The Players Guide To Science Fiction Games

electronic GAMES

Videogames · Computer Games · Stand-Alone Games · Arcades

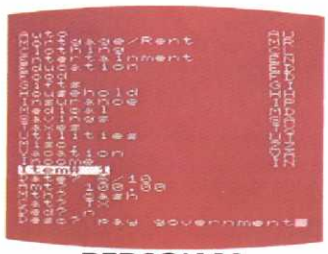
DELL 04114

MARCH, 1983 • $2.95

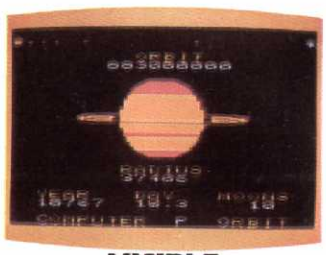
IF YOU OWN A COMMODORE VIC YOU KNOW IT CAN DO ALL THIS.

BASIC PROGRAMMING

WORD PROCESSING

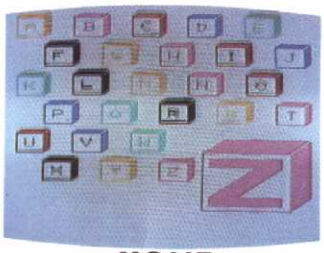


PERSONAL FINANCE



VISIBLE SOLAR SYSTEM

BINGO/ SPEED MATH



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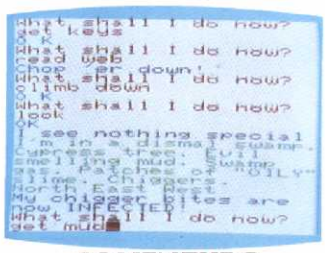
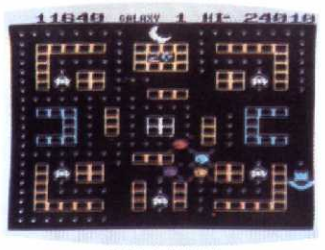


ADVENTURE LAND

BIORHYTHMS



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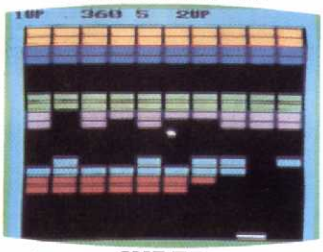
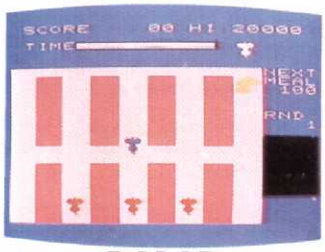


SUPER SMASH



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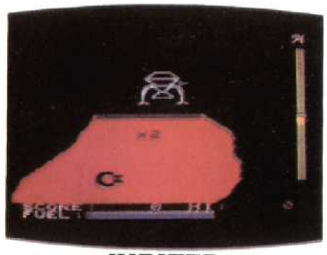

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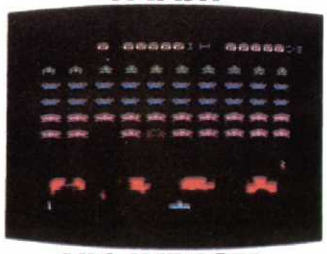

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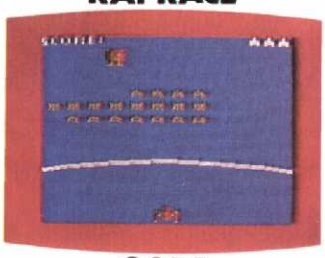

GORF

OMEGA RACE

What those extra few dollars get you is a simple little device called a Commodore VICMODEM.

It connects your telephone to your VIC 20™ or Commodore 64™ computer (resulting in something aptly called telecomputing), giving you access to information such as you see on the screens to your right.

Normally, you'd have to type a short program into your computer to help it make the final transition into a telecomputer.

However, when you buy a VICMODEM, you'll find we've included a free software program. You just load it into your Commodore Datassette Recorder, and presto (give or take a moment or two), you have access to a vast library of information and games.

Speaking of free, Commodore also includes a free subscription and a free hour's time on CompuServe™ and Dow Jones News/ Retrieval Service,® a free trial offer on The Source,℠ and a discount program offer with Comp-U-Store and General Videotex Corp.

Let's see. Did we leave anything out? Oh, yes. Along with CompuServe comes a free membership in the Commodore Information Network. This is your HOTLINE to Commodore. (How often do you get to speak directly to a manufacturer?) Through it we

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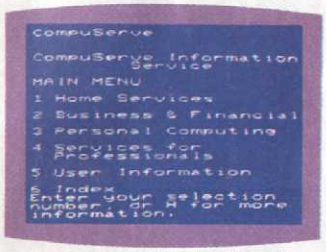
BUT DID YOU KNOW FOR ABOUT $100 YOU CAN ALSO GET IT TO DO ALL THIS?



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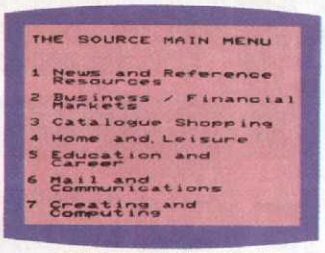

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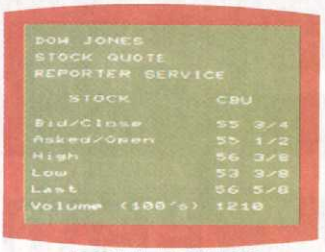

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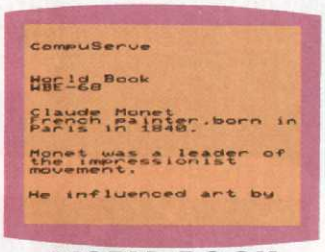

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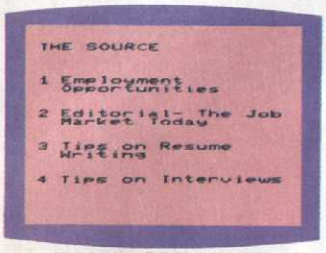

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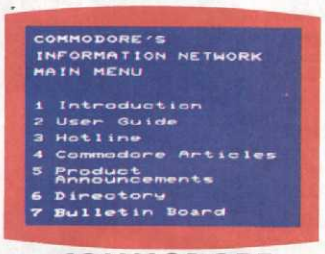

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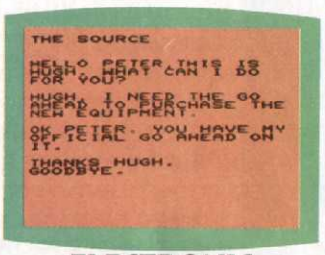
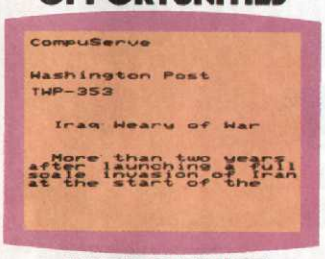
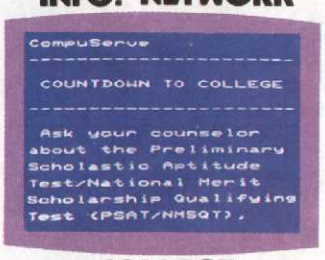


ELECTRONIC MAIL

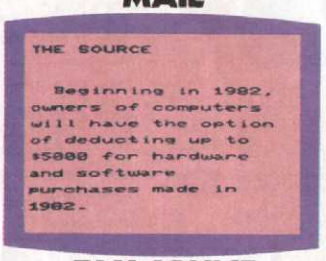
TRAVEL INFORMATION



WIRE SERVICE NEWS

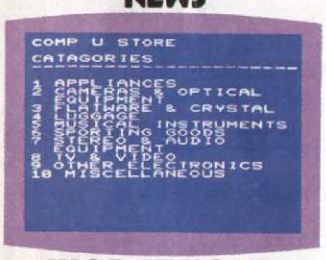


COLLEGE PLANNING

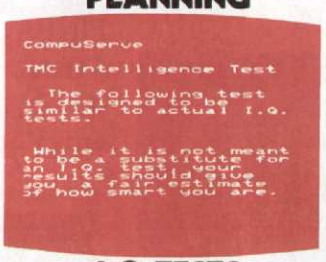


TAX ADVICE

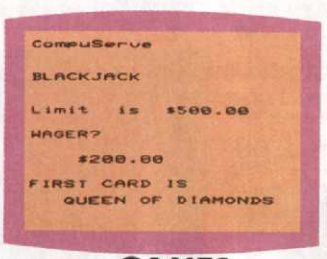
MOVIE REVIEWS



SHOP AT HOME



I.Q. TESTS



GAMES

SPORTS NEWS

can answer any questions you might have about your computer, or programming, or anything else Commodore-related, via electronic mail.

The Commodore Information Network is also your direct line to the Commodore Bulletin Board, which Commodore owners use to keep in touch with each other, for programming tips, Public Domain Software, and technical support.

THE COMMODORE VIC 20, A REAL COMPUTER FOR THE PRICE OF A TOY.

Altogether, these little extras we've included with our VICMODEM add up to a value of $197.50. A nice return on an investment of around $100.

Some computer companies think it's reasonable to ask as much as $500 for telecomputing capabilities such as ours.

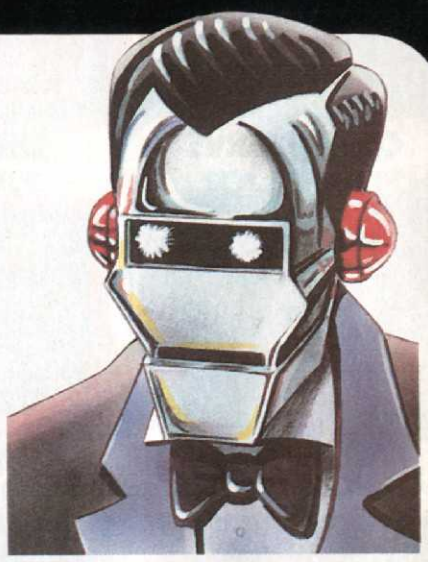
However, with the Commodore VICMODEM selling for around $100, we feel we're being a whole lot more reasonable. Don't you agree?

commodore COMPUTER

These are just a few examples from our existing library of software available for the VIC 20.
U.S.A.–P.O. Box 500, Conshohocken, PA 19428; Canada–3370 Pharmacy Avenue, Ontario, Canada M1W 2K4.

electronic GAMES

FEATURES



Your favorite games have a shot at immortality again, because it's time to vote on admission to

20 **THE ELECTRONIC GAMING HALL OF FAME**

A good joystick controller can add precious points to your scores. Here's a consumer's-eye-view of the latest and greatest.

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The gaming world has been science fiction-crazy since "Star Wars". Our magazine-within-a-magazine presents this year's galaxy of electronic SF entertainment in

45 **THE PLAYERS GUIDE TO SCIENCE FICTION GAMES**

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Can you imagine a veritable supermarket crammed with games? It already exists, as you'll learn when you take. . .

A VISIT TO G.A.M.E.S. **60**

72 *If you love chess but can't always find an opponent of comparable ability, what you need is*

CHESS FOR ONE

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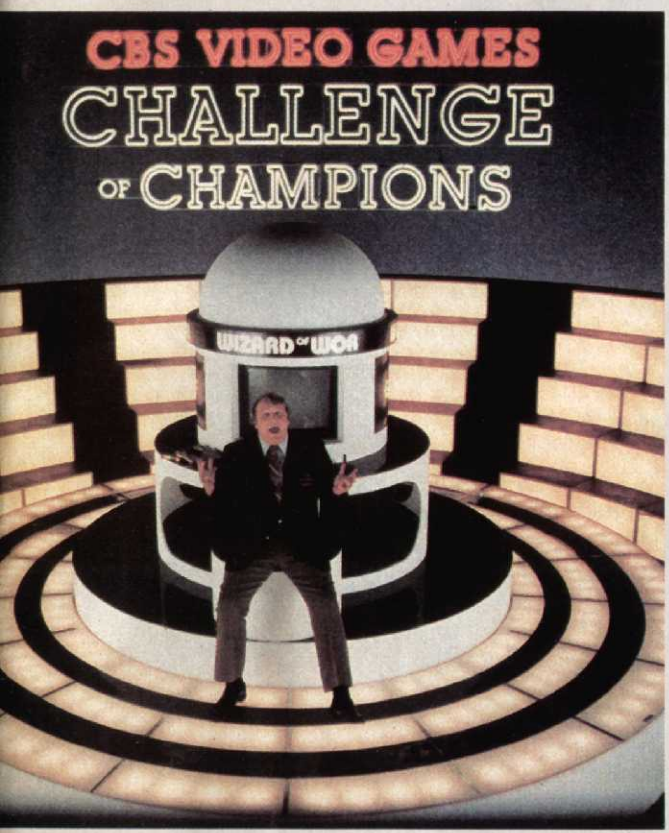
Cover characters used courtesy of Dino DeLaurentis.

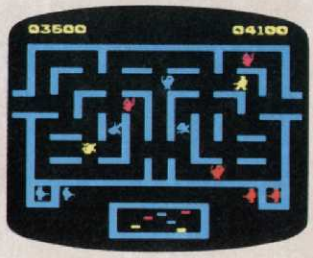
Winning at 'Wizard of Wor' and 'Gorf'. By John Madden.



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.

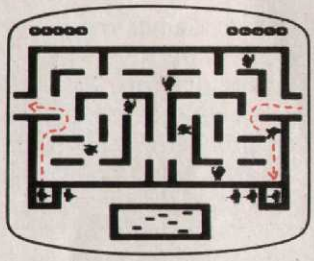
As the sportscaster for CBS Video Games, I get a chance to watch some of the best players in the country in the "Challenge of Champions."

Here's 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.

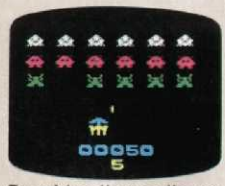
Here's an interesting move you might want to try. Get out into the maze fast, zip out of the escape door, come back in through the opposite side. If you're quick enough, you'll be in perfect position to blitz your opponent's three worriors before they can score any points. The ultimate shutout.



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. 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.



Coaching tips: patience

Stick & move

Get position

Hit it high

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 really tough, but I know you're up to the challenge.

© 1983 CBS Inc. "Gorf" and "Wizard of Wor" are registered trademarks of Bally/Midway Mfg Co.

CBS Video Games

Are you up to the challenge?

Setting Some Standards

By ARNIE KATZ

A few issues back, I sounded off about something referred to as the Electronic Gamers' Bill of Rights. I'm happy to say it got a strong positive reaction from readers and representatives of the industry alike.

A few folks did raise one question, though. They pointed out that although I set some fairly stringent guidelines for manufacturers and retailers, I had said nothing about the electronic gaming *press*.

They have a point. In fact, I believe that the people who create the magazines and books about our hobby have especially serious obligations to the arcading public. That's why one of the first things we did at Reese Publishing Company when we started **Electronic Games** was to establish the principles under which we intended to operate.

It would be presumptuous of me to dictate standards to my journalistic colleagues, but I can speak authoritatively about the way we here at **EG** see our responsibilities to you. Call it our Pledge to the Readers:

1. **Electronic Games** magazine will carry no advertising for firearms, alcoholic beverages or any other product or service which is not appropriate for our family readership with its large segment of readers under 21 years of age.
2. **Electronic Games** will not accept advertising for a home videogame cartridge, computer game, stand-alone device or coin-op which is, in the judgement of its editorial board, offensive.
3. **Electronic Games** will not publish an advertisement containing sexually explicit written or illustrative material.
4. **Electronic Games** will neither review nor recommend for purchase any electronic gaming hardware or software that has not been thoroughly tested by an **EG** editor. You will never read a "review" compiled from a press release in this magazine.
5. The editors of **Electronic Games** pledge to review every item fairly and objectively, giving no favor or preference to any company or individuals.
6. No full-time employee of **Electronic Games** will accept a consulting fee or other service payment from any electronic game-related enterprise, nor may they hold stock or other financial interest in any concern whose products they must review in the pages of the magazine.

Many of the policies outlined in the pledge are an outgrowth of rules already in effect at Reese at the time of this magazine's founding. Others are newly developed to deal with situations which are exclusive to this field. All of them have caused a few scary moments — and prompted us to exercise a bit of self-restraint at times — but we feel they are necessary if **Electronic Games** is to remain the heartbeat of the hobby, a reliable and truthful source of accurate information about the world of electronic entertainment.

The fast-growing nature of our hobby makes it necessary to constantly develop new standards and policies in order to deal with the most rapidly-changing pastime in history — electronic gaming!

Volume One, Number Thirteen
March, 1983

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"...faithfully captures the look, spirit and play of arcade 'Space Invaders'".

-John Anderson,
Creative Computing

"All are excellent versions of the arcade games with super graphics and sound."

-Mark Benioff
A.N.A.L.O.G.

"The graphics display, sounds and game logic are so close to the original, that you might find yourself looking for the coin slot on your computer."

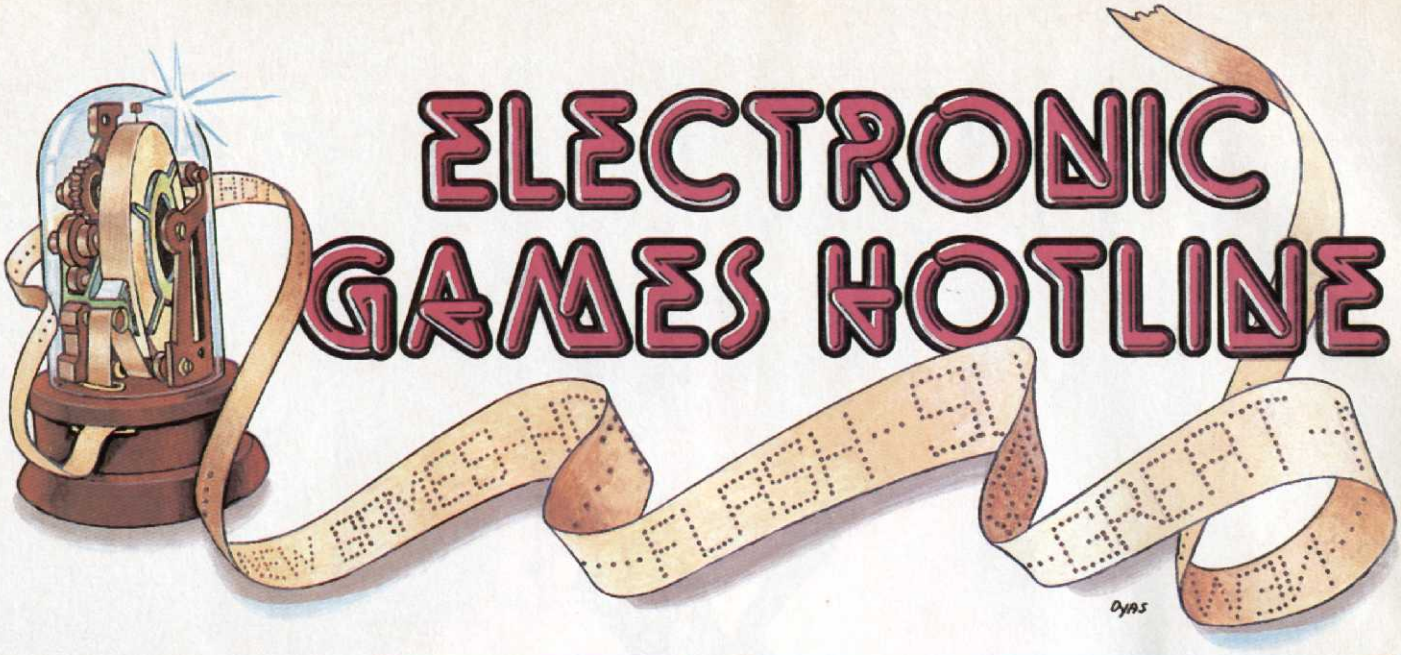
-Gary and Marcia Rose

"'Deluxe Invaders' is by far the best Space Invaders program ever released for a personal computer."

-Leigh Goldstein,
Electronic Games

Roklan Software

We are Serious About Our Games!



MS. PIGGY MEETS ATARI

Atari has combined talents with the Children's Computer Workshop, a subsidiary of Children's Television Workshop, to produce carts for both the VCS and 5200.

The folks over at the Workshop responsible for such popular kideo shows as Sesame Street and Electric Company, are now teaching kids by providing them with "fun, informal learning opportunities," says Paul Firstenberg, President of the Children's Computer Workshop.

The child-tested, age-appropriate, discovery-oriented games will be designed to produce an "environment in which a child can learn educational skills while involved in a fun, colorful activity," according to Michael Moone, President of Atari's Consumer Electronics Division.

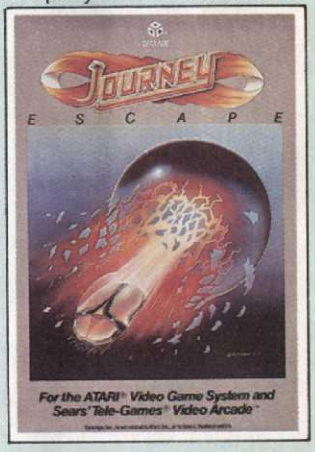
The jointly-created games by Atari and CTW will be released shortly, in mid-'83, and will star "Kermie and the gang".

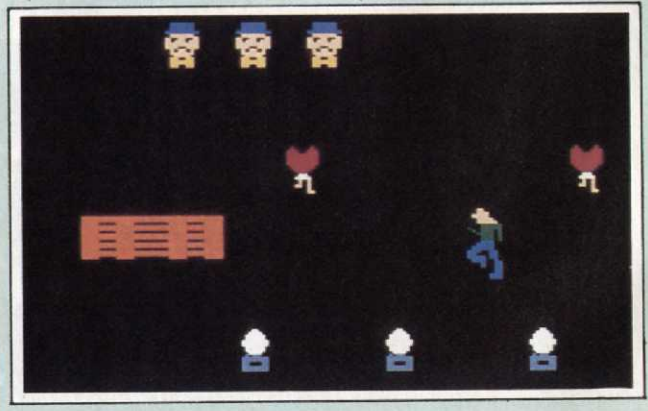
JOURNEY ESCAPES INTO DATA AGE

Data Age, the VCS-compatible software producer, has just become the first company to combine the world of videogames with the Rock and Roll universe by signing American supergroup Journey to an exclusive contract. (Interestingly, Journey records for CBS Records, who also a videogame subsidiary.)

The newly-created Data Age design team has created a state-of-the-art contest in which arcaders must safely escort, via joystick, the band's five members through hoardes of groupies, greedy promoters, photographers and agents. But fear not, helpful roadies turn up periodically to help the harried rockers to their escape vehicle — a rocket ship based on the group's scarab logo.

Using the VCS's audio capabilities to their fullest, the group's music will play as background accompaniment. Moreover, Data Age hopes to be the first home videogame company to sell one of their titles to the coin-op world, where the extended graphic and sound capabilities could turn an exciting game into an explosion.





WICO

COMMAND CONTROL™

Arcade challenge, accuracy, precision, speed, durability, quality, sensitivity and excitement.

Now yours, at home.

Who else but WICO could make that claim? WICO is the world's largest designer and manufacturer of controls for the arcade.

WICO Consumer Division • Niles, IL 60648

WICO Command Control joysticks and trackballs work with Atari® and 8 other home video games and computers.

Atari® is a registered trademark of Warner Communications.

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MINES OF MINOS

COMMAVID RELEASES TWO MORE

Commavid has released two more Atari-VCS compatible games.

Mission Omega strands you on a dying Earth, and requires you to fly to an artificial world built to rescue our planet's population and supplies. **Mines of Minos** asks the arcader to pilot the last remaining robot through maze-like mine corridors. There, he's stalked by aliens as he struggles to reassemble pieces of other robots to form his own squad of fighters, and disperse all aliens from the mine.

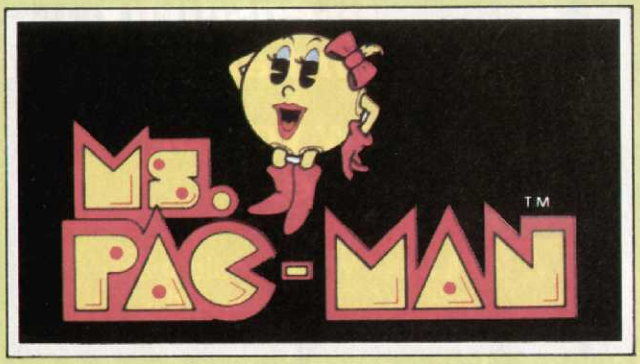
CALL FOR MS. PAC-MAN

Now videogamers will be just a phone call away from a selection of VCS-compatible cartridges, once they subscribe to GameLine — an over-the-phone service that expects to be going full-blast by mid- '83.

Players initially buy a special "Command Module" cart (about $39.95), plug it into an Atari VCS and connect it to a working telephone. Upon registering, the new member can down-load one of the 30 games available each month, for play sessions lasting about 40 minutes each, at a cost of $1.

The roster of games rotates each month and is scheduled to include pre-release carts from major game publishers. The two-way system makes possible the most extensive prize contests ever, in which a good percentage of GameLine subscribers will win everything from T-shirts to college scholarships.

The initial shipment of "Command Modules" are available to **EG** readers only in a charter-member subscription offer, followed by a rapid expansion of the phone-games in mid-'83.

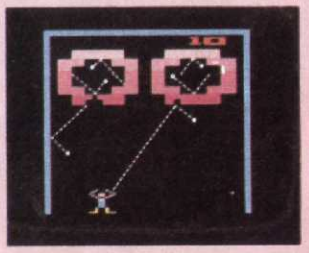


ARCADIA TO CHANGE NAME

The Supercharger, the RAM cart that increases the graphic resolution capabilities of the Atari VCS, is manufactured by a company called Arcadia. At the same time, Emerson has released a new videogame system called the Arcadia 2001.

Sounds confusing, you say? Well, Emerson agreed, and so Arcadia is now being called "Starpath". (Since the Emerson Arcadia 2001 made its way onto retail shelves before the Supercharger, the Emerson team has squatter's rights to the much sought after name.

Starpath, by the way, is releasing a slew of new titles including a D&D-style special, Dragonstomper.



FIREBALL

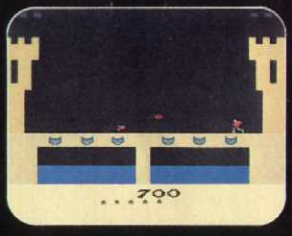
DESIGN YOUR OWN GAME!

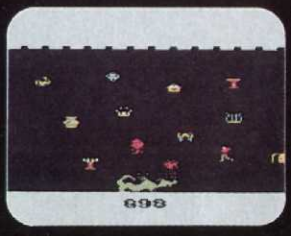
Broderbund Software has created **The Arcade Machine** to guide you, step by step, through the design of a computer arcade-style game. Even if you don't know how to program, Broderbund still promises you'll be able to animate full-color monsters as well as create dramatic explosions and sound effects.

Your completed games will contain automatic scoring, a colorful title page, one or two player options and "fast and smooth arcade-style animation". The disk works with the 48K Apple II Plus.

Give it a try; this just may be what you would-be game-makers are looking for.

DAN SONNET THOUGHT HE COULD TAKE THE HEAT.





What's the matter, Dan? Having a little trouble keeping up with Imagic's® new game Dragonfire™?

But we thought you were so tough, so cool.

We never thought an expert like you would have so much trouble sneaking over the drawbridge to the castle.

Just look at you jumping and ducking and dodging that Dragonfire. Why, if we didn't know better, we'd say you were scared out of your pantaloons.

Well, surprise, surprise. You made it inside the castle. Let's see how fast you can swipe that treasure before you get hit by the dragon's fireballs.

Ouch!!! Ooooch!! Aghhh!!

Shame on you! At this rate, Dan, you're not even going to make it past the first level.

You should know by now that Dragonfire and all Imagic games are created by experts for experts.

And frankly, Danny boy, you just don't qualify.

IMAGIC

Created by experts for experts.™

©1982 Imagic, Inc.

For Atari® 2600™ and Intellivision® Systems

THE NATIONAL VANITY BOARD

Today's Top Coin-op Scores

Electronic Games is proud to announce the creation of the National Vanity Board to identify and honor the nation's arcade aces. Just as the National Home Arcade (set to debut next month) salutes the achievements of the lords and ladies of livingroom gaming, the National Vanity Board will monitor the triumphs of the kings and queens of the coin-op videogaming world.

EG will update the listings each month based on information provided by game manufacturers, arcade operators and, most importantly, our hundreds of thousands of readers. If you or one of your buddies rewrites the record book for the most popular commercial arcade machines, getting the proper recognition for the new champ is as easy as following these three steps:

1. Set the record.
2. Show the arcade manager on duty your record score and have him (or her) sign the proper portion of the report form—copies or facsimiles are fine.
3. Mail your score report to: Electronic Games, 235 Park Avenue South, Sixth Floor, New York, N.Y. 10003.

Score Report Form

Name of Player (Please Print)

_____

Player's Address _____

_____

Name of Game _____

Score _____

Name of Arcade _____

Arcade Address _____

_____

Arcade Operator's Signature _____

Here Are the Arcaders to Beat!

Battlezone (Atari)
Dennis Hranitzky
Grapevine, TX
Record: 9,600,500

Missile Command (Atari)
Joe Fernandes
Artesia, CA
Record: 52,246,260

Centipede (Atari)
Darren Olson
Calgary, Canada
Record: 15,207,353

Star Castle (Cinematronics)
Jack Haddad, Tony Garza
San Jose, CA
Record: 12,536,960

Crazy Climber (Nichibutsu)
Jim Wright
Lake Orion, MI
Record: 487,150

Defender (Williams)
Marvin Norton
Safford, AZ
Record: 49,367,750

Pac-Man (Midway)
Dave Marsden
Santo, TX
Record: 14,880,210

Scramble (Stern)
Jason Itzler
Cliffside Park, NJ
Record: 8,410,500

Phoenix (Centuri)
Darnel Stephens
Piqua, OH
Record: 585,778

Astro Blaster (Sega/Gremlin)
Eron Foote
Spokane, WA
Record: 101,450

Gorf (Midway)
Jim Hart
Jacksonville, NC
Record: 1,237,500

Dig-Dug (Atari)
Dwayne Lindsey
Redding, CA
Record: 3,499,010

Donkey Kong (Nintendo)
Steve Sanders
Clifton, MO
Record: 863,500

Frenzy (Stern)
Jim Howell
McHenry, IL
Record: 1,914,777

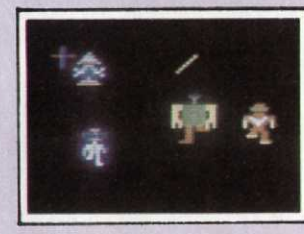
Frogger (Sega/Gremlin)
Dave McPhee
Muncie, IN
Record: 507,230

Galaga (Midway)
Jack Pardo
Lansing, MI
Record: 5,102,380

Omega Race (Midway)
Rick Klin
Hamilton, MT
Record: 1,779,300

Stargate (Williams)
Mike McCrary
Albuquerque, NM
Record: 64,830,268

Robotron (Williams)
Steve Harris
Gladstone, MO
Record: 115,935,000



Tempest (Atari)
Eric Clayberg
Fredericksburg, VA
Record: 1,697,634

Vanguard (Centuri)
P.W. Gunter
Dillwyn, VA
Record: 1,045,610

Wizard of Wor (Midway)
Johnny Thatch
Marietta, GA
Record: 398,000

Zaxxon (Sega/Gremlin)
Barry Begos
Coventry, RI
Record: 1,148,900

Tron (Midway)
John Carver
Holly Hill, FL
Record: 1,554,836

Solar Fox (Midway)
Rick McClellan
Columbus, OH
Record: 221,110

Thief (Pacific Novelty)
John Carver
Holly Hill, FL
Record: 389,890

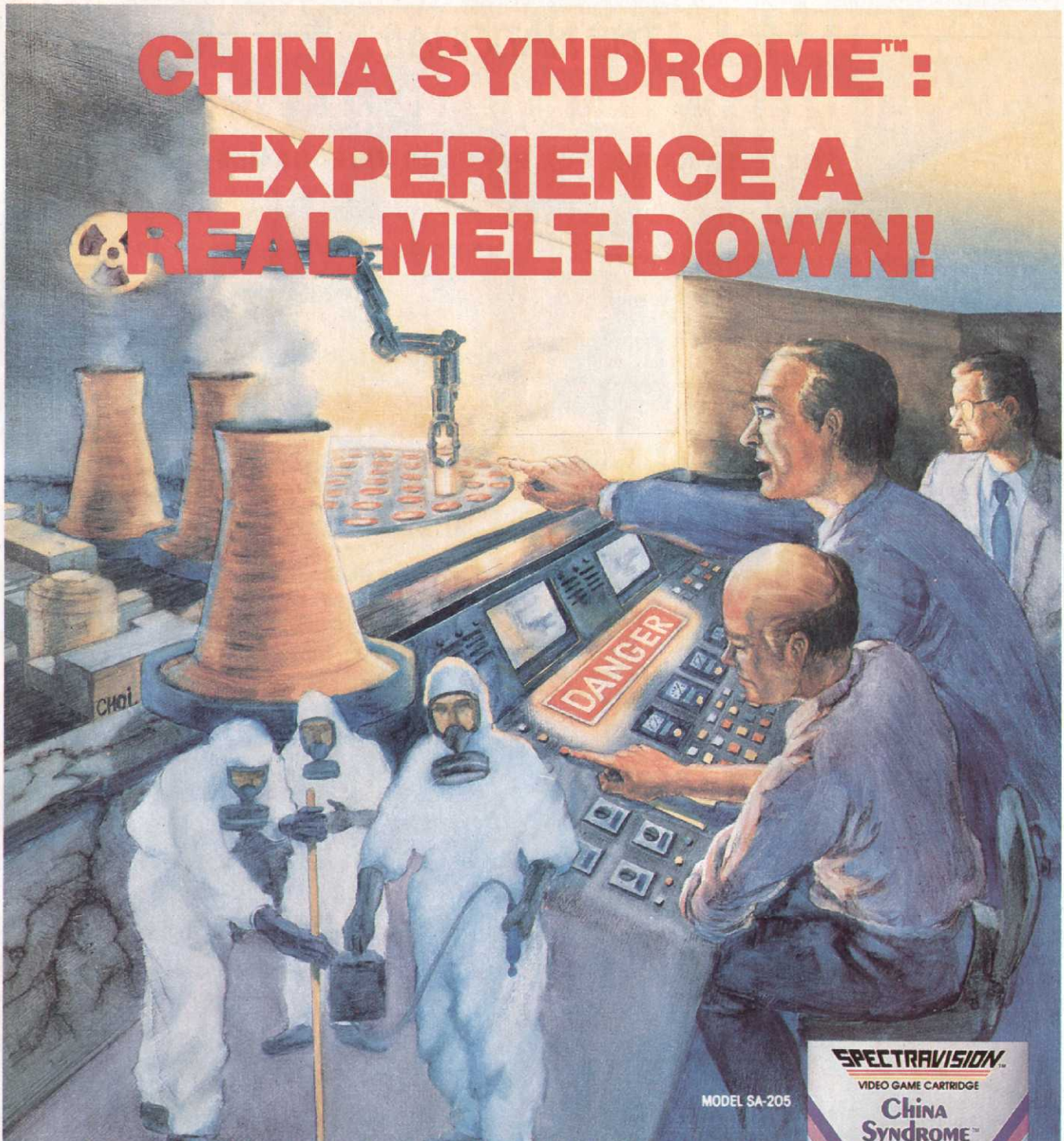
Kick-Man (Midway)
Rich Turkishev
Manitov Springs, CO
Record: 4,429,555

Kangaroo (Atari)
Francis Haggerty
Cresskill, NJ
Record: 162,400

Looping (Venture Line)
Bruce Boulden
Frankfort, IN
Record: 449,500

Space Firebird (Sega/Gremlin)
Bobby Henderson
Belle Chasse, LA
Record: 128,520

CHINA SYNDROME™: EXPERIENCE A REAL MELT-DOWN!



MODEL SA-205

Overheated reactor! Devastating particles! Damaged core! And the unthinkable—meltdown! It has all the makings of a catastrophe. . . and one of the most exciting new video games ever.

For years, the nuclear power plant at Spectra Island has provided safe energy. Now, an earthquake has changed all that. The lives in Spectraville are now in your hands. Dangerous particles must be contained. The Decontamination Diffusion Vacuum must be moved quickly. It's challenging, and at times, frustrating. But it must be done to prevent a major disaster.

Like all games from Spectravision™, China Syndrome™ is incredibly lifelike. With more realistic sound effects. More colorful graphics. More action and challenge. Varied skill levels. Even an introductory demonstration of the game. So try new China Syndrome™ soon. You'll agree that there's only one word for it's realism — unreal.

SPECTRAVISION™

39 W. 37th Street, New York, N.Y. 10018

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

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★ THE NATIONAL ★ ARCADE SCOREBOARD

THE BEST SCORES FOR POPULAR VIDEOGAMES

Photos of readers' best scores are really pouring into the offices of **Electronic Games,** and the competition among the land's arcade aces is even keener than expected. There are plenty of top players out there, and the rankings listed here show that they're hitting the joystick hot and heavy in a bid for national recognition.

The scores tabulated here reflect the first group of games which the editors of **EG** selected to kick off this continuing compilation of home videogaming records. We'll be adding more games and updating their scores each month, a few at a time, until we're covering most of what's hot.

To have your gaming achievements recognized in the National Arcade Scoreboard, all you've got to do is follow a few simple rules:

1. Every score must be accompanied by a photograph of the TV screen showing the score. These photos do not have to be of publishable quality, just readable by our judges.
2. All photographs received become the property of **Electronic Games** and none can be returned.
3. Be sure to include your complete name and address. (We will print only the name and city in the magazine, but we may want to contact high scorers for helpful gaming hints.)

Games currently eligible for the National Arcade Scoreboard are:

★ **UFO** (Odyssey) — Game #1
★ **Asteroids** (Atari VCS) — Game #6
★ **Grand Prix** (Activision) — Game #4
★ **USAC Auto Racing** (Mattel) — Course #1
★ **Spacechase** (Apollo) — Game #1
★ **Defender** (Atari VCS) — Game #1
★ **Space Hawk** (Mattel) — Game #1
(auto-fire, if desired)

THE HONOR ROLL

UFO/Odyssey/Odyssey ²/Game #1
1. **1,636** — Lee Raymond, no address given
2. **1,575** — Jim Peterson, Farmington Hills, MI
3. **1,461** — Marlon Burns, Chicago, IL

Asteroids/Atari/Atari VCS/Game #6
1. **199,990** — Ed Semrad, Waukesha, WI
2. **195,310** — Bob Clarke, Racine, WI
3. **129,460** — Bob Prindle, Erie, PA

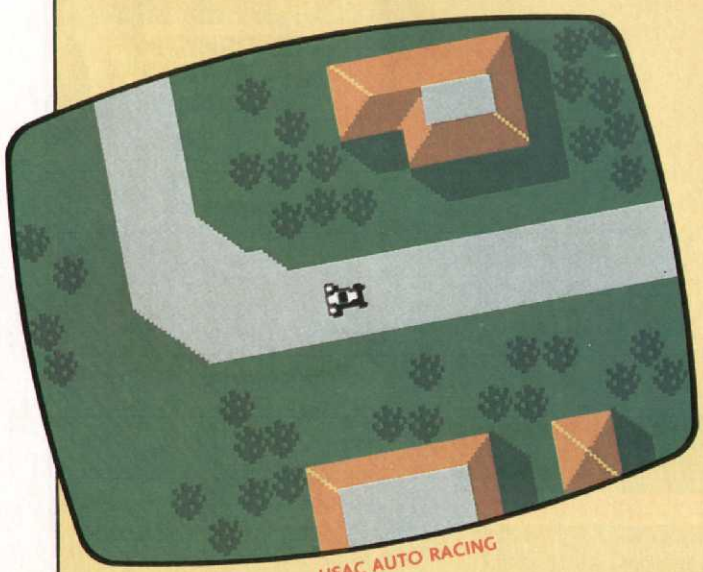
Grand Prix/Activision/Atari VCS/Course #4
1. **1:35:68** — Mike Ratledge, Charleston, SC
2. **1:36:73** — Ed Semrad, Waukesha, IL
3. **1:37:03** — Isaias Banegas, New York, NY

USAC Auto Racing/ Mattel/Intellivision/Course #1
1. **2:52** — Ken Barley, Canby, OR
2. **2:55** — Jerry Kurfess Jr.,Jackson, MI
3. **2:55** — Bob Allen, Sarasota, FL

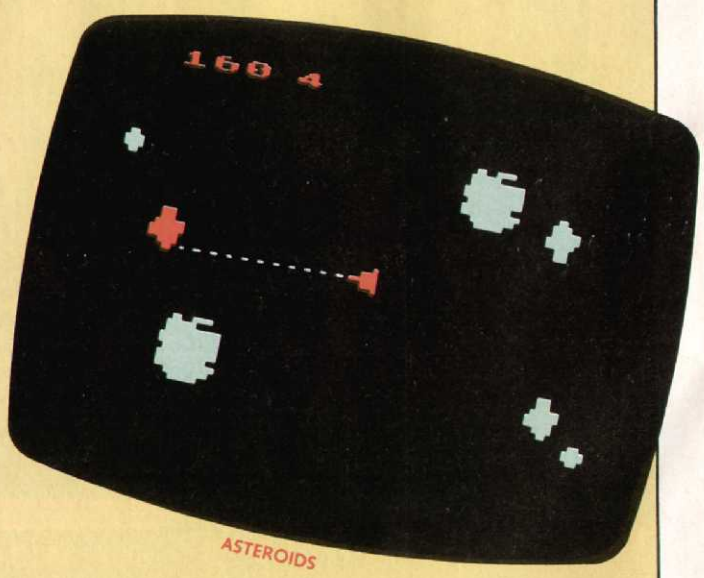
Spacechase/Apollo/Atari VCS/Game #1
1. **185,075** — Tom Garcia, Whittier, CA
2. **93,300** — Ed Semrad, Waukesha, WI
3. **45,500** — Adam Krlic, Medford Lakes, NJ

Defender/Atari/Atari VCS
1. **4,717,850** — Ed Semrad, Waukesha, WI
2. **4,183,500** — Charles Own Jr., Little Rock, AR
3. **2,002,850** — Art Childs, Gaylor, MI

Space Hawk/Mattel/Intellivision
1. **10,142,040** — Luc Labelle, Manitoba, Canada
2. **5,130,660** — Steve Connelly, Boone, NC
3. **3,515,560** — C.R. Murtha, St. Petersburg, FL



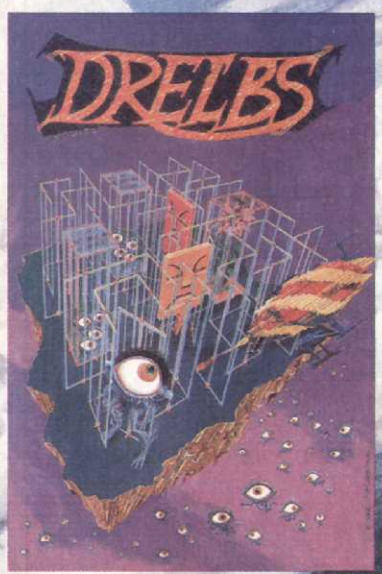
USAC AUTO RACING

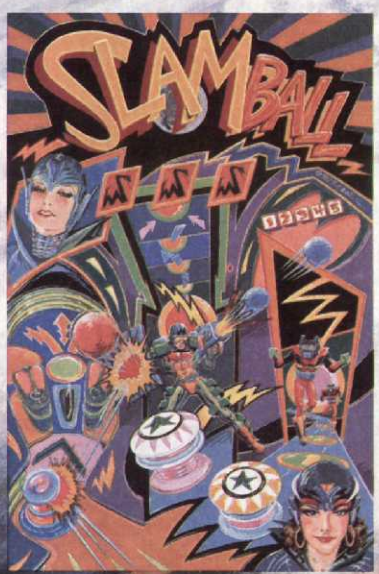


ASTEROIDS

Why let some good times slip through your fingers?

