Video Review

THE WORLD AUTHORITY ON CONSUMER VIDEO

GREATEST VIDEO GAMES
HOW THE CHAMPS BEAT THEM

Best Tapes and Discs Of the Year

Video Gear: Rent or Buy?

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 1

THE WORLD AUTHORITY ON CONSUMER VIDEO

Video Review

Cover Photo: Michael Waine

World's tiniest TV and other flashes

☐ **VIDEO WALKMAN:** Teeniest TV set so far is being introduced by Sony: wallet-size, black-and-white set with two-inch screen. New mini marvel is now on sale in Japan at about $240. Company studying possibilities of selling it in US. Dimensions: 1¼" (D) x 3½" (W) x 7¾" (H).

Tiny size was made possible through new FDT (flat display tube) which is just ⅜ of an inch thick. Sony says using Walkman-type stereo headphones with it results in high-fidelity sound.

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Art Levis

☐ **AUTO VIDEO:** First automotive VCR system coming from Clarion, using new mini UCM (ultra compact machine) format, compatible with VHS. Three prototypes with 30 minute play/record time currently undergoing road tests. System scheduled for August introduction in Japan, Europe later in year. Meanwhile, Matsushita (Panasonic and Quasar in US) cruising into Japanese car business with three-piece component color TV system: chassis in trunk, control panel in dash, monitor facing rear seat.

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☐ **ITTY BITTY BETA:** Meanwhile, Beta-format originator Sony has developed its answer to JVC's UCM prototype. News from Japan is that Sony's "mini-Beta" VCR will be much smaller than existing Beta recorders, using tiny "mini-Beta" videocassettes that will be compatible with current Beta VCRs. Confirming Japanese rumor, source at Sony's US office says that while "mini-Beta" prototype could be shown within electronics industry by this fall, a consumer version may not appear for "maybe two or three years."

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☐ **GAMES GALORE:** Hottest new video game trend is introduction by new and established companies of cartridges compatible with Atari and Mattel Intellivision systems. Among latest entrants to join Activision in creating private-label cartridges: Imagic ("Star Voyager," "Demon Attack" and "Trick Shot" for Atari; Intellivision games to follow) and Coleco ("Donkey Kong," "Round-Up," "Vanguard," "Phoenix," "Mousetrap," "Venture" for both Atari and Intellivision).

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☐ **KING OF CLUBS:** LP record club pioneer—CBS—is applying same idea to video with planned sale-only cassette club through Columbia House. In plan similar to record club, new members get four tapes for two weeks, for $1 plus shipping, handling charges. Members then have option of returning tapes or purchasing them at half price.

Other incentive to join club: Purchase of videotape at regular price entitles member to buy second tape of equal or lower price for $12.95 to cover shipping and handling.

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☐ **BENNY AND THE CASSETTES:** The British are coming, at least to US video scene. Thames TV International is making many popular British TV imports (*The Benny Hill Show, Edward and Mrs. Simpson*, etc.) available on cassette here through deal with Thorn EMI. Eventually over 100 titles should be available, including *The World at War, The Naked Civil Servant*.

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☐ **FUNAI FRIENDS:** Quarter-inch (CVC) videotape format embraced by Technicolor is getting new US support, this time from Japan-based Elbex Corporation, exporter of commercial video-cameras, security systems. Company says it'll sell version of Funai-developed CVC system in US next fall. Grundig and Canon have also announced they'll sell CVC in US, though latest reports had Canon shifting to VHS format. Stay tuned.

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☐ **NIPPER NIPPED:** New York City retailer Trader Horn slashed prices on RCA CED-format videodisc player to $269, including $50 rebate. Bonus: "three discs free from RCA."

Latest gear from JVC, Marantz and more

MARANTZ
Videocassette Recorder
Model VR-100 $1,450

The first stereo Beta-format VCRs are among the first video equipment from Marantz, a well-known manufacturer of audio equipment. This portable model and a comparable VR-200 one-piece model ($1,350 suggested retail price) are also the first to offer Dolby C noise reduction circuitry. Although no prerecorded cassettes so far utilize Dolby C, home videotapers can use it to achieve about a 20-decibel noise reduction.

The front-loading VCR has a built-in tuner and separate tuner/timer, and is styled in gold to match the company's audio components.

Marantz, 20525 Nordhoff St., Chatsworth, CA 91311 (213) 998-9333

ODYSSEY[2]
Video Game Cartridge
The Great Wall Street Fortune Hunt $49.95

"Rollover" and play Rockefeller. As news headlines flash across the TV screen, one or more players can invest in stocks, bonds, gold, Treasury bills and real estate. Savvy buying and selling can either put you in the (computer) chips or wipe out your fictional fortune. Compatible only with Odyssey[2] consoles.

