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Video Review®

INCORPORATING HOME VIDEO MAGAZINE

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THE WORLD AUTHORITY ON HOME VIDEO

TOP KIDS' STUFF

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS COME OF AGE

CBS Labs Test New Blank Beta Videocassettes

Make Your Own Video Telephone System!

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FEBRUARY 1984

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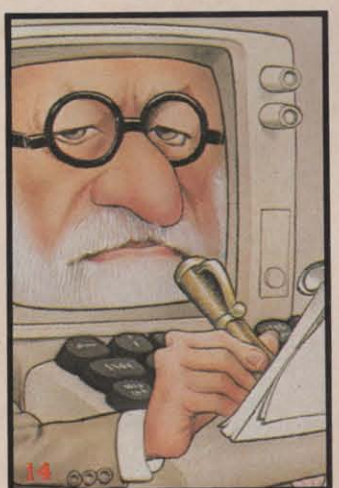

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DBS STARTS DISHING OUT SHOWS

Straight from outer space, the newest rage in video programming is DBS, the high-tech technique of sending satellite signals directly to the home, care of small, low-cost direct-broadcast-satellite dishes. Even HBO wants to get into the act, possibly in an alliance with Turner Broadcasting's Cable News Network.

Granted, it's mostly talk—nothing much is going to happen in a big way for several years—but significant action is already under way.

Where? For now, Indianapolis, the location of the start of United Satellite Communications' proposed national service. Residents ready to stick little (three-foot) DBS dishes on their roofs are already receiving three channels of movies and sports and two consisting of a mix of wire-service news, a program guide and video music shorts.

Anyone interested can call (800) 225-USCI for information and a sales pitch. When we called, the rep said USCI was beginning to spread to Illinois, Michigan and Ohio, with more territories being added all the time.

So watch the skies: That DBS bird may be coming into view. (S.G.)□

Beta VCR Format: A Boom or Bust?

By Robert Gerson

NEW YORK—Is the Beta VCR format booming or on the brink of going bust?

Up on the roof: DBS makes its debut in Indianapolis.

Prompting some speculation that Beta is on the brink are reports at presstime that Zenith is about to add VHS VCRs to its line, and become the only major brand besides Sears to offer both Beta and VHS models. While Zenith has declined comment, it's widely understood that the company will have one home and one portable VHS model in the stores some time around February.

Meanwhile, another Beta brand, Toshiba, has announced it will start production of VHS recorders at its color-TV plant in England for sale in Europe. Significantly, however, Toshiba stresses that it will continue to offer only Beta VCRs in the US and Japan, noting that three times as many people bought Toshiba Beta recorders in '83 than in '82.

Bolstering the signs of a Beta boom, Sony says it's doing better than ever with Beta and that it expects the situation to improve even further. Helping strengthen Beta, Sony says, are its lead in super stereo-sound VCRs and one-piece camcorders. Sony and other Beta companies have had Beta Hi-Fi VCRs in the stores since last fall, while shipments of VHS Hi-Fi models hadn't yet begun at presstime. Sony's BetaMovie was introduced in November, and it is being joined by similar products from NEC, Sanyo and Toshiba. The first VHS Video Movie portables are not expected until late this summer, at the earliest.□

'Universal' MSX: Japan Only

By Carl S. Kaplan

Computer promises, promises. Last June, when it made its debut in New York, MSX—a home computer standard developed by Microsoft—set forth the promise of "universal," one-size-fits-all software in America. Today, that promise promises to go unrequited.

SpectraVideo computer: America's own—and only—MSX.

MSX is a tag name for a kind of computer that uses a Microsoft-dictated configuration of sound and visual processing. Since its introduction last summer, 15 Japanese electronics companies have agreed to back the MSX format with equipment.

Recently, JVC, Sanyo, Sharp, Matsushita and Yamaha took the wraps off MSX home computers, each set to retail in the $250 range. Yet, so far, no Japanese manufacturer has announced plans to distribute MSX computers in the US.

The Japanese companies seem content to confine MSX to Japan, almost virgin territory for videogames.

SpectraVideo, a New York-based company and Microsoft licensee, appears to be the only manufacturer that will offer MSX hardware in the US next year—a $299 computer called the Model 328.

Software for the MSX computer is not available directly from the manufacturer in the US, concedes SpectraVideo executive Steve Weinstein. It has to be imported from Hong Kong. Last June at the MSX christening, four third-party software publishers in the US—Microsoft, Spinnaker, Sierra On-Line and Sirius—went on the record as having an interest in making MSX software. At present, though, not one has jumped on the proverbial bandwagon; these companies will make MSX software on a contract basis only. Clearly, a sense of caution best characterizes the feelings of US third-party software companies toward MSX. If a mountain of top-quality software is what it takes to establish a new computer format, then MSX, at least as far as the US is concerned, is a format in search of a constituency.□

TIME KOs TELETEST

By Gary Arlen

After blowing about $25 million to develop and test a cable-satellite teletext service, Time has abandoned its teletext activity. The publishing giant's two-year test in Orlando and San Diego was plagued by technical and usage problems. So Time decided that the near-term prospects for a full-channel text service, available for a small extra fee to cable subscribers, aren't promising enough.□

THE COLLECTOR RARE

By Phil Wiswell

Anyone who's been spending $30 to $40 apiece on game cartridges and now goes into stores and sees the same ones discounted to $5 or $10 probably wants to swear off new games forever. But a few smart and lucky people will get their money back on those carts. Not this week—or year—but in 10 or 20 years, some of those games will be rare collector's items worth two to three (or more) times their original price.

The trick is to know which ones to save. Predicting what will appeal to collectors in the future is close to impossible. But by applying many of the same principles that have proven trustworthy for collectors of other items, from coins to cars, we can determine that the games listed here will undoubtedly have value to 21st century collectors.

What makes a game rare and collectible? The first principle to apply is a basic one: The value of just about anything rises as its availability declines. So with some games going out of print and others already difficult to find, certain game carts are now becoming collectible for their historical value. But, as we'll see, not every out-of-print cart will be a jackpot. It needs to be a classic or hard to find—and if it's both, it could be worth a tidy bundle.

The second factor to keep in mind is the designer. Some—such as Ed Averett, David Crane, Rob Fulop, Al Miller, Bob Ogden and Warren Robinet—have become legends in the industry, and their games are likely to appreciate in value as time passes. Look for cartridges that are unique in some way, either with flukes that take advantage of the special features of the game system or represent ground-breaking design. *Adventure*, for example, was the first such game for the VCS; *Incredible Wizard* for the Astrocade used every bit of sound and graphic capability built into that system.

Also, games with a slim production run are good bets, not to mention those that were forced off the market by lawsuits or public uproar. Finally, such classic hits as *Space Invaders* and *Pac-Man* are obvious collectibles, though the enormous number of these carts in circulation may diminish their value.

So don't give that old cart to the neighborhood Dr. Destructo until you've checked it against the following list and examined it for similar features.

SECRET MESSAGES AND BUGS

Strangely enough, some games, particularly some early ones, contain secret, hidden messages from the designer. These messages, as well as significant programming errors that went undetected by the company, will likely increase the value of a game as it takes its place in the history of the industry. And if you've been a consistent buyer of games, one of these programs could be in your possession already.

MISSILE COMMAND was published by Atari for its VCS in 1980 and was an immediate smash hit. In its four years of existence, hundreds of thousands of copies have been sold—but only several hundred, perhaps a thousand, of these are collectibles. In the early days, you see, Atari gave no credit on its packaging to the game designers. This bothered Rob Fulop, designer of *Missile Command*, so in search of some recognition and as a joke on Atari and himself, Fulop hid his initials in the program. These "signed" editions are rare and will be worth plenty, because somewhere along the line, Atari found out and removed the initials. Here's how to find out if a cart is one of the valuable copies: Reset the game to play variation 13, then do nothing. If you score no points on a collectible *Missile Command*, the letters RF will appear on-screen.

ADVENTURE was another early VCS cartridge in which the designer sought fame as well as fortune—and succeeded. This rather crude looking maze adventure has become a classic on its own, but its designer, Warren Robinet, helped it take an even larger place in videogame history by fooling Atari until it was too late. Cartridges with his secret message went on sale, and there was no recalling them.

