

Video Review

INCORPORATING
HOME VIDEO
MAGAZINE

\$1.95

THE WORLD AUTHORITY ON HOME VIDEO

FLAT-TV EXPLOSION

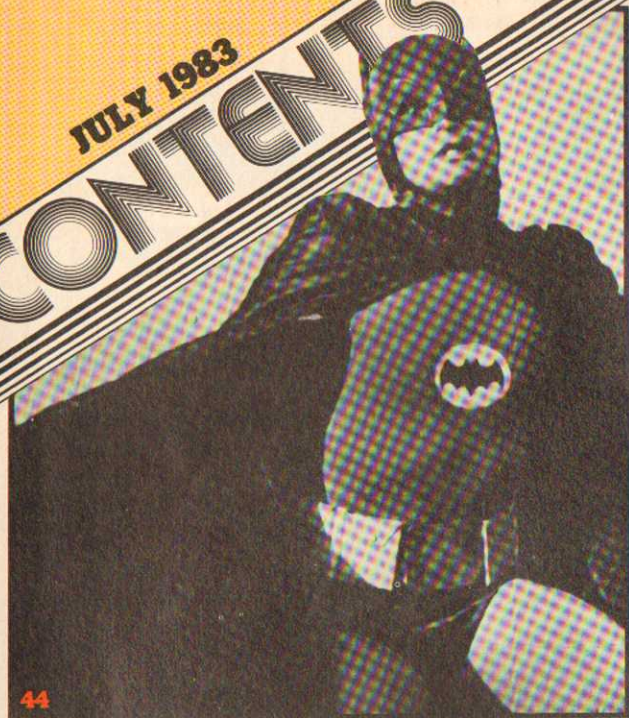
WILL IT BLOW AWAY THE BOOB TUBE?

Are TV Stations Spying on You?

8mm Mania: Guide To the New Format



JULY 1983 CONTENTS



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VIDEOGAME REVIEWS

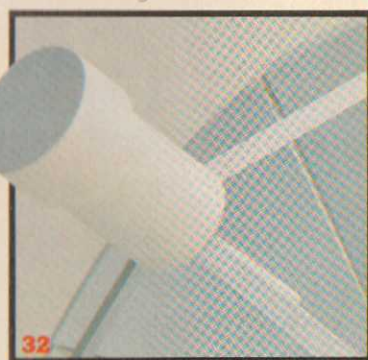
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Games Guru Gearing Up?

By Carl S. Kaplan

NEW YORK—Nolan Bushnell, who is credited with creating the first Atari videogames and who sold them to Warner Communications in '76, intends to get back into home videogames. But Warner is out to stop him—at least until the fall.

Warner lawyers recently filed suit against Bushnell and his associates at the Pizza Time Theatre Company, a national pizza-videogame parlor franchise Bushnell founded after leaving Warner. The suit alleges that Bushnell and his associates violated a non-competition contract precluding them from developing and selling videogames until October.

Atari declines to comment on the suit, but Pizza Time claims the action is without merit and says it will fight the complaint vigorously. "We don't have videogames and it's as simple as that," says Pizza Time's John Porter. But another Pizza Time



Bushnell: playing games?

spokesperson acknowledges, "We are currently researching videogames."

In the past, Bushnell has said he wants to re-enter the home videogame business, but only after his non-competition pact expires. He'll probably do it through Sente Research, a Bushnell-owned company that makes wooden fixtures and Skee-ball-type games. What else it makes will likely remain a secret until October. □

Radio-Video Tie-Ins

By Gary Arlen

WASHINGTON—They used to call them emerging technologies, but now it's more appropriate to call them merging ones. The latest to band together—video and radio.

Thanks to a new Federal Communications Commission ruling, video monitors will soon be picking up signals transmitted by special circuits of FM radio stations. For the most part, the images will be text, data and information material, not full graphics. Receivers with special decoders will be needed to display the material, which will also be sent to computer printers and other reception devices.

The FCC ruling brings massive changes to the "subcarrier" circuits of FM radio signals. Until now, those subcarriers were primarily used for stereo transmissions or for other audio signals, such as Muzak. But the FCC decision doubles the number of subcarrier circuits on each FM station and allows public radio stations as well as commercial FM stations to sell the

circuits to anyone who wants to program them. Business customers who want to download computer software are expected to be the major users, but a variety of other video and data applications are permitted under the ruling. □

Laser Fare For Arcades

The optical videodisc is being asked to rescue arcade games, those quaint, 25¢-a-throw machines that seem to become outdated faster than operators can install new ones. A half-dozen entrepreneurs are betting that a steady flow of new optical disc titles, which are much easier to change and update, will be able to please a fickle public. Sega Enterprises, for example, has designed a "Star Trek" videodisc game which uses the disc's superior graphic capabilities to simulate the flight deck of the *USS Enterprise*. Every few months, players can expect a new adventure. (S.G.) □

SAT SPACING IRKS BIRD WATCHERS

Faced with the possibility of too many satellites and no place to put them, the Federal Communications Commission has decided to allow new satellites to be positioned closer to those already in orbit. The effect of these spacing changes has many backyard "bird" watchers worried.

Some experts predict that too little space between satellites will cause fuzzy reception in backyard earth stations. But tests

conducted by a cable television industry group found that three-meter dishes of reasonably good quality will suffer very little, if any, signal degradation from the changes.

No existing satellite will have to be moved as a result of the FCC decision. And in about 10 years, when the doubling is complete, there could be as many as 40 satellites beaming video voice and data communications earthward. (L.H.) □

Computer Costs Cut

At last—bargain basement pricing has hit the world of home computers. Competition has pushed prices down to the point where, in many instances, home computers are less expensive than popular programmable videogames.

The Texas Instruments computer model 99/4A, for example, can be picked up for about \$100, after deducting the scheduled \$50 rebate. It had a list price of \$950 when it was introduced in 1980. The competing Atari 400 is available in some stores at a post-rebate price of about \$80, which is \$550 below the list price of just three years ago. Commodore's VIC 20, which sold for \$300 in 1981, is being offered in some stores for as little as \$90.

