I realized there was an extraordinary opportunity in laser disc technology."

In December of 1980, Nowlin and a friend from college, Robert Robbins, a financial consultant based in Cincinnati, formed Vidmax with the goal of developing and producing specialized programming designed to tap the unique capabilities of laserdisc players. Their first project, a joint venture with Abrams Publishing and the National Gallery of Art, was a one hour television special and a laser videodisc on the National Gallery, both due this spring. The ArtDisc includes 54 minutes from the TV special, narration, and still frames highlighting 1,600 works of art from the Gallery's permanent collection. Once released, Nowlin and Robbins hope people will recognize the capabilities of the videodisc for, at least, art appreciation and education. Last year, Vidmax completed preliminary motion photography for another TV/laserdisc project, which will serve as an introduction to Modern Art. Titled "Sixty Works of the First-Half of the Twentieth Century," it was shot on location at Rome's Capitoline Museum and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation in New York and Venice.

So, after this auspicious beginning in the world of art and culture, how did Vidmax become a *game* company? Well, like millions of others across the land, Robbins' two sons, Chris and David, were video game players and it was their interest which triggered the thinking that maybe something could be done in the area of an interactive video game. Nowlin and Robbins mentioned the idea to a friend, playwright Hy Conrad. Conrad, who is also a mystery buff, suggested that a whodunit might be the perfect vehicle for such an undertaking and later contributed the game's script.

Vidmax, meanwhile, had raised a considerable amount of capital to fund the venture and tapped Norman McFarland, head of the graduate design

Nowlin, left, and Robbins, right, proudly display their MysteryDisc.

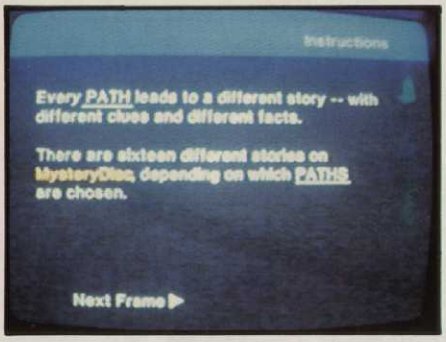
"An important aspect of our company is that, from the very beginning, we decided that everything we do has to be of a timeless nature."

"As you know, we're very early in the industry and the development of the whole market."

"Vidmax, for one, is dedicated to creating original programming that will attract the consumer to this exciting technology."

Photos by Perry Greenberg

Murder, Anyone?



The play . . . is more cerebral and cognitive than what most conventional video gamers would expect . . .

department at the University of Illinois, to design and test the game. Robb Creese, vice president of Videodisc Publishing, was brought in to direct the electronic storyboarding of the action, as well as to oversee that, once the still and video photography and soundtracks were completed, "Murder, Anyone?" worked as a total entity. Philip S. Goodman took the director's seat and Martin Perlmutter produced the motion photography. A cast was assembled to portray the mid-30's rouge's gallery which included Rex Robbins (playing the deceased), Clare Peck (as Reardon's wife, Elisa), Barbara Baxley (his spinster sister, Jessica), Larry Pine (the playboy brother, Tom), George Ede (Dr. Theodore Morfield), Christine Estabrook (private secretary Helena Crane), Lea Thompson (as the distant cousin "Sissy"), John Heffernan (Pembroke, the butler), Ben Hammer (as German businessman Austin Buhler), Paul Gleason (as P.I. Cavanaugh) and Kate McGregor-Steward (as Cavanaugh's assistant, Maxine Blair).

The first part of the MysteryDisc (which can be played by two to six players, or in teams), presents the viewer with motion picture scenes. Then, at four distinct intervals, players reach what is called a "decision point," during which instructions are given on screen to search for the storyline's next chapter and choose between two alternate paths. It is here that the present and potential capabilities of the technology is most apparent. Using the dual (right or left) soundtrack features of the videodisc and alternative visual footage, these routes lead to different storylines and clues—both audibly and visually—making the 16 potential outcomes.

The *play*, if you will, is admittedly more cerebral and cognitive than what most conventional video gamers would expect, but just think about the times you've gone to the movies, seen a mystery with your friends, and have tried to guess the outcome. Well, with MysteryDisc, in many ways, you control the action and only your *interaction* can complete the story. So, in actuality, you're just as much a part of the drama as are the actors on screen, only you're in command of their destiny, which is an interesting experience into the realm of what omnipotent power feels like.

Your task is to listen closely as Cavanaugh grills each suspect and follow him along as he examines the evidence, which is always mounting and sometimes not that easy to identify. This Investigation File is your primary arsenal in guessing who the murderer is, the motive and what the method was used to carry it off. When you think you know, you can make an accusation and see if you're right. Thankfully, for those who are really lost, Vidmax has provided what they call Desperation Frames, which can point you in the direction of specific scenes imbedded with more pertinent clues. And so it goes until one player or team wins.

"Murder, Anyone?" like the MysteryDiscs to follow, makes full use of the unique features of the laserdisc system (Pioneer, Sylvania and Magnavox currently offer systems), including soundtracks, automatic stops, freeze frames, as well as random access chapter and frame search.

According to Robbins: "The educational potential of this medium is tremendous. You can do so many different things with laser videodiscs. You decide which movie scene or photograph you want to look at and when. That's what's really special because the viewer is in control. I watch how our boys use it at home. They watch scenes in certain movies over and over again. That's part of the training in any artistic process. It's bound to have a big impact on stimulating creativity."

"We spent a great deal of time designing the game, coming up with the phrases, terms and graphics and processes that were all copywritten and protected in terms of their identification. We aren't looking to do more of that," Nowlin says. "We're thinking of continuing the main character and his assistant, but that's as far as the identification will go and we're even undecided about that."

Principal photography on Vidmax's next mystery offering, "Many Roads Lead to Murder," ended last Thanksgiving at Brooklyn's Montauk Club, and is planned for a spring release. Stew Cavanaugh is back, along with his assistant, but this time writer Hy Conrad has tossed them into a much more complex and tangled web, trying to solve up to three murders. "This one takes place two years later, in 1938," says Nowlin. "Marcus Sanders (currently in Broadway's Dream Girls) plays a waiter at the

The "Murder, Anyone?" disc jacket pictures Derrick Reardon's final moments on the front. Flanked by his family and trusted friends, this drink will be his last. But, whodunit? On back is the MysteryDisc's line-up of characters, including short biographies of each.

. . . you're just as much a part of the drama as are the actors on screen, only you're in command of their destiny . . .

Explorer's Club, who also has a jazz club in Harlem. In some of the story lines he's been sent to recover a lost stone that one of the explorers has taken. It involves German espionage before the war and is really incredible.

"The cover shot is great with Stu and Maxine standing underneath the Brooklyn Bridge and over a body which has just been pulled from the river. Maxine is holding a talisman that plays many different roles. In one story, it has a secret coding for spies. In another, the stone in it is a compound for a newly-discovered plastic."

Besides completing post-production of the second MysteryDisc, Vidmax is busy making plans for the third installment for a September release. "We're thinking of doing that one in the Midwest and the possibility of shooting at Keeneland Race Track, a wonderful old race track in Lexington, Kentucky. It could be very ritzy with the whole image of the horse-set involved. And then, we're exploring the possibility of having it relate in some way to the Delta Queen." Additionally, Vidmax has an adventure-type laserdisc game in the works and discussions have begun with some prominent film people to possibly create a horror series.

"An important aspect of our company," Nowlin says, "is that, from the very beginning, we decided that everything we do, has to be of a timeless nature. As you know, we're very early in the industry and the development of the whole market. So we really want the products we produce to be just about as timeless as they can be. We hope "Murder, Anyone?" would sell as well in 1986 as it does now. And, bar an extraordinary revolution in the industry, it should. After all, it's a period piece. And we will try to keep the other discs we produce in the same vein."

About two years ago, Wall Street analysts were making projections about the potential of laser disc technology in domestic settings. Their projections, Nowlin points out, were far more optimistic than the 80,000 currently out there. "We'd be in much better shape today if they were right," says Nowlin. "The press has often described the videodisc player as a product in search of a market. Well, Vidmax, for one, is dedicated to creating original programming that will attract the consumer to this exciting technology." ▲

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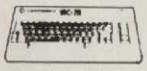

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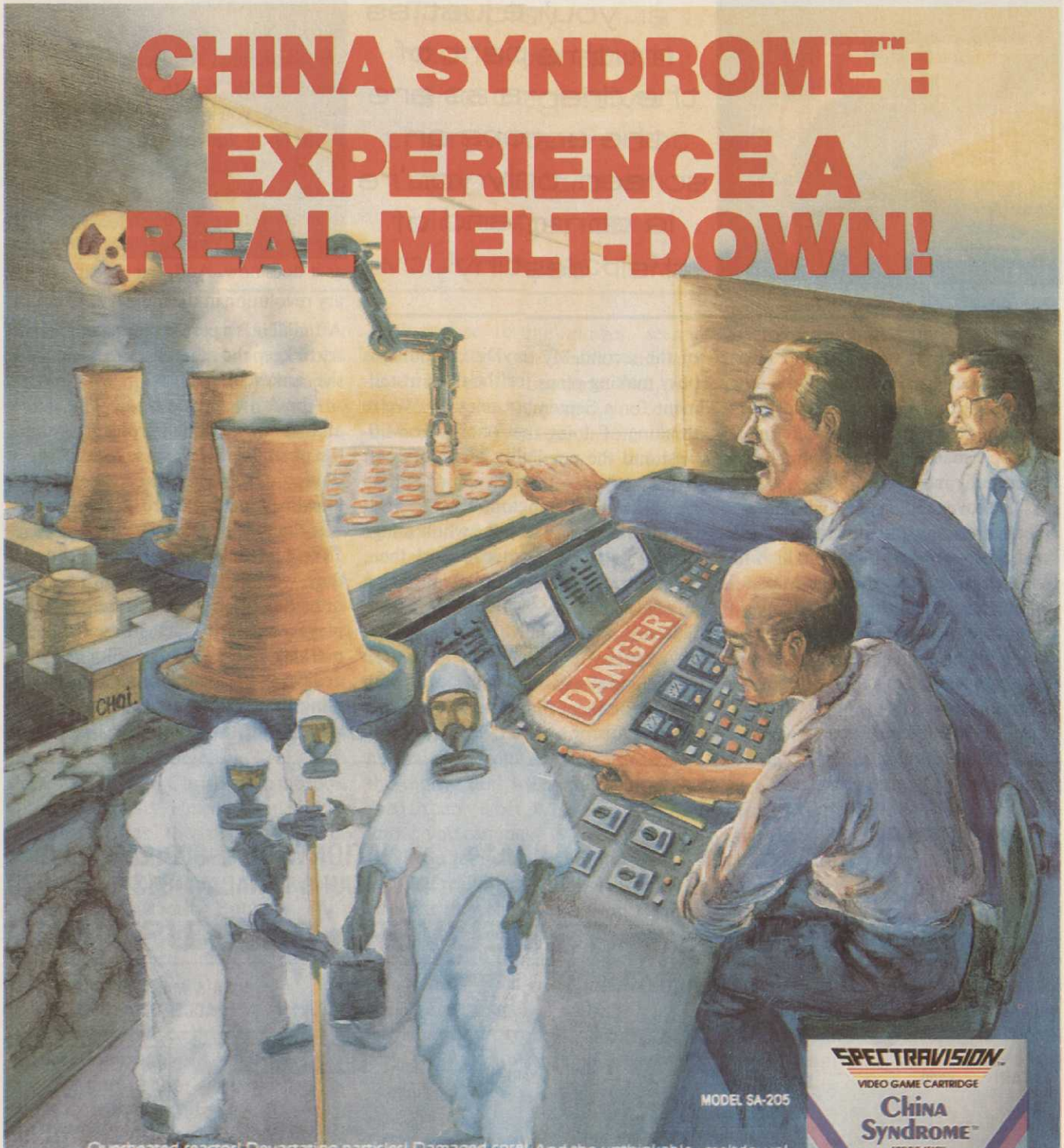

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Spectravision Video Games fit the Atari™ VCS System and Sears Video Arcade™

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Illustration by Michael Waldman

Cartoons, Comics, Muppets

By Robert Greenberger

Every day is Saturday morning. Or so it will seem to video game players as manufacturers begin turning to familiar faces and characters for design, graphic and thematic inspiration. Whether it's arcade games, hand-helds, counter tops, cartridges, "wafers," or whatever, this latest trend has already begun.

After being bombarded with an outpouring of space games which capitalized on the phenomenal success of *Star Wars* and translated the fantasy and excitement into all forms of video screen creations that lasted for almost five years, there was one exception to the rule whose overwhelming impact has radically altered the direction of game development.

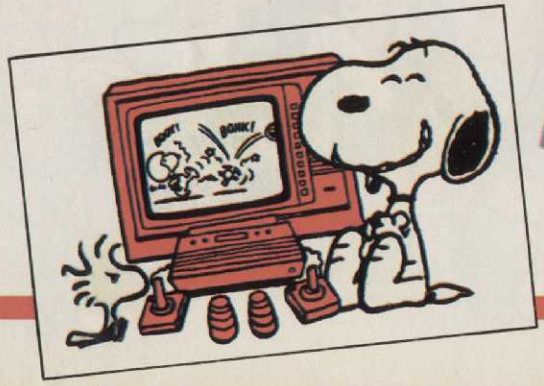
Pac-Man did more than just bring female players into arcades or promote the idea of non-violent, shoot-'em-up games. It stood apart from the crowd because it was different. In a world of intergalactic missions and quests, it brought to life a cast of unique characters (some even with nicknames) with distinct personalities that proved video games could deliver fun as well as a test of skill. And long before the outside public heralded the arrival of the yellow chomper and his four adversaries, other companies were looking into the newly-crowned category of "cute" to see what additional forms of whimsy could be presented.

The result was a dual emphasis, at least in coin-op, to make game graphics more realistic and dimensional, as well as develop little entities which conveyed a sense of humor. So it was that we found ourselves before monkeys, kangaroos, frogs, dogs, pigs, turtles and a host of other species better left for the zoo rather than the game room. But it didn't stop there. We were suddenly hit with original characters such as Dig Dug, Pengo, Q*Bert, and Robby Roto, before old Mr. Pac-Man (along with his newly-spawned family) made it to network television.

This was an event of noteworthy proportions, because if an arcade game character could be valid for Saturday morning programming, why couldn't the reverse also be true — that some of those classic cartoon favorites might well find a new home in the form of video games? After all, many had years of recognition and popularity behind them — a built-in appeal — which could only enhance their chances of gaining a loyal following.

Well, funseekers, that's just what happened and this year, as never before, we are going to have the opportunity to see if all of us arcade and home game players are really ready for cartoons, comics, muppets and puppets to take over our own personal airwaves and domain. Almost every major manufacturer is betting that the time is right and following up this belief with an assortment of colorful creatures in almost any video game form imaginable. It's a big gamble, but it should be fun to see who the winners and losers will be.

This isn't to suggest that game development in other thematic areas will be



and Puppets Come Home

abandoned completely, but rather that the spotlight has been directed, for the coming months, in one specific direction which should be played out to the point that we'll all welcome the next inevitable fad, whatever it will be.

However, to keep you up on the action as it is taking place, *VIDEO GAMES* offers an overview of just how prevalent and far-flung the permutations and combinations have become in terms of tapping this current video game trend. What's interesting is that when you stop to think about the sheer number of characters already under "contract" to given manufacturers, you have to wonder about the research that went into resurrecting some of the more dated figures. But whether you're a child of the Fifties, Sixties or Seventies, many are going to bring back fond memories and, maybe, fonder anticipation of what's to come.

Probably because there are more of them, with a greater variety of possible applications, producers of home systems and software have embraced animated creatures with an unmatched fervor. The first to make the transition were those beloved, blue Smurfs when Coleco adapted them for its own system as well as others. Then the floodgates opened. Atari announcements soon followed of agreements aligning them with Walt Disney, Charles Schultz, the Children's Computer Workshop and Henson Associates. Meanwhile, Mattel acquired the rights to use the Hanna-Barbera library of characters including Bedrock's first family, The Flintstones, the more futuristic Jetsons and Quick-Draw McGraw. Coleco then entered back into the fray with the addition of Dr. Seuss to its line-up and, not to be outdone, Datasoft signed up Mighty Mouse and his Terrytoon pals, while Data Age went after *Saturday Night Live*'s Mr. Bill along with Sluggo and, of course, Mr. Hand.

At the introduction of the 80th annual American Toy Fair, held in New York City, Richard Grey, Toy Manufacturers of America's chairman, proclaimed that licensing grew to new levels in 1982, and he predicted that it will contine to seriously influence the marketplace. While Grey acknowledged that licensing from arcades represented a large percentage of the overall total, it was apparent that cartoon and comic-strip characters were increasing in number by the end of the year. Even movies were targeted as a source for game themes, despite the poor fourth-quarter performance of Atari's E.T.

With its coin-op track record and experience to draw upon, Atari has selectively turned to licensing in general of big arcade hits for use with its home systems. Not that it ignored the potential benefits of tying in recognizable characters with its product line. In fact, although most would be quick to remember Atari's Superman game cartridge for the VCS, back in 1979 the company had drawn on the Man of Steel for a coin-op pinball machine.

However, for all its success, Atari still wanted to tap a new audience and to this

"Whether you're a child of the '50s, '60s or '70s many games are going to bring back fond memories and fonder anticipation of what's to come."

end introduced the Kid's Library in February for pre school to pre teen children. For use with the 2600, although plans include upcoming 5200 versions, the games emphasize creative expression and learning skills via a newly designed five-inch by seven-inch, 12-button keypad featuring colorful picture overlays and simplified operation. "For the younger children, we chose to go in a big way with well-known characters," states senior vice-president for marketing David Ruckert.

The first releases will feature *Sesame Street* characters, starting with Cookie Monster Munch, Oscar's Trash Race, Big Bird's Egg Catch and Grover's Music Maker, while Alpha Beam, a spelling game, will be the only one not integrating a personality. All were jointly developed and created with the newly-named Children's Computer Workshop, as was the special controller.

Next on the horizon for Atari in further expanding the Kid's Library will be the summer introduction of games featuring such Disney favorites as Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Dumbo and Goofy. These will be specifically designed for pre teens, while Charles Schultz's renown Peanuts gang follows in the fall with two titles scheduled to be Snoopy vs. the Red Baron and You're a Good Man Charlie Brown. Finally, if that weren't enough, two Muppets' games are planned: one featuring Miss Piggy and Kermit, the other with the entire Muppets' cast.

We recognized that by 1982, or 1983, the market would be glutted with games, which has happened, and we felt in order to be different, that we needed games and properties to help get us noticed," says Richard Stearn, a Parker Brothers' vice-president. One of the many companies which began marketing software in the last year, Parker entered onto the scene with The Empire Strikes Back and Frogger. Initially designed for use with the 2600, plans now call for the introduction of the company's first Intellivision-compatible game this spring.

"Parker Brothers caught the premier licenses and put high-quality games as well as promotion behind them," Stearn says. "Using all three factors to their best advantage, you can't miss. If you lack any one of those elements, then you're entering risky ground." According to Stearn, Parker has looked for characters that lend themselves to video game translations and has found that popular movies, such as *Star Wars* and those featuring superheros, are perfect for the company's needs.

There has also been a concerted effort to adapt arcade games for the home, including Reactor, Tutankham and the upcoming Q*Bert (which will also be released in a table-top model), but Parker Brothers hasn't been idle in going after other properties. Besides Spider-Man, the company is creating its own games based on Strawberry Shortcake, J.R.R. Tolkien's classic fantasy *Lord of the Rings,* as well as The Incredible Hulk, G.I. Joe and Popeye.

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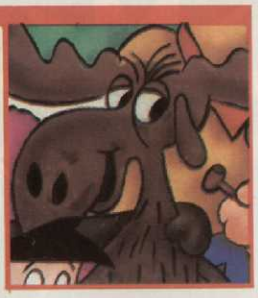
"...if an arcade game character could be valid for Saturday morning programming, why couldn't the reverse also be true..."



One of the most aggressive manufacturers around, Coleco has carved a substantial niche for itself based, in no small measure, on the generally held consensus that it has an exceptional home game system with excellent capabilities and, seemingly, never-ending potential. In addition, from the beginning, Coleco turned its attention to bringing arcade-quality game play into the home, so that the primary focus was, and still is, the licensing of coin-op machines.

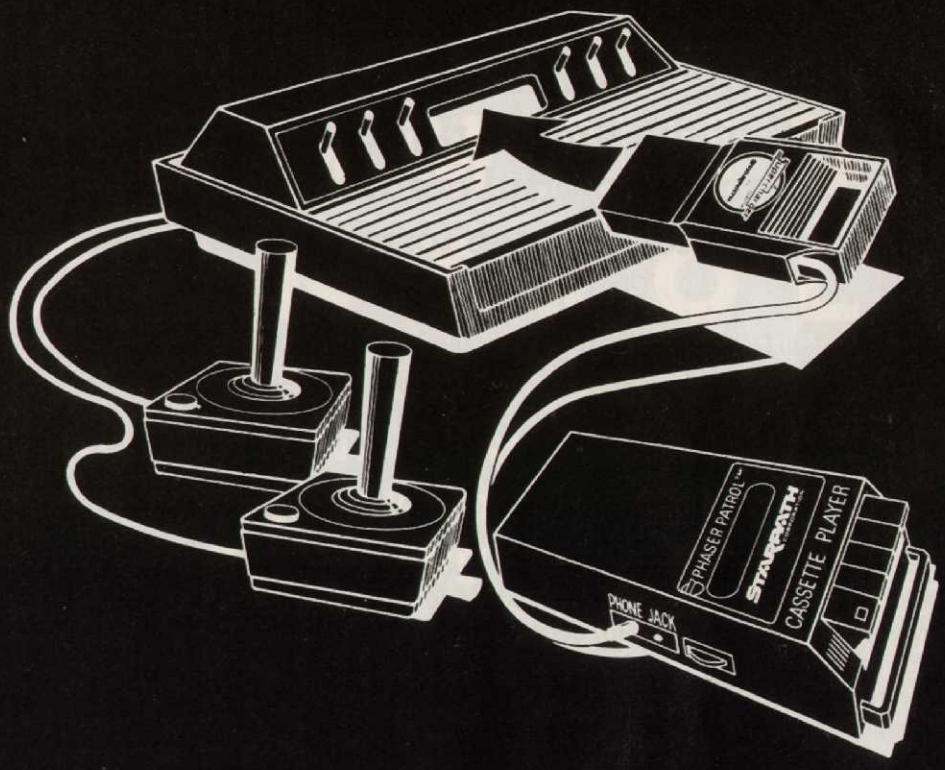
However, Coleco hasn't limited its product development to this lone area as evidenced by the inclusion of Smurf Rescue in Gargamel's Castle, Smurfette's Birthday Party and the upcoming Papa Smurf's Treasure Hunt in its game cartridge line-up. Even the announcement of a new Gemini game system, with voice module, seems to indicate a different direction geared more to younger players, with the Berenstain Bears featured in a play-and-learn cartridge.

Al Kahn, Coleco's vice-president of marketing, agrees that licensing well-known characters is an important development, but equally important is the transfer of those characters games. "Execution is everything," he says. "We have to replicate the characters as closely as possible and make sure the appeal is similar enough. The point is that popular characters reach a broad spectrum of people. You may have been weaned on Dr. Seuss (one of Coleco's most recent license acquisitions) and therefore would be inclined to buy a game based on his books for someone young. It's a family we're targeting for and because of this there are other segments of video games to explore. We call them 'cutesy,' but variations are what's important. What strikes the consumer's fancy is also important as is realizing that everything is so cyclical."

One software manufacturer with a very specific design and marketing strategy is U.S. Games. Jack Dews, executive vice-president, defines the company's aim as "producing home video games that appeal to all members of the family." After relying on originally conceived creations, U.S. Games is poised to broaden its horizons with the company's first licensed effort that will also introduce improved programming proficiency.

An addition to U.S. Games' Family Fun Series, scheduled to be released in the spring, is the Trail of the Pink Panther, featuring that universally known cartoon character and the indomitable Inspector Clouseau. But maybe more important to the company's future plans is the fact that the game will utilize something new for U.S. Games—8K of expanded memory and a software technique called "overlays." Still playable and designed for the Atari 4K VCS, the technology allows for expanded game play and better graphic resolution.

As for the dual-pronged attack, John Belden, vice-president of U.S. Games, offers, "We wanted to use a very recognizable character to take advantage of our increased graphic capability. We



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"Major manufacturers are betting that the time is right for an assortment of colorful creatures in almost any video game form imaginable."

began working on the visuals in October and took the finished version to MGM in December, and they loved it and we signed the deal." Not so coincidentally, the game is expected to hit stores in time for the release of MGM's *Curse of the Pink Panther.*

U. S. Games may have the Panther, but Mattel's got the Universe—Masters of the Universe, that is. Last year, the company enjoyed great success with the introduction of these rugged heroes and beefy villains as action figures, which DC Comics later turned into a three-issue comic book miniseries. Now the Masters—including He-Man, Mer-Man, Stratos, Zodac, Beast Man and others—will be turned into a half-hour Saturday morning cartoon series, a hand-held electronic game and a cartridge for the Intellivision system. Following that Mattel has plans to release a Masters' game for home computers.

"To compete, we must be aggressive," says Ken Strottman, vice president of marketing. "Strategically, as the industry settles, it's going to be like the record companies. Standards will be set and we will manufacture software for those standard systems. As it stands now, our software is very dependent on the hardware."