Odyssey[2], NAP Consumer Electronics, Interstate 40 and Straw Plains Pike, Knoxville, TN 37914 (615) 521-4316

JVC
Mini-Combo
Model CX-710 $699.95

This portable combo includes a color TV set, an AM/FM stereo radio and a stereo audiocassette recorder that can play metal tapes as well as standard ones. Connecting a VCR's video output turns the color TV, with its five-inch (diagonally measured) screen, into a video monitor.

Each of the twin speakers measures four inches across, and two built-in microphones and a mike-mixing control offer live stereo recording. The mini-combo can run on 10 (type-A) batteries, household current, an optional battery pack or a car/boat battery.

JVC, 41 Slater Drive, Elmwood Park, NJ 07407 (201) 794-3900

AUDIO-TECHNICA
Video Head Cleaners
Video Cleanica AT5002 $21.95
Video Cleanica AT5001 $24.95

Two sides may be better than one, so both sides of the tape in these head-cleaning cassettes are coated with non-abrasive cleaner. Designed to clean rollers and tape guides as well as video heads, the Beta- and VHS-format cassettes are among the first video accessories from Audio-Technica, a prominent audio-accessory manufacturer.

Audio-Technica, 1221 Commerce Drive, Stow, OH 44224 (216) 686-2600

FUJI
Blank Videocassettes
Super HG T-20, T-30, T-40, T-60, T-80, T-100, T-120 $23.35 to $37

Super high-grade is Fuji's designation for blank tape a step up from high- and standard-grade. The company's VHS-format Super HG tape provides a video signal-to-noise ratio

that's four decibels better than standard-grade tape, according to Fuji. It's also designed for greater durability and improved audio response.

Fuji, 350 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10118 (212) 736-3335

Unless otherwise noted, all New Products specifications are manufacturers' data—not results of Video Review tests or measurements. All listed prices are manufacturers' suggested retail. Availability of products varies according to supply and locality.
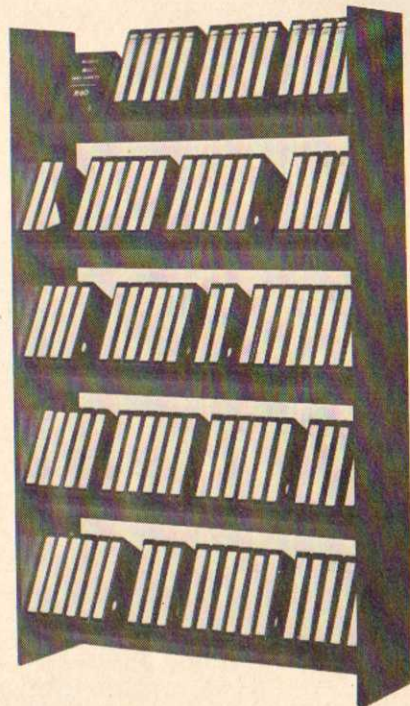
MATTEL
Voice Synthesis Module
Intellivoice $70 to $80

This plug-in module gives the Intellivision video-game console not only a voice, but several—male and female. Computer-generated voices introduce the new "Space Spartans," "Bomb Squad" and "B-17 Bomber" video games, offer strategic advice, warn of imminent danger and cheer winners. The voices' emotional timbre ranges from "calm reassurance" to "alarm," according to Mattel.

The company expects to eventually expand the module's uses beyond video-game play.

Mattel Electronics, 5150 Rosecrans Ave., Hawthorne, CA 90250 (213) 978-5150

PANASONIC
Videocamera
Model PK-805 $1,200

Virtually everything's automatic on this full-featured videocamera, including the focus, iris, white balance and brightness controls. There's also an *f* 1.4 lens with two-speed, 6:1 power zoom, a fade-in/out control, an electronic viewfinder and a flashing light to let subjects know when they're being taped.

Its ⅔-inch Saticon image-pickup tube is designed for reduced lag and low-light sensitivity.

Panasonic, One Panasonic Way, Secaucus, NJ 07094 (201) 348-7000

VISUAL BUILDERS
Video Furniture
Model 5-120 $79.20

Tape titles are easy to read when they're stored on these tilted shelves. You can fit up to 120 Beta and VHS cassettes in the unit, which stands about 4½ feet high.

It comes ready for assembly, with pre-drilled holes and 12 screws. The shelves are finished in walnut-look woodgrain.

Visual Builders, 4435 Trias St., San Diego, CA 92103 (714) 296-4435

SONY
Digital Audio Processor
Model PCM-F1 $1,900

Now you can keep your finger on the pulse-code modulator of the times. This accessory can turn any Beta- or VHS-format VCR into a high-quality, half-inch audiotape recorder. It converts analog audio signals to digital with its computer-processed system.

One of the smallest and lightest of such devices for the home user, this stereo-capable pulse-code modulator has an LED peak program meter and audio-level controls.