News spread by word of mouth after some intrepid adventurer stumbled across the words "Created by Warren Robinet" written vertically in the center of the screen. Robinet made the process for getting to the secret message so complicated that it's far too long to reprint here, but the information is available in a few videogame books.

DECATHLON, one of Activision's newest VCS cartridges, features a sit-down version of the grueling 10-part Olympic event. You may wonder how a game released only a year ago could be collectible. Well, it seems the first cartridges produced contain a bug, or program error, that neither the play-testers nor David Crane, designer of this and many other videogames, were able to find.

In the pole vault event, the player must wiggle the joystick back and forth to get the vaulter up to running speed, then press the action button once to plant the pole in the box and a second time to release the pole and clear the bar. A third press of the button at the proper time will cause the vaulter to leap into the spectator stands—adding 12,000 points (enough to win) to that player's score! *Only* if your cartridge contains this flaw should you consider it truly collectible.

OUT OF PRINT

This is the largest category of collectibles because the harder it is to find a game, the more valuable it's likely to become. Games that have already gone out of print will only become harder to find over the next few years, but not every game that goes out of print will appreciate in value. The better the game, the better its chances. So look for games that have received critical acclaim before buying out the $4.95 discount bins.

Videogames aren't antiques—yet. But a few of the carts on nearly every game addict's shelf may be worth a lot of money. Some classic and hard-to-find games are already valuable collectibles.

Photo: Aaron Rezney Stylist: Linda Peacock Coins: Harmer Rooke Numismatist, LTD. Butterflies: Collector's Cabinet Lalique Crystal Vase: Cardel, LTD.

SURROUND is one of very few of Atari's own VCS cartridges to be discontinued, despite the fact that the game was considered very good in its heyday (the late '70s). Atari just didn't think people would still buy it. *Surround* was one of Al Miller's first VCS game efforts—he has since done *Checkers, Tennis, Ice Hockey, Starmaster* and *Robot Tank*, all for Activision. The fact that Miller programmed *Surround* while working for Atari makes it that much more special.

The game is an interesting fast-action contest for two players, and doesn't quickly lose its appeal. That it's both out of print and a good game mean copies will be worth something in 20 years. If you have a copy, save it; if not, there's a slim chance you can get it from a mail order house or in one of the discount bins, but not for too much longer.

K.C. MUNCHKIN for the Odyssey² was also pulled off the market, but not for marketing reasons. *K.C. Munchkin*

S HANDBOOK TO VALUABLE AND VIDEOGAMES

was withdrawn grudgingly by NAP after a landmark legal battle over the game was lost to Atari. Atari claimed that *K.C. Munchkin* was a copy of *Pac-Man,* which Atari had under exclusive license for the home market. In fact, the game is like *Pac-Man,* but it seems no more a copy of *Pac-Man* than *Apple Panic* is of *Space Panic.*

K.C. Munchkin had incredible sales for the month or so it was on the market before Atari got the court to issue an injunction against further sales of the cartridge. No exact figure is available as to how many *K.C. Munchkins* escaped to the public, but it was certainly not enough to satisfy owners of the system. If you have a copy, don't let go. And the icing on the cake: It's really a good game.

THE INCREDIBLE WIZARD is, quite simply, the best game ever released for the now defunct Astrocade game system. The system itself was ahead of its time, but, for one reason or another, the company wasn't able to convince game-system buyers that that was the case.

The Incredible Wizard is one of the very last games to be published before Astrocade filed for bankruptcy. The sound effects and graphics are superb, and the game play is phenomenally close to that of the original coin-op. It turns out that Bob Ogden, who designed the coin-op *Wizard of Wor*, also designed the home cartridge for Astrocade. If nothing else, that will secure this cartridge a place among the collectibles, because Bob Ogden is such a respected designer.

GLADIATOR is a wonderful cartridge that came and went almost without notice, and is very difficult to find. But for serious collectors, that just adds flavor to the hunt—and this game is worth the hunt. It was for a system called Videobrain, which was developed in the mid-'70s, just before Atari released the VCS. It's fair to say that Videobrain was lightyears ahead of its time—more like today's home computers than other videogame systems. But no one knew how to sell that 10 years ago, so the system disappeared as quickly as it appeared.

A few games were published for the system, and *Gladiator* was one of the best. It is basically *Outlaw* dressed up with 383 scenarios. A fine game and a fine system that even museums will have a hard time locating.

JOURNEY/ESCAPE was the next to last game published for the VCS by Data Age before that company filed for bankruptcy last year—a shame, because the company's game designs were just beginning to improve. Compared to other Data Age games, *Journey/Escape* and *Frankenstein's Monster* were the cream of the crop. *Journey/Escape,* licensed and developed in conjunction with Journey, the popular rock 'n' roll band, was the first tie-in of videogames and popular music. It also has the distinction of being the only home game design ever licensed for conversion to a coin-op machine.

SPACE CAVERN was published by Games by Apollo, a Dallas, Texas-based software company that went the way of Data Age in the same twelve-month period. The company produced half a dozen VCS titles, but only *Space Cavern* stood out as an original challenge that wasn't bad to look at either.

TOWERING INFERNO is arguably the best game from another defunct company, US Games Corporation. *Towering Inferno* was one of the company's earliest products. It's a maze game in which the character must fight the fire in the skyscraper and rescue people from each floor—a very humane objective as videogames go. Not a bad game, if you can still find it.

IN QUESTIONABLE TASTE

The third category of collectible games are those done with what some critics have called poor taste. These "adult" games feature sexual or extremely violent themes that may strike people as silly or innocent in 10 or 20 years, at which time the following games might become quite valuable considering their limited production runs.

X-MAN, from Universal Gamex Corporation, was the first adult party game. With its ridiculous blend of mazes and sex, it generally caused people to laugh the first time they saw it and ignore it thereafter. At $50, few people bought this game, which is reason to believe it has potential for the collector.

CUSTER'S REVENGE caused the most public uproar, for here the so-called hero apparently rapes an American Indian woman whose hands are tied behind her back to a post. The company heard from women's groups, American Indians and politicians demanding the game be removed from the market. Meanwhile, it apparently died a quiet death all by itself, probably because the game is not particularly good and gets boring very quickly. If you're seeking to collect the unusual, however, this is it.

FIRE! surfaced from a small company called Palmtex. The game went a bit too far thematically, it seems. Its object: Maneuver your character into a building to pour kerosene, ignite it and get out before the blazing building collapses. As one NY legislator put it, "Arson isn't something we should be teaching anyone to play." Indeed, the game was snuffed out early, and copies of it are as rare as any trace of the company that made them.

TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE, from a software company called Wizard, is another grotesquely themed game for the VCS. Licensed from the horror movie of the same name, it puts your character in charge of a chainsaw with which he carves innocent humans into bloody totem poles for points. It's hard to stomach this game, not because the graphics are sensational (they're not), but because there's very little fun involved. It's safe to say that there's no other game like *Texas Chainsaw Massacre,* and that makes it a sure bet as a collectible.

HOW TO START YOUR COLLECTION

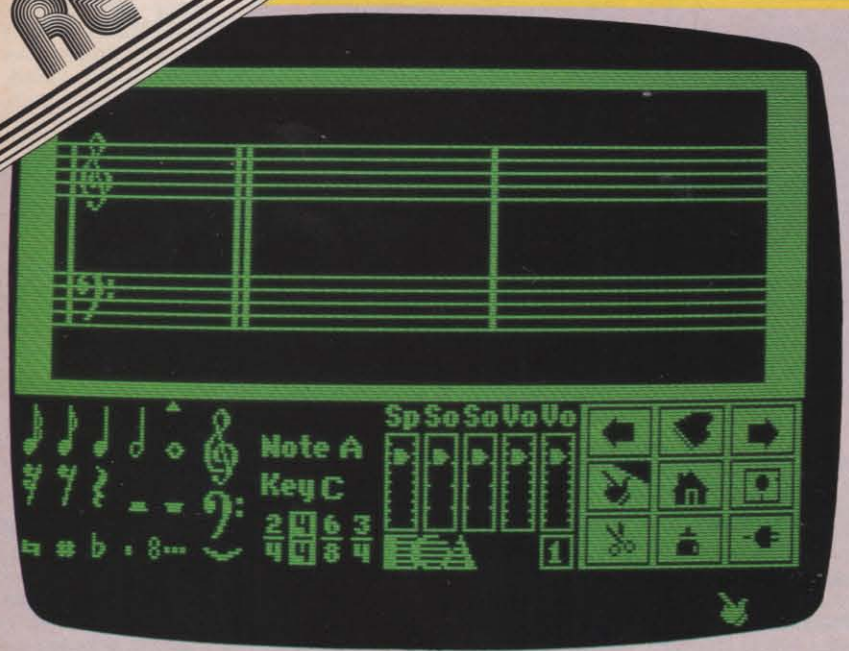
If you really want to start collecting videogame cartridges that have a good chance of becoming valuable over the years, you'll need sources for the games. Begin by subscribing to newsletters, magazines, articles, the works. The smaller the publication, the more likely it is to contain classified advertising for trading, selling and buying used game cartridges. And remember: Most people buy this way to play, not to collect, so don't tip your hand by offering too much or being too eager.