Muscular heroes with advanced weaponry won't appeal to all young gamesters and that's where the Hanna-Barbera characters come in. Mattel will be introducing games based on the Flintstones, and the loveable mutt Scooby Doo for its Entertainment Computer System. For the M Network line, it's nabbed The Jetsons, Rocky and Bullwinkle and the Kool Aid pitcher. "We want to expand the appeal of games and home computers. The game play will be developed for younger people. Also, our computer software will be in the educational mode. What it boils down to is this," says Strottman, "If you walked into the store for a spelling program, would you buy an anonymous one or one featuring the Flintstones?"

Not to be left out in the cold, Datasoft, Inc. has its own barnyard of 200 Terrytoon critters waiting for their computer game debut, including Mighty Mouse, Deputy Dog and Heckle and Jeckle. Currently there are 20-25 different adventure and educational games under development for the Atari 400/800, TI 99/4A and VIC-20 computers which founder/president Pat Ketchum is hoping to have ready for introduction by June.

"A great number of licensing companies are getting into the business and we bought the Terrytoons characters knowing that Viacom will be selling them in other forms," Ketchum points out. "The cross-recognition will help. It may not be that well-known to children now, but because licensing is being done in other areas, they will get to know these characters. It's a kind of synergy." Due first from Datasoft's cartoon lineup is the Mighty Mouse game, followed by a vocabulary game hosted by Heckle and Jeckle. The company is also developing games based on the comic strip cat Heathcliff and Banjo, the Woodpile Cat. Banjo, a creation of Don Bluth Studios, the folks who last year brought moviegoers *The Secret of NIMH*, made his public appearance just once so far, on an ABC-TV prime-time special last fall.

Lest you think that this ends the cartoon and comics licensing saga, it's really only the beginning. In fact, Nintendo has already expanded its line of hand-held game watches with the addition of models featuring Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Snoopy, Charlie Brown and Lucy as well as Popeye. The latter, as many of you know, is the company's current coin-op hit which brings up the whole matter of arcade games. Well, they were there before, with Gottlieb, for one, serving up pinball machines with the likenesses of The Incredible Hulk and Spider-Man. At present everyone seems to be racing around to see what's available and it's a sure bet we'll be seeing more of cartoons, comics, muppets and puppets. ▲

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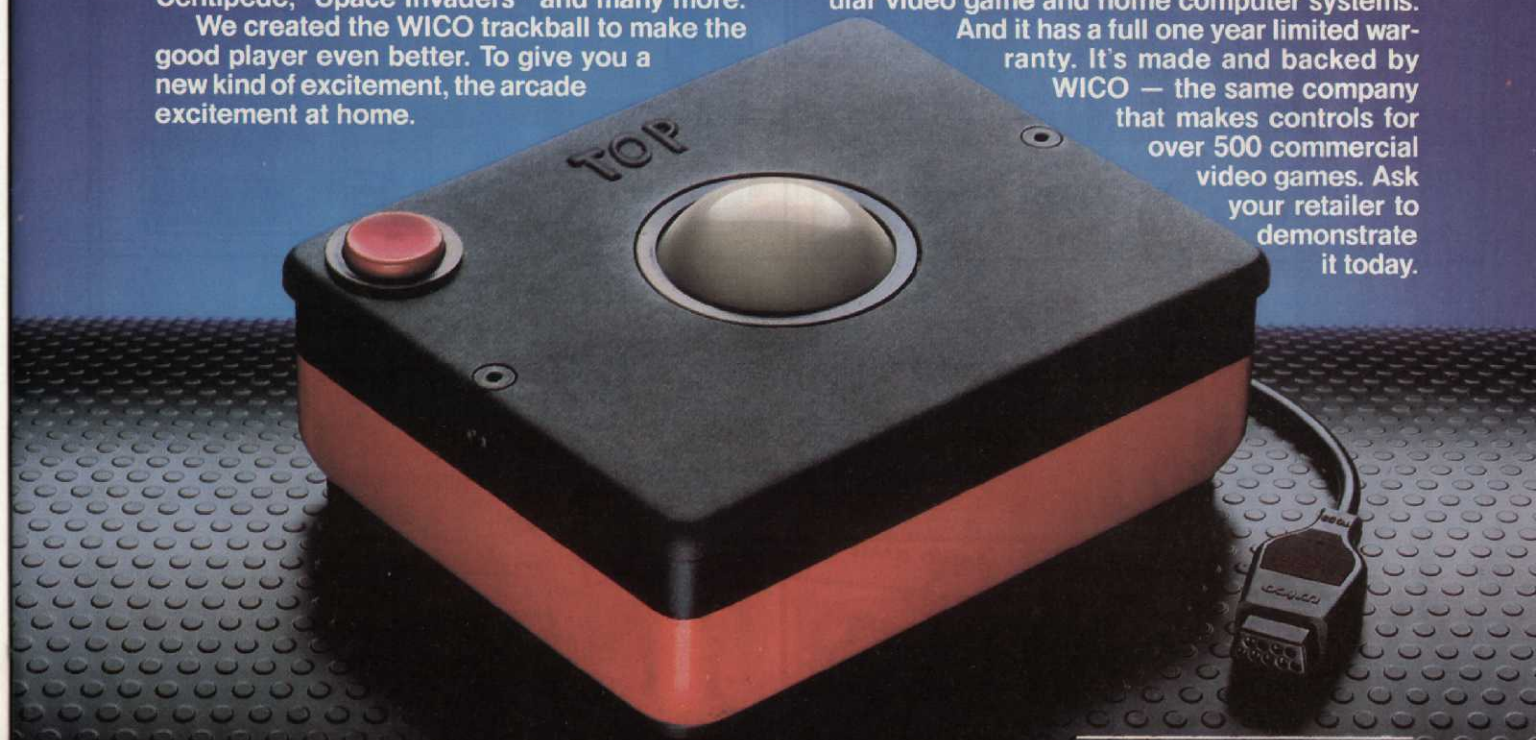

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TOY FARE

TIME MACHINES

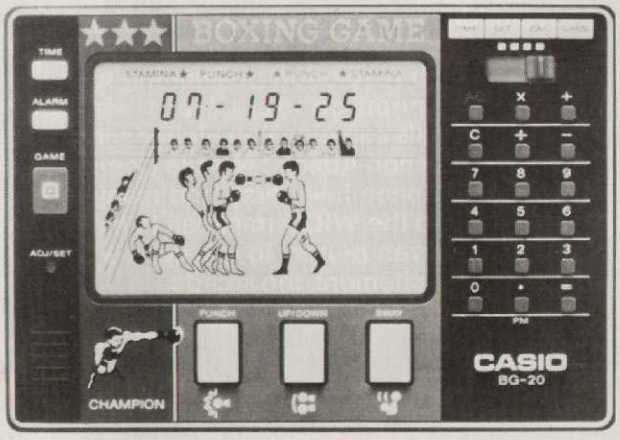
Once upon time there were watches that you wore on your wrist, but then someone had the idea to have some fun with Father Time. The result has been a growing category of hand-held games which not only tell you the time of day, but also keep you cool and calculating as well as give you the sound of your favorite radio station and, if that weren't enough, also let you play games.

FINGER TIPS

Billed as "hands-on therapy for appendages of all ages," Thumb Games by Masudaya (1185 Chess Drive, San Mateo, Calif. 94404, 415-574-3146) are worth coming to grips with. There are more than half-a-dozen different pocket-sized models, such as Kitchen, which feature full color, multi-dimensional graphics, two game variations and increased levels of difficulty during play, as well as a digital alarm clock. (About $30 to $40.)

A FIGHTING CHANCE

Now you can score a knockout with Casio's (15 Gardner Road, Fairfield, N.J. 07006, 201-575-7400) 8-digit calculator and clock/boxing game combination. Weighing only 2.4 ounces (including batteries), the BG-20 features a large 2½-inch LCD screen of detailed graphics and up to 100 different levels of championship boxing. (About $30.)



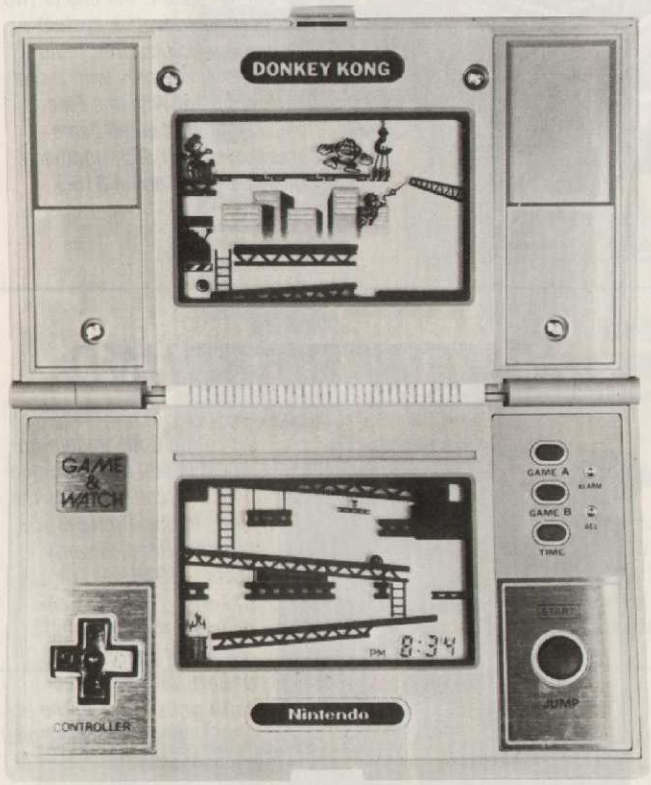
ALL IN ONE

Music to your ears and a sight to be held, are Technotel's (1151 Triton Drive, Suite B, Foster City, Calif. 94404, 415-571-0311) new line-up of palm-sized Pop Games. Barrier, Voyager and Emergency bring into play some interesting on-screen challenges, but that's just the beginning with these little wonders which also feature a liquid crystal display clock as well as alarm functions. In addition, unbelievably, these Pop Games let you tune in to your favorite AM radio station and listen to all the sounds via a plug-in earphone. (About $40.)

POCKET PICKS

There's a handful of fun waiting with Gakken's (2832-B Walnut Avenue, Tustin, Calif. 92680, 714-731-0960) new pocket series. Jumping Boy and Donkey Angler feature two game playing options, color screen and digital quartz clock display with an alarm. (About $25.)

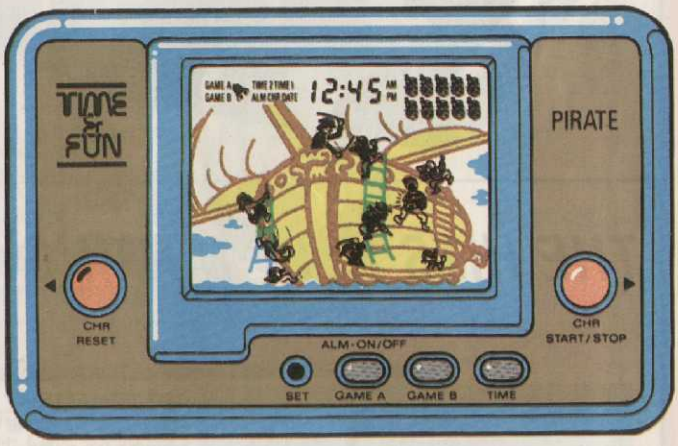
A POCKETFUL OF MIRACLES

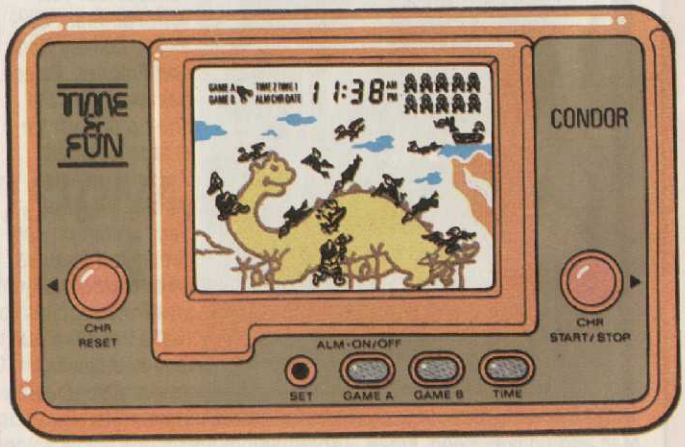


Having gained a considerable reputation in coin-op, Nintendo (4820-150th Avenue N.E., P.O. Box 957, Redmond, Washington 98052, 206-882-2040) is bringing things down to size with a full array of wide- and multi-screen hand-held Game & Watch variations. Incorporating an upper and lower screen design, Donkey Kong reprises the same cast from the arcade game with some faithfully replicated graphics and play action, as well as a clock and alarm feature. (About $28 to $40.)

HANDIWORKS

Adding to their already extensive assortment of Time & Fun games, Video Technology Ltd. (2633 Greenleaf, Elk Grove Village, Ill. 60007, 312-640-1776) has recently introduced Pirate, and Condor. Offering a diversity of colorful graphic themes and play action (including two skill levels), both feature hour, minute, month and date display, dual time function as well as a melody alarm. (About $20.)





ALL SYSTEMS GO!

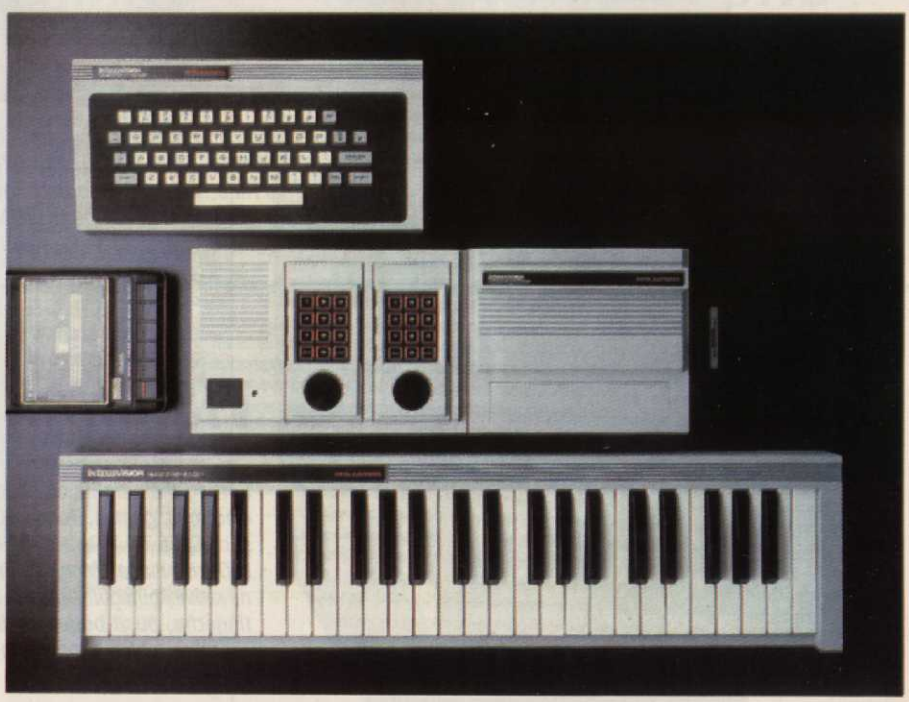
The adage stating that the more things change, the more they stay the same just doesn't hold up when it comes to game systems. New entries can now feature everything from built-in voice and music synthesizers to other advanced operating capabilities, while old standbys have been updated via modules that turn them into computers and wafer-using machines delivering expanded memory not thought possible a few short years ago. Like the wolf in sheep's clothing, home systems have taken on the look, sound and feel of the coin-ops while also opening themselves up for computer applications. And the end to all the changes doesn't seem to be in sight.

THE POWERS THAT BE

Like any game cartridge, Amiga's (3350 Scott Boulevard, Bulding 7, Santa Clara, Calif.) The Power plugs right into the Atari 2600. But unlike any cartridge, The Power uses Random Access Memory. After the initial investment of the module and a standard cassette recorder, a player can then purchase the game software cassettes (such as Depth Charge and 3-D Ghost Attack) and load them through the module for some interestingly dimensional play. (About $45. with two games)

GETTING BACH TO BASIC

Intellivisionists with an ear for music and a bent toward BASIC can have both thanks to Mattel (5150 Rosecrans Ave., Hawthorne, Calif. 90250) Electronics' Entertainment Computer System (ECS). The Intellivision Computer Adaptor attaches to the Intellivision and Intellivision II master components, adding 12K ROM, built-in BASIC and a sound generator to old faithful. A computer keyboard, sold with the adaptor, can be used for programming or changing game play. Recently introduced is the Intellivision Music Synthesizer, a 49-key keyboard which looks and feels like a real organ. (About $125.)



VOCAL CHORDS

Speak no evil with Milton Bradley's Expander which will have your Texas Instruments (P.O. Box 10508, Lubbock, Tex. 79408) 99/4A computer talkng to you in no time at all. A voice recognition/voice synthesis add-on unit, the Expander features a 64-position keypad, joystick and a headset microphone for the voice command function. Ten Voice Command cartridges are available, including Championship Baseball, Sewermania and Honey Hunt. (About $80.)

FIRST BASE

Photo by R. P. Sefcik

Beneath this computer keyboard rests a system you might very well own — the 2600. Last February, Atari introduced the 2600 Computer which transforms the video game player into a home computer featuring a keyboard, 8K RAM, built-in BASIC, full-color display and the ability to add up to 32K memory. Fondly dubbed "My First Computer," it snaps right onto the VCS and accepts the standard game cartridges as well as a new line which will include games and educational programs. There's similar news coming for 5200 owners. (About $90.)

ALL KEYED UP

Could you imagine sitting at your Astrocade to figure out how much you spent this week at the arcades? Or using your VCS to brush up for next week's Algebra final? How about speed reading, spelling, typing or BASIC programming? Well, Entex's 2000 PiggyBack Color Computer makes it all possible. It features built-in 8K BASIC, 3K RAM, a full-size keyboard, nine special function keys and an expansion module for such peripherals as a 16K memory expansion cartridge, phone modem and printer. (About $100.)

ALL SYSTEMS GO!

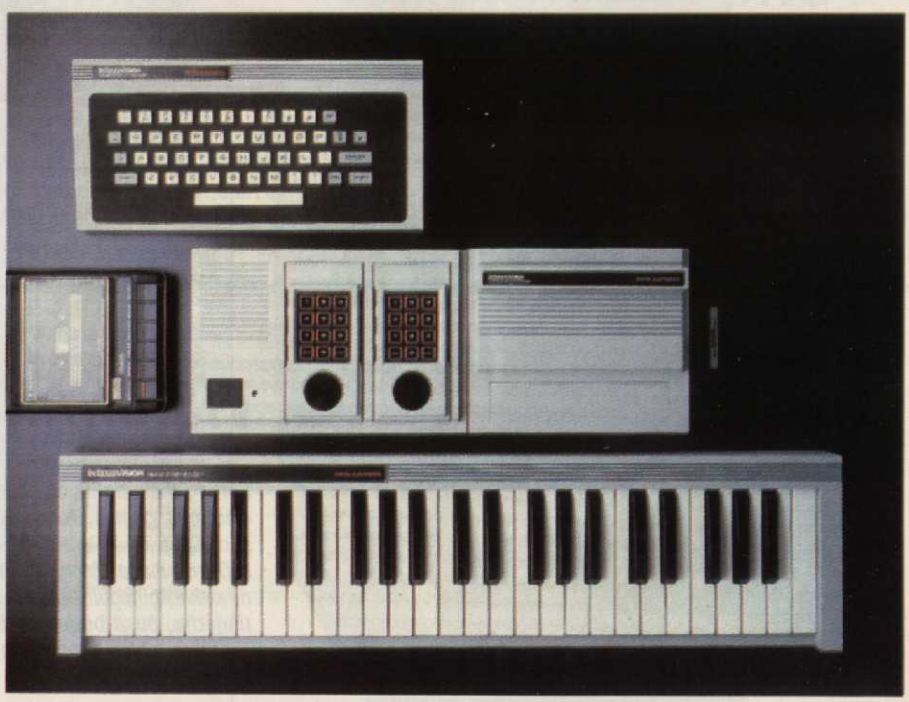
The adage stating that the more things change, the more they stay the same just doesn't hold up when it comes to game systems. New entries can now feature everything from built-in voice and music synthesizers to other advanced operating capabilities, while old standbys have been updated via modules that turn them into computers and wafer-using machines delivering expanded memory not thought possible a few short years ago. Like the wolf in sheep's clothing, home systems have taken on the look, sound and feel of the coin-ops while also opening themselves up for computer applications. And the end to all the changes doesn't seem to be in sight.

THE POWERS THAT BE

Like any game cartridge, Amiga's (3350 Scott Boulevard, Bulding 7, Santa Clara, Calif.) The Power plugs right into the Atari 2600. But unlike any cartridge, The Power uses Random Access Memory. After the initial investment of the module and a standard cassette recorder, a player can then purchase the game software cassettes (such as Depth Charge and 3-D Ghost Attack) and load them through the module for some interestingly dimensional play. (About $45. with two games)

GETTING BACH TO BASIC

Intellivisionists with an ear for music and a bent toward BASIC can have both thanks to Mattel (5150 Rosecrans Ave., Hawthorne, Calif. 90250) Electronics' Entertainment Computer System (ECS). The Intellivision Computer Adaptor attaches to the Intellivision and Intellivision II master components, adding 12K ROM, built-in BASIC and a sound generator to old faithful. A computer keyboard, sold with the adaptor, can be used for programming or changing game play. Recently introduced is the Intellivision Music Synthesizer, a 49-key keyboard which looks and feels like a real organ. (About $125.)



VOCAL CHORDS

Speak no evil with Milton Bradley's Expander which will have your Texas Instruments (P.O. Box 10508, Lubbock, Tex. 79408) 99/4A computer talkng to you in no time at all. A voice recognition/voice synthesis add-on unit, the Expander features a 64-position keypad, joystick and a headset microphone for the voice command function. Ten Voice Command cartridges are available, including Championship Baseball, Sewermania and Honey Hunt. (About $80.)

FIRST BASE

Photo by R. P. Sefcik

Beneath this computer keyboard rests a system you might very well own — the 2600. Last February, Atari introduced the 2600 Computer which transforms the video game player into a home computer featuring a keyboard, 8K RAM, built-in BASIC, full-color display and the ability to add up to 32K memory. Fondly dubbed "My First Computer," it snaps right onto the VCS and accepts the standard game cartridges as well as a new line which will include games and educational programs. There's similar news coming for 5200 owners. (About $90.)

ALL KEYED UP

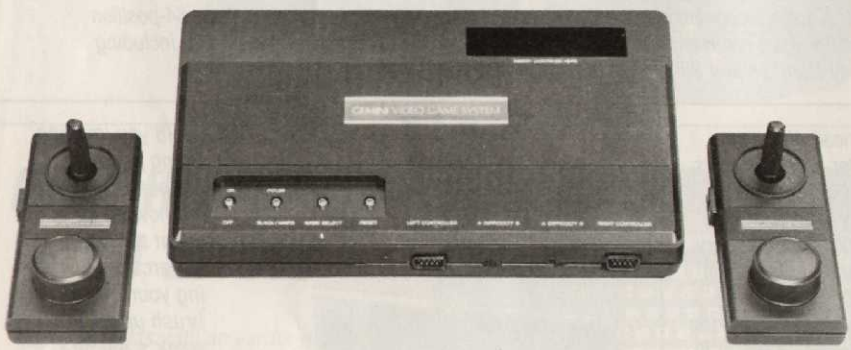
Could you imagine sitting at your Astrocade to figure out how much you spent this week at the arcades? Or using your VCS to brush up for next week's Algebra final? How about speed reading, spelling, typing or BASIC programming? Well, Entex's 2000 PiggyBack Color Computer makes it all possible. It features built-in 8K BASIC, 3K RAM, a full-size keyboard, nine special function keys and an expansion module for such peripherals as a 16K memory expansion cartridge, phone modem and printer. (About $100.)

ON THE BALL

It's time to roll up your sleeves and get to some serious gaming. Coleco's Roller Controller features a free-rolling track ball that allows for 360 degree movement as fast as you can spin it. Not to be left out on the action, there's room for two ColecoVision controllers right in the console and, as an added inducement, the unit comes with a home version of the arcade winner, Slither. (About $70.)

LET'S GET PHYSICAL

The impact that joysticks have made on the market has been enormous, especially so with Coleco's Super Action Controller. Featuring four triggers which control specific areas of play (for instance, the speed of a pitch), an eight-direction joystick, select buttons and keypad, these sticks allow ColecoVision players to run the gamut of play options. The Super Action Baseball cartridge that's included puts the action in the palm of your hand—you can actually feel the impact of a good hit. Upcoming is Super Action Football and Rocky Super Action Boxing. (About $70. per pair)

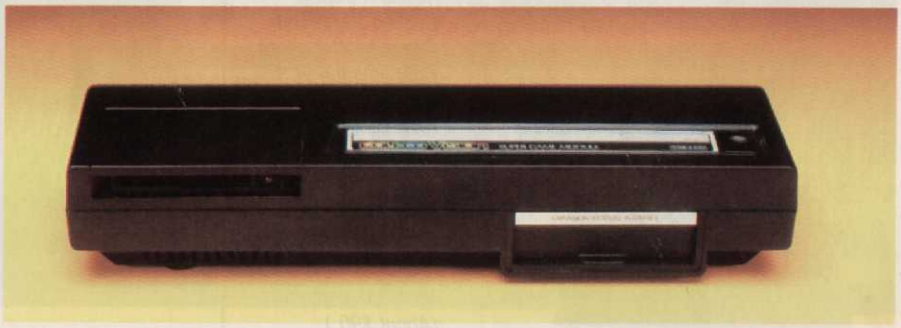


NOW HEAR THIS

Coleco's newest Full-Feature Gemini system plays all Atari VCS-compatible games and features joystick/paddle game controllers. It comes with Donkey Kong and special-offer coupons on other Coleco video products. When used with Gemini sound I and specially-designed cartridges and tapes, it produces realistic voices and sound effects. Included with this component is the Berenstain Bears play 'n learn cartridge. (Gemini about $100; Sound I about $70.)