Sony, 9 W. 57th St., New York, NY 10019 (212) 371-5800

QUASAR
Videocassette Recorder
Model VH5021TW $875

Even though this is one of Quasar's less expensive VCRs, it still comes with forward visual scan.

Other features on the two/four/six-hour VCR include freeze-frame and single-frame advance in the six-hour mode. The top-loading, VHS-format videocassette recorder comes with a 24-hour/one-event timer. It receives VHF channels 2-13 and UHF channels 14-83.

Quasar, 9401 W. Grand Ave., Franklin Park, IL 60131 (312) 451-1200
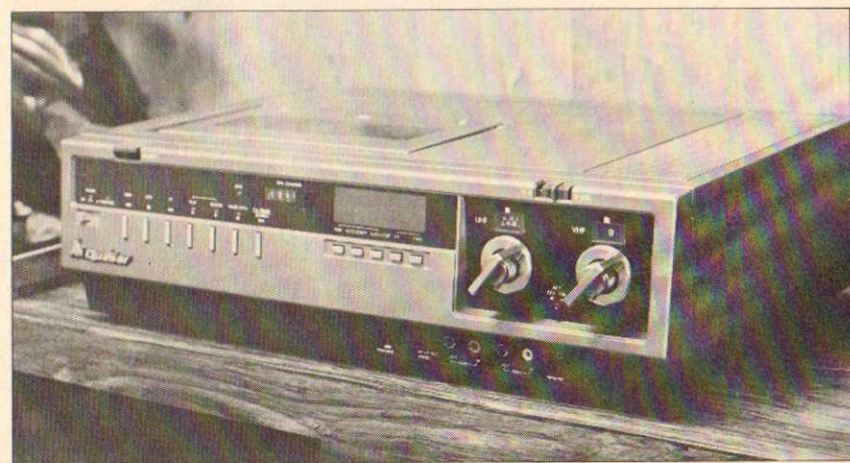
CHAMPIONS' SECRETS FOR
BEATING THE BEST VIDEO GAMES

By Phil Wiswell

The key to understanding video games lies in the Filipino monkey trap. A hollowed-out coconut is filled with rice and chained to the ground. When a monkey reaches in and grabs a handful of rice, its fist becomes too large to pull back out of the coconut. Panicked, the monkey will not release the rice from its hand, although that simple gesture would save its life.

Anyone who has ever wrapped a hand around the joystick of a game such as "Space Invaders," "Asteroids" or "Pac-Man" knows what that poor, trapped monkey feels like. There you are, doing just fine, when suddenly things on the screen get fast and furious. You panic. Game over.

Since all three games' point scores are unlimited, no one can *beat* "Space Invaders," "Asteroids" or "Pac-Man"—the most popular and addictive of all video games. Yet there are inside tricks and strategic subtleties which we've gathered exclusively from national video-game champions, critics and the original designers of each game cartridge that can help you master the games.

'SPACE INVADERS'

Of the video games that are hardest to master, "Space Invaders" is the easiest, because the program is very predictable. That's why Bill Heineman, a 17-year-old from California, was able to rack up 165,200 points in two hours of competition to win the first National Space In-

vaders Championship in November, 1980. When the games were turned off, Bill and four other finalists had not lost a single laser cannon. I spoke with them after the match to uncover their secrets and strategies which, correctly employed, could hypothetically keep a game of "Space Invaders" going forever. So far, scores of 500,000 to 700,000 have been common using these techniques.
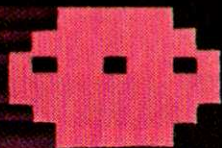
There are two main rules to playing great "Space Invaders." First, keep moving unless you have reason to wait behind a barrier. Once you fire a shot, move immediately. Moving the laser cannon will not affect the upward direction of a fired missile, and it will avoid drawing unnecessary fire from aliens sensing your presence.

The second rule is to keep cool under pressure. Let go of the coconut. All the strategy I can give you will probably only relieve a portion of the pressure you'll feel while playing a game. You still have to overcome the rest by not going into a panic.

Now for the strategy. There are four "fields" in "Space Invaders." Once a field is destroyed, a new one replaces it a row closer to your laser cannon. (Remember: If a single alien makes it to earth, the game ends.) So how do you take care of the first field?

Figure 1 (next page) answers that question by numbering the aliens in the order you should zap them, leaving eight on the screen. When the game begins, your laser cannon will be slightly to the right of the column on the far left, which you want to destroy first. Wait exactly seven heartbeats, then let go with rapid fire, moving right just a bit with every two shots to keep up with the moving column. Then, following the numbers in Figure 1, move to the column on the extreme right (blasting the two bottom aliens in each column along the way), and destroy it.

If you have to blast your way through your own protective barriers or come back for one or two aliens which were hidden as you went by, that's okay. Just don't get too far out of step. Count the aliens as you kill them, because after your twelfth hit, the Mother Ship will appear at the top of the screen on the right side. Go for it if you can.