If you can't get the games you want through those sources, you might try taking out a small ad in your local newspaper. Check every store in your area that carries videogames and watch for close-outs and specials.

A number of services have sprung to life offering exchanges of used videogames either through a store or among club members. Some of the clubs cost money to join; others are simply mail-order houses. You'll find advertisements for these services in many publications. Good luck and happy collecting. □

COMPUTER SOFTWARE REVIEWS

Mario, music, space and Subrock



Music Construction Kit: *worth noting, but not watching.*

Activity

MUSIC CONSTRUCTION SET★★★
***Designed by Will Harvey.* (Electronic Arts, disc for Apple II/II+/IIe. $40)**

By Van Dyke Parks

America is girding its loins for the undeniable importance of developments such as this—products that personalize both music composition and the process of understanding how music is built. The *Music Construction Set* allows you to compose, transpose and play back music without the aid of an instrument in your home. All you need is a computer.

Moving a small pointing hand around the screen (with a joystick or keyboard) allows you to insert notes, chords, rests, sharps, flats and any number of other musical notations into two staffs (for both treble and bass parts). You can transpose keys, change tempos, "cut and paste" measures that repeat later in the song, print out your compositions and generally have a fine time listening to the music you've written (or listening to some classics that come with the disc). Be forewarned, however, that because of the Apple computer's audio limitations, you'll have to shell out another $75 or so for a Mockingboard add-on, in order to hear stereo multi-voice harmony. (The Mockingboard is made by Sweet Micro, 50 Freeway Drive, Cranston, RI 02910.)

But the software is not without its faults. For example, you can watch the notation scroll by when a selection is playing. But the notes fly by much too quickly, even at the slower tempos. One only hazards to think what the problem of reading this music would be, given the velocity, in the case of the *Flight of the Bumblebee* by Rimsky-Korsakov (which is included with the disc). I choose not to look at the *Flight of the Bumblebee*, because I don't want to suffer any photostrobic damage. And we wonder what the effect on the optic nerve might be, from such a quagmire of notation.

My biggest objection, however, is that all notes played at the same time must be of equal value. This presents a problem, which can be worked around and necessitates an abnormal standard of notation.

So I wouldn't recommend the *Music Construction Set* for professionals. But there are three large groups that would appreciate it, including musicians (or would-be musicians) with no other means (such as a piano) for the realization of their work. Also, if you are interested in advancing from baroque to Scriabin in understanding harmony, this may be of great benefit. And finally, it can be a musically educative diversion, and, more importantly perhaps, an introduction for a musical child into the possibilities that lie beyond, in computer music language. □

RATINGS
★★★★ OUTSTANDING
★★★ GOOD
★★ AVERAGE
★ BELOW AVERAGE

Arranger, composer and longtime cult hero Van Dyke Parks' latest album, Jump, *will be released to coincide with his first national tour, this spring.*

Games

MARIO BROS.★★★
***Designer uncredited.* (Atari, cartridges for Atari VCS and 5200. $30.45 VCS, $40.95 5200)**

By Craig Kubey

What you think of this game is a matter of taste. If you have bad taste, you'll like it.

I'm giving this game three stars. This is only because I'm trying to be objective. Personally, I prefer space games—*Asteroids*, *Defender*, etc. But if you're one of those people who like such games as *Donkey Kong* and *Dig Dug*, you would probably give this game three stars.

You are represented on the screen by Mario, the tiny Italian carpenter first seen in *Donkey Kong*. (If you're in the two-player mode, one player is represented by Luigi, Mario's brother; his profession is unstated.) Mario is confronted with a series of horizontal bars called "floors." Crawling or hopping about on the "floors" are three kinds of "pests" (turtles, crabs and flies), fireballs and, on higher levels, a gentleman named Slipice, who can coat floors with—guess what—slippery ice.

Mario's mission is to locate himself directly below a pest (which is on the floor above), then jump up, striking his head against the level above him. This flips a pest onto its back. Then Mario must take a running leap onto the higher floor and run into the pest, kicking it into oblivion and scoring points. Working hard to set a new standard for incoherence, the game also has wafers spewing out of pipes and occasionally presents coins that come from who knows where (Citibank?).

Possibly the greatest value of this game is to demonstrate the dramatic differences in quality between games for the VCS and those for the 5200. The 5200 game is as different from the VCS version as the NFL is from high school football. The 5200 game is much more similar to the arcade original, its objects are much more precisely depicted,

its audio is superior, and it allows the player to maneuver Mario with much greater precision.

Though the coin-op *Mario Bros.* did make it into *Play Meter*'s top 10 in arcade income per week, its sales were sufficiently disappointing that Nintendo conducted a nationally-advertised sale. I guess videogamers have a little taste after all. □

SPACE SHUTTLE★★★
***Designed by Steve Kitchen.* (Activision, cartridge for Atari VCS. $34.95)**

By Dr. Edward Gibson

Space Shuttle is different from any other videogame cartridge I've seen. Not just another game, this is actually a space simulation. You're the commander on a complete space mission. Viewing out of your orbiter window (with a variety of displays below the window), you must launch off Earth, stabilize orbit, dock (with what looks like my old Skylab!), then safely re-enter the atmosphere and land at Edwards Air Force Base. Each of these phases requires reflex and skill, as you control speed, pitch, yaw and many other factors that occur in real space flights. Considering the limited memory in the VCS system, *Space Shuttle* captures the spirit of a real space flight simulator.

There are a multitude of technical adjustments to make during your mission, so an overlay (included with the cartridge) converts your console into a "flight deck instrument panel," which uses the various VCS switches for a number of different functions. My Skylab Mission in 1973 included three on-board astronauts; this simulation makes a good two-person exercise, with one working the joystick and console, while the partner refers to the flight manual.

Space Shuttle is more a series of specific tasks than a free-wheeling instinctive game. But if you're up for a challenging mission on your VCS, this cart is the best of its kind.

More than any other VCS game, *Space Shuttle* is educational—it makes you think about what really goes on in space. When you start to perform on it, you'll ask "Why does it work that way?" And once you ask "why," you're on your way to learning. □

Dr. Gibson was the science pilot aboard Skylab IV.

SUBROC★★★
***Designer uncredited.* (Coleco, cartridge for ColecoVision and Adam. $30 approx.)**

By Mark Trost

Although one of the most colorful shoot-'em-ups ever delivered to the home screen, *Subroc* is certainly not among the most original. Similar first-person game scenarios—in which you see out of a cockpit rather than controlling an on-screen ship—have already been offered by virtually every major game company. Nonetheless, *Subroc* does offer good animation, sound and graphics.

As the unnamed defender of an unnamed planet (let's assume it's Earth), you pilot a combination submarine/rocket attempting to rid the air and seaways of alien craft. Every UFO (Unidentified Flying *and* Floating Object) imaginable is after you, including blue flying saucers, white battleships, purple fighters, green intercepters and a black command ship with deflector shield. Flying mines, missiles and torpedoes attack you by day, night and even twilight.

On your side is an inexhaustible reserve of torpedoes (when operating at the lowest altitude) and missiles (when engaged at higher elevations). Depending on the skill level, you have three or four vessels per game to down all the air and seacraft before moving on to a faster round.

For each ship downed, you earn between 150 and 400 points. Surprisingly, advancing enemy torpedoes, missiles and mines—the only true threats to your ships' existence—carry no point value. It's a fair trade-off, though, since they can be shot down up to four or five seconds after initial sighting. If you complete the round, you earn additional points: 100 times the number of ships downed. Mystery bonuses abound and are needed, if you are to reach the score of 20,000 and win another ship. Additional ships are earned at the 100,000 plateau and every 100,000 thereafter.