Corner the latest Synapse Software games at your local computer store.





Available in disk, cassette, and cartridge for the Atari 400/800 computers.

Other titles soon available for the VIC 64, IBM-PC and the TI 99/4.

© TIM BOXELL '82

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IBM-PC is a registered trademark of IBM, Inc.
TI 99/4 is a registered trademark of Texas Instruments, Inc.
All game titles are trademarks of Synapse Software.

synapse
SOFTWARE

5327 Jacuzzi St., Suite I, Richmond, CA 94804

Jefferson Services, Inc. (Bus Lines)

GAMES HOP ON THE BUS

Gaming enthusiasts making tracks through Minneapolis, MN will definitely want to bus it, thanks to an independently-run busline that's now operating there.

Based in the Minnesota city with routes southward, Jefferson Lines, Inc. has pulled out the rear seats on some of their commuter buses, and replaced them — but of course! — with **Pac-Man** games!

Interior shot of gamer's fave bus!

Daniel Prins, President of Jefferson Lines Inc., explains that he'll try just about anything to keep his customer's patronage. "People just love the game-equipped vehicles," notes Prins. "Right now, I'm grappling with the question of whether to continue with *Pac-Man* on the buses, or take my six-year old son's advice and go with **Donkey Kong**!"

Keep on truckin' *Mr. Prins!*

ACTV ROLLS INTEL CARTS

The first Intellivision-compatible cartridges from the team over at ACTV have just hit the shelves, much to our delight.

New arrivals, which by the way are a bundle of fun, bring **Pitfall**, a jungle adventure designed by Steve Crane and a calf-roping extravaganza, **Stampede** by Bob Whitehead, to the Intellivision-owning community for the first time.

E.G. READERS PICK THEIR FAVORITE GAMES

☆Most Popular Videogame Cartridges☆

Position This Month	Position Last Month	Game	System	Manufacturer
1	1	Pitfall	Atari VCS	Activision
2	4	Donkey Kong	ColecoVision	Coleco
3	10	Donkey Kong	Atari VCS	Coleco
4	—	Advanced Dungeons &Dragons™	Intellivision	Mattel
5	11	Demon Attack	Atari VCS	Imagic
6	7	Frogger	Atari VCS	Parker Brothers
7	8	Major League Baseball	Intellivision	Mattel
8	12	Zaxxon	ColecoVision	Coleco
9	—	Earthworld	Atari VCS	Atari
10	5	Berzerk	Atari VCS	Atari
11	6	Adventure	Atari VCS	Atari
12	—	Venture	ColecoVision	Coleco
13	—	K.C.'s Krazy Chase	Odyssey²	Odyssey
14	9	Star Master	Atari VCS	Activision
15	3	Night Stalker	Intellivision	Mattel

☆Most Popular Computer Programs☆

Position This Month	Position Last Month	Game	System	Manufacturer
1	1	Star Raiders	Atari 400/800	Atari
2	3	Pac-Man	Atari 400/800	Atari
3	2	Castle Wolfenstein	Apple II	Muse
4	4	Jawbreaker	Atari 400/800	Sierra On-Line
5	—	Choplifter	Apple II	Broderbund
6	—	David's Midnight Magic	Apple II	Broderbund
7	5	Missile Command	Atari 400/800	Atari
8	6	Centipede	Atari 400/800	Atari
9	8	Wizardry	Apple II	Sir-Tech
10	—	Bandits	Apple II	Sirius

☆Most Popular Coin-Op Videogames☆

Position This Month	Position Last Month	Game	Manufacturer
1	1	Donkey Kong	Nintendo
2	2	Tron	Midway
3	6	Zaxxon	Sega
4	3	Ms. Pac-Man	Midway
5	7	Dig-Dug	Atari
6	5	Robotron	Williams
7	7	Jungle Hunt	Taito
8	—	Tutankham	Stern
9	—	Joust	Williams
10	—	Donkey Kong Jr.	Taito

Readers Choose Top Games

Since mere *quantity* of play doesn't necessarily equal actual popularity, **Electronic Games** bases its standings on the votes of its readers. These lists of most popular games are based on the more than 1000 Reader Polls. We update the "picked hits" lists in every issue of **Electronic Games.** So send in your votes!

"ONE OF THE TOP TWENTY HOME VIDEO GAMES. THE MORE I PLAYED IT, THE MORE ADDICTED I BECAME." KEN USTON, BEST SELLING AUTHOR

"ASTOUNDING GAME PLAY. WILL GIVE EVEN THE EXPERTS A RUN FOR THEIR MONEY." JEFF ROVIN, EDITOR, VIDEOGAMING MAGAZINE

"ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL COMPUTER SOFTWARE ADAPTIONS EVER SEEN ON THE ATARI® VCS™." BILL KUNKEL, EXECUTIVE EDITOR, ELECTRONIC GAMES MAGAZINE

"THIS MULTI/SCREEN INVASION GAME DRESSES UP ITS THRILLING ACTION WITH EYE CATCHING GRAPHICS." ARNIE KATZ, EDITOR, ELECTRONIC GAMES MAGAZINE

WE COULDN'T HAVE SAID IT BETTER.

Blowing your own horn is one thing. But when unbiased, independent editors and writers tell their readers how terrific a video game is, you can believe it. Because they've seen them all and played them all. They know what they're talking about.

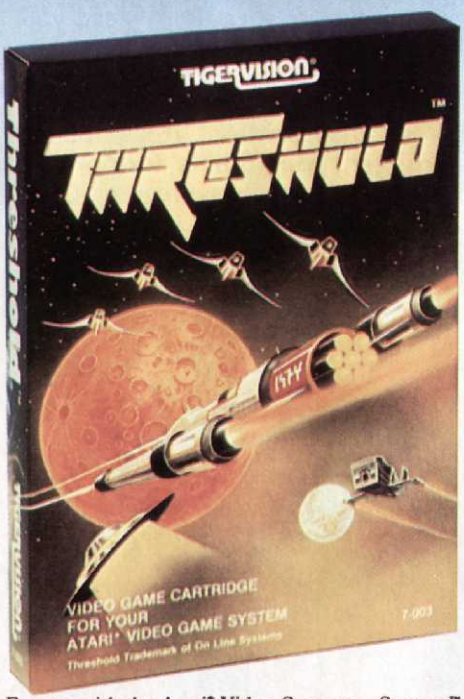
And Threshold™ designed by Warren Schwader, is one game they're all talking about.

When you assume the controls of Threshold (a Tigervision video game designed for the Atari® VCS™ system), you become commander of a space attack ship exploring the galaxy. But be prepared to fight. Because you're about to be attacked by up to 12 different enemy forces, bent on blowing you into never, never land.

If you're to survive the onslaught, your reactions must be split second, your strategies flawless, and your will to win enormous.

And you're also going to love the other great Tigervision games: King Kong™ and Jawbreaker™.

Get your hands on those controls and you may never let go.



For use with the Atari® Video Computer System™

TIGERVISION®

Division of Tiger Electronic Toys, Inc.
909 Orchard, Mundelein, Illinois 60060, Telephone, (312) 949-8100.

Threshold Trademark of Sierra On-Line Inc.
Jawbreaker Trademark of Sierra On-Line Inc.
King Kong Trademark of Universal Studios Inc. © 1982 Universal City Studios Inc.
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Electronic Games
235 Park Ave. South
New York, N.Y. 10003

Readers Replay

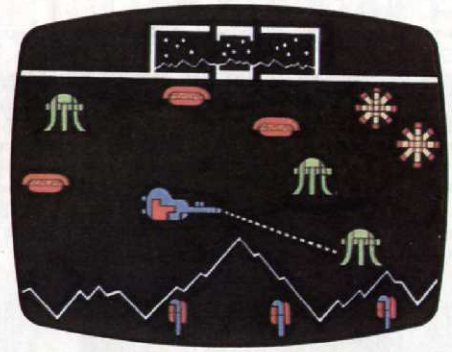
MORE PAC-TAPESTRY!

At a time when there is so much talk about art and science crossing over, we thought you would be interested in knowing about an extraordinary tapestry entitled "Intarivasion" by Sheila O'Hara.

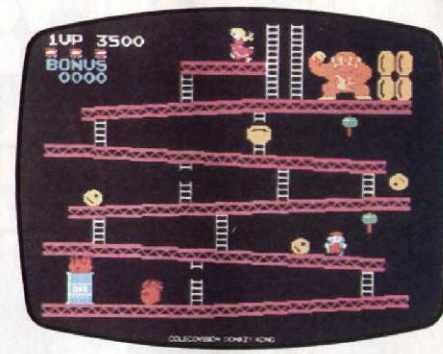
This monumental tapestry has already attracted a lot of attention and shows how quickly **Pac-Man** has entered history!

Dominique G. Mazeaud
Modern Master Tapestries, Inc.
Director

Ed: Well, we may not know about fine art, Dominique, but we certainly know what we like —and this tapestry is magnificent. Readers wishing to inquire about this or other works from MMT Inc., can reach them at: 11 E. 57th St., New York City, NY 10022.



DEFENDER



DONKEY KONG

VIDEOCHEATING REDOUX

In your October issue I read your article on "How to Cheat at Videogames" and I've got a few more to add to your collection.

In Parker Brothers' VCS version of **Frogger**, your points for forward progress do not always register. Other times, the scoring is erratic in the player's favor, awarding more points than it should have. This generally happens when the replay is triggered by hitting the reset switch on the console, as opposed to pressing the joystick's action button. So if you're in the middle of a game and want to start over, turn the VCS off, then on and hit the action button rather than the replay switch — unless you like unusual point tabulation.

Also, the timer on Atari's **Night Driver** is similar to the one in **Superman.** A little experimentation will allow you to start the countdown up to several seconds after play commences.

Finally, on Atari's VCS **Defender,** when in the middle of a big game and you feel like taking a break, try this one: wait for a wave number that is one below a multiple of five (e.g., 4, 9, 24, 39). Then exit either above or below the planet, where you can remain as long as desired without loss of a man. However, if you wait long enough, your planet will be destroyed. This is why it is important to wait for the right time to "take five". Every five waves a new planet is awarded and it is very difficult to survive four waves

Continued on page 108

Sheila O'Hara expresses her interpretation of "Intarivasion"

A New EPYX Graphic-Adventure for the ATARI 400/800*

King Arthur's Heir

RETURN THE SCROLL and claim Camelot's Crown!

King Arthur has made you his heir. But, gallant knight, to prove your worth, you must first journey forth AND DEFY ALL PERILS! Slay dragons; bargain with wizards; explore magic kingdoms and enchanted forests; defeat the evil of Mordred...

FIND AND RETURN TO ARTHUR THE SCROLL OF TRUTH!

KING ARTHUR'S HEIR, designed by Marc Russell Benioff, Offers...

- *Both Puzzle-Solving & Role-Playing Intrigue!*
- *Superb Graphics, Sound, & Color Animation!*
- *Hours of Challenging Heroics*

Requires...

- *ATARI 400/800 with 40K & Disk Drive or with 16K & Cassette Recorder*
- *One Player & Joystick Controller*

Comes with...

- *Game Program & Complete Instructions*
- *EPYX 30/FOREVER WARRANTY*

Now Available At Your Favorite Dealer .....
For the name of your nearest EPYX dealer write:
"KING ARTHUR'S HEIR"
EPYX/Automated Simulations, Inc.
1043 Kiel Court, Sunnyvale, CA 94086

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HALL OF FAME

Will Your Favorite Game Get Elected?

By THE EDITORS OF ELECTRONIC GAMES

Immortality is waiting for two outstanding videogames. Which ones? Ah, but that's the question which the electronic gamers of America must answer by voting in the annual Videogame Hall of Fame Election.

Even a forward-looking hobby like electronic gaming should not neglect its own illustrious past. That's why **Electronic Games** magazine decided, last year, to establish a continuing monument to the best videogames ever created — the Videogame Hall of Fame.

Currently running within the select circle are **Pong** (Atari), **Space Invaders** (Taito), **Asteroids** (Atari), **Pac-Man** (Namco/Midway), **Quest for the Rings** (Odyssey), **Major League Baseball** (Mattel), **Defender** (Williams) and **Star Raiders** (Atari). That number will be increased by two games as a result of this year's election.

All you've got to do to participate is fill out the voting coupon below and mail it to **Electronic Games.** The two videogame cartridges, coin-op machines or microcomputer game programs that corral the greatest number of votes will be installed in the Hall of Fame.

In the most recent voting, some of the titles which barely missed election included **Tempest** (Atari), **Donkey Kong** (Nintendo), **K.C. Munchkin** (Odyssey), **Astrosmash** (Mattel) and **Demon Attack** (Imagic). Will this be the year that one or more of these contenders makes the grade? Or will other super-games ride to glory on a wave of public support? The answer is up to you: Vote!

Rules for Voting for the Videogame Hall of Fame

1. Any knowledgeable electronic gamer is eligible to vote.
2. Only one nomination shall be made by any one person.
3. Any commercially published programmable videogame cartridge, coin-operated electronic game or microcomputer game software program is eligible for nomination.
4. All nominations must be received on the ballot included in **Electronic Games** magazine. A copy or facsimile is perfectly acceptable, if you do not wish to deface your copy of the magazine.
5. The deadline for nominations for the 1982 Videogame Hall of Fame Election is **April 1, 1983.**
6. All ballots should be sent to: **Electronic Games,** Hall of Fame, 235 Park Avenue South, Sixth Floor, New York, NY 10003. Ballots received become the property of **Electronic Games** magazine and none can be returned.

Sounds simple? It is. The two games which receive the highest number of nominations will be inducted into the Videogame Hall of Fame. A complete report of the voting, along with some selected comments from readers about the games will appear in the September, 1983 issue of **Electronic Games** magazine.

I would like to nominate the following programmable videogame, coin-op game or microcomputer software program for inclusion in the Videogame Hall of Fame:

_____

The main reason I feel this game merits such an honor is: _____

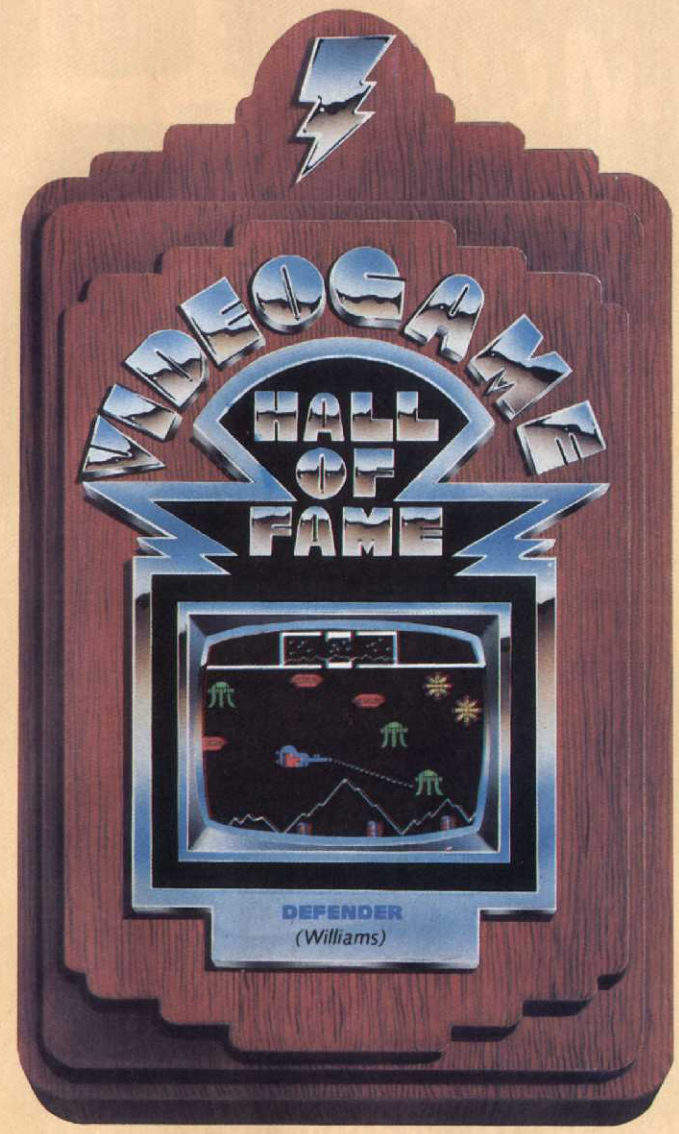
_____

_____

My Name _____

Address _____

Send all ballots, including copies and facsimiles to: Electronic Games, Hall of Fame, 235 Park Avenue South, Sixth Floor, New York, N.Y. 10003.



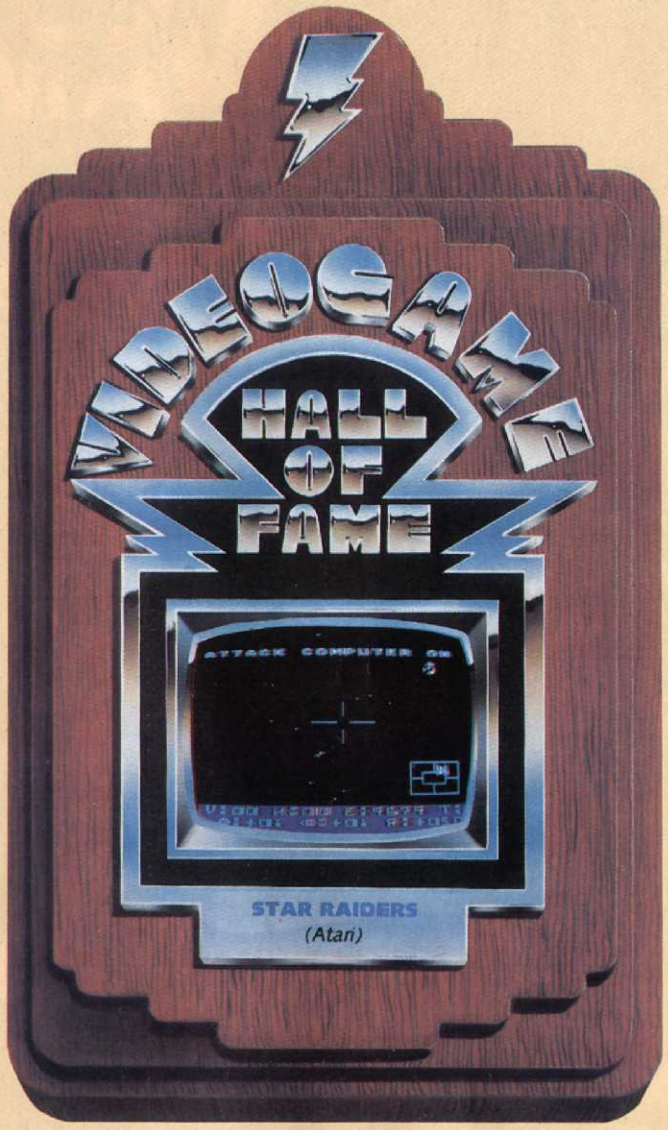
Defender (Williams)

When some future historian compiles a list of the really important videogames, look for **Defender** to appear in a place of honor at or near the top of the roll. With the exception of **Pac-Man,** no game has exerted a stronger effect on commercial amusement centers over such a long period of time.

The reason is crystal clear to anyone who has ever staked a quarter on this machine. *Defender* features the type of thrill-a-minute action that has made the scrolling shoot-out — the genre it pioneered so successfully — one of the most popular play-formats ever incorporated into an electronic game.

Defender is markedly different from the games which preceded it on the coin-op sales chart. Rather than repeating the same action over and over, this game is a mini-adventure with the clearly defined goal of saving the survivors of a planet-wide attack.

And when you've achieved that objective, you know you've really done something. *Defender* is the most difficult of the super-popular coin-ops.



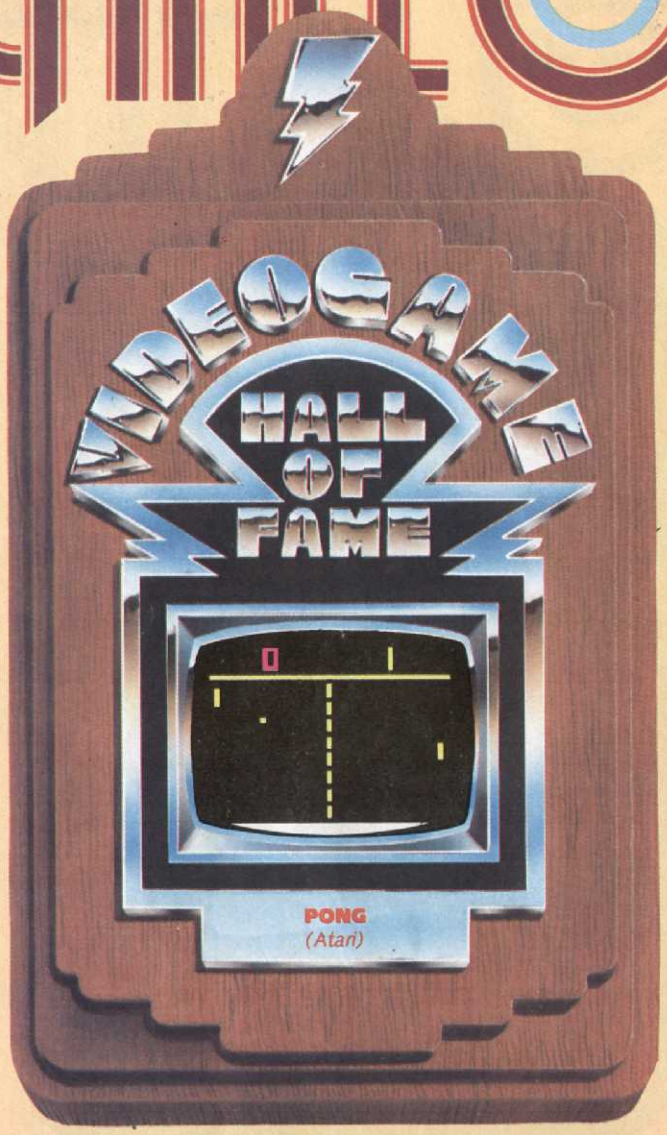
Star Raiders (Atari)

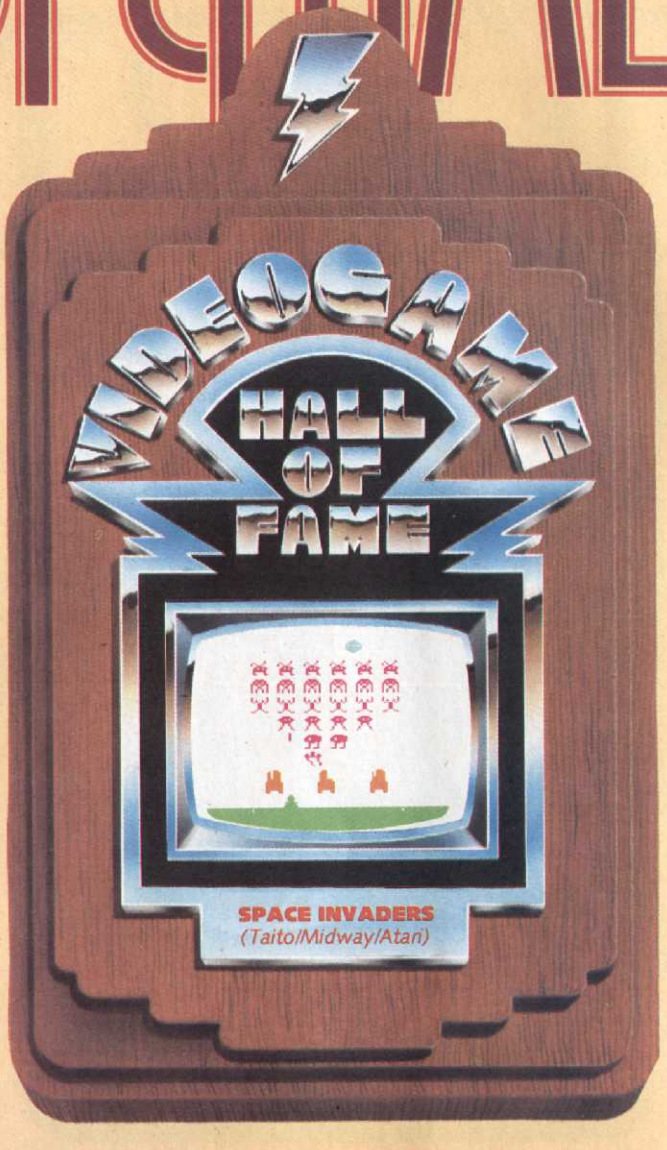
Everyone talks about the tremendous pace of innovation in the computer field, yet here's a game that has remained virtually as fresh and stimulating as the day Atari shipped its first cartridges to the retail stores. **Star Raiders** is a beautifully executed Trek-type game that immediately made all other programs in the same general classification obsolete.

The first thing everyone notices about this program for the Atari 400/800 computer systems is the riveting visuals. *Star Raiders,* however, is much more than just another pretty face. With its multitude of strategic and tactical options, this science fiction classic can keep several computer-gamers happily flying along the spacelanes for hours on end.

Yet *Star Raiders* is more than "just" a great game. It also has its share of historical importance. Its introduction sent shock waves throughout the electronic gaming world, serving notice that computer programs would no longer take a back seat to programmable cartridges in graphic excellence or action-oriented play.

HALL OF FAME





Pong
(Atari)

The doubters said there was no future in the coin operated arcades for the new-fangled videogames. **Pong** proved them wrong. This ultra-simple version of video tennis, designed by Atari founder Nolan Bushnell, proved incredibly fascinating to a pinball-weary public when placed in taverns and other such establishments.

Pong may look crude to us today, in 1982, but the concepts it introduced were bold and original a decade ago. The idea of moving a vertically mobile on-screen bat with a paddle controller formed the basis for hundreds of subsequent videogames.

Pong is also worthy of inclusion in the Videogame Hall of Fame because of the entertainment revolution it embodies. Before *Pong*, videogames could not really have been said to exist. Its popularity opened the door to the introduction of more and more videogames, eventually leading to the popularity of such games both at home and in commercial amusement centers. And make no mistake, it was the arrival on the scene of videogames that transformed the arcades from seedy, ill-lit dens into the comfortable family entertainment centers of today.

Space Invaders
(Taito)

Space Invaders, invented in 1978, proved the biggest arrival from the Orient since Godzilla. It broke the ball-and-paddle game mold forever by offering arcaders an incredible new kind of action — a target game in which the targets could and did fire back!

Space Invaders introduced a play-mechanic that is still the most copied in the videogame world. The idea of the arcader manipulating a horizontally mobile cannon can be found in numerous other videogames, from **Centipede** to **Sneakers.** And, *Space Invaders* is the most relentlessly imitated and copied videogame creation in the world. You can't walk into an arcade in America and not find at least one example of the invasion game genre spawned by this landmark title.

Space Invaders, itself, has proven irresistibly popular in every possible electronic game format. Its fans can enjoy the struggle to defeat the marching alien horde by playing *Space Invaders* as a hand-held, a tabletop unit, a home videogame, a microcomputer program, a coin-op machine or even as a watch or a pocket calculator. *Space Invaders* has penetrated the fabric of our society

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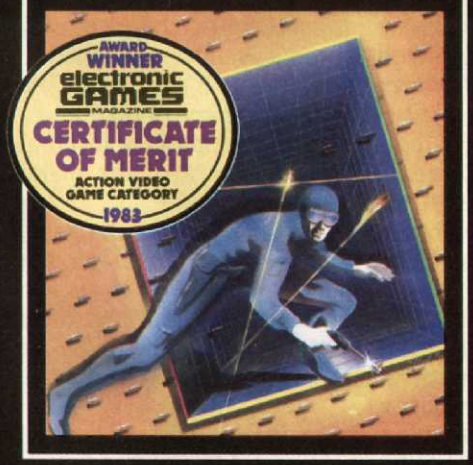

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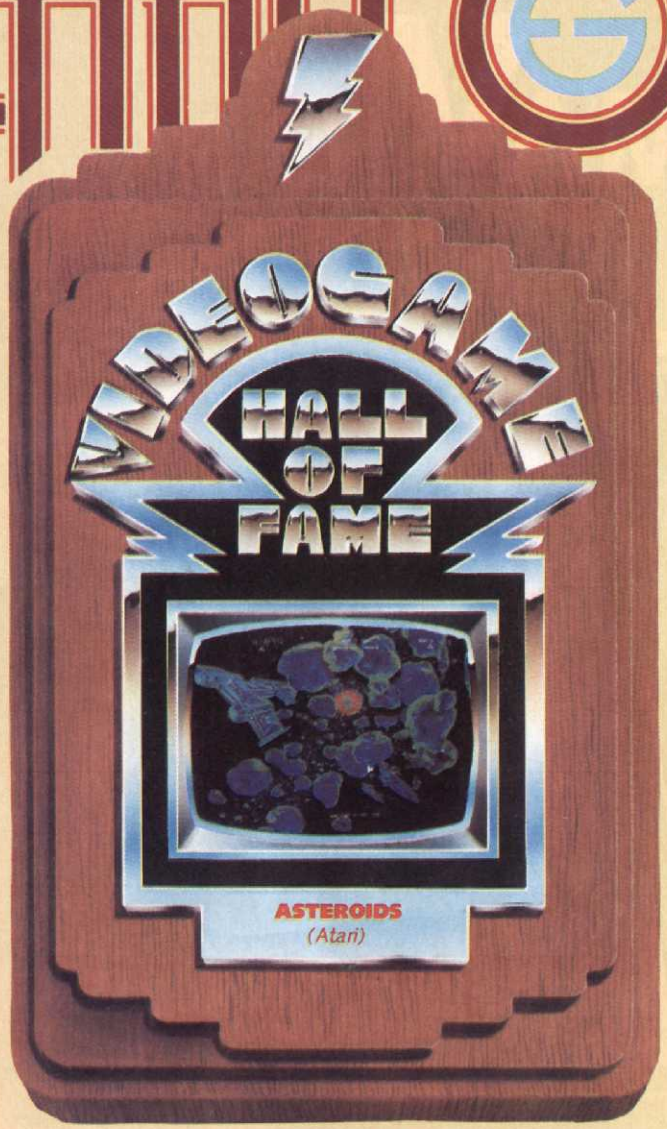
Hall of Fame

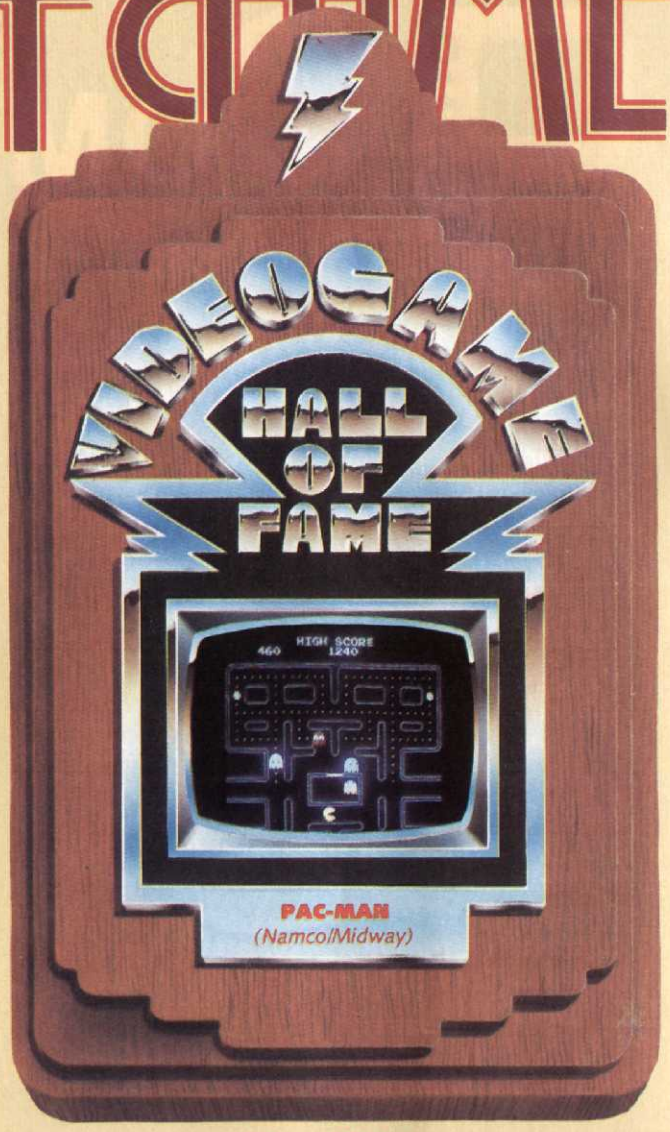


Asteroids
(Atari)

When **Asteroids** supplanted **Space Invaders** at the top of the coin-op popularity chart in 1980, it signalled the dawn of a new era of creativity within the world of videogames. *Space Invaders* broke the old restraints, but the highly patterned nature of its play-mechanic threatened to set up a new set of rules that would've proven very nearly as restrictive. By departing so completely from the *Space Invaders* success formula of the horizontally mobile cannon firing upward at advancing targets, *Asteroids* showed manufacturers that electronic gamers were appreciative of new ideas and didn't want endless rehashes of the same game.

The speed and unpredictability of *Asteroids* has made it a classic in its original quadrascan arcade configuration. The game has also proven a winner as a hand-held, a microcomputer program and a home programmable videogame. Succeeded in the market by the current **Asteroids Deluxe,** the original version is still seen here and there, one of the sternest challenges to the ability and stamina of coin-oppers.

Americans aren't the only ones who love *Asteroids.* An Atari tournament held in 1981 drew entrants from many foreign nations anxious to show their prowess.



Pac-Man
(Namco/Midway)

Pac-Man didn't introduce the idea of a maze or even use it for the first time in an electronic game. What this mega-hit *did* do was incorporate the strategic possibilities suggested by a labyrinth into an overall scheme of play better than any electronic maze game ever designed.

The maze-chase format is as brilliant as it is simple. The idea of including point-scoring and a game of tag that go on simultaneously produces a richly complex contest that is, at the same time, one of the easiest of the major videogames to learn how to play.

Another reason to salute *Pac-Man* is that it is the game that, more than any other, has brought women into the arcade revolution. Its charming graphics, jolly tunes and generally light-hearted approach to gaming have provided an introduction to the hobby of electronic gaming for millions of female players who might not have bothered otherwise.

Finally, *Pac-Man* is the game which proved conclusively to all but the most thick-headed that there's more to videogames than a simple challenge to hand-eye coordination. The many words *Pac-Man* has generated about its near-mystical patterns have proved that the arcading challenge is mental as well as physical.

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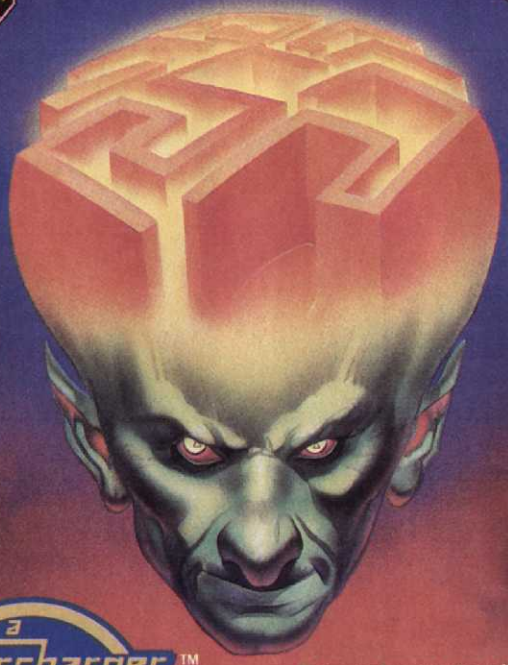

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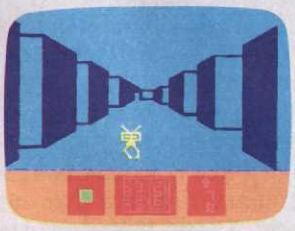

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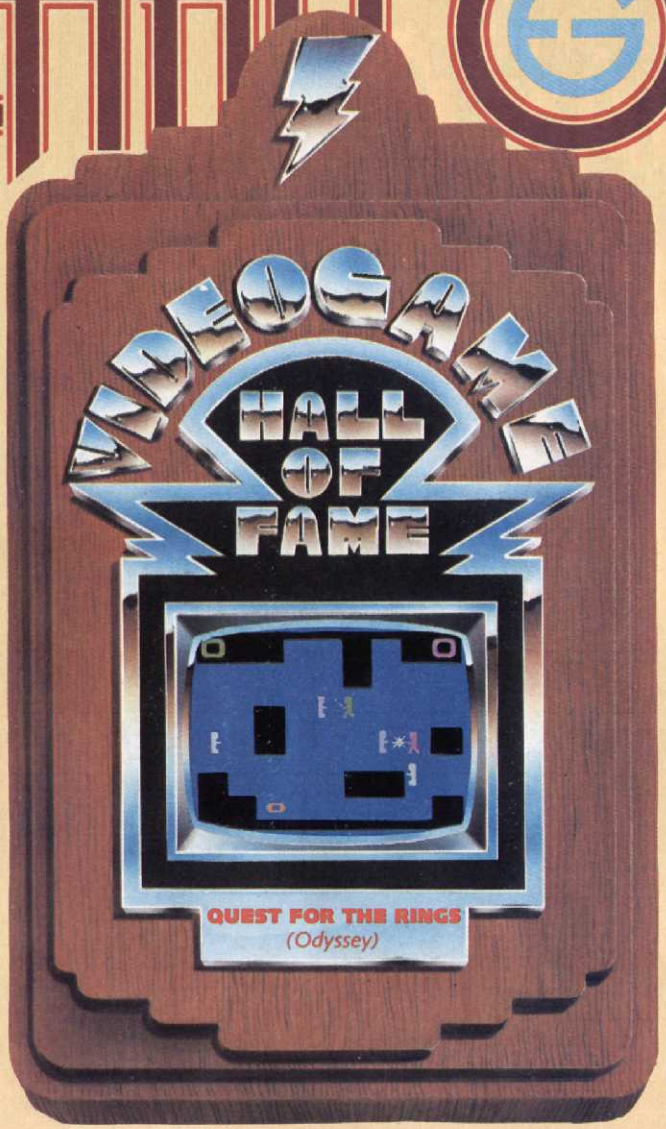

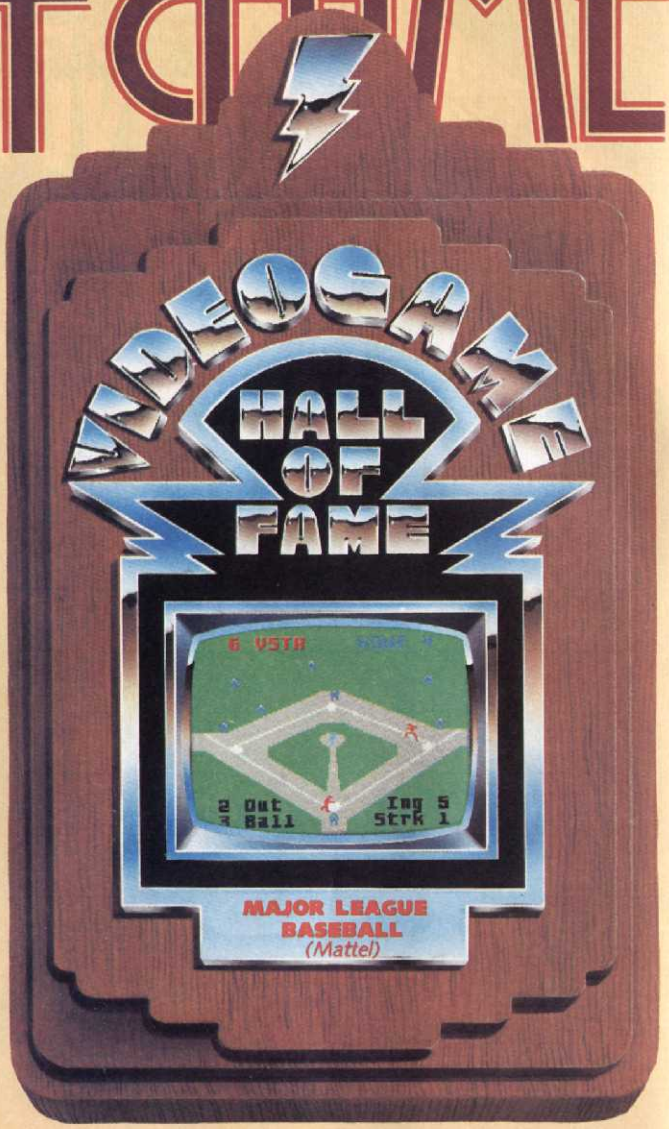

Quest for the Rings (Odyssey²)

Sometimes a game is more important for historical reasons. Other times, it's because it is simply a great game. **Quest for the Rings** is entering the Videogame Hall of Fame as a charter member because it is both of these things.

It is certainly of seminal importance in the history of videogames. For the first time, a single design blended elements of both the boardgame and the videogame in one title. By taking some of the burden for movement and record-keeping off the computer and assigning it to the human participants, designers Averitt and Lehner create a contest with much more scope and depth than the typical videogame cartridge.

Yet *Quest for the Rings* also shines as a game. Its clever arrangement, whereby the two human players must team up to accomplish the common goal of collecting all the rings instead of competing against each other gives this a decidedly different flavor.