If you manage to finish up with the numbers in Figure 1 quickly, it will take the remaining eight aliens some time to make their way to the bottom of the screen, and you will have a chance at as many as four more Mother Ships (which alternate entering from right and left). A key point: *A Mother Ship will not appear on the screen once there are fewer than eight aliens left.* That's why you want to get the grouping of eight in Figure 1. Once you have shot a few Mother Ships, destroy the remaining eight aliens by staying in the middle of the screen behind what's left of your middle barrier. Slip out to take potshots at them one at a time. With only three, two or one left, they will be moving fast. But never attempt to keep up with them.

When you have eliminated the first field, the second will set up a row closer to you and begin marching. Again, wait seven heartbeats and fire using Figure 1 as a guide.

The third field begins another row so close to you that it doesn't leave you enough time to use the strategy outlined

for the first and second fields. The general idea, however, is the same: You want to chop the phalanx down to eight aliens—two rows of four—and wait for the Mother Ship. See Figure 2 for the order in which to destroy this field.

Rather than waste any time, you should zip to the right side of the screen and destroy that column first. Then come back across to the left, eliminating two aliens from each column. Again, if you have to shoot your way through the barriers to get at the aliens, that's okay. You
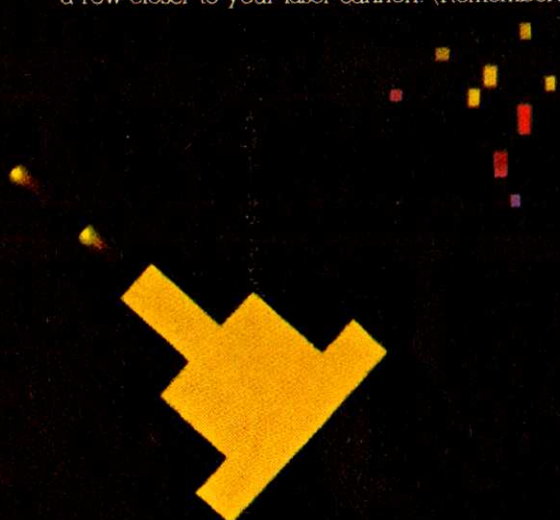
do not have enough time to get out of step at this point.

The fourth field appears with no barriers, so it's just aliens against a laser cannon with nowhere to hide. It calls for immediate action and rapid movement. The bottom aliens are so close now, you can be blown up before you can say "licked again." See Figure 3 for the order in which to destroy the fourth field—the most important order to learn, because you will use it on all succeeding fields.

The fifth field starts the aliens as low as they can start, so it's as tough as it gets. But if you can master Figure 3 and avoid the enemy laser fire, you'll rack up a lot of points.

Tip: Keep your finger on the fire button or keep the direction controller pointed while a new field sets up, to get the jump on them.

Four Final Hints

• A missile, once fired, must hit an alien, an alien missile or a Mother Ship—or pass out of the top of the screen—before another missile can be fired. Therefore, don't waste your time flicking the fire button wildly; it will eat up too much time.
• With a full field of aliens, your heart will beat 27 times before they drop down a row.
• Maintain more columns than rows; it gives you more targets.
• The Mother Ship will pass overhead after 12 aliens have been destroyed. Watch for it.

'ASTEROIDS'

"Asteroids" is much more difficult to master than "Space Invaders" because its format is more abstract. However, as with all video games, there is a strict format to "Asteroids," no matter how complex. Once you understand it, your scores will improve dramatically. This is a discussion of Atari's "Asteroids Game #2" played at B difficulty, although the general strategy will be of help in playing any of the other 65 variations.

Wiswell's Four Rules of 'Asteroids'

1. Stay in the center of the screen.
2. Avoid going into hyperspace.
3. Avoid using forward thrust.
4. Break rules 2 and 3 only when rule 1 cannot be followed without losing a ship.

Like most of the outer-space video games, "Asteroids" is played with increasingly fast fields. On the first field, the asteroids will be traveling basically north or south on the edges of the screen. The game never starts with one right under or over your ship. Turn your ship due west or east, depending on the closest asteroid. You want to blow up the closer ones first, since all asteroids gravitate towards the center of the screen sooner or later, and the closer ones will get there that much faster.

When you hit a large asteroid, it breaks into two medium ones. When you hit a medium asteroid, it breaks into two small ones. The explosion also alters their course, sending them into the screen on more of a diagonal. Obviously, the small ones are the hardest to hit. The ideal strategy is to fire at a single large asteroid in bursts of two or three shots, hoping that one of the extra shots will hit the resulting smaller asteroids. Before blowing up another large asteroid (unless one is heading straight for you), try to blow up the medium and small asteroids you've created by hitting a large one.