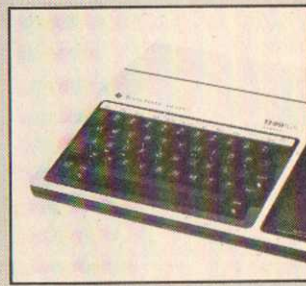
Caught in the competitive

squeeze, videogame console prices have been dropping, too. Recent prices spotted across the nation (some after rebates, or with the requirement that cartridges also be purchased) include: Atari 2600 at \$85; Mattel's Intellivision at \$70; Magnavox's Odyssey² at \$50; and Coleco's ColecoVision at \$149.

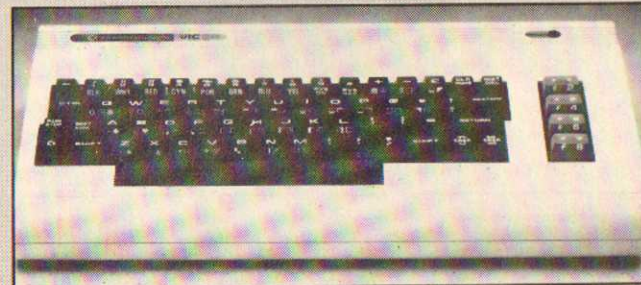
Console prices for both computers and videogames are noticeably lower, but costs of games and accessories for both formats are holding firm. The most popular videogames and computer game programs still cost \$20-\$30, for instance, and there is no sign of price changes for computer disc drives, printers or the modems needed for a hookup into telephone lines. (B.G.) □ (Cont.)



Atari 400: down to \$80.



TI 99/4A: about \$100.



Commodore VIC 20: hovering near \$90.

P.O. Goes Video

Electronic messaging—including greeting cards, community bulletin boards and conventional computer "chat"—is shaping up as one of the favorite features of videotex systems.

Most electronic mail falls into the category of quick memos or video versions of telephone answering machines, sending items such as "Meet me at the theater at 7:30" or "I solved the new videogame." One videotex service even includes a "graffiti" section, encouraging users to scribble electronic art and quips for other customers to see.

Perhaps the most popular form of videotex mail is electronic greeting cards, developed by Hallmark. These computer-animation segments can be sent to the electronic mailboxes of other system users. In one "card," a frog hops around the screen and says, in text, "Hi, I'm the birthday frog. Come up to the screen and let me give you a birthday kiss." When the user kisses the screen, the cartoon figure's lips curve into a happy smile—then comes the message: "Ha, ha, the joke's on you, wart lips."

Not all videotex messaging is fun and games, however. Questions of electronic junk mail—unsolicited, unwanted messages which fill up the computer storage capacity in the videotex ter-

minal—pose an increasing problem to videotex users. A greater problem is the issue of censorship designed to remove raunchy and suggestive messages from videotex systems. Operators are examining now whether they should—or can—monitor material flowing through their systems. That may even include X-rated greeting cards. (G.A.)□

House Calls

Ma Bell will not orchestrate the home electronics future, but she may very likely play some key solos. That's the view, at least, of a high-tech think tank, the Boston-based Yankee Group.

Yankee president Howard Anderson sees a day when cable services, home computers, telephones, videogames and other types of consumer electronics will all operate from one telecomputing home terminal, courtesy of Ma Bell. He says the device will, at one and the same time, guard the home, enable a user to do work from the living room, take calls and access data bases. Additionally, he says computer programs, videogames and other forms of home entertainment will be sent electronically from a central computer along telephone or cable lines into the home. He predicts these phones would cost less than \$500. (C.S.K.)□

'HOT ROCKS' ROLLS

The Playboy Channel has created its own version of MTV—an erotic music video show that offers performers nothing less than full artistic license. The hour-long, monthly program—"Playboy's Hot Rocks"—premieres July 29.

Fred Seibert, a former MTVer and one of the producers of the new Playboy show, says he hopes to feature "hot" clips of Olivia Newton-John, The Rolling Stones, The Tubes and Berlin, a techno-pop club band. He says video clips such as Billy Squier's "The Stroke" or Rod Stewart's "Tonight's the Night" would also be appropriate.

"Inherent in most modern pop music is sensuality and erotic behavior, and we want to focus



Hot Rod Stewart.

on that and make it clearer than it has been," he says. To that end, the Playboy Channel will add its familiar brand of context cues and wraparounds, as Seibert puts it, "to create an environment in which these clips work." (J.G.)□

STORES VS. STUDIOS IN TAPE PRICE FIGHT

Should Hollywood be permitted to dictate videocassette rental and sale prices? Video retailers answer with a resounding "No." They say setting prices is the holy writ of their business. Movie studios, on the other hand, want the opportunity to pull the price strings, for whoever sets sale prices also gets to set rental ones. The question of first-sale rights resists with Congress, which is expected to

answer it sometime this fall.

To win support in the meantime the studios say they'll drastically cut suggested sale prices—as much as 40%, in fact—if they gain first-sale rights.

Store owners point to the success of *Star Trek II* and *An Officer and a Gentleman* at \$39.95 as proof that no change is needed to lower prices. It'll be a long, hot summer on both sides. (S.G.)□

SHELVED

Intense competition among home videogame companies has driven some out of business and prompted others to diversify into computer games.

The first to go under this year was US Games, a subsidiary of Quaker Oats. Former US Games general manager John Belden says, "The basic issue here was a glut of games on the market." Then, CA-based Data Age Video Games filed for Chapter 11 protection in US bankruptcy court. It seems the company pegged its hopes on *Journey/Escape*, a game tied in with the rock group Journey. But from an initial inventory of 400,000, only 25,000 copies of *Journey/Escape* have been sold so far, a source close to the company says.



Journey/Escape: the end of the road?