WAFER WONDERS

Thing's are just super for Coleco (945 Asylum Ave., Hartford, Ct. 06105) with the announcement of its newest component, Super Game—Module #3. Adding over one million bits of information to ColecoVision it translates into more action and game detail than ever before for the home. This module accepts a new line of Super Game Wafers, each of which can have 32 times the memory of most conventional game cartridges. Included with the module is the Super Donkey Kong wafer which features five screens, including the infamous opener. Wafers on the horizon include Super Zaxxon, Super Turbo, Super Time Pilot, Super Subroc and Super Smurf Rescue in Gargamel's Castle. (About $125.)



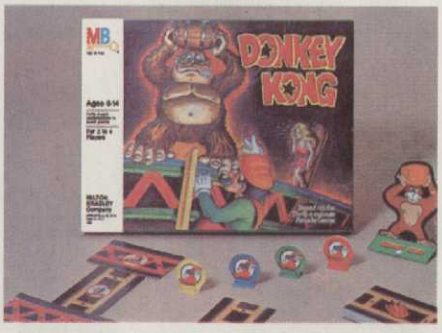
ALL ABOARD

That staple of home entertainment, the board game, has learned a few things from its successful electronic cousins. Old favorites, such as chess, Monopoly, and even Scrabble have incorporated state-of-the-art technology to enhance game play, even to the point of allowing you to compete against a computer opponent. And, if they're not going full-tilt into electronics, board games are adapting characters, scenarios and basic play strategy from successful arcade fare, and putting them in a format which further displays just how pervasive the video game revolution has become.

CHESS MATE

Fidelity Electronics' (8800 N.W. 36 St., Miami, Fla. 33178) Prestige Challenger features an automatic response playing surface and tone/voice capability in either English, German, French or English. There are 15 levels to choose from in playing against the Challenger itself, which not only plans its strategies while you make your move, but can suggest a move when it's in the "referee" mode for two (human) player competition. (About $1300.)

SURFACE CHANGES



Buoyed by the success of its Pac-Man board game, Milton Bradley (443 Shaker Road, East Longmeadow, Mass. 01028) has followed up with a Ms. Pac-Man and three other arcade-based efforts; Turbo, Zaxxon and Donkey Kong. Also introduced is Arcade Mania, an electronic board game, which features four different challenging contests and three skill levels. (About $8 to $10; Arcade Mania about $33.)

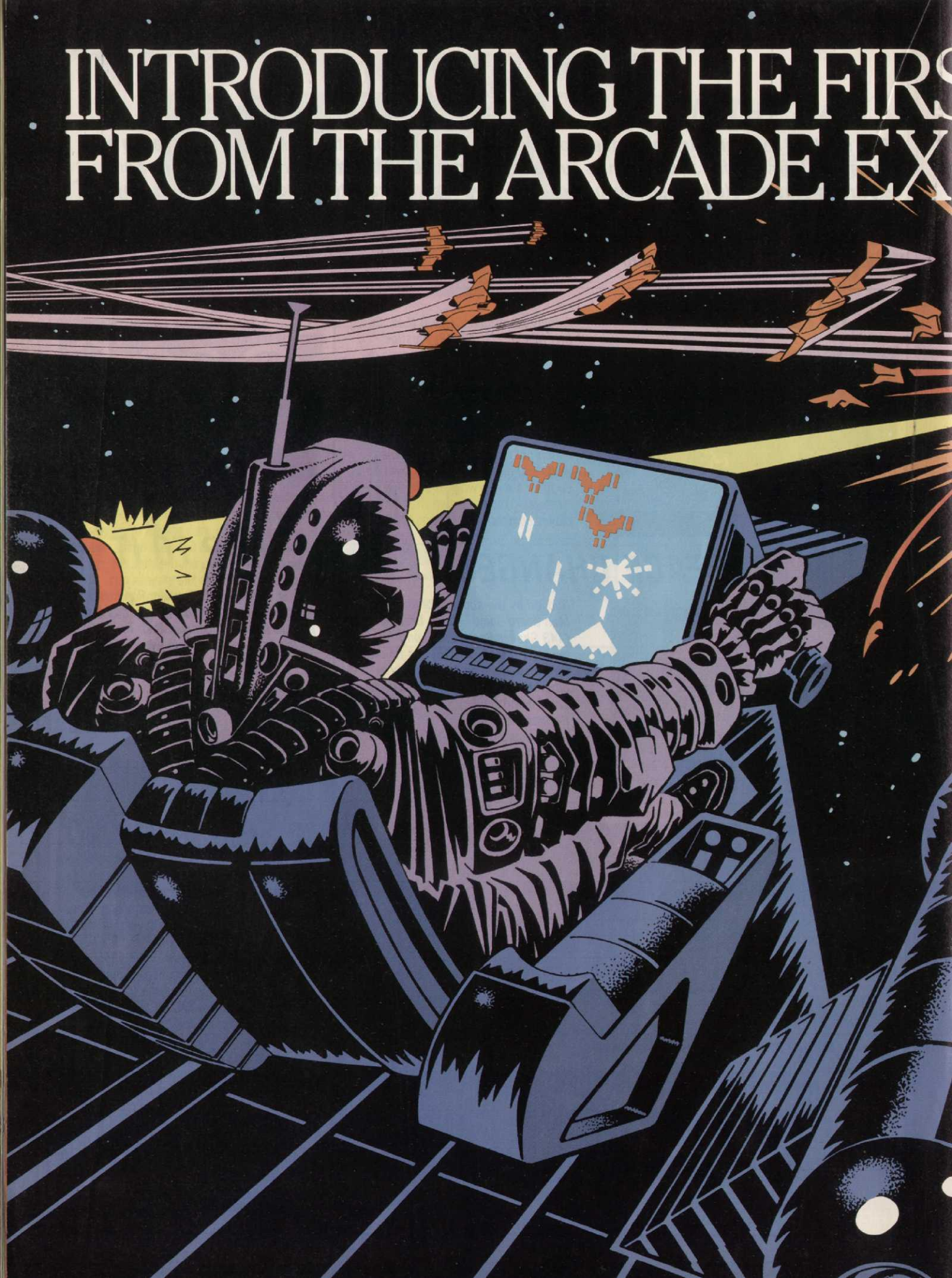
HOP TO IT

*Parker Brothers (50 Dunham Road, Beverly, Mass. 01915) has given Q*bert and his pursuers a board game of their own. Based on the coin-op game, this two-player effort features one person taking the role of little old Q*bert with the strategy being to guide him down the pyramid, removing as many red pegs from the yellow squares as he can before his opponent sends Coily, Slick and Sam his way. (About $9.)*

SPELLBOUND

Selchow and Righter has been keeping millions of families watching their p's and q's with its historical Scrabble board game. Now comes Monty Plays Scrabble, an electronic version manufactured by Ritam Corp. (P.O. Box 921, 207 W. Grimes, Fairfield, Iowa 52556). A portable, self-contained edition, it can be used with or without the traditional game board. Players ENTER to receive their tiles and place their words via an LCD display screen with "keys" for scoring, trading, exchanging and passing between players and even Monty can join in the action. The basic unit contains over 12,000 words in its computer memory. There are also two Advanced Vocabulary Modules, each containing an additional 16,000 words. A second Monty in diskette is compatible with the Apple II computer. (About $150; Monty disk about $40.)

INTRODUCING THE FIRS
FROM THE ARCADE EX



ST HOME VIDEO GAMES PERTS AT SEGA.

Your **Tac-Scan**™ squadron is streaking across the galaxy at mach 24, and you're suddenly confronted by the deadly superfleet from Ahm.

The glare of laser cannons pierces the darkness. Explosions fill the void. Wave after wave of Ahmins hurl themselves into combat. Only lightning-fast reflexes and brilliant strategy can save you now.

Tac-Scan isn't just another video game. It's the first video game that gives you absolute command of your own starfighter wing. The first that gives you the fire-power of over 600 rounds a minute. The first that gives you strategic control over when to call up reinforcements.

Tac-Scan. The first home video game produced by Sega, the Arcade Experts. Creators of **Zaxxon**,™ **Frogger**™ and **Turbo**.™ And watch for Sega's amazing new **Sub-Scan**.™ A battle of wits on the high seas between the hunter above and the hunted below.

Tac-Scan and **Sub-Scan.** The first home video games from the Arcade Experts at Sega. For the Atari 2600 and Sears Video Arcade systems. Now playing at a store near you.

SEGA

THE ARCADE EXPERTS.

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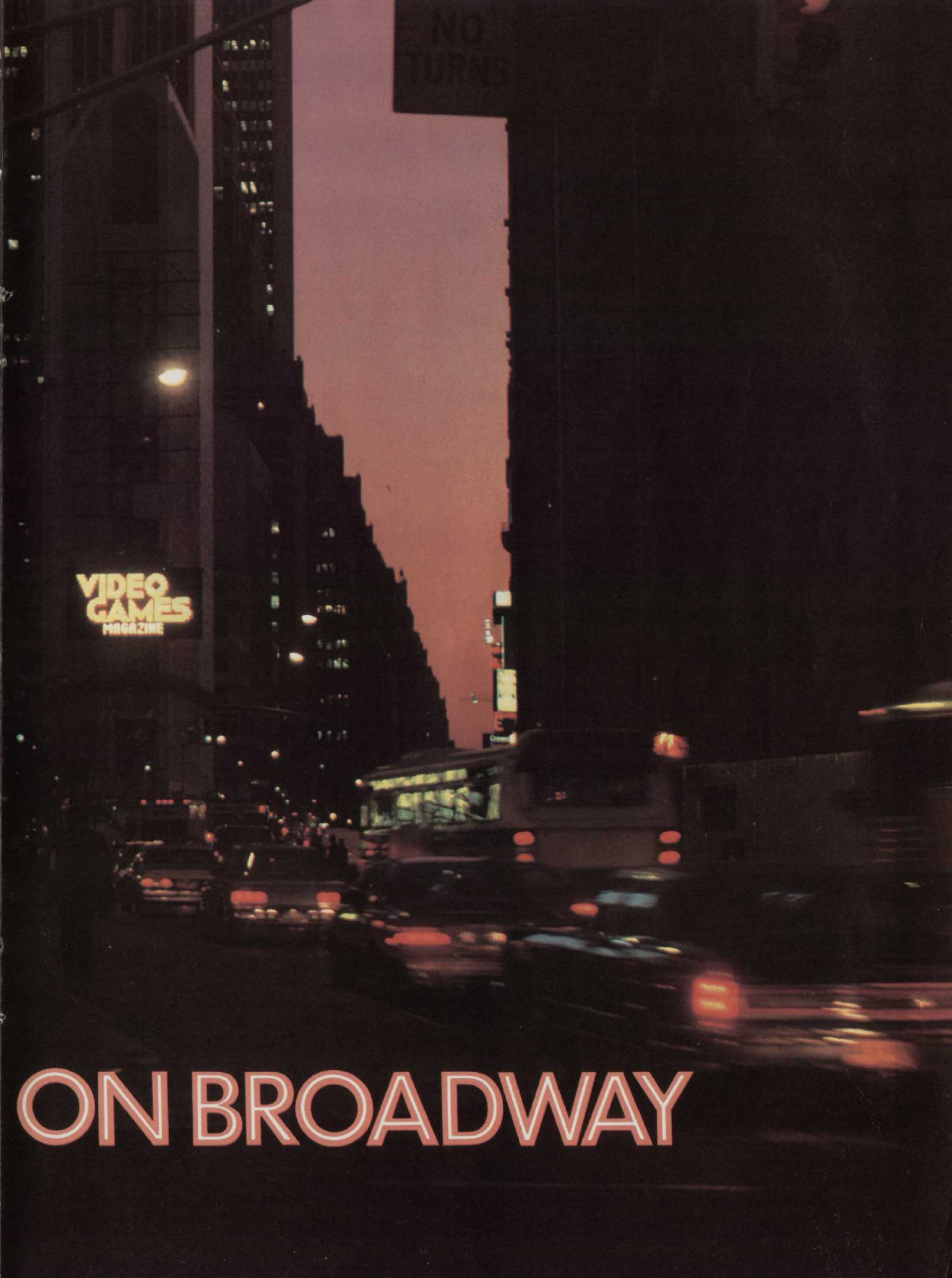
VIDEO GAMES

Photo by Perry Greenberg


NO
TURNS
VIDEO
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MAGAZINE
ON BROADWAY

SCREEN GEMS

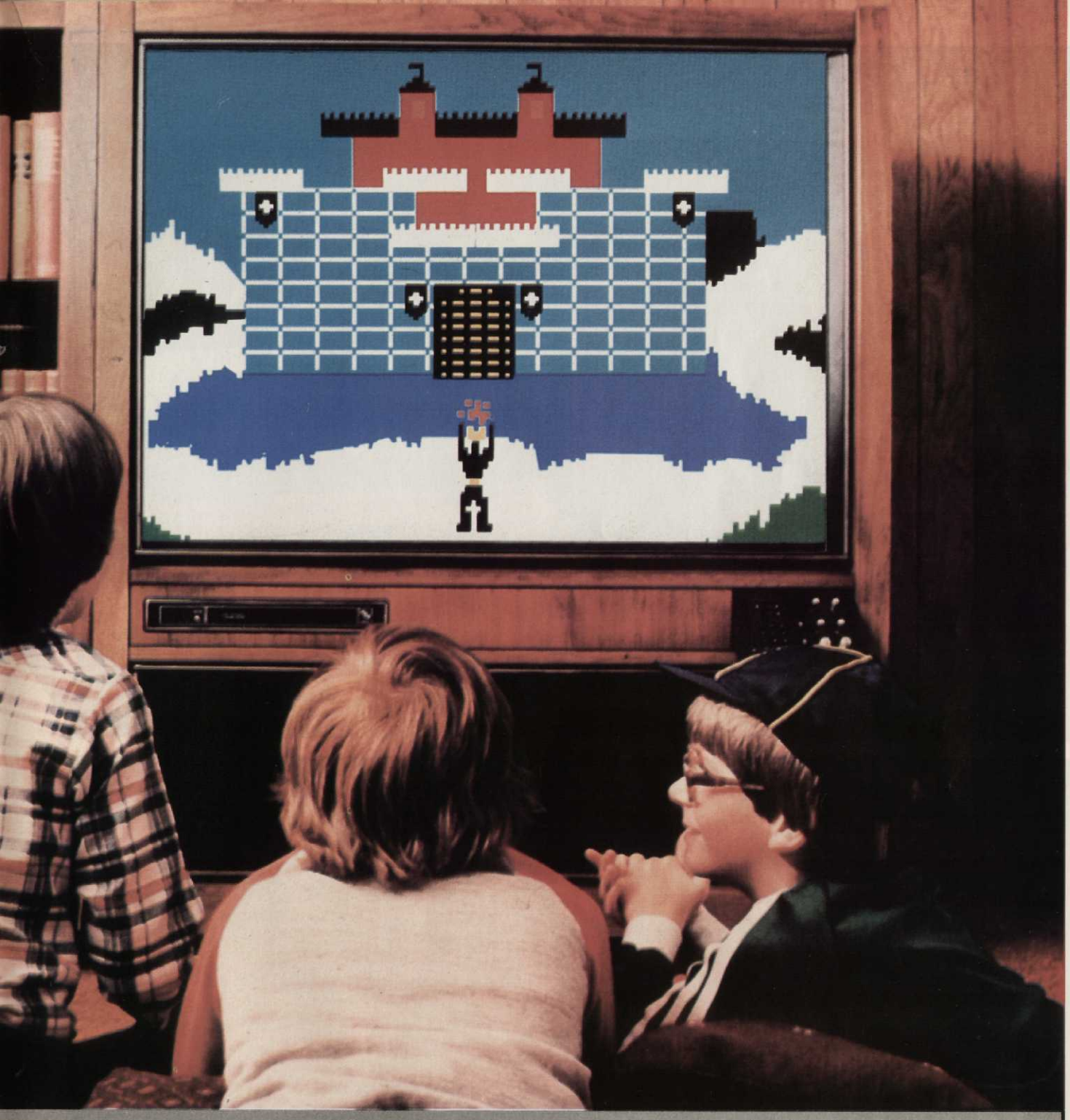
Making a big play for video games

By Roger C. Sharpe

No matter what game system you own—Atari, ColecoVision, Intellivision, Odyssey, Astrocade, Fairchild, or any of the others—you might well be overlooking a piece of the action and not even realize it. If you've been keeping up with recent developments, you know that, overall, game design has dramatically improved and a dizzying array of controllers has appeared on the scene to upgrade playability. But there's still a main ingredient many of us just take for granted.

Think about it. With all the embellishments manufacturers have made, and continue to make, the quality of what you see is ultimately dependent upon your television set. You know the one—that little portable off to the side of the room, or the larger screen model, with remote control, which divides its time between game play or viewing *Square Pegs*.

Your view on the world of video can change if you're willing to size up the options. All you have to do is consider the possibilities of playing your favorite games on a large-screen television. The effect is going to be a sight for sore eyes, and to help put you in the picture, *VIDEO GAMES* has selected some of the newest models guaranteed to make a big impression on any game player.



GENERAL ELECTRIC WIDESCREEN 4000

More than just a rear-projection television system, the General Electric (Portsmouth, Virginia 23705, 804-483-5000) Widescreen 4000 is a home entertainment, information and communication center. The 45-inch screen images are enhanced by GE's VIR II broadcast controlled color which automatically adjusts the picture 60 times a second, program to program and channel to channel. In addition, there's a programmable Dual Mode hand-held remote control for changing channels at random or scanning through available broadcast stations, and a special high-quality, low-distortion power amplifier for clear sound on regular TV broadcasts or stereo for simulcasts and videodisc programming. The widescreen 4000 also features a four-position mode switch to give up-front control of any video or audio accessories, which can be neatly displayed on optional, coordinated furniture that rounds out the total system. (About $3,600.)

RCA PGR300R

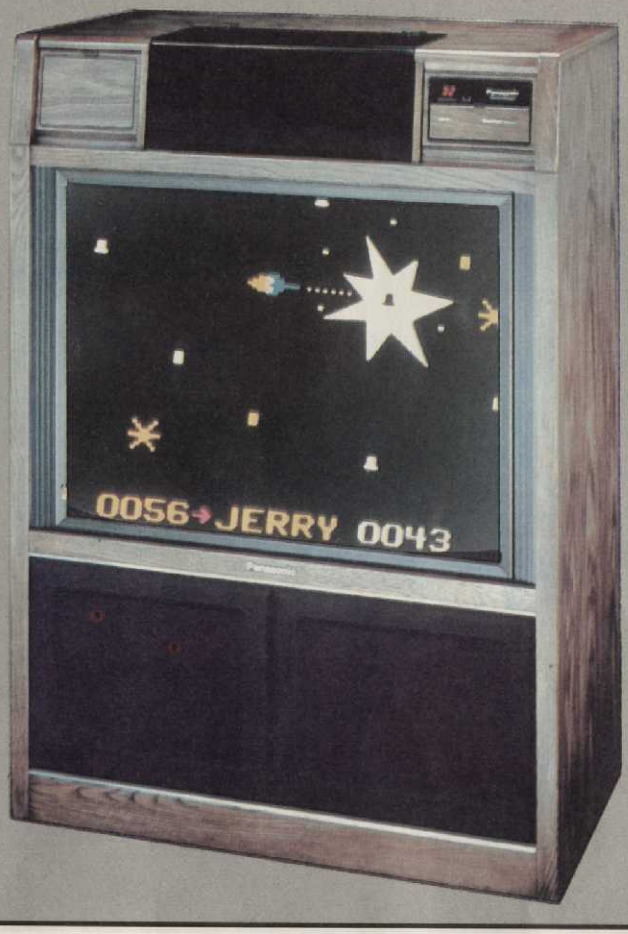
For an a-mazing display, RCA's (600 North Sherman Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46201, 317-267-5000) new 45-inch big screen, rear-projection television is a sight to behold. A special tuning system offers access to all standard broadcast, as well as up to 35 cable channels with operation simplified via a multi-function, hand-held remote control unit. In addition, the model PGR300R features a four-speaker, two-channel sound system that's more than an earful, while a flip of a switch can bring true stereo sound from an externally-connected source. There's also an input panel for connecting everything from a VCR to a disc player or video game system, with an "auxiliary/TV" switch for instantly viewing the type of entertainment you want. (About $3,295.)

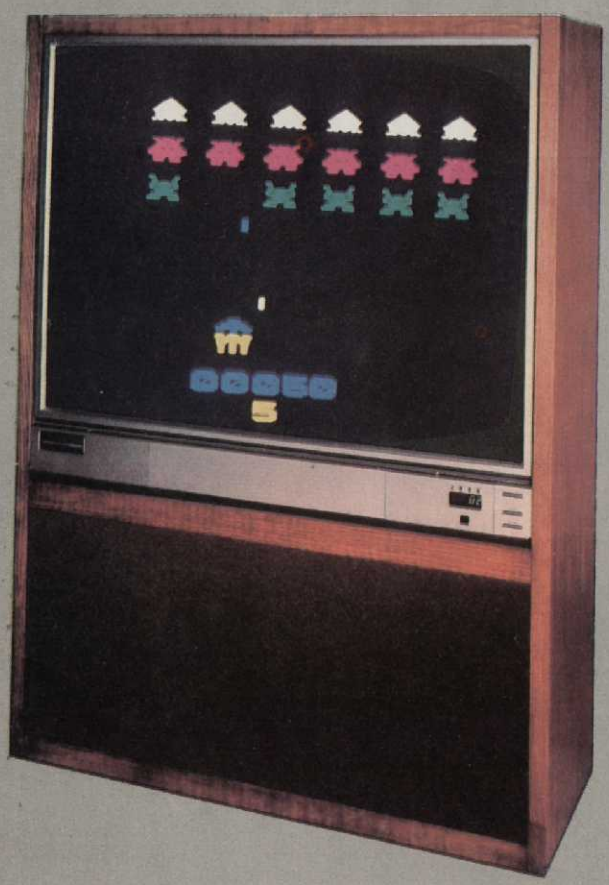
FISHER PT900

With a reputation built on its complete line-up of audio products, Fisher (21314 Lassen Street, Chatsworth, Calif. 91311, 213-998-7322) has set its sights on bringing to life high-fidelity television. The 46-inch, rear-projection PY900 features Wide Surround sound via two separate 7.5 watt built-in stereo amplifiers, as well as separate bass, treble and volume controls. In addition, there's a 17-key wireless remote control for operating any of the television's functions and multiple video/audio input jacks permitting you to directly connect, and have instant access to, either a videodisc player, VCR or video game system. (About $3,800.)

PANASONIC CT-4001

Uniquely styled, Panasonic's (One Panasonic Way, Secaucus, N.J. 07094, 201-348-7000) new model CT-4001 rear-projection color television features a special storage space built into the top of the one-piece cabinet that's large enough to house a video game system or any other video or audio components. The 40-inch screen delivers an enhanced picture image due to Panasonic's ColorPilot and Video Sensor electronic circuitry as well as a quartz synthesizer tuner. There are four two-way speakers for true dimensional sound, a 16-function wireless remote control and direct hook-up of external video or audio equipment to make the CT-4001 a complete home entertainment environment. (About $3,300.)





NEC PJ-4500

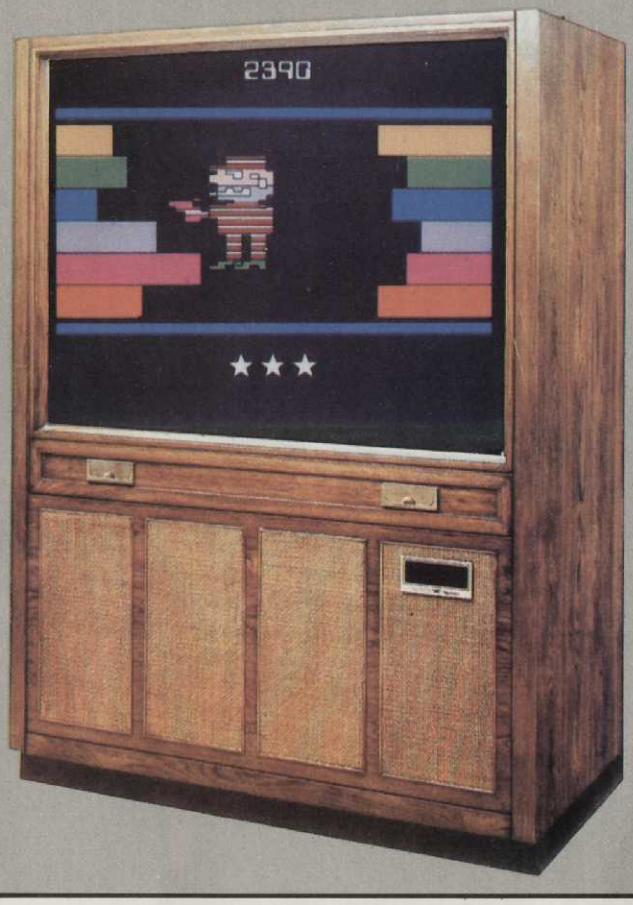
Utilizing three in-line Novatron projection tubes, developed by Kloss Video Corporation, to produce brilliant picture clarity and definition, NEC's (1401 Estes Avenue, Elk Grove Village, Ill. 60007, 312-228-5900) 45-inch screen television receiver/monitor has been designed to take advantage of limited space. Only 27½ inches deep, the PJ-4500 offers 105 channel cable-ready capacity, infrared remote control which allows you to select from three different signal sources, and an LED readout displaying channel selections and the time of day. Besides four high-fidelity quality speakers, there's a convenient connector panel for easy interfacing with any video or audio components that keeps operation simple and direct. (About $3,200.)

