

Video Review

Latest Tape & Disc Reviews plus Equipment Test Reports

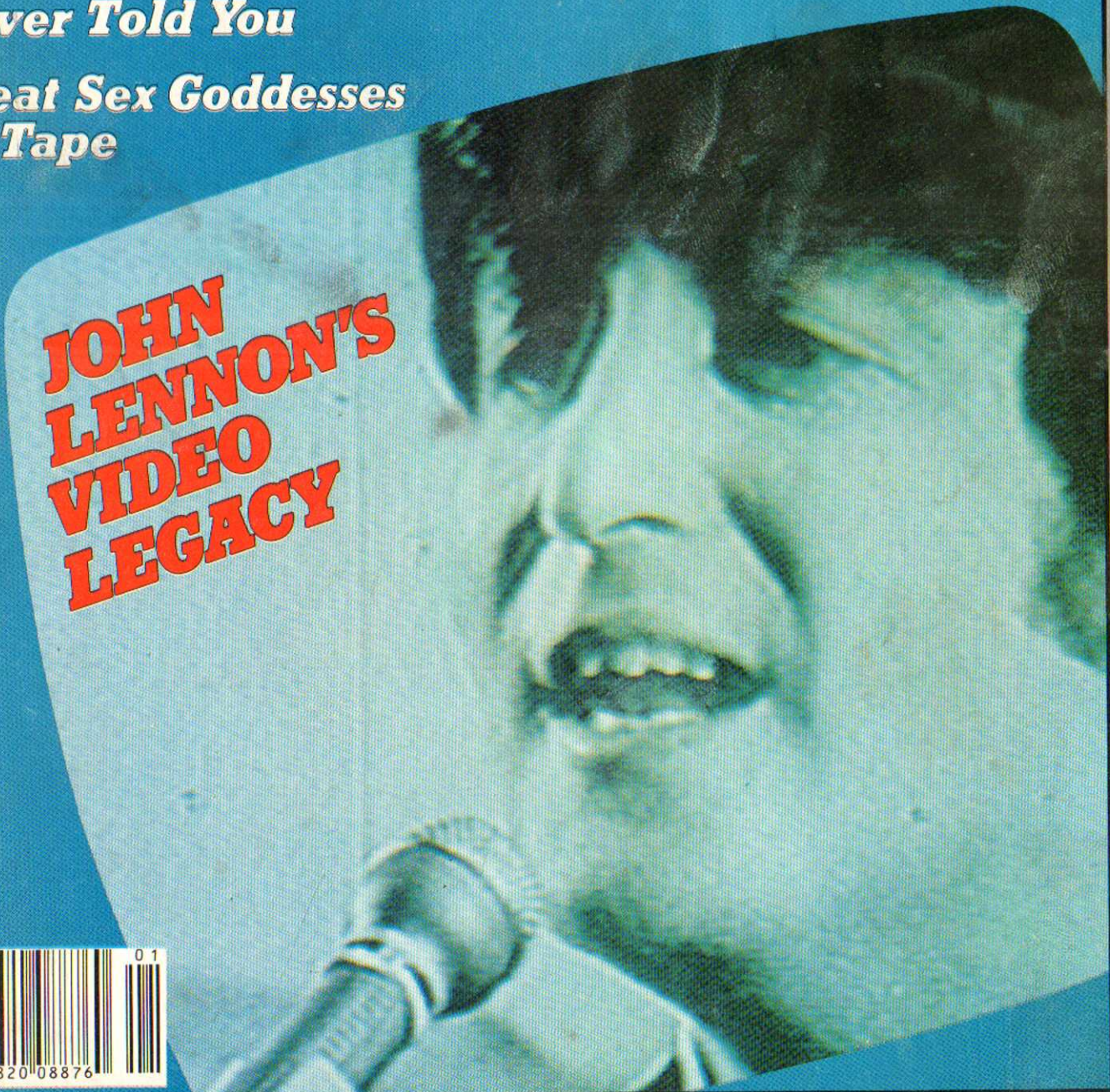
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THE WORLD AUTHORITY ON HOME VIDEO