For all those games elbowed out by competition, new ones—for computers—are being put on the shelves as replacements. Activision, Imagic, Parker Bros. and 20th Century Fox Videogames have all announced that they'll be putting out computer games later this year. But there

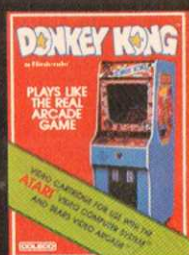
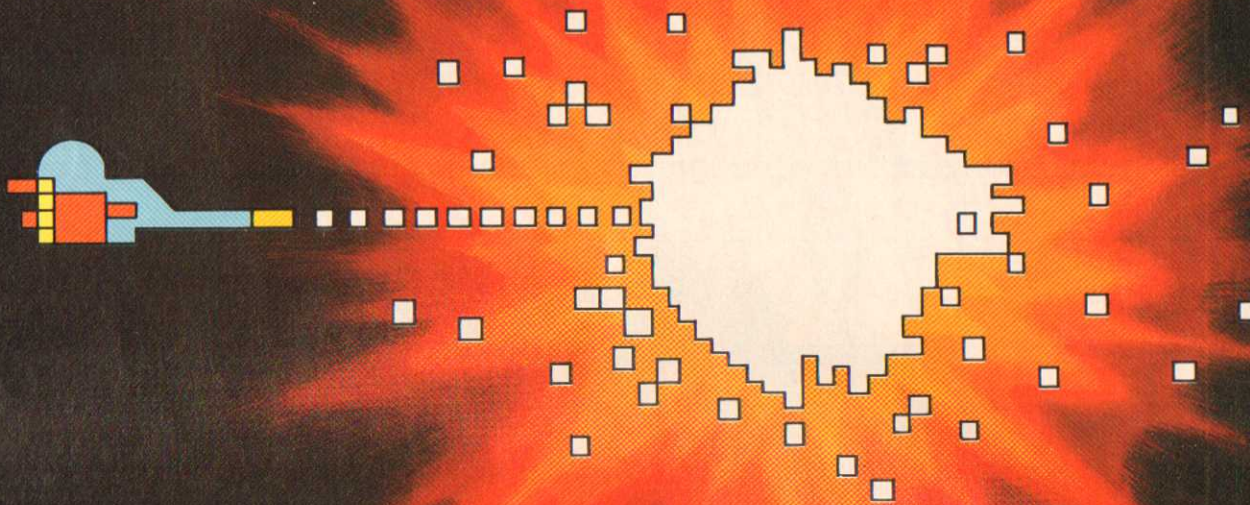
is some good news for videogame fans. CBS Videogames, Parker Bros. and Star Path have said they'll start making games for ColecoVision consoles. And MicroLab of Highland Park, IL, a maker of computer games, has decided to start making videogames, too. (C.S.K.)□

Flip-Flop For Flop?

No matter that Michael Cimino's *Heaven's Gate* was a \$40-million, three-hour-and-forty-minute flop. No matter that critics called it "excessive," "overblown" and "a bomb." No matter that the movie played for just three days in New York and Toronto before it closed. The epic movie tale of the old west will be resurrected by pay TV August 1.

The Movie Channel has decided to run the picture, letting TV viewers decide for themselves whether Cimino's movie is visionary or vacuous. In Los Angeles, where *Heaven's Gate* was shown on the pay-TV "Z" channel, a survey found that 77% of the viewers said they didn't hate it. (J.G.)□

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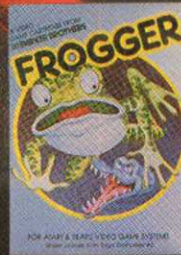
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this happen to allow for changes in picture size which occur when the brightness changes. The variations are the result of fluctuations in the set's power supply voltage. Even sets with carefully regulated power supplies are often adjusted for slight overscan to ensure that dark edges don't show up around the picture. However, too much overscan indicates a poorly designed television set. Excessive overscan can cause the edges of printed titles or, in extreme cases, even some essential action to be cut off from view.

In our overscan tests, this JVC monitor/receiver displayed nearly perfect title centering (Fig. 2a), and all essential action was framed within the screen (Fig. 2b).

Convergence error was nonexistent at the center of the screen and a negligible .2% at the outer corners of the picture. Scanning interlace was a perfect 50-50. Transient response was also excellent and black-level retention was a very good 90%. Black-level retention is the receiver's ability to reproduce black areas in a given scene when other portions of the same scene are brightly lit.

Color Purity

Color purity was excellent. The TV tuner's sensitivity was also very good. In these tests, various receiving sites were simulated by changing the strength of an incoming signal from 1000 microvolts

(urban reception), to 200 microvolts (suburban reception) to 100 microvolts (rural, or fringe-area, reception).

This receiver/monitor contains a better-than-average audio system capable of approximately 3 watts of power. Audio frequency response was quite good, considering that the built-in speaker is in anything but an ideal speaker enclosure. Response was reasonably flat from around 60 to 70 Hz to above 10 kHz. The output at low levels of distortion (.75%) was surprisingly high: 96 dB SPL. Even though the audio system is better than that found in most tabletop television sets, we wish JVC had incorporated a separate audio output jack.

Summary

The JVC model C-2073US is, without a doubt, one of the finest TV sets we've ever evaluated. Judged as a monitor, it also ranks with the best we've tested so far. The only thing we were a little dissatisfied with was the audio performance because, good as it was, it still isn't on a par with the high-quality audio from some of today's program sources.

When I checked the set for normal operation the way you would use it at home, I found that it received over-the-air signals with reasonably good signal-to-noise ratios (absence of "snow"). This was true even when I used the rod (dipole) antenna supplied on the back of the set, and my lab is some 20 miles from the nearest major TV stations. As you'd expect, things got much better when I hooked up an outdoor antenna.

Overall, this monitor/receiver will do justice to any video program source fed to it, whether it's through the antenna terminals or the convenient video and audio input jacks. (L.F.) □

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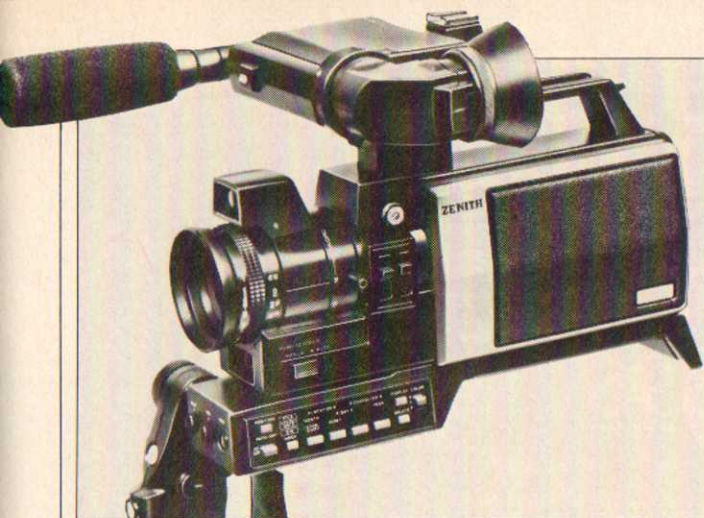
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Overscan: on target for titles (Fig. 2a, above) and action (Fig. 2b).





