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Latest Tape & Disc Reviews plus Equipment Test Reports



SNEAK PREVIEW: VIDEO IN 1981

12 Questions to Ask a Video Salesman Before You Buy



MORE CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS

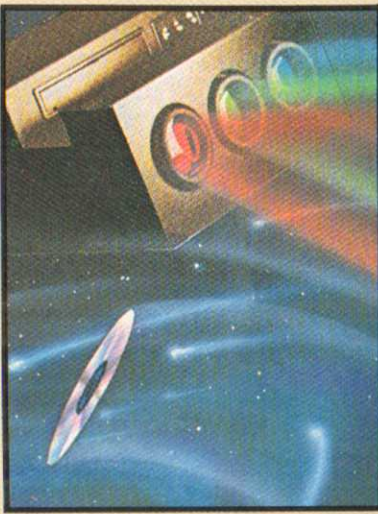
Make Your Own Video Animation



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Video Review®



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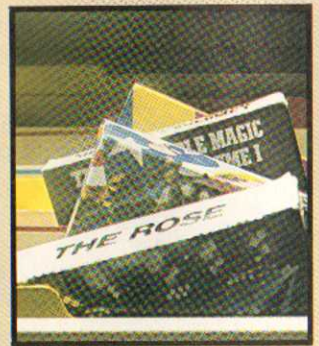
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Stocking stuffers from Santa's game shop



Phil Wiswell

I've never had much trouble finding gifts for even the hardest-to-shop-for members of my family, and it's all because of games. Everyone likes a good game—more specifically a good video game—because of its visual stimulation. As the range of video-game themes continues to expand, it's just as easy to please Grandfather with a game as little nephew Charlie.

So here are some ideas to keep in mind for this holiday season. And, remember, if the person on your list doesn't have access to a video game system, the same range of games is now becoming available as handhelds.

For Grandfather

Out of respect for age, let's begin with the older members of the family. Grandfather was the last of our family to discover that video games don't represent the downfall of Western civilization. (Grandmother says he said the same thing originally about television.) Last year I got him Checkers and Fishing Derby, both by Activision for use with Atari's VCS. He scoffed at Checkers at first, but it's a strong program and Grandfather found even his best can't match its highest level. Similar checker programs are available from other companies, but no one else has anything remotely resembling Fishing Derby. Grandfather loves to play this one with his grandchildren, telling his own fish stories in the process. Some of Grandfather's best stories concern his misspent youth leaning over a smoke-stained billiards table making impossible triple rail shots. He's always dreamed of owning his own table, but he's never had the place to keep one. So it was exciting

news when Magnavox introduced Pocket Billiards for their Odyssey² game system and Parker Brothers introduced Bank Shot, a handheld simulation of pool. It would have been a tough decision between these two games of strategy if I hadn't bought both with the idea of keeping the one I liked best! Grandfather can always borrow it.

For Grandmother

For Grandmother, great sport is a round or two of croquet. Since no one manufactures video croquet (yet), I settled on introducing her to video gaming with Miniature Golf, a game of patience and judgment (Grandmother's fortes). Within two weeks she was shooting under par and boasting of birdies. And since Grandmother likes to do things by intuition, last year I gave her some of the casino gambling games. Among Roulette, Craps, Black Jack and Slot Machine, the last is by far her favorite. During the first week she pulled the lever so many times that the hand controller broke! Too bad we couldn't pay the repair bill with some of the \$37,000 she'd "won" in one night.

An unusual cartridge I've been dying to get her is Pachinko by Magnavox. It's a TV version of the extremely popular Japanese arcade game, a unique attraction for those who like to juggle balls on the screen. But I've already gotten her an electronic juggling game for this Christmas. Handheld, no larger than a credit card, and requiring no television, it's called Toss-Up and comes from Mego. I couldn't wait 'til Christmas to give it to her—and its slight beeping sounds can be heard outside the bathroom door, forcing us to remind Grandmother that others are waiting in the hall!

For Mom and Dad

Mom and Dad were the easiest to shop for again this year. They're an active couple, play golf and tennis, ski a lot, belong to a bowling league and occasionally scare up a

game of volleyball. In the past I've gotten them video cartridges for all these sports except tennis. This year Tomytronic Tennis, a handheld game with a convincing fluorescent display, will fill that gap.

For the Cousins

For players like my cousins, video games mean Space Invaders or Spacewar. The factors they like in their play are fast, furious and deadly. They have every invader-type variation on the market. They wear Space Invaders T-shirts and have similar posters on their bedroom walls. What's left to get them? Spacesuits and helmets?

For Nieces and Nephews

For my young nephews and nieces, selection is limited by the sophistication required on even the lowest skill-level of most video games. Hangman, Fishing Derby, Fun With Numbers, Adventure and Superman have worked for me. (Guess the name of their favorite uncle.) And Split Second, new last year from Parker Brothers, is perhaps the most wonderful electronic game of dexterity and reflex that a youngster could hope to get his or her little mitts on. The computer generates the action of eight different games, adjusting the complexity to the player automatically throughout the game. As you get better at Speedball, the ball gets harder to catch. But if you're having a hard time, the computer slows the ball down to a crawl and eventually stops it entirely. This is unique among games.

And...For Me

Well, family, that's about it. You now know what I'm getting for you. But do you know what I'd like? Here are a few of my favorites: Baseball, Circus Atari, Human Cannonball, Sky Diver, Soccer, Auto Race, Sub Chase, Pinball, Gunfight, Lunar Lander, Basketball, Football, Surround, Hockey. That's enough for this year. □