As with most Coleco games, the home adaptation compares favorably to the arcade, although the animation is less fluid than usual, and it was easy to clear the sea lanes with a few well-timed torpedoes. There is a challenge here, however, particularly at the advanced skill levels where enemy craft move quickly, requiring you to think ahead of your adversaries.

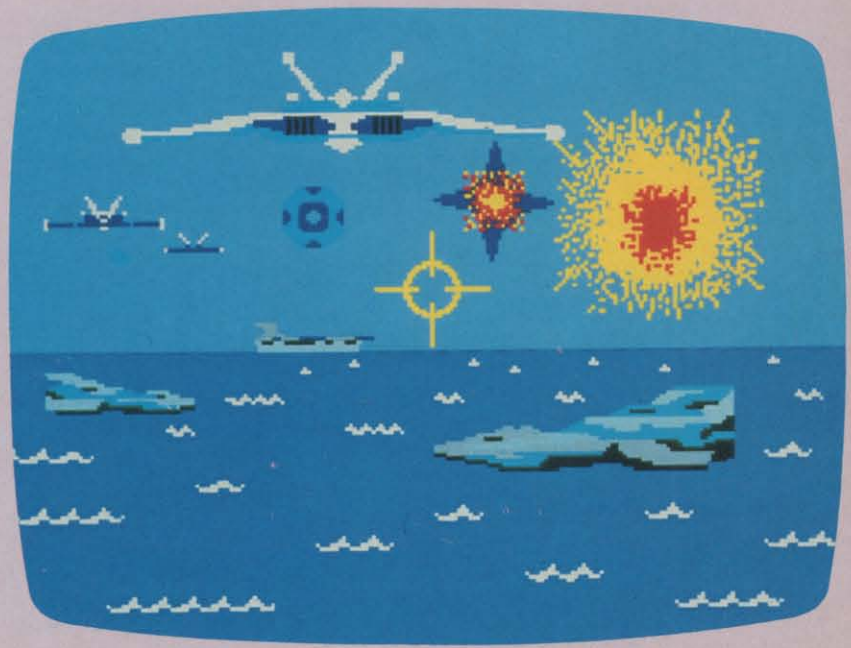
While not *the* definitive space action game, those dedicated to such "twitch" cartridges should add this to their libraries of video psychomotor disturbances. □

OMEGA RACE★★
***Designer uncredited.* (Coleco, cartridge for ColecoVision. $30 approx.)**
OMEGA RACE
***Designer uncredited.* (CBS, 8K cartridge for Atari VCS. $30 approx.)**

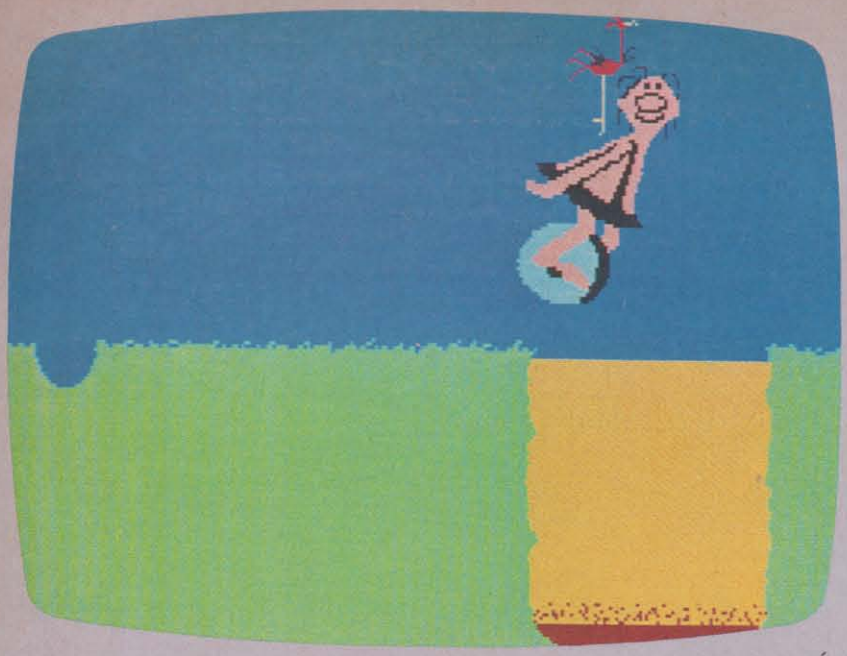
By Len Albin

Old arcade games never die—they just get recycled into home software. And if you're one of the relatively few earthlings who never burned out on the arcade mediocrity *Omega Race*, here are two new home versions competing for your cartridge dollar. In this race, however, the ColecoVision version is the clear winner—a passable rendering of a mildly stimulating game. The CBS version, though, is a colossal turkey. In fact, that may be too kind. There's no excuse for a game this bad, even though it's designed for the relatively inferior 2600 system. Its awfulness can hardly be measured within the known galaxy. Let's just say I'd rather watch "snow."

In the Coleco *Omega Race*, at least you have a sense that some intelligent life forms were at work designing it. The task for the player is to obliterate a half-dozen Omegan alien vessels with a laser-firing rocket ship—and so on, every wave. The nice quirk in the game is that this Armageddon doesn't take place in the void of space, but in a type of outer space with a rectangular obstacle in the middle of it. This is why *Omega Race* always reminded arcade buffs of a day at the local race-track. The enemy proceeds around the "infield" either clockwise or counter-clockwise, and the player's ship has the option of meeting the enemy head-on at



Subroc: *a sub-definitive but super-twitch game.*



Quest for Tires: *more than the damsel's in distress.*

the front of the pack or "sneaking up" behind them, at the back of the pack. Of course, all these features are copied in the Coleco version, and your ship still has the ability of *bouncing off* the edge of space (as opposed to *appearing on the other side* of space, as in *Asteroids*). The Coleco cartridge also includes sharp graphics and entertaining musical interludes.

The most significant difference between the arcade and home versions is that your ship's maneuverability, using the Coleco "roller controller," isn't quite as nimble as you may remember from the shopping mall. But Coleco has compensated by adding four "Skill Options" and, as cake-frosting, three "Play Options." All told, however, the classic *Omega Race* mode is still the best—and the traditional strategy applies. Sneak up behind them, and remember that a bullet is still deadly even when the vessel that fired it is destroyed.

As for the CBS *Omega Race* cartridge—beware! (I think my Sony Trinitron suffered emotional harm when I soiled its pixels with the video garbage from this cartridge.) It fails on every level. First of all, it's ugly; not only are the Omegan vessels stick-figures, but when they start blinking you can hardly see them as targets. Second, the CBS version is impossibly hard. You need a "booster-grip" on your Atari joystick—and that makes maneuvering very tricky. Meanwhile, you get less space for your rocket to maneuver in, your ship only fires two shots per volley (Coleco's shoots three), and there are *seven* (not six) alien vessels per round. Finally, the sound effects are repulsive. These whines and explosions sound as if they were composed by one of L.A.'s worst punk rock bands.

So, if you must slay Omegans, do it on the Coleco. The CBS cartridge is deadlier than the aliens that inhabit it. □

B.C.'S QUEST FOR TIRES★★
***Designed by Sydney Development Corp.* (Sierra On-Line, disc for Atari 400/800. $34.95)**

By Michael Blanchet

The purpose of licensing for videogames has always escaped me, but in this case it finally makes some sense. Cartoon characters, unlike their cinema counterparts, lend themselves well to recreation on the videogame screen. Thematically and visually, B.C. has made the jump intact.

My suspicion is that the game's title is a deliberate pun on a recent, forgettable movie about the day-to-day activities of Stone Age folks. Something along the lines of *B.C.'s Quest for Cute Chick* would have been more appropriate since the object of the game is for B.C. to rescue this elusive female from the clutches of the dinosaur. Between them lies a surprisingly diverse obstacle course bristling with hazards and pitfalls. The animation is top-notch, but it cannot cover the *Donkey Kong* overtones of the game play. The last thing the world, and gamers in particular, need is another damsel in distress. If nothing else, though, *Quest for Tires* is nice to look at. □

POPEYE★★★★
***Designer uncredited.* (Parker Brothers, cartridges for ColecoVision, Atari 400/800/1200XL. $30 ColecoVision, $40 400/800/1200XL)**

By Dan Gutman

You get the feeling that most computer games adapted from other media are strained—merely attempts to cash in on a familiar title. But *Popeye* fits perfectly as a post-*Pac-Man* game. You're an insignificant but spunky guy (Popeye/Pac-Man) being pursued by an unfeeling enemy (Brutus/ghosts) who is invulnerable unless you eat something (spinach/power pills) which will "turn the tables" for a short period of time. It works as a cartoon *or* a game.