Caution: *Never blow up all large asteroids without having blown up at least half the medium and small ones.*

When there aren't many threats left on the side where you started, change direction by 180° and commence firing with the same strategy. Now and then you may have to spin around to kill off a straggler, but it is worth not moving from the center of the screen. The small ships aren't really that hard to hit. You just have to remain calm and take them in order of their proximity.

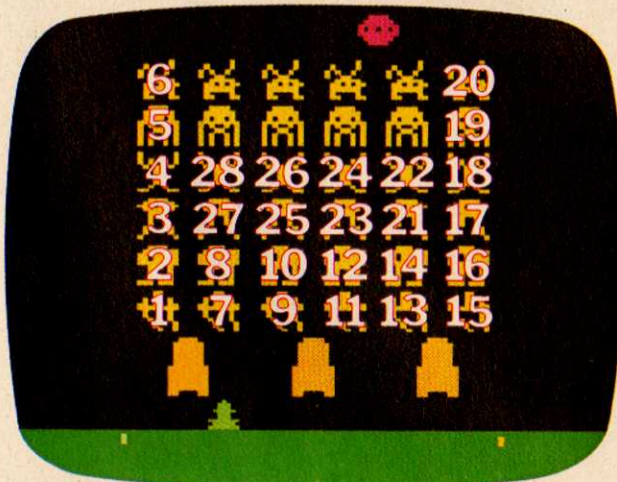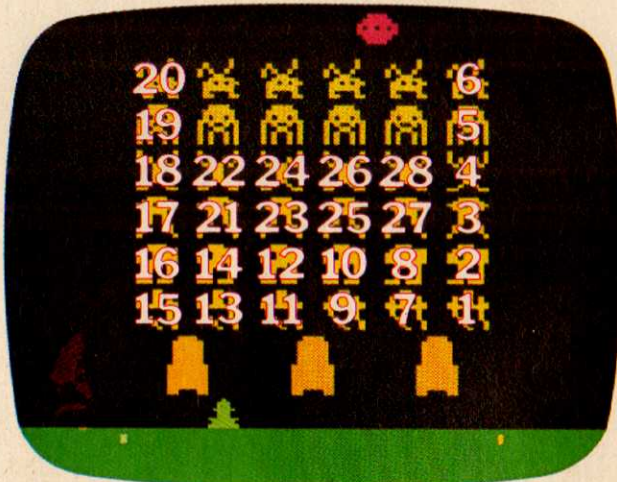Try to have only one small asteroid left at the end. At

Figure 1.

Figure 2.

Figure 3.

that point take a quick breather. Check your position. If you aren't in the center of the screen get there. You may have to maneuver around a few times, but it's worth being centered when the new field arrives. Once centered, blast off the little asteroid and get ready for a new field.

To understand how a single asteroid approaches you, let's look at a single asteroid's path around the screen. Figure 4 shows its approximate path, with numbers indicating its entry and exit points. Eventually, all paths cross the center of the screen.
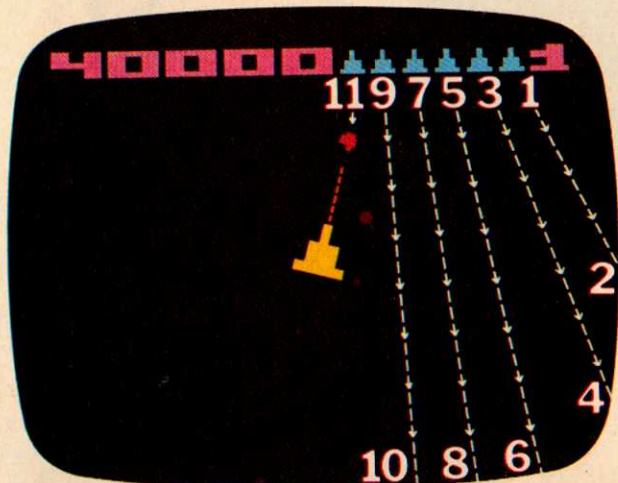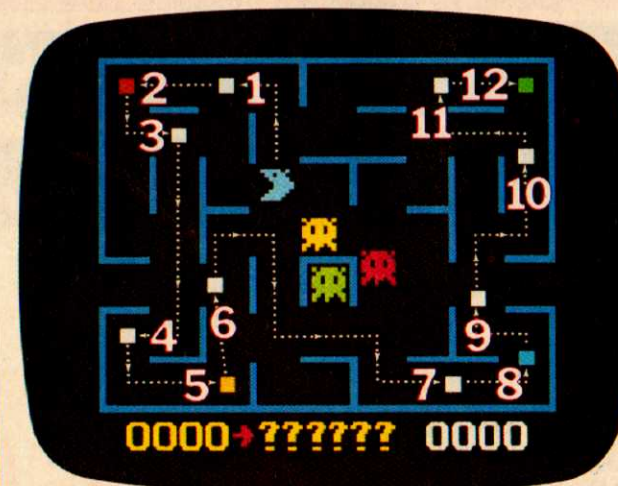

Figure 4.