Even the instruction manual for *Quest* is noteworthy. It sets forth the rules and nuances so clearly, that a game that could've seemed forbiddingly complex is instead easy to learn and play. A triumph of the first magnitude.

Major League Baseball (Mattel)

Major League Baseball has been widely acclaimed as the finest videogame sports cartridge ever produced, and rightly so. No other program for a programmable home arcade system — or for the current generation of microcomputers for that matter — so successfully captures the essence of the National Pastime.

Every important phase of real-life baseball is reflected in this stunning design. Gamers have come to expect a detailed pitching routine in electronic baseball games, but the inclusion of finely detailed fielding, running and hitting in the same cartridge is a feat no other simulator of sporting events has yet proved able to top.

And then there is the eye-popping graphic treatment. *Major League Baseball* broke exciting new ground with its high-resolution visuals when it first reached market as one of the original cartridge releases for the then-new Intellivision system. It has rarely, if ever, been surpassed since. That's quite a feat in a field in which technology seems to make breakthroughs once an hour.

Major League Baseball belongs in the Videogame Hall of Fame because it is, quite simply, the best of its type. Play ball!

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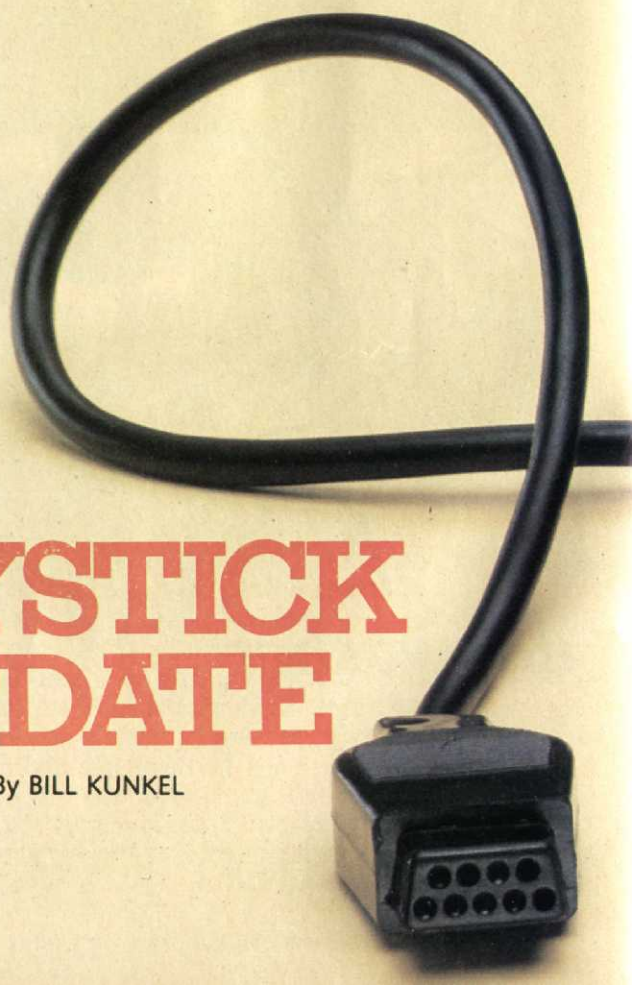
The Latest on Deluxe Home Sticks

Several issues ago **EG** presented an overview of the first explosion in the deluxe-controller market. Using the power of hindsight, it is obvious that what we took to be the explosion was merely the initial flash of blinding light that precedes the actual blast. Since that original feature ("Better Control for Your Games", **EG**, September) appeared, more control consoles, tracballs, top-mounted firing joysticks, leaf-switch sticks, potentiometer sticks and even microswitch joysticks have surfaced on retailers' shelves than an arcader could shake a . . .well, a *stick* at!

So overwhelming is the current flood of controllers, in fact, that we are covering them in shifts. This first half of our opus on videogame controllers will cover joysticks exclusively, while the second half will cover the more *outre'* controllers and peripherals — everything from the Wico tracball to a nine-slot VCS cartridge holder with a blank "feeder" cassette that remains in the game slot while the player dials the title desired.

Right now, though, the subject is joysticks. Lots and lots of joysticks. The most immediately intriguing of the lot, however, are the Remote-Control joysticks from Cynex. The wireless joystick has been a taunting dream for many gamers, especially since Atari announced such a system over a year ago, whetting the appetites of multi-system owners and all-purpose klutzes. Alas, the Sunnyvale folks abandoned the idea just before the release date because of technical problems. Response time of the new controllers — which were configured to serve both stick and paddle functions — was reportedly too slow, and the project was shelved.

The Cynex product doesn't have a double duty joystick/paddle — in fact, the main problem with these sticks is the fact that they are, essentially, *very* thick Atari-standard controllers. The system uses a battery which is placed within a receiver box attached to the standard joystick input on your Atari-compatible system. This black box has an antenna bolted to its rear which is then positioned so that the wireless sticks' signal-sending aerials can easily be pointed in its general direction. Up



JOYSTICK UPDATE

By BILL KUNKEL

Pointmaster (left) is low-priced and top-firing, while Questar (above) is console-styled. Starfighter and Slik Stik (below) offer tight play

The Spectravision joystick offers a grip-style handle, and the option of either top or base fire buttons

Wico offers a variety of controllers

to 20 feet, response was good, and, dependent upon the layout of the room(s), the signal can travel over 50 feet.

The downside involves two things: construction and cost. The standard Atari joystick is not exactly everyone's favorite. It breaks easily and loosens quickly. The Cynex version has all the drawbacks of the original, and the incredible multi-inch thickness makes it virtually impossible for children, women or even men with small hands to reach around and hit the action button. Of course, repair kits for the Atari stick are obtainable through companies such as Screensonics. The other problem is price: $90 is a pretty heavy asking price for a pair of joysticks, even if they are remote control.

The upside comes down to this: they *do* work, and, as of this writing, they're the only game in town.

Next come the popular new top-mounted grip controllers. Wico's super-duper version of their standard bat-style stick (with optional top and base-mounted firing buttons) is a true beauty, but it's also a big son of a gun. Playing with this stick pretty much means placing it on the floor in a stationary position and working from there.

For those who like stationary sticks *and* grip style sticks, the Spectrastick, from Spectravision, is a nice item that comes with four suction cup feet.

Best buy in the top-mounted category, however, goes to Discwasher's Pointmaster, which retails for about $16 or less and provides a nice alternative to the standard Atari joystick at about the same price. Though all-plastic, the controllers are pretty durable and provide a nice, easy feel when moved about. Our only gripe with the Pointmaster, in fact, may be considered a boon to other arcaders. The top-mounted firing button was designed to make you the fastest shot in gameland, since it can fire at about twice the speed of most sticks. The problem is that there is no audio or tactile response to the triggering action. You press the thing but there's no click, or feeling of having depressed anything. If this lack of physical response doesn't bother you, you should be delighted with this bargain-priced entry.

Most gamers prefer different types of joysticks for different games. Some like their action very tight, almost immobile, while others may prefer a loosie-goosie stick that gives them lots of play. It all depends on the games. For maze chases which require fast cornering, most players opt for the loose, flexible joystick. In this department, a dark horse came away with the blue ribbon. The Supr Stick, from D-Zyne Video Products (Waterford, CT) is the only stick on the market to

Supr Stick—it uses micro-switches!

use actual micro-switches, which create an ease of play that will virtually astound you. For hard-to-manage ColecoVision games, such as **Ladybug,** this stick will prove a revelation. The distribution is just starting, and dealer inquiries are being welcomed, but even at $39.95, this is a great joystick.

Slightly tighter action is afforded by the Newport/G.A.M.E.S. durable metal sticks, and Questar offers an attractive, similarly nob-topped joystick in a console-sized housing. This $35 stick has left and right positioned action buttons and is one of the most attractive types of joystick controllers.

The folks at Zircon have reengineered the old "Channel F" stick, altering the only drawback the controller possessed. The Fairchild controller was pistol-grip styled, with a free-moving triangle-shaped headpiece. This top could be used as a standard joystick or in paddle fashion by twisting it left and right. Problem: to fire, it was necessary to plunge down the entire top piece. The new Command Controller takes care of this gaffe by installing a front-mounted action button. The result is a nice, free-moving joystick at a reasonable price.

For fanciers of tight joysticks, however, we at **EG** have unearthed a pair of *really* tight sticks at bargain-basement prices — Suncom's twin-entry into the tight-fingered sweepstakes brings the Starfighter ($17) and the Slik Stick ($10). The Starfighter uses a thick, column-like shaft and offers slight movement-control for games where more play is desired. The Slik Stik is a nob-topped controller that virtually *does not move.* There are eight dot-style directional pointers, set up from the central shaft, to indicate direction. This item carries a 90-day warranty, by the way, while the Starfighter is protected up to two years.

A final note to Intellivision owners: disc-haters rejoice! There are a group of new, easily available adapters that will instantly turn your disc into a joystick. If you like small shafts, the pawn-shaped Skil-Stik is available at $6 a pair from C&T Creations of Providence, RI. The Lasky Injoy-A-Stick seems to have temporarily gone into hyperspace, but the controller offers a nice long shaft that is as easily workable as the Lasky product. The price is $8 for a pair and you can get them through the Jenco Home Entertainment Center of Staten Island, N.Y.

For the final chapter in this saga, however, you'll have to be here again next month — same time, same magazine. Aloha. G

The remote-control Cynex Game-Mate

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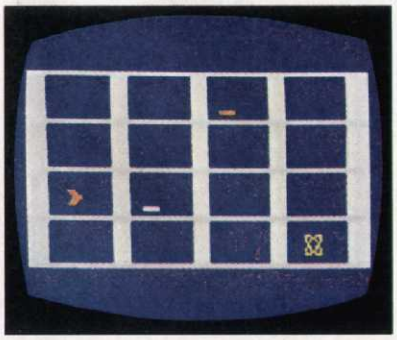

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PROGRAMMABLE PARADE

Siege of the Sky-City!

By ARNIE KATZ AND BILL KUNKEL

ZAXXON

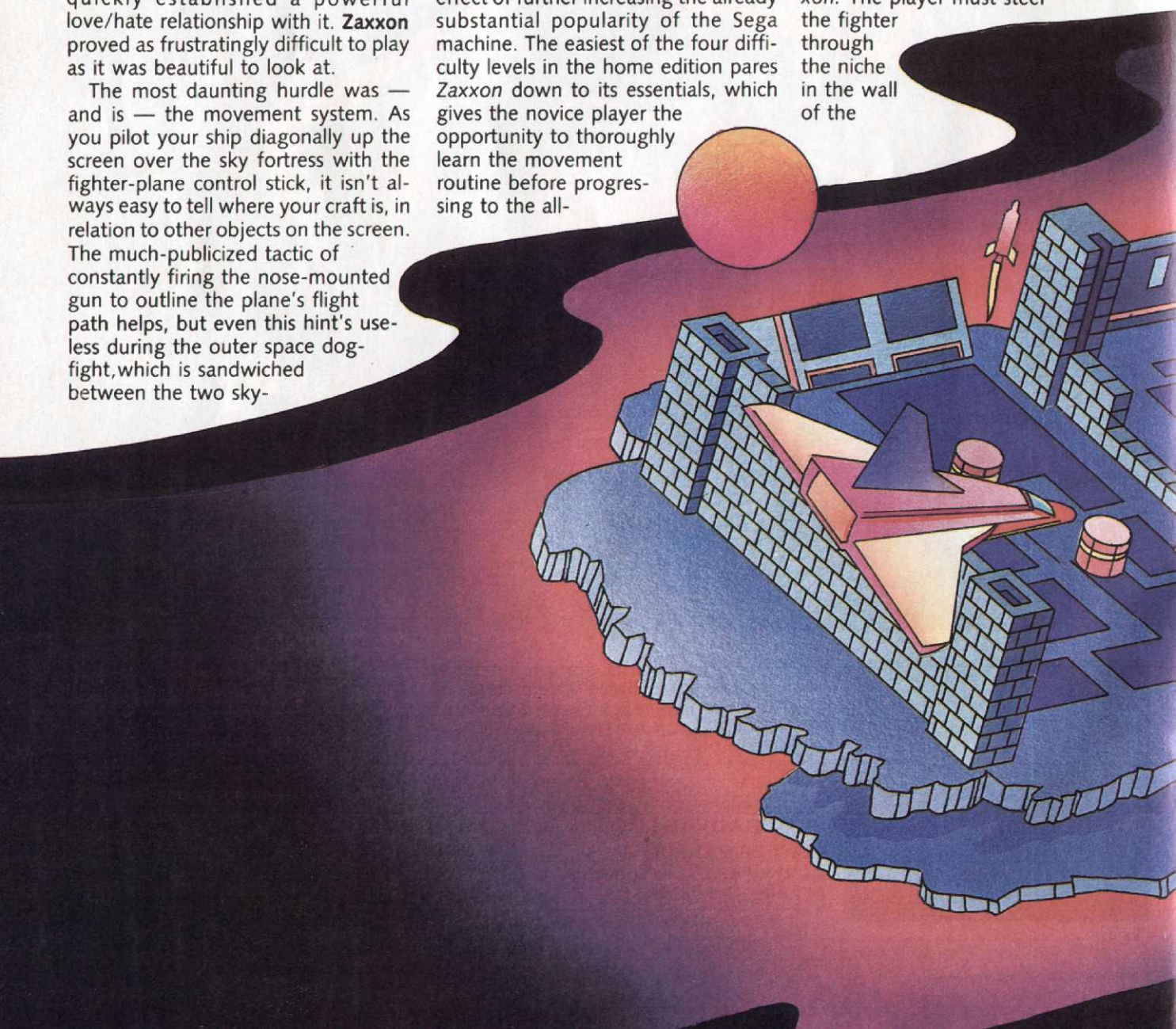
Coleco/ColecoVision

When Sega first premiered this space combat game in the family amusement centers, many players quickly established a powerful love/hate relationship with it. **Zaxxon** proved as frustratingly difficult to play as it was beautiful to look at.

The most daunting hurdle was — and is — the movement system. As you pilot your ship diagonally up the screen over the sky fortress with the fighter-plane control stick, it isn't always easy to tell where your craft is, in relation to other objects on the screen. The much-publicized tactic of constantly firing the nose-mounted gun to outline the plane's flight path helps, but even this hint's useless during the outer space dogfight, which is sandwiched between the two sky-fortress scenarios.

Coleco's *Zaxxon* cartridge for its new "third wave" videogame system is outstanding in its own right, of course, and it will probably have the effect of further increasing the already substantial popularity of the Sega machine. The easiest of the four difficulty levels in the home edition pares *Zaxxon* down to its essentials, which gives the novice player the opportunity to thoroughly learn the movement routine before progressing to the all-out action found in the harder versions.

The inclusion of a simplified variation of the game is a lifesaver, since aerial acrobatics hold the key to *Zaxxon*. The player must steer the fighter through the niche in the wall of the

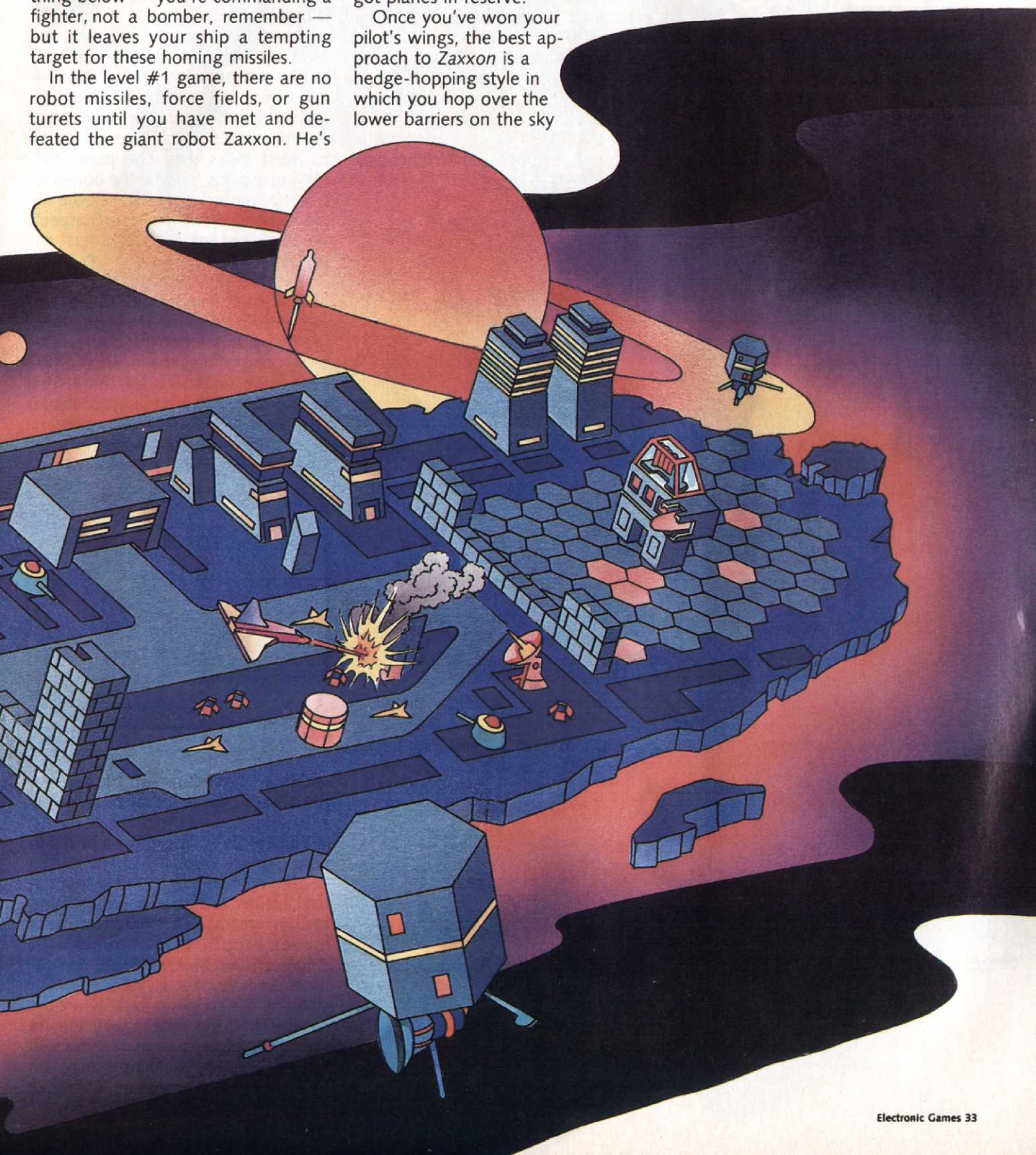


first sky fortress and shoot the oil storage tanks and other ground installations while avoiding homing missiles launched from underground silos and the low walls which frequently appear to block the plane's best low-altitude route. And taking the ground-skimming pathway is a must, because that's the only way you can hit the targets to score points. Flying high not only makes it impossible to hit anything below — you're commanding a fighter, not a bomber, remember — but it leaves your ship a tempting target for these homing missiles.

In the level #1 game, there are no robot missiles, force fields, or gun turrets until you have met and defeated the giant robot Zaxxon. He's located at the end of the second sky fortress, where he waits with a super-missile. If you hit this rocket two more times than the level at which the cartridge is being played — in other words, three times on level #1 — you have destroyed Zaxxon (worth 5,000 points) and start all over again at a higher skill level. If Zaxxon fires the missile and hits your ship, you lose a life, but you can continue if you've still got planes in reserve.

Once you've won your pilot's wings, the best approach to *Zaxxon* is a hedge-hopping style in which you hop over the lower barriers on the sky fortresses and get back down in time to sow destruction.

One innovation which the home edition has introduced is the robots, which make their appearance when the second fortress comes into view. These hemispheres glide along the ground and fire at your oncoming plane, rather like oddly shaped tanks. When a pair of these line up one behind the other, it can take some



fancy shoot-and-dodge maneuvers to keep the action going.

Graphics in the home edition, while perhaps not as mind-blowing as the coin-op, are pretty incredible for a game you're playing on the family television set.

Zaxxon is a cartridge that exhausts superlatives. It's that good. It is, at least at this time, the very best home videogame cartridge in the land.

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Mattel/Intellivision

When E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson developed the play routines for the game now known as **Dungeons & Dragons,** they were hoping to add a little zest to campaigns involving tabletop battles using medieval miniatures. In the process, they created a totally new category of recreation: the role assumption game.

Translating the elements of non-electronic adventures to the video screen is an arduous task, complicated by the limitations of all present-day computer and videogame systems. Like most publishers, Mattel has had to make some difficult choices — not to mention a few compromises — to translate the *D&D* concept to electronic gaming terms.

Has the company been successful? Those still waiting for the video quest that can compare to a round of authentic *ungeons & Dragons* moderated by a skilled dungeonmaster (referee) must maintain their vigil. The rest of us can revel in one of the finest action adventure cartridges yet produced for the home arcade market. **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons** is at least the equal of the best of the breed and certainly rates among the best cartridges yet provided for the Intellivision senior programmable videogame system. This program, like all electronic adventures which have preceded it, must gloss over the pure role-playing aspects found inthe non-electronic adventure contests, but the exploration, combat and quest aspects are preserved intact for arcaders' enjoyment.

After the player selects one of the four difficulty levels, which range from sightseer to hero, the strategic movement map appears on this display. This terrain map shows the location of the expedition (indicated by three smal squares arranged in a triangular shape) and physical features such as mountains, rivers and forests likely to interest the would-be adventurer.

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Brown mountains are impassable, rivers must be crossed by boat, a wall with gate requires the player to have a key and some ax-wielding is needed to clear passage through the forest. The cave complexes which are the focus of the action are found beneaththe brown mountains. When a party moves atop a blackmountain, it changes color to reflect both its contents and degree of difficulty. For instance, the gray cave systems are the easiest, but the only prizes they're likely to hold are quivers of arrows. In the purple caves, the hardest, you can find the key and arrows — if you can

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get past the monsters which guard them.

When your expedition lands on a colored mountain, the viewscreen shifts to a map of the cave complex, which comes in two sizes. Large ones are four rooms vertically by eight rooms horizontally, while the smaller ones have the same vertical dimension, but only half as many chambers horizontally. Each system is arranged as if it were on the surface of a sphere, so that walking far enough, using the direction disk, will cause your warrior to circle back to his or her starting point within the system of underground rooms.

Eight monsters of varying fearsomeness challenge the player during his journey to Cloudy Mountain. These range from the merely annoying bats all the way up to deadly winged dragons. Against these creatures, the player's only defenses are a quick pair of legs and a trusty bow. Each expedition begins with three arrows and must find additional quivers to keep supplied with ammo. The higher the difficulty setting, the fewer arrows will be found in each quiver.

Leaving a cave complex isn't nearly as simple as entering. The warrior must find the one exit, marked by a ladder, and defeat the monster that blocks the way before returning to play on the strategic map. Cave complexes remain clear for awhile, permitting the expedition to backtrack when necessary, but the program automatically restocks them. The last four mountains are always clear, but beyond that you may have to fight a new generation of creatures in a system of caverns that your group has emptied once already.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons portrays all the excitement in attractive high resolution graphics that leave

no doubt in the gamer's mind about exactly what is happening on the screen. Although the basic rules are fairly easy to learn, this is definitely a hard game to mastr, especially at the upper skill settings. That means *AD&D* is one cartridge most players won't "use up" the first week they have it. The quest for the Cloudy Mountain is one adventure Intellivision owners will enjoy playing over and over again.

PROGRAMMABLE PARADE

SMITHEREENS

Odyssey/Odyssey²

This kideo (kid-video) artillery duel proved so successful when issued by North American Philips' European parent company that Odyssey has now published it for the American market as well. It pits two players against each other as rival commanders of big guns.

Each weapon is pointed in the geneal direction of the other, but with an obstacle in-between that requires both sides to arc shots over intervening barriers in order to smash the opposing gun. Each gun is operated by a little on-screen robot, and flattening the metal man with a well-placed round causes him to temporarily retire from the battle. That gives the accurate marksman a few seconds to send a few salvos in the direction of the rival castle without worrying about incoming fire.

It takes several direct hits to completely demolish the enemy stronghold. The first player to accomplish this task wins the engagement. A series of engagements are strung together to make one, multi-round war.

Timing is everything in **Smithereens.** The longer you hold down the control, the further the shell flies once you release it. After a few practice shots, most arcaders should be able to hit the other gun at least 75% of the time. **EG,** therefore, believes that *Smithereens* will be of most interest to the youngest age group of gamers. Older players will tend to quickly tire of the straightforward play mechanic, but *Smithereens* is definitely a strong bet to keep

younger ones entertained for some time. The cartridge even has an educational aspect, since it seems a particularly painless way for someone to learn about trajectories and other aspects of geometry and ballistics.

Smithereens is also one of the cartridges which is specially enhanced for use with the Voice of Odyssey's speech synthesis module. It works just fine without this add-on, but full sound includes the satisfying scream of hurtling sheels and the roar of high explosives blasting into a target. Graphics are standard-issue Odyssey², which means fairly simple, but somehow also quite charming.

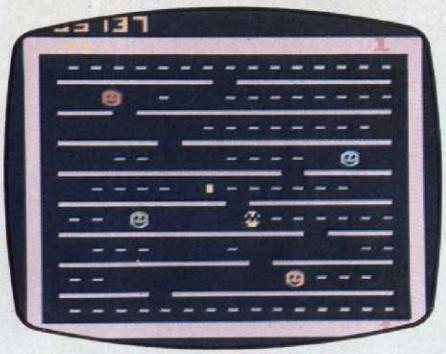
Smithereens won't turn the videogaming world upside down, but it is a well-produced action contest that should capture the fancy of many teenagers and pre-teeners — and hold it through hours of play.

JAWBREAKER

Tigervision/Atari VCS

The original home computer versions of John Harris's classic **Jawbreaker** were great fun, delightful to lool at and listen to — and perilously close to being **Pac-Man** imitations. For this reason, when Tigervision asked the folks at On-Line to come up with a VCS-compatible version of their smash hit, they wanted something a little different.

What they got was the most innovative variant on the maze chase/gobble game ever developed.



JAWBREAKER PLAYFIELD

Instead of moving through the traditional stationary maze, this is a horizontally-linear contest with lines moving, in parallel, back and forth across the screen. The hungry teeth, out to devour some candies as usual, can either move off the left or right edge of a line and then slide up or down the playfield, or the choppers can wait for a gap in the moving maze to pass above or beneath them. The power-pellet styled "jawbreaker", however, only appears at the center of the maze, so frequent sojourns to the nexus of the field must be made if the teeth wish to polish off the spinning smile-faces and turn them blue.

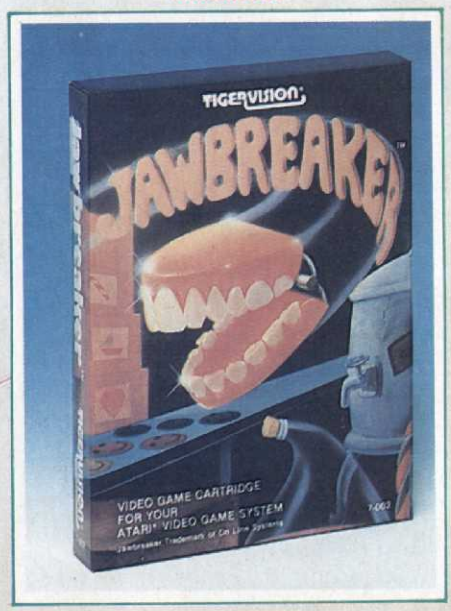
This linear maze movement is about twice as fast as previous versions and players will either become very facile at guiding those hungry chompers around the constantly-changing playfield or be in for a lot of very short games. But the real shock is this: this new version is actually *better* than the old one. It has provben so successful that the Atari and Apple II computer versions are being redesigned in this same format!

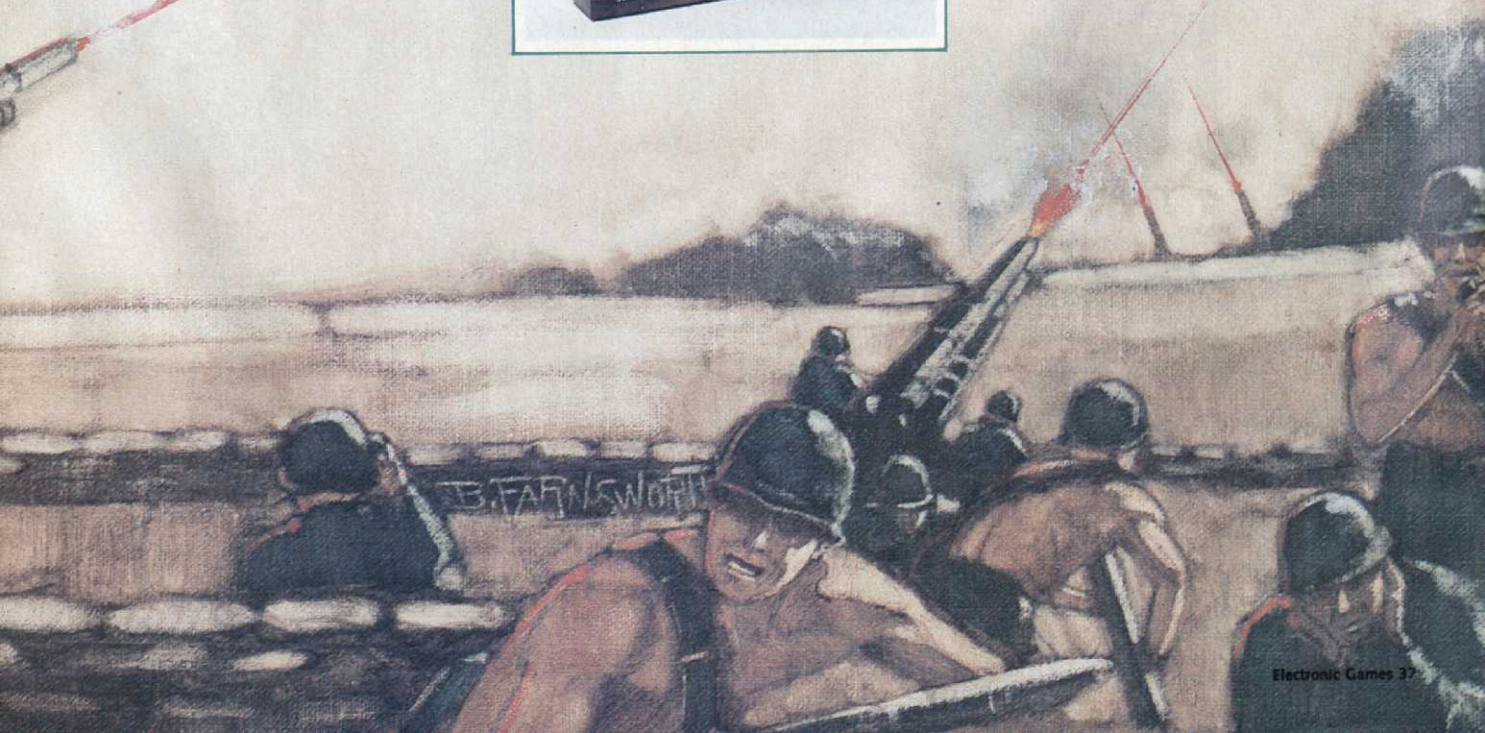
Sound and graphics are state-of-the-art for the 2600, with the illusion of the spinning faces accomplished with even greater precision. True innovation brings us a classic game in a new format — and it turns out even better! Definitely recommended.

Jawbreaker is a perfect example of designers with backgrounds exclusively in computer software — in this case, the rustic wizards from Coarsegold, Sierra-On-Line Computing — taking to VCS game design like a fish to water. It is, in fact, now possible to design VCS games exclusively on an Apple II computer system.

As the computer designers enter the programmable fracas, it should prove interesting to see which of them adapts best to the strictures of the VCS.

JAWBREAKER





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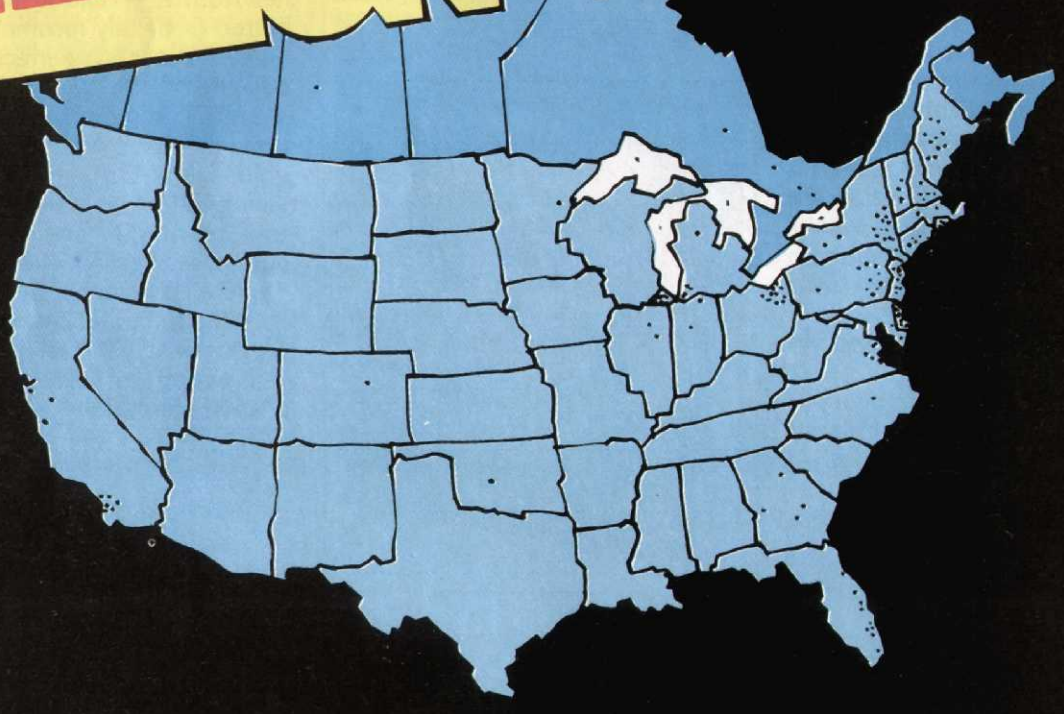

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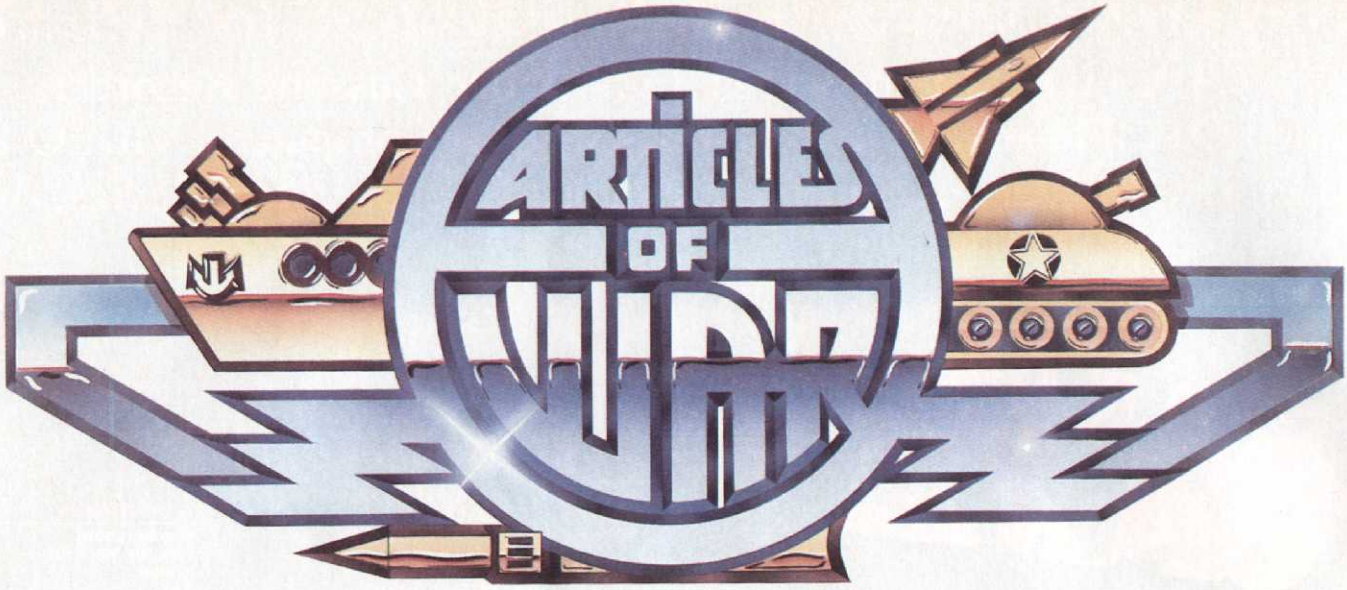


Tanks Roam the Desert in Southern Command

By NEIL SHAPIRO

Could you have counter-attacked across the Suez Canal in the 1973 war as successfully as Israel General Sharon? With this new computer war game from Strategic Simulations, only you and your computer will know for sure.

Southern Command, as a computer game, is a unique and exciting application of the graphic capabilities of the Apple II. As a war game, it is everything a simulation should be; accurate without being boring, intellectual without bowling you over with charts and tables, and clear and concise in its play. The fact that it is a war game which runs on a computer makes it even more of a special breed.

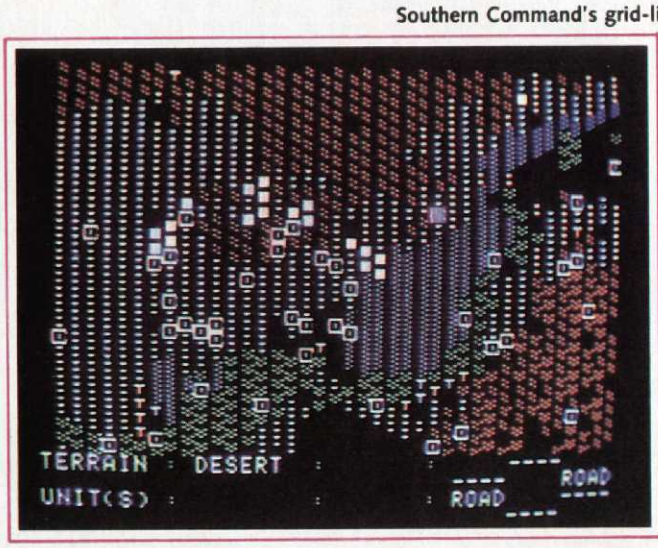
Since SSI began its computer war gaming line, the Apple II has always been the computer that the company has targeted. So it isn't surprising that SSI is getting better and better at using the Apple to stage its battles.

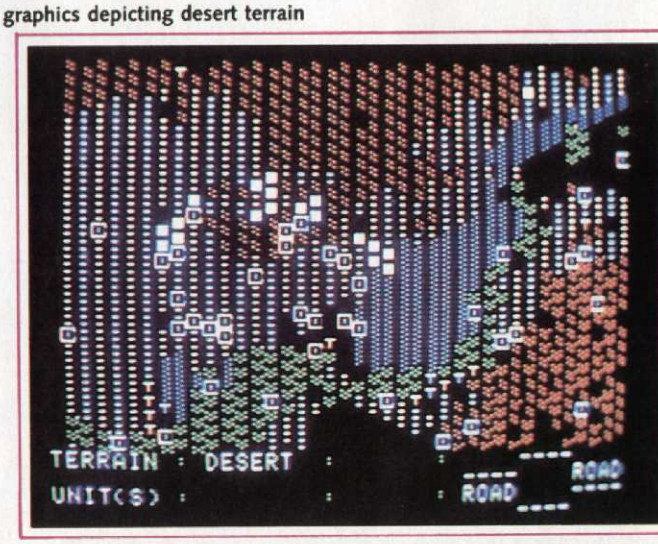
You don't need an arcader's uncanny reflexes to succeed at *Southern Command.* Neither do you have to be a mathematician able to leap 20 charts at a single bound. Rather, you have to be a meticulous master of strategy and tactics. Because the computer does most of the figuring, it's possible to open the box, turn on the computer and "boot" the disk with only a cursory look through the rules. Of course, a careful reading can save many a battalion.

The game map can be displayed whether gridded with hexagons or simply as a mixture of terrains. If gridded, the entire map is 39 by 29 hexes. The map takes in the entire western half of the Sinai peninsula, the Suez Canal, and a good hunk of Eastern Egypt (the lack of a published scale is one of the game's few faults). Because the game mechanics deal on a battalion level, two sizes of maps had to be included. The strategic map gives an overview of the entire area as to terrain and units present (not their type), while the tactical display divides the strategic map into twelve close-up views.

Each of these 12 views is one screen in size. Because of this unique method of mapping, SSI had to invent a new system of play. In the normal phase of the game (not during movement) the

Southern Command's grid-like graphics depicting desert terrain





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player can control which part of the map appears on the tactical display. The 12 sections are numbered and lettered 1-9 and A-C. These sections may be called up individually, hitting S for Scroll Map and then 3 would, for instance, switch to a tactical view of screen three. Or the player can leisurely scroll north and south, east and west — moving the map as if the screen were a small window looking out onto a large playing area.

The tactical map sections are very well-done in brilliant hi-resolution colors—the game can be displayed on a black-and-white monitor with a special command—which connote 12 types of terrain. Terrain types affect movement costs and combat bonuses.

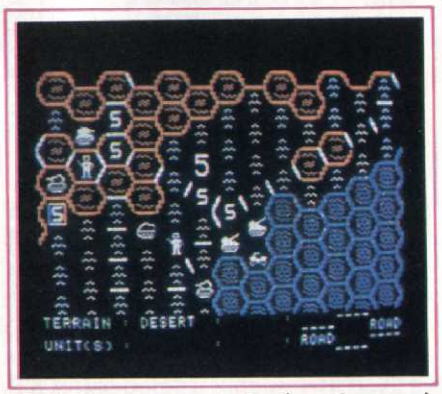
During the Movement Phase, a player uses the keyboard to move a cursor (blinking box) around the screen so it points to the unit he wishes to move or examine. There is also an auto-move option which automatically switches the cursor from the unit just moved to the closest unit which may still be moved. At any time during this auto-move option, the player can still choose to leave a unit for later movement or completely return to manual control of the unit to be moved.

The Israeli player controls six types of units including tank, infantry, armored infantry and artillery battalions along with bridging engineers. The Egyptian (computer's role during solitaire play) must worry about his six types of units: infantry and mechanized infantry battalions, artillery and tank battalions and katushka (mobile artillery) battalions.

The unit's mode governs the number of movement points. A unit may expend on travel and there are eight different modes from defense and transportation to attack and reorganization. Changing from one mode to another also costs movement points.