Popeye also has similarities to *Donkey Kong* (and was originally made by the same company, Nintendo). Both are climbing games and both involve winning the heart of your true love—in this case, Olive Oyl. But while macho Mario had to bull his way to the top and physically grab his woman, Popeye wins Olive's affection the way boys have always done it—by showing off. He prances around, catching the hearts, love notes and letters she tosses.

These home versions of the arcade game are not perfect *copies*, but they are excellent *translations*. The opening scene where Olive begs, "Popeye, catch!," has been eliminated, and the screen doesn't shake when you bounce Brutus off the walls, but the important part—the game play—is nearly identical. You're not going to get arcade graphics, but I don't care if Brutus looks a little like Ernest Borgnine—as long as I can still punch his face in.

Both of these one- or two-player home games feature three screens, terrific sounds and current high score display, and both are a little easier than the arcade game. The Coleco version gives you slightly larger screen images, a reset button right on the joystick, and the choice of starting at any of three difficulty levels, things lacking in the computer version. But I enjoyed the computer game more, simply because the Coleco joystick didn't get Popeye up and down the stairs as well as my trusty Suncom StarFighter. Both games, however, are very good. A "cute" game for the kids, a strategy game for adults. □

KID GRID★★★★
***Designed by Arti Haroutunian.* (Tronix, disc for Commodore 64. $34.95)**

By William Michael Brown

Released over a year ago for the Atari 400/800 computers, the original *Kid Grid* was no graphics extravaganza or sound-effects masterpiece; it did, however, sport some addictive game play. Making judicious use of the C-64's superior graphics and sound capabilities, Tronix has now turned out a new version that plays exactly like the original, yet also manages to be more fun to look at and listen to.

And a good thing, too, since all *Kid Grid* needed to be a sure-fire hit with young and old were some hot graphics and sound. The game play is pretty simple. You control The Kid, who's got to travel over every line in the game's grid of boxes, coloring in each line, then each box. Once The Kid's finished that grid, he graduates to another. Meanwhile, he's pursued by a team of four odd-looking bullies—Thuggy, Muggy,

William Michael Brown writes frequently on computer software and videogames.

Hide and Sink: *an old game with new twists.*

Moose and Squashface—who'll beat him up if they catch him. If cornered, The Kid can stun them temporarily, but there's a limited supply of stuns. A question mark randomly appears in one of the boxes from time to time; if The Kid colors in the box before the question mark disappears, you'll net anywhere from 100 to 500 bonus points (or lose 10 points if you fail).

Despite the cutesy names and title, *Kid Grid* isn't only for kids. Coloring every box is tough enough, but your enemies are fairly smart, and don't respond to your dodges the same way every time. And with 15 levels and five speeds, the game's challenge can be adjusted to appeal to everyone, from a three-year-old to an adult.

The graphics have been substantially improved from the Atari version. Instead of simply stopping when the bullies bop him, The Kid now does a woozy little dance that's more amusing without being more violent. Both The Kid and his enemies are much more detailed in this version, and the colors—formerly simple hot yellows and blues—now include some pastel shades. All things considered, the new *Kid Grid* is an object lesson in how to translate games from one piece of hardware to another without ruining them. □

HIDE AND SINK ★ ★ ★
***Designer uncredited.* (Mirror Images, disc for IBM PC with DOS 1.1 and Color Graphics Adapter. $29.95)**

By Dr. Laurence L. Greenhill

Although *Hide and Sink* closely resembles the game *Battleship*, its strategic action entertains and amuses in a sustained way that many zip-and-zap joystick games just can't. It pits you against the computer and features a variety of twists that keep the sea battles unexpectedly intriguing.

All game screens hold two 10×10 sea-grids, one for the player, marked "Your Ships," and one for the computer, labeled "My Ships." Colorful symbols for each fleet's subs, destroyers, cruisers, battleships and PT boats sit below the grids. These ships are shown accurately with dabs of color where they have been hit or when missiles are fired, and are covered with an "X" when sunk. The player hides each ship by keying in its coordinates on the sea-grid, then commences firing on the computer's fleet; a hit is signaled by a beep and the appearance of a ship's colored label letter in the enemy's sea-grid. Of course, the computer is simultaneously firing on the player's fleet. I was so excited when I sunk the computer's destroyer, I didn't mind (not much!) that my battleship was also going under.

Hide and Sink has three additional levels of play: "Super Hide and Sink," "Super-Salvo Hide and Sink" and "Nighttime."

Written originally for the IBM PC's former DOS 1.1, *Hide and Sink* won't run on the newer DOS 2.0, which means it won't work on the big IBM PC XT. Since the game requires the $244 IBM Color Graphics Adapter board, as do all other IBM PC color games, a color TV or monitor is also needed. Although the game's color graphics are quite good, they are not as detailed or as original as the competition's. The text-mode FriendlySoft's *Sea Battle* game not only runs on the standard IBM monochrome monitor but also features more detailed and original graphics, in black and white, than *Hide and Sink*'s colorful silhouettes. But there is more to videogames than just graphics or originality, and *Hide and Sink*'s excellent game play makes it a winner. *Hide and Sink* excels in strategy, providing the most sustained-interest *Battleship* game for the IBM PC now on the market. □

Dr. Laurence Greenhill is a research psychiatrist, an electronics expert and a contributor to Stereo Review, High Performance Review *and other publications.*

ENCHANTER ★ ★ ★
***Designed by Marc Blank and Dave Lebling.* (Infocom, disc for Apple II/II+/IIe. $49.95)**

By Dennis Jue

As a professional magician who also enjoys the fantasy role-playing game *Dungeons and Dragons*, I was enchanted by the combination of both elements in this text adventure.

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an apprentice wizard summoned by the Circle of Enchanters, who have foreseen that a "ruthless and powerful evil" will threaten the land. Afraid their own magic would reveal them, the Elders select *you* to find the lair of the evil Warlock and triumph over his dark necromancy.

You begin with just four magic spells (and a book to store new ones in). You must explore forests, swamps, villages and an ocean before ultimately making your way into and through a dark and foreboding castle. Along the way, you'll learn new spells and interact with many creatures (both animal and human). As you interact with them, you'll be able to solve puzzles with the help of the various characters who may join you in your quest.

The richly detailed lands (and especially the evil castle) are of the type I've encountered in *D&D*. Although this text game has no graphics, high-res imagination is required as you roam around in this fantasy world.

Some hints I can pass along: Unlike in *D&D*, where a magic-user can cast each spell only once a day, the use of most spells is unlimited in *Enchanter*; just memorize them again and they'll be ready to use. Experiment with spells early in the adventure; learn their powers and don't feel the need to save them up for one crucial moment.

Even if you solve the ultimate challenge of *Enchanter* it's fun to return to the world for visits. There are many hidden text responses that will only be revealed by trying new spells or actions in familiar situations. And with magic available, you can have fun casting spells on unexpected objects (try "frotzing" a turtle sometime!). The illusions I perform at the Magic Castle in Hollywood are just that—illusions. But with *Enchanter*, I can cast real spells in an imaginative and interactive fantasy world. ☐

Dennis Jue is a professional magician at the Magic Castle in Hollywood and an avid D&D player.

Education

MATH MAZE★★
***Designer uncredited.* (DesignWare, disc for Apple II/II+/IIe. $39.95)**

By Elizabeth Crow

When is a workbook not a workbook?

When it's a computer program with jazzy graphics on the box cover.

Math Maze, a DesignWare product that is billed as "The Amazing Math Game," is a paradigm of this genre. It's a solid review of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, with an element of "Beat the Clock" thrown in. (Bonus points depend on the player's speed in obtaining the correct answer.) There's a basic math-review game, in which the cursor, in the form of a fly, wends its way around the maze to pick up digits that form the solution to a problem posed at the bottom of the screen. Game variants include one in which the fly is pursued by a hungry spider and another in which the maze walls become invisible. The player can also design, program and store mazes. Accompanying the *Math Maze* disc is a well-written booklet explaining how the game is played, suggesting strategies and helping the player feel at home with the computer's functions.