**ZENITH
Videocamera
Model VC1810**

The character generator, a device for tilting that's been showing up on more and more cameras this year, has been simplified for this 5½-pound videocamera with the addition of a cursor.

This camera also features an electronic viewfinder, infrared auto focus, auto iris, auto white

balance, stereo microphones and instant review of the last few seconds recorded (with certain VCRs). The camera's equipped with a Newvicon tube, and the f1.6 lens has an 8:1 (12-96mm) variable-speed power zoom and a macro focus adjustment. It draws 6.6 watts at 12 volts DC.

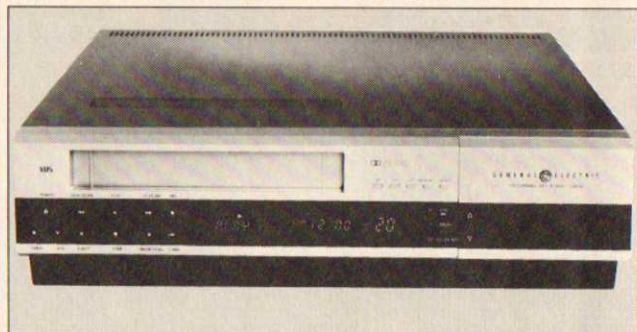
Zenith, 1000 North Milwaukee Avenue, Glenview, IL 60025 (312) 391-7000

**GENERAL ELECTRIC
Videocassette Recorder
Model 1VCR4016X**

Hi-Fi sound is featured with this VHS-format recorder. It has stereo sound with Dolby B noise reduction and audio dub. Additionally, this VCR features electronic tuning of 128 VHF, UHF and unscrambled cable channels, an

eight-event/two-week timer. It records in all three speeds (SP, LP and EP), and automatically selects the playback speed. The tape counter has a "search" function to locate previously recorded material on a cassette.

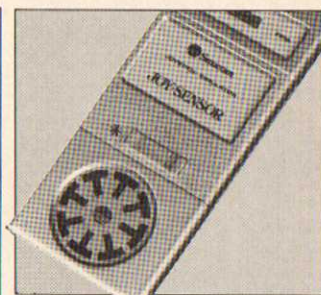
General Electric, 1 Wellner Drive, Portsmouth, VA 23705 (804) 483-5000



**SUNCOM
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Joy Sensor \$34.95**

No, it's not what you think. In fact, it's a joystick without the stick.

This controller is designed to simulate the action of conventional joysticks through two touch-sensitive panels. Rapid fire is built into the center of the firing panel, which is designed for both left- and right-handed players. It's compatible with the Atari 400/800/1200, Sears



Tele-Game, and the TI 99/4A. Suncom, 650 Anthony Trail, Suite E, Northbrook, IL 60062 (312) 291-9780



**SONY
Beta Videocassette
Rewinder/Eraser
BE V50 \$130**

Here's an accessory for Beta VCR owners who hoard tapes: a tape rewinder and eraser. It runs on household current or batteries; an AC adaptor is supplied.

Sony, Sony Drive, Park Ridge, NJ 07656 (201) 930-1000

**KENWOOD
Videocassette Recorder
Model KB-905 \$999**

Kenwood's first new VCR in over a year is a front-loading VHS-format model. It has four heads, stereo sound, Dolby

noise reduction, feather-touch controls, a 14-day/eight-event timer and a 14-function wireless remote control.

Kenwood, 1315 E. Watson-center Road, Carson, CA 95037 (213) 518-1700

**SANYO
Videocassette Recorder
VCR7300 \$999.95**

Sanyo makes Beta Hi-Fi portable with its model VCR7300 video recorder.

The one-piece VCR, which weighs about 15 pounds (with battery), has a seven-day/one-event timer, a 105-channel cable-ready tuner and an eight-function wired remote control. The company claims, furthermore, that switching from the Beta II to the slower Beta III speed doesn't degrade the audio quality. It retains a conventional fixed audio

head, so it's compatible with existing Beta tapes and machines. *Sanyo, 1200 W. Artesia Blvd., Compton, CA 90220 (213) 537-5830*



ON THE DRAWING BOARDS

SET PROJECTIONS: NEC came out with the first projection TV set with an RGB switch—for enhancing videogame or home-computer graphics—in March (for \$3,500), and other projection TV makers are already in hot pursuit. But only **Burke Industries**, which makes **Kolorama** projection TV sets, will have a model out this summer (at \$3,995). **Hitachi**, **Panasonic**, **Quasar** and **RCA** say they'll bring out projection TV sets for use with computers and videogames next year. **GE**, **Kloss** and **Mitsubishi** are working on their new sets now but haven't set official introduction dates.

MONITORING THE SITUATION: On that subject, by the way,

Hitachi is coming out in August with 20-inch and 25-inch monitors with RGB switches; Panasonic will have a 13-inch model for games and computers in September and a 25-inch model in October; and **Proton** will feature a 25-inch monitor for videogame and computer use this fall. **RCA** and **Sampo** are delaying plans for monitors until an interface device standard is set.

HEAR YE, HEAR YE: Game and toy maker **Milton Bradley** makes its first foray into home videogames with a voice synthesizer module for Atari's 2600 and 5200 consoles. Also coming from Milton Bradley—a device allowing voice control of game moves. —Marcy Ressler

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not quite sure where everybody is. One exception is an endearing sequence in which Strawberry and her friends take off for the city on Big Apple Airlines, an ingenious butterfly who conjures up a way to escape the Pieman's butterfly net.

In an obvious effort to avoid violence, the cartoon comes across as too harmless and innocent. This is necessary for the under-five child, but this story is too complicated for that age group.

While this tape may be fun for showing to a group of kids, it just won't hold up to repeated viewings by kids of any age.

The last part of the tape, however, consists of uproariously funny cartoon spoofs of well-known fairy tales, courtesy of Warners Brothers' Merrie Melodies, from the '40s. Jack and the Beanstalk, Aladdin and His Magic Lamp, Sleeping Beauty and others all get their due with trick endings and corny World War II slogans. Today's kids won't get the war-time references, but there are still a lot of laughs. Old Mother Hubbard's dog is a riot when he finds a secret cupboard filled with hoarded goodies and races off to report Mother to the Food Rationing Board. The goose who lays the golden egg instead lays aluminum ones stamped, "I'm Doing My Part for the National Defense," and Aladdin's genie wafts out of the lamp waving a War Bond.