Combat, which takes place during movement whenever a unit enters an enemy's zone of control (in most cases the enemy's six surrounding hexes), affects both strength and the future movement capabilities of both defender and aggressor. The calculation of a typical combat resolution is quite complete as it takes into account strengths, terrain, adjacent units, type of units, mode of units, efficiency of units, artillery and airstrike capabilities, and a random factor.

At this point, three cheers for the computer! A boardgame saddled with such a complex combat resolution system would, take days to play. The computer chews up the numbers and spits out the results in almost no time at all. In fact, during a solitaire game, watching the computer quickly and efficiently moving its units, switching from one map-screen to another, and resolving combats can almost psych-out a slower-than-silicon human.



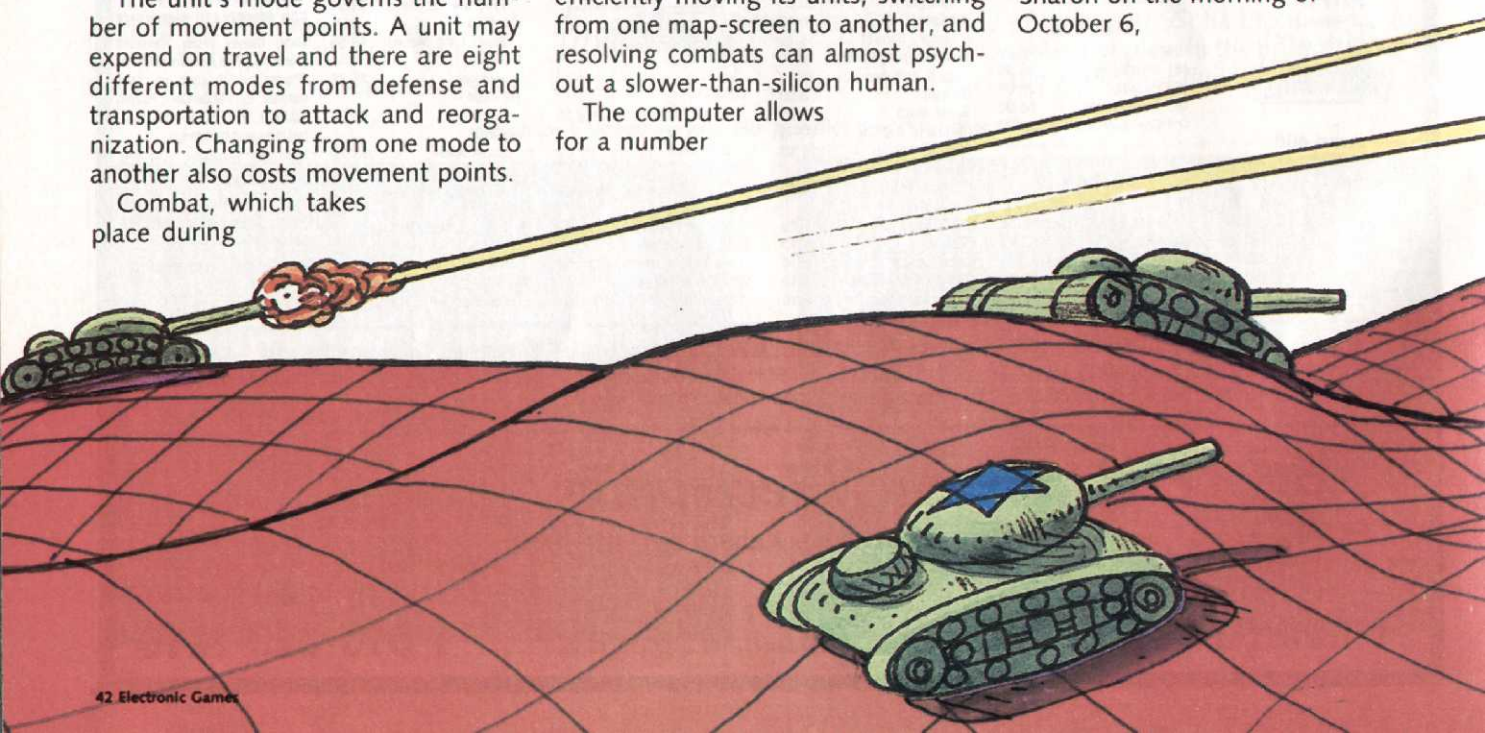
The battle progresses in Southern Command

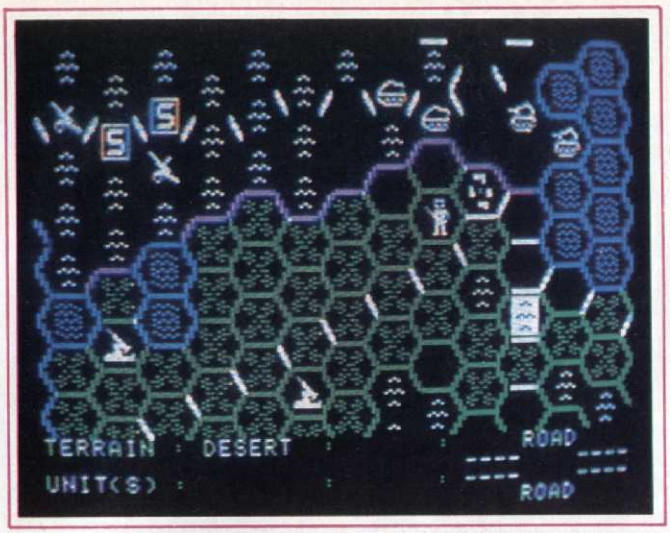
The computer allows for a number of very nifty touches to the game mechanics. One favorite is what the rulebook calls the "order phase." During this phase, the player chooses a trigger hex. During subsequent enemy movement phases, when an enemy unit enters a trigger hex — whammo! — all the friendlies move toward it on a course that was pre-plotted in the friendly order phase.

This always made using hidden movement and sighting rules a bit of a drag. The paperwork and the nit-picking measurements are a chore. Once again, the computer is a completely impartial and super-speedy referee. Whenever a hidden unit is sighted, the speaker beeps and the unit appears on the map.

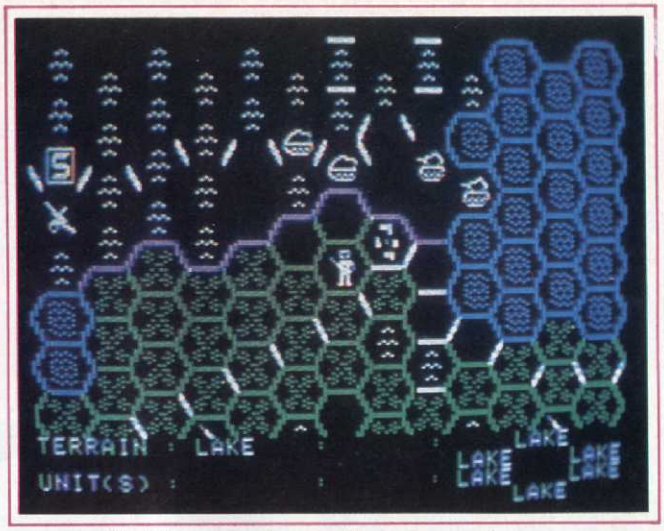
As a simulation of history, this war game maintains a fair degree of accuracy while maintaining a high level of playability. Though some war game maps of this area, according to our almanac, are more accurate, (notably the game map in the old *inai* boardgame from the defunct but much-lamented Simulations Publishing Inc.), the problem with the SSI computer graphics seems to be that if a hex is more than just bordered by the canal it must be all water or all something else. This is unlike a boardgame map where, for example, a body of water might be only partially within a hex. Because of this the bodies of water (not the canal itself) such as the northern section of the Gulf of Suez are a bit "fatter" than on a map.

But the game's play and the victory conditions accurately reflect the challenge that faced Israel's General Sharon on the morning of October 6,





The maps in SSI contests use symbols as in board-style war games

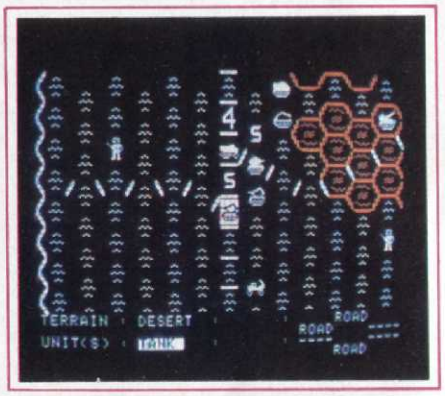


The lake terrain from Southern Command

1973. Israel knew it had to move quickly or it would economically crumble. They attacked and, as it turned out in real life, encircled the enemy. The Egyptians, meanwhile, knew that they had to regain Israeli-occupied territory and hold onto it.

The game's mechanics award victory points (10) to the Egyptians for destroying an Israeli unit, and a point for each Egyptian unit on the East Bank of the Suez. Israelis get one point per each Egyptian unit destroyed, two points for each SAM missile.

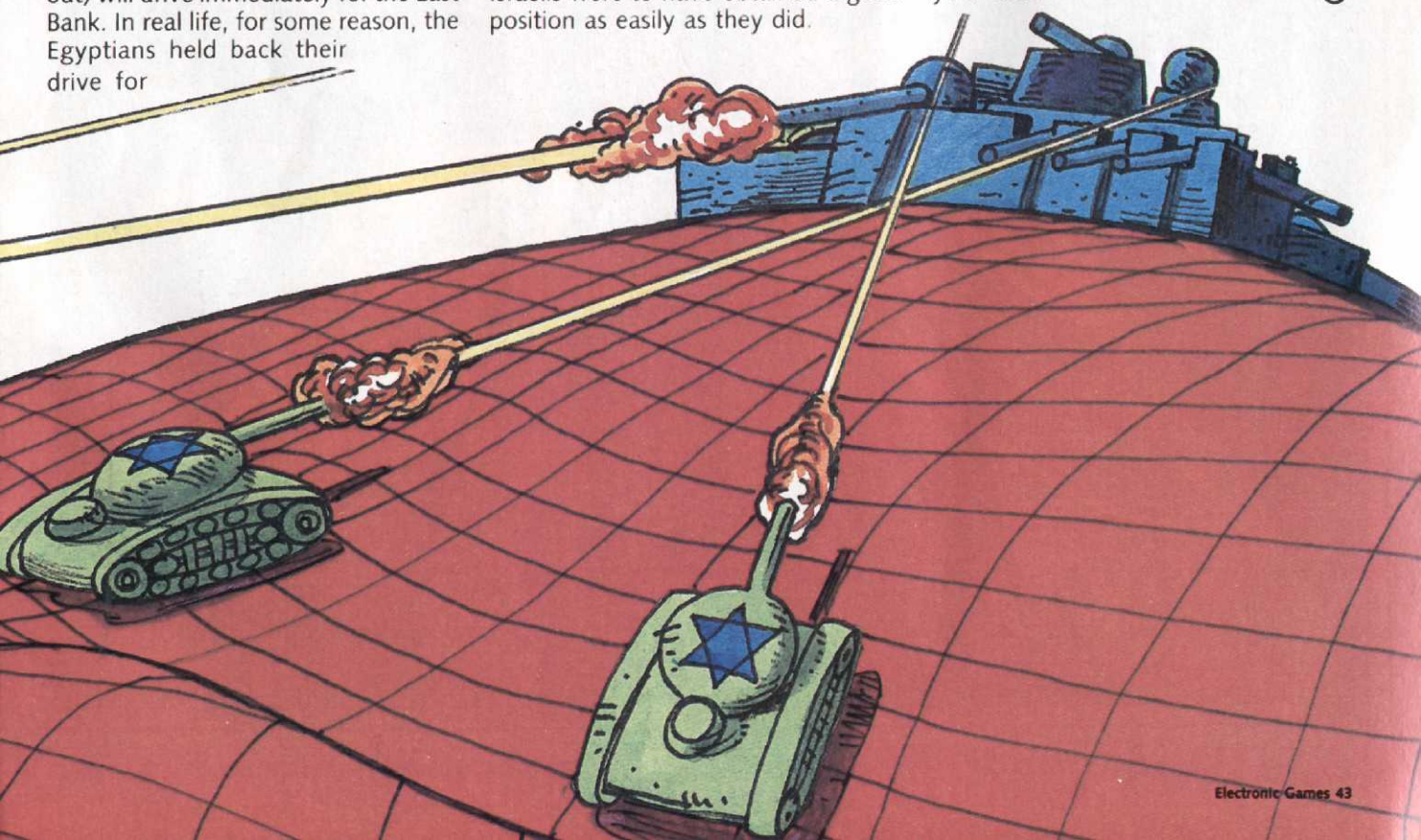
The canny Egyptian Player (and if you don't have a human friend handy the computer is as deadly as all get-out) will drive immediately for the East Bank. In real life, for some reason, the Egyptians held back their drive for more than a week. This game helps you understand just how lucky the Israelis were to have obtained a good position as easily as they did.



Note tanks at center of playfield

The Israeli player is well advised to do just what the Israelis did on the real battlefield: Get there first and get there heavy. They must open a corridor for their bridging engineers as soon as possible. Then, they have to cross the Suez right away and do as much positional and actual damage as they can to the opponent.

Southern Command is a fast-playing simulation that is not only a lot of fun and excitement — but it's a good way to study the historical battle's "what if" scenarios in absorbing detail. If you have a computer and an interest in war gaming, this package should be on your shelf.



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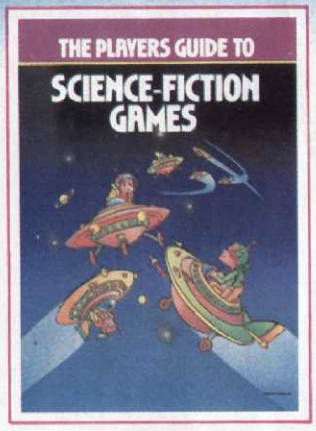
THE PLAYERS GUIDE TO

SCIENCE-FICTION GAMES



SF GAMING'S

THE SOUND OF MARCHING FEET

In a very real sense, the hobby of electronic gaming began with the introduction of **Space Invaders** in 1978. This Taito design signalled the dawn of a new era of coin-op arcading, as it boasted totally novel play-action supported by surprisingly cute visuals.

It was the overwhelming popularity of *SI* that sparked the gaming boom, the fruits of which we are still enjoying today. The success of *Space Invaders* firmly established the intimate relationship between gaming and science fiction that has given the world such wonderful titles as **Defender, Missile Command** and **Star Raiders.**

Space Invaders has not only created a whole genre of contest, the invasion game, but it has also proven popular in virtually every format into which it has been placed. On the home front, Atari makes cartridges based on the game for its VCS, 5200 and 400/800 machines, and Rocklan also offers **Super-Invaders** for the Atari microcomputers. Close relatives of *Space Invaders* are available for use with the Apple II, VIC-20, TRS-80 Color Computer and several of the videogame units.

WINGS OF DEATH

Take the original invasion game concept but allow the attackers to break formation and swoop low to bomb the player's cannon at the bottom of the screen and you have the kernel of **Galaxian.** Better graphics combined with a less predictable motion of the invaders makes this *SI* sequel a treasured classic in its own right.

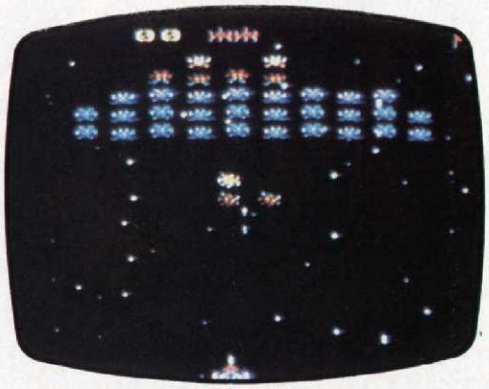
Official versions of *Galaxian* are produced for the Atari 5200 by Atari and as a stand-alone mini-arcade by Coleco.

CLEARING THE SPACELANES

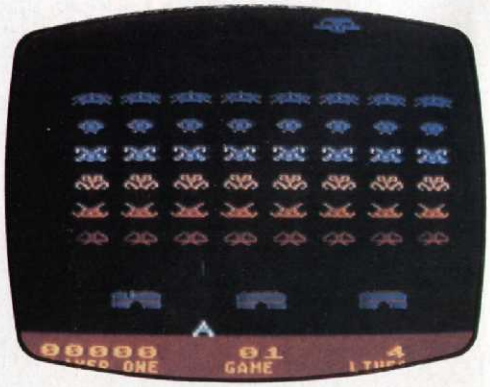
In sharp contrast to the highly patterned nature of both *Space Invaders* and *Galaxian*, is the seeming chaos of **Asteroids.** This Atari coin-op utilizes a vector graphics monitor to fill the view screen with careening meteorites of all sizes headed in just about every conceivable direction.

Atari has led the way in bringing *Asteroids* to the home arcading community. It is available from the Sunnyvale, CA, publisher for both the VCS and 400/800 systems.

Other games in which the player manipulates a single spaceship employing a thrust movement system and tries to



GALAXIAN



SPACE INVADERS

GREATEST HITS

blow up space debris are plentiful. **Minestorm** is resident in the Vectrex, and Apple-ites can enjoy a brisk round of **Meteoroids in Space**, to cite two of the best examples.

EARTH'S LAST DEFENDER

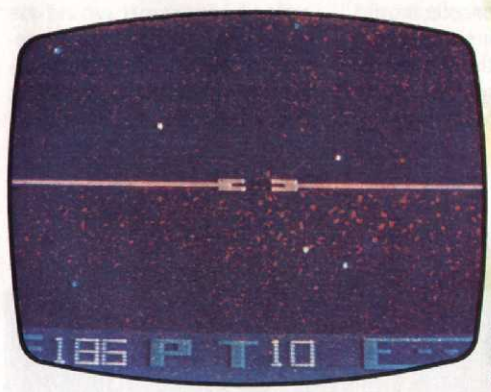
Williams' **Defender** coin-op may be just about the ultimate in wild shooting sprees, yet the underlying theme of rescuing survivors of an extraterrestrial attack probably has nearly as much to do with the popularity of this duo-directional scrolling contest. The arcader pushes instructions into the machine using the somewhat complicated button panel, and then zips back and forth along the multi-screen horizon trying to prevent the final extinction of the human race.

Williams has followed up *Defender* with an even more difficult sequel called **Stargate.** This game, which features a control set-up that's even more complicated than *Defender's,* is often touted as a supreme test of gaming ability.

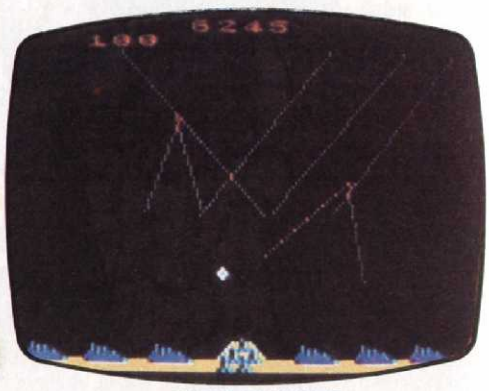
Atari owns the home license for *Defender* as a videogame, and the company has produced cartridges for the VCS and 5200, with one for the 400/800 computer likely for the coming year. Entex has also produced home editions of *Defender,* a handheld and a cartridge for the company's AdventureVision tabletop programmable. The same outfit is also marketing a *Stargate* stand-alone. A program that shares some of the features found in *Defender,* albeit mixed in with some novel concepts of its own, is **Protector II,** an Atari 400/800 disk form Synapse Software by Mike Potter.

RAIN OF DEATH

With due respect to the other electronic science fiction classics discussed in this issue's Players Guide, **Missile Command** may well turn out to be the most popular of them all in the long run. Not only is the Atari pay-for play machine an enduring favorite, but the same publisher has produced highly acclaimed editions for all three of its home arcade systems.



STAR RAIDERS



MISSILE COMMAND

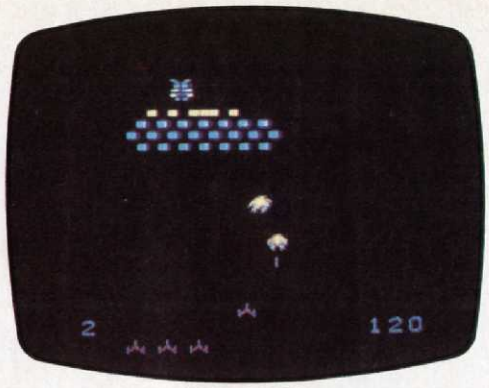
Galaxies

WANTED: SPACE PILOTS

From "Skylark of Space" to "Space Patrol" to "Star Wars", the notion of taking the controls of a spaceship has sparked hundreds of science fiction stories, books and movies. In a sense, it's the futuristic version of the Old West cowboy — a strong hero in a fast ship that can travel anywhere.

This may explain why first-person space piloting and combat games are so numerous in the videogame cartridge field.

Owners of the Atari VCS have several excellent titles of this sort from which to choose. Atari itself now offers a VCS version of **Star Raiders**, the game which perpetually tops **EG's** monthly listing of readers' favorite computer game programs. The 2600 edition utilizes a keypad controller with a special overlay to present the home arcader with a much greater-than-usual variety of strategic decisions. Although the keypad adds considerably to the cost of *Star Raiders*, the publisher intends to use this new controller to enhance other upcoming games, so the cost will eventually be spread over several cartridges.



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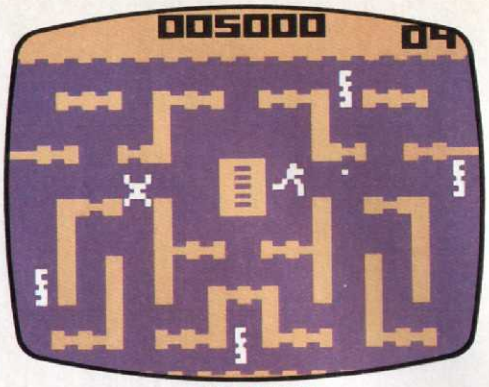


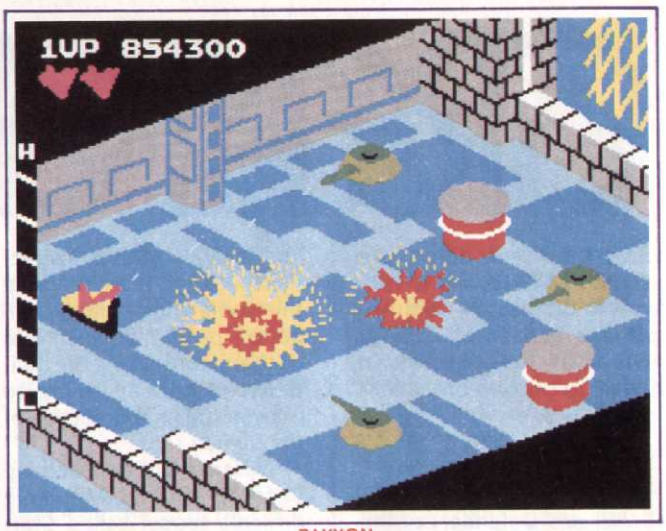
DARK CAVERN

Activision's **Star Master** relies on innovative use of the 2600 console's control levers to toggle between tactical battle views and a map of the whole galaxy. The player must zip back and forth across known space, protecting friendly star bases from alien attack.

Similar in overall concept to both of these games are **Phasar Patrol** (Starpath, for the Supercharger) and **Planet Patrol** (Spectravision). The latter is a solid and enjoyable SF romp, while the former is enriched by the superior graphics available with the Supercharger.

Although Mattel's Intellivision is not known primarily for its action-oriented contests, one happy exception is the justly high reputation which **Space Battle** has earned. The player monitors the strategic map for approaching alien spacefleets and dispatches one of three available squadrons to deal with any threat and then takes command of a space fighter once the opposing forces actually meet in space.

make a "comfortable" enemy. You're not gunning down fellow human beings with that laser, goes this theory, you're only blasting apart inhuman metal creatures. This viewpoint is most obvious in a cartridge like **Robot Commando Raid** from U.S. Games for the Atari 2600. The player commands



ZAXXON

BEWARE. . . ROBOT ALERT

Although technology, in the form of the hardware, software and peripherals associated with the games themselves, is unlikely to hold many terrors for electronic arcaders, designers are sensitive to the potential of science as a source of menace.

And let's face it, robots

an anti-aircraft battery situated at the center of the bottom portion of the playfield and attempts to shoot down foes as they parachute from helicopters. If the attackers were actually people, this video war game would be portraying a significant violation of the Geneva Conventions of War. As it is, no one is forced to fire at a human

chutist on the way down to Earth.

The best known of the robot videogames is, of course, Atari's **Berzerk** for the VCS. This 1983 Arcade Award Certificate of Merit winner is a satisfyingly close reproduction of Stern's maze shoot-out coin-op machine that pits the player's on-screen character against a multi-room maze guarded by veritable hordes of angry androids.

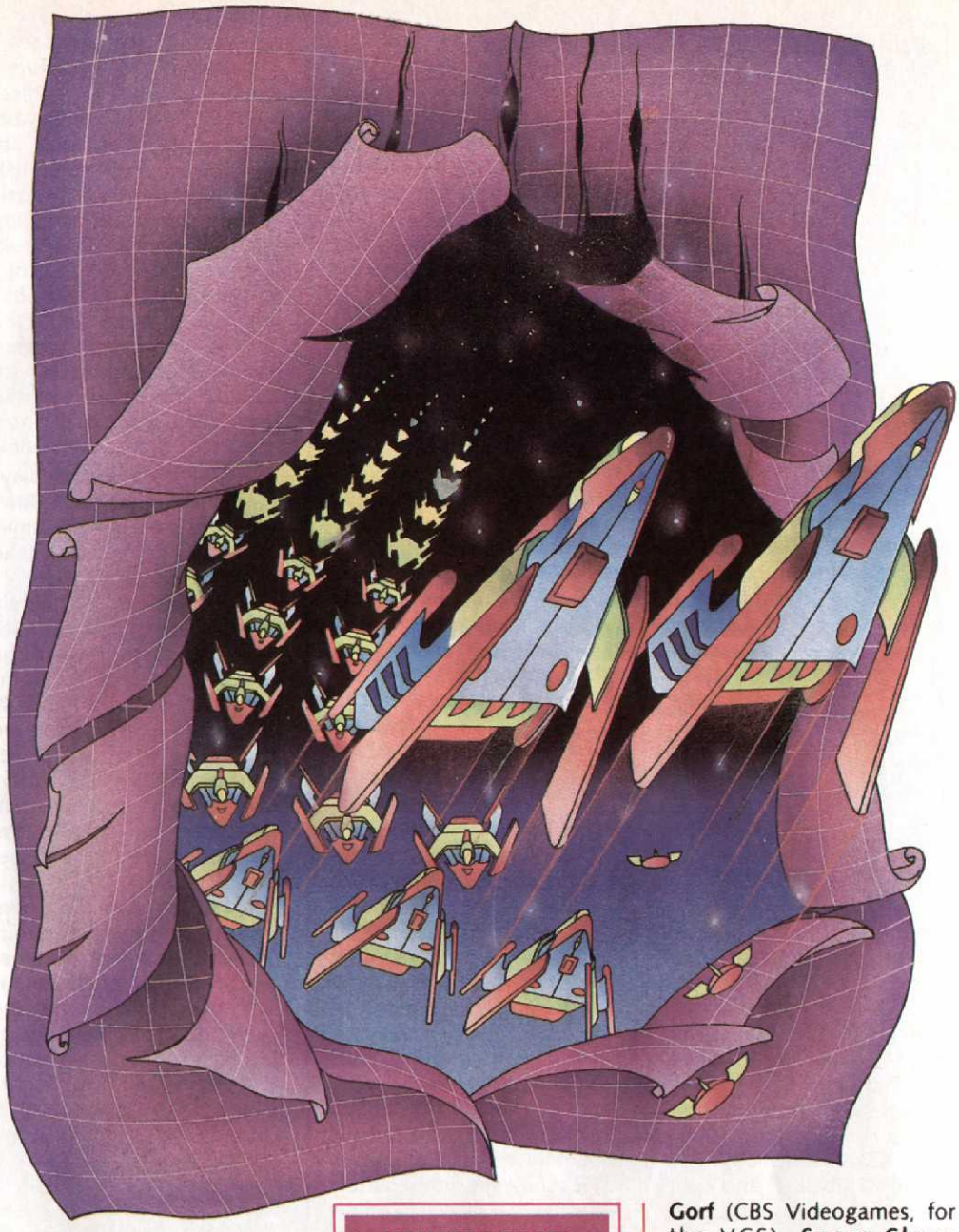
A pair of Odyssey² titles make use of robots as the primary opposition. You can lead a robot army against a similar force directed by a second human player in **War of Nerves,** or combat robot attackers in **Alien Invaders — Plus!**

Robots provide the threat in Mattel's **Night Stalker** for the Intellivision, and **Dark Cavern** for the Atari VCS. Both cartridges — essentially versions of the same design produced for two different systems — spice up the traditional maze-shoot with adventure game elements. Careful planning of moves through the underground labyrinth is as important, if not more so, than the ability to shoot accurately while running across the screen.

PLEASE CALL HOME

Atari's recently published **E.T.** cartridge is notable for a number of reasons. It is the first game designed with significant input from a cinematographer (Steven Spielberg), and the first non-educational Atari title aimed squarely at the youngest age bracket of home gamers.

E.T. has proven unexpectedly controversial among players. Critics charge that the cartridge looks hasty and lacks sophisticated play-action, but others vociferously defend the game on the grounds that it is faithful to the spirit of the film and of suitable complexity for those who are most likely to be interested in such a game.



SHOOT-OUT IN SPACE

Ship-to-ship combat in space is one of the most common videogame themes. From classics like **UFO** (Odyssey, for the Odyssey²) to newcomers like **Nexar** (Spectravision, for the VCS), **Threshold** (Tigervision for the VCS), **Gorf** (CBS Videogames, for the VCS), **Space Chase** (Games by Apollo, for the VCS) and **Zaxxon** (Coleco, for ColecoVision), the list of cartridges is studded with excellent games on this topic.

The assault on the sky fortresses in Coleco's *Zaxxon* is unquestionably one of the most thrilling home arcading experiences available today. The duels with the enemy missiles, robots, and giant robots are the ultimate in videogaming at present.

Of Videogames

THE EXPANDING UNIVERSE OF COMPUTER SF GAMES

THE COSMIC ARCADE

Action games with a science fiction slant are proving just about irresistible to computer gamers. Whether you enjoy an invasion game such as Sierra On-Line's **Threshold** or Roklan's **Super-Invaders**, labyrinth contests like Datamost's **Mars Cars** or the special excitement provided by Avant Garde Creations' **Zero Gravity Pinball**, chances are very good that at least one outer space arcade-style program is among your favorites.

Sir-Tech has melded several different types of games into a single disk with its magnificent **Star Maze** for the Apple II. The hunt for the nine star jewels forces the player to execute intricate maneuvers such as over-flights and docking while fending off dangers ranging from meteor showers to hostile flying saucers.

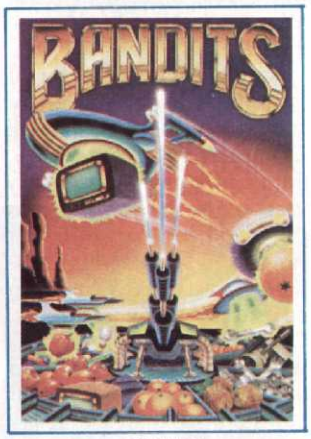
Tubeway, by Datamost for the Apple II, is a perimeter target game with a futuristic angle. The player whirls his shooter around the outside edge of the geometric "universe", and blasts the assorted nasties which crawl out of the center. Completion of each wave immediately transfers the player to a new universe populated by even deadlier creatures. Home arcaders who enjoy this gaming genre — spawned by Atari's coin-op division with 1983 Arcade Award recipient **Tempest** — won't want to miss this largely successful attempt to produce a game that utilizes a similar play-mechanic within the restrictions imposed by the family television set's raster scan video technology.

Sirus Software frequently mixes a dash of humor in with its space games. Two of the best examples of the company's penchant for the lighter side of home arcading are **Bandits**, in which the player must prevent waves of interstellar pack-rats from scampering off with all of the supplies at the moonbase, and **Sneakers**, the multi-scenario invasion marathon. Another entertaining Sirius Software disk that is something less than totally serious is **Twerps**. In this one, the player must complete a perilous journey to the surface of the moon where numerous fellow-twerps are cowering in craters waiting for rescue.

SUPER SCIENCE SCROLLERS

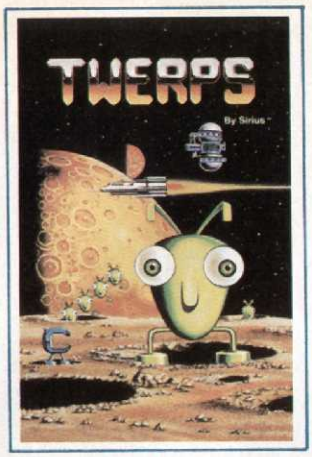
Scrolling shoot-outs have claimed a huge following in the videogame, stand-alone and coin-op fields, so it's hardly surprising that the run-the-gauntlet games are among the most popular of computer game programs. While a few of these designs are not in the least science fictional, most of the best ones involve piloting a speedy spacecraft through several scenarios.

Protector II — actually it's the third version of this horizontally scrolling title — is perhaps the ultimate game of this type for the Atari 400-800 computer systems, at least until Synapse Software's Mike Potter gets the urge to redo his masterpiece yet again. The player must attempt to save survivors of a future conflict by ferrying them to a safe city and, from there, to even more secure locations. The ship can zoom across the multi-screen playfield, shooting alien ships and airlifting humans at breakneck speed.



BANDITS

Caverns of Mars is a vertical scroller for the Atari 400-800 that sends the player's ship snaking down heavily fortified tunnels deep be-



TWERPS

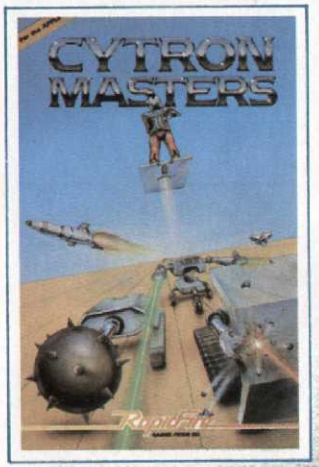
neath the Red Planet.

Star Blazer, Tony Suzuki's Broderbund disk for the Apple II, is a mono-directional scrolling game that clearly stands apart from superficially similar games because of the extreme ingenuity incorporated into its program. This action game can't be conquered simply by steamrollering through it like a runaway bull in a china shop. That kind of frontal assault simply won't get the job done in some of *Star Blazer's* scenarios, such as the one in which the player must somehow get the best of a tank that speeds up whenever the gamer's ship accelerates and can go faster than the fighter can fly.

DUELS OF THE FUTURE

Strategic Simulations is a leader when it comes to simulating all the possible methods of combat between individuals and small teams in the world of tomorrow. The *Rapidfire* series, which consists of four different programs at this writing, straddles the line between strategy games and the faster-moving action types. All make use of SSI's impressive movement system to keep events unfolding on the display at a pace which no conventional electronic war game could possibly match.

One of the titles, **Cytron Masters,** is especially appealing. The idea of combat between rivals piloting one-person flying platforms absolutely bursts with gaming possibilities. The other games in this line are uniformly excellent as well, and should be examined by any strategy game-oriented science fictioneers.



CYTRON MASTERS

MEET THIS CHALLENGE

Ming's Challenge, from Micro Fun for the Apple II, is an offbeat action game with a science fiction theme. It is fairly simple in the graphics department, but it makes up for any shortfall in that area by furnishing arcaders with the chance to try something that's really different.

The player manipulates a horizontally mobile cannon and shoots upward at various targets in motion. The idea is to shoot the round targets as they descend, freezing them in position and scoring points based on their closeness to the top boundary of the playfield. A bomb-dropping alien and a flying saucer capable of releasing the roundies add further tests of hand-eye skill.

STAR BLAZER

All the action is conveyed to the adventure through a combination of line artwork and short scene descriptions.

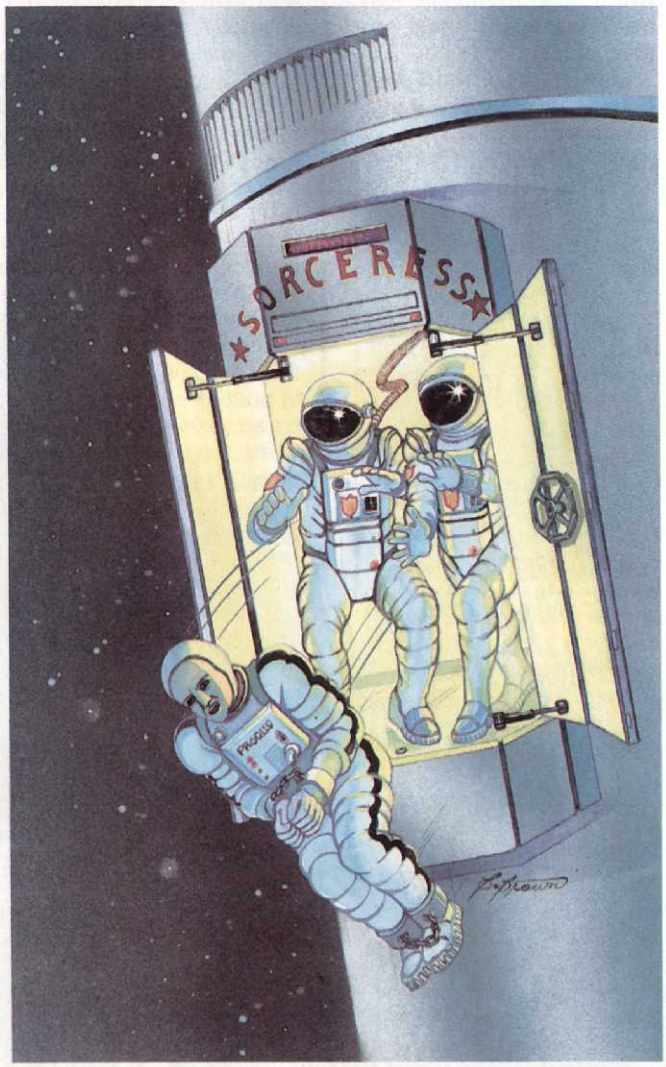
ADVENTURES THROUGH TIME AND SPACE

WHERE SCIENCE MEETS FANTASY

Just as science fiction in other media runs the gamut from super-technical hard SF to interstellar flights of fancy that approach the blood and thunder of the typical swords and sorcery extravaganza, so does computer software.

One of the best examples of this is the **Zork** series, now three games long, from Infocom for most of the popular computers. While fantasy elements are certainly prominent, the meticulous way in which the great underground empire has been worked out by the designers, betrays the attention to even the most minute details that characterizes the sci-fi novels of authors like Robert A. Heinlein and Jerry Puornelle.

More obviously science fiction is, **Empire of the Over-Mind,** a 1982 Arcade Award program from Avalon Hill's Microcomputer Games Division. Although the Over-mind, a cruel tyrant whom the player must overthrow, definitely has mystical aspects, it's clear that, in some way, the events which take place on the twin planets owe as much to super-science as eldritch magic.



MYSTERY FROM THE STARS

Infocom, which has revolutionized the field of computer text adventures with its *Zork* and **Deadline,** has now ventured forth to the stars with its latest creation, **Starcross.** The player assumes the role of an explorer on the lookout for black holes, which are the source of mega-energy in the world of this particular future.

Instead of the prize you seek, however, your scout craft stumbles upon the find of the millennium — a mammoth starwagon sent by super-intelligent beings from the other end of the universe. You must board this veritable city in space and unravel the enigma which permeates it.

The *Starcross* program is one of the most sophisticated on the market, which makes it one of the smoothest playing adventures around. Its best feature is its extensive vocabulary, which makes it possible for the player to enter instructions in the form of full English sentences, instead of the two-word, verb/noun phrases generally employed in other role-playing disks.

JOE JUSTIN, SPACE HERO

The same design team which produced *Empire of the Over-Mind* has returned with **G.F.S. Sorceress.** This text adventure is touted as the first of a series of disks to feature the exploits of Joe Justin.

In this one, the player (as Joe) must visit various planets to gather evidence that will prove he was unjustly pushed out of the airlock on his ship for a murder which he did not commit.

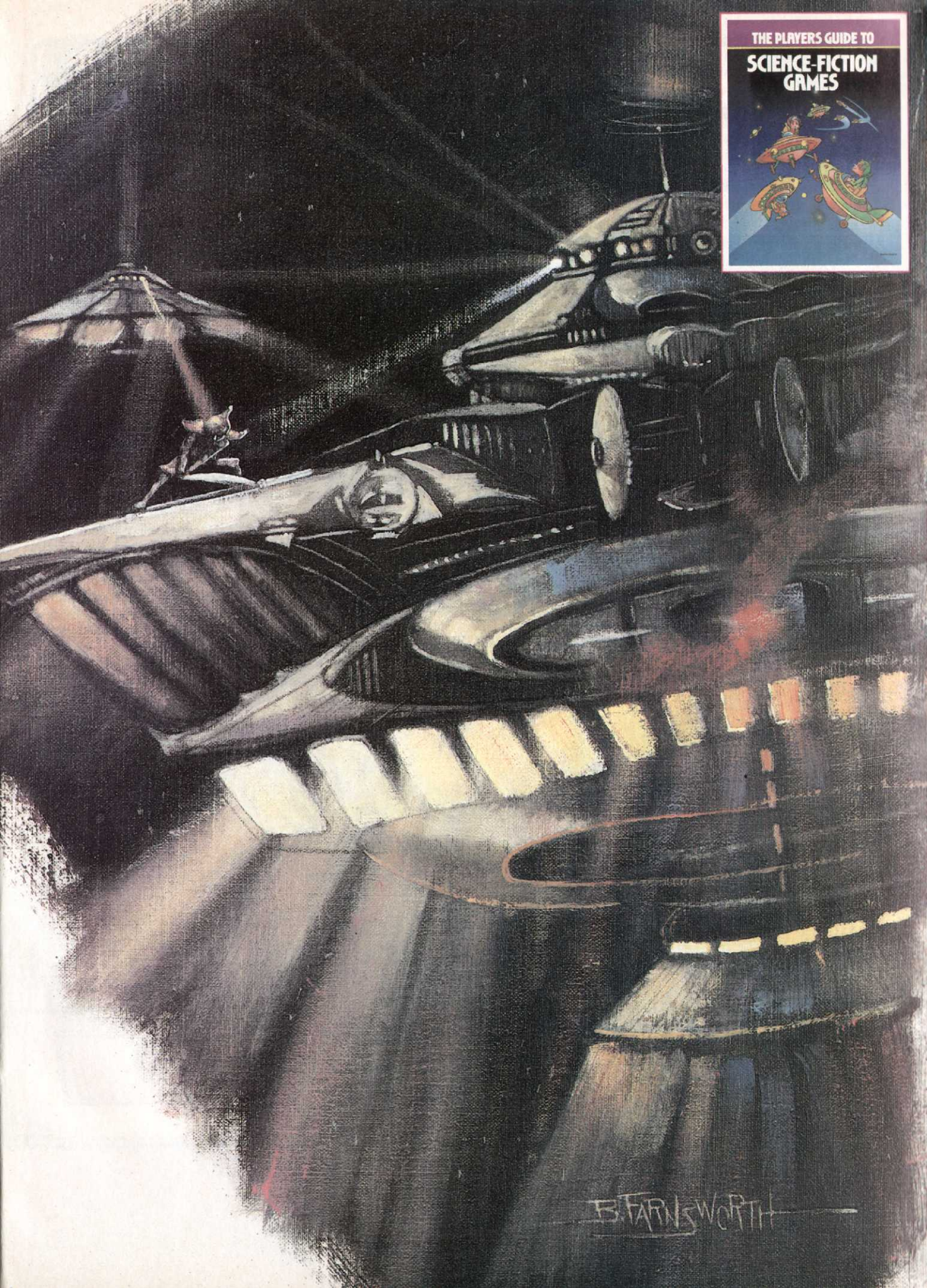
Although *Sorceress* lacks the all-out brilliance of the *Over-Mind* escapade, it is an intermediate-level brain-teaser that will provide several entertaining play-sessions for the veteran starfarer.