But math review is math review, no matter how you slice it, and most wide-awake schoolchildren aren't likely to clutch *Math Maze* to their hearts. In our house, seven-year-old Sam actually *likes* to practice addition and subtraction and often does so happily with his Texas Instruments *Speak & Math*. But although Sam liked *Math Maze* for the practice it provided, he merely tolerated its mazes as pallid imitations of the flashier mazes and more thrilling rewards of *Ms. Pac-Man*. ☐

MATH DUEL★★
***Designed by Baier.* (Computer Software Associates, cassette for Commodore VIC-20. $19.95)**

By Phil Wiswell

Math Duel is a game you play against your own intellect, designed for students in grades one through six, in order to learn addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. For example, if you select multiplication, the computer might, on skill level one, ask for the answer to 2×4, but on level three it might ask for the product of 41×19. If the answer you type in is correct, one more rung of an escape ladder is lowered to the human figure on screen. If not, a dragon edges one step closer to grabbing your character and ending the game. It's basically an electronic set of flash cards, which hardly seems to put the computer to good use. ☐

PROGRAMMING KITS 1 AND 2★
***Designer uncredited.* (Timeworks, disc and cassette for Commodore 64. $24.95 each)**

By Sheldon Leemon

These programming kits strongly remind me of my school days. Like the painful traditional school curriculum, they take an interesting subject and extract all of the juice from it until learning becomes a chore. About the best that can be said for them is that, despite their deficiencies, some people may be able to learn from them how to use the BASIC programming language.

The approach that these kits take is twofold. First, they explain the general principles of programming. Second, they show how these principles apply to an actual program. The one positive thing that they have going for them is that they start with interesting subject matter. *Kit 1* is subtitled "Beginning Game Design" and

examines the inner workings of a "Lunar Lander" game. *Kit 2*, "Intermediate Game Design," examines a "Slot Machine" game. While neither of these games rivals *Pac-Man* for razzle-dazzle, they are somewhat more attractive than programming your tax return. The complete listing of the program text that must be typed in to make the program run is included in the booklet that accompanies each kit. Although the working programs themselves are included on disc or tape, the manual instructs you to type in the program yourself from the listing, apparently to promote familiarity with the program.

The *Programming Kits*' explanation of these programs, however, is strictly by the numbers. They break the programming process down into eight steps. These steps include such tasks as sketching out the program display on graph paper and creating a flow chart. They don't even get to typing the program in until step six. In short, this approach reinforces the common belief that programming is such a complex operation that the simplest task requires all the planning of a major naval assault. While the manual hints that all of this planning makes programming easy, it really has the unintended effect of discouraging the reader.

The example programs and the line-by-line explanation of those programs given in the manual certainly can help teach programming, particularly to one already familiar with the rudiments. But at 30-50 pages in length, they do not offer much more depth than the computer magazines available on the newsstands which contain listings for BASIC programs. At 10 times the price of such magazines, these programming kits are no bargain. □

STICKYBEAR SHAPES ★ ★
***Designer uncredited.* (Xerox, disc for Apple II/II+/IIe. $39.95)**

By Elizabeth Crow

Stickybear Shapes is a beautifully packaged learning kit for children ages three to six. Designed to teach children to recognize five basic geometric shapes—circle, square, triangle, rectangle and diamond—the kit contains not just a disc, but a full-length picture book as well (*The Strawberry Book of Shapes* by Richard Hefter, an excellent shape-recognition primer which has been out for several years). Also enclosed between the kit's shiny vinyl covers is a 21-by-15 inch poster, and, lest these fail to appeal, there is also a page of eight colorful stickers of the sort beloved by children under 10.

Stickybear *needs* Shaping *up to be educational.*

Stickybear Shapes consists of three games. In "Pick It," the child identifies a shape missing in a picture by pressing the arrow key (or twisting a paddle dial) until the correct one of five shapes flashes at the bottom of the screen. "Name It" requires word-recognition skills, which means a lot of parental prompting if your child isn't reading yet. "Find It," the third choice, involves selecting the called-for shape in a scene that contains all five shapes.

In each game, the player registers his or

The "careful planning" approach is appropriate for professional programmers, and can work for those who are so determined to learn about computers that they are willing to grit their teeth and sweat it out. But most first-timers do not fall into these categories. What they want to know most is what's fun about programming. And if they are not given some immediate indication of the thrill of making the computer respond to their commands, they aren't going to stick around to find out about the fine points of style and technique.

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her answer by pressing on the space bar (or fire button), and the correct answer is rewarded by a sprightly tune and a witty animation of the scene. In all three games, the scenes are charming: a bear blowing out the candles on a cake; an alarm clock ringing maddeningly on a bedside table; a seaside scene; and so on.

Wrong answers get a gentle raspberry from the computer. In fact, this reprimand was so unthreatening that four-year-old Rachel simply ignored it. She quickly learned to beat the system by simply tapping out a rapid-fire arrow key/space bar sequence until, inevitably, the right answer was produced. This may have been good for her typing, but it didn't do much for her ability to recognize shapes. In fact, the enclosed book was a far better teaching tool.

Beyond this, the program shares an unfortunate flaw with some other standardized multiple-choice tests: It rewards "right" answers, not logical answers. For instance, when a hand appears on the screen, with a stone missing from a ring on one finger, the shape called for was the diamond, which is semantically correct but ignores the fact that the diamonds in most rings are, in fact, round or rectangular, not diamond-shaped at all.

Stickybear Shapes was an entertaining package, but as a teaching device the program was no match for the inexpensive book that made up only one part of this overdressed kit. □

THE NEW STEP BY STEP★★★★
***Designer uncredited.* (Program Design, two discs for Apple II/II+/IIe. $89.95)**
STEP BY STEP TWO★★★★
***Designer uncredited.* (Program Design, two discs for Apple II/II+/IIe. $89.95)**

By Martin Packer

These two excellent products by Program Design will ease you into the "mysteries" of computers through a beginner and an intermediate course in BASIC, one of the most widely available computer languages for home computers.

Each course consists of several audiotapes, two floppy discs and a workbook. The pleasant surprise is that these tools are integrated. That is, they reinforce one another rather than being duplicates in different media. The tapes lead you through the lessons on the discs, so the mixture of voice and fairly catchy graphics help avoid the tedium usually associated with computer tutorials.

Each lesson is broken down into two parts, with each part alternating between explaining some aspect of BASIC (such as color graphics) and asking questions about

Martin Packer is a project leader for System Strategies, a software consulting firm in New York City.

the material covered. The questions are surprisingly good at helping reinforce the material.

At the end of each part, you are given time to "play" with the computer and marvel at your newly acquired talents. The *Step by Step* workbooks help out at this point, providing both a summary of the material and suggestions on things to try. At the end of the complete lesson, a quiz is given to help you determine if you are ready to go on or should pay a little more attention.

The lessons are well laid out and not only teach the essentials of programming, but also give good pointers on programming style and how to make your own programs easy to use. Each lesson part takes about 15 to 20 minutes, so a complete lesson with some time to review and take the quiz should run an hour to an hour and a half.

The beginner *Step by Step* course covers most of the BASIC commands and functions (including loop control and subroutine calls), low resolution graphics, character variables, arrays and scientific notation. The intermediate course includes material on PEEK and POKE commands, binary and hexadecimal arithmetic, use of the Apple monitor, more character functions, high resolution graphics and a solid description of the design of the Apple computer.

These two programs are available only for the Apple computers. If you have a different computer with BASIC, I would suggest you beg, borrow, steal or buy an Apple computer so that you may use these excellent learning tools. □

Personal

LOAN ANALYSIS ★★★
***Designer uncredited.* (Dynacomp, disc for Atari 400/800/1200XL. $21.95)**

Loan Analysis is so easy to use, it hardly needs explaining. Even better, it's really useful. It can be a boon to personal finance, if you're in the market for a loan. By loading the program with the facts on up to 10 loans and then playing with those variables, you can find the most cost-effective way to borrow money *before* sitting down with the loan officers. You can also create a month-by-month amortization of any particular loan but this is usable only with an 80-column printer for hard copy because the full amortization schedule doesn't fit on the Atari computer's 40-column screen. (P.W.) □

TYPE-WRITER ★
***Designed by The Professor.* (Gessler Educational Software, disc for Apple II+/IIe. $69.95**

By Abigail Reifsnyder

Hybrids can be brilliant, especially when roses are involved. Mixing two types of word processors, however, can lead to less-than-satisfactory mutations. Case in point: *Type-writer*, a multi-lingual word processor. This program is intended to combine the sophistication of some business word processors (including special character sets for nine different languages) with the simplicity and ease of use of most home word processors. Instead, it manages to combine the complications of a business word processor with the limited functions of a home word processor.