These, it seems to me, can be watched over and over by kids of any age. □

STORYBOOK CLASSICS

(1982) ★ ★ ★

Animated shorts featuring the voices of the *Andrew Sisters*, *Buddy Clark*, *Sterling Holloway*. Directors uncredited. (Walt Disney cassette, color, 41 min., \$49.95)

By Genevieve Kazdin

Four Walt Disney animated shorts make up this new compilation cassette. Three of them are wonderful—and really classics.

Little Toot comes from the '48 feature movie *Melody Time*. It is narrated by Buddy Clark and has some cute music sung by the Andrews Sisters as it tells of a mischievous little tug boat more interested in playing around and having fun than in doing the work he's supposed to do. When foolishness causes trouble, he is banished to the open sea. But then a dreadful storm comes up and Little Toot makes a daring and dangerous rescue of a floundering ocean liner. Bringing the liner to safe harbor earns the brave little tug the cheers and admiration of all the other tugs.

Peter and the Wolf was originally part of the '46 feature movie *Make Mine Music*. Disney's version is slightly different—in both text and music—from the original version that's been a concert-hall staple since the 1930s. But it remains a charming story regardless of the changes, and children will surely enjoy watching Peter and his Disney-style animal friends go after the wolf—big and bad, as wolves always should be. (P.S. After your youngsters have watched this

OUR NEW BABIES.



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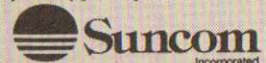
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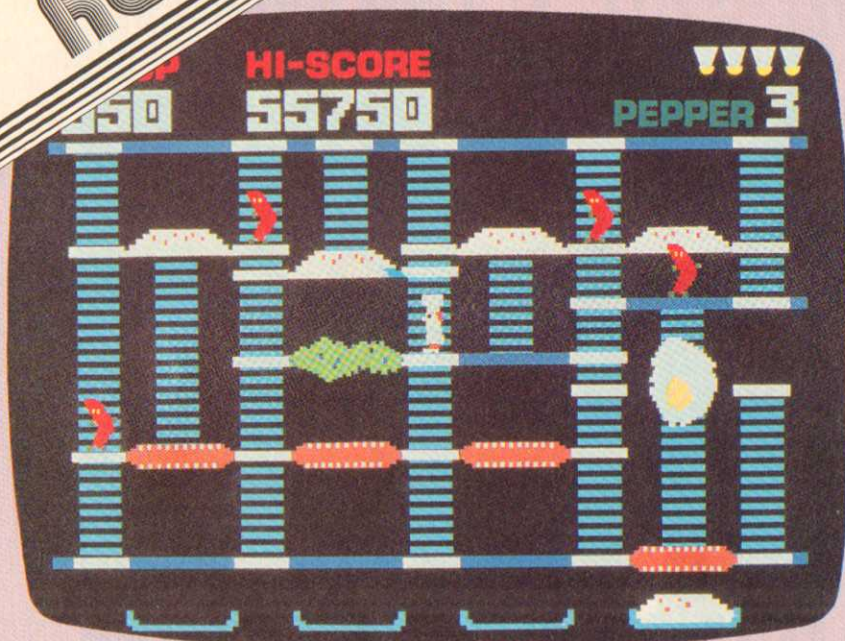
You own an Apple Computer. You probably use it for entertainment and to play games. We think that you deserve a controller that is as up and keeping with new technology as your computer. So we designed one. From scratch. Brand new internally. Starfighter. For Apple.

Starfighter for Apple has many of its Atari-compatible counterpart's exterior physical characteristics. Round-cornered and smooth, it won't fatigue you over those long playing sessions. And internally, its new, advanced design gives you a kind of feel and response during game play that you have never experienced before.

Of course, Starfighter for Apple comes with a 2 year warranty. From your friends at Suncom.

*Products and trademarks of Atari, Sears, Commodore, Apple Computer. Consumer Hotline: 800-558-0003

Dom DeLuise devours *Burgertime*



Burgertime: If you're in a pickle, use your pepper.

Cartridge

BURGERTIME ★ ★ ★ ★
Designer uncredited. (Mattel, Intellivision-compatible cartridge. \$35 approx.)

By Dom DeLuise

I know this magazine often has videogames reviewed by experts in particular subjects. So when its editors contacted me, I was looking forward to seeing what game they would match me up with. Since I'm often mistaken for my Hollywood look-alike, Burt Reynolds, I assumed it would be a game like *Good-Of-Boy Invaders*, or *How Was It for You, Dear?*

Frankly, I was hurt when I found it was for *BurgerTime*. But maybe they asked me since they know I'm crazy about buns ...and in this game there are a lot of buns!

Of course, the subject of food has always appealed to me. I'm on a diet now, and have lost over 300 pounds. Over a period of 20 years. But this game is a great way to work with food without gaining weight.

Your goal is to make hamburgers, not war. You control a fat little chef who runs

around the screen trying to put together burgers made with lettuce, buns, patties and sometimes tomatoes. It would be easy, except that hot dogs, fried eggs and eventually pickles chase the chef around the screen. He can either outrun them or throw pepper in their faces to temporarily immobilize them. But the nasties get smarter and faster as the game goes on.

I have three sons, and they all love this game. My youngest, David (age 11), says it's as good as the arcade version. He got 24,000 points after only a few tries. When I first tried, the fried egg got me immediately. On my second try, I got one-and-a-half burgers built, then a hot dog got me.

Food will mean the end of me yet.

One of the big hints I can pass along is to take the long way around the board when being chased, because the hot dogs and the fried eggs are not as smart as they seem. They tend to follow you around, and you can fool them into taking the long way, while you double back and take a short cut.

I think the fried eggs are the dumbest. The hot dogs are not as dumb as the eggs. But I'm warning you: Watch out for those pickles! They're fast, they're clever, and they have to be dealt with.

You get extra points if you drop your burger, lettuce or bun while an egg or hot dog is on it, or right under it. If you see a cup of coffee, some fries, ice cream or ketchup, go for them! Not only do they go well with hamburgers, but if you get them before they disappear, you get an extra

shake of pepper. But be careful with the pepper. My chef kept throwing it all over himself. I think he was starting to enjoy it.