TREASURE TROVE IN SPACE

Queen of Phobos is the name of the adventure and of the seemingly forsaken spaceship which is the setting for the illustrated action. After finding a way to enter the drifting hulk, you must navigate its labyrinthine corridors to uncover its valuable secrets.

Making life a little tougher are various looters who have the same idea as you. At best, they may beat you to some of the valuables, while at worst, they may turn on you instead.

All the arcading action is conveyed to the adventure through a combination of line artwork and various short descriptions of the scene.


THE PLAYERS GUIDE TO
SCIENCE-FICTION GAMES
B. FARNSWORTH

SEE SPACE FOR A

TIME PILOT

Imagine yourself locked in eternal conflict with an air wizard who battles you through time and space! Most science fiction games concentrate on the trappings of the genre — rocket ships, robots, asteroids and invading aliens. Very few games have been science-fictional in and of themselves. Centuri's **Time Pilot** is a genuine SF contest in that its very theme is the stuff of which many of the field's classics have been made: time travel.

As *Time Pilot* begins, the player is back at the dawn of air combat — the days of the biplane and dogfight. Your Flying Dutchman of an adversary comes barreling toward your craft, machine guns smoking as you finally "come to grips" with the controls. The airfight begins in earnest when, abruptly, both ships are tossed several decades into the future, where a World War II circa combat is about to begin.

Time Pilot moves through the jet era, into special combat choppers able to launch sidewinder missiles and, ultimately, into space warfare itself.

Each type of aircraft presents a unique gaming challenge, and mastery over all sequences takes time. But what the heck — you've got all the time in the world, haven't you?

GRAVITAR

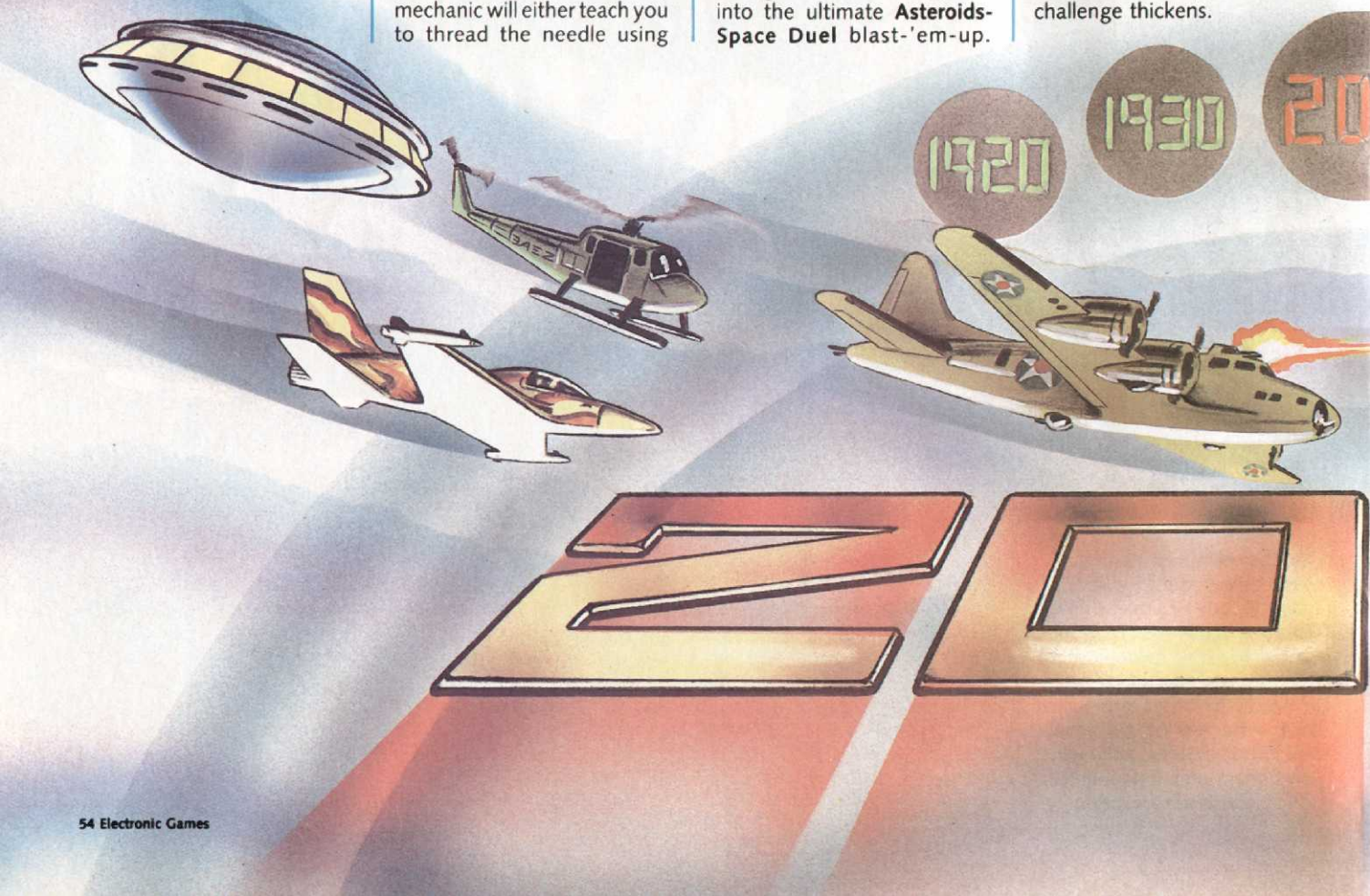
Atari's **Gravitar** is an interesting and — as usual with Atari's coin-op department — innovative creation. The play mechanic will either teach you to thread the needle using directional thrust or wipe you out of quarters in the blink of an eye.

More interesting, however, is the game's use of an adventure-game format integrated into the ultimate **Asteroids-Space Duel** blast-'em-up.

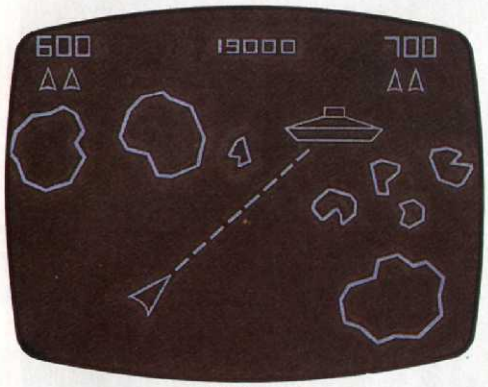
ASTEROIDS (COIN-OP)

Players begin by maneuvering their ships around a series of shapes, not unlike a cosmic floor plan of the type commonly used in graphic adventure's dungeon explorations. Each of the space "chambers" must then be entered and a mission accomplished.

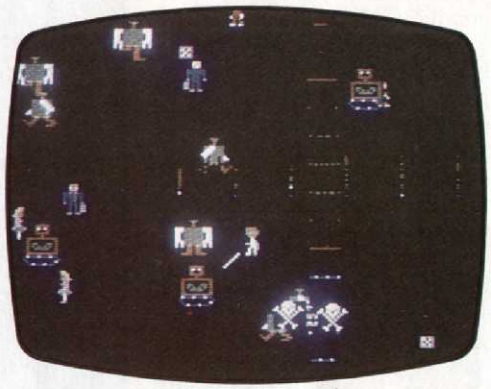
Thrust movement is an interesting type of steering for limited-movement games such as *Asteroids*. In order to steer via directional thrust through what amounts to a space-maze, the mechanic becomes a deadly challenge. To steer via this method, the ship must be pointed in the direction desired and a thruster button needs hitting. To stop, the ship must be turned around 180° and an equal amount of thrust must be applied. Now imagine steering through U-shapes and labyrinths in this style and the challenge thickens.



QUARTER



ASTEROIDS


ROBOTRON

Just in case all these death-defying space acrobatics begin to bore you, there is also the matter of gravity, which is, of course, putting in its 2¢ as well, naturally drawing the ship to any large body in space.

MOON PATROL

As with all things in the world of coin-op videogames, concepts mix and mingle and hybrids are always turning up. The two strongest types of games in the coin-op world of today are science fiction contests and "cute" games. Then, of course, there are the sub-genres of "climbing" and "jumping" games.

Now, imagine the first "cute" SF game with blasting and jumping themes blended in for good measure. The game is called **Moon Patrol,** and it isn't exactly the sort of game arcaders have come to expect from its producer, Williams, known previously for their highly-challenging "players" contests such as **Defender** and **Robotron.**

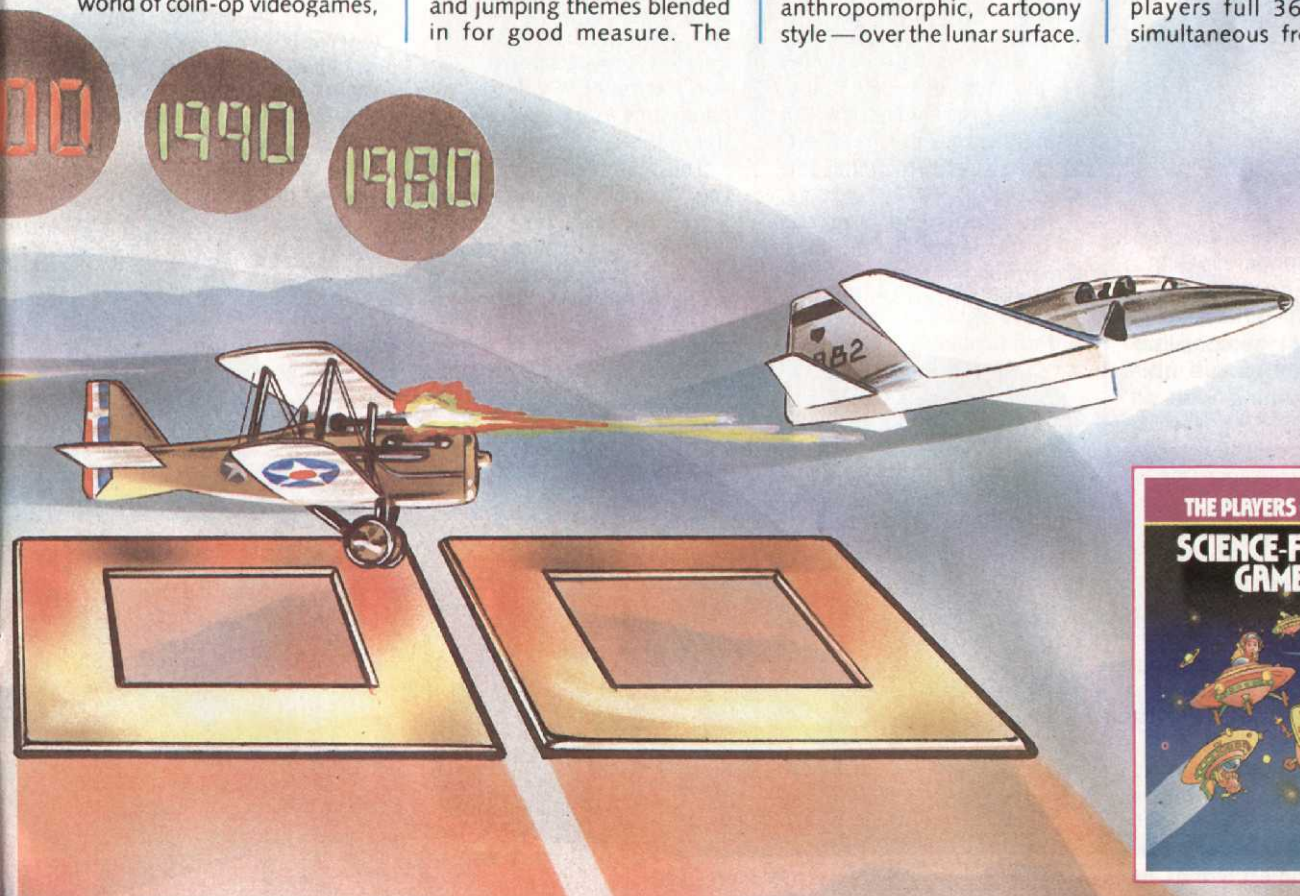
Players control a horizontally-scrolling moon-buggy — rendered in a highly anthropomorphic, cartoony style — over the lunar surface. Occasionally, moon rocks turn up, and must be vaporized by the vehicle's front-mounted laser cannon. Other times, craters appear and the gamer must employ the console's "jump" button in order to safely leapfrog the pit.

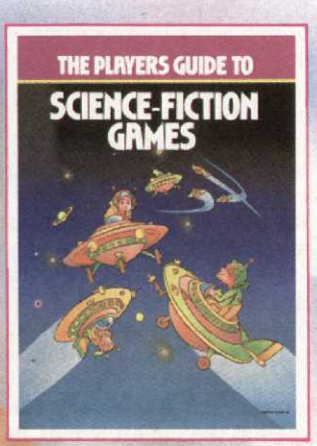
Nothing revolutionary concerning the play mechanic; it's not even very difficult, but there's obviously something that *Moon Patrol* does right, because it is one of the most popular and compelling coin-ops in today's arcade. The most likely cause for the game's appeal is its marvelous graphics. The moon-car, with its oversized, balloon tires and warm, friendly colors, creates an atmosphere not unlike that of the old children's story, "The Little Train that Could".

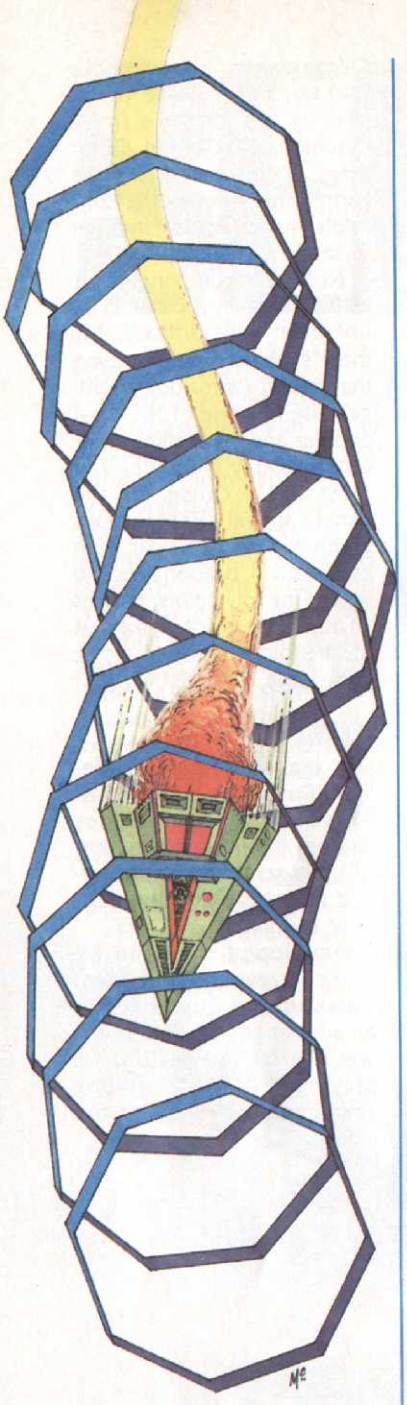
BOSCONIAN

A real space-gamer's delight, **Bosconian** is the sort of SF coin-op that utilizes strategy lightly — in the form of a side-screen radarscope — and goes heavy on the dog-fight elements.

Developed in Japan by Namco (creators of **Pac-Man, Galaxian,** and scores of other arcade smashes), *Bosconian* was the first game to offer players full 360° scrolling simultaneous front-rear fire







and a sense of graphic realism that approaches full animation. Beginning with an audio signal alerting you to begin the attack, the arcader grabs the joystick and tries a little piloting practice. Since this game has no boundaries, and as this particular sector of space is festooned with asteroids, space mines and the ever-popular galactic enemy, familiarity with the controls are a definite plus.

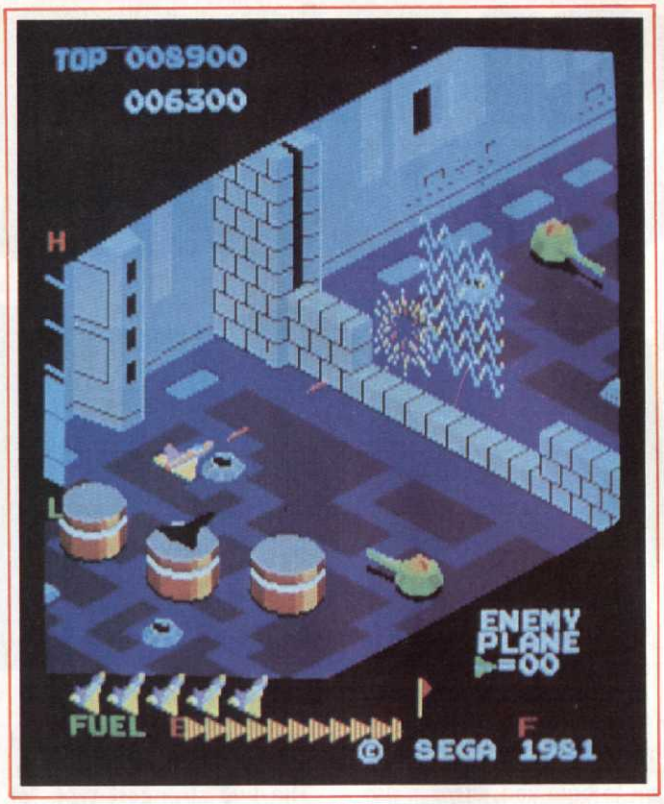
The object of the game is to destroy as many of the huge, multi-domed motherships as possible. These enormous floating spacecraft send out endless squadrons of attack ships at the merest hint of an attack, so good peripheral vision is required to keep track of the objects on the radar-tracking view screen. The motherships can be blown away one dome at a time, or by a direct hit on its single, vulnerable spot — a hatch that slides open and closes at the nexus point where the various corridors connecting the enormous globes meet.

The ability to fly totally free, in any direction is a marvelous gaming experience, but the simultaneously firing front and back guns are lifesavers. Imagine pursuing an enemy through deep space, weaving through meteors and spiked astro-mines while being able to waste any craft hanging onto your tail at the same time! This game might well be retitled, the "Space Gamer's Revenge"!

TUNNELS OF TERROR

The arcades continue to be the cutting edge of the videogame industry, in terms of ideas and technology. This ultimate proving ground has generally turned to science-fiction games in order to show off their latest innovations. After all, what better context for futuristic technology than the future itself? The first vector graphics games (**Star Hawk, Asteroids,** etc.) and, later, the first full-color v-g games (**Space Fury, Tempest**) all used science-fictional settings.

The latest trend in arcade SF is the search for the third dimension — depth. 3-D has thus far proven stubbornly



ZAXXON

elusive to the game masters. The *illusion* of depth, however, has drawn considerably more success than the real thing, however, From the earliest videogames simulating the "trench" sequence from the climax of "Star Wars", to the shadows and three-quarters perspective of **Zaxxon,** a score of SF videogames have come to the very edge of the mountaintop of 3-D.

The search continued with the "tunnel" sequence from Sega's **Tac Scan.** *Tac Scan* is a multi-scenario space shoot-out with its most memorable scenario occuring during a wild, roller-coaster trip through a twisting, winding cosmic pipeline. The gamer is given a front row seat courtesy of a head-on perspective as the ship hurtles through the tunnels that most closely resemble a serpentine strip of corrugated-steel pipe.

The videogame world seems perched right above the first three-dimensional game. The odds are pretty good that it will involve a ship zipping through space.

TAC SCAN

SCIENCE FICTION GAMES GO PORTABLE

VECTREX: THE CARRYOUT ARCADE

The Vectrex stand-alone programming system from the GCE Division of Milton Bradley is particularly rich in titles with a science fiction twist. Not only does the console, which is built around a 9-in. vector graphics monitor, include **Minesweep** as a resident game, but several other spacey contests are currently available with more to come.

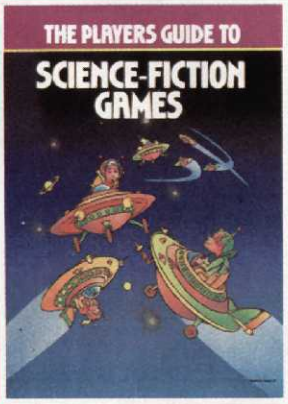
Best of a strong group is this year's Arcade Award winner as best stand-alone cartridge, **Scramble.** Although the graphic treatment is light-years away from the one Stern utilized on its quarter-gobbling coin-op, this scrolling shoot-out shines just as brightly in its own way in its Vectrex edition.

TRON (STAND-ALONE)

STAND AGAINST SARK

Tomytronics has just unveiled a pair of tabletop mini-arcades with a futuristic feel. **Tron** is based on events in the Walt Disney videogaming movie and involves the player in a series of contests against Sark, chief minion of the MCP. And if you defeat the henchman, you'll even get a chance to deal out some justice to the Master Computer Program itself.

Tomytronics also offers a superb stand-alone version of *Scramble*. Graphics are, of course, a little sparse on the brightly lit playfield, but Tomytronics has done a wonderful job of producing a device that really plays like the original shoot-'em-up, despite the limitations of the technology.



ZAXXON IS COMING!

Coleco has announced that one of the titles in its well-received mini-arcade series for 1983 will be **Zaxxon.** Though it would be unrealistic to expect Coleco to equal the videogame cartridge of *Zaxxon* which it produced for the ColecoVision in late 1982, the company's officials express confidence about being able to communicate the essence of this three-dimensional, multi-scenario space slugfest in the mini-arcade format.

SCRAMBLE (STAND-ALONE)

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A VISIT TO G.A.M.E.S.

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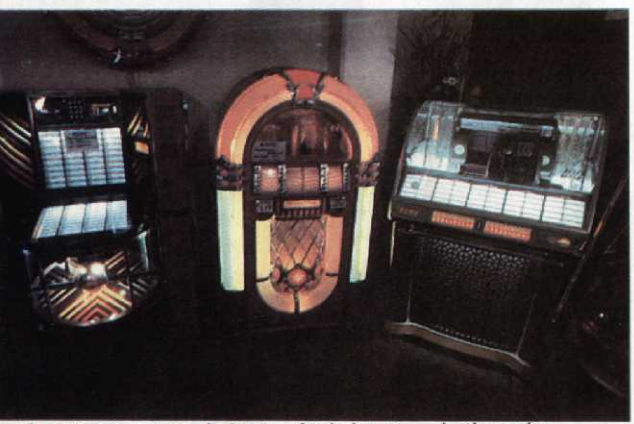


The evocative neon lighting of jukeboxes — both modern and antique (above) — mixes with novelty coin-operated devices such as a gunslinging "one-armed bandit" seen below, waiting to relieve customers of their money

When Joel Gilgoff goes to work each morning, he enters a world that's known to most electronic arcaders as the stuff of which dreams are made.

Joel owns G.A.M.E.S., a successful mini-chain of electronic gaming supermarkets.

Those who visit — or call — one of the four Southern California stores can choose from among practically every game cartridge for just about every programmable and computer system currently on the market. Joel prides himself on being among the first, if not *the* first in the area to get the hottest new titles.

Then there are the big games in his stores, like **Ms. Pac-Man, Zaxxon** and **Tron,** — the coin-ops most of us head down to the local arcade to play. And if both an upright version and a tabletop model are offered by the manufacturer, Joel usually has, or can obtain either one in short order.

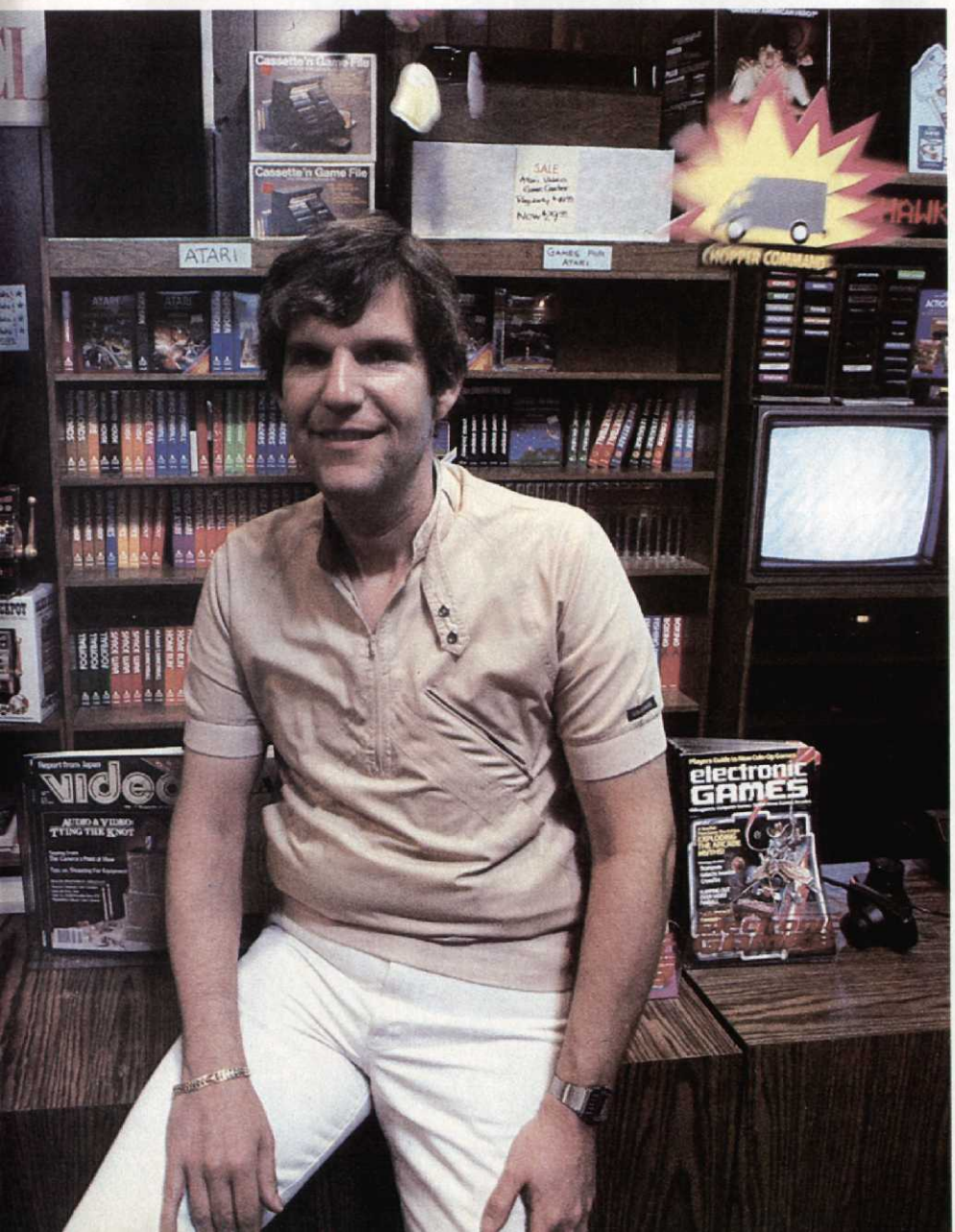
Of course, there are also the pinball machines, slots (a.k.a. one-armed bandits), and jukeboxes.

What makes Joel different from the average broker of these vintage fun toys? Well, when a call came in from Japan, for example, for a pair of Wurlitzer jukeboxes, complete with records, Joel and his crew made sure they were stocked with appropriate era 45's and 78's. Now *that's* class.

Besides receiving telephone calls from the Los Angeles area and Japan, G.A.M.E.S. gets orders from almost every city in the country and practically

G.A.M.E.S.

By DAVID LUSTIG



Joel Gilgoff (left) is the man who created the G.A.M.E.S. chain. Above, we see a gauntlet of coin-op hits, all ready to be wrapped up and taken home by some wealthy arcader, while a distinctly old-fashioned slot machine is seen below on its own pedestal.

G.A.M.E.S.

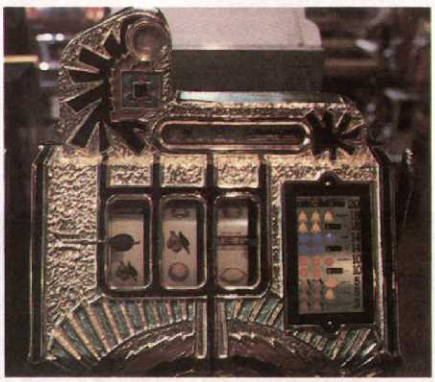
every nation that has the word "arcade" somewhere in its language.

A gentleman from Texas called one day, requesting 13 coin-operated videogames. He wanted to give them away as presents. A caller from South Africa even placed an order for a **Donkey Kong.** And if the thought ever crossed your mind as to what some Saudi sheiks do for entertainment, just ask the Middle Eastern oil baron who ordered both **Pac-Man** and **Frogger** tabletop model videogames from Joel.

Obviously, G.A.M.E.S. is more than just a profitable enterprise to owner Gilgoff. It is a commitment. What keeps his telephones ringing and parking lots busy is a personal commitment to having the most up-to-date stock of videogame cartridges and coin-op machines and a wide selection of pinball and slot machines. And after sales are completed, G.A.M.E.S. tries to ship out every order within 24 hours. It's a good thing, too, because many people, once finding what they want, usually like to have their new prize safe at home as soon as possible.

Joel's entry into the field was a natural transition from his previous job as an IBM electrical engineer in New York. He opened his first store and was Atari's first customer for *Pong* games in 1975. Today there are also stores in Fountain Valley, Torrance and Century City.

The visitor to G.A.M.E.S. will find a plethora of visual delights. The Van Nuys' store, for example, is spacious and well-lit. The latest in electronics share space with the older slot machines and jukeboxes. What enhances G.A.M.E.S. is that everything is thoroughly reconditioned before going out on the floor. Pinball machines, slot machines and jukeboxes look and operate as well, or better, than the day they left the factory, thanks to a crew of trained repairmen and technicians. Usually, it is impossible to tell that it is a used pinball machine sitting next to a new videogame.



(Above) A slot machine, adorned with golden carvings, looks properly regal, while (below) three pins look sharp

You want accessories? Joel's got 'em, including more joysticks, pun intended, than you can shake a stick at! If it's a quality product, you'll find it at G.A.M.E.S.!

What visitors should remember however, is that G.A.M.E.S. is not a toy store and definitely not an arcade. Prospective buyers can, with a demonstrating employee, try out any of the games. But don't try and play them for a high score — this electronic wonderworld doesn't have an arcade license.

Oh yes, the next time you're watching normal television and you come across a new movie (yet to be released) on the life of Hugh Hefner, you won't have to wonder where they rented all those arcade games. They came from Joel Gilgoff's G.A.M.E.S., of course.

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COMPUTER

OIL RIG

Computer Programs Unlimited
Apple II/48K disk

Can you turn $1,000 into black gold? Can you make the right decisions to amass profits quickly and become a member of the Tycoon Club? **Oil Rig,** a new program written by Kevin Bagley for CPU, combines quick-thinking wheeling-dealing with arcade precision for a thoroughly enjoyable game.

When the game is booted the player must decide how many years (10-40) he would like to play and at what level (1-novice through 9-pro). He is then given his $1,000 and is faced with the Master Board. On that board he must decide what to buy in products; crude, shale, oil, kerosene, gas and petroleum products, or equipment; drill rig, oil rig, refinery, warehouse, pipeline, tanker, truck and platform.

He must gain enough money, by buying when prices are low and selling when high, to prospect for oil. There is a $1,000 fee for prospecting. The gamer controls where on the map (at what coordinates) he will take the sample and then a core rating is given on a percentage basis. The higher that figure, the higher the chance of striking oil.

After getting a satisfactory rating and copying down those coordinates (this gamer didn't do that once and lost a 90 percent rating), a drill rig must be purchased before progressing to that portion of the game.

Drilling for oil is the most enjoyable part of the game. The drill rig is rolled along the surface of the ground at the top of the screen. Below is a cross section of the layers of earth underground. The pocket of oil moves across the screen only once and the gamer must position the rig correctly and sink the drill at just the right time to strike oil. The higher the core rating, the easier the oil is to hit.

Once a strike is made there must be an oil rig purchased before the oil can be pumped and added to the Master Board. With that income pouring in, it would be wise indeed to prospect more and buy more equipment because the tax man will otherwise take a more than healthy share of the winnings.

To become a member of the Tycoon Club and get a 100 percent rebate on the cost of the program, the game must be played at the shortest time span (10 years) and be set at the pro difficulty level and there must be a gusher on the final score.

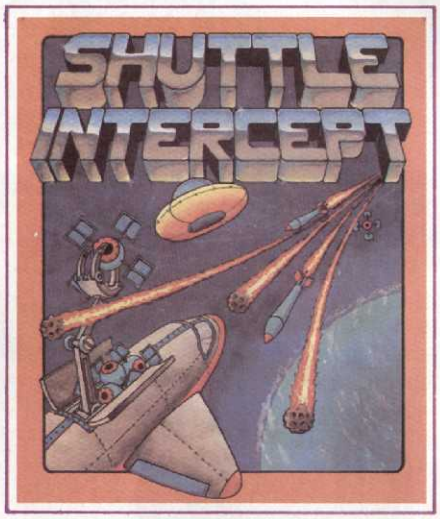
If there is a complaint about the game, it comes from inadequate documentation. Some of the details of the game are left out. For instance in one game, this writer bought a platform only to see it sink in a storm a few months after the purchase. That feature is realistic, but the gamer should be made aware of the possibilities for this otherwise outstanding game.

(Rick Teverbaugh)

SHUTTLE INTERCEPT

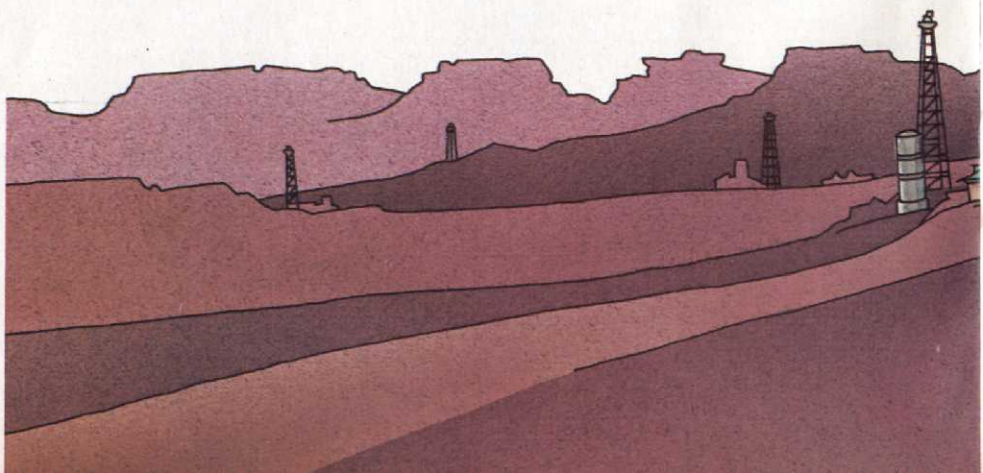
Hayden Software/Apple II/48K disk

In the 1950's and 1960's, launching satellites into Earth orbit frequently grabbed worldwide headlines as the super-powers raced each other to be the first to accomplish various space feats. These days, the emphasis is switching from rocketing stuff into space to retrieving it and returning it to the surface. That's the theme of **Shuttle Intercept,** in which the arcader employs a sky hook to collect friendly satellites as they fly past from right to left on the playfield.



SHUTTLE INTERCEPT

The overall mission is divided into four quantum levels, each separated by an interval in hyperspace. Ten friendly satellites, alternately colored red and green to help the player keep count, flash past in each quantum level. When your ship takes a hit, even with its protective shield up, you immediately go into hyperspace. Otherwise, a ship enters this dangerous zone automatically, once 10 shuttles have appeared.



GAMING

Drill Down Deep For Black Gold — and Bring in a Gusher!

The first (green) quantum level challenges the player with meteors and enemy craft. The ship's laser cannon, fired with the paddle's action button, can't hurt the meteors, though a collision atomizes the ship. The enemy craft aren't very powerful, but when one passes over your ship's position, it makes the skyhook used to catch the friendly satellites retract into the ship.

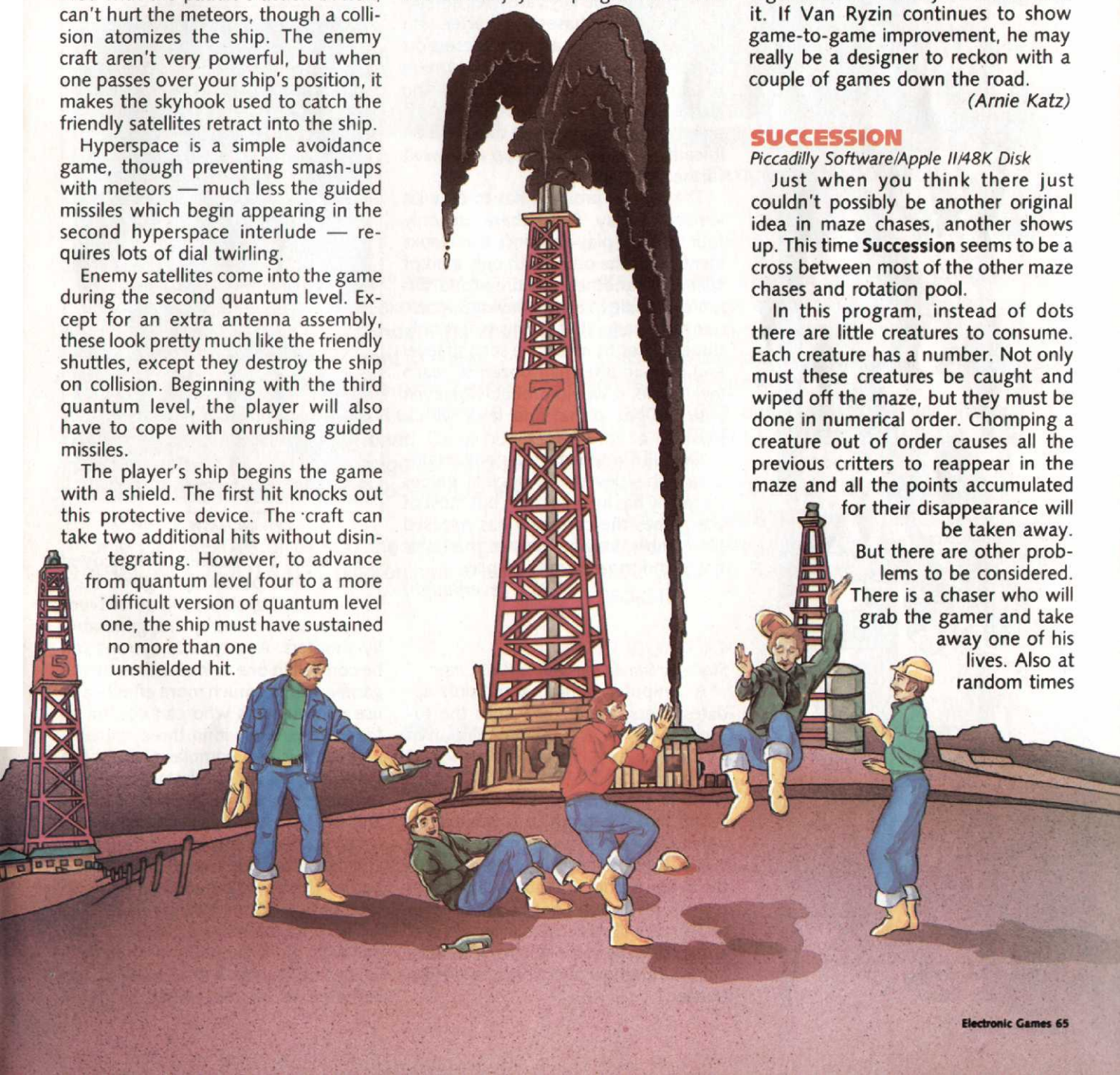
Hyperspace is a simple avoidance game, though preventing smash-ups with meteors — much less the guided missiles which begin appearing in the second hyperspace interlude — requires lots of dial twirling.

Enemy satellites come into the game during the second quantum level. Except for an extra antenna assembly, these look pretty much like the friendly shuttles, except they destroy the ship on collision. Beginning with the third quantum level, the player will also have to cope with onrushing guided missiles.

The player's ship begins the game with a shield. The first hit knocks out this protective device. The craft can take two additional hits without disintegrating. However, to advance from quantum level four to a more difficult version of quantum level one, the ship must have sustained no more than one unshielded hit.

John Van Ryzin, who authored **Kamikaze** for the same publisher, has produced a somewhat more innovative and enjoyable program this time out. No one will ever shower *Shuttle-Intercept* with prestigious awards but it's a reasonably interesting game with a good deal of novelty to recommend it. If Van Ryzin continues to show game-to-game improvement, he may really be a designer to reckon with a couple of games down the road.

(Arnie Katz)



SUCCESSION

Piccadilly Software/Apple II/48K Disk

Just when you think there just couldn't possibly be another original idea in maze chases, another shows up. This time **Succession** seems to be a cross between most of the other maze chases and rotation pool.