SHARP 45G1000

Viewing its system as a "theatre in the home," Sharp Electronics (10 Sharp Plaza, Paramus, N.J. 07652, 201-265-5600) has introduced the compact 45G1000 rear-projection television featuring fitted casters for easy movement around any living space. The 45-inch screen provides a viewing angle of 30 degrees on either side for an almost panoramic effect and a two-way, four speaker system for exceptional sound reproduction. A detachable 17-function infrared Sharp Shooter remote control unit covers all TV viewing functions, with the 45G1000 also featuring "quick start" for both picture and sound. Three input terminals built into the unit allow for easy hook up of any accessory equipment. (About $3,500.)

SONY KPR-4600

Featuring a new compact rear-projection design, the 46-inch screen VideoScope TV from Sony (9 West 57th Street, New York, N.Y. 10019, 212-371-5800) keeps any intrepid invader in full sight. Besides a Tri-Fold Optical System, which blends colors for a brilliant picture, the model KPR-4600 offers Cable-Adaptable tuning circuitry for instant access to 105 broadcast channels, a full-function Express Commander remote-control unit and 10-key Frequency Synthesis Express Tuning. In addition, the KPR-4600 provides a Remote Antenna Switch so you can switch from regular TV/Cable reception to the video game of your choice without ever leaving the sofa. (About $3,800).

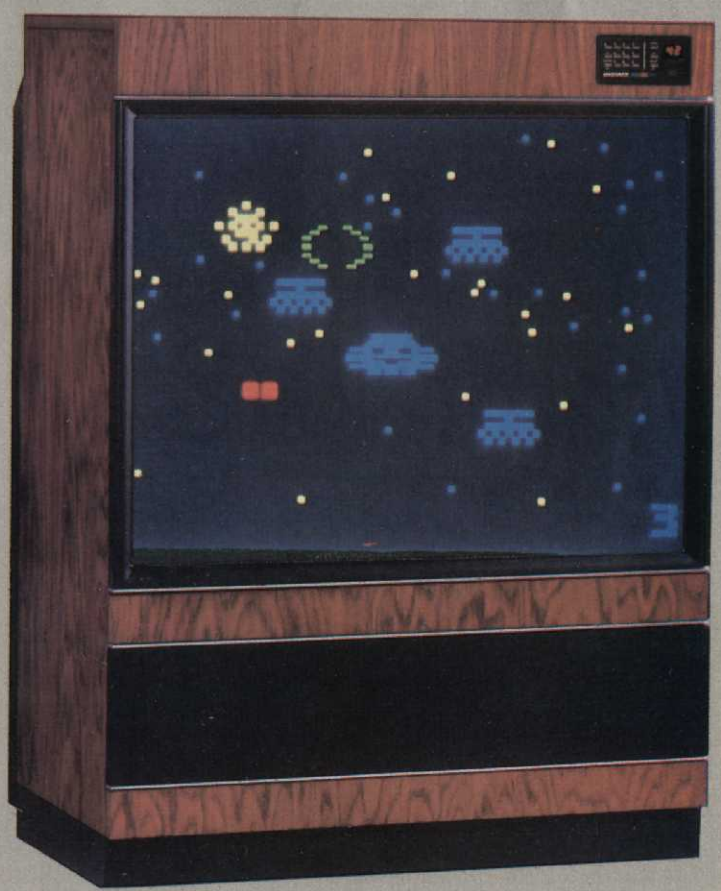


ZENITH PV4535E

Form follows function with Zenith's (1000 Milwaukee Avenue, Glenview, Ill. 60025, 312-391-8181) new cane-paneled, 45-inch rear-projection television. Contemporary styled, the PV4535E integrates quartz-controlled electronic tuning to ensure a sharp, focused picture every time. Zenith's Space Command remote control allows you to scan all programming channels with the press of a button, activate an on-screen channel number and time display or Time Control Programmer for presetting when you want the TV to turn on or off. There's also four-speaker sound and instant switching over to any other form of video entertainment. (About $2,800.)

MAGNAVOX RC8515AK/AS

The perfect complement for your Odyssey game system or any other, the Magnavox (I-40 and Straw Plains Pike, Knoxville, TN 37914, 615-521-4316) RC8515AK/AS gets you in on the action with its Videomatic Plus that constantly monitors changing room light, automatically, and adjusts the picture's balance of brightness, contrast and color accordingly. The 40-inch screen model features infrared remote control, the option of programming the TV to scan only the stations broadcast in your viewing area, random access touch-tuning and direct hook-up for external entertainment sources. (About $2,850.)



Score One Bonus Life

By J. Ray Dettling

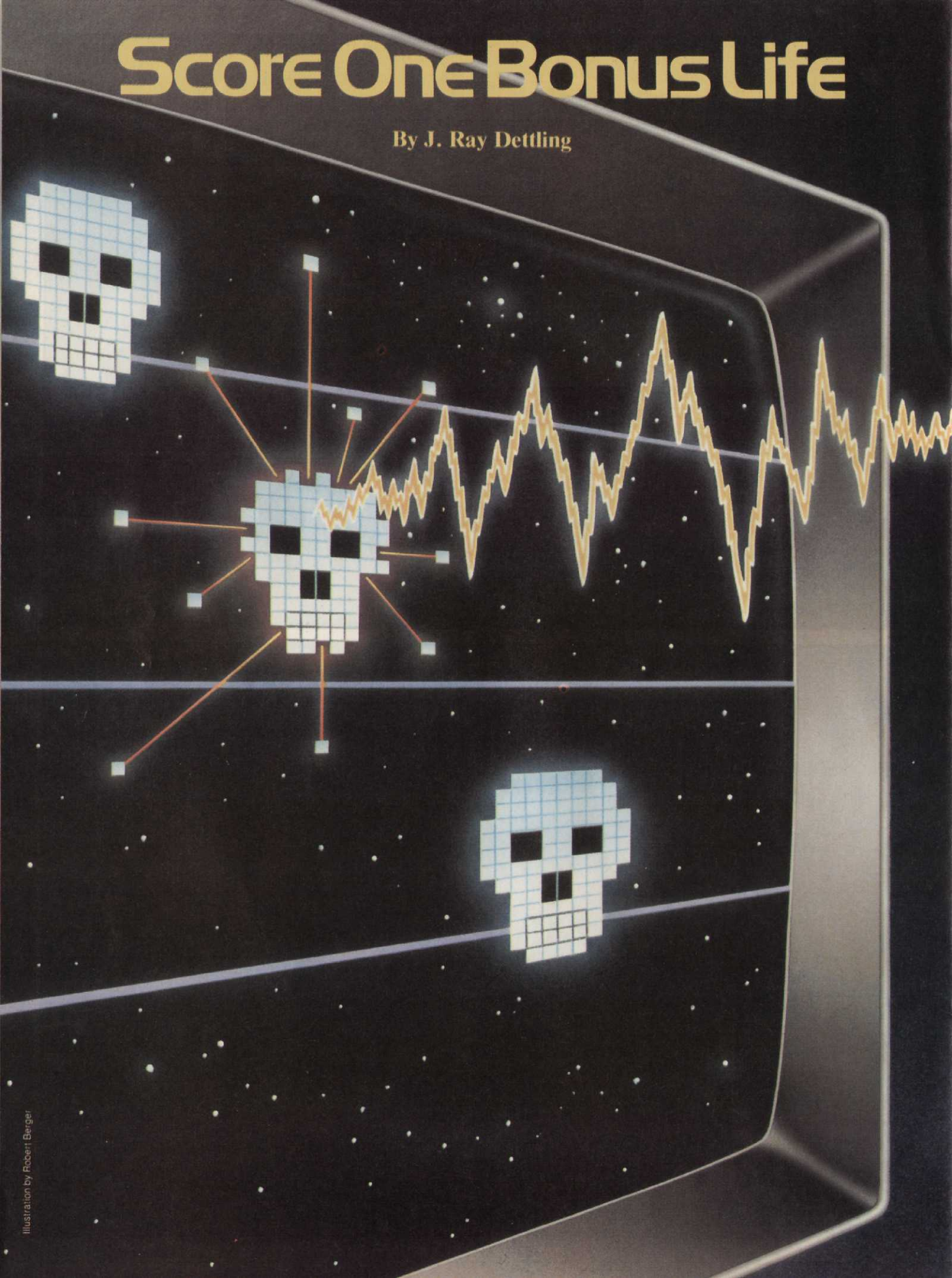
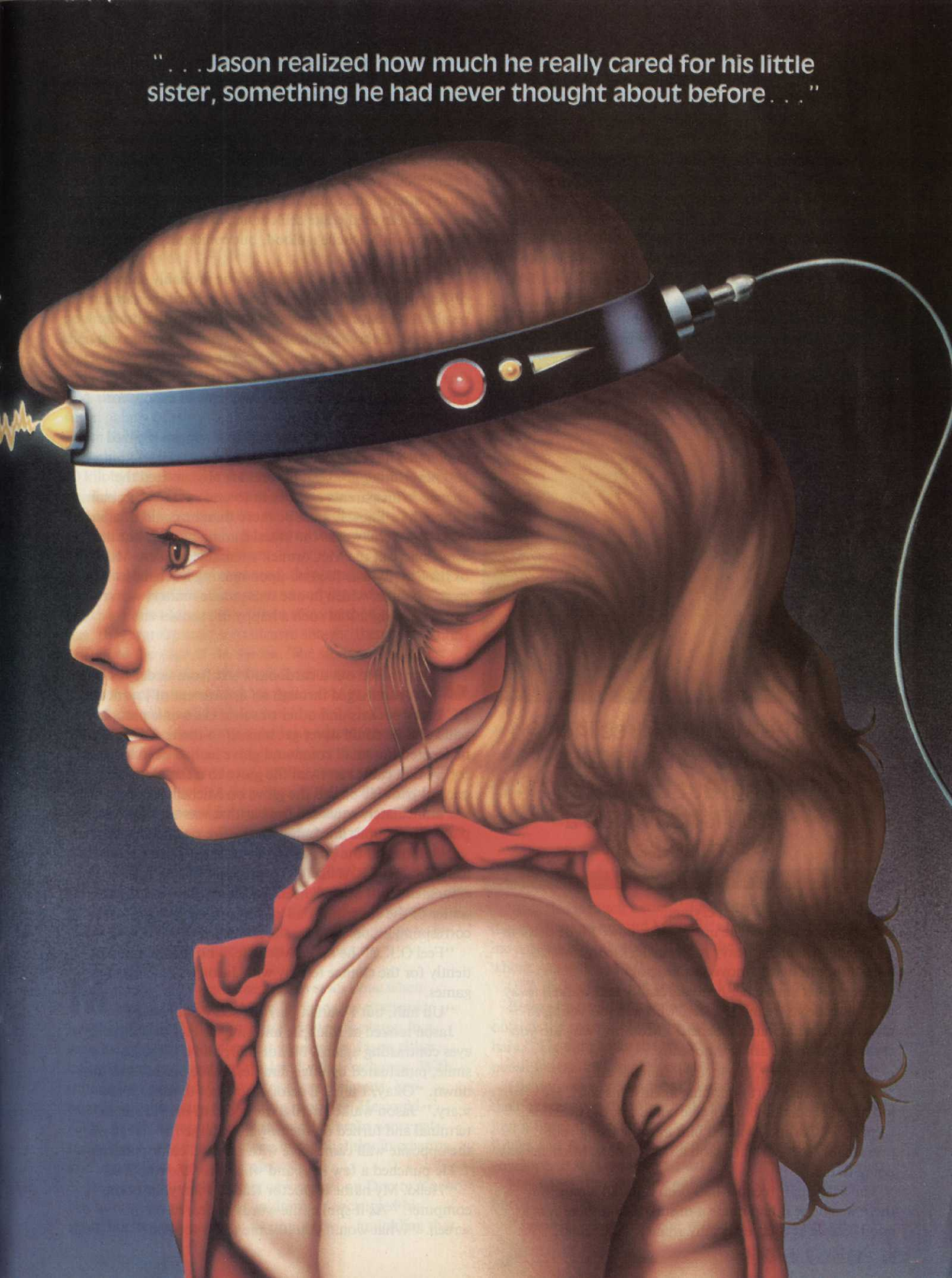


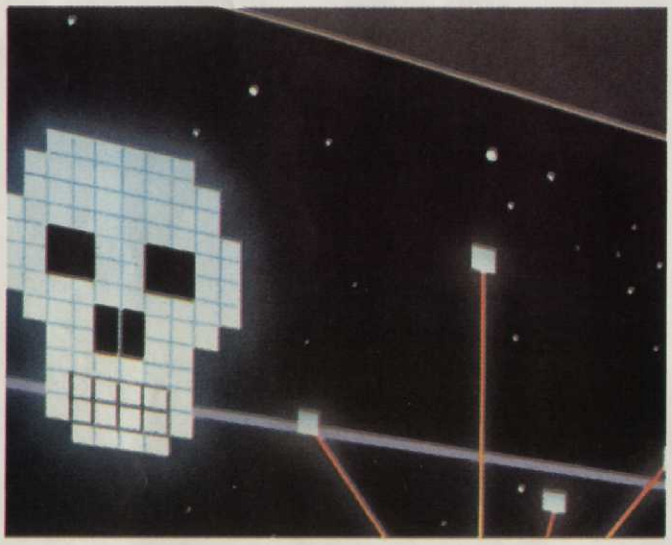
Illustration by Robert Berger


". . . Jason realized how much he really cared for his little sister, something he had never thought about before . . ."

To anyone else, 1992 was just another year, and the crisp Saturday morning of February 22nd was just another day. To Jason McCormick it was a day he would never forget for as long as he lived.

With little interest, he took a last bite from his toast and nervously wandered about the house, hoping to find something to pass the time. He thought about calling Stephanie, then decided to do it later. Nothing, not even Doctor Know, his cherished computer, could hold his attention. Then he heard the car pull into the driveway. He pushed a lock of wavy brown hair from his eyes, looked out the window and saw his mother sobbing, as his Dad escorted her to the front door.

Jason opened it and, for the first time in his life, he saw



The Medichair recliner had been right all along. But there was hope it had made a mistake.

that his dad had also been crying.

"Honey, take Michelle upstairs for now. I'll be there in a second." Behind a heavy moustache, George McCormick's mouth hardly moved as he spoke.

His mother shook her head agreeably and walked away with his little six-year-old sister, who was too young to understand what had happened. "Mommy, why are you crying?" Michelle asked innocently.

"Oh, it's nothing, Darling. Nothing at all."

Jason felt his heart pounding against his shirt. He looked at his dad and before he could ask the question, George McCormick walked him into the living room, presumably to say what Jason already knew. Michelle was going to die.

The Medichair recliner had been right all along. But there was hope it had made a mistake. And there was a good chance at that, especially when a small child, weighing less than 50 pounds, was being tested. In order for the Medichair to give an accurate diagnosis, the subject had to be heavy enough to trip its complex array of bio-sensors.

Yet the Medichair sensors did respond—hundreds of them—all probing every part of Michelle's body. Pulse rate, blood pressure, blood chemistry, hematology, brain wave patterns and much more were checked. The findings indicated elevated white cell counts, as well as pathogenic organisms in Michelle's blood, but could not identify their exact nature.

George McCormick thought it was probably some type of flu virus. But when the Medichair printed the same results three days in a row, and no other flu symptoms developed, George and Karen McCormick became worried. After four trips to the clinic, the pathogens were finally identified. Michelle had been stricken with a rare type of leukemia—one of the few forms of cancer for which there still was no cure.

During the two weeks that followed, Jason realized how much he really cared for his little sister, something he had never thought about before. He also noticed the change in his parents and began to understand their pain, although he knew it must be more than he could imagine.

After several weeks the initial trauma passed, but the atmosphere at the McCormick's remained sullen. Much of the activity was focused upon making Michelle as happy as possible, which in one sense made matters worse. It just wasn't right that such a happy life should end so soon.

* * *

Jason pulled out a cardboard box from under his bed, then rummaged through an assortment of joysticks, PC board sockets and other obsolete electronic paraphernalia that he could never get himself to discard. Finally, he located the small command glove he had been looking for. A thin cable ran from the glove to a flat electronic control pad. He placed the glove on Michelle's hand, and she immediately squeezed the bar that was sewn into its palm. Her thumb lined up with the fire control button.

Jason turned the power on, then set the selector switch to REMOTE TRANSMIT. A pinpoint of red light emanated from Michelle's index finger. She touched the center of the electronic pad and a cursor appeared in the corresponding position on the screen.

"Feel O.K.?" he asked Michelle, who fidgeted impatiently for the chance to play with Jason's new electronic games.

"Uh huh, but I wanna play the scary one, okay?"

Jason looked at Michelle and smiled. Her dark brown eyes contrasting against blonde hair, and a perpetual smile, punctuated by huge dimples, made her hard to turn down. "Okay, I'll tell Doctor Know not to make it *too* scary." Jason walked across the room to the videocom terminal and turned on the power. A large flat screen on the opposite wall came alive with random color patterns.

He punched a few keys and waited for the response.

"Hello. My name is Doctor Know. I am your home computer." As it spoke, the words appeared on the screen. "What would you like me to do for you?"

"I wanna play the scary game," Michelle said, then beamed toward her brother.

Jason laughed, before reminding Michelle that he had to key in the answer. As soon as I get some extra money I'll buy a voice input module, he thought. Yes, Michelle would enjoy that. Jason punched in the words GAME/GALACTIC GHOULS, then answered the string of questions the computer asked:

Number of players:
Names of players:
Difficulty level:
Etc.

For a few seconds the screen went blank. Jason looked down at Michelle. Her attention was fixed on the screen, then she retracted her head between her shoulders and giggled when the eerie sound effects faded in. Jason smiled at her reaction.

A three-dimensional star field followed, and soon a spiral galaxy of stars filled the screen. It revolved slowly. Jason thought, as he often did, about the memory required to display such a realistic scene. Probably a mere 50 kilobytes—hardly a dent in the 100 megabytes available with the videocom. Still, 10 years ago, when he was Michelle's age, a system with these capabilities was only a far-off dream. He thought of the next 10 years. Michelle would never see them.

Several bright spots appeared, then randomly moved against the star field. They started coming closer, growing larger and changing color. When they reached a certain size, they transformed into bizarre shapes, then eventually drifted to the edge of the screen. The stereo sound effect enhanced the illusion of ghoulish creatures passing by.

Jason didn't have to tell Michelle what to do. She had played the game many times and knew she had to shoot the invaders before they reached the edge of the screen. The earlier she hit them, the greater her score.

"That's very good Michelle," the computer finally said. "Now let's try it a little faster." Michelle shifted in her seat and prepared for the next wave.

Jason let Michelle continue playing the game, while he went back to his own project. With a little luck he could finish early enough and still have time for homework, which he had been neglecting, but he would stay up late to get it done. Besides, the sounds of exploding invaders along with Michelle's laughter made it difficult not to be at least a spectator to the action.

* * *

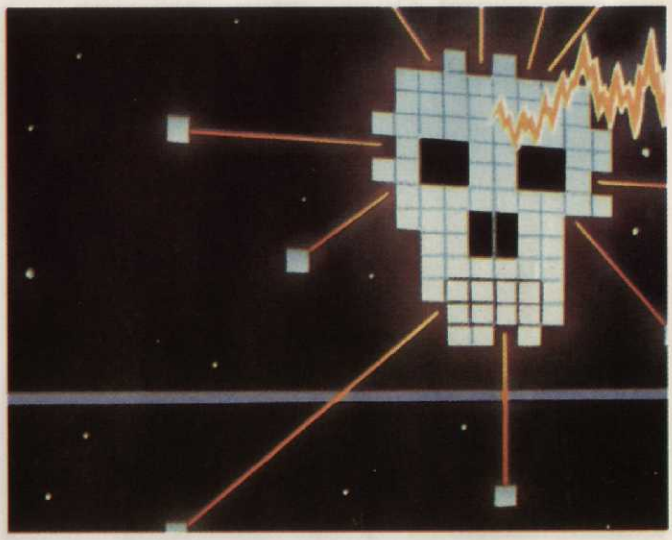
Michelle had been asleep for over an hour when Jason soldered the last wire from the psytronic headband to the little transmitter. It was the latest in a long list of game enhancement accessories Jason either built himself or bought at the local video exchange. With it there was no need for joysticks, exoskeletons, keyboards or even voice recognition modules. He could calibrate all the input commands to his brain wave patterns, due to the research done in the Eighties in creating and controlling artificial limbs.

He was tempted to test his new gadget on Doctor Know, but homework and a civics midterm preoccupied his thoughts. And there was something else—an inkling that nagged from deeper levels of his mind. Was he forgetting something? The thought was cast aside when he reached for the civics book, opened it to Chapter 13, and started reading. In the background he heard his father's voice discussing Michelle over the videocom. It did not have the assertiveness Jason was accustomed to. Instead, there was the shallow voice of a man who was heartbroken.

Jason took a deep breath and felt a wave of frustration rush through him. He wished there was something he could do to help Michelle. He looked down at his book and noticed his own teardrops had stained the bottom of the page. He blotted it with his sleeve and read on.

* * *

But I wanna use the glove," Michelle said without understanding Jason's new accessory.



He was tempted to test his new gadget on Doctor Know, but homework. . . preoccupied his thoughts. And there was something else. . .

"But this is much better," Jason insisted as he placed the elastic band around Michelle's forehead. "All you have to do is think about it, and the launcher will go where you want it to."

"I'll do it a little, but then can I put the glove on?"

Before he could answer Michelle, he heard a voice from outside the room. "Jason, your father wants you down here." He didn't like the sound, thought about the possibilities, then went downstairs to the kitchen.

His parents were sitting at the table. It was obvious by their expressions that they hadn't called him down to give him a boost in his allowance. Then his dad opened the folder and Jason cringed when he saw the familiar envelope. It was his report card.

He sighed. "I know it's not very good this time, but. . ."

"Jason, it's horrible," his father said calmly, with a

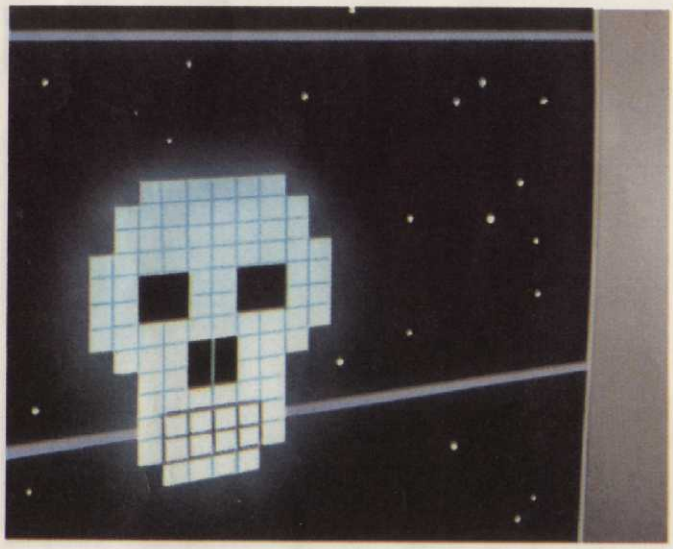
facial expression that delivered more concern than threat.

"I know." Jason agreed. "I'll get it together by finals. Really, I know I will."

"No, not by finals, things are going to start changing now. And that means no computer games until your homework is completed. . . ."

"I think he's been spending too much time with the computer," his mother added.

"But, Mom, it's not just games. Doctor Know helps me with my schoolwork. And he helps me make things the other kids can't." His statement was true enough, for the computer was only part of something much bigger—the videocom—a complete communication/information/entertainment console. With the videocom one could contact almost anyone on earth, view the morning news or



Did she finally come to grips with the nightmare, or was her own mind blocking the reality of it all?

have access to virtually all the libraries in the world, as well as play games.

Jason's father looked dubious at his son's last statement. He had never really thought of Jason as someone special, but maybe. . . Finally he said, "I don't really mind that, dear. Michelle enjoys it, and that's the important thing right now."

Jason's mother pressed both palms against her temples. "Oh, God, why can't they do something? She doesn't even *look* sick." She clenched her fists, then went off to Michelle's room, where the little girl was busy with Doctor Know.

Jason watched his father's eyes follow her out of the room, then focus back on him. No other words had to be said. He felt the silent reprimand, then watched his father leave. Jason admired the man's self-control, all the while feeling his own personal pain and pressure building up inside.

He would get his grades up. He owed that much to his parents, especially now. And Michelle would not get cheated out of the happiness Doctor Know could give her, and he wouldn't deprive himself of the comfort Doctor Know could provide during these hard times. With unshakable determination, Jason knew he could hold on to it all. Still, there was something that preyed upon him with an uneasy sense of urgency. Something he couldn't nail down.

A month went by. The symptoms of Michelle's ailment were beginning to show exactly as the doctors had predicted. Her hair had become straggly, her face drawn and her complexion increasingly anemic. Jason cursed the Medichair for the false hope it had given them. Michelle's lack of awareness and her genuine happiness were almost more than her parents could bear, yet they vowed Michelle would never be told of her fate. However, all knew that it wouldn't be too long before Michelle would question, in greater detail, why she wasn't going to school anymore.

Michelle had become used to the headband, to the degree that she could play the games without Jason's help. He tried with little success to get Michelle interested in a *variety* of games. After all, Doctor Know could draw upon the thousands stored in the video entertainment library, which were available just by keying in the appropriate sequence of digits and megabytes of game code—millions of minute pulses of light—which would then rush through the network of fiber optic cables and settle into Doctor Know's memory bank. In fact, Jason tried everything from edurecreational variations to rock 'n' roll games, but Michelle always settled on Galactic Ghouls. It seemed to have the right blend of excitement and comedy for the six-year-old girl.