Another hint: Don't try eating while playing the game. I tried it once, and all I made was a mess on my sweater. That you don't get points for.

My only complaint is that if I'd invented this game, I would have added a nice slice of onion. And maybe Alka-Seltzer. □

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE:
MUSICAL MATCH-UPS ★ ★ ★
Designer uncredited. (Parker Brothers, VCS-compatible cartridge. \$30 approx.)

By Elizabeth Crow
With Sam and Rachel Crow

Strawberry Shortcake, American Greetings' pint-size character/doll with the artificial-fruit aroma, is among the greatest pop exploitation successes of the past decade. Strawberry and her friends—Lime Chiffon, Blueberry Muffin and Huckleberry Pie—appear on everything from kids' lunch boxes to party favors to, at last, a videogame.

In our household, six-year-old Sam has his antennae fine-tuned for video stuff, and weeks ago he began pestering me to buy the Strawberry game for three-year-old Rachel. "You know how Rachel's not interested in *Chopper Command*?" he asked. "Well, now they've got a game for kids her age to play."

It's a simple, bright-colored, charming game, with lively musical effects. By manipulating the joystick horizontally or vertically, the player tries to reassemble Strawberry and her friends, whose bodies have been scrambled by the evil Purple Pieman. When a figure is correctly reconstructed, the player presses the fire button and the doll's legs spring to life, performing a snappy clog dance while his or her signature tune plays. In fact, any time the button is pressed, the figure, whether doll or mixed-up hybrid, will dance.

That was enough for Rachel, who we discovered has a lead thumb. "I like this game," she announced, her thumb firmly glued to the button while Lime Chiffon's tune played, again and again. The rules of the game, which has six skill levels (two of which require reading), held no allure for her at all. Rachel was content to twiddle the joystick randomly and press the fire button to see the mismatched little figures launch into their musical numbers.

Elizabeth Crow is editor-in-chief of Parents magazine. Sam is a first grader; Rachel attends nursery school.

RATINGS

- ★★★★ OUTSTANDING
- ★★★ GOOD
- ★★ AVERAGE
- ★ BELOW AVERAGE

A week after the game entered the house, Rachel never played it unless urged to do so. And there are some good reasons for her lack of enthusiasm. Foremost is Sam's philosophical explanation: "Little kids just aren't very interested in videogames." In fact, young preschoolers aren't very interested in playing *any* game by the rules for more than a minute or two. Physically, too, the game is frustrating: A three-year-old's coordination isn't refined enough to manipulate the joystick precisely, so Rachel found it hard to make the rotating character parts stop when she wanted them to.

Above all, a video display is not a toy. It can't be handled or thrown or turned upside down, and it leaves little room for the kind of imaginative "let's pretend" play on which little kids thrive. To Rachel, the game proved as interesting as a mechanical music box, no more, no less.

Sam, on the other hand, loved it. It hasn't replaced *Pac-Man* or *Freeway* or *Chopper Command* in his affections, but he's played its more challenging levels at least once a day for a week. He especially likes beating the clock at the "Four Berry" level in which the player races the sun, and "Five Berry" and "Six Berry," in which the player is given musical cues.

For a first grader, it's an enormously likable game. It's cheerful, colorful and utterly without violence. No one gets zapped, and, as Rachel discovered, everyone wins when the dolls begin to dance. □

REALSPORTS TENNIS ★★★
Designer uncredited. (Atari. VCS-compatible cartridge. \$29.95)

By Ken Uston

Sometimes things go full circle in unexpected ways. Atari's *RealSports Tennis* is a state-of-the-art simulation, no question. The on-screen players' forehand and backhand stances are realistic. Game and set scores



You can have your Shortcake and make her dance, too.

are exhibited, and you can enter your name for continuous ego-gratification. Even the sound effects are impressive. In fact, *RealSports Tennis* surpasses both Activision's VCS-compatible *Tennis* and Mattel's overly complicated Intellivision version. But, despite my enthusiasm, something bothers me about this game.

The videogame craze was launched about 10 years ago by the legendary *Pong*. It consisted simply of two paddles, a square ball and a net which was nothing more than a vertical line down the middle of the screen. You maneuvered the paddles to hit the ball back and forth. When we disregard the living color and the fancy sound effects, the basic kick from *RealSports Tennis* is exactly the same as it was from *Pong*. At the higher difficulty level, the former poses a

greater hand-eye challenge because you must push the firing button at the right time to swat the ball with the electronic tennis racket. Otherwise, the games are basically the same.

RealSports Tennis no doubt will appeal to tennis buffs who so enjoy the real game that a high-resolution simulation will cause them to spend hours in front of their TV sets. It may also attract those who have never played *Pong*. Finally, there are those who enjoyed *Pong*, haven't played it in years and may again enjoy this type of game, albeit disguised in all its finery.

At the very least, *RealSports Tennis* is an impressive (though uncredited) VCS-programming accomplishment. □

FLASH GORDON ★★★
Designed by David Lubar. (Fox. VCS-compatible cartridge. \$29.95)

By Howard Polskin

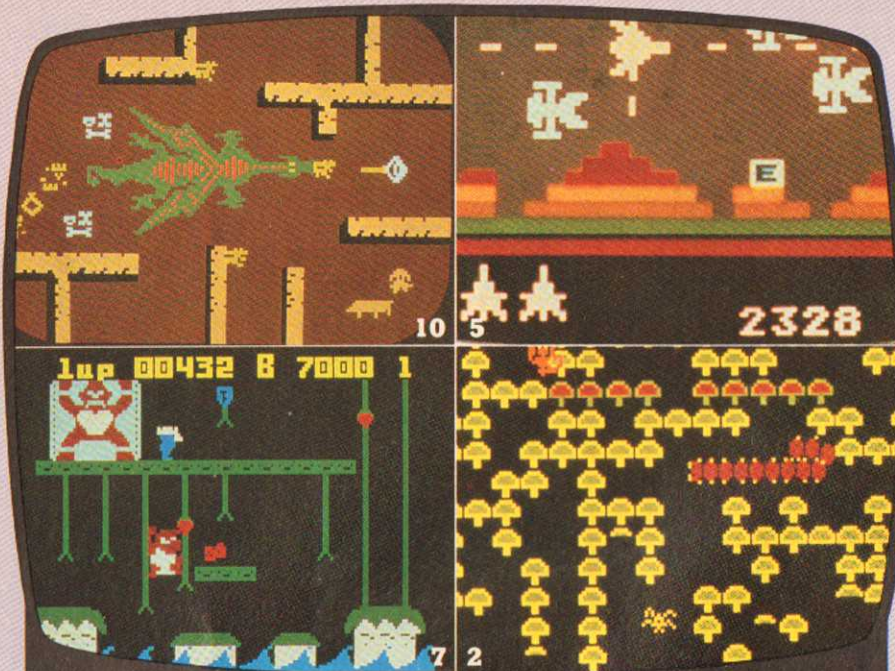
Finally, a videogame better than the movie—which is not necessarily saying all that much. *Flash Gordon*, the movie, was a disaster. Luckily, *Flash Gordon*, the videogame, is wonderful. This is an above-average outer-space shoot-'em-up that draws practically nothing from the movie.