Figure 5.

Figure 6.

If you have no way out of a collision, always choose the smallest asteroid. A collision still scores points, and in some cases, enough to earn you a new ship.

'K.C. MUNCHKIN'

In this game, released in 1981 for the Odyssey² game system, you control K.C. Munchkin, a gobbling mouth trying to eat 12 munchies while avoiding three munchers. If that sounds familiar, it's because "K.C. Munchkin" is the first home variation on the "Pac-Man" theme.

The strategy outlined here will be for Game #0, the first and hardest maze according to Garland Newport. A senior lab technician for N.A.P. Consumer Electronics, the company that makes the Odyssey² games, Newport has played "K.C. Munchkin" more than 1,000 times in his search for program bugs to be eliminated.

"What I normally do is go to the upper left-hand corner," says Newport, "eat the first white dot if it gets in the way, and then I sit next to the first blinking dot until the munchers chasing me come up there. When they get close enough to me that I think I can eat them before they change back, I grab the colored dot and chase them."

Figure 5 shows how every field begins. There are twelve dots to be eaten, with two white and one flashing dot in each corner of the maze. By eating the white dots you gain points, but nothing else. By eating a flashing dot, however, all three munchers become vulnerable to you. In other words, for a few seconds—randomly selected from one to four—you can also eat the munchers. When vulnerable, munchers turn purple and will avoid you like the plague. If they are chasing you as you eat a flashing dot, they will turn tail and run like frightened children. So trick them into following you close enough to a flashing dot.

In each new field, you should work your way around clockwise, eating the dots according to the numbers in Figure 6. Use the flashing dots as defense to repel the munchers, or use yourself as bait to attract and eat them. Sometimes you won't be able to follow the numbers in Figure 6 and will have to improvise. There's nothing you can do to prepare for this.

• One word of caution: You can let a muncher get very close to you, but always allow about a quarter-inch between you and it if you plan to turn any corners safely with a muncher on your tail.

• One bug in the program: Use only north, south, east and west directions on the controllers. If you hold the controller northwest (thinking it is north), K.C. Munchkin will go north—until he hits a wall or the top of the screen. At that point he'll turn west, and you'll have lost control of the game for a moment. Just make sure to move the controller in a perfect cross.

• One super hot tactic: There's an advantage to saving a blinking dot for last if you are either very quick or very lucky. If the last dot you eat on a field is a flashing one, the three munchers will enter from the center hole on the new field *still vulnerable to you!* That means if you can pick the side they will enter from, or if you are fast enough, you can eat all three right at the start, leaving you plenty of time to clear the maze before they regenerate.

So there it is. Now you are armed with all the information you need to improve your play on these three video games. Just remember the story about the monkey every time you hit "reset" on your console.□

Man River" as sung by Warfield to some of the movie's most mistily atmospheric photography. (Cue: As Gardner and her lover depart the show boat, she says to Warfield: "Keep ridin' the ol' river, Joe." Warning: Don't stop after Warfield's first chorus ends in a big flourish, for he soon comes back for an even more moving second chorus.) This whole sequence, incidentally, was directed by Roger Edens during an illness of George Sidney, and makes one wish Edens had directed more of the picture.

• **SINGIN' IN THE RAIN** (1952) For me, this ranks with '35's *Top Hat* as one of the two best original movie musicals ever. It's got everything—great songs (the cream of the Brown-Freed '30s catalogue), terrific dances (co-directed by Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen), a "fun" book (by Comden and Green) that spoofs movie-musicals themselves, and a wonderful cast: Kelly, Donald O'Connor, Debbie Reynolds, Cyd Charisse and the unforgettable Jean Hagen (in a role originally planned for Judy Holliday before she clicked in *Born Yesterday*). Fully 60 of its 103-minutes' running-time are given over to musical numbers! The two best are included in *That's Entertainment*: (1) the classic title number, in which Kelly gloriously sloshes and frolics his way through a downpour; (2) "Make 'Em Laugh," a frantically acrobatic and side-splittingly comic song-and-dance by O'Connor. Parts of the "Broadway Melody Ballet" are included in both *That's Entertainment* I and II—a minute of the finale in the first and a longer sequence in Part II, including as sultry a *pas de deux* as Kelly and Charisse ever danced. One other excerpt worth taping: The warmly tender Kelly-Reynolds *pas de deux* to "You Were Meant for Me." (Cue: As they walk onto an empty soundstage, Kelly says: "*This* is the proper setting!") But, perhaps more than any other '50s musical, this is the one you should have complete—either on videocassette (MGM/CBS) or on videodisc (RCA Selecta-Vision, CED format).