The headband, however, offered new possibilities for Jason. It was the idea of moving the launcher by thought which fascinated him. It was almost like mind over matter, although it really wasn't. Doctor Know simply noted one's brain wave patterns that corresponded to the specific commands of *right, left, up, down, fast, slow, shoot,* and so on, then sent the appropriate commands to the game.

Nevertheless, it was something new for Jason and he spent hours trying to refine each command. He even managed to tie it into his schoolwork as a special, extra-credit project for a psychology class.

No, it wasn't mind over matter, it was mind over mind, for Jason soon realized that refining the game play controls could only be achieved by refining his own brain wave patterns, and this was easily mastered with practice. The screen continuously indicated how well you were doing, making a perfect example of biofeedback.

For several weeks Jason pulled in as much information as Doctor Know could find on biofeedback. He would learn and refine, then continue and repeat the process. He hoped to establish a routine that would make his psytronic controller the best it could possibly be.

Jason sat on the edge of his bed and looked at the screen. His fingertips pressed against his temples as if it

could help him concentrate. But, he wasn't concentrating in the truest sense of the term, but, rather, adjusting his state of mind.

Cursor up! Across! Rotate! Rotate!
Stop. . . . Fire!

A shimmering spacecraft obeyed the thought commands. Then something else echoed through his thoughts. The spaceship faltered and exploded into thousands of fragments which streaked across the screen in a myriad of color patterns.

"Jason," his mother called the second time.

"Be right down," he said, then quickly placed the psytronic controller in the cardboard box and slid it under his bed. He rushed to his desk and opened his civics book, then made his way to the kitchen. His mother was dousing a Boston fern over the kitchen sink. Even though she wore a plush blue bathrobe, Jason noticed that she had lost weight and was beginning to look far more gaunt.

"Are you getting your work done?"

"Uh. . . yes, I'm almost finished," Jason answered, stretching the truth as far as he dared.

"Your father will be glad to hear that." She glanced at the top of the stairway in the direction of Michelle's room, then continued. "He's in there with Michelle. She hasn't been feeling well today."

"She's getting worse, isn't she?" Jason asked sympathetically.

"Yes, she is." His mother appeared to be in full control. Did she finally come to grips with the nightmare, or was her own mind blocking the reality of it all? Strange how the mind can protect itself from emotional overload. Jason understood, only too well, these possibilities. In fact, he was beginning to learn certain things about the human mind that no one else knew. The way subtle adjustments in his mood drastically changed the action on the screen was indication enough that made him sure he was breaking new ground. Amidst the gloom, Jason was looking forward to his psychology term paper.

"Jason," his mother continued, "your father and I were planning on taking Michelle to Disneyworld for a few days. I think it would do her a great deal of good. I know that you would like to come, but we decided you couldn't afford to miss your schoolwork for a week. Would it bother you to stay home this time?"

Jason started to object, then checked himself. "I guess not." A touch of disappointment was written on his face.

"There'll be another time, I promise you."

"Sure, Mom. Don't worry about it. It's okay, really it is. . . and Michelle'll get a real charge out of it."

"We both know how much Michelle adores you and how fond she is of Doctor Know, but I think it'd be good to get her away from the video games. Not that it's bad, I just think it would be good for her to do other things as well."

"Mom, I said it's okay."

"She doesn't understand why you can't come along. Would you try to explain it to her? I think she'll take it better if it comes from you."

"I'll talk to her," Jason said. He looked into his mother's eyes. She looked as if she were ready to burst into tears.

"You're all we have left," his mom said, then hugged him for a long time.

* * *

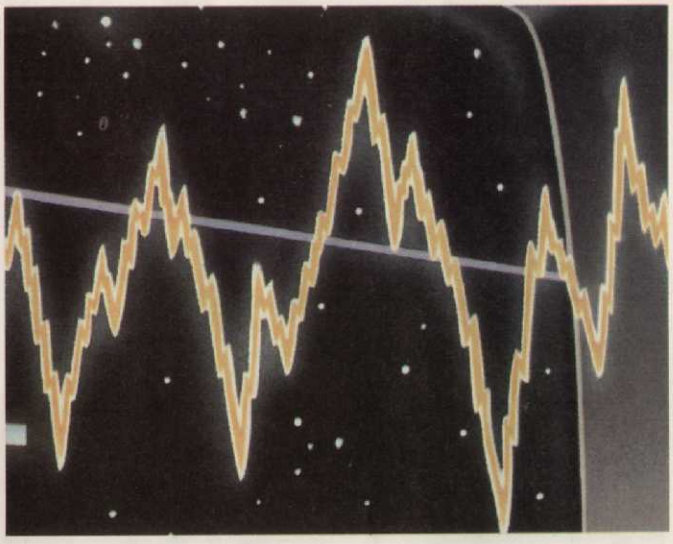
Jason walked up to Michelle's bed. "Hi!" he said, then handed her a small gift-wrapped box. "Open it."

She did and found a clear plastic cube. "What is it Jason?"

"You have to push the little button on the side." Jason pushed it and a kaleidoscope of color patterns danced within the cube to the sounds of familiar nursery rhymes. He saw that Michelle liked it. "It's a going away present for you."

"I want you to come with me," she said.

"I can't."



"Doctor Know and I will make a new fun game for you when you get back. . . a real great game, okay?"

"Why?"

"I have to go to school."

"Am I gonna go to school again?" she asked.

"When you come back you will." Jason choked on his words.

"But you're my very best friend. And Doctor Know is my friend, too." For a moment Jason was taken aback by Michelle's expression of feelings for an inanimate machine.

"And you're our best friend too, Michelle. The best friend in the whole world. I just can't go with you this time, but Doctor Know and I will make a new fun game for you when you get back . . . a real great game, okay?"

"Promise?"

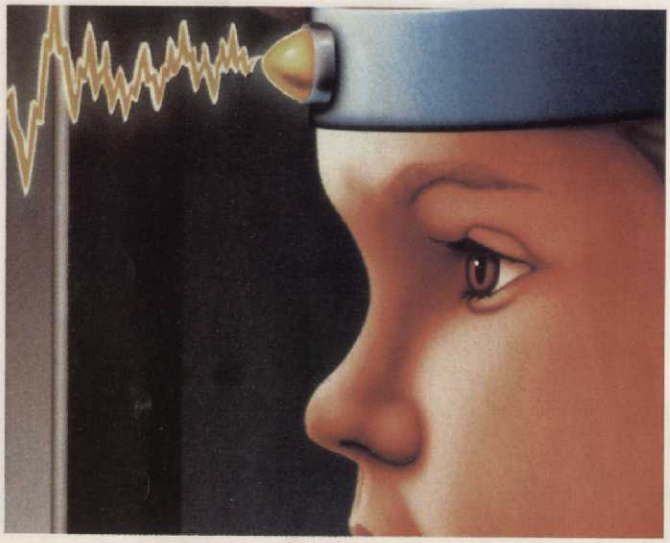
"Promise." Jason had no idea what the game would be, only that there would be one when Michelle returned.

* * *

Jason finished his civics homework early, then called Stephanie. She was still upset over the last three calls he never returned, and when he tried to explain, she hung up. No matter, he really didn't have time for her anyway.

Right now he was more excited about using what he was learning from the psytronic controller for his psychology term paper. Thoughts of Michelle, however, spoiled his emotional high. He forced them aside and continued on his paper, unaware that what would occur in the next few hours would change his entire life.

Jason's term paper was titled "Altered States of Conciousness, Biofeedback and the Video Game Computer." He was pleased with the way it was turning out, yet there was something still missing. He could feel it. It was the same nagging thought that had recurred many times and



"You can play this game without looking. In fact, sometimes it works better when your eyes are closed."

he was convinced it had something to do with the psytronic controller.

Jason went to his room and switched on the videocom. His fingers raced across the keyboard. The screen flashed on and he immediately had access to some of the best libraries in the world. He called for the subject index. Starting with the "A's," all the major headings scrolled upward from the bottom of the screen. He stopped on BIOFEEDBACK and called for the subheadings. He scanned them closely then spotted a word he couldn't pronounce. But he knew what it meant.

"THAT'S IT! I'VE GOT IT!"

* * *

There had been so much to do that Jason cut school for the third day straight. He had literally torn the Medichair apart, extracting its major components, and was now desperately trying to piece it back together before his parents returned. The chair would never work again, but it didn't matter. Jason had a much better use for the hardware. His parents would just assume the Medichair was broken. It would take them several months before they even got around to fixing it. God, if they ever caught him; he didn't even want to think of that possibility.

When his parents arrived, everything was in order. Jason had even gone out of his way to do a little housecleaning—just enough to make a good impression, but not enough to raise any suspicions. He was relieved to find everyone in good spirits. Michelle had been exhausted, yet she perked up for a few minutes when she saw Jason, then went right to sleep. After not seeing Michelle for a week Jason could spot the changes in her appearance. He noticed her nose had been bleeding. Then his parents told him that it occurred regularly—another symptom. Her condition was failing fast.

* * *

When Jason returned home from school he headed straight for Michelle's room. A combination of emotions had his stomach in knots. "Hi, Michelle."

His sister smiled, then dropped her crayons and gave Jason a hug. She started telling him about all the neat things she had seen, then finally asked about the game Jason and Doctor Know had promised.

"Okay, do you wanna play it now?"

"Yeah, and you can play it with me, okay?"

"I can't play this one, Michelle, but I'll stay here and watch you."

"Why can't you play, too?" Michelle asked, while Jason placed the psytronic headband on her.

Jason looked at her and thought how much he really loved this little girl. He pulled an elastic sleeve from his dresser, slipped it over Michelle's arm, and explained that in this new game the player had to wear this sleeve, and his arm was far too big for it. Michelle seemed to understand.

A messy bundle of wires came from the sleeve to a sheet-metal box. A second cable led from this to a terminal strip on the back side of Doctor Know.

Jason went to the keyboard and punched in the instructions. He watched Michelle closely and noticed that much of her vitality had been lost. She would tire easily. Another lousy symptom, he thought. The same eerie sound effects, which Michelle had heard many times before, came on.

"Hey that's the same scary one," Michelle said.

"No, Michelle, it's only a little bit like the other one, and it's a lot different."

Michelle looked at Jason and smiled with that I-know-you're-just-teasing-me look, then said, "Na-h-h-h, it isn't."

"It is! Really, it is! See!" Michelle looked at the screen. The spiral galaxy was there, but the patterns of the galactic ghouls were different. So were the sounds.

"Now watch this," Jason said, then punched in more keys on the terminal. One of the ghouls exploded as if it had been hit. Jason had reprogrammed a spectacular reward factor into the game so that when the ghoul was hit, a dazzling display of color would result as fragments streaked to all corners of the screen. He rigged up extra

speakers around the room, so it sounded as if the fragments went beyond the screen and shattered like glass against all four walls.

Michelle laughed hysterically. "I wanna do it now," she insisted.

"Okay, but you have to listen to me first. Sometimes the monsters are hard to shoot. You have to think about a whole bunch of different things and when you think of the right thing, you'll hit the monster. You can't think about 'up,' 'down' or 'sideways' anymore. Okay. Ready?"

After several minutes without a hit, Michelle said, "I like the other one better; this one's too hard for me."

"No it isn't, Michelle. You can play this game without looking. In fact, sometimes it works better when your eyes are closed."

"But I wanna play the other one."

Jason pleaded, trying everything to keep Michelle's interest up. "I'm your best friend, right?"

"And Doctor Know is my best friend too," Michelle added.

"That's right, and me and Doctor Know want you to try it one more time. Okay?"

"O. . . kay, then can we play the other one?"

"I promise. But first you have to lay down and try it with your eyes closed, just like you were going to sleep, then I'll tell you different things to think about."

Jason watched the screen while Michelle's thoughts wandered from one subject to another. Half an hour later it happened. She had her first hit. The flashing lights and sounds distracted her, but four minutes later she had her second hit. Before scoring her third hit, she was fast asleep.

Jason wiped the beads of sweat from his forehead, then switched off the tape recorder. It wouldn't take long for Michelle to master the game, he thought.

* * *

George," Karen McCormick said across the breakfast table. "Have you noticed that Michelle's nose bleeds have stopped?"

George took a sip of coffee, then said, "Yes, it does seem like that symptom isn't as severe as it used to be."

"Not as severe! It stopped altogether."

"Karen, it's only been a few days. We can't let ourselves. . . "

"I know," Karen said despondently, then took her plate to the dishwasher.

George watched her for a long while but remained silent. He was sure Michelle's skin color had improved, but he didn't say anything. Something very strange was happening.

That evening George McCormick came home from work even more confused. He called Jason to the kitchen. "Jason, I received a call today from your psychology teacher."

Jason looked surprised.

"It was about your term paper."

"Was there something wrong?"

"Something wrong! He said he had never seen a paper like that in his entire career. What did you call it? Psychoneur. . . "

"Pyschoneuroimmunotherapy," Jason said limply. "It's a word I learned from Doctor Know."

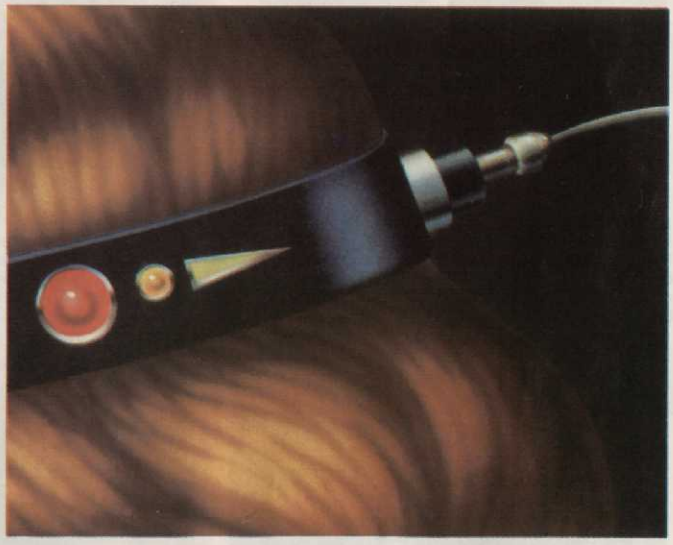
"Christ, Jason. He's ready to submit it to the American Institute of Experimental Psychology, the American Medical Association, the National Institute of Health, you name it. It seems as if you've raised quite a stir. Your mother and I didn't realize you had been working so hard. We thought with the games and all. . . "

George's words were interrupted by Michelle running down the stairs. "Jason, the game's not working anymore."

Jason put his arm around her. "Why not, best friend?"

"There's no more monsters."

Jason noted the shocked expression on his father's face, then took a good look at Michelle. It pleased him very much, and he smiled. For the first time in a long while he was happy. He got up from his chair. "Come on best friend. I'll put another game on for you."



Half an hour later it happened. She had her first hit. The flashing lights and sounds distracted her. . .

Jason didn't tell his father that psychoneuroimmunotherapy was just a fancy name for curing yourself with your own mind, nor did he tell Michelle that there would be no more monsters in the last game, because the monsters she destroyed on the screen were the same monsters she had destroyed in her own body. ▲

J. Ray Dettling is currently developing new video game concepts for the Data Age Corp., Campbell, Calif. Previously, he worked for nine years as a senior physicist at United Technologies Corp. A member of the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA), he has published many science fiction stories as well as science-fact articles. In addition, for the past two years, he has been the science columnist for Amazing Science Fiction Magazine. *His most recent works include three feature articles published in* Science Digest Magazine.

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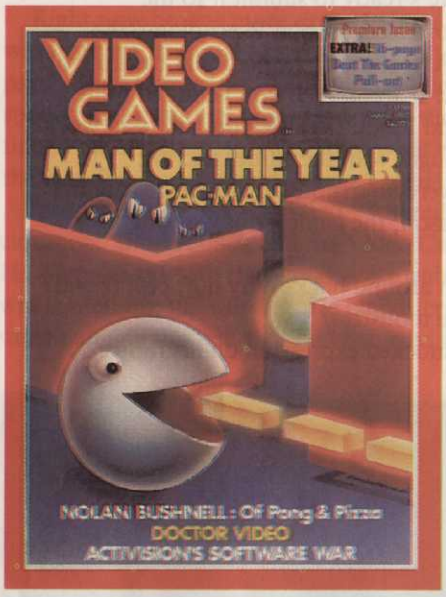

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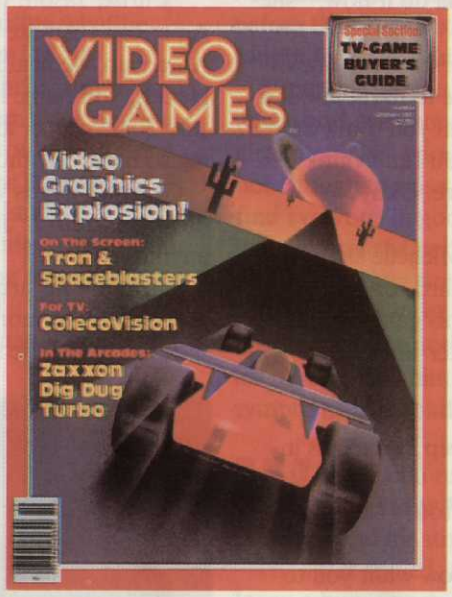

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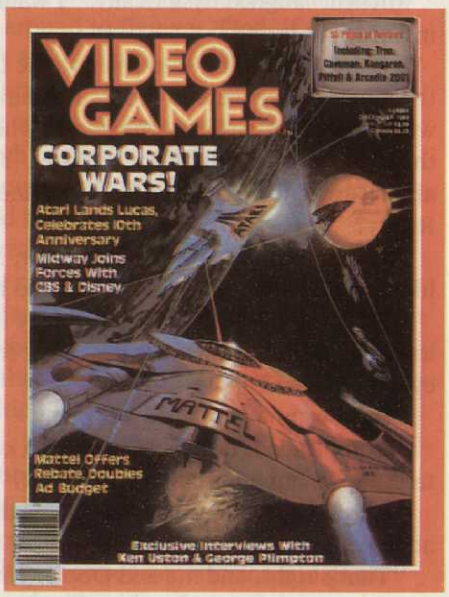

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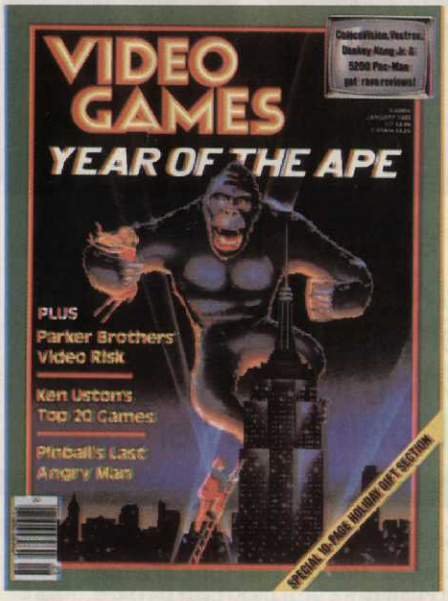

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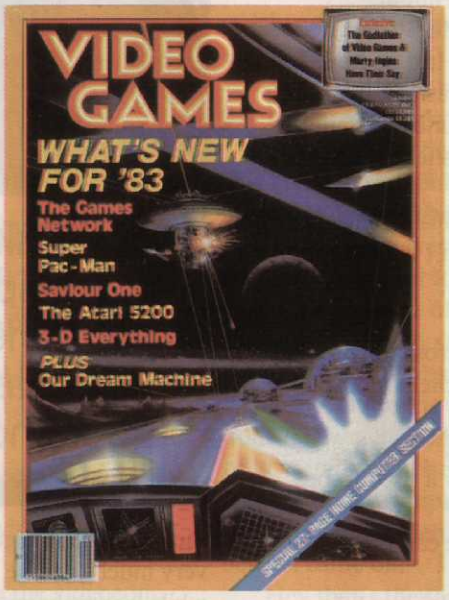

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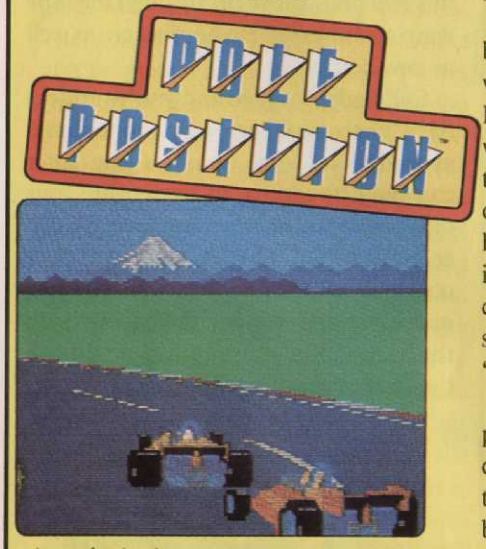
COIN-OP SHOP

Harvesting Spring's Crop of Arcade Games

By John Holmstrom

With the year not even half over, the game trends have been pretty much established, at least in terms of play action and graphic themes. Overall, the major manufacturers are still searching for the one formula which might replicate the phenomenon of a Space Invaders, Asteroids or Pac-Man, although most are willing to concede that these types of "super hits" are not regular occurrences. In fact, what 1983 has indicated so far is that the playing public is fair game for amost any endeavor if it's been done imaginatively with a suitable challenge and pleasing effects to embellish and strengthen the total experience. And so it is that we find the arcades and game rooms filled with a variety of design approaches where no one style predominates over any other, although an argument might well be made for more cartoon-esque inspired models as well as more realistically-rendered motifs. At any rate, the battle lines seem well formed for the coming months in terms of development and technological modifications with rumors of laser disc applications lurking in the background and possible product (products?) using this medium arriving as early as late fall. Until then, here's a sampling of the current games on the video scene and details on what all the action's all about.

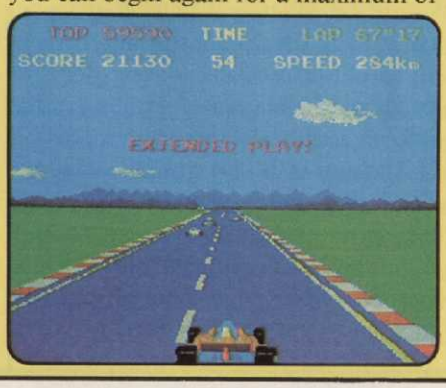
ATARI'S POLE POSITION

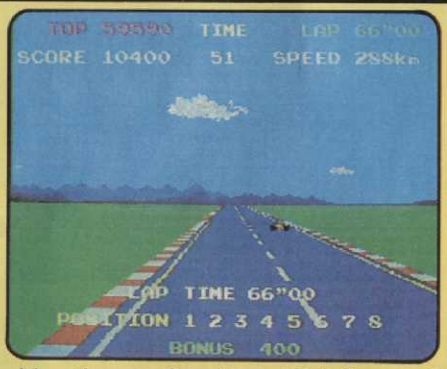


America's love affair with the automobile has always been legendary, so it shouldn't come as any surprise that one of the all-time favorite forms of arcade entertainment has been driving or racing games. Well, in terms of video variations, we have seen everything from an Exidy Death Race to a Midway Rally X and the more recent Sega Turbo. But now there's Atari's Pole Position which shifts into high gear as a truly exceptional and faithful rendition of fast-paced track action.

Licensed from Namco, the folks who brought you the original Pac-Man as well as many other notable efforts, Pole Position takes you to the Fuji Speedway, where the initial challenge is to complete the qualifying lap within 73 seconds in order to make it into the next stage: the high speed Formula 1 Grand Prix race itself. Depending upon how well you've done, you'll find yourself in one of eight starting positions, with the best being the "pole" position.

At this point you'll have to gear up to pass other cars on a track where puddles of water and hairpin curves are enough to make anyone want to put on a seat belt. Do well enough during the race and you can begin again for a maximum of





either three or four Grand Prix laps and a chance to enter your initials in the game's High Score Table, along with 299 others.

Pole Position is available in either an upright cabinet or sit-down model with the controls including a two-position gearshift (low to high) just to the right of the steering wheel, and an accelerator pedal. In addition, the sit-down offers a foot brake, but whichever you find yourself in front of, Pole Position brings into play realistic graphics, great sound effects and a grueling test of driving skill that should appeal to those clutch videophiles as well as the more timid stop-and-go individuals desiring a chance to feel the wind in their hair and smell burning rubber.

NINTENDO'S

POPEYE

new

After enjoying incredible success with Donkey Kong, Nintendo tried to pull the same miracle twice with an updated Junior version, before bringing us the antics of "The Sailor Man" himself, Popeye. Not to be confused with the ill-fated Robin Williams/Robert Altman feature film wonder, this effort is more faithful to the original cartoon and comic book escapades, although Nintendo in its own way has lost something in the translation by making that villain of villains, Bluto, into someone called *Brutus*. But, no matter, Bluto/Brutus is a well-defined character in the scheme of things, where other familiar faces also appear during play.

There's a four-directional joystick and a lone button on the control panel and, when the game begins, Brutus offers his love to Olive Oyl, who breaks his heart and turns to Popeye instead. Brutus, thus spurned, tries to get even by punishing our hero for the rest of the game. And Brutus is tricky, cunning and vicious. He might throw bottles, knock Popeye down, or jump on top of him in what is basically another variation of a climbing game motif.