The basics are here: edit, delete, save, search, replace and so on. The program is full of quirks, though. For example, to capitalize a letter, you don't use the shift key, but rather the escape or slash key—except in the edit mode, when only the slash key functions as a shift key. So it's not worth training your finger to reach for the escape key for a capital letter, since it won't work half the time.

Moreover, when you edit a line, you must move the cursor to the end of the line before you return to the main text or you'll lose the rest of the line. But, as you move the cursor over the line, you'll find that it makes all capital letters lower case, unless you remember to hit the slash key as the cursor passes over them. A word processor is supposed to make it easy to correct mistakes, but this one makes it hard to keep correct those things that are already right.

The main point of this word processor, though, is to facilitate writing and editing in a foreign language. Briefly, this is done by choosing one of nine character sets, each of which contains 10 characters particular to a language. These characters can then be used by hitting the slash key and the appropriate number key. (A reference card is included to help you remember which number represents which character.)

Sounds simple enough. But I found that as I blithely typed away in French, for once able to include the necessary accents, I had lost the normal shifted values of the number keys—most notably, the apostrophe (which, on the Apple keyboard, is on the 7 key). Undaunted, I continued typing, figuring that I could return to the normal character set afterwards and slip in my apostrophes. No such luck. When I switched back, my lovely accented French became gibberish, full of brackets and other meaningless symbols.

In order to have my accents and normal characters too, then, I had to use the "Extra Characters" option. This allowed me to assign the ASCII code for the apostrophe to the key that usually prints an asterisk. Thus, every time I wanted an apostrophe, I typed an asterisk, knowing that when my Apple and my printer collaborated, I'd end up with my apostrophes.

One last complaint: The formatting options are limited. While you can control margins and line spacing, you cannot set such parameters as align left or right, center, underline or boldface.

Overall, this program has some nice features, and, with some effort, you can get it to do what it's supposed to do. But, frankly, I'm not sure it's worth the bother. □

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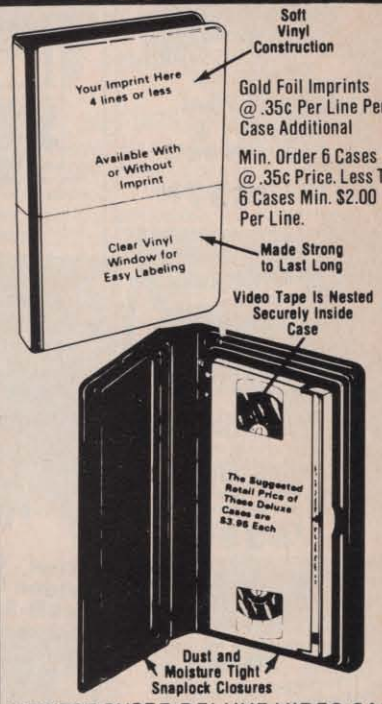

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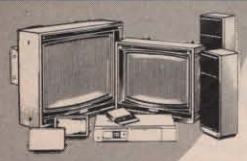

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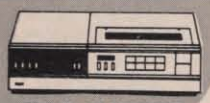

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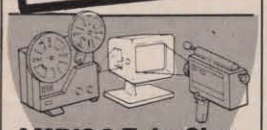

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HOME OFFICE★
***Designed by Audiogenic.* (Creative Software, disc or cassette for Commodore VIC-20 with 8K expansion module. $34.95 disc, $29.95 cassette)**

The most popular areas of home computing after videogames are word processing and data processing, but no program in either of those categories has yet attained the sales of *Choplifter, Demon Attack* or other popular computer game programs. Thus, the trend of bundling more than one applications program into one piece of software has become popular.

Home Office is an example of bundling, containing two programs, VICPRO and VICDATA. But it is also an example of shoehorning too much into too little space. Either program could have been much better if packaged alone.

VICPRO is supposedly a word processor, but it really isn't much more than an electronic typewriter that can print copy in column widths from 22 to 74 characters. In order to run the program at all, one needs an 8K expansion module. Even with a 16K expansion, though, VICPRO can only handle a maximum of about 1,500 words at a time. That is enough for long letters or very short articles, but precious little else. And because the VIC-20 can't display more than 22 characters per line, one must get used to the little arrows that mark the line breaks, as they will appear in the printed copy.

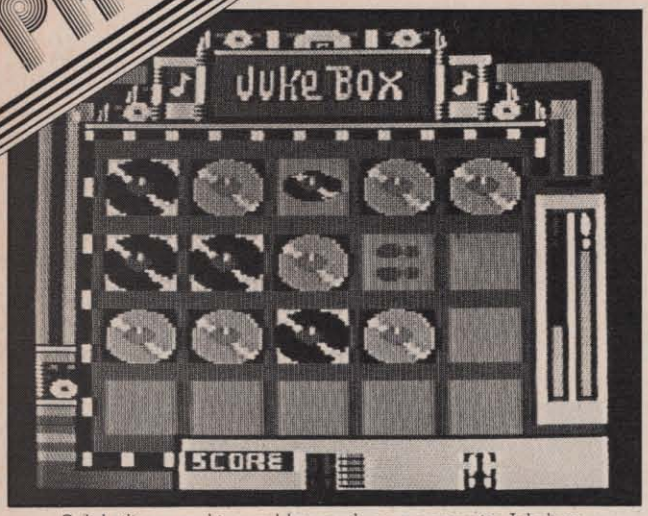
The important functions of word processing all involve the editing of rough manuscript, and their usefulness is sometimes defined by how easy each function seems to the user. Not only are the functions difficult to use, but there are surprisingly few of them. In fact, you can't do much editing at all with VICPRO. You can change a complete line or insert a complete line, but you can't see the rest of the text while you do it! And there is no such thing as inserting, changing or deleting a single character. If a line needs a small change, it must be retyped. My typewriter has that function!

I would give VICPRO zero stars; VICDATA, on the other hand, gets two (hence the overall rating of one star). VICDATA is a data base for holding, sorting and printing lists of information, such as names, telephone numbers and addresses or the entries to a bibliography. Once again, with the 16K expansion module, you can store only about 550 entries in a telephone directory, but for home use this is probably sufficient for anyone who owns a VIC-20. This program lets you manipulate the information much more easily than VICPRO, and with its helpful features it appears to be useful for home applications.

Incidentally, *Home Office* is available on both disc and cassette, and you can use either medium to store your information. (P.W.)□

SOFTWARE PREVIEWS

Coming next in cart, cassette, disc



Solid silicon: making gold records on a computer Jukebox.

GAMES

ALF IN THE COLOR CAVES Alf, a big-eyed but very flexible blob, must wiggle his way through all sorts of tunnels to reach the color cave. The Wufflegumps get in the way. For four- to seven-year-olds. *(Spinnaker, Atari 400/800/1200 XL, Commodore 64)*

AQUATRON In this arcade-style shoot-'em-up, alien bombers drop parachutes to earth. The player's character must stop them before they hit the water, become submarines and lead the chase underwater. *(Sierra On-Line, Apple II/II+/IIe)*

BANNER CATCH Team strategy and skill are the key to getting the flag from the opposing team at all five difficulty levels. *(Scholastic, Apple II/II+/IIe, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64, IBM PC)*

BOULDER DASH Rockford must contend not with files but boulders, earth, giant amoebas and jewels that combine in various patterns to produce almost limitless scenarios and obstacles. *(First Star, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64, IBM PC)*

BRUCE LEE The king of karate is positioned against his two deadliest foes—the green Yamo and the Ninja—in this action and skill game. *(Datasoft, Commodore 64)*

COCO-NOTES Set on a tropical island, this musical game stars the "Jazz Scats." Coco-notes fall from the Coco-note tree into the water, and the player's character must fish them out in four different game variations. *(CBS, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64)*

