

AUG. 1984 \$1.95 ICD08876 VOL 5 NO.5

Video Review

THE WORLD AUTHORITY: WITH HOME VIDEO

Michael Jackson's Secret Video

SPLASHY IDEAS FOR SUMMER VIDEO FUN

*Vacation-Time Guide
To Color Videocameras*

*Ray Bradbury: Video as
Nobody's Ever Seen It*

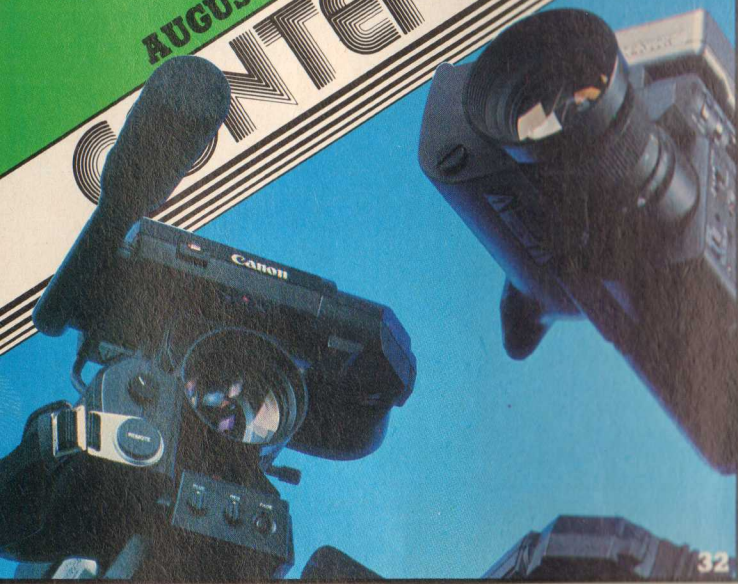
*Leonard Maltin:
Video Mermaids
Old and New*



Splash's Daryl Hannah

AUGUST 1984

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Cover Photo: Paul Jasmin Photo Insert: ©MCM.LXXXIV Touchstone Home Video

Phone-Games: Downloading Hopes Dim?

The electronic downloading of videogames into game players' homes—heralded last year as the wave of the future—has barely made a splash so far.

GameLine, a pioneer in electronic delivery of videogames via telephone lines, began selling its "Master Modern" cartridge in the Los Angeles area last August. The Modern is designed to download games into Atari VCS game modules. In January, GameLine pulled its Modems off store shelves, after selling only 3,000 of them.

"We found out that store owners weren't selling the concept of GameLine very well," says Steve Case, a marketing vice-president. "We also discovered that the 'pay-per-play' scheme didn't work."

Shifting its focus, GameLine recently signed a pact with Bell South, whereby the regional phone company will offer the GameLine modem and service to customers for a flat monthly fee

of around \$10. Case says Bell South will begin test marketing in July; a large-scale introduction of the GameLine service won't happen until at least January '85. Case adds that GameLine is now working on a modem that will plug into the Commodore and Apple computers.

A second electronic delivery

vice that used cable TV lines and a specially designed 64K home computer. The service was supposed to start up in February.

"We have not yet launched," says marketing director Jan Gildersleeve. "We ran into a delay on manufacturing of the home terminal, and we ran short of funds," she says. "But a new fi-



Disconnected: CVC's game-grabbing Master Modern.

company, Games Network of California, has also run into problems. Last year, Games Network test-marketed a downloading ser-

vice deal is in the works, and it looks like we'll launch on a limited basis in California in September." (C.S.K.)

U-WATCH: TAPE TO GO

As video continues to grow, prerecorded cassettes are turning up in the oddest places. Take your local U-Haul dealer, for example. The next time you want to rent a van, check out U-Haul's movies on tape as well. The 1,100-unit chain began stocking cassettes earlier this year, with each U-Haul outlet carrying 40 bestsellers and 40 top catalog titles.

The top catalog titles change each month as the tapes are rotated among U-Haul outlets in a designated region. And if you're lacking a VCR, U-Haul also has some of those on hand. There's a hitch, however. Each outlet carries just a single VCR and one cassette per title. So make your weekend plans early, or stop in at your favorite bookstore.

Yes, bookstore. Cassettes are beginning to crop up among the hardcovers, with Waldenbooks taking the lead. That chain now carries 75 to 100 cassette titles in its stores in four or five major metropolitan markets. (S.G.) □

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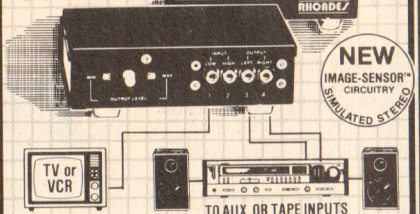
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would drop if they had a firmer grip on the market.

This year, the legislation to change the first sale doctrine was incorporated into an "omnibus" copyright bill by Rep. Robert Kastenmeier (D-WI). The bill was eventually stalled because it affected a wide range of entertainment interests and was opposed by a number of different groups.

Members of Congress, however, have virtually guaranteed that a bill of some kind, incorporating first sale legislation, will re-surface when Congress reconvenes.



Bill-maker Kastenmeier.

Gamer Back on Stick

The reports of the death of SpectraVideo Corporation have been greatly exaggerated.

In June *VR*, we incorrectly stated that SpectraVideo, a New York-based distributor of computers and videogame peripherals, was closing up shop due to financial difficulties. In fact, reports SpectraVideo president Harry Fox, the company is alive and busily restructuring itself to meet its commitments to customers and creditors.

SpectraVideo's ups and downs are a vivid illustration of the turbulent nature of the home computer business. The story begins in May '83 when SpectraVideo went public with a stock offering and raised \$6 million of capital, according to Fox. But in August, a deal for a \$15 to \$20 million line of credit from a bank fell through. "We were forced to use our own cash and to look for more funds," says Fox. "That was a real predicament, because the environment for investing in computer/game companies was getting worse. Rumors about our ill health began to spread."

In November, SpectraVideo, which up to that time had been selling Atari videogames and peripherals, began to cut back on its sales activity, because it

would have the financial resources to remain in business," says Fox. In March, a letter of intent was signed between Bondwell and SpectraVideo and a final contract is pending.

At present, SpectraVideo is selling a line of joysticks in the US,



Shaking off the specter: SpectraVideo's SV-328 computer.

lacked enough funds to import product from its Hong Kong manufacturer and partner, Bondwell Industries. In January '84, SpectraVideo went to Hong Kong to work out a proposal with Bondwell. "If Bondwell would acquire 49 percent of SpectraVideo, contingent upon a settlement with its creditors, then it would see to it that SpectraVideo

plus some Coleco-format videogames. Since November, the company has been shipping its SV 328 computer—\$199 retail price; 80K RAM—plus some supporting software titles. Future plans for the company, according to Fox, include a \$349 MSX-compatible home computer in the fall and a \$50 MSX upgrade for the SV-328. (C.S.K.) (Cont.)

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