In this program, instead of dots there are little creatures to consume. Each creature has a number. Not only must these creatures be caught and wiped off the maze, but they must be done in numerical order. Chomping a creature out of order causes all the previous critters to reappear in the maze and all the points accumulated for their disappearance will be taken away. But there are other problems to be considered. There is a chaser who will grab the gamer and take away one of his lives. Also at random times

throughout the maze, doors will be locked, preventing the gamer from taking the route originally planned. There is also a timer. If a maze level is cleared of creatures, the clock plays a vital role in determining the score the gamer gets. There are 500 points awarded for clearing the maze, 100 points for each mark left on the timer when the maze is cleared and an extra 1,000 point bonus if there are more than 15 marks left on the timer when the maze is cleared. Each of the four levels of mazes has one more creature than the previous level and operates a bit faster.

With all those positive ideas behind us, it's time to consider the negatives. *Succession* plays on keyboard only. Even though the keys are user definable, most maze chases play better with joystick than keyboard and *Succession* is probably no exception. Each turn on the maze must be typed in, as the gamer-controlled masher won't merely follow the maze in the direction it leads, but rather will stop and await further instructions.

The second problem has to do with variety of play. Since there are only four levels of play and since each looks identical to the other with only a bit of speed and another creature added, it is quite possible to tire of playing *Succession* very early. It took this writer only three games to reach the second level and only another half dozen to reach level three. It would probably be even easier to get to that final level with a joystick.

Overall *Succession* is a good example of the clever and original games Piccadilly has in its catalog, but most of the games the company has released have more staying power than this entry and more variety of play.

(Rick Teverbaugh)

CYTRON MASTERS

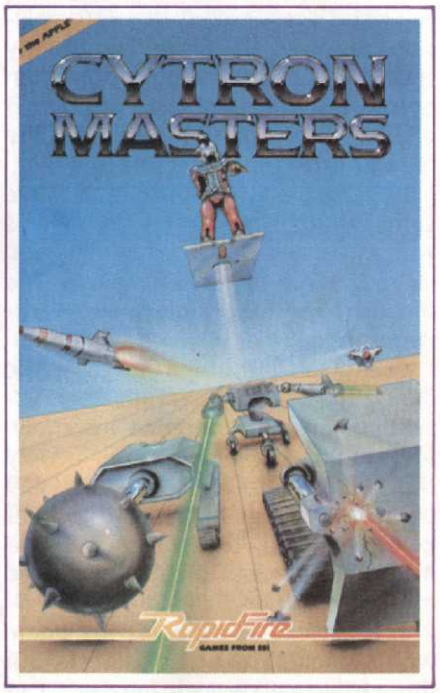
Strategic Simulations/Apple II/48K disk

A computer game that not only updates chess, but takes it into the future? That's an accurate description of **Cytron Masters,** one of the new **Rapid Fire** games from SSI.

There are so many facets of this offering that it's tough to know exactly where to start. The premise for the game, which is detailed quite nicely in the extensive documentation, is that in the future, disputes between countries or planets will be decided in an arena as armies of Cybernetic electronic devices battle under the direction of a Cytron Master.

The game system is taught within the program by one of these combatants, Grand Master Titus III, in one of the most informative and entertaining processes yet brought to disk. There are six types of cytrons; mines, bunkers, shooters, commanders, missiles and anti-missiles.

In each game the masters try to protect their command centers and destroy the same of their foe. Foe can be either a second human or the computer. Also on the 18x38 space grid are power centers, which must be controlled to have enough power to create more cytrons as the match progresses, and transport beams, which are used to direct new cytrons to appropriate locations on the field.



CYTRON MASTERS

A command center is destroyed when a mine passes through it. Bunkers are used to shield the other types of cytrons from enemy fire, generated by shooters. Any type of cytrons can be controlled one unit at a time by the gamer, but it's much more effective to use commanders who can control all friendly cytrons within three spaces.

If there is one complaint about the game it is that the combatants must be thinking so far ahead in terms of tactics and are kept so busy directing and creating these machines, there is very little time to enjoy the graphics of the battle. This could be an ideal game to tape on a VCR for viewing later.

There are too many little details that make the game both fun to come back to, yet at the same time make it too complex to be mentioned in detail

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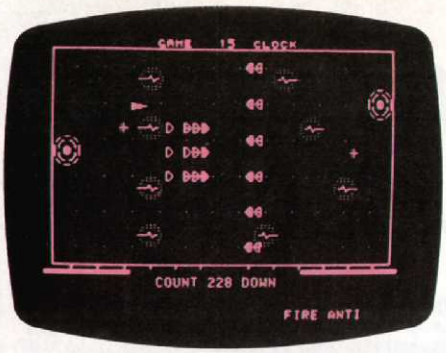


CYTRON MASTERS (PLAYFIELD)

here. The probability of shooters destroying its target means that, in general, good strategy will win and poor planning will lose, but there are times that a suddenly poor shooting set of attackers can ruin a well-crafted charge.

Dan Bunten, who also has created **Cartels & Cutthroats** and **Computer Quarterback** for SSI, has put together a game which requires endurance, strategy and quick wits. If this is an example of the quality of the *Rapid Fire* games, SSI will continue to be a major factor in creating computer classics in the future.

(Rick Teverbaugh)

STAR MAZE

Sir-Tech/Apple II/48K disk

No one knows who created it, where it came from or even how it was built, but the star maze exists. This cosmic version of King Solomon's Mines beckons to adventurous explorers of deep space with the promise of untold wealth.

An interstellar gamesman has stocked the vast labyrinth — only a small part of which is visible on the screen at any one time — with gigantic jewels of incalculable value. As captain of a tiny but maneuverable spaceship, you desire these magnificent baubles more than any other prize in the known universe. You must therefore cruise the lanes of the star maze and use your grappling beam to tow the jewels back to the mothership for safekeeping. Once you have collected all nine jewels, the mystic forces of the star maze transfer you to a more difficult portion of the labyrinth with a fresh set of jewels.

Dangers may prevent the three ships of your fleet, available one at a time, from accomplishing this goal and retiring to a life of eternal ease on your favorite pleasure planet. There are enemy ships that shoot first and ask questions never, meteor showers, an alien space station that disassembles into spherical fighters and the fearsome bug train with its winged marauders.

The arcader presses one of the joystick's two action buttons to ignite the ship's engine and apply the thrust which moves the craft through the void. The more thrust, as veteran gamer Isaac Newton once noted, the greater the speed in the opposite direction.

It is important to closely monitor the speed indicator located on the scoreboard just to the right of the maze display. Firing the engine depletes your ship's limited supply of fuel, and the faster the ship hurtles down the corridors of the space maze, the greater the energy drain. A pilot should therefore use a feathery touch on the gas pedal to avoid having to expend great quantities of fuel just to stop the ship's forward progress.

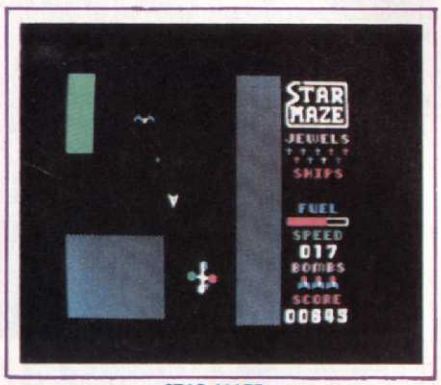
Why not zoom throughout the labyrinth at top speed? The designer of **Star Maze** cleverly requires the arcader to complete two vital tasks at extremely slow speeds. The indicator must read less than 200 in order to pick up a jewel with the grappling beam, and it must be under 100 when docking for refueling at your mothership.

Besides a nose-mounted laser, fired by hitting the other action button, the ship is also armed with three "smart bombs". Pushing the "x" key obliterates everything visible on the playfield. The wise player won't be quick to squander this powerful weapon, perhaps saving it for dire emergencies like an unexpected encounter with the bug train.

If the ordinary form of movement lands your space cruiser in trouble, one possible way out of the mess is to press "/", throwing it into hyperspace. It's a random jump that shifts the ship to a random point in the maze. Even though it burns up a lot of fuel, hyperspace can be a useful tool when your ship is temporarily lost far from the mothership, since the chance move is apt to put you closer to that all-important refueling station.

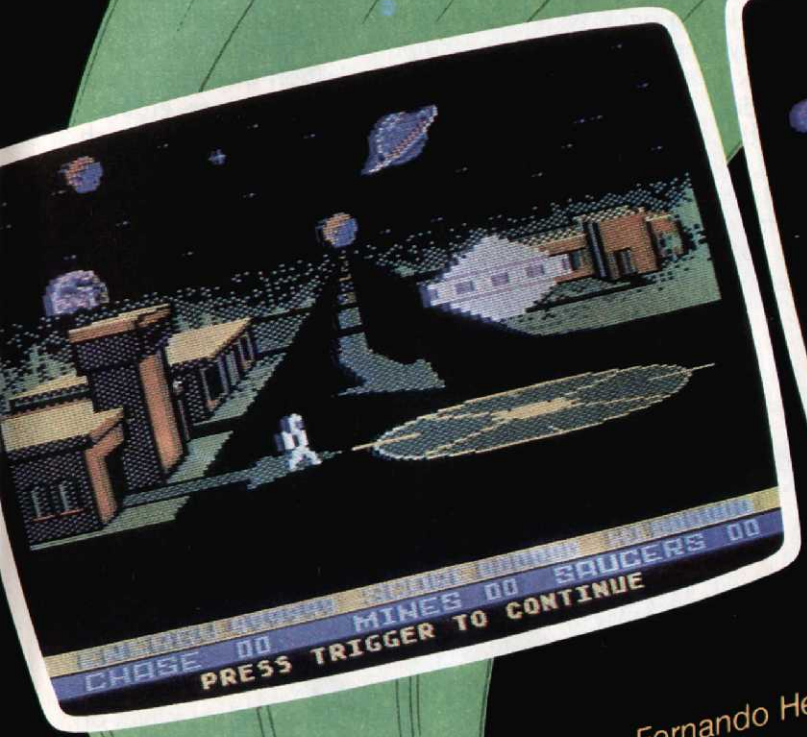
Although movement has been described in terms of the standard Apple II joystick, it is possible to play *Star Maze* using a pair of paddles, the keyboard or even an Atari-style hand controller with a joyport. All four control schemes are sensibly explained in the instruction booklet, though the rules folder is just a bit vague about some other aspects of the game. Fortunately, *Star Maze* nearly qualifies as a boot-and-blast program, so the lack of comprehensive rules is not that crucial.

Gordon Eastman, who wrote *Star Maze* based on an original design by Robert Woodhead, must be congratulated for his outstanding programming achievement. The 18-color hi-res graphics are a revelation, and few players are likely to soon forget the magnificently complex explosions which occur when something is shot with a



STAR MAZE

Totally Awesome!



Fernando Herrera's

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laser gun or the arcader's ship runs out of fuel.

The computer generates the omni-directional scrolling maze randomly at the start of each game of *Star Maze*, lending needed variety to the action. And when you've scooped up the nine jewels in the first maze, there are 15 more waiting to test your skill.

Still, all the design expertise in the world means nothing if the resulting game is a dud. This is certainly not the case with *Star Maze*, which is a totally fascinating space epic worthy of every Apple-gamer's attention.

(Steve Davidson)

RENDEZVOUS

EduWare/Apple II/48K Disk

Any gamers out there who did any growing up in the '60s will remember the Mercury space programs and how nearly every kid on the block wanted to grow up to be an astronaut. That feeling grew as the space program went through the Gemini and later on, the Apollo stages.

Now there has been a further surge of interest with the success of the space shuttle Columbia. EduWare has put together a complex program that allows the gamer to become an astronaut and discover some of the thrills of flying in space.

Rendezvous was obviously planned as a learning aid. But Wesley Huntress, Ph.D. has also managed to make the simulation fun.

The documentation is a bit too technical in places, more designed for the science major than the layman, but there are good drawings and a glossary of terms on the back page.

The program has four stages: Earth lift-off, orbital rendezvous, approach and alignment, and docking. Each section can be reached from the game's main menu without being successful at the previous stage.

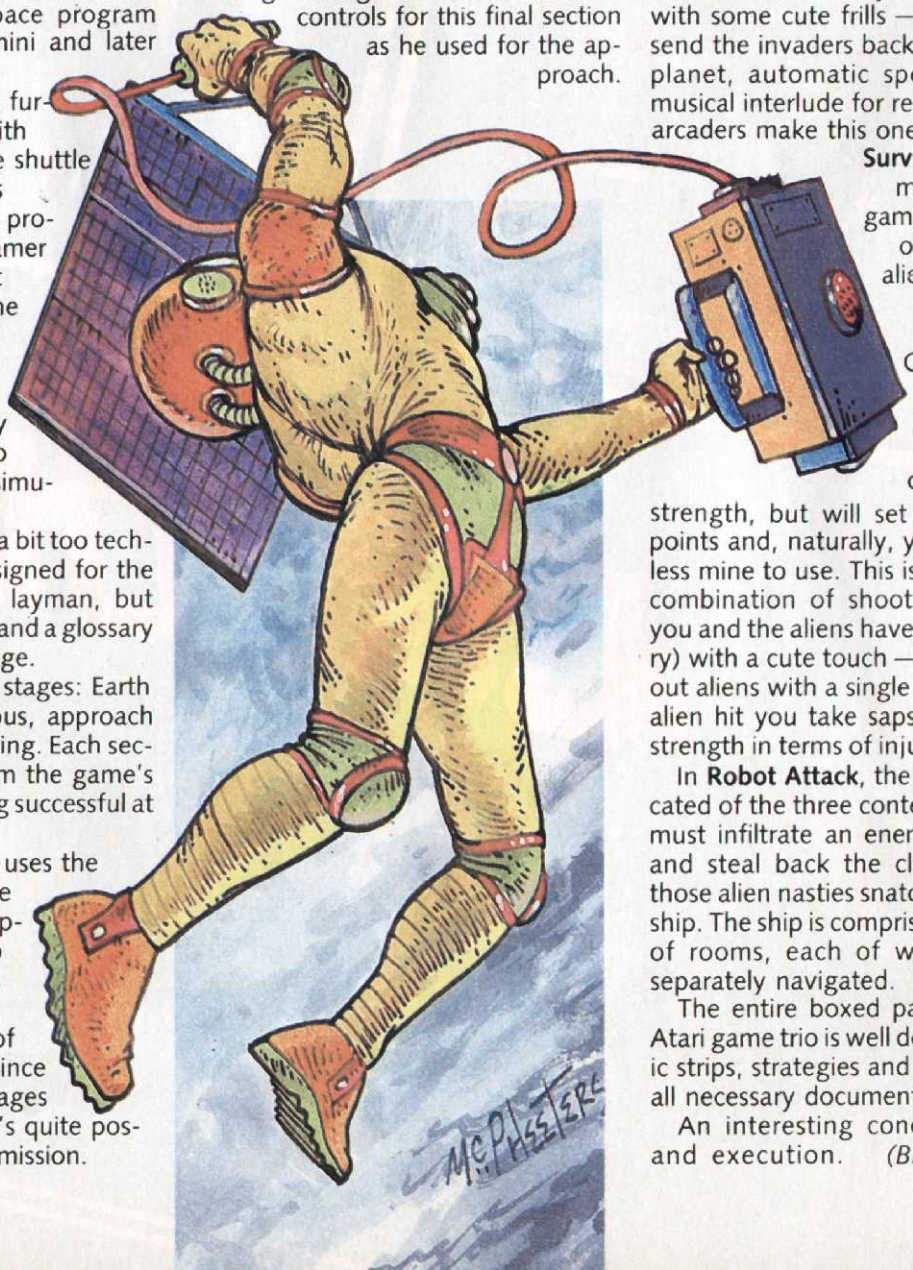
At lift-off, the gamer uses the arrow keys to make sure the shuttle gets the proper altitude and speed to achieve an orbit around Earth. Getting that task done with a minimum of engine burns is a goal since all of the other three stages also requires fuel and it's quite possible to run out in mid-mission.

Next the shuttle's orbit must be altered to match that of the space station. The gamer can plot trial course corrections until he finds one that will put the shuttle within reach of his objective. He must then have the onboard computer make a course correction to allow a circular orbit.

The approach is probably the most difficult of the four phases. Controlling the shuttle at this phase can be accomplished with either joystick or keyboard. This writer feels that the keyboard is a bit more sluggish and unpredictable, especially if there is a good joystick at hand.

The shuttle can be moved up, down, backward, forward, left or right, with one hand on the keyboard or with a flick of your joystick. The other hand controls pitch, heading and bank.

Finally, the fourth section is alignment and docking, a drill in precision control and split-second decision-making. The gamer uses the same controls for this final section as he used for the approach.



At the end of the program the gamer is judged on how well he accomplished the rendezvous, using considerations such as time, energy used and piloting skill. Like most EduWare programs, *Rendezvous* makes the learning very easy to swallow. Next time NASA has a shuttle program scheduled, if they have any trouble lining up its crew, my number is. . .

(Rick Teverbaugh)

SPACE GAMES

Eduware/Atari 400 & 800/Tape: Aliens and Survive 16K RAM; Robot 32K RAM, Disc: 32K RAM/BASIC

Space Games is EduWare's early foray into the entertainment end of the computer software market. It is an interesting collection of classic space games. None of these are groundbreakers, but they play well enough and may make a solid introduction to computer gaming for youngsters.

Aliens is, basically, **Space Invaders** with some cute frills — the ability to send the invaders back to their home planet, automatic speed-up and a musical interlude for real quality tyro-arcaders make this one a winner.

Survive is a sort of maze-traversing game in which the object is to lure aliens over them, blowing them up *real* good. Collision with a mine by the player will not affect any of your lives or strength, but will set you back 10 points and, naturally, you've got one less mine to use. This is an interesting combination of shoot-out SF (both you and the aliens have laser weaponry) with a cute touch — you can wipe out aliens with a single shot, but each alien hit you take saps 20% of your strength in terms of injuries.

In **Robot Attack**, the most sophisticated of the three contests, the player must infiltrate an enemy space craft and steal back the cloaking device those alien nasties snatched from your ship. The ship is comprised of a quintet of rooms, each of which must be separately navigated.

The entire boxed package on this Atari game trio is well done, with comic strips, strategies and a full listing of all necessary documentation.

An interesting concept, package and execution. *(Bill Kunkel)*

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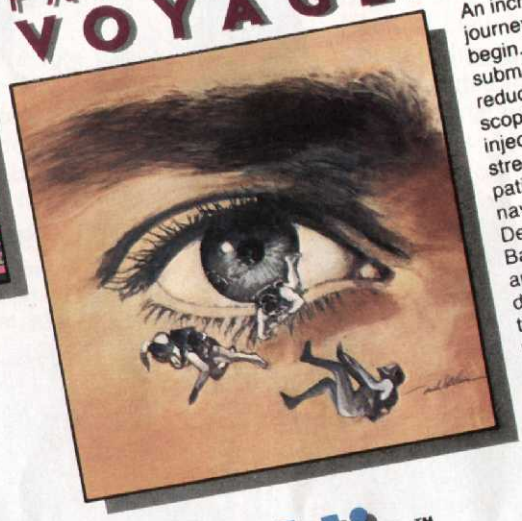

An incredible medical journey is about to begin. You and your submarine are to be reduced to microscopic proportions and injected into the blood stream of a critically ill patient. You must navigate past deadly Defense Cells, Bacteria, Antibodies and Enzymes to destroy a life-threatening blood clot near each patient's brain. Prepare yourself for one Fantastic Voyage!

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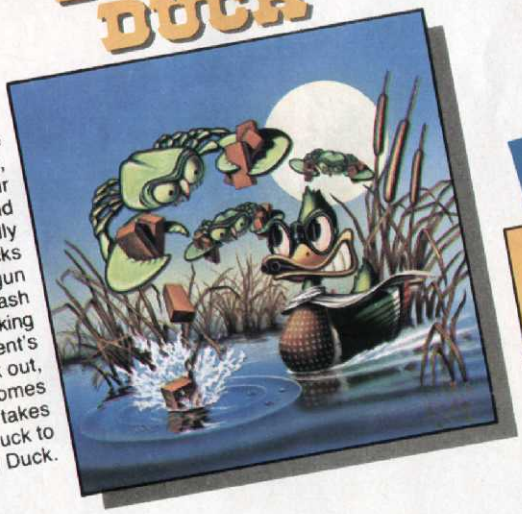
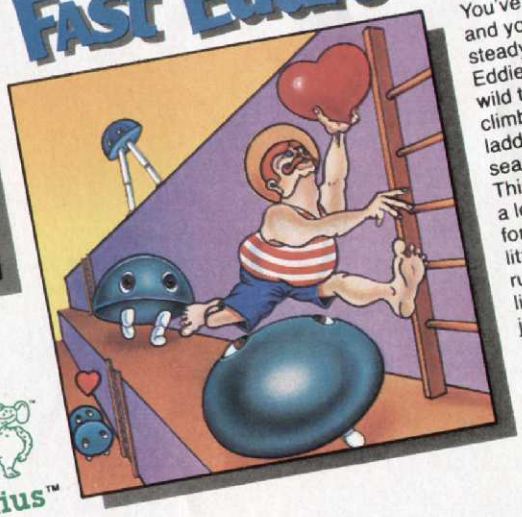


Those cranky crabs are trying to drive the ducks from their once quiet pond. Imagine, crabs taking to the air armed with bricks and bombs! Luckily, Deadly Duck has a few tricks of his own. His gun barrel bill can unleash a bevy of crab cracking bullets at a moment's notice. Look out, Deadly, here comes another brick! It takes more than luck to play Deadly Duck.

Fast Eddie™



You've got to be cool and you've got to be steady to play Fast Eddie. Eddie is on a wild treasure hunt, climbing up and down ladders everywhere in search of prizes. Things would sure be a lot easier if it weren't for all of those pesky little Sneakers™ running around. They literally keep him jumping!

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CHESS FOR ONE

Electronic Chess Can Cure the "No Opponent" Blues

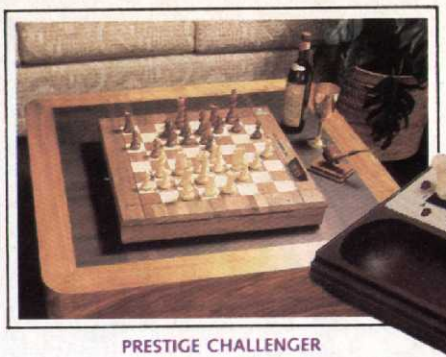
By JOYCE WORLEY

Games may come and games may go; fads rise and fall. But one game never wanes in popularity: chess. No one knows how many chessists there are. It's probably the most widely known contest on earth, and possibly this planet's most popular non-athletic competition. It would be unusual, if not actually unlikely, to walk into any room containing a dozen people, and not find at least one chess player among them. Certainly, most folks know the moves and have tried the game at one time or another. Even with all those players, the problem is finding one who can give you a satisfying game at your own skill level. It's not much fun to get wholloped repeatedly by your chess-master cousin. Continually mating baby brother in seven moves gets boring, too.

The ultimate answer actually may be some sort of multi-functioned android companion programmed to exactly suit your every need. Such a device certainly could be considered the ultimate stand-alone "game". Until that happens, technology has provided a satisfactory solution to the problem of finding the right opponent, defined as someone you can beat often enough to have fun, but who can give you a run for it so your own skill will increase. Since 1977, when Fidelity Electronics marketed the first dedicated chess playing computer, pawn-pushers have had to look no further than the closest electronic games store for a good opponent who will never tire of the sport.

Just how good these electronic

FIDELITY CHESS CHALLENGER



PRESTIGE CHALLENGER

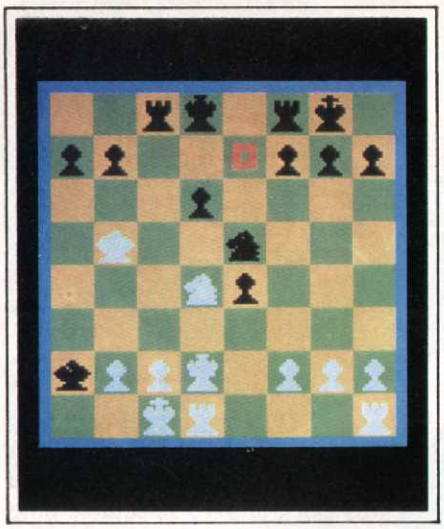
MINI SENSORY CHALLENGER

combatants can play is a matter of record. Late in 1982, for the first time ever, a chess computer reached the "expert" level. The Prestige Challenger, Fidelity Electronics top-of-the line device, beat a human Candidate Master with a rating of 2046 under tournament conditions. This victory topped the second round of the U.S. Open Chess Championship, sponsored by the U.S. Chess Federation.

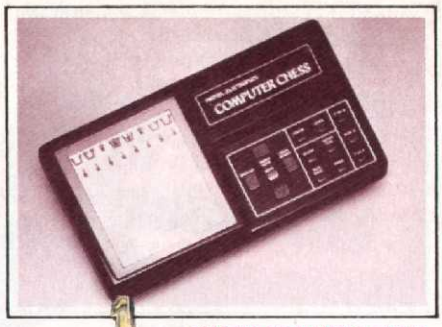
If you're looking for an adversary, the Prestige Challenger is a good place to start. It has an automatic response playing board, with wooden men. Magnets in the base of each chess piece activate switches in the board, so the program can "read" the moves. The computer then signals its wishes by flashing LED's to indicate the piece to be moved and where it should be placed.

It's unlikely the Prestige Challenger will be technologically outdated any time soon, since it has cartridge capability. This means that if future chess programs surpass this one, a new cartridge will upgrade the machine to state-of-the-art again.

The beautifully handcrafted walnut housing with inlaid top has a built-in chess clock and 15 selectable time levels of play. Every command option that can be devised is included in the unit, with special modes to suit all needs. As if that weren't enough to make this one of the most desirable chess computers on the market today, the Prestige also has voice capabilities. It has a 50-word vocabulary in English, French, Ger-



COLECO CHESS CHALLENGER



MATTEL COMPUTER CHESS

THE SPRACKLEN'S DESIGNING CHALLENGER

man, or Spanish. At $1295, the Prestige Challenger isn't for everyone, but it's currently ranked as the strongest chess program in the world.

Fidelity isn't the only company with a state-of-the-art computer chess machine. One of the world's most beautiful units is the Mephisto II, from Hegener & Glaser, a West German company that recently opened a branch in the U.S. to market it.

The electronic sensory board is made of walnut and maple hardwoods, with hand-carved chikari and rosewood chess pieces. Every conceivable option for chess players is possible with this top-quality unit, including seven levels of play and an additional timer with infinite levels. The unit memorizes the entire game, giving the option of replaying it backwards or forwards. Interrupted games can be stored for an unlimited time. It's possible to take back any move, or even every move, during the course of play.

Mephisto II is a luxurious chessboard with a top-quality program. The unique design provides an additional versatility. The chess program itself is contained in a small module that functions separately as a portable chess unit. This makes it the most powerful portable chess machine in the world.

MEPHISTO COMPUTER

Enter moves using the built-in keyboard, and the digital readout which indicates the computer's moves. Use any chess board, or the portable board and playing pieces that come with the unit, for an absolutely top-powered challenge that goes with you anywhere you wander. The Mephisto II sells for approximately $800. The portable program can be bought separately for $300.

SciSys' top chess computer is the Mark V Model #501. The Mark V boasts a 36K memory and variable time control so that it can play any form of chess from Speed to Tournament. This smart machine can solve "mate in seven moves" problems, and plays up to 12 games simultaneously against humans, other computers, or itself. The Mark V provides analysis, comment, or even advice on the situation in progress, and gives a complete game history as well as predicting the outcome of the current contest. Listing for around $500, the Mark V can give any chess player a run for his money.

There is a large variety of medium-priced, high-quality units for chessists to choose among. Fidelity's Sensory Chess Challenger 9, $165, is ranked at 1771, and features a sensory playing

Continued on page 106

FIRST: MONSTER MOVIES NOW:

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COMPUTER GAMES THINKERS PLAY

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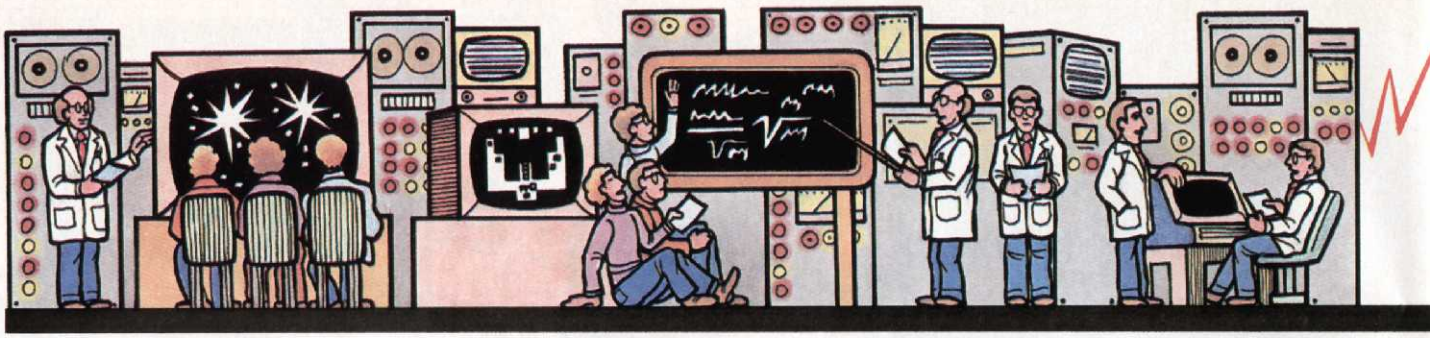
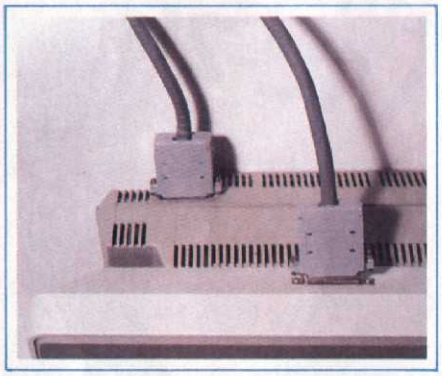


Sidewriter—The Outboard Keyboard for the Atari 400/800

By HENRY B. COHEN

Some computers for gaming are funny little beasts. You start out amazed at what they can do and pretty soon you wish they could do a whole lot more.

Up to now you usually had the option of making them a bit smarter with "RAM Crams", making them faster with disk drives or improving their manners with gourmet controllers.



The Screensonics "Sidewriter" outboard keyboard sits atop the original Atari 400 computer

Atari owners have always been among the luckiest in this regard, because of the enormous popularity of their systems. Aftermarket manufacturers have catered to almost every whim of the Atari owner, making it possible for an original 4K 400 to become a super-brained 48K genius and, shortly, a 64K Einstein.

Well fellow gamers, RAM Crams and disk drives have their place, but a real keyboard has seemingly been an elusive dream. That is, until now.

Screensonics, a leading Midwest computer repair center, is marketing a device that will make the 400 owner the envy of every computerist on the block, and it can be of almost equal benefit to the 800 owner as well.

They call it the Sidewriter. We call it the outboard keyboard.

If you're a regular reader, you know from past experience that **EG** favors the addition of outboard controllers when their use will greatly enhance the versatility or performance of an already fine product. Several months ago this magazine showed you how to add real joysticks to Coleco's line of tabletop arcade games. Now, with the aid of Screensonics, we're going a whole lot further in our quest to make the best even better.

The Sidewriter is a very high quality, self-contained, typewriter-style keyboard (featuring a built-in loudspeaker) for Atari 400 and 800 home computers.

For the 400 owner, it means an end to putting up with the child-proof and sometimes user-proof membrane keyboard. In fact, the keyboard is so responsive its effects are somewhat

TEST LAB

startling the first time you use it, but more about that later.

For the 800 owner, particularly if he or she is an avid programmer, it means instant comfort and freedom from hunching over the machine.

Before heading into further user benefits, we have to tell you the price of keyboard liberation isn't cheap. With factory installation the Sidewriter will set you back a cool $249.00. Do-it-yourselfers can save a few dollars ($11.00). Frankly, this nominal savings is truly false economy.

Installation of the Sidewriter took just under two hours. It is a totally straightforward task, but requires a very high degree of soldering skill along with an ability — and courage — to cut a very precise hole in the back of your computer gaming system.

(Left) Full-front look at the full-stroke Sidewriter, being given a workout in the photo above. The keyboard here can be placed on the player's lap for convenience

EG installed the unit in a 400, and we suspect that putting it into an 800 would be no more difficult. It's simply that user installation will void any Atari factory warranty, but if a professional shop does the work, the warranty may still be honored. Not by Atari, mind you, but by the shop that does the job.

But if your computer is out of warranty, you know your way around its innards, and you are perfectly at home with a soldering iron and appropriate cutting tools, there's no reason to expect surprises or problems with the installation.

The instructions, as supplied by Screensonics, are thorough and well-detailed, although the hand-drawn template could be a bit more precise. In addition, a warning to position the 25-pin connector as far to the right as possible (when facing the back of the

By nature an outboard inputting device, the Sidewriter helps liberate gamers from the task of sitting "on top" of their computers

computer) would be welcome.

In the test installation, we cut a hole about a sixteenth of an inch too far to the left which eventually caused the case of our 400 to bulge by that amount. This is hardly noticeable, but preventable, hence our suggestion about an appropriate warning.

In sum, installing the unit requires you to cut the mounting hole for a 25-pin connector. You must then solder 24 factory stripped wires from a twenty-five wire ribbon into place, tack down the ribbon with double-sided tape (supplied) and mount the connector. Somewhat easier said than done, but straightforward nevertheless.

We simply do not feel that there is any advantage in doing it yourself other than pride in workmanship or a minor time savings.

For this reason we have not shown photos of the installation but rather what the end result will look like.

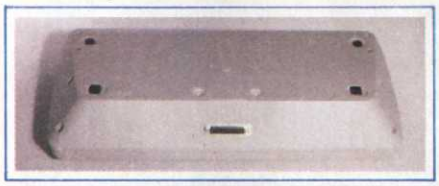
As mentioned, the keyboard itself is of very high quality, equivalent to what you'd get in a computer selling for several thousand dollars. We have nothing but praise for the design integrity of the entire unit from its heavyweight plastic case right down to its rubber feet.

The keyboard is laid out almost identically to the Atari factory keyboard and even features heavier weight springing on the "system's reset" and "break" keys to prevent mishaps.

Supplied with a beefy 10-ft. cable, the Sidewriter frees Atarians from the computer to program upside down if they like. It allows gamers, especially adventurists, to lie down on their sofas and leisurely input instructions. Of course, this is most pleasurable if one owns a projection TV or Beamscope.

More to the point, the Sidewriter allows the kind of freedom from the machine that can make long sessions vastly more comfortable and less constraining.

In use, the Sidewriter parallels the Atari's keyboard — it does not usurp or



A look at the Sidewriter's hard, underbelly

replace it. This allows two or more people (depending upon how many Sidewriters are in use) to input the machine simultaneously. In a business situation the 800 owner (or the 400 owner for that matter) can run multiple inputs to this computer, making his system far more versatile than ever before.

Because the Sidewriter was designed by people in the repair business, it has several unique features. Each of its keys is replaceable at a very reasonable cost, should a malfunction occur.

In addition, while the cable that connects to the computer can be screwed down for added security, the end that attaches to the Sidewriter cannot. This arrangement is designed to prevent a mishap from occuring should someone trip over the 10-ft. umbilical. In that case it will unplug from the Sidewriter leaving both the keyboard and the operator intact. If hard mounting on both ends of the cable is desired, Screensonics will supply the Sidewriter so endowed at the customer's request.

For those who like their keyboards with an uncluttered look, the brass Screensonics nameplate may be easily removed — this too by design — a nice touch.

For the Atari 400 owner, the Sidewriter is probably worth its weight in gold. For the serious 800 user, it is only marginally less desirable — and then only because the 800 already has a real keyboard.

This isn't much to recommend in the way of improvements for this excellent product. If only Screensonics can locate a supplier that makes 25-pin "Y" connectors, which would eliminate virtually all soldering, the product would be just about perfect.

As it stands, it's almost there already, and that's saying a great deal.

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PASSPORT TO ADVENTURE

Adventure Through the Ages with Time Zone

By BILL HEINEMAN

It's amazing how much someone will go through to make the biggest and the best "anything"! Well, the people at On-Line Systems are no exception. Not only is this computer adventure the most difficult one I've ever solved, but the complexity of it was startling. Anyone who plays this game without previous adventuring experience may well find they've bitten off more than they can chew.

The guest starts out at your home and progresses through seven time periods, seven continents and another world. All in all, there are 41 different time zones to explore. Some are death traps, some are easily solved, and others are not so easy to live through. And the planet Neburon is a real pain.

The story of the game is as follows: In the year 4081, Earth is a fast-paced, highly technological planet. Earth has advanced so fast that no other planet in the galaxy has been able to keep up with it. Earth has the edge over every planet but one; Neburon, the only world that has not joined the Federation or even let the Federation in on its existence, has been watching Earth for a long time and now decides that action must take place or Neburon will be discovered and their superiority will be lost.

The Neburite scientists went to their great leader Ramadu, and asked him what should be done. The evil ruler chose to declare war and had a great raygun built and aimed at the small blue world, Earth. A lone Neburite saw what was about to take place, so he built a device to send to the Earth people in the hope that they could figure out how to stop Ramadu and save themselves. Just as the Neburite was about to send the device, Ramadu's guards stormed his home, shot the controls of the transporter, and the device simply disappeared. Did he fail!?!

The year is 1982: You have just awakened from a really weird dream. You thought that Earth would not see the year 4082 because of somebody named Ramadu and rayguns and the like. You dismiss these thoughts as fantasy brought on by that 4-foot long sandwich you ate last night and you decide to take a walk to settle your thoughts (not to mention your stomach!). No sooner do you walk out to your backyard then you see a funny-looking device just sitting there. What could it be? Your curiosity gets the better of you and you venture inside. With that, your greatest adventure begins.

The game called **Time Zone** is played by simple two word verb/noun commands entered on the computer keyboard. There is no time limit and there are a lot of time-consuming puzzles to be solved. A good feature in this adventure is the "save-game" routine. An adventurer can save up to 16 adventures on one save-game disk (which you supply), and there is no limit as to how many save-game disks you can have.

This one is just like previous *Hi-Res Adventures* by On-Line in originality, complexity of the puzzles, detail in the graphic artwork, playability, and humor. *Time Zone* boasts faster picture-drawing routines and the sheer number of puzzles and pictures, not to mention the variety of scenarios, make this game a real mind-blower.

If you've been wondering what a hi-res adventure is then you haven't seen anything yet. A hi-res adventure is exactly like a text adventure in which you move your "adventurer" from room to room with the addition of a full color picture of what the room looks like. There is no animation of any kind in this game so arcade skills are not needed.

I'm a very good adventurer and can usually solve a game in one evening, but this program took me three weeks of solid effort to finally have the honor of wasting Ramadu and blowing the raygun to bits. Those who have no patience whatsoever, probably shouldn't buy this game. You will probably burn the disks after a few weeks of playing. If you do have the stamina it takes to be a text/hi-res adventurer, then this will be your greatest challenge ever. Don't say I didn't warn you.

To play *Time Zone*, the player enters two word verb/noun commands into the keyboard. The computer will then give you a response. Hitting the "return" key toggles between all text and the room picture with four lines of text. Some commands are "Get Laser", "Drop Money," "Use Rope" and "Kill Ramadu." Other possible orders are: "Go North" (or "N" for short), "Enter Machine" and "Save Game".

In this adventure, you can journey back to the era when Cleopatra was Queen of the Nile and Julius Ceaser was still friends with Brutus. You will see dinosaurs and cavemen, the signing of the Declaration of Independence and, you will even get to join Robin Hood's Merry Men. You will also travel to Los Angeles in the near future and trek to the dreaded planet Neburon in the far future.

The doomed city of Neburon offers many ways of getting you killed but trying to survive is fun. Neburon is a perfect example of a dictatorship, where death at every turn and (hint) Big Brother's always watching you. Neburon also is the climax adventure in which you must have items gathered from all of the previous adventures to survive.

The game also has a back-up routine so you can make copies of the six scenario disks in the event of a system crash.

So if you watch your tongue and have a logical mind you may eventually solve the game and receive the title of "Ultimate Adventurer"!!

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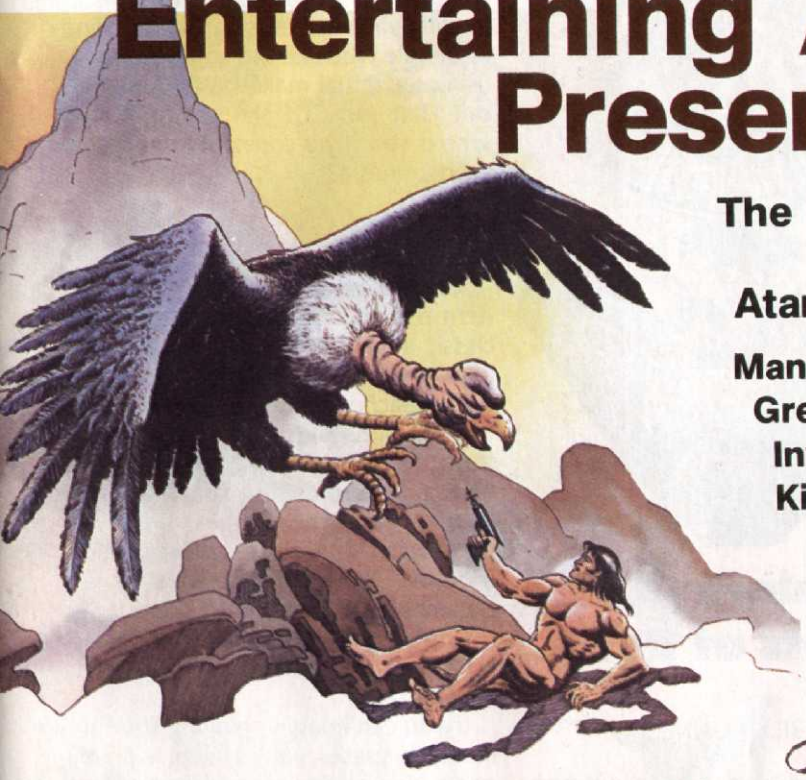

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Explore the Planets of Peril!

By BILL KUNKEL

HOLEY MOLEY

Tai

Certainly one of the most "off-beat" coin-op fads of the past year is the incredible popularity of the "Whack-a-Mole"-style non-video contest. In these nutty little games, the player holds a padded mallet in hand, stands in front of rows of what look to be empty holes. Suddenly, furry little moles start popping up to give you a raspberry. The creature's head is above ground for only a heartbeat and in that period, the player has to smack the little offender on the noggin. Pretty soon the little critters are popping up all over the place, and the players — caught in a fit of frenzied aggression — are smashing anything that dares peer over the top. Well, at least the animals are only imaginary in this affront to ASPCA members.