• **CALL ME MADAM** (1953) This lively, impudent, "topical" musical comedy was adapted from a Broadway hit that broadly spoofed Harry Truman's shipping off Washington hostess Perle Mesta (reportedly on his wife's orders) as ambassador to Liechtenstein (here fictionalized as Lichtenburg). 20th Century-Fox had the good sense to keep the best of the Broadway original—including star Ethel Merman in a tailor-made role—if not all of Irving Berlin's songs (eight of the show's 13) or all the nippy Lindsay-Crouse dialogue. Most tapeable: (1) Merman's opening "I'm the Hostess With the Mostest on the Ball," belted out with her typical blend of good-natured humor and unabashed brassiness. (Cue: Right after Merman's swearing-in ceremony, Donald O'Connor asks her how she got her appointment.) (2) The wonderfully exhilarating, romantically lit dance that Donald O'Connor and Vera-Ellen do to "It's a Lovely Day Today," choreographed by Robert Alton. (Cue: After the "International Rag" number, O'Connor dances Vera-Ellen out into the garden.) The show's best song, "You're Just in Love" (with one of Berlin's cleverest countermelody choruses), is only routinely staged—twice.

• **THE BAND WAGON** (1953) Loosely based on a 1931 Broadway show that Fred Astaire had done, this keeps only five of the original 17 Schwartz-Dietz songs but adds eight other good ones by the same team, plus a thoroughly updated book (by Comden and Green) about a declining movie star (Astaire) trying to get a new Broadway career underway. There are many "in" bits, such as sly digs at Broadway's snobbishness about movies and Jack Buchanan's broad spoofing of an overly artistic director not entirely unlike the movie's own director, Vincente Minnelli. The two *That's Entertainment* features take their title from the one *new* song Schwartz and Dietz wrote for the movie—and both include choice excerpts. "Dancing in the Dark," one of Astaire's all-time airiest romantic dances (with Cyd Charisse) is in Part I, and "Triplets," unforgettably knee-danced by Astaire, Buchanan and Nanette Fabray, is in Part II. Not included in either one and most tapeable: "A Shine on My Shoes," in which Astaire first shows how he can make his feet work magic even while he's sitting down—and then cuts loose with some great buck-and-wing hoofing. (Cue: A minute or so after Astaire enters a game arcade, he nearly trips over shoeshine man LeRoy Daniels.) Ballet fans may also want to tape one of Cyd Charisse's few purely classical ballet turns in the movies, danced to Schwartz's "Beggar's Waltz." (Cue: Immediately following a close-up of a theater poster promoting Gabrielle Gerard's appearance.) The complete movie is available on prerecorded videocassette from MGM/CBS Home Video.

• **GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES** (1953) For all its fame as Marilyn Monroe's best musical, it's the brunette who comes close to stealing the show—Jane Russell, who even gets top billing. Marilyn's performance has been definitively analyzed by Norman Mailer in another Critic's Choice article (*VR*, Feb. '82). But Jane is also a knockout—and the Russell-Monroe duets *require* video so that you can freeze-frame and rewind so as to watch Marilyn one time, Jane the next. The most tapeable numbers: (1) "We're Just Two Little Girls from Little Rock," sung by Marilyn and Jane in form-fitting, glitteringly sequined, flame-red gowns at the movie's very beginning, *before* the main titles. (2) "Ain't There Anyone Here for Love?", playfully sung by Jane as she cavorts with the men's Olympic gymnastic team. (Cue: The coach's whistle summons the team to shipboard practice as Jane talks to them about their 9:00 curfew.) (3) "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend," the ultimate in golddigging cynicism, done with just the right touch of vamping irony by Marilyn, and then recapped by Jane in a wildly camped parody of Marilyn! (Cue: As a Paris nightclub show begins, the camera pans to a huge overhead chandelier—made up of very human showgirls!) The complete movie is available on prerecorded videocassette from 20th Century-Fox Video (formerly Magnetic Video).

• **A STAR IS BORN** (1954) Judy Garland gives the performance of her life in this remake of a popular '37 Janet Gaynor movie (itself based, in turn, on a '32 Constance Bennett drama, *What Price Hollywood?*)—about the devastating personal price of Hollywood stardom. Not only is Garland at her vocal peak, with a tailor-made Harold Arlen score, but she also turns in an acting performance that makes the most of both her serious and comedic talents. James Mason is also superb as the actor on the skids whom she loves—and Moss Hart's screenplay and George Cukor's direction are far more subtly shaded than their earlier counterparts. Some 20 minutes of the picture got whopped off a few weeks after the premiere, but let's hope someday the complete version will turn up again (Warners claims the cut footage is lost or destroyed), because it has several marvelous comedy scenes that balance the unrelieved gravity of the picture's last third, plus a good musical number ("Lose That Long Face") that gives more impact to the dramatic scene that precedes it. But even in its present form, this is one of the all-time great musicals. Most tapeable: (1) "The Man That Got Away," in which Garland sings her heart out in what is arguably her single best "strictly singing" movie sequence. (Cue: Mason enters a club whose blue-lit sign says "Bleu-Bleu.") (2) "Born in a Trunk," a lengthy but brilliant musical-comedy *tour de force* that traces a singer's rise from spotlight-stealing kid to Broadway star. This sequence, incidentally, was directed by Garland's old MGM cohort, Roger Edens. (Cue: At a sneak preview, Garland takes a bow following the finale of "Swanee" and the camera comes in for a close-up.) (3) "Somewhere There's a Someone," a nifty sendup of '40s movie musicals (including some of Garland's own). (Cue: Garland, about to describe her day at the studio to Mason, puts a record on the phonograph.)