Popeye features three different screens, with the backdrops including a series of staircases on either side, a large building and an old sailing ship. In the first, Olive throws down 24 hearts (one at a time) which Popeye must catch before they reach the bottom of the screen and begin to break apart. In the meantime, there's Brutus to worry about, and the possibility of gaining bonus points by dropping a bucket on top of him, or reaching a randomly-placed can of spinach, which will suddenly transform Popeye into a true super hero with the power to match, since it is only at this point that he can

CENTURI'S

TimePilot

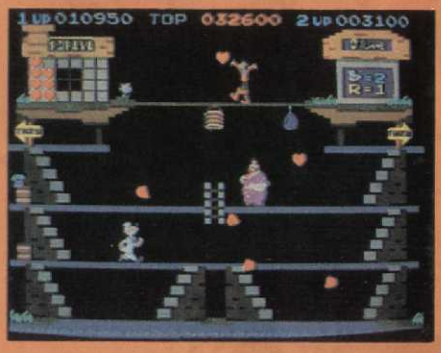
Take a simple joystick and a lone fire button, add in some good sound effects as well as visuals, with a storyline that's solid enough to sustain interest and playing involvement and you've got the basic ingredients for a video game which might just have heads turning. That's what has happened with Centuri and its most recent release, Time Pilot. Licensed from Konami Industry Company, Ltd., the machine brings together some old-fashioned shooting with the concept of time travel in a way that doesn't seem stale or even contrived.

The year is 1910; the place: a blue sky filled with clouds. Your jet plane is up against a squadron of 56 biplanes as well as one big, orange mothership. The mission is simple: wipe them all out (the mothership needs seven direct hits to be destroyed) and try to save parachuting flyers for additional points. Accomplish this feat and you're off through the time warp and an escape to another era as well as new battles.

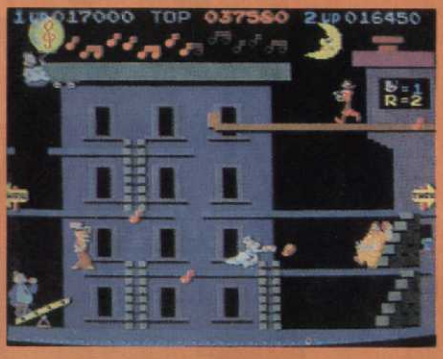
Suddenly, it's 1940 and you're attacked by faster, more powerful monoplanes as well as mid-size bombers (the latter can only be destroyed by scoring four direct hits) and last, but not least, another mothership. The sequence will then continue as long as you can survive, maneuver and destroy the enemy, with the background changing color and hue the farther you progress. The next stage

really wipe Brutus out.

The second round of play features the addition of Wimpy and Sea Hag as well as Sweet Pea. But here Olive has changed her tune and is throwing down musical notes which must be reached before they hit bottom. Popeye gets some help against Brutus and the Hag by landing on a springboard at the bottom left of the screen which will bounce him back up to the top of the action. Finally, the last round offers Olive tossing out the letters H-E-L-P and Popeye running around different levels of a ship while



trying to avoid streaking vultures and rolling skulls. Once past this, you're ready to begin the fight again, only now it's the Sea Hag along with Brutus who are ready, willing and able to put a stop to the entire display.



is 1970 where the monoplanes have been replaced by 56 jet range helicopters complete with sidewinder homing missiles. The action then shifts to 1983 where you're matched up against jet planes similar to the one you've been using (so if it's been a piece of cake so far, you might be in for a surprise) as the battle speeds up. If you survive this, you can advance to the last stage which takes place in 2001 amid forces of swarming UFO's. Get through all this intact and you're back at the beginning, only the rate of play will be accelerated.

Time Pilot has become a solid arcade performer (so much so that Coleco has plans to release its own version for the home) with good reason. There's a great deal of non-stop action, sound effects enhanced by rapid-fire shooting, and graphics that will satisfy the most experienced flyers. In addition, there is no time limit in any given stage, so you can stay for as long as it takes to wipe out the enemy force or be wiped out yourself. With the potential to move in any direction, at any time, and the ability to trigger rapid bursts of firepower, Time Pilot stands as a challenging and interesting game that's not too confusing to learn, yet more than enough to master.

BALLY'S

There has been a movement afoot in the coin-op industry which many players on the outside world aren't aware of, unless they happen across certain models where changes are evident. So if you suddenly see a game that looks the same as it always has, but plays differently than it ever has—you know something's amiss and it doesn't have to be you—it's probably the game.

The perfect case in point is this effort from Bally, which really isn't a "new" game per se. The panel art above the screen has been changed, but on the surface, everything else is really the same. In fact, the machine is probably a Pac-Man which has been through the wars, but it's still a *different* game. Pac-Man Plus is an enhanced version of the original favorite and standout arcade attraction whereby the action on screen has been "upgraded" so that the old patterns and tried-and-true ways of playing no longer have any validity.

Not all the ghosts turn blue after you eat a power pill and they even have the nerve to totally disappear after you've eaten one of the bonus fruits which appear from time to time. And if that weren't enough to throw you off the chase, in the later boards even the mazes disappear. Add to this that the speed of Pac-Man as well as the monsters has been juiced up, and you can get a pretty good idea that the game really isn't the same as it used to be.

Overall, however, Pac-Man Plus is an improvement and a good change of pace over the standard Pac-Man formula, especially after all these months of the same old thing. In fact, look for these types of game conversions, or enhancement kits, to become more prevalent within the world of the arcade.

TAITO'S

Front Line

If war is hell, then welcome to a game where the devil would feel right at home. The newest game from Taito, Front Line is a dramatic departure from the fast and slow draw of Qix, the ups and downs of Electric Yo-Yo, or the swinging vines of Jungle King (later dubbed Jungle Hunt and finally Pirate Pete), let alone the snowy slopes of Alpine Ski. In fact, if anything, Front Line more closely resembles the graphic style of the company's Wild Western shoot-'em-up, with even the control panel of a turning knob and fire buttons having some telling similarities.

The multi-scene setting brings you into the thick of battle where the challenge is to wipe out a never-ending stream of enemy soldiers. Your weapons are a gun and grenades, with the first stage having on-foot combat complete with bushes to

BALLY'S

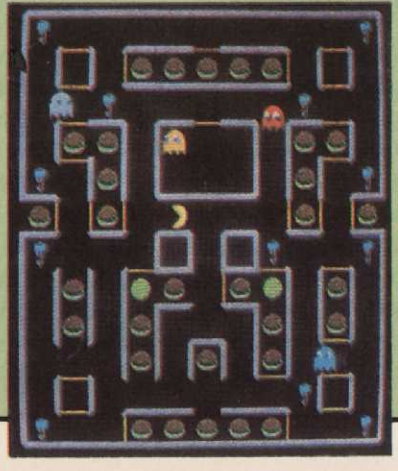
SUPER PAC-MAN

When you've had the good fortune to be instrumental in creating what has become a national video game treasure, it's not easy to just *pack* it all in and move on to something else. And so it is that Bally has brought us many variations on the original amazing theme, including a Mr. & Mrs. Pac-Man pinball machine, a Baby Pac-Man pinvid hybrid, and video follow-up to Ms.Pac-Man—Super Pac-Man—where the action is a bit of a departure from what most Pac-fanatics have come to expect.

Here the familiar hero is controlled not only by a joystick, but also a super speed button (on the right and left of the panel) for an additional twist whereby old yeller zips around a maze eating keys that unlock rows of food and other supposedly delectable goodies, including apples, donuts, hamburgers, bananas, fried eggs, pies and even sneakers. Even the power dots are locked up, making any counterattack more difficult than in past versions, while two green "super" dots, when eaten, can transform Pac-Man into "Super" Pac-Man—10 times bigger than normal size.

Every third maze is a bonus rack where you get to race super-sized Super Pac-Man around the board, gobbling up everything and anything in sight, before the timer runs out and the regular game continues. Although I like this bonus round, Super Pac-Man does have some problems, at least for me.

Once he eats the super pill which will enlarge his size on screen, you can then also press the super speed button and suddenly you have to deal with an image that is at least 10 times more difficult to maneuver. The problem is further complicated by the fact that the maze hasn't really been designed to give players a chance against the ghosts. As a result, instead of being your ordinary, predictable maze game, Super Pac is something else. By and large, its appeal depends more upon gimmicky super pills and super speed, instead of the basic game elements which made Pac-Man so successful in the first place.

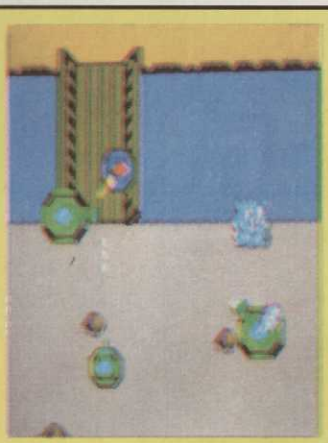


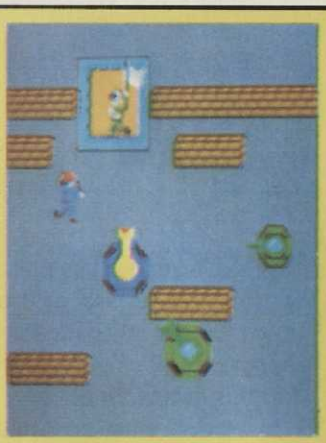
SEGA'S

BUCK ROGERS PLANET OF ZOOM SEGA

Familiar characters continue to infiltrate the arcades with this addition that goes far beyond Buster Crabbe or even Gil Gerard. Gaining the rights from the Dille Family Trust, Sega has essentially brought into play a hybrid of its successful Zaxxon and Turbo games, with the first-person perspective similar to the latter and the hand controls (two buttons for dual-level speed control) as well as the center panel joystick based on the version found with Zaxxon.

In Buck Rogers you begin by tooling down a corridor and blasting everything in sight while trying to maneuver around walls and other obstacles before the next stage begins and you find yourself on the surface of the Planet of Zoom moving around different movable objects and configurations better left for science-fiction fanciers. It's then time for a conflict in the darkest reaches of space where the scenario is completed. Throughout, players should find that the spaceship maneuvers well and that the firing is surprisingly accurate. The graphics are somewhat similar to Subroc-3D and, although the planets and other space objects tend to jump around





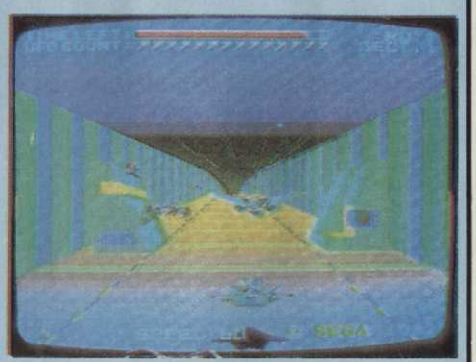
hide behind and land mines to avoid, while you continue to move onward and upward. Survive this onslaught and you can find yourself in a heavy tank shoot-out, where your lone infantryman suddenly has the advantage of more mobile travel along a landscape that includes bridges of troubled waters as well as narrow passageways in enemy territory. If your tank is hit twice, you lose a man, or even the game, if you haven't been that successful along the way. But have one soldier left and it's on to the enemy fort and the ultimate conflict of taking headquarters on foot in one valiant charge. (If only John Wayne were alive to lead the way, or at least to have Aldo Ray along for inspiration.)

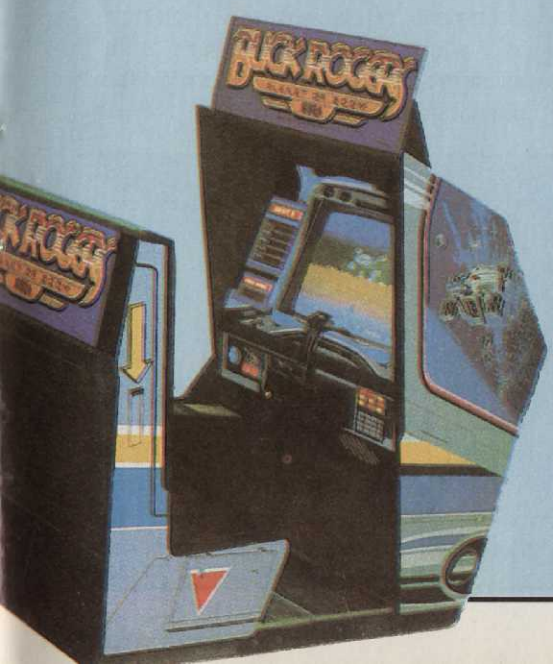
Anyway, Front Line, for all its bombings, death and destruction, is really a slow-moving game with controls some might find difficult to maneuver and master. However, the saving grace is the action taking place and the fact that the realistic graphic touch tends to make any player feel as if he/she is right in the middle of the *Winds of War.*

a bit, the game on the whole is everything anyone could ever want from a space shoot-'em-up.

The big surprise for this writer is that in the New York area, at the time of this review, there hasn't been an overabundance of Bucks in local game rooms. I thought the game was going to be a real winner, but so far it hasn't hit and with Sega seemingly pouring more of an effort into its Star Trek game, the fate of Buck Rogers Planet of Zoom might well be already sealed.

I've heard that some arcade owners are quietly boycotting Sega games, feeling that some of its efforts have been equivalent to those science-fiction special-effect movies of a few years ago—all flash and thunder, but no substance. In addition, some operators have been known to complain about Sega equipment, especially those control grip handles which seem to break off after a while (did you ever run across a Zaxxon with a little joystick?) and the company has a reputation of being slow to replace the defective part. There is also some trepidation that Buck might well be too similar to Subroc-3D, which didn't do as well as expected in attracting and keeping players.





I have the feeling in general, however, that the reasons go deeper regarding the acceptance of Buck Rogers. The science fiction and space craze seems to be well spent out with players wanting something new after so many years of the same old thing. It's not enough to base a video game on the idea of a spaceship flying around the galaxy blowing up menacing aliens. The recent success of Joust, Jungle King and Q*Bert, as well as other non-cosmic themed games, might well be the indication of a new direction.

I do think that Buck Rogers Planet of Zoom will find its audience because it is an exciting and graphically appealing game that combines all the pleasures of a shooting and driving machine in one neat package. Still, Buck might well be an appetizer for Sega's potential entry of Astron Belt (its laser disc game) in the not-so-distant future.

STERN'S

Stern has introduced its first conversion kit with the release of Lost Tomb. Similar in concept to the Pac-Man Plus "enhancement" package from Bally, what this means, in essence, is that old Stern games, such as Amidar, Moon War, Turtles, Scramble and others, can now be changed over via new printed circuit boards, control panels and cabinet artwork into totally new games. And so it is that Lost Tomb enters the world of video.

Combining the pyramid exploration concept of Tut, with the stuck-in-a-maze-so-shoot-everything-in-sight theme of Frenzy or Berzerk, Lost Tomb is a dual joystick model (which brings into play an extra control button) with a great sense of humor, lots of action and a mildly confusing setup as to how players should proceed in order to get to where they want to go.

The game begins when your man lands on a South American pyramid. He then has to run down and through a labyrinth of rooms and hallways to find "a big surprise" at the base. Lost Tomb gives you options throughout, depending upon which rooms you want to enter. Once you've chosen your path, you have to pick up treasures, kill all the creatures (or "nasties" as they're called) in your way, find the key, and get out of the room as fast as you can, avoiding the potential of setting off an earthquake. Besides the ability to shoot, you have a whip button, which knocks down any walls in your way and kills any nasties in the area. You're limited to three whips per room, although you can pick up more on the way.

Once you leave a room, you'll find yourself in a hallway, where you have to rush as fast as you can down some stairs and into another room before a swarm of bats kills you. This alone is one of the more difficult parts of the game, but if you can get past it, it's on to the next stage. Be careful here, because there are "throne rooms"—where, if you veer off the path into one of them, you'll be up to your neck in bats and bullets.

Stern has elevated quarter-eating to a fine art in Lost Tomb since it's incorporated the feature of being able to insert additional coins to pick up where you left off once you run out of men; but you get only seven seconds to decide. Apart from this continuation of play option, the funniest feature is this game's use of the first video game advertisement. It's an offer you can't refuse with a graphic that reads: "And now—a word from our sponsor" flashing on the screen, and the machine offering to sell you 99 whips for 25¢ (a bargain if you're going to do some serious playing, but also an indication of how expensive this machine can be).

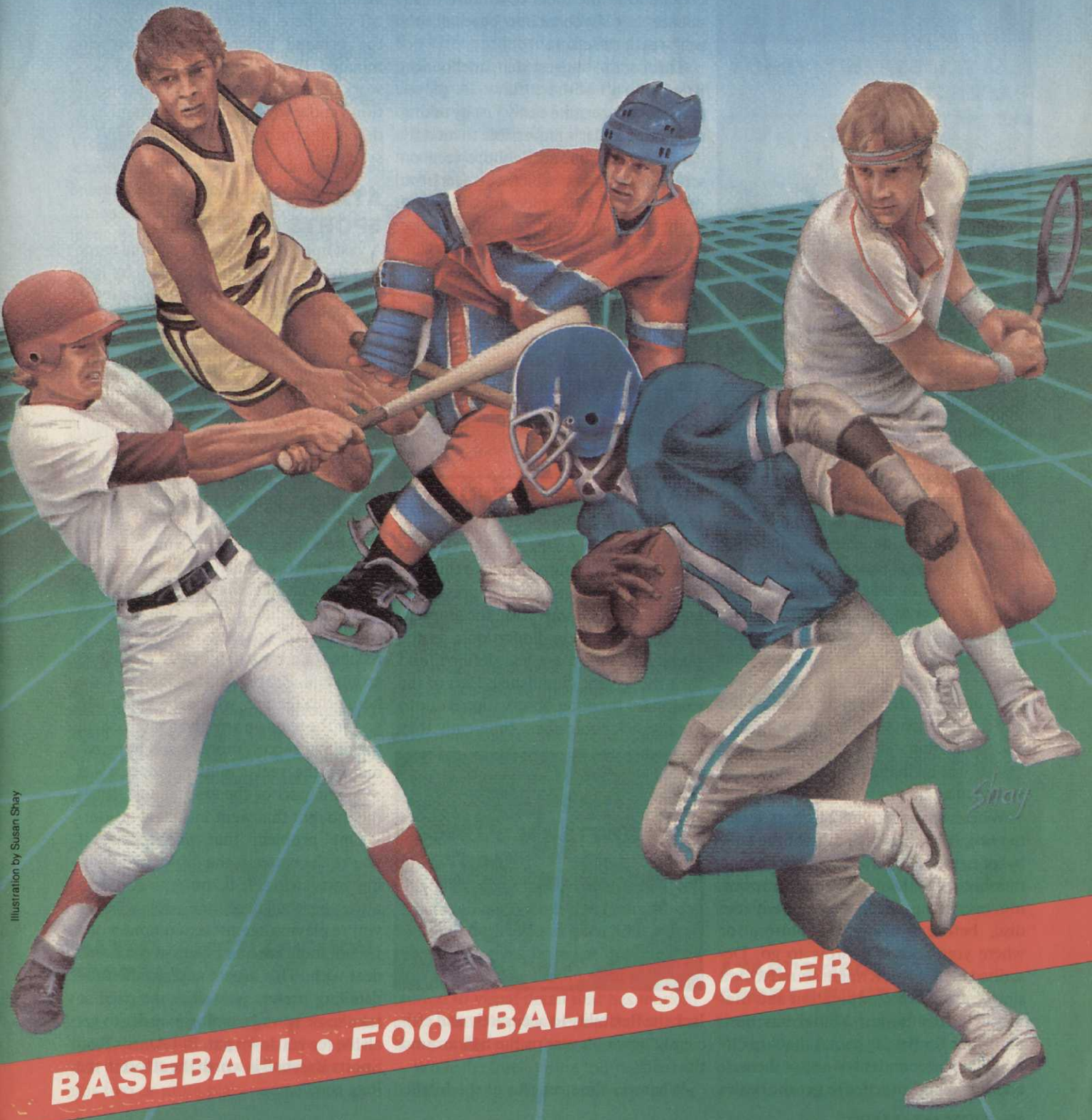
Lost Tomb has a great deal of potential. In fact, it's the best *Raiders of the Lost Ark*-inspired game so far to hit the scene. The shooting is fast and accurate, and there is a certain amount of motivation to play it more than once. However, the graphics are a bit murky (it's the only game I can remember that uses brown as its principal color) and the play is overly complex for most novice arcade enthusiasts. However, this shouldn't deter you from trying your hand at an adventure that's more than worth the price of admission. ▲

ARCADE WATCH

The rumor mill is running overtime with guesses as to who will be doing what in the coin-op scene in the coming few months. One thing seems certain: the product development well under way now will visibly change the face of video games forever. The ongoing research into laser disc technology indicates some definite commitment in this area with releases due as soon as this fall or winter. But don't expect too much change in game play, at least right away. Joysticks and other historical controls will still be the guiding force behind the games.

Whatever is destined to appear, *VG* will keep you on top of the scene as to the newest games. Look for Williams to follow up to Joust, Bally's return to another variation on the Pac-Man theme, more news about conversion games and such efforts as Atari's Xevious, Stern's Bagman, Bally/Data East's Bump 'N' Jump and others in future issues. *The Editors*

VIDEO Sports GAMES Illustrated



BASEBALL • FOOTBALL • SOCCER

Illustration by Susan Shay

Here we are at the unique time of year when all professional sports (thanks to the new USFL) are in action, and in that spirit, we at *VIDEO GAMES* thought it would be a good time to herald America's love affair with the wide world of sports and take a look at how the home versions are faring.

In order to give you some new perspectives on the most recent releases, as well as those that have become long-standing staples, we assembled a team of weekend athletes to give us their impressions and overviews of the growing number of video sports cartridges. So in Part I of this two-part report, without benefit of the national anthem ringing in our ears, its time to play ball and let the game begin.

By Noah Greenberg

BASEBALL

MATTEL'S INTELLIVISION BASEBALL

Up to this point in time, it's been called the standard by which all others are judged, in terms of player controls, outstanding graphics, and faithful reproduction of play. Utilizing Mattel's nine-keypad hand controller, with directional disc and side buttons, as well as a full-color overlay to indicate specific functions, the game is a standard nine-inning affair (without a seventh-inning stretch) for two or even more players (if you want to split up your offensive and defensive maneuvers with a friend) that features a selection of pitches that are controlled via the directional disc. The batter can then take the pitch, swing away, or bunt, with the potential to "time" the hit in the hope of "going" to a particular field.

Wherever the ball might go, it's then the task of the defense to field the ball, by pressing the corresponding keypad number with the fielder, then moving him over in the correct direction with the disc, before pressing the button for where you want the throw to go. Described in this way, it might sound to be a simple matter of coordination and timing, which it is, but Mattel has been notorious for having games that are difficult to master and this is one of them. It takes time and practice to get the basics down and refine them to a more exact science, but if you're into baseball, it's well worth the effort.

This isn't to suggest that Intellivision Baseball isn't without flaws. A player can steal a base quite easily just by taking a big lead, and it's impossible to hit a fly ball. Shots to the outfield are seen on screen as grounders which distracts from the overall effect. A nice embellishment is the addition of an electronic voice shouting "Yer Out" (okay if you're winning, but annoying if you're not).

Graphically, the game delivers realistic throwing, batting, and running action within the confines of a colorful and well-detailed field of play that earns Mattel high marks for an exceptional effort. This game does have more than enough going for it to make it a hit in any league.

MATTEL'S M NETWORK BASEBALL

Designed for use on the Atari VCS, Mattel attempts to bring as much to this version as it can, given the differences of the two systems. To start with, the graphics are good but show limitations, as the players on screen are less defined, and their movement diminished. Part of the reason for the latter observation is due to the joystick controllers. Inherently they

lack the flexibility to accurately and efficiently move players or the ball around the field.

Whatever the strengths of the Intellivision cartridge, they appear just a touch off base here, while the flaws found in the original haven't really been eliminated. By and large, however, M Network does have a more simplistic operation via the joystick and does stand as a decent alternative for those owning VCS systems.

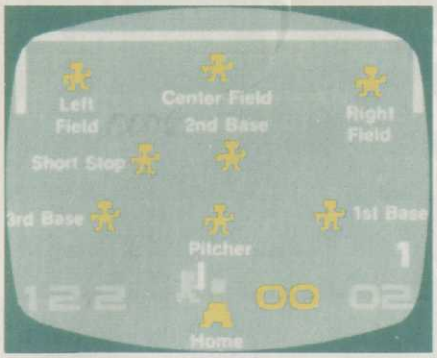
ATARI'S 2600 REAL SPORTS BASEBALL

A vast improvement over its initial entry into the field, Atari has made up for lost time, with a game that might be the most true to life compared to those currently available. While thankfully featuring single-player competition against the computer, for those who don't have a willing opponent handy, Real Sports shows its differences right off the bat, with a gold dust-covered diamond lying atop a field of green and some pretty decent player images to round off the package.

Where this game really shines is in the play; there is a full complement of options and strategies. Offensively there's bunting, stealing a base after the pitch (which makes this game more realistic, if riskier than most), fly balls as well as grounders. Real Sports has even added a home run feature, where the batter can go for the seats on any given pitch. With the rate of success more closely approximating the real summer game, it's a welcome part of the arsenal and shows the thought that went into its creation.

One problem that might arise if you're the batter, is the difficulty in timing your swing. It is more precise than other baseball versions and whether you're playing against the computer or a friend, there are more types of pitches to deal with. This aspect adds to the total detailing present as well as the need to take some spring training in order to get all the moves down pat. But Atari's Real Sports Baseball is worth the effort in the long run.

ODYSSEY'S BASEBALL



With the Atari update for its 2600, this first generation effort shows its weaknesses, although the coming release of the Odyssey 3 might well change the outcome of at least this game, if the company decides to go to bat once again. Visually the stick figure players on screen are large compared to other baseball games and not very life-like or dimensional. You can control the movement of your outfielders before each pitch, but all three shift in tandem and restrict the feeling of a personalized style of play. The defensive alignment is missing a shortstop making it impossible to imagine turning over a nifty 6-4-3 double play. In total, Odyssey Baseball is fairly easy to master, which tends to take away from the appeal for those desiring more sophisticated and complex action. However, it might well be suited for players needing a little minor league seasoning before they attempt to make their debut in the "bigs."