It was inevitable that a videogame version of this phenomenon would turn up in the arcades and homes (the Commodore VIC-20 has a version) and this is it: Tai's **Holey Moley.** Now if the concept of three decks of three mole holes each, all of whom must be bopped — with a King Mole who occasionally makes a cameo appearance for bonus points — isn't already too strange for you, there's the game's somewhat. . .er, *unusual* play mechanic. The control console consists of nine paddle-boppers, one for each mole-hole. As one of the fuzzlings pokes his upturned nose above ground, wham!, you smack down on the corresponding paddle to put him back in his place.

That's it folks, honestly. Video **Whack-A-Mole** for all you mad things who've been just *dying* for it. The big question is whether or not the game will be able to sustain its drawing power without the actual tactile contact required in the original version. It's one thing, after all, to stand over a patch of holes, waiting with glazed eyes for the first sight of a mole to wallop. Will pressing a button be as intellectually and emotionally fulfilling to people who like this sort of thing as using an actual mallet? Will June find out that Jerry's been seeing Cathy who is secretly a convicted murderess with amnesia?

GRAVITAR

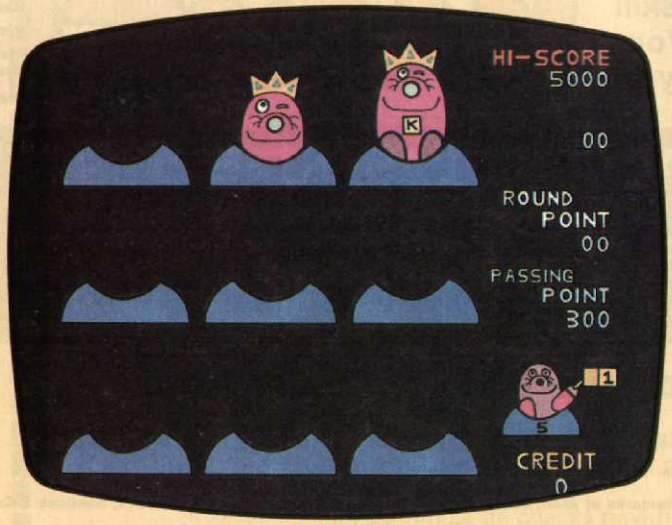
Atari

Gravitar is an interesting, off-beat item that incorporates aspects of the classic adventure game, using a floor plan-style playfield with close-ups within each sector. Players must pilot their ships here using the directional-thrust technique developed for games such as **Asteroids** and **Space Duel.**

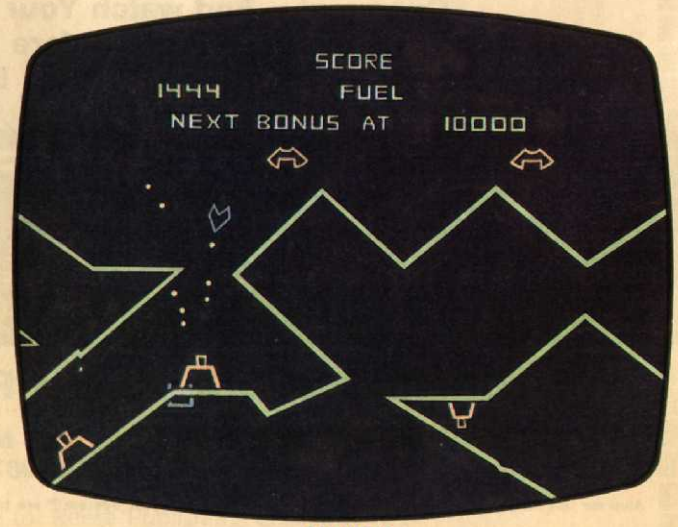
In those earlier games, however, there wasn't quite as much navigation required. Here, players must move their ships through what appear to be hollowed-out asteroids, complete a mission and return to safety for another go.

If you can imagine playing **Venture** in outer space, you'd have a pretty good idea of the general concept of *Gravitar.* The hi-res, brilliantly colored graphics give a unique look that, at first, may strike some as looking like a hybrid of raster and vector technology.

The major excitement comes strictly from the piloting system. To propel the ship, you point it in the desired direction and hit the thrusters. The ship gains speed as you pour on the power.



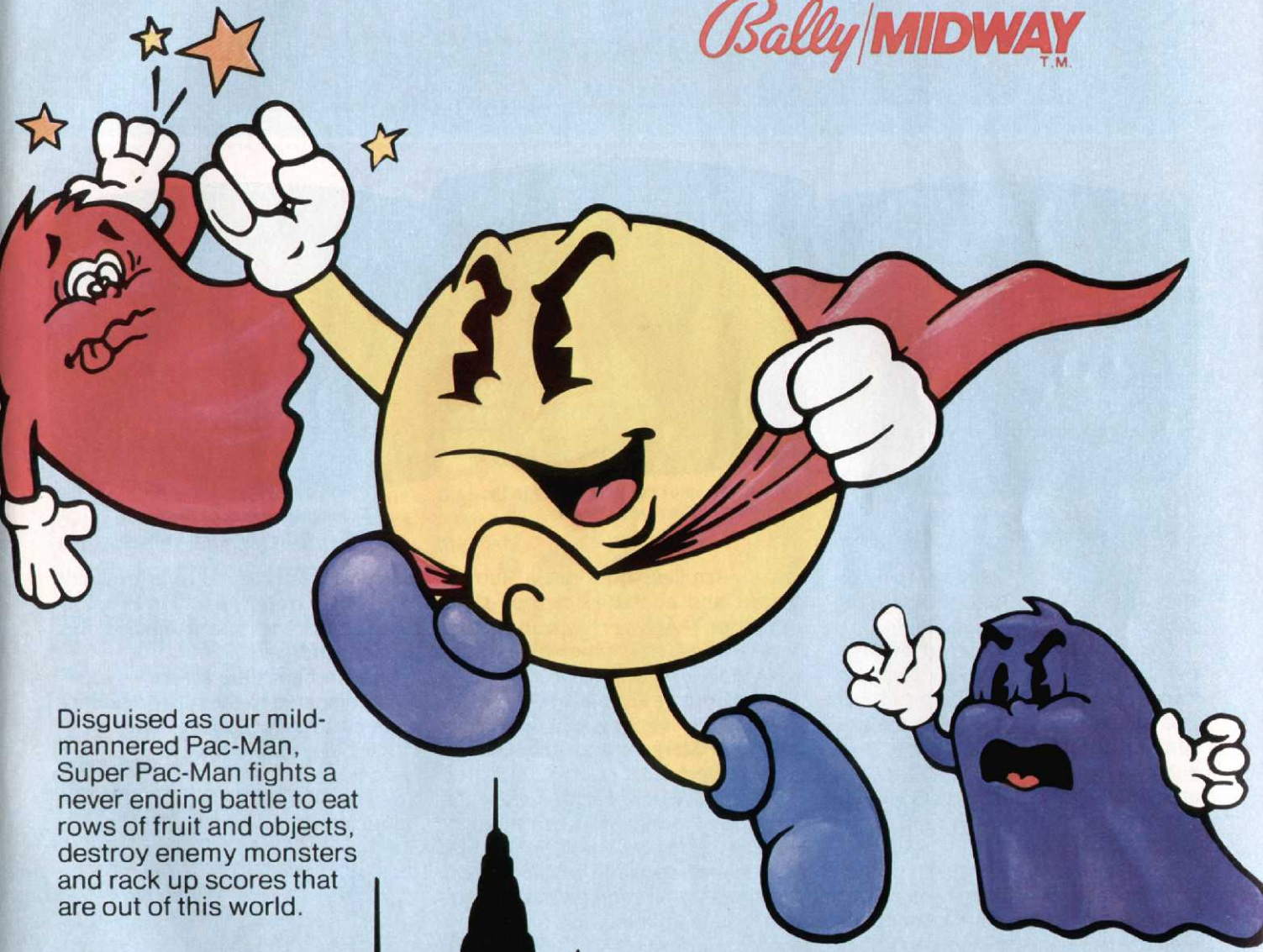
HOLEY MOLEY



GRAVITAR

SUPER PAC-MAN™

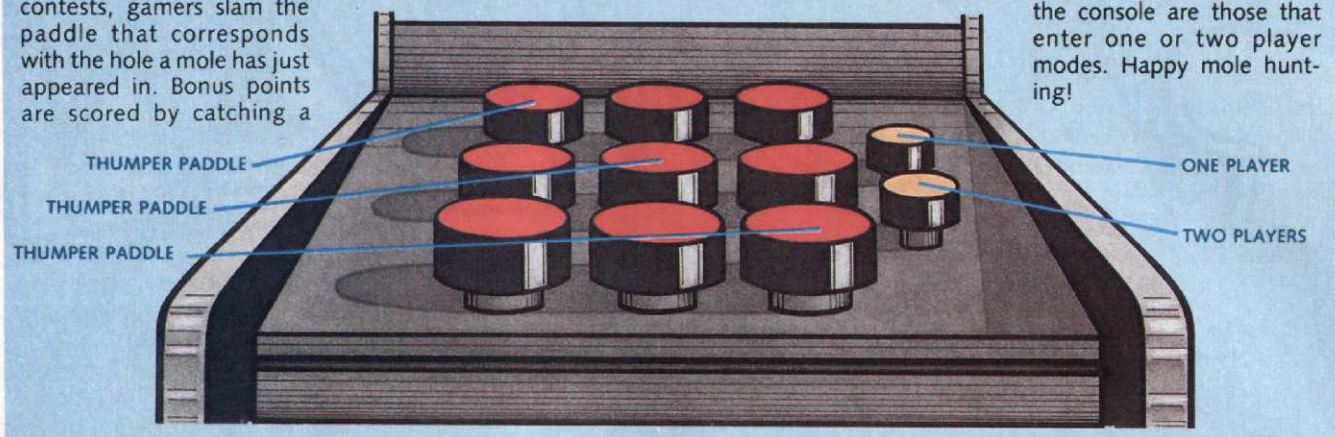
Bally/MIDWAY™

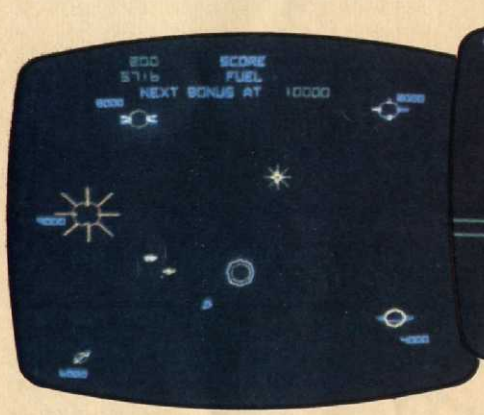


Disguised as our mild-mannered Pac-Man, Super Pac-Man fights a never ending battle to eat rows of fruit and objects, destroy enemy monsters and rack up scores that are out of this world.

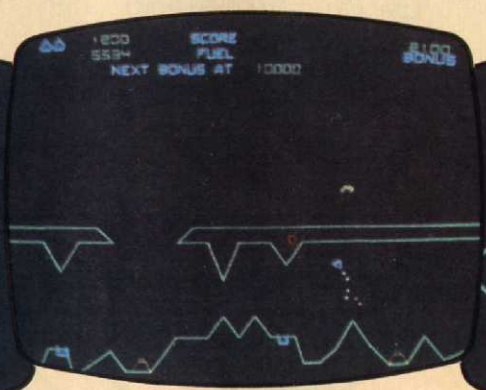
HOLY MOLEY
HOW IT PLAYS

Using the "wham" paddles in place of the mallet employed in the full-sized, non-video versions of these contests, gamers slam the paddle that corresponds with the hole a mole has just appeared in. Bonus points are scored by catching a "King" mole — so indicated by the regal crown worn atop his fuzzy head. The only other input devices on the console are those that enter one or two player modes. Happy mole hunting!

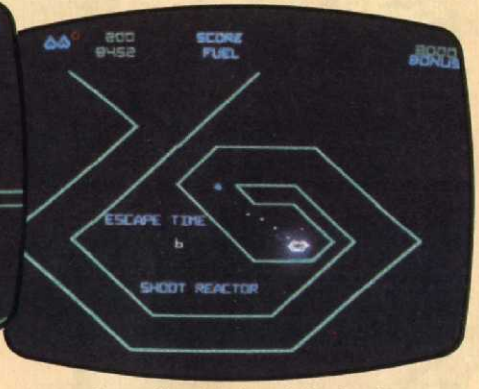




First rack of Gravitar — Solar System number one — has four planets



Close up of the third planet in the first of Gravitar's systems



Serpentine interior of the deadly Red Planet — time limit and all!

In order to stop, or reverse, spin the ship around and apply an equal or greater amount of thrust.

This technique can be a challenge even when you're just moving up and down. Try making the hairpin turns and slipping through the maze-like tunnels — destroying depots and enemy spacecraft while you're at it — and you've got a pretty good grip on just *how* hard this one can be. *Gravitar* is a real player's game.

Sorry, novices, unless you've got pockets lined with tokens you're just dying to get rid of, leave this one for the experts — or else start practicing, quickly!

MOON PATROL

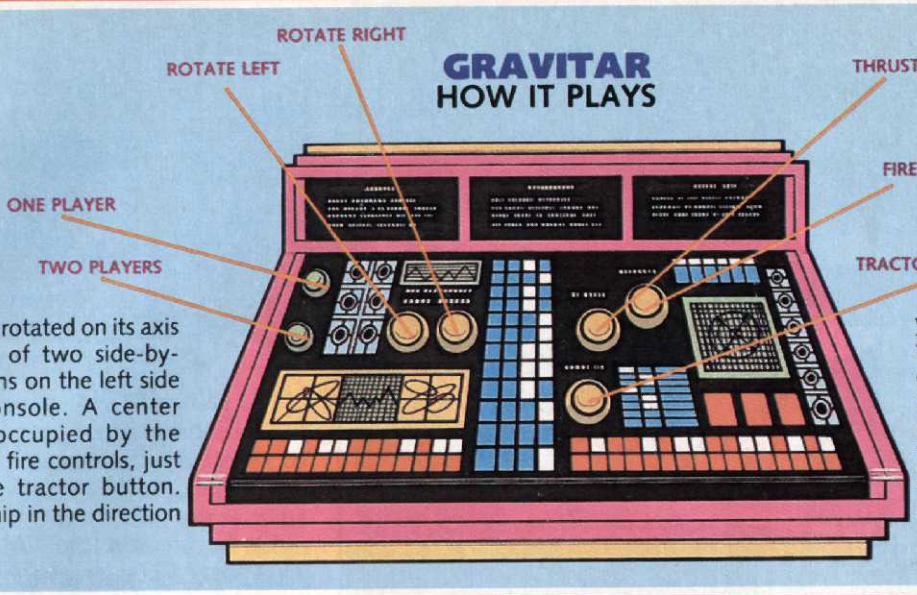
Williams

What do you get when you combine a science fiction theme, a horizontally-scrolling shoot-out, a "jump" contest and adorable, cartoon-style animation? Answer: **Moon Patrol** from Williams, one of the least expectable follow-ups to the manufacturer's trio of hard-core SF "players' " games. This machine is a long, long way from **Defender, Stargate** and **Robotron** in every respect.

Initially, *Moon Patrol* creates a magnificent illusion of depth through the use of several background sequences that scroll at variable speeds. This creates a feeling of distance. Our hero, a cute little moon-mobile complete with three sets of oversized, balloon tires, a laser cannon and an ability to leap over craters, scrolls from left to right across the screen against this painted landscape.

The mechanics are simple — especially compared to the super-dexterity required to play *Stargate*. The moon buggie moves eastward while two sets of action buttons (jump and fire con-

GRAVITAR
HOW IT PLAYS



The ship is rotated on its axis by means of two side-by-side buttons on the left side of the console. A center panel is occupied by the thrust and fire controls, just above the tractor button. Aim the ship in the direction you wish to go, then apply thrust. To stop, or alter course, rotate into the new position and put the thrust-blasters down to the floor. Thrust will build momentum so the ship will travel faster the longer thrust is applied.

trollers) flank the console. Big, dangerous rocks appear periodically and must be blasted to atoms. Similarly, huge holes open up in the lunar surface from time to time. The valiant vehicle must vault these craters with a mixture of good timing and a press of the jump button.

Once the arcader masters these the fun *really* begins! Three different types of alien attackers bombard from the sky. At this point, apprentice pilots will discover that, just as moving the joystick right and firing eliminates menaces to the right, moving the stick straight up and firing wipes out any swooping nasties lurking overhead, just as pushing the stick to the left or right and blasting away eliminates ground-based targets.

The real fun here comes from the need to fire simultaneously in several directions, while avoiding the ground obstacles. Once *Moon Patrol* really gets going, the buggy seems to jump and fire in all directions at once.

This is an absolutely enchanting game to watch, and it's no dud in the play department, either.

Williams may not produce the *most* games in the field, but their quality level remains with the biggest companies in the field.

MOON PATROL (COIN-OP)

By THE GAME DOCTOR

Good morning, games persons. Lots of questions on your faces, I can see that. Wondering about things like when your favorite coin-op is going to appear in a home version — and if it'll play on your system! And joysticks, new computers, oh yes, it's going to be a busy day.

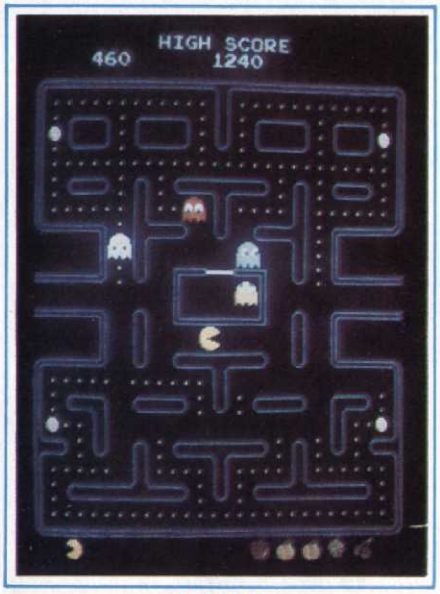
So to get the ball rolling, I'm informing all those Odyssey² owners who've been asking me for a year-and-a-half now when N.A.P. (O²'s parent company) was going to pick up the home rights to a coin-op game, that the time has come. Blow your horn, Gabriel, for Stern's maze-chase cutie, **Turtles,** is already in the prototype stage as the doctor writes this. Unfortunately, for the first time since the programmable practitioner's been authoring this column, this is the *first month* nobody's asked me the question. So do *I* get the T-shirt this time?

Naw, that wouldn't do. It'd look silly with my video-golf slacks. Instead, this month's bit of reader reward goes to Grey Oliver, who not only had a good question, but used "Garfield" stationary. I like that cat — when is he going to get his own videogame? How about *Lasagna Hunt*?

Q: *Back in your second issue, on the last page, there was an advertisement for Midway games. Notice on the* **Pac-Man** *screen that the gobbler's on the apple but he's only got 460 points — not nearly high enough to reach the apple rack. How did they do it?*

(Grey Oliver, Austin, TX)

A: Most of the playfields seen in magazines and advertisements, Grey, are not photographs but artist's reproductions of what you actually see on the monitor. There are several reasons for this, most prominent being that videogame screens are quite difficult



PAC-MAN

to photograph clearly (as anyone who has ever tried to record a high score can testify). Even the best pictures tend to feature considerable distortion as the glass tube is slightly domed, producing a "bubble" effect.

Also, artistic renderings of playfields allow a single picture to tell a more complete story than any single frame of actual game play. Seldom do all of a game's most picturesque objects appear on screen simultaneously, but in a drawing, the potential player gets a better look at all the contest's elements.

Q: *How do you feel about some of the newer videogame TV commercials that show incredible special effects or scenes from well-known movies which the games are based on, but barely show the game itself at all!? I'm thinking of those Coleco ads with three-dimensional spaceships flying out of TV screens or the ad for* **Wormwar**.

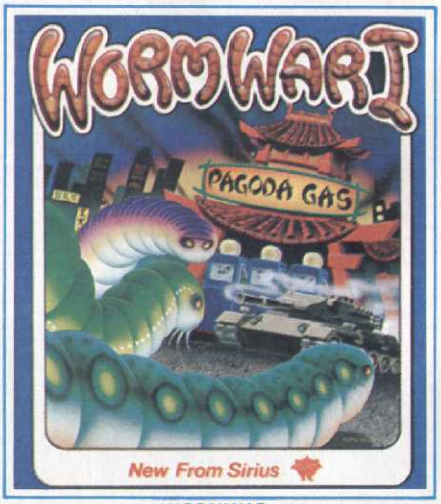
Or how about the "M Network" TV spots? They are very interesting to watch, but they never tell you what it is they're selling, who makes it and which system it plays on!

(Steven Ryder, Detroit, MI)

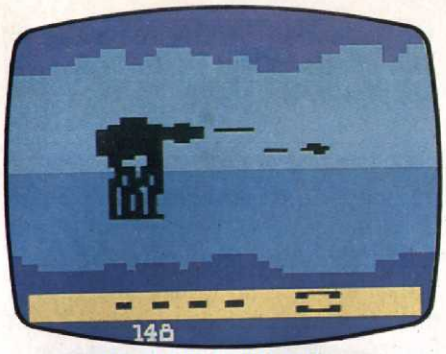
A: The Doc has no personal objections to ads that utilize dazzling visuals to explain a game concept or highlight a particular entry, just as long as we prospective consumers get an equally good gander at what the game itself looks like.

Parker Brothers' VCS version of **The Empire Strikes Back,** for example, does use actual film footage in the ad, but we get to see just as much of the actual game in progress. Opinion on the ColecoVision ads, meanwhile — "bringing the arcade home" — have elicited a few complaints. Personally, I don't believe that consumers are actually expecting to see spaceships come zipping through their living rooms.

The 20th Century Fox ad for *Wormwar*, however, does tread considerably thinner ice. While it's true that the actual game *is* shown, it comes in



WORMWAR

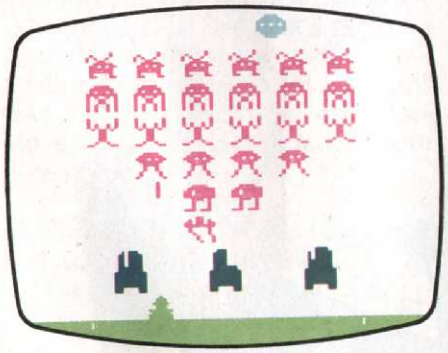


THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

quick-cut bursts. Also, because of the deliberate videogame-style of the special effects (produced, I believe, by MAGI, the wizards who created much of Disney's "Tron"), the entire issue gets muddier still. Perhaps there should be some sort of on-screen captioning to identify the simulation of a simulation from the simulation. Got that? Of course not.

On the "M Network" commercial, though, I gotta admit I'm right with you on that. The old cartridge croaker thought his bifocals were going haywire along with his ears the first couple of times that played. Sure, it's a great piece of entertainment, in terms of telling the viewer *anything* about the product (TV sets? Some new, unnamed videogame or computer system? Glasses? Shoes?) it rated a hard zero. Sure did love that song, though. .

Q: *Since things begin to blink when there are too many objects on-screen*



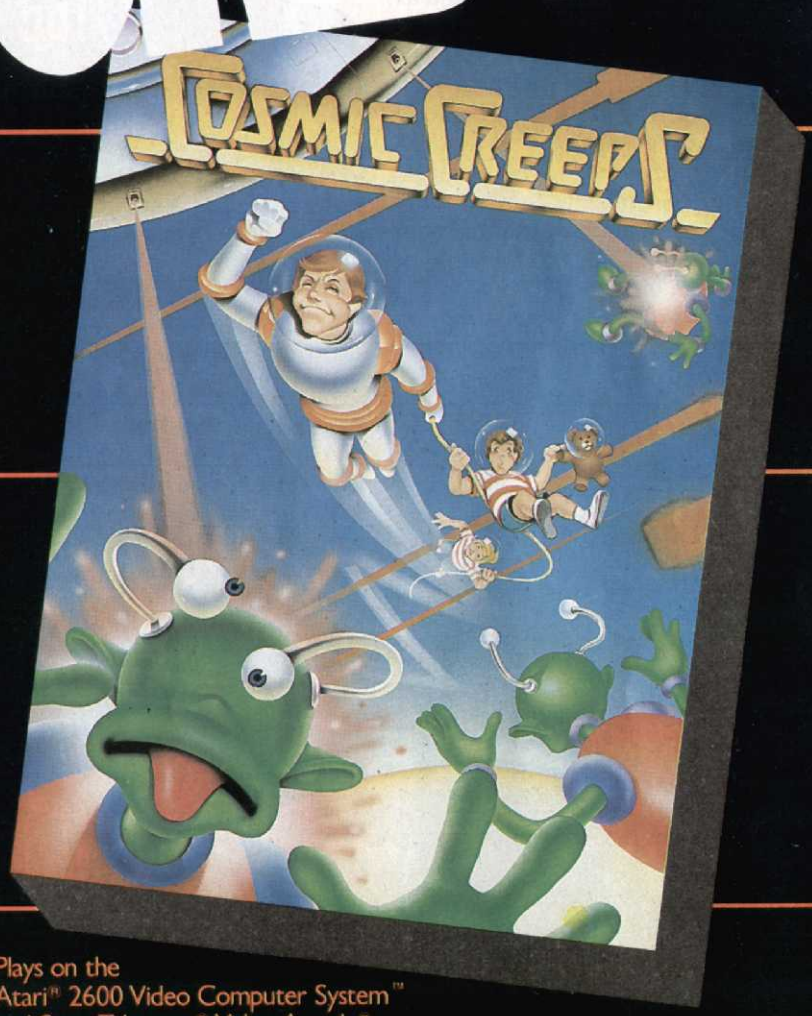
SPACE INVADERS

(such as in Atari's **Adventure***), why don't they blink in* **Space Invaders** *or* **Defender?**

(John Ahrens, San Antonio, TX)

A: I must admit, John, you just about killed the Game Doctor with that question. You, eh, didn't notice anything blinking in *Defender*, you say? Well, then, either you have a magic VCS or my eyes really are going! Not only does the radar scanner at the top of the screen flicker constantly, the entire ship disappears every time a shot is fired!!

ORB IT!



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Q&A

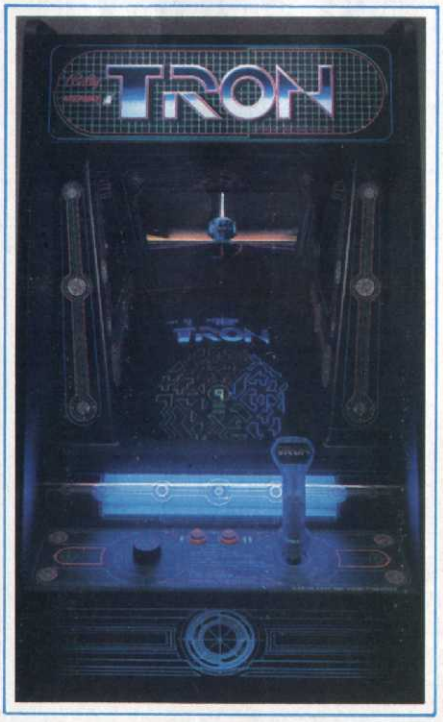
By THE GAME DOCTOR

As for *Adventure*, I never noticed all that much blinking — at least, nothing that wasn't supposed to be there (if you egg-hunters catch my meaning). As for *Space Invaders*, the blinking effect is caused primarily by random movement of horizontal objects. You'll notice that the horizontally aligned invaders are always moving in synchronization. Thus, no blinking.

Q: *Will "Tron" be appearing on either Showtime or Cinimax in the near future?*

(Chris Lerrin, Oak Park, IL)

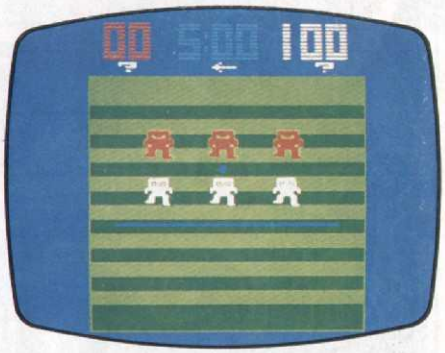
A: Actually, "Tron" may return to the movie theaters before it visits cable

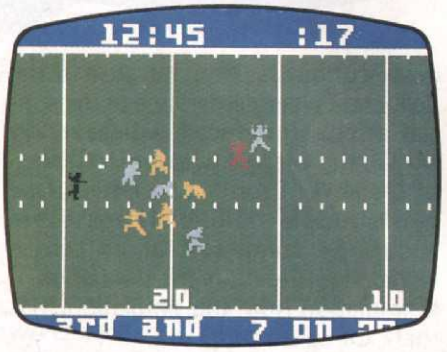


TRON

TV. Based on the success of the Midway coin-op, there is serious talk regarding the film's re-release. In either either case, it has been available on videotape for VCR owners for the past several months.

Q&A QUICKIES: As at least 200,000 of our readers pointed out, the titles under the Intellivision and Atari VCS versions of **Football** were reversed. In penance, George Plimpton was summoned and the proofreader in question was beaten about the head and shoulders with a five-foot high rebate slip. The villain in question was then sentenced to watch every compare-our-system-with-your-system commercial ever filmed over 600 times. After that, we got rough. . .Scott Advani from the Great White North (Alberta, Canada) asks several questions regarding the Atari 400. Going over the stats quickly, 48K boards already exist and a 64K RAM board is said to be on the way. There are both tape and disc drives available, the 410 and 810, and it's true that almost all of the major producers of computer game software are making Atari versions of their hits available. Remember to check the game, however, and be sure that you have the Atari version and "K" requirements. Several of the older game-makers for the Apple (such as Sirius and Broderbund) are releasing Atari versions of their major titles, but they are almost exclusively 48K. This is due to the fact that all Apple II software utilizes the system's full 48K as a means of protecting the program for bootlegging and the time that would be needed to rewrite the program for, say, 32K of Atari RAM (a possibility in most cases) would make such translations financially unrewarding. . .Dozens of readers have wondered about back issues of **EG**, and most of our older stuff is still available. Address all queries and $$ to: **Electronic Games,** Subscription Dept., 235 Park Ave. South, NY, NY 10003. . .





(Left) Atari Football (right) Intellivision Football — all right, Mr. Plimpton?

Q: *I've heard a lot about ColecoVision, and I have a couple of questions about it to ask you folks. Are any companies such as Imagic, Apollo or even Activision going to make cartridges for the system? Also, will you be covering the ColecoVision more in* **Electronic Games?**

(Kevin Macdonald, Vallej, CA)

A: Software publishers are pretty cagey about which systems they intend to support in the future, but spokesmen for several have said that they are looking hard at the ColecoVision and expect to enter the software market once the base of installed systems grows large enough to support such a venture. And, yes, you can bet

your favorite joystick that you'll be reading lots about this fabulous "third wave" system in future issues of this magazine.

Q: *As the former owner of an Atari and the present possessor of a ColecoVision, I have two questions concerning some of the add-on devices. Specifically, will it be possible to use the Starpath Supercharger with the Atari emulator and my ColecoVision? Will the Supercharger still enhance the Atari cartridges if used this way?*

(Jeff Jewell, Solon, OH)

A: Although we have not formally tested the link-up you suggest at this writing, there is no reason to believe that the Supercharger will not work perfectly well with the emulator. Referring to your second query, the Supercharger will not enhance Atari cartridges with or without the emulator. The device simply allows a home arcader to run game programs put onto tape cassette by Starpath through the Atari 2600, and has absolutely no effect on existing ROM cartridges.

Q: *When Atari buys the rights to an arcade game or movie title, are those rights bought for both the 2600 and 5200?*

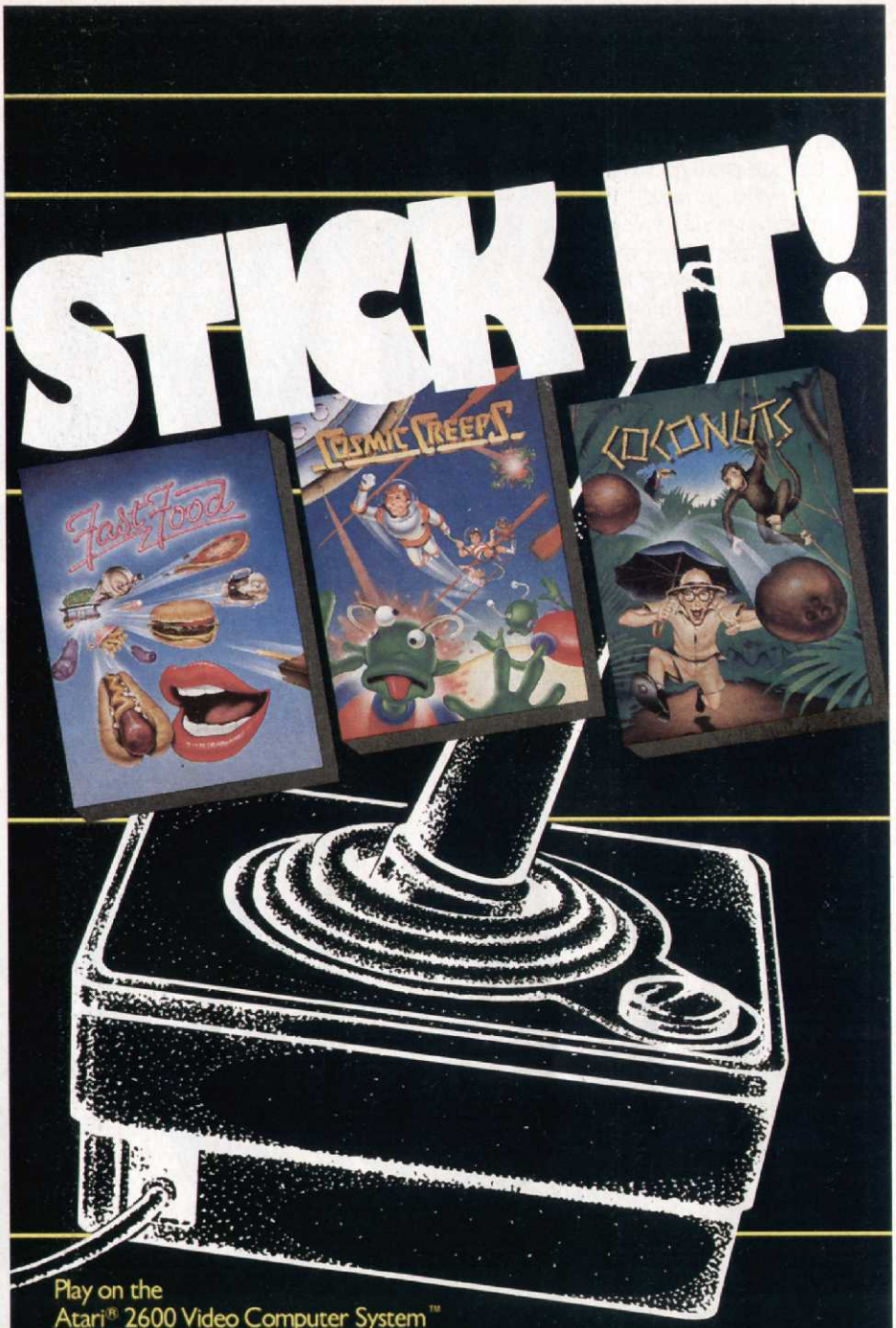
(Brian Robins, Ardsley, NY)

A: It all depends on what kind of deal the Sunnyvale videogaming giant can hammer out with the folks who are selling the rights. So far, at least, Atari seems to be buying home videogame rights in most instances, which means that the company could offer cartridges based on such titles for both systems.

Q: *I would like to know a little about the Commodore VIC-20's gaming software. Are any independent companies producing software for the VIC?*

(David Craft, Kosciusko, MS)

A: Dash down to your local software dealer, because he's now got shelves jammed with new games for the VIC-20, some of them from top publishers, too. As the ol' sawbones has mentioned more than once, it takes about a year from the time a new computer is introduced until the third-party publishers are geared up to produce software for it. That year is just about up and, in light of the VIC-20's burgeoning sales and popularity, you can expect lots of games for your system in pretty short order.



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Here Come the 1983 Flipper Games!

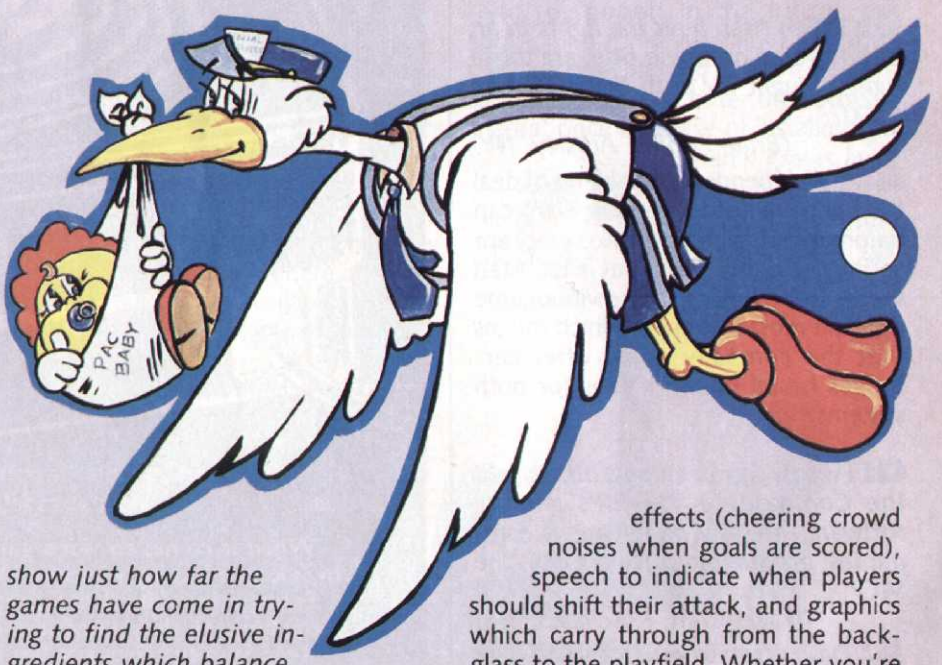
By ROGER C. SHARPE

The nation's most intriguing arcade only stays in business three days. It doesn't even bother to charge customers for the right to play its nearly unbelievable selection of the very newest state-of-the-art coin-op machines.

About a week before Thanksgiving each year, members of the coin-op industry gather in Chicago to see what's new and try to guess which titles will be the coming year's sales winners. It is there, quite often, that the fate of the latest crop of pay-for-play devices is settled.

The Chicago trade show proved once again that there's no limit to the possibility of interesting ways to package the unique appeal of flippers and silver balls. Solid evidence is available in the form of the games which we'll be covering in this month's installment of "Pinball Palace" as well as the highlights of the show. These included Williams' **Warlok** *and* **Defender,** *and Bally's combination pin/vid version of* **Baby Pac-Man.**

We'll be looking at these and other efforts in upcoming months, chronicling the trends and continued battle as pinball fights to survive and attract a larger audience than it recently has enjoyed. In the meantime, there are some interesting selections which show just how far the games have come in trying to find the elusive ingredients which balance out for the hard-core players as well as the newcomers to flipper games.



STRIKER

Gottlieb

With the prevailing design emphasis focused on more simplistic layouts and play strategies, Gottlieb is quickly rediscovering the niche in which the company built its pinball reputation.

Striker incorporates all of the elements of soccer, complete with sound effects (cheering crowd noises when goals are scored), speech to indicate when players should shift their attack, and graphics which carry through from the backglass to the playfield. Whether you're a fan of the NASL or MISL, *Striker* gets its points across in a game where scoring is a dual challenge of getting goals as well as building up other values.

The board is symmetrically laid out with three top lanes leading down to a thumper bumper area complete with a left and right side bank of drop targets, as well as dual spinners for access back up. At midfield there's an interesting little set-up of four drop targets and a

pair of smaller sized flippers, while beneath this is another thumper bumper. The bottom flipper configuration (two on either side facing each other) might remind some of you of a previous Gottlieb pin game called **Rocky**, but here the range of shots available off the flippers, as well as the proximity of some key features, better utilizes this design twist. In fact, it's almost like playing two games at once — the left side *and* right side — with the programming and build up of point values also carrying this through.

Basically, *Striker* projects you into a soccer game where the main purpose, besides scoring as many points as possible, includes trying to score goals as well. Located on the board are a string of lights leading up to either spinner from the bottom of the field. Shaped like soccer balls, they will either light up white for the offense (you) or yellow for the defense (the machine), with the challenge being to hit the appropriate targets at the right time to advance the white light all the way to the top lanes where it can be "collected" as a goal.

However, while you're trying to advance your ball position, you may also be "advancing" down the defense which will block you and can even push you back. The game designer wasn't without sympathy for this and added an extra set of buttons on the side of the cabinet which allows players to shift their white ball from side to side depending upon the defensive threat. And, rather than leave you wondering when the best time might be to press the button, since you're initially limited to three passes at the beginning of any turn, there has also been some speech thrown in that *tells* you when to pass. As for increasing, or at least replenishing, your number of available passes, there's a right side kick-out hole which will add on one pass when the ball lands in it. This same feature also serves as a "free kick" opportunity. Completing either of the top drop target banks will light the hole so that if a ball lands in it, another one will pop out in the plunger lane. Play this one until it drains and then get ready because that right side kick-out hole will eject that "locked" ball for extended play on that turn.

But that's not the end to *Striker*. Depending upon the number of goals you can score during the regular game, the machine may begin a "shoot-out" period for a limited amount of time based on that number of goals, so that players have an extra chance to add on

STRIKER

to their scores as well as making goals. It's a nice touch which is indicative of the continuity of action that *Striker* brings into play for both the beginner and more skillful pinballer.

It might take a bit of time to get comfortable with all the nuances and subtleties in order to maximize your shots, but *Striker* is a good, solid effort that carries through a workable and recognizable theme no matter what the goal might be. In fact, it's one pinball machine you shouldn't "pass" up.

BMX
Bally

Looking to further incorporate fresh themes to pinball, Bally has gone full cycle with this two-wheel-inspired double-level game that shifts into high gear the moment the ball hits the playfield. Entering from underneath on up to the top portion of the board, there's a full array of features which should test even the most adept flipper ace.

Play begins on the upper level, where there's a set up of drop targets at the very top and increased point totals tied in on a timed basis before the entire bank resets and you have to start again. Hit them all down and for a brief moment a lone target behind the bank is lit for an extra ball, before the sequence continues anew. Over on the left are three stand up targets, while behind and above them rest two lanes for either a roll-down back on the top level or one that finds the ball mysteriously hidden until it comes out down on the lower playfield. When lit, these lanes can really mean mega-points, with one offering 2X scoring of playfield values and the other 3X for the duration of that turn. A set of flippers at the middle offer good access to all these key areas and a hole between that will drop the ball down into a lower kick-out hole for release on this portion of the playfield.