• **OKLAHOMA!** (1955) Rodgers' and Hammerstein's original Broadway musical of '43 achieved such landmark status in terms of theatrical innovation that its screen transfer in the '50s seemed to demand something as cinematically innovative—or at least super-duper. In opening up the action to the real outdoors of the story, a new big-screen process called Todd-AO

Bloodthirsts, Firewraths, Spydroths

![Phil Wiswell]

Phil Wiswell

Doomwinged Bloodthirsts, Firewraths and the Spydroth Tarantulus are among the monsters planted in your paths through Crystal Caverns, Infernal Infernos and other labyrinths you must work your way through to find 10 Rings of Power in a video game that melds medieval fantasy with home computer technology. The first game in Odyssey²'s Master Strategy Series, the Tolkien-style "The Quest for the Rings" offers adventure, action and strategy in a manner unlike any other current video game.

Rings of Power

The basic "Quest" game pits one player, as the evil Ringmaster, against two other players, acting as a team of heroes out to recapture the 10 hidden Rings of Power. But any number from one to five players can play by using some of the many variations. Among its unusual features, this video game uniquely combines a mapboard and playing tokens with microcomputer technology. All tactical action occurs on-screen while strategy is planned on the board.

The Ringmaster starts the game by placing all ring and monster markers (or tokens—but *not* Tolkiens) on any of 23 castle locations (with such names as Gorgonwyck and Angryph) shown on the board, then covering all 23 locations with castle tokens. The heroes will not know what awaits them in any particular castle. The Ringmaster's plan is to force them to visit as many castles as possible.

Once the board is set up and the video cartridge switched on, the two other players select which of four heroes they will be. The Warrior carries an enchanted sword which can wound or kill enemies. The Wizard has the power to cast demobilizing

spells on monsters, holding them at bay. The Phantom can walk through walls that others must go around. And the Changeling can become invisible at will. Thus, there are six combinations of heroes to be used in any adventure. (Heroes are maneuvered with the joysticks; monsters are computer-controlled.) Before setting off on a quest, all players must agree on the number of turns (50, 75 or 100) the heroes will have to recapture the rings.

Now the heroes choose one of 11 ports of entry around the board and advance to the first castle. The Ringmaster turns over the castle

"The Quest for the Rings": a mix of medieval fantasy and microprocessors.

token, and enters into the computer console whether there is a ring present; what, if any, special monsters lurk there; and which of four types of labyrinths the heroes will have to fight in: Dungeons, Crystal Caverns (which have invisible walls), Shifting Halls (which have moving walls) or Infernal Infernos (which have flaming red walls that snuff out a hero on contact). Each time the heroes move to a new castle they will do battle in one of these four settings against whichever monsters the Ringmaster preselected.

All four types of labyrinths contain Orcs (ugly ogres) and Firewraths (enslaved souls of the Dragon's past victims) that the heroes must defend themselves against. The Warrior's sword will kill them; the Wizard's spells will halt their advance.

In addition, the Ringmaster has three other kinds of creatures to throw your way, which make Orcs and Firewraths seem like Boy and Girl Scouts! The Spydroth Tarantulus, a spider-like creature, moves slowly from side to side, but can drop on your hero's head from above faster than you can say "Little Miss Moffet." Doomwinged Bloodthirsts move even faster. But the real threat comes from the Dragon, whose mouth can shoot a ball of flame nearly across the screen.

So dread are all these special monsters that no single hero can beat them to a ring or an escape passage. This is where the game gets fun. You have to cooperate with another hero to be successful. Heroes always show up in the middle of the screen, surrounded by a maze of walls and enemies whose touch means death. If there is a ring on the screen, the heroes must try to battle their way to it. Either hero may capture a ring simply by touching it. If there is no ring, the heroes must battle their way to an escape passage indicated by an arrow.

Wizardly Tactics

Video tactics become apparent at this point. A Warrior can slip through to a ring while a Wizard holds monsters at bay with his spells. A Phantom hiding in a wall attracts the other monsters like bugs to a lantern, giving another hero a chance to go for the ring. And it's great fun just experimenting with the different combinations of heroes to find out which ones will work best for you.

If video games are to become lasting challenges, they'll need to go in the direction "The Quest for the Rings" has pioneered. They'll need to challenge the minds as well as the wrists. □