Like most space videogames, the goal is to pilot an on-screen spaceship through the dangerous stretches of the universe inhabited by evil aliens. The spaceship encounters patrolling enemy vessels, space debris and spider warriors. There are also stranded spacemen who come drifting by. Just make contact with them and they're saved, though for a mere 70 points it's hardly worth the effort. Accidentally shoot one of the spacemen, however, and it'll cost you 1,000 points.

One of the things I immediately liked about the game is its firing mechanism. The shots are accurate and easy to control, plus



RealSports Tennis: serving up a souped-up Pong.



Last Month This Month

Top Carts *

1	1	MS. PAC-MAN Designer uncredited. (Atari, VCS-compatible, \$29.95)
10	2	CENTIPEDE Designer uncredited. (Atari, VCS- and 5200-compatible, \$34.95/\$39.95)
3	3	RIVER RAID Designed by Carol Shaw. (Activision, VCS-compatible, \$31.95)
—	4	SPACE FURY Designer uncredited. (Coleco, VCS-, Intellivision and ColecoVision compatible, \$30)
5	5	VANGUARD Designer uncredited. (Atari, VCS-compatible, \$29.95)
9	6	FROGGER Designer uncredited. (Parker Brothers, VCS-compatible, \$30)
8	7	DONKEY KONG JR. Designer uncredited. (Coleco, ColecoVision-compatible, \$30)
2	8	PITFALL Designed by David Crane. (Activision, VCS- and Intellivision-compatible, \$31.95)
7	9	PHOENIX Designer uncredited. (Atari, VCS-compatible, \$29.95)
—	10	SWORDS AND SERPENTS Designed by Brian Dougherty. (Imagic, Intellivision-compatible, \$34.95)

Behind the Top 10 Carts: "More arcade adaptations" is the apparent cry of videogame fans as they stock up on arcade-inspired titles. This month, seven out of our Top 10 are arcade adaptations, and more are on the way. Such titles as *Space Panic*, *Qix* and veterans *Donkey Kong*, *Zaxxon* (for the VCS) and *Gorf* (for ColecoVision) are receiving high marks. While Activision and Imagic continue to spurn arcade licensing, some of their forthcoming releases, such as *Robotank* and *Enduro*, certainly take their cues from the quarter-eating machines.

Chart followers may note that not one movie-based cartridge has made the list, and may not in the near future. Game buyers' less than enthusiastic reception of *E.T.*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Spider-Man*, and *Jedi Arena* has stopped many companies from pursuing plans for more such titles. We guess that *Gandhi* game will never get off the ground now. (M.T.) □

*Based on a nationwide survey of sales and rentals at presstime. All games are in cartridge format unless otherwise noted. Suggested retail prices are approximate.

they make a very pleasing sound as you blast away. The dual screen display is a clever touch. The top two-thirds of the screen presents the spaceship battling the aliens. The bottom shows an overview of the terrain over which your ship must soar. The most intriguing element is that you're able to spot and avoid such obstacles as "disruptors," which appear as treacherous bits of space debris that can easily knock off any one of the three ships in your fleet.

The way the game begins is somewhat confusing because there's no display with the title of the game. Similarly, when it ends, the score merely reverts to zero.

But these are minor complaints, and *Flash Gordon* is not some flash-in-the-pan game. It's down-to-earth, and that's miles above its cinematic namesake. With games like this, who needs movies? □

SPACE PANIC ★ ★

Designer uncredited. (Coleco, ColecoVision-compatible cartridge, \$30 approx.)

By Dan Gutman

What do you do after you've licensed all the current hit arcade games? You dig into the arcade archives and dredge up some old games. A minor hit in its day, *Space Panic* is a 1980 ladder game that actually pre-dates *Donkey Kong*.

Pacifists will be pleased with it, at least momentarily. In *Space Panic* you don't shoot and kill things—you just bury them alive! Three types of nondescript space monsters plod after your spaceman, and he gets rid of them by digging holes for them to fall into and covering them up again. If he makes the monsters fall two or three levels, you receive more points. And, for goodness sake, watch your oxygen level. After all, this is a space game.

As in *Donkey Kong*, there's the annoying feature of having to start at the beginning if you get killed in the middle of a wave. But there are nice new touches also. You no longer must go through the torture of lining up your screen persona before climbing a ladder.

Like most ladder games, *Space Panic* looks easy, but it's very difficult and frustrating. It's a thinking person's game. For example, to drop a monster two levels, your spaceman must find an empty vertical space to dig, dig one hole, go upstairs to dig the other hole, lure a monster into it and bury him, while avoiding the other monsters.

The graphics and sound are simple and lack the inspiration of other Coleco games. That's the problem with attempting to duplicate three-year-old arcade games—the medium's come so far since then. Rather than remain faithful to the coin-op *Space Panic*, I would have liked to see Coleco jazz it up a bit, with more animated monsters, a more complex environment, an ape, anything. These days it's not good enough to just "bring the arcade home." You've got to have it come over and redecorate the place, too. □

KEYSTONE KAPERS ★★ ★

Designed by Gary Kitchen. (Activision, VCS-compatible cartridge. \$30 approx.)

By Michael Blanchet

Keystone Kelly, the hero of *Keystone Kapers*, is an archetypical '20s movie cop. There are no guns or car chases in Keystone Kelly's world. On the contrary, Keystone has little more than a pair of legs and a blackjack with which to work. Fortunately, he has a simple assignment: Nab a fleeing felon named Harry Hooligan, who has dashed into a department store.