It's here that the action gets tricky. Besides a bank of four blue drop targets on the left and three yellow stand up targets at the right, there's a little "shredded" type of curtain fronting that kick-out hole in between, and ramps on either side for shots back up to the top. The bottom brings into play an additional set of buttons on the side of the cabinet for "closing" up the outer lanes leading down to the flippers for a brief amount of time, which keeps the ball in play *if* you can adjust your flipper fingers fast enough to press the right button. This is, admittedly, a "learned" talent that will take some time to get used to and tends to speed up a player's response and awareness when the ball is rolling around in this area.

All in all, **BMX** is a fairly basic and straightforward game where the strategy might just be weighted a bit more in favor of the upper playfield in order to achieve consistently high scores. This wouldn't be so bad except for the need to make long left to right or right to left shots from the bottom flippers and those extra buttons for closing off the sides. It should, however, keep you on your toes until you can get a firmer handle on *BMX* and establish an approach you're comfortable with. ⊖

LOVE COIN-OPS?

If you do, be sure to check out the April **EG** for a whole batch of stories and features on the pay-for-play machines. We'll tell you about how to collect the classics and show you the games that may attain that status in 1983. Be there.

Close 'N' Counters of the Third Kind!

By JOYCE WORLEY

SPACE-N-COUNTER AND CHASE-N-COUNTER

GCE/$40

When the folks at General Consumer Electronics Corp. decided to market a wristwatch, they came up with three of the most delightful game-playing timepieces ever devised, Game-Time, Arcade-Time, and Sports-Time. Each plays a trilogy of unique diversions, using the watch face as a tiny playfield for the miniature videogame graphics.

Now the designers from GCE have something new for us — two of the most challenging game-playing pocket calculators that ever counted a bunch of nines. The masters of miniature have stuffed three giant contests into each machine. Now you can balance your checkbook or solve your math homework problems, then cure your headache with a quick game. If that isn't enough, these useful instruments will also tell you the time, so you won't be late for class or supper.

Space-N-Counter and **Chase-N-Counter** each measure 2½-by 4¾-in. and fit easily in a jacket or shirt pocket. A slide mechanism shields half the unit. When moved all the way left, the calculator keys are exposed for use and totals show in the viewscreen window. Move the slide to the right to reveal the 1½-by 1-in. playfield, firing button and miniature joystick.

Each unit features a full-function calculator with a memory feature that allows a number to be stored, then recalled when needed. The memory stays intact as long as the calculator is in operation, but clears automatically four to five minutes after you stop

using it. Returning to the game mode or entering a new number in the memory also clears the old number. The calculator totals up to 10 digits, though there's only room in the digital readout window for six numerals. Pushing the "2nd" button reveals the second tier of numbers so you can get a 10-digit total.

Time reads out continuously, except during calculation or game play. It's very easy to set the correct time on these units. Just press the time set button, enter the correct hour and minute(s) using the calculator keys, then press the memory button to lock it in. This is a nice simplification of what can be a tedious procedure in some other pocket time/game calculators.

Many companies manufacture excellent calculators, and there's a plethora of cute and accurate pocket timepieces on the market. But the real superiority of these two units is in the games. Both feature unusual programs to provide hours of fun when you're not busy solving problems or checking the passing time.

Space-N-Counter has a trilogy of scrolling shoot-out games. Game one, **Phaser Fight,** takes a spaceship through a series of defenses. The mission is to destroy the enemy base, but before your fighter can deliver the coup de grace, it must battle through rockets, UFOs and fireballs. The four-position joystick helps maneuver the ship around the mountainous landscape, while you fire at the rockets streaking toward your craft. Survive this barrage only to face the UFOs; then the next screen brings fireballs that can't be destroyed — all you can do is try to avoid them. Once past the fireballs, the enemy base appears. It has four segments, and all must be destroyed. Then a victory sign appears, followed by a new, faster landscape. Score nine points for each rocket or UFO destroyed, and 500 points for the enemy base. Arcaders gain an additional ship for each 1000 points scored.

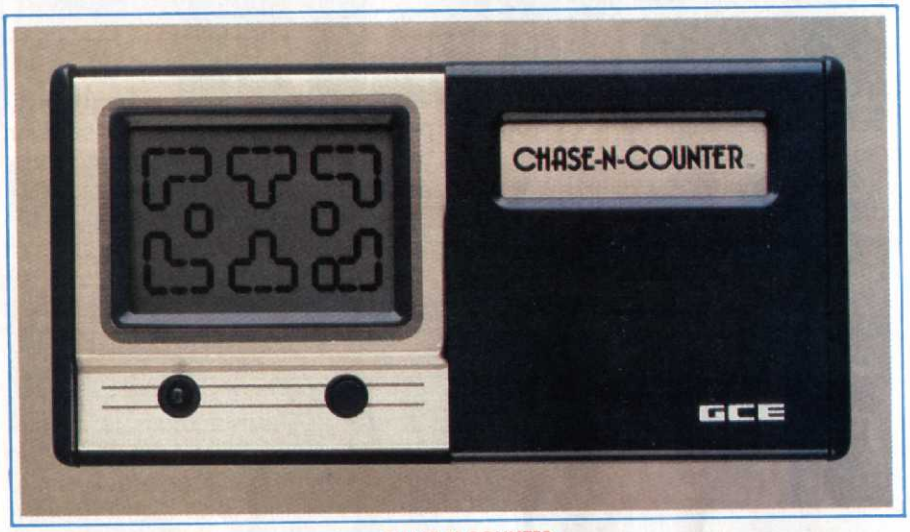
The second game is **Meteorox.** Fly the spaceship through a storm of rocks and meteors moving toward you from right to left. Shoot to destroy the boulders, but remember to avoid the meteors. The speed increases each time eight rocks are demolished for 25 points each, and the game ends when all your ships are gone.

The third game in *Space-N-Counter* is **Star Sweep.** Move the ship through a minefield, avoiding collisions while destroying mines and minelayers. Your ship appears on an empty field, but the minelayer immediately shows up, placing deadly explosives in random locations. Your ship fires bullets which travel four spaces, either across the screen or wrapping around to the other side. If the bullet hasn't gone four spaces when it hits the right side of the screen, it bounces to the left, then travels the remaining spaces. Likewise, the ship wraps around to the opposite side when it strikes the right side of the playfield.

Score 25 points for each mine destroyed, and 100 points for each of the deadly mine-laying enemy vessels.

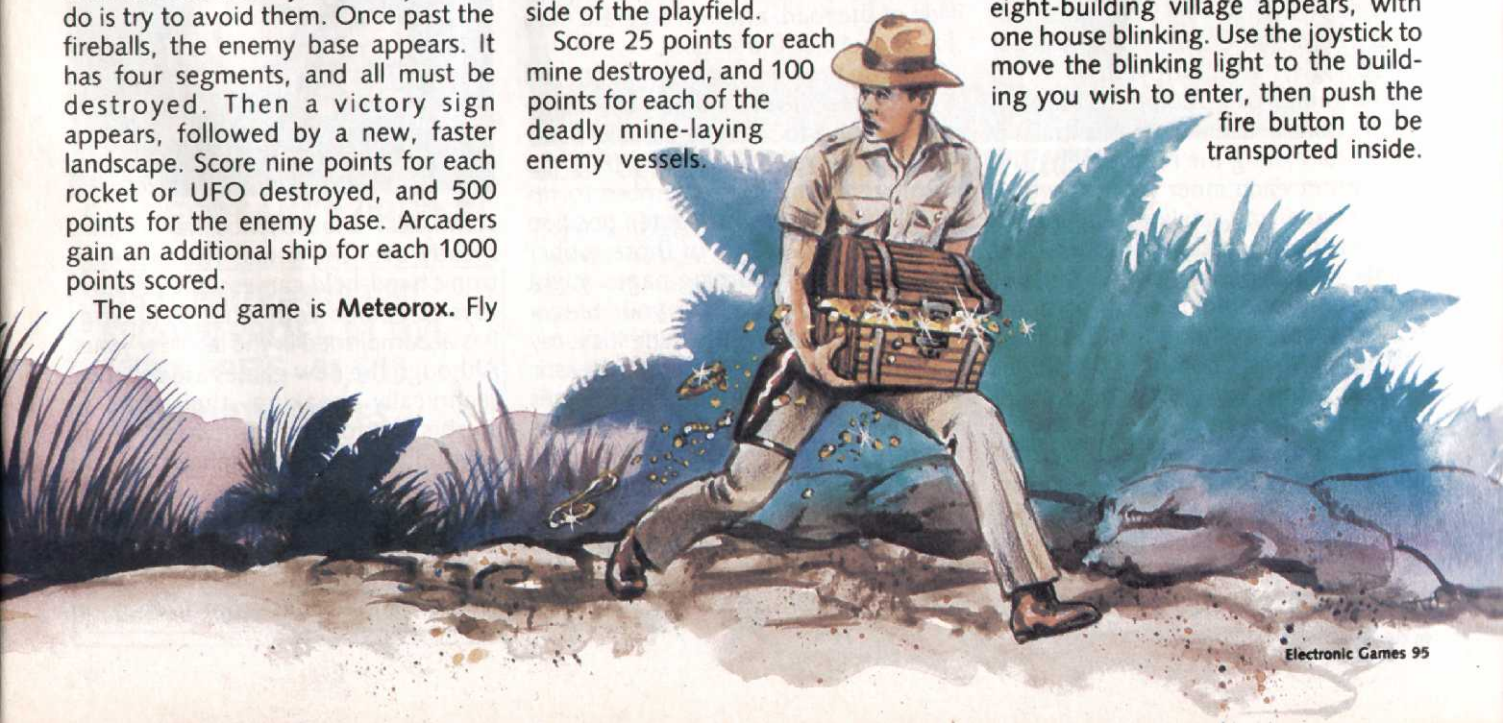
Play starts with four ships, like the other games on the unit, and arcaders win an extra ship for each 1000 points. *Star Sweep* is a tricky challenge; the mine-laying alien cruisers quickly fill the screen with their deadly eggs. But a simple strategy gives you an edge over the enemy. Put your battleship just ahead of the minelayer (instead of following behind where you're almost certain to cross the path of a mine.) Then fire toward the right and let the bullet wraparound, eliminating the alien ship from behind.

If you're lukewarm about space shoot-outs, and adventure games are more to your taste, *Chase-N-Counter* is the calculator for you! Three captivating entertainments with very diverse themes are certain to amuse you, with nary a shoot-out among them!



CHASE-N-COUNTER

First is **Treasure Trek.** Operate an on-screen archeologist hunting booty in an ancient city. A map of the eight-building village appears, with one house blinking. Use the joystick to move the blinking light to the building you wish to enter, then push the fire button to be transported inside.



SPACE-N-COUNTER

There find a treasure, represented by a square shape. Capture it by touch, then exit the building through the same invisible door you entered by. Snakes, which can be shot, and arrows and boulders, which can only be avoided, make your escape more difficult. The two inner buildings can only be entered by a secret passage, activated by stepping on a secret square in a room you've already looted and escaped once. There are two of these secret squares in the six outer buildings, making it necessary to reenter and thoroughly search each room after you've escaped with its treasure. When you find and step on the secret square, it transports you to the inner room and another hidden treasure. But the Ghost of the Ancient Wizard lives in the inner rooms, and will kill your archeologist if he can.

After raiding all eight rooms, another round begins, with even faster antagonists to hinder your quest for booty. The game ends when all your archeologists are destroyed.

The gamer gets 500 points for each outer-room treasure, plus an extra 500 points for exiting the room safely. The treasure in each inner room is worth 2500 points, and safely escaping each of those buildings scores another 2500 points. Killing snakes is always fun, but worth only one point each, so don't waste a lot of time hunting the wildlife.

Game two is **Chomp 'n Chase,** an excursion through a six-screen maze to find four power spots, while avoiding or eating the monsters. Narrow paths traverse the maze, and you can walk off the screen in any direction, onto the adjoining game fields. But the monsters follow, and your only hope is to eat the power spots, then destroy the enemy before your strength dissipates. Devour all the power spots in the first maze to start round two, where the bad guys move even faster. Every succeeding round grows more difficult. Gain 250 points for each power spot eaten, and 50 points for each monster. The arcader gets 500 points for completing each round, and a free man for each 10,000 points.

Finally, the third game in *Chase-N-Counter* is **Double Cross,** a traffic-crossing game never before seen in such a tiny format. Cross your cursor over a busy four-lane highway without being hit; then turn around and cross back again. In the first round, only slow-moving trucks are on the road, but fast-moving cars show up after the first double cross. After each double crossing of the clogged highway, all the vehicles speed up. Get 25 points for each lane of traffic passed, 50 points for making it to the other side of the road, and win an extra man for each 10,000 points.

The miniature joysticks that control the games in each unit take some getting used to. They're actually four-position levers. Use just one fingertip to move them, and remember to return the stick to the center position after each push. One of those rubber thumbs used for turning pages might be handy protection for your tender digits as you handle the mini-stick; my fingertips grew sore from enthusiastic thumbing. The tiny controller seems strange if you're used to a self-centering stick, but a few minutes of practice will master the method.

Both *Space-N-Counter* and *Chase-N-Counter* are very appealing. The games are engrossing, despite their size and graphic limitations. The LCD screen naturally allows only for black and white, but the action is so diverting that I didn't really mind the lack of color. The first game in each unit, *Space-N-Counter's Phaser Fight,* reminiscent of *Scramble,* and *Chase-N-Counter's Treasure Trek,* a dungeon-search game, is quite remarkable, and with better graphics, each would make fine stand-alone games on its own. Each of these fine games is coupled with two others almost equally unusual, and a good calculator, plus an accurate timepiece. It would be hard to ask for more of a value.

DONKEY KONG

Coleco/$70

Poor Mario has lost his sweetheart. She's been captured by Donkey Kong and taken to the top of a skyscraper. Mario would like to rescue her, but it's a long hard climb up girders and ladders to where the giant ape has stashed his lady. Worse yet, Donkey Kong sees him coming and throws a barrage of barrels down on Mario's head. Mario must avoid being hit while climbing to the top, or he'll never see his lady love again.

Coleco's introduction of the mini-arcades early in 1982 signalled a new era in quality stand-alone games. Although stand-alone electronic gaming has been around for a long time,

standards of excellence have varied greatly over the years. The first electronic hand-held games were primitive toys compared with what technology has accomplished in the last few years. Although the new games are still toys, technically speaking, their level of sophistication has elevated them beyond the mechanical entertainment that were state-of-the-art only a couple of years ago.

There were some fine electronic hand-held games on the market prior to the mini-arcades from Coleco. In

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1981, Coleco's own line boasted the outstanding **Alien Attack,** as well as **BowlAtronic.** At the same time, Parker Bros. had **Bank Shot,** a fine electronic pool game, and **Wildfire,** possibly the best hand-held pinball machine ever devised. These and a half-dozen other titles were actually a new generation of stand-alone electronic games just starting to crawl out of the sea of mechanical battery-operated toys that had dominated the field before that time.

It was easy to be excited by the Coleco mini-arcade games when they first appeared. The initial release was the phenomenally successful **Pac-Man,** and it continues to be the record seller among stand-alone games. The beautiful tabletop game came out just in time to ride the crest of that popularity wave. The unit deserved all the attention it got. Housed in a handsome miniature version of the coin-op classic, it copied the Midway pay-for-play machine, with two skill levels and three games, including one that allowed two players to compete at *Pac-Man* in a novel head-to-head version.

Pac-Man was followed closely by **Galaxian,** winner of the 1982 Arcade Award for Stand-Alone Game of the Year. *Galaxian* has everything a gamer could want in a miniature arcade. It has

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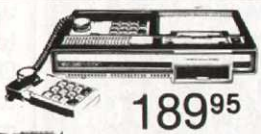

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screens, getting harder on every turn. Mario must continue striving for the return of his true love until three Marios have been killed.

There are numerous differences between this and the Nintendo version. Since the graphics are produced by matrixing, it wasn't possible to put rungs on the ladders. This looks strange, but doesn't really affect the game play. However, animation of this game by matrixing produces some incongruities. Mario is counted as squashed by a tumbling barrel when he is standing next to one. A moment's thought explains this: obviously, matrixing doesn't allow two objects to be in the same space at one time. But it's very disconcerting to have Mario waiting at the foot of a ladder outside the range of a falling barrel, only to have him die because the barrel fell beside him. This takes some getting used to.

DONKEY KONG

Another major difference is the hammer. It has no effect on the game. Gain 200 points for grabbing the hammer, but then it disappears instead of staying in Mario's hand to smash barrels for a few point-gaining seconds.

Avoid touching the electric fence that Donkey Kong stands on. Mario can pass under it harmlessly, but fries if he tries to go through it. Likewise, be alert to the danger of running off the edges of the playfield. On the coin-op game, falling off the side is not a factor, but this hazard keeps the mini-arcade version from being too easy.

On the second screen, Mario must remove the floor rivets on each level by running over them, then remember to leap over the gap left in the floor each time he passes that way. Since the barrels, flaming on this level, can't

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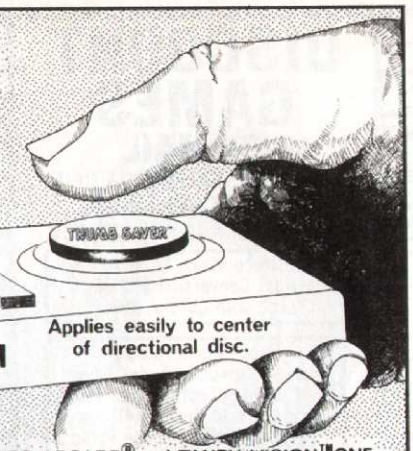

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cross the gaps left by the missing rivets, Mario should plan to keep a gap between himself and the missiles.

The second screen has a variety of ladies' belongings scattered around. By picking up his lady's purse, hat and umbrella, Mario gains 200 points each.

Donkey Kong is a good solid mini-arcade version of the coin-op, and definitely the best climbing game to date for the stand-alone field. Anyone who especially enjoys this genre of entertainment should certainly try the Coleco version, even though the unit lacks the special spark that made the original Coleco mini-arcades so outstanding. Gone is the multi-game capabilities of *Pac-Man* and *Galaxian;* also missing are the exciting head-to-head challenges. Even the demonstration mode, found on every mini-arcade up to this one, is absent from *Donkey Kong.* It's easy to understand why. *Donkey Kong* is a very complicated game, difficult to stuff into such a small package, so some of the frills had to be left off.

But if you love climbing games, look no further than this. Donkey Kong's unending desire for Mario's girl will keep you busy on a rescue mission for many hours, trying to get the love-sick plumber to the top of the building and back in his lady's arms again.

PAC-MAN

Tomytronic/$45

Fine clothes do not a lady make, or so the saying goes. This thought hangs in mind as I eye the Tomytronic stand-alone version of **Pac-Man.** It looks delightful. The sunshine-yellow frisbee-shaped unit could pass as a futuristic spacecraft, and the fluorescent screen is bright and attractive. But beauty is as beauty does.

Set the unit for the amateur or professional level, then control *Pac-Man's* trip through the mini-maze with four directional buttons. The game starts with a few bars of the familiar *Pac-Man* theme. Then get ready for munching as you steer the smile-faced *Pac-Man* through the demi-maze, crunching up the goodies and avoiding monsters.

So far, so good. The *Pac-Man* symbol is a cheery ball. The monsters are cuter than normal; bright red with big eyes that seem to implore you not to gobble them. Even the power spots are pretty little stars. There are 18 dots of bait and two power spots on each screen, and one bonus bunch of cherries. At the amateur level, there are two monsters on each of the first three screens; starting with level 4, there are three ghosts. ("Pro" setting gets three monsters each screen, from the start.) If your *Pac-Man* survives five levels, the score window reads "good" in a mechanical judgment of your skills. Tally 2000 points and you get an additional *Pac-Man.*

The problem with Tomy's version of *Pac-Man* is that he can only gobble in the direction he's facing (right to left). If *Pac-Man* is facing left and a power spot is directly behind him, he must back up until it's ahead of him before he can gobble it. As if all this wasn't enough of a handicap, *Pac-Man* doesn't have to actually collide with a ghost to be eaten. Simply being in the space next to a monster counts as a loss. This is because matrixing doesn't allow two objects to be in the same space, but it's a shame that Tomy designers couldn't think of a better way around this problem.

There are good points. The maze has two warp tunnels, allowing *Pac-Man* or the monsters to exit one side and reenter from the other direction. When *Pac-Man* eats a star, a loud ticking tells the gamer he's empowered to eat ghosts for seven seconds. And it's nice that the game provides the cherry prizes. They appear at random intervals, always in the same location, and give bonus points to the arcader when eaten.

The game flashes to signal its end when all the *Pac-Men* have been destroyed. To play again, turn the unit off and on; there is no reset button.

It isn't that Tomy's *Pac-Man* game is awful; it's just that it's been outdated and outclassed by other *Pac-Man* style games on the market. Being able to gobble in only one direction is a fatal flaw when coupled with the matrixing problem that causes *Pac-Man* to be eaten when he's a space away from any monster. The result is an unsatisfactory variation of a great game. No one playing with this unit could ever imagine why the coin-op version, or other video and stand-alone games, were such hits. And, unfortunately, all the pretty yellow flying-saucer cabinets in the world won't make it play any better!

Of course, at least this is a legally-produced version and *does* come in an attractive housing. This is more than can be said for *Epoch Man* and similar take-offs on the real gobbler.

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CHESS FOR ONE

Continued from page 74

surface that automatically picks up every move and enters it into the computer's memory. This excellent chess program, designed by Dan and Kathe Spracklen, has nine skill levels ranging from novice to advanced player. It's upgradeable, in case a better program is ever devised for the Challenger. It is a handsome unit made of durable molded plastic. The Sensory offers a battery of special options and features, and qualifies as one of the best computer games in its price range.

The SciSys Chess Companion, Model #203, is an eight-level, sensor-type chess computer that suggests and takes back moves, plays either side or against itself, and solves mate in four problems. The Chess Companion recognizes castling, *en passant* captures, pawn promotion, and all draw moves. A special key even enables the user to program opening variations. This unusually attractive high-tech design lists for $115.

Applied Concepts markets an entire line of chess computers at varying price points, under the Destiny name. Destiny Laser Chess, selling for under $250, uses tiny light beams to scan each square of the LCD board and boasts nine levels of play. Destiny's sensory Prodigy costs less than $150 and has both keyboard/display input and output. Moves can be made on the sensor playing board, or entered on the 20-position keyboard. This portable unit sports a built-in chess clock, an unusual feature at this price.

Applied Concepts pioneered upgradeable chess computers with the Great Game Machine. The new model, called the Mega 4 Great Game Machine, is 100% faster in search and play capability than its predecessor. This completely portable game computer still plays all existing two-megahertz game cartridges, but a new line of four megahertz games has been programmed to utilize its increased capabilities. The master chess cartridge for the Mega 4 is **Steinitz-4**, with eleven levels of play and a complete choice of time parameters. There's even an infinite search level for postal chess players. Additional cartridges are available for the Great Game Machine, and the opening and endgame carts can be used in conjunction with *Steinitz-4*. The Mega 4 has a line of other games available, including **Borchek** (checkers), **Odin** (reversi) and **Las Vegas 21** (blackjack).

Applied Concepts' Destiny designers haven't forgotten that some gamers prefer to play on computers. The Mate is a hands-on chess peripheral that connects directly to the Apple II. It has an upgradeable program to bar against obsolescence. The chessboard senses the movement of a piece on the board. Then the computer responds, displaying the move on the computer screen and flashing LED lights on each square affected by the move. The Mate sells for $299.95 complete.

There are a variety of chess programs available for use with computers. Almost every software company has at least one chess disk in its catalog. One of the best is from Hayden. **Sargon II** was programmed by Dan and Kathe Spracklen, currently the chess programmers for Fidelity Electronics. *Sargon II* has seven levels of play, will let you know the moves it's thinking about, and even gives hints. On disk for the Apple II, it sells for $34.95. You can play chess with no board or pieces; all the action is on the screen.

Even videogame companies recognize the popularity of pawn-pushing. ColecoVision has licensed Fidelity's Chess, to sell for $30. Playable either by one person against the ColecoVision computer, or two people with ColecoVision monitoring, this is probably the strongest program available for any videogame system. Atari has a cartridge called **Video Chess** for the VCS for only $26.95. This may be the least expensive of all the automatic chess games. Mattel offers **USCF Chess** for Intellivision. A special feature of this cartridge is slow-motion replay so the gamer can study the moves in the previous match.

If you spend a lot of time on the move, a portable unit is worth considering. Every company offers at least one moderately priced travel set. Travel Sensor Chess from SciSys is an eight-level sensor-type chess computer with an integral sensorboard. Red LEDs run parallel to the chessboard and illuminate the coordinates of the computer's moves. The sensorboard automatically enters all moves into the computer as the chess pieces advance. You can even store board positions when the machine is set "off". Travel Sensor Chess lists for $50, including the molded chess pieces and a dust cover.

Fidelity has a portable player called the Mini Sensory Chess Challenger. The sensory playboard recognizes and

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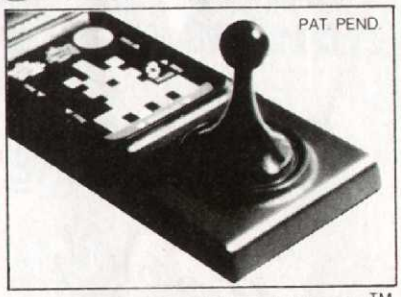

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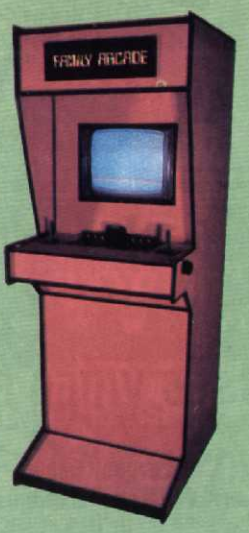

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Another self-contained game comes from Mattel Electronics. Computer Chess has four skill levels, and an LCD playing board. If the computer shows signs of beating you, take back up to three moves, or ask for help on the next move. This tiny hand-held game is a low-priced goodie that chess enthusiasts will want to carry everywhere.

Most people play chess somewhere between the 1200 and 1600 level; No matter what strength player you need or how much you want to spend, there's a variety of electronic chess games ready to give you the kind of challenge you need.

READER REPLAY

Continued from page 18

without a planet when you can reach waves as high as 50.

Howard Dombrower
Address unknown

Ed: Way to go, Howard. With the advent of the ColecoVision, of course, there are whole new worlds of opportunity awaiting the prospective videogame cheat. Did you know, for instance, that in **Donkey Kong,** *Mario can be made to climb the ladders at nearly super-speed? You simply have him take a single step up the ladder, pause for a heartbeat, then continue on up. Mario zips up the ladder so fast he almost loses his mustache!*

Obviously, a follow-up look at the possibilities of beating the home systems will turn up on the pages of **EG** *before too long.*

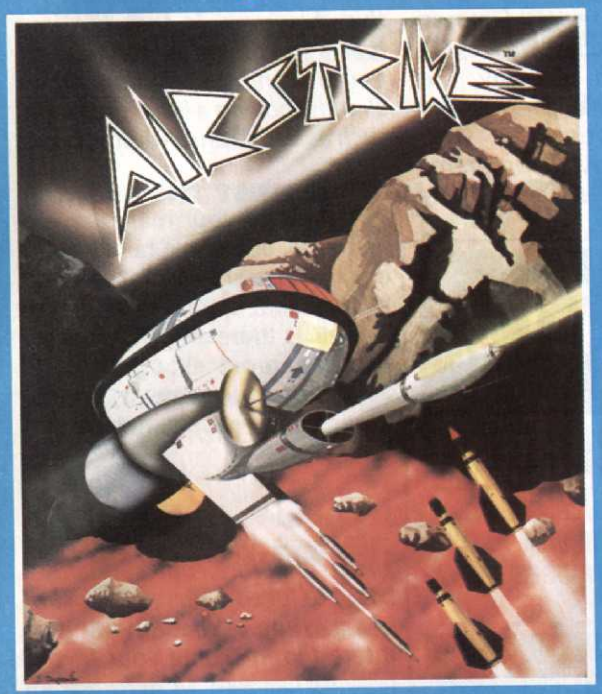
GETTING FLOPPY

Does your magazine cover arcades as well as home video, computers and other electronic game items? Also, could you provide information on gift subscriptions as I have a brother who's a videogame nut and I'm sure he'd enjoy your magazine.

Scott Lapham
New York, NY

Ed: Scott, we cover it all. **EG** *looks at its audience as hobbyists who just happen to be interested in electronic*

Very, very difficult!



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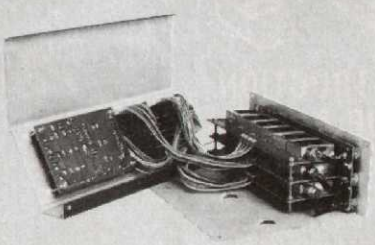

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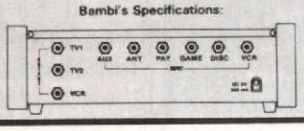

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IS IT I-MAGIC?

There's something that's been on my mind ever since I purchased Imagic's incredible **Demon Attack** for the VCS. I can't believe how much the software for the Atari 2600 has improved in the past year. A year ago, it seemed as if Atari's **Asteroids** was the very best the machine could do — what with all the talk of flip-flopping bank switches and such.

My question is this: have there been that many new programming developments or have all of the VCS-compatible cartridges advanced so much due to the new software companies with fresh ideas?

Will Simpson
Silver Lake, CA

Ed: Good question. Actually, the fact of the matter is that many of the veteran software designers who created the original Atari programs have moved on to the newer companies such as Imagic and Activision, where they have continued to learn the secrets of the VCS. Since its inception, the software-oriented 2600 has consistently produced "impossible" effects — everything from scrolling to horizontal, random movement.

The truly amazing aspect to all of this, however, is that the improvements just keep on coming. You begin to wonder if Demon Attack isn't already looking a little aged with items such as **Pitfall** *and* **Atlantis** *bowing in!*

UP AGAINST THE WALL, EG!

As fans of your magazine since its first issue, our whole family enjoys not only the words but the beautiful pictures that appear in your magazine as well. Is there any way that some of the super pieces of artwork that appear in your pages could be made available to readers, maybe in poster form?

June Landon
Kingston, NY

Ed: Gee, we really hadn't thought about it before, but suddenly **EG** *is being deluged with requests similar to yours, June. What about it, folks? Interested in seeing your favorite* **EG** *artwork in poster form for hanging on walls, etc.? If there is sufficient enthusiasm for the project, something could surely be worked out. Just let us know.*

One of the most rewarding aspects of working on a magazine such as **EG** is reading the mail. Each day, great white heaps of letters come washing across our editorial desks, most of it intelligent, articulate and, well, shucks, full of nice things about **EG.**

But the best part of mail reading comes when a bright reader suggests an article idea they would dearly love to see — and we know that the very feature our reader has in mind has already been either discussed or assigned or actually written! It means that we're on the same wavelength, that we can pretty much tell what our readers will go for just by our own gut reactions.

So if you happen to be occasionally disappointed when your letter with that great suggestion doesn't turn up, just wait an issue or two — and you may find the feature you want is waiting for you in all its full-color glory!

And if it isn't well, write us again. That, after all, is what this column is for. Till this same time next month, then, happy arcading!

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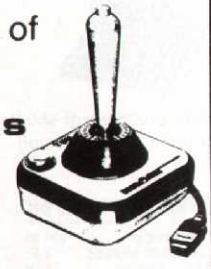

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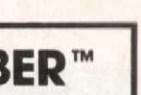

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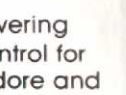

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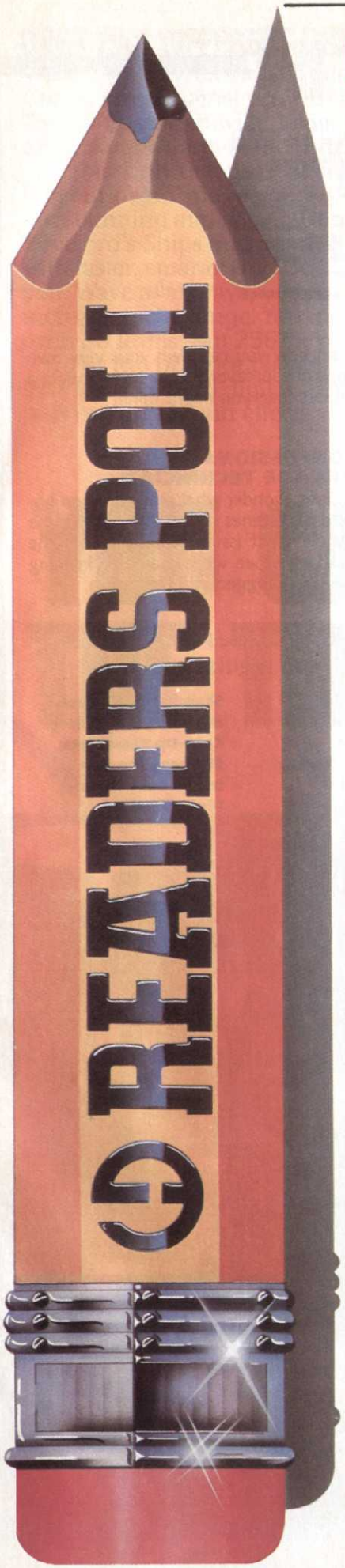

Interaction between the readers and editors of **Electronic Games** helps make this a better magazine. The more we here at **EG** know about who you are and what you want to read, the better we can satisfy your needs and desires. That's why we run a Reader Poll in every single issue of this magazine. Rest assured that even though we protect the anonymity of every respondent to our survey, the editor personally reads each and every ballot received. And of course, this is also your ballot for casting your vote for the most popular videogames, computer game programs and coin-op arcade machines.

Please return this poll sheet—or a photocopy, if you prefer to keep your **Electronic Games** in perfect condition—to: **Electronic Games**, 235 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10003.

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My favorite coin-op games are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

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THE PLAYERS GUIDE TO COIN-OP VIDEOGAMES

Which games will be as hot in the nation's family amusement centers over the next year as machines like **Ms. Pac-Man, Tutenkham, Donkey Kong** and **Tempest** have been during the last one? **EG's** magazine within a magazine will provide a quarter-saving guide to the up and coming pay-for-play machines.

AN INTRODUCTION TO GAMING ON CABLE

No fewer than three services for electronic gamers will be available to cable subscribers before the end of 1983. Find out their good and bad points in this no nonsense consumer's-eye view of the situation.

HOW TO COLLECT COIN-OPS

Sometimes, the oldies are the goodies. Coin-op authority Roger Sharpe will explain how you can own your very own copy of your favorite coin-op — and for a lot less than you might think!

CONFESSIONS OF AN ARCADE TECHNICIAN

Ever wonder what really goes on behind the scenes at your favorite game parlor? Next issue, you'll get into the head of a man whose career is keeping coin-ops plugged into the action.

There'll be plenty of other exciting articles and features of interest to arcaders, plus these regular columns:

- ★ Passport to Adventure
- ★ Q&A
- ★ Inside Gaming
- ★ Arcade America
- ★ Computer Gaming
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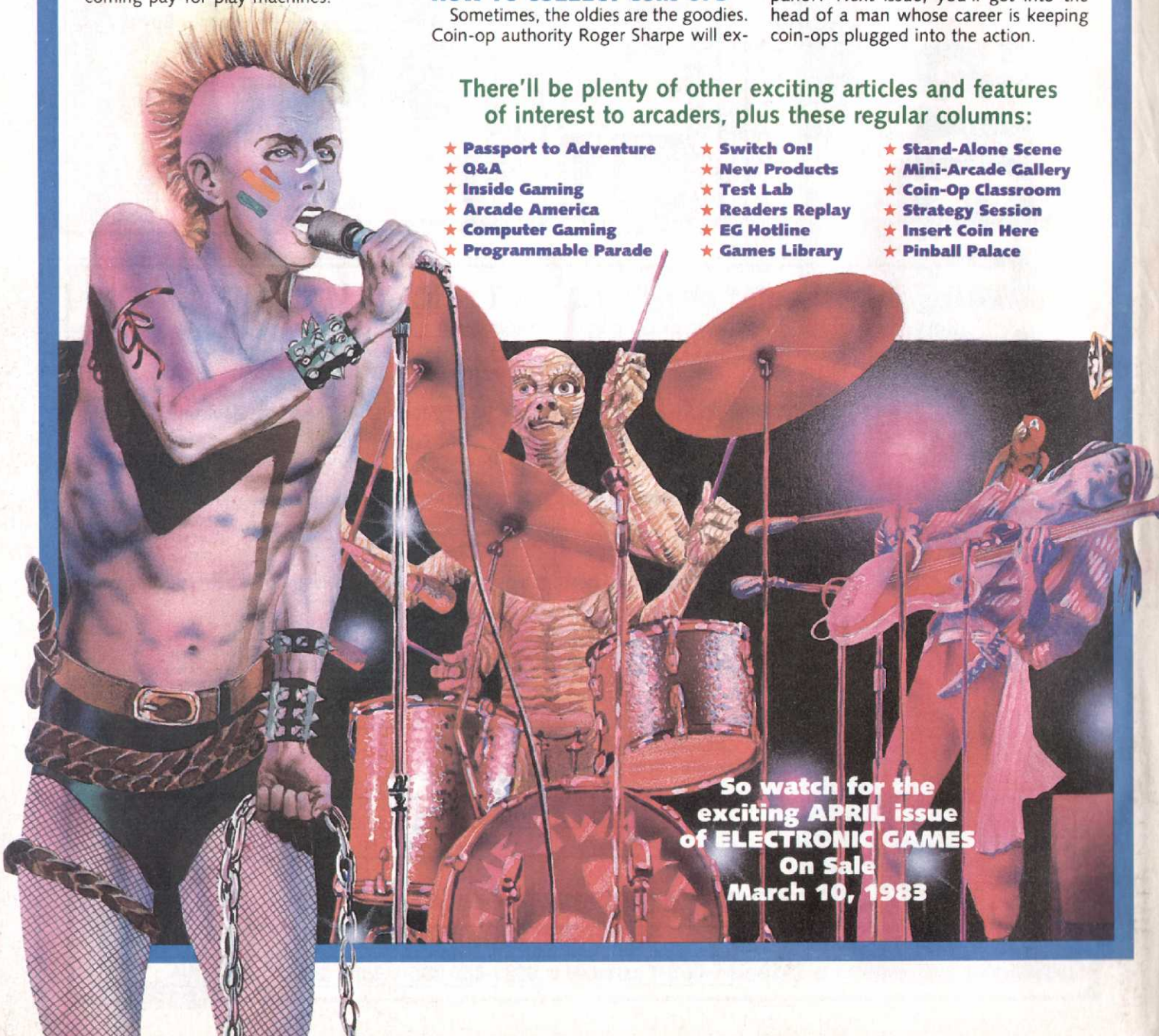
- ★ Insert Coin Here
- ★ Pinball Palace



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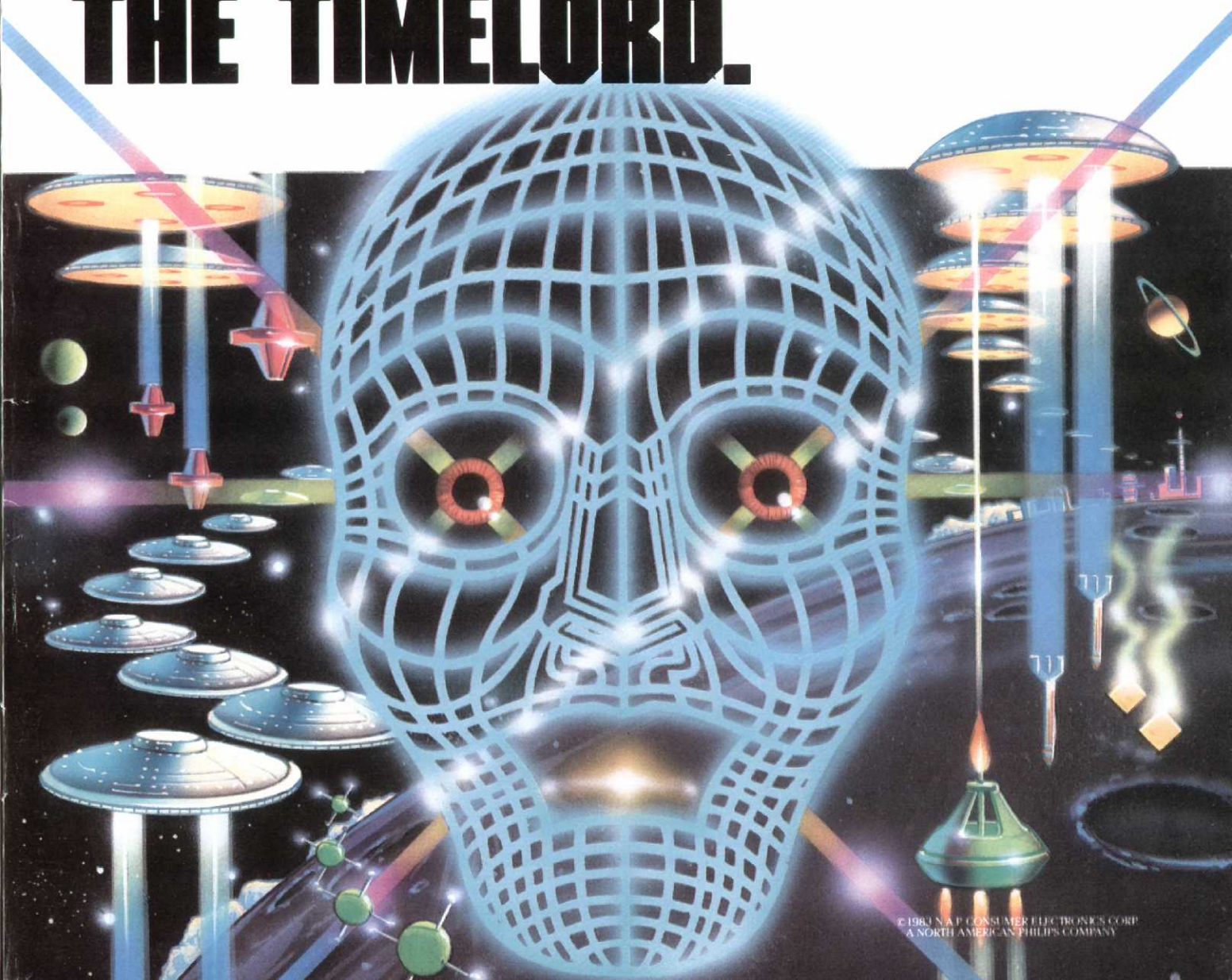

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