EXTRA INNINGS

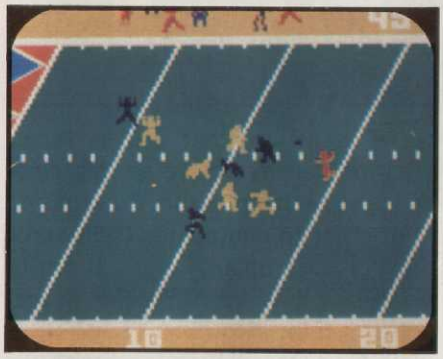
The game has really just begun for baseball since there are a few versions upcoming that might well change the score. Atari, for one, is readying its 5200 entry that promises some great effects and real-life action, while Coleco has also unveiled its new game in town, complete with a new joystick control and multiple screen images.

FOOTBALL

MATTEL'S INTELLEVISION FOOTBALL

Once again Mattel has earned its well-deserved reputation for having excellent sports games. Besides detailed graphics that leave nothing to the imagination, this two or more player game (you can go with teams and split up the offense and defense) takes full advantage of the system's controllers. In fact, there are many who feel Intellivision Football is too faithful to the real thing and, as a result, too difficult to master. But this doesn't have to be seen as a problem for everyone since football is a complex sport to begin with.

Here you could just as easily be an NFL (or USFL) coach in training because your playbook can be extensive. On offense there are a number of options, which you can select by pressing five different buttons on the hand controller overlay once your team is set at the line of scrimmage. Meanwhile, the defense hasn't been forgotten, although alignments are more limited as is the manipulation of the controller—all you have to do is press two numbers. From this point it's just a matter of accurately



controlling the action via the directional disc.

If there is any fault with Intellivision football, above and beyond the degree of difficulty in becoming proficient at playing it, it is that, on offense, you can have only one receiver activated for a pass play, which tends to limit your success ratio if you're up against an equally skilled opponent. But you can't have everything and for the armchair quarterback, Mattel scores points with this effort.

MATTEL'S M NETWORK FOOTBALL

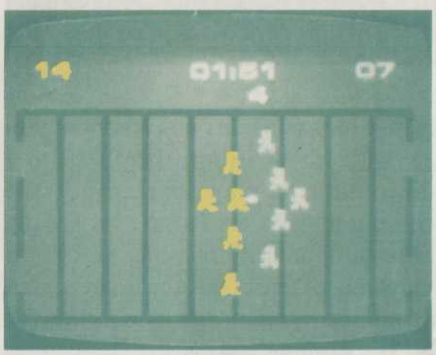
This VCS-compatible cartridge offers considerable improvement over Atari's own initial effort and even adds a few new wrinkles not found in the Intellivision version. The graphics show the attention to visual detail that has marked all of Mattel's software, but there's also more to this game than meets the eye.

While the Intellivision football, for all its appeal, only allows you to control one receiver on any given pass play, M Network Football has expanded this option, which really opens up the action and adds to the quality of the game. In fact, there's even a sense of greater control and interaction since you can maneuver the joystick to direct separate players to different roles depending on the particu-

lar play. Just by moving the joystick back will mean that the player's task for the down is to block, or you can push the joystick away from you, resulting in the player now being able to go out on a pass pattern. These subtleties as well as others, make M Network Football a good catch for any gridiron fan.

ODYSSEY'S FOOTBALL

Similar to its baseball cartridge, we're faced with rudimentary stick figures ambling around the screen, although you can maneuver more than one man on offense. The play isn't too bad considering the visual limitations. You are



able to pick exact patterns on either offense or defense so there is a degree of strategy involved which tends to raise Odyssey Football a notch or two for owners of the system.

ATARI'S 2600 REAL SPORTS FOOTBALL

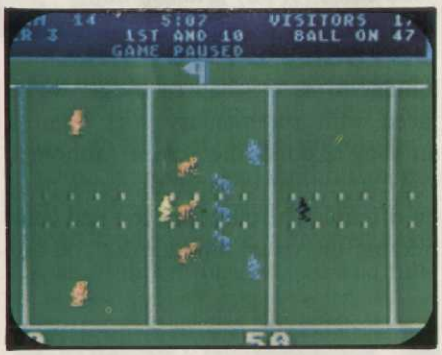
Compared to its original entry for the VCS, Real Sports Football is in another league. What you notice right away is the quality of the graphics and

better color—the players are more realistic and the field has greater depth and definition. There's the option of playing against the computer or someone else, but the competition value of the former isn't what it might be. Rather that being a tougher challenge, it's really easier, since the computer is often predictable in its offensive play calls and defensive sets.

Apart from this criticism, the only other "problem" you may discover is that the small width of the on-screen field makes running plays virtually impossible to pull off if you're up against a good opponent. Otherwise, Real Sports Football is a passable game that at least scores points for effort.

ATARI'S 5200 FOOTBALL

Here's a cartridge that pulls out all stops. Not only are the graphics excellent, but Atari has obviously gone head to head with Mattel to outdo the Intellivision football game, and in many ways they've succeeded. Instead



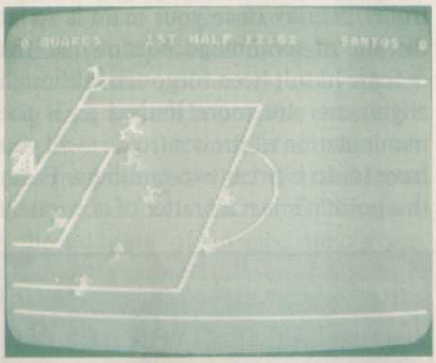
of five men per side (which is what you get with Intellivision), there's six and the option to play solo against the computer. This last feature isn't really pure game conditions, since you get to play only offense, but for practice and refining strategies, it's as good as the NFL's summer camps.

Atari's 5200 Football really shows its strength when two or more players are competing. Using the system's controllers, with the corresponding keypad overlays, the game incorporates many of the options found in real football, including fake field goals, broken plays, and even the opportunity for the quarterback to change the play call at the line of scrimmage. Add in crowd sounds during the action and it's obvious to see that Atari is ready for a championship season with 5200 Football.

SOCCER

ATARI'S 5200 SOCCER

If you're a soccer fan and looking to get your kicks from a home video rendition, you're going to like the Atari 5200 version. The graphics are exceptional with fully dimensionalized players and a scrolling side-to-side playfield that moves along with the action. The game begins with one team gaining posession at midfield and from ther it's a contest of being able to



better maneuver your players versus your opponent, before getting close enough to attempt a shot on goal.

In order to control the location of the ball and stop any potential confusion before it begins, 5200 Soccer features color identification to follow play. On offense, the player with the ball will have a uniform that's a different color than his team mates', while the same will also hold true for the 'activated' defensive player.

An extra touch that further enhances the playability of the game is the ability to 'switch the control' of any given player on your team whenever you want. This feature allows strategy and positioning to become that much more important in head-to-head competition. And even if you're not the most ardent fan of the sport, Atari's 5200 Soccer is one game that has successfully reached its goal.

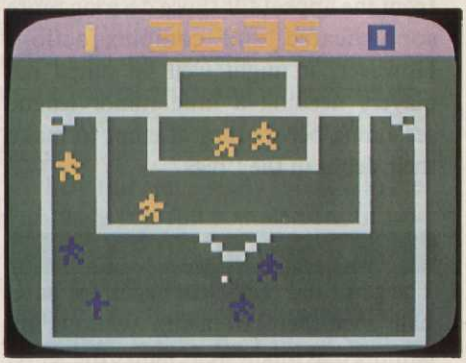
MATTEL'S INTELLIVISION NASL SOCCER

Providing worthy competition to the Atari 5200 effort, NASL Soccer offers many of the same features, including strong and realistic graphics as well as similar player movement and control. With three players per side on screen at any given time, the scrolling field gives a suitable illusion that the rest of the team is there, just waiting out of view.

In fact, you can kick the ball out of view and suddenly find yourself back in the heat of battle with hardly a delay. As for video gamers looking for more realism from sports' cartridges, this one has it all including free, and even corner, kicks, not to mention the sounds of what most assuredly has to be a sellout crowd.

MATTEL'S M NETWORK SOCCER

Compared to the previous two efforts in the field, M Network Soccer misses the mark, although it's not that bad of a game—only different. The graphics are above average and have that distinctive Mattel touch, but the movement of the players is slow. The result



is that, where the Atari 5200 and Intellivision games are normally low scoring defensive struggles, M Network tends to be more of an offensive spree since it's far easier to be on the attack versus trying to stop the flow. Another feature (or lack of one) that adds to this aspect of play, has to do with the fact that there's normally no goalie protecting the net, unless you happen to be controlling that player at the appropriate time. However, even with a computer-assigned goalie, his responsiveness is less than awe-inspiring. You can expect a run and gun experience that might be more suitable for fans of the indoor version of the real sport where two digit scoring isn't uncommon. ▲

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SOFT SPOT

Visions of Eight: A Seasonal Collection of Carts

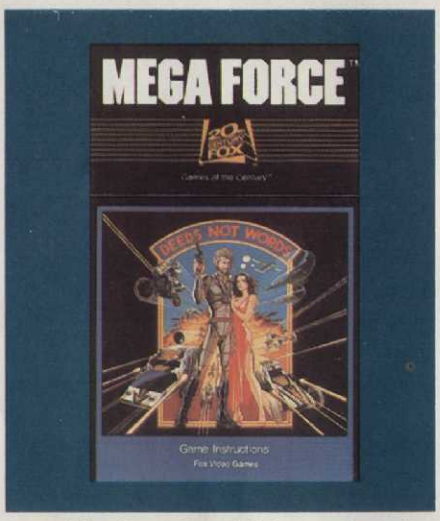
By Perry Greenberg

Software manufacturers have taken us on terrifying journeys to the outer reaches of space, placed us on lily pads and thrown us into the thick of traffic. And that was just the beginning. Now, they're not only clamoring for the licenses of arcade games that bring us other-worldly adventures, but they're also creating exotic locales and giving us genetically-impossible creatures which can perform totally impossible tasks of their own creation. And we cry out for more. Following is a tour of eight home games which will have you protecting fruits from spindly arachnids, and good kingdoms from evil ones; games which put you at the wheel of an air/land vehicle, have you manipulating laser beams and, if that weren't enough, seeing how you fare in a nuclear reactor that's ready to burst. A sign of the times? We'll leave that to the futurists.

Megaforce (20th Century Fox Video Games)

Unlike other games based on movies that were smash hits (*Raiders of the Lost Ark, E.T.,* and *The Empire Strikes Back*) here we have a game inspired by an unequivicable flop. Ironically, unlike some of the limp games fostered by hit movies, this one is a good rousing adventure game which is similar in design and play to Activision's Chopper Command.

Instead of being at the controls of a helicoptor you're at the controls of an incredible missile-firing vehicle (Moto-fighter) that can both fly and convert to a speedy land rover when it lands. Your job is to protect a friendly desert kingdom and destroy an evil one. Much like in Chopper Command you move vertically across a brightly colored desert landscape in a moto-fighter encountering enemy aircraft that is headed toward



your kingdom. In addition to downing the speedy saucers, you must also consider your fuel level and, when need be, refuel by destroying fuel dumps. The dumps are guarded by ground-to-air missiles that can be shot down or dodged. As you successfully proceed along the landscape you will finally reach the defenseless enemy kingdom. Here, you quickly destroy the buildings and go to the next round, which is just like the first round, only faster. Proceed slowly so you can size up and knock out enemy aircraft without colliding with them. In order to destroy enemy buildings, missile installations, and fuel dumps you must land your Moto-fighter, converting it to a land rover that fires downward at a 45-degree angle. It's imperative that you destroy fuel dumps to refuel so you can reach enemy headquarters. When the Moto-fighter lifts off, it converts back to a flying vehicle that fires horizontally allowing you to pulverize the enemy aircraft. If you get confused during the action and fly in the wrong direction, arrows will appear at the bottom of the screen to redirect you to the enemy kingdom which looks like the friendly one, except darker.

Megaforce features four levels of play, each speedier than the previous one. The first level was about all I could handle but if you proceed to the others you'll find them very challenging. You also have the option of starting at the harder levels by using the game select switch.

The graphics and sound effects of this game are excellent. The Moto-fighter is a well-drawn silhouette and the desert background is a colorful array of vivid blue skies, sand dunes and palm trees. The two kingdoms are well represented by little, spired, mosque-type buildings. This is a one-player, joystick-controlled, Defender-like game where you can travel in all directions and reverse on a dime. Megaforce looks and plays well and is far more entertaining than the movie.

Spider Fighter (Activision)

This game, at first, seems to be a typical dodge-and-shoot game. The difference here is the scenerio. Instead of moving a shooter at the bottom from side to side and firing and dodging aliens you're guarding an orchard from attack by ravenous spiders bent on shooting you with poisonous venom and robbing the crop, including oranges, grapes and bananas.

Despite the fact that Spider Fighter breaks no new ground in game concept and play, it gets high marks for being one of the fastest games ever designed for the VCS. The game explodes into action as three colorful arachnids zoom all over the black playing field and, unless stopped, break apart to reveal a host of deadly offspring.

This game requires split-second movement of your joystick. The best strategy to use is to rapid fire while mov-

ing (which tends to spray your bullets in a wider area), and to travel in the opposite direction of your attackers, thus avoiding their fatally poison fire. Stamina is the key to success; don't let up even at the beginning of each round when there are only a few spiders to deal with. In each round you're protecting a different fruit. If the lead spider manages to steal all three of your fruits, the round ends and you lose a shooter. If you see the spider and her cohorts absconding with one of your fruits, don't panic or change your fire, because you'll be able to finish them off long before they get a chance to steal *all* three pieces. When you successfully complete a round you're rewarded with an additional shooter, and if you complete a round without the loss of a shooter you get an extra bonus of 500 points.

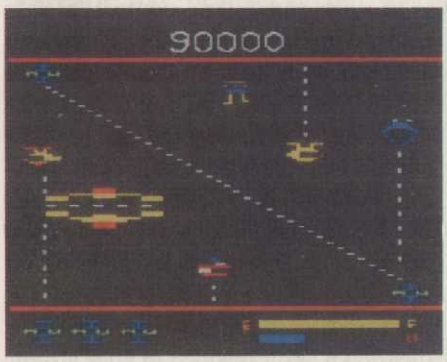
Oddly there are no variations at all in this one-player game and since the action is so fast, Activision should have considered making it paddle-controlled. A trackball controller also works well with this game.

Even though this game presents nothing new in video game play, the graphics and battlefield sound effects are so good and the action so fast that this is one game where the guileless play is hopelessly addicting. Spider Fighter is simple activity that keeps you coming back for more.

Cross Force (Spectravision)

Cross Force is another dodge-and-shoot game with some novel twists. Here you control two lantern-shaped spectrons-one at top, one at bottom-with a joystick. When you press the fire button a beam is emitted between them. The object is to intercept the aliens with this beam and destroy them. The spectron move in the same direction or in opposite directions depending on which of the two game variations you choose. There are four game selections since both variations can be played with either one or two players. In the two-player versions you merely alternate between rounds.

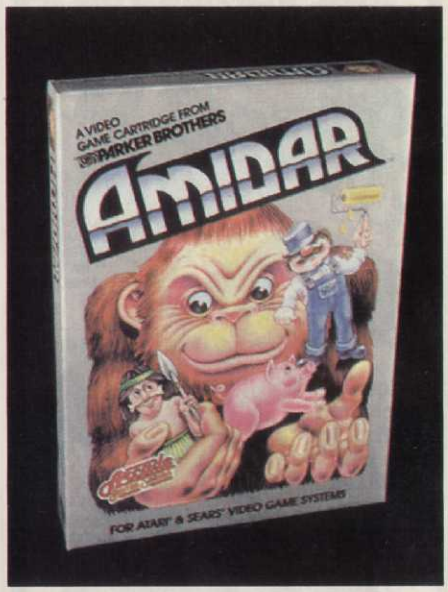
The aliens are dropped on the playing field from their indestructable mother ship that has transported them here from the planet Tzoris. Tzoris, the Yiddish word for trouble, is exactly what you encounter as you attempt to battle an assortment of lethal creatures which send out deadly packets from above and below. Not only must you avoid getting clobbered from both ends but you must keep an eye on your fuel level and temperature gauge. To avoid the unenviable position of running out of fuel or overheating, fuel packets are periodically deposited on the screen and intercept-



ing one will recharge your shooters. To prevent overheating shoot judiciously and try lining up more than one alien in your beam.

This is a difficult game with unrelenting action, good graphics, and sound effects. It provides plenty of excitement for the most demanding of arcade veterans who still enjoy the shoot-and-dodge game scenerios.

Amidar (Parker Brothers)



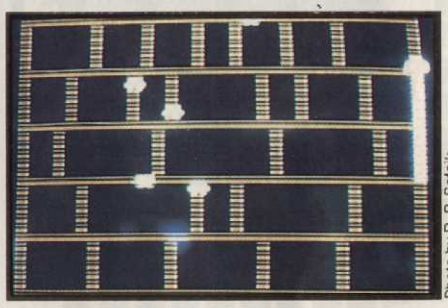


Photo by R. P. Sefcik

Sterns' **Amidar** received much fanfare in the arcades, and deservedly so. Its clever cartoon-like figures of apes, men, paint rollers and pigs made it one of the most refreshing games of the post Pac-Man era. Parker Brothers, which did such a terrific job of taking Frogger out of the arcades and putting in into a home version, fares less well in this attempt at home conversion. Amidar for the VCS is a dull, colorless, lifeless, and sluggish recreation of a lively and colorful game. In fact, if it were not for the name on the cartridge, I'd be hard pressed to see any resemblance at all to its arcade counterpart.

Amidar is a two-screen game involving an ape which must be guided by the joystick over boxes on a grid. Each time he covers the entire perimeter of a box it fills in. When he covers all the boxes, proceed to the next room where you guide a paint roller. In both rounds you are being pursued first by amidars than pigs. Which can be avoided by pressing the jump aid (only four times per round). Unlike the arcade version, there's no bonus round but then again there's not much about this game that reflects its coin-op cousin.

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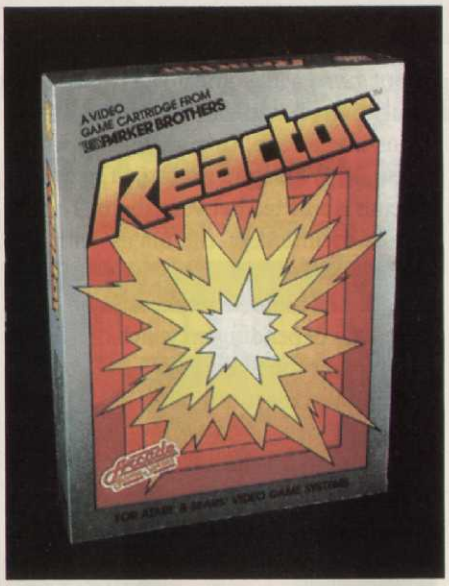
Reactor (Parker Brothers)

Considering that Reactor is virtually extinct as an arcade game, it may be difficult to find one to compare this home version to. On its own, however, this game holds up quite well as a suitable addition to games for the VCS. For one thing, it's truly unique: there is no game that looks or plays like Reactor.



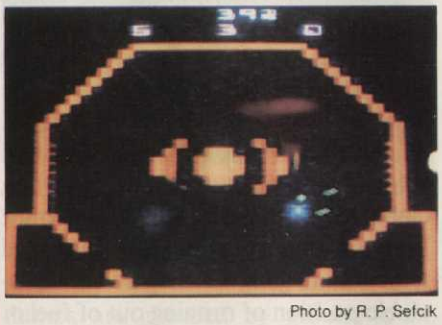


Photo by R. P. Setcik

In this game you control a ship trapped in a nuclear reactor. This ship is attacked by a host of atomic particles bent on destroying you by colliding with your ship, thus forcing the ship to make contact with the deadly walls of the reactor. Your job is to destroy the particles by forcing them into the walls. You must demolish all the particles in a round before the ever-expanding core of the reactor reaches critical mass causing a meltdown. You're aided in your atomic conflict by decoys. These are dropped anywhere at your discretion by firing the red button. By dropping a decoy near the walls, you can lure the particles away from your ship and cause many of them to crash into the reactor walls. You get one decoy per round so use them discriminately.

This is a one-player game with eight variations. Basically the variations involve either playing with the reactor core or, instead of a core, playing with the vortex in the center. The difference here is that when you play against the vortex, contact with it results in the loss of your ship, while contact with the Reactor core is non-lethal: You just bounce off it.

When playing against the core, keep your ship near the core since collisions with it are harmless. Also place your decoys near the walls with the rods. Knocking out the rods will prevent a meltdown. Try placing decoys in the reactor chambers to accumulate additional points.

Pinpoint control of the player's ship is necessary for success with this game and it plays much better with the addition of a trackball controller. However, you can use a joystick and still reach a high score. Reactor is a challenging, unique, and thoughtful game requiring good reflexes and strategy. It's a mystery why the obvious superior arcade version never caught on.

Bermuda Triangle (Data Age)

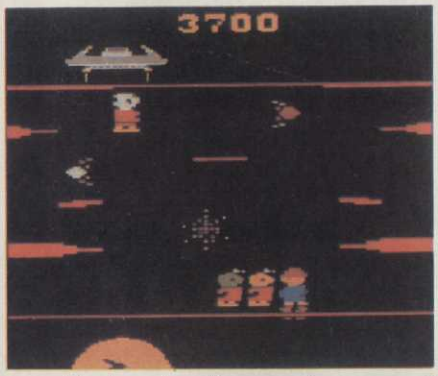
The company who brought us the world's first video rock game, Journey Escape, has come on strong again. This game puts the player in control of a rocket-firing, souped-up mini-sub smack in the middle of the treacherous Bermuda Triangle. On the water's surface are two ships—your research ship and the enemy ship, both of which periodically zoom by. It's your job to gather mysterious artifacts that lie at the bottom of the ocean with your tractor beam which is activated by holding the joystick down. Be careful not to make contact with the Bermuda bombs that also lie on the ocean floor. Once you obtain one of these artifacts, you must make contact with your surface ship to deposit it for 600 points. Also to be avoided is a host of adversaries, including giant squids, sharks, mines, and aquatic drones. Making contact with a mine, bomb, or enemy ship will result in

the loss of a sub. Contact with any other object will nudge your sub and release your cargo causing you to lose it along with 100 points. When you reach 10,000 you get a replacement sub, but you now have to avoid laser beams which are also included with your host of antagonists.

Bermuda Triangle is an exciting fast-paced game that is extremely difficult to get a high score because the deck seems stacked very heavily in the computer's favor. But if you enjoy a very tough, interesting game with plenty to do and colorful visuals, Bermuda Triangle is for you.

Cosmic Creeps (Telesys)

Here's a charming cartridge that is really two games in one. First the Orbinaut is launched from the dying planet at the bottom of the screen. In order to get him to the space station at the top, you make like a galactic frogger as you avoid obstacles to get him there. The second part commences once your orbinaut is at the controls of the station—the rescue of the cosmic kids begins. You launch the kids with your joystick from the bottom of the screen as they make their way to the top and safety. You must protect them by moving the space station above them and firing at cosmic creeps hot on the heels of the kids. If one of the creeps makes it through, or if the planet sinks before 5000 points, the game is over. If you score over 5000 the action continues on a new planet at a faster pace. The first



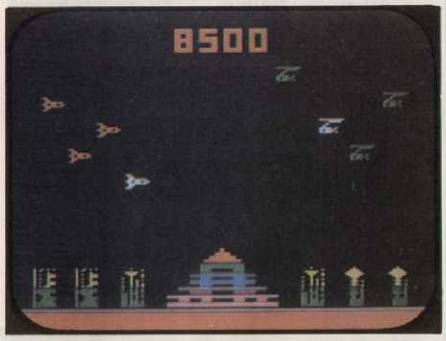
round is slow, but the graphics are good and it takes skill and timing to do well with this game. In fact timing is everything as you must release your bombs from the space station at the precise moment to knock out pursuing creeps and avoid killing innocent children.

At the beginning of the first round when you release your first kid, the creeps are right on the heels of him. Your best course of action is to wait for them to reach a midpoint in the screen then fire just as the kid is directly under your space station. By the time the bomb reaches them it will invariably knock out one of the creeps. In later rounds always aim first for the fastest moving creep since he can catch your kid and destroy him.

Cosmic Creeps is a pleasant game incorporating three different themes, dodging, shooting, and rescuing. The game has clever graphics and it takes skill, timing, and strategy to do well in it.

M.A.D. (Missile Attack and Defense) (U.S. Games)

Two of my favorite games for the VCS are Missile Command and Atlantis. M.A.D. seems to be a hybrid incor-



porating features of each. In this game you're defending six energy stations based to the right and left of your anti-aircraft gun. The one central gun, which is rotated with the joystick, takes the place of the three fixed guns in Atlantis. As in Atlantis, you must shoot down wave after wave of attack aircraft, which turn white and fall from the sky when hit.

This is an action-packed game with good graphics and sound effects, but what is the best feature of this game is that it's one of the few games which provides for real head-to-head two-player competition.

When you set the game for two players a cursor appears on the screen. One player controls the gun, while the other controls the cursor. When the second player's cursor makes contact with the bomb, he releases it by pressing the fire button. You alternate between defender and attacker in each round. The player who accumulates the most points after all the installations are destroyed, wins. As a one- or two-player game M.A.D. ranks high as a challenging and enjoyable play. ▲

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HARD SELL

The Vic-20: Commodore's Small Wonder

By Sue Adamo

The VIC-20 on display at Commodore's Consumer Electronics Show booth looked just like the others that had rolled off the assembly line before it. On the surface was the handsome full-stroke, brown keyboard; within, the potential for BASIC programming, splashy colors, graphics and text. But this particular VIC had special meaning for those who'd brought it with them from King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, for it signified a landmark in personal computer history: Commodore had a million-unit seller.