THE CRIMSON CROWN The sequel to *Transylvania*, this graphics adventure pits the player against the vampire, which the Princess and her brother help eliminate. *(Penguin, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64, IBM PC)*

GELFING ADVENTURE A junior version of *Dark Crystal*, this game uses almost exclusively third-grade vocabulary. The player chooses among three options. *(Sierra On-Line, Apple II/II+/IIe)*

HALF-TIME BATTLIN' BANDS The Scrimmage Stompers need help from the player to get in formation and play silly marching band music. Obstacles include mustard, footballs and referees. *(CBS, Atari 400/800/1200 XL, Commodore 64)*

HEATHCLIFF The cartoon cat helps children in kindergarten through third grade understand the fundamentals of spelling in this educational game. *(Datasoft, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64)*

JUNO FIRST Space: the 3D frontier. This space shoot-'em-up challenges the player to survive waves and waves of a variety of aliens. *Datasoft, Atari 400/800/1200XL, IBM PC, Radio Shack Color Computer)*

JUKEBOX Play it again... and again, until it's a gold record. The player maneuvers a pair of dancing feet in an effort to make as many gold records as possible. *(Spinnaker, Apple II/II+/IIe, Atari 400/800/1200 XL, Commodore 64, IBM PC)*

LEAFER MADNESS This multilevel game stars caterpillars that the player must help up trees so they may become butterflies. *(T&F, Commodore 64)*

MICROSURGEON A translation of Imagic's Intellivision game that slices the screen into four sections. One shows where the robot probe is; the second gives a close-up; the third indicates the patient's status; the fourth pictures the ICU. *(Imagic, PCjr)*

MINIT MAN Carter's musical missiles on computer. The silos are empty, awaiting the arrival of intercepter missiles from trains on the other side of the gorge. The player must stop enemy robots which have shattered the bridge over the gorge and are trying to sabotage the missile-launching computer. *(Penguin, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64)*

QUICK STEP One of Imagic's first conversions for the IBM PCjr, this version is more elaborate than the original VCS-compatible *Quick Step*. It includes a second screen and more confusion-creating objects. *(Imagic, PCjr)*

RING QUEST The Sorceress Lisa possesses the magical ring that corrupts its owner in this graphics adventure. The player must track her down before she destroys everything in sight. *(Penguin, Apple II/II+/IIe)*

Fishing for Coco-notes.

SCUBA-DOO-BA-DOO The first in a new adventure series called "The Adventures of Dutch Dugan," this game focuses on the weekend athlete's underwater adventure. *(Gamestar, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64)*

XYPHUS This fantasy role-playing game is a series of scenarios that allow for an infinite variety of spells, weapons and monsters. Each scenario takes only a few hours to play, but all are connected in a larger game. *(Penguin, Apple II/II+/IIe)*

ACTIVITY

ADVENTURE CREATOR This program gives the child the necessary tools to create original adventure games. *(Spinnaker, Apple II/II+/IIe)*

THE COMPLETE GRAPHIC SYSTEM This updated graphics program combines Penguin's *The Complete Graphic System II* and *Special Effects*. Among its unique features are shading and airbrushing techniques and two ways to create three-dimensional drawings. *(Penguin, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64, IBM PC)*

KIDWRITER Children create their own stories by choosing from 99 characters and objects. The characters can be manipulated to create scenes under which the story itself may be written. *(Spinnaker, Apple II/II+/IIe, Commodore 64)*

MAGIC PAINTBRUSH This drawing program is designed to make it easy to draw high-resolution pictures using lines, circles, a variety of brushes and over 100 colors. Includes pre-drawn shapes, objects and creatures that can be used in pictures. *(Penguin, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64, IBM PC)*

MOVIE MUSICAL MADNESS Computer Direct-It. The user/director puts together a set, characters and music to make a movie. Some of the props have a mind of their own, though. *(CBS, Atari 400/800/1200 XL, Commodore 64)*

STORYMAKER: A CREATIVE STORY CONSTRUCTION KIT This program gives the eight-year-old everything needed to create original stories, then takes him or her through the process step by step. Using a palette of colors, the child can create line drawings and color them in. *(Sierra On-Line, Commodore 64)*

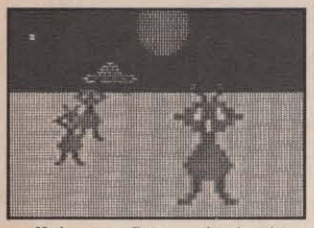
EDUCATIONAL

LEARNING WITH FUZZYWOMP This educational game is intended to teach counting, shapes and pattern recognition and hand-eye coordination. *(Sierra On-Line, Commodore 64)*

MONKEY BUILDER The player's monkey uses bits and pieces of words to build complete words which in turn form houses in this spelling tutorial. *(Artworx, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64)*

MONKEY MATH Monkey add, monkey subtract. Set in a "math factory," this program is designed to teach counting and basic mathematical functions. One conveyor belt carries in problems, the other answers. The player's monkey must pick the right answer. *(Artworx, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64)*

SPELL DIVER Diving for definitions. Mystery words are hidden on the ocean floor, and the player's scuba



Kidwriter: *Picture this book.*

diver must go down to uncover them. Termed by its manufacturer "the first underwater spelling game," it is designed to teach understanding of words. *(Scholastic, Apple II/II+/IIe)*

PERSONAL

DATABASE This multifunction program combines a database program with a spreadsheet and a word processor to maximize the ability to manipulate information. *(T&F, Commodore 64)*

LETTER WIZARD An enhanced version of Datasoft's *Text Wizard*, this word processor includes such features as automatic indent, status windows and expanded print styles (standard, condensed, elite and proportional). *(Datasoft, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64)*

SYN-CALC This spreadsheet program is, according to the manufacturer, an enhanced version of Atari *VisiCalc*. It includes such features as "table look-up" and search. *(Synapse, Atari 400/800/1200XL)*

SYN-FILE This database program allows the user to store, sort, retrieve and modify virtually any type of information. It will hold up to 1,000 records with one disc drive. *(Synapse, Atari 400/800/1200XL)*

SYN-TREND This general statistical and graphics package requires only that the user plug in the numbers. It will then perform a whole series of statistical analyses. *(Synapse, Atari 400/800/1200XL)*

UTILITY

DISCARRANGER This program allows the user to rearrange files on discs and move files from one disc to another. Disc catalogues can be alphabetized by file name or file type. *(Penguin, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64)* □

SOFTWORKS

NEW WAVE (OF) MUSIC: Datamost plans to release 18 new games compatible with Apple, Atari and Commodore computers in early '84. All will have original music scores; one, "the first new-wave game," features new-wave music. Company also plans to release three or four personal application programs and as many educational ones.... CBS Software has joined forces with music video and computer program producer Dovetail to create music programs initially for Commodore 64 and Atari computers that will allow would-be John Coltranes and Dexter Gordons to compose original jazz and blues.

CONVERSION CRAZE: Rather than create new programs, many software manufacturers are devoting efforts to translating successful titles to other machines. Softsync is converting Commodore 64 programs **Dancing Feats**, **Model Diet** and **Personal Accounting** to Adam, with eye on PC*jr* and Apple conversions later.... Epyx, having recently bought up **Supercharger**-maker Starpath, will translate **Jumpman Jr** and **Gateway to Apshai** for the Adam... **Lode Runner**, from Broderbund, expected to be available for the IBM PC and PC*jr* soon.... Activision will continue converting popular VCS games to computers, with only new title, **David's Delight** (named after designer David Crane), coming out for VCS....Sirius' **Type Attack** will be converted to and packaged with the HP150. Company focusing efforts on Commodore 64, HP150, IBM PC and PC*jr* conversions of its most popular titles.

EARLY ENTRIES: Early '84 will see a new title from SubLogic called **Jet Fighter Simulator**, according to company spokesperson.... Blackjack expert and *VR* software reviewer **Ken Uston** has formed own software company, with first game slated for early in year. Compatible with Commodore 64, **Meta-Sequence** is described by Uston as "an intriguing brain game."

MAYBE, MAYBE NOT: Games based on TV series **Ripley's Believe It or Not** are still in the works. Manufacturer Roklan still seeking approval from Ripley's International.... **Survival Island** and **Sword of Saros**, last Supercharger games, *may* be sold in US, but possibly only abroad.

—Abigail Reifsnyder

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