10 Things Your Owner's Manual Never Told You

Great Sex Goddesses on Tape

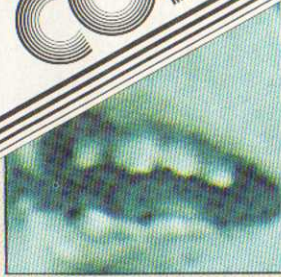
JOHN LENNON'S VIDEO LEGACY



FEBRUARY 1981

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Cover photo: Steve Eisenberg

TV with an IQ: Mattel's Intellivision



Phil Wiswell

What do you get when you combine the words Intelligent and Television? The simple answer from Mattel Electronics and Sylvania: Intellivision, a video game system. Intellivision comes in

two parts—the Master Component for video game cartridges and the Keyboard Component for computer programs. This month's column is devoted to the master Component (you can expect a report on the keyboard section when it becomes available).

The Master Component will connect to any TV set, but black-and-white is not recommended since the ability to distinguish colors is a large part of many games. It is packed with the Las Vegas Poker and Blackjack game cartridge, and sells for about \$300—causing some to comment that Intellivision

is the rich man's game machine. That may be. But remember, this system can be turned into a home computer by adding the keyboard, while Atari's and Magnavox's cannot. Also, Mattel has provided the best graphics you'll find on a home-video game system.

No Joystick

The machine you'll get for \$300 is small, stylish and a well-thought-out 16-bit microprocessor. The hand controllers have 12 key positions, and plastic overlays are used with each game. The overlay method for directing players to the right buttons helps them play without constant reference to the rule book. Fire buttons are on both

sides of the controllers for the convenience of left-handed players, and a 16-direction rotating disc replaces the traditional joystick for movement, though this takes some getting used to. The controllers have retractable cords, a unique feature, for neat storage when the game is not in use.

Sports Cartridges

Currently, Mattel has 19 cartridges on the market, ten of which are sports-oriented (and most of these are licensed by professional sports agencies). The four most exciting are Space Battle, Armor Bat-

alien ships drift, bank, and dive out of range. With your target sight, you aim at the ships and fire your lasers, careful not to be hit by alien fire. The alien ships actually appear on the screen in perspective to how far away your ship is, and sometimes they zoom directly at you, growing larger as they close range.

Once you have wiped out an alien squadron (or get wiped out yourself!), the screen returns to radar range and you pick another target to go after. The game is basically for one player, though the rule book says two players can

play, one aiming and the other firing. No matter which way you play, Space Battle is as much fun as Space Invaders. That's my highest recommendation.

Another good strategic battle game is Armor Battle. Each of two players gets two tanks to fight the other, but what's nice is that terrain (buildings, roads, water, woods, etc.) has an affect on movement and firing.



Intellivision: topnotch graphics and computer capability.

tle, Major League Baseball and NBA Basketball.

Graphically, Space Battle is one of the best games Mattel has developed. It consists of two stages: radar and combat. Beginning the game on your radar screen, you see five clusters of alien ships or squadrons which you must eliminate in order to win (and you can play at four different speeds). Figuring speed and distance, you must go after the squadron that's closing in on your Mother Ship fastest. You can send one, two, or three of your own squadrons out to gun down the aliens. Once you are within their combat range, the screen switches automatically to a background of stars through which

Tanks move fastest down roads, slowest in water, and have the ability to lay invisible mines. In some tank battle games, boredom sets in after players memorize the scenes. But Armor Battle has 240 possible terrain maps!

Not for Singles

As great as these games are, however, most of Mattel's games require more than one player. Only one of the four games I mentioned above can be played without an opponent—and in my own case, one's not always available. So if you want a system to entertain you singly, you may be disappointed with Intellivision. That is my only hard criticism of the system. □