Introduced here in spring 1981, the VIC (Video Interface Computer) took the home computer market by storm almost immediately. A 5K machine expandable to 32K, it offered users a "friendly computer," with more graphic features than any other in the Commodore line, four "voices" (including one for special sound effects), programmable function keys and access to a line of low-cost peripherals and software—all for about $300. When Commodore shaved $100 off the system's wholesale price, the VIC became even friendlier. It could be had for "the price of a toy."

Says Robert H. Lane, president of Commodore operations in North America, "In this century, only four electronic products virtually guaranteed their owners an advantage in the future: the telephone, radio, television and, now, the computer. Thanks to the VIC-20, every age and economic group can own its own personal computer. No one wants to be left out next year, when we wake up and find computers in every home." Accor-

ding to Lane, Commodore research shows that the main reason consumers have purchased the VIC is for its computing abilities. However, the unit's gaming value is destined for rapid growth as established and new software companies vie for a share of its market.

Hardware

The main unit (16 by 8¼ by 3¼ inches) features a full-sized, 66 key keyboard that can be used in two modes: text, featuring upper-, and lowercase letters, or graphics, with each key accessing the uppercase letter plus two graphic characters. The number keys provide numerals as well as the symbols their typewriter counterparts do($,#,",!, and so on), a choice of eight colors (when used in conjuction with the control key) and a reverse color mode. Other special keys include an insert/delete key, for adding or removing characters, a run/stop key, which can interrupt a program or load one from tape; a graphics key (shaped in the Commodore logo); and a return key to enter commands and responses. To the right of the main keyboard are four function keys which are used, for example, to reset games and set difficulty levels; to access the printer and disk drive; and to store up to eight functions in creating your own BASIC programs. In the console's upper right-hand corner is an LED signaling when the unit's power is on.

On the VIC's right side is a game port, for connecting Atari-compatible joysticks and paddles (one of each), lightpens and so on; the on/off switch; and power-cord socket, which connects to the AC transformer. In the back, from left to right, are the expansion port for program cartridges; video port, which connects the RF modulator to the TV set; serial port, for hooking up peripherals like the printer and disk drive; cassette port, for attaching the Datasette cassette recorder; and user port, for special accessories like the phone modem. Built into the hardware is Commodore's 6502 microprocessor, which includes 5K RAM (Random Access Memory) and 16K ROM (Read Only Memory). Unexpanded, about 3.5K bytes are available for user programs.

Not included with the main unit but necessary for saving and loading cassette programs (either pre-recorded or user-written) is Commodore's Datasette cassette unit, which sells for about $60. Like an ordinary tape player, it ejects to accept or remove cassettes, and also features record, rewind, forward, play and stop buttons. The tape counter doesn't always coincide with software numbers, but it does get the job done.

Something for Everyone

Back in June 1982 Commodore computer aficionados Bill Munch and George Ewing began a business out of their West Milton, Ohio, homes. The company, Public Domain, was to be a sort of central library of public-domain programs for the PET, VIC-20 and Commodore 64—that is, programs that hadn't been copyrighted or used for commercial purposes. A $1000 initial investment bought them recorders, tapes and disks. They then faced the task of redistribution to users.

"There's been no exchange at all between the Commodore user groups, and I've never understood that. They don't talk to each other," says Munch. "It's a shame because other computers, like Apple, have had public-domain programs supported by their dealers since the beginning. If you approach any Apple dealer, he'll be able to lead you to a box of 25 to 50 disks that are there free for the copying. It's great if you have that kind of network support. Up to now, that hasn't been the way with Commodore. That's where we're trying to go."

The programs on Public Domain's cassettes and disks are provided by users and user groups. After receiving them, Munch and Ewing weed through them, pulling out duplicates and researching those that seem suspiciously commercial. "If they're very high-quality, you get a bit worried. You go scanning through various magazines, trying to find out if they might be commercial programs. If I find a program in the Public Domain files is commercial, it will be pulled; there's no question about it."

For $10, users can buy a disk or two-cassette package that contains 60 to 80 public-domain programs. They're mixed, content- and quality-wise. One VIC cassette, for instance, includes a savings-account aid, checkbook-balancing program, math drill, loan calculator, music from *The Muppet Show*, a superexpander demonstration plus various games: blackjack, camel, pinball, craps, and Othello. "We don't claim that this stuff is of commercial grade. Then again," Munch explains, "we do have some programs that are far beyond commercial grade as far as the way they run."

Programmers in other countries, including Germany and Japan have also begun supplying public-domain programs to Munch and Ewing. "We have one man in Greenland who has nothing to do but play with his VIC, look at the snow and watch the penguins. And we just received an order from a sheik in the United Arab Emirates. Then, some group in The Netherlands is tickled to death to be hearing from somebody in the States. We bought their disks and we'll go ahead and sell them ours for the price of the disk, like they did for us," Munch adds.

Public Domain is gearing up for Commodore 64 users but already has the third collection for VIC in the wings. "The VIC is an excellent machine," Munch claims. "It's super for anybody who wants to start out. They advertise it as being 'user-friendly' and, having worked with a few other machines, I've yet to find a system that's more readily handled by the general public. Unfortunately, Commodore's instruction literature isn't the greatest, but their follow-up books, like *The Programmer's Reference Manual* for the Vic and, now, for the 64, are excellent."

Munch and Ewing answer questions and respond to comments, as well as take orders. Public Domain can be reached at 5025 South Rangeline Road, West Milton, Ohio 45383; phone orders (Master Card and VISA) can be placed at 513-698-5638. —*S.A.*

Software

When it comes to software, the future of the VIC looks bright, indeed. Though not intended as a games machine, per se (Commodore's Max Machine, due this year, will be the company's first such en-

try), many companies are expecting it will be used as just that. Imagic (which will have a VIC-20 Demon Attack ready later this year), Parker Brothers, Sirius, CBS Games and Zimag have all announced plans to join firms such as Tronix, Epyx, HES, Creative Software, Broderbund, Thorn EMI and Commodore, itself, in supplying games for the VIC market. Some games are already available, such as Swarm and Galactic Blitz (Tronix), Serpentine and Choplifter (licensed from Broderbund by Creative Software), River Raid (Thorn EMI) and Shark Trap (Broderbund)—all of which will be reviewed in *VIDEO GAMES'* upcoming computer software department. This is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of what the response has been by major software producers to the VIC's seemingly ever-growing popularity. Plus, Cardco of Wichita, Kansas, and Protecto Enterprizes of Barrington, Illinois, will be releasing adaptors for using Atari games on the VIC-20, which should additionally enhance the attractiveness of the system.

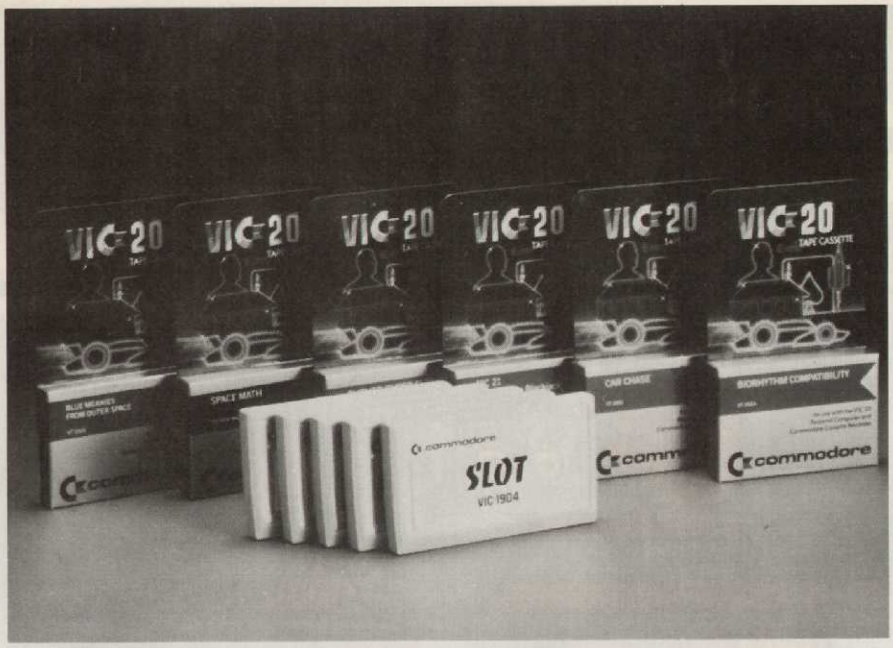
Commodore also produces some 50 pieces of VIC software, including game cartridges, programming-aid cartridges and cassette programs geared to home, business and educational use. Admittedly, the selection of games has left much to be desired, but the hope is that the pickings will get better in the future. A licensing deal with Bally has allowed for VIC translations of Gorf, Omega Race, Clowns and Sea Race, but no other inroads have been made in this area. Variations on popular themes—Pac-Man, Defender, Space Invaders—can be found in the Commodore library, yet they don't allow for simultaneous two-player competitions. And even now, the VIC lacks even one sports game.

In **Cosmic Cruncher**, the player uses a joystick or the keyboard (L for left, I for right, P for up and the period for down) to move the blue Cruncher (shaped in the Commodore logo) around the Milky Way where it crunches pulsars while dodging killer satellites. The player's only defense is to munch one of six super pulsars on the maze, which turns the satellites green and renders them powerless. It's not hard to trace this game's family tree: a sort of Pac-Man gone supernova and, cosmetic changes aside, it's a one-level game with one maze. Like other Commodore games, Cosmic Cruncher allows players to select the colors of the border and game field before resetting. By changing the field to one of the killer satellite colors—say, red—it becomes "invisible." Unfortunately, the "invisible" satellite casts a shadow on the pulsars so, unless you're lost in concentration, it can be detected. On the plus side, the maze is sharply defined and several nice touches —including an animated blow-up of the Cruncher on impact with the satellites and an arcade-style scoring readout after each successful munching—make for enjoyable play.

In **Road Race**, the Commodore keyboard controls steering (D for right, A for left), shifting (function key 7 for first gear to F1 for fourth) and acceleration (return). Shown from the driver's point of view is a very sparse scene: blue road posts against black (night). A yellow slab, representing the hood, rests atop the TV dashboard, which includes a speedometer,tachometer,gear indicator, odometer and temperature gauge. The object is to drive as far as you can in the allotted 100 seconds, overheating and crashing being the main deterrents. Once you are accustomed to the keyboard arrangement, the driving feel is fairly realistic (sound effects—an incessant engine roar and squealing tires taking curves—help.) Graphically, though, Commodore could have done better. Lacking are any other cars, obstacles (save the posts) and scenery. As a driving game, it works; but Turbo, it's not.

Sargon II Chess, done in conjunction with Hayden Publishing and designers Dan and Kathe Spracklen, is sophisticated enough for pros and a fine way for beginners to learn. The board is divided into three areas. At the upper left is the playing board with outline drawings of the pieces, the vertical and horizontal (rank and file, respectively) positions numbered and lettered on the game's border. To the right is the move window, which displays the most recent move along with the last five. The bottom lists messages from Sargon (like "Invalid Move," "Check" and "Checkmate") and indicates how far ahead it's thinking. (A "ply" number, such as 3, tells the player Sargon is calculating three moves ahead.) Sargon Chess can be played with a joystick or by entering the rank and file numbers of present location and desired move. There are seven levels to this game; at its most difficult, Sargon takes an average of four hours to respond to a move. At beginner's level, the response is immediate, and also for beginners is a hint mode. Hitting the "?" key gives the player a suggested—though not always legal—move.

Mission Impossible, one of five Scott Adams adventures available for the VIC, begins with a readout telling Mr. Phelps that a madman has activated a nearby nuclear reactor. His job, "should he accept it," is to disarm the facility before everything goes kablooie. Users enter two work commands, like "turn left," "sit down," "open window," to perform tasks and move around the game, trying to solve the mystery before time runs out. Commodore does provide a somewhat useful word list, but half the fun comes in trying to discover which words and phrases you and the software have in common. Thanks to Votrax's (500 Stephenson Highway, Troy, Mich. 48084) Type-'N-Talk speech system, about $250, players can hear the game as well. All of Adams' adventure games have been decoded to "talk" with the synthesizer. If you like spending hours deducing, any of Adams'variations is for you.



Commodore announced several new pieces of software at this winter's Consumer Electronics Show. The line, packaged like paperback books, will include the titles Know Your Personality, Know Your I.Q., Robert Carrier's Menu Planner and Quizmaster. An educational series teaching BASIC to preteens is also on the way, along with a VIC version of Tooth Invaders.

Accessories

Commodore and other companies have seen to it that VIC owners have the same peripheral options as owners of more expensive computers. Commodore markets expander cartridges for an added 3K, 8K and 16K memory; Data 20 Corp. of Laguna Hills, Calif. goes even further, offering a 40- or 80-column screen (the standard VIC has 22), with an additional 16K or 64K memory. Data 20 and Cardco both offer expansion interfaces, allowing users to combine the memory capacity of several cartridges or easily switch between programs.

Several VIC peripherals are compatible with the Commodore 64, as well. The VIC 1540/1641 Disc Drive, which is currently selling for about $280, stores 174,000 bytes worth of information per disk and has 2K RAM and 16K ROM built in. Also compatible is the VIC 1600 VICmodem telephone interface cartridge. This handy device, the first phone modem to sell for under $100, comes with terminal software and a free subscription and trial hour to CompuServe information service and a special offer on The Source. The modem can also put the user in touch with other information services, including Dow Jones, the World Book Encyclopedia and the Commodore Information Network, as well as local and nationwide user groups.

Commodore's VIC 1525P dot matrix printer, which sells for about $320, prints 30 characters per second, 80 columns across on 9½-inch tractor-fed paper. The printer, which can be adjusted for paper thickness, produces clean, easily-read copy of text or graphics. Upcoming peripherals include a 13-inch color monitor, CBS 1701, expected this spring at under $300; a high-resolution printer/plotter, for under $200, which prints in four colors on 4½-inch roll paper; and, for the musically inclined, an electronic drum set—Digi-Drum.

Conclusion

At any price, the Commodore VIC-20 is an amazing computer; at $200, it's a machine to be had. The book that's included with the system, *Personal Computing on the VIC-20* has its faults. While it details the keys' functions and provides step-by-step instructions for getting the system to perform specific tasks, the overall picture on how those instructions and tasks can be used in other applications is cloudy. Still, it'll have first-time users producing sounds like ocean waves, chirping birds, laser beams and a ringing phone in just about 10 steps. And, the book includes a program that turns VIC's keyboard into a piano, as well as a songwriting program that lets users make up their own songs or transcribe them from other sources. No game system yet offers that. Nor will any game system have you creating colorful, animated graphics. VIC can.

Components have seen to it that the machine will grow with its user, while game players won't be ignored given future plans. Though many electronics companies have announced low-priced computers on the horizon, the fact that VIC is already here—to the tune of a million units—is certain to give its owners an edge in the software and peripheral markets. In preparing yourself for the soon-to-arrive day when there's a "computer in every home," and for recreation, as well, the VIC-20 fits the (modest) bill. ▲

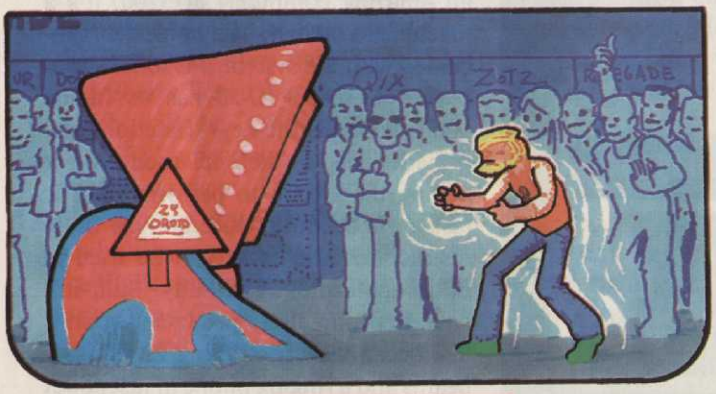
THE ZYDROID LEGION 5

Chapter Five: **BUG FOR MERCY!**

Synopsis: Mumpwax discovers he's snatched the wrong recruit – and it drives him buggy! The Kid's bubble is about to be burst ... while his Earth-bound brother prepares to master the Zydroid machine ...

Words: Lou Stathis/Matt Howarth Visuals: Howarth ©1983 Howarth/Stathis

A hush of tense anticipation descends ...



Moments later, light-years away ...

While back on Earth ...
Hey – where'd he go?
Patrol Captain reporting! Subject appears to ... uh ... not be on the planet anymore, sir.
But how is that possible? Unless ...
Commander! I'm getting a Code Red alert! I think we're under attack!
?
NEXT: FISH FRY!

STATS

The Top 10 Home Games

Feb. 19	Feb. 5	Weeks on Chart	
1	1	22	**Pitfall (Activision)**
2	4	5	**River Raid (Activision)**
3	3	24	**Frogger (Parker Brothers)**
4	2	24	**Donkey Kong (Coleco)**
5	6	24	**Demon Attack (Imagic)**
6	9	5	**Vanguard (Atari)**
7	5	24	**Pac-Man (Atari)**
8	7	13	**RealSports Baseball (Atari)**
9	12	3	**RealSports Football (Atari)**
10	15	3	**Dragonfire (Imagic)**

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These are the best-selling home video games compiled from outlets by the Billboard research department.

The Top 15 Arcade Games

March 15, 1983	Percentage
*1. Pole Position (Atari)	100%
*2. Time Pilot (Centuri)	90.1
*3. Popeye (Nintendo)	84.4
*4. Front Line (Taito)	79.8
5. Joust (Williams)	79.6
*6. Baby Pac-Man (Bally/Midway)	79.5
*7. Q*bert (Gottlieb)	77.9
8. Super Pac-Man (Bally/Midway)	72.9
9. Galaga (Bally/Midway)	66.2
10. Ms. Pac-Man (Bally/Midway)	65.5
*11. Pengo (Sega)	64.4
*12. BurgerTime (Data East/Bally)	63.3
*13. Moon Patrol (Williams)	62.8
*14. Satan's Hollow (Bally/Midway)	62.5
15. Turbo (Sega)	60.3

Up and coming: Mr. Do (Universal), Super Zaxxon (Sega), Monster Bash (Sega), Buck Rogers (Sega), Subroc-3D (Sega), Tac-Scan (Sega) and Liberator (Atari).

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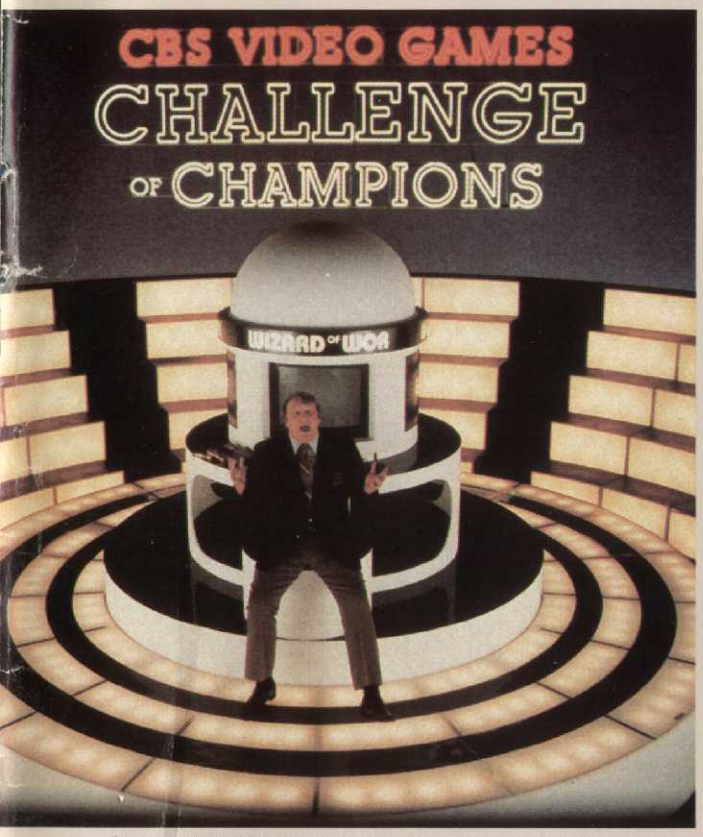
These are the top earning arcade games according to a poll of operators. Those with asterisks indicate operator responses were between 25-50 percent. The percentages are based on the top arcade game.

High Scorers

Astro Blaster	299,100	Gus Pappas Napa, Calif.
BurgerTime	1,806,600	Pete Kane Sante, Calif.
Bosconian	1,345,710	Henry Szarmach Norridge, Ill.
Centipede	15,207,353	Darren Olson Calgary, Alberta, Can.
Dig Dug	4,129,600	Ken Arthur Blackburg, Va.
Donkey Kong Jr.	951,000	Matt Brass Helena, Mont.
Frenzy	4,737,820	Rik Kelly Kenosha, Wisc.
Galaga (level D)	12,753,570	Mike Lynn Durham, N.C.
Gorf	723,300	Allen Menard Regina, Sask., Can.
Gravitar	4,722,200	Raymond Mueller Boulder, Colo.
Joust (new chip 5 men)	2,186,400	Tommy Maddox Benton, Ark.
Kangaroo	754,400	Sam Middleton Panama City, Fla.
Millipede	1,371,507	Ben Gold Dallas, Tex.
Missile Command	69,739,020	Victor Ali San Francisco, Calif.
Moon Patrol	577,480	Eric Ginner Mountain View, Calif.
Ms. Pac-Man	347,400	Chris O'Bries San Diego, Calif.
Pengo (4 men)	599,150	Kevin Leisner Racine, Wis.
Pole Position	620,150	Andy Peacock Franfort, Ill.
Popeye	154,460	Thomas Gellner Pensacola, Fla.
Q*bert	11,025,250	Ron Urias Newton, Ia.
Rally X	238,910	Joel West Shelby, N.C.
Robotron	252,114,340	Eddie O'Neal Durham, N.C.
Satan's Hollow	8,629,035	Michael Ward **Madison, Wis.**
Solar Fox	832,940	Lee Whitney Las Vegas, Nev.
Stargate	70,283,000	Oscar Iglesias Concord, Calif.
Super Cobra	198,470	Matt Brass Helena, Mont.
Super Pac-Man	456,190	Kevin Fischer Dunkirk, Mo.
Tempest	4,706,540	David Plumer Regina, Saska., Can.
Tron	4,036,171	Rick Maldanado Westland, Mich.
Tunnel Hunt	732,910	Mark Robichek Mountain View, Calif.
Zaxxon	2,326,350	Roger Mangum Durham, N.C.

Our thanks to Walter Day Jr., of Twin Galaxies International Scoreboard, 226 East Main St., Ottumwa, Iowa 52501, for providing us with these latest scores. Locations given are where the scores were recorded.

Winning at 'Wizard of Wor' and 'Gorf'. By John Madden.

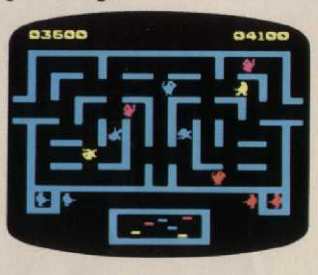


In our first Challenge of Champions, Ray Johnson of Los Angeles defeated Tony Sarkis of New York and David Hayes, a student at Cal Tech, defeated Brian Anderson, a student at MIT.

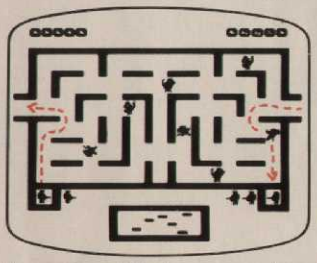
As the sportscaster for CBS Video Games, I get a chance to watch some of the best players in the country in the "Challenge of Champions."

Here are some of their winning strategies.

Wizard of Wor™: You start with three worriors. The object of this game is to defeat the Wizard, his henchmen and your opponent. This is a game you can play alone, or two can play simultaneously. When two play, you have to worry about getting zapped by your opponent as well as the Wizard, and his gang.



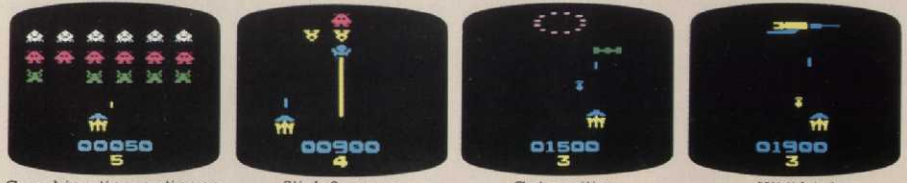
Here's an interesting move you might want to try. Get out into the maze fast, zip out of the escape door, come back in through the opposite side. If you're quick enough, you'll be in perfect position to blitz your opponent's three worriors before they can score any points. The ultimate shutout.



Another variation is to work together. Make a pact not to hit each other (accidents do happen, of course) and go for the record score: 99,500 by Frank Merollo (10/82) and Buz Pryzby (8/82)*

'These are two tough games, but I know you're up to the challenge.'

Gorf™ is four boards in one game. Your father will enjoy this game because with a little luck, he'll be able to go through the four boards a couple of times, but after the third level it starts to get faster...and faster.



Coaching tips: patience | Stick & move | Get position | Hit it high

That's when you separate the players from the parents. You start out aggressively and after 10,000 points the bombs and torpedoes start to come hot and heavy, so be prepared to change to a defensive game plan.

The record high score is still 32,700 by Horace Eckerstrom (9/82),* which gives you some idea of how hard this game is.

Both Wizard of Wor and Gorf are made for the Atari® 2600 System.™ (Look for Intellivision® versions soon.) They're really tough, and the more you play them, the more you'll like them.

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*High scores as of this printing.

CBS Video Games
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