When the game begins, Keystone stands alone in the lower right-hand corner of the screen. The crook is already on the second floor making haste for the roof. If he reaches its east end, he escapes and Keystone begins again with the same crook.

The entire store, consisting of three floors and the roof, is much larger than what is seen on the screen at any given moment. As Keystone runs off one edge he reappears, *a la Pitfall*, in another frame. In all, the scrolling playfield spans eight screens.

To locate the convict, you use a long-range scanner at the bottom of the screen. Here is where you map out your strategy—should I take the store elevator or the escalator? To the third floor or the second?

Kapers is not a pattern game, since the crook seems to possess a sixth sense regarding Keystone's whereabouts virtually guaranteeing no two games will be alike.

Quirks aside, *Kapers* is easily the best thing to come from Activision since *Pitfall*. I like the fact that you can beat this game. Instead of immediately fleeing to another structure, our target surrenders when caught, giving you that fleeting but glorious feeling of victory. *Keystone Kapers* is actually an accurate depiction of real police work—there's always a crook to be caught and chances are he's one step ahead of the law. For a while, anyway. □

BOMB SQUAD ★★ ★ ★

Designer uncredited. (Mattel, Intellivision-compatible cartridge. \$36 approx.)

By Jimmy Trahin

This game is a blast! I've been a member of the Los Angeles Police Department Bomb Squad for six years, and have faced dozens of explosive devices in my career, but never one as complicated as this.

The goal is to disarm a bomb before it blows up a city. It can be done by manipulating tools to re-wire circuit boards. As you complete each board, you get a better view of a secret code number. If you correctly guess the number before time runs out you save the day. There are nine game levels, and if you can get through the most difficult, there probably aren't many real-life

Officer Jimmy Trahin is the Senior Bomb Technician for the Los Angeles Police Department Bomb Squad.

bombs you couldn't take apart by yourself.

The Intellivoice voice-synthesis module adds realism to the game—it's like working with a partner telling you what you should and shouldn't do. The voice of Boris, the mad bomber, like the ticking and sirens, is an annoyance you must try to block out.

In real life, when I encounter bombs, my approach is exactly the same as in this game—I listen carefully to my partner and don't let the time factor or any of the other distractions get to me. I concentrate on working just one part at a time. That's my advice for this game, too: Just concentrate on exactly what you're doing at the moment. If you lose a few circuit boards, just keep going and use a little logic.

The graphics are excellent, and believe me, it's very easy to tell whether you've won or lost the game! □

NIMBLE NUMBERS NED ★★ ★

Designed by Robert Harris. (Odyssey, Odyssey²-compatible cartridge. \$39.95)

TYPE AND TELL ★ ★

Designer uncredited. (Odyssey, Odyssey²-compatible cartridge. \$39.95)

By Toni Cohen

"Back to basics" seems to be most educators' and parents' learning ethos nowadays. As an educator, I agree that children need the fundamentals to build knowledge. While not McGuffey Readers, *Nimble Numbers Ned* and *Type and Tell* are games which uphold this value.

Nimble Numbers Ned combines basic math exercises followed by, as a reward, a simple game of Nimble Ned leaping over

New York City special-education teacher Toni Cohen has written for Scholastic's Electronic Learning.

rolling barrels. It offers three kinds of math exercises: "Name the Shapes" (basic geometry), "Multiplication" and "Addition." *Type and Tell* facilitates learning by the user's typing words onto a TV screen.

One thing I like about these educational videogames is that parents can easily participate; classroom techniques transfer easily to the home. For example, when your child is naming the shapes in *Nimble Numbers Ned*, you could ask him or her to name similar shapes found around the room. When unable to get a correct answer to the multiplication problems, parents could "coach" with step-by-step solutions.

Do kids like these games? In the classroom, at least, I've seen children eager to figure out the correct answers to the math problems of *Nimble Numbers Ned*. The math games give kids immediate feedback to their answers by either going on automatically to the next example or offering a second chance if the child answers incorrectly. (After two tries the correct answer appears, but the player can take as much time as necessary to type in an answer.) There are, as with most videogames, varying skill levels.

Type and Tell enhances learning twofold: Children can learn to type on the Odyssey² keyboard, as well as learn to spell. It would probably be most useful with a list of correctly spelled words or under parental supervision, since it can't make any spelling corrections.

Both games have simple, blocky, but effective graphics. They're colorful, attractive and hold kids' attention.

The optional Voice voice-synthesis module—necessary for both cartridges to be truly effective—has its good and bad points. While the robotic voice can be nerve-grinding, it plays a very important part in learning since hearing the answer as well as seeing it reinforces the experience. □

(Continued)



Leaping barrels and learning basics with *Nimble Numbers Ned*.

Computer

PINBALL CONSTRUCTION

KIT ★★★★★

Designed by Bill Budge. (BudgeCo floppy disc for the Apple II/II+. \$39.95)

By Phil Wiswell
And Bernie DeKoven

The wall between videogame player and designer is beginning to crumble, thanks to such new approaches to videogame design as *The Arcade Machine* by Broderbund and *Pinball Construction Kit* by BudgeCo. In the latter, the player is given a "tool kit" full of objects and is let loose to design his or her own computer pinball machine. Essentially, *Pinball Construction Kit* is more an activity than a game.

After the disc loads, the screen divides in half: The left side displays the outline of an empty pinball table, and the right shows the objects you can place anywhere on the table. They include bumpers, flippers, sling shots, knockers, rollover lights, drop targets, ball hoppers, spinners, chutes, even a magnet. Selection and placement of objects is made simple by use of a little hand with a pointed index finger. You use the joystick to move the hand to a desired object, then press the fire button to drag the object onto the table.

The real excitement of this disc is not that you *play* pinball, but rather that you *play with* pinball. The act of building becomes at least as much fun as playing. You want flippers? You can have a hundred or more, anywhere on the screen. You want complexity? You can give bonus scores for hitting a combination of targets in order. And if you get tired of realistic pinball, you can change the physics of the game (by controlling degrees of gravity, kick, elasticity and ball speed) and end up watching a weightless ball bouncing around indefinitely. Color graphics and a range of sound effects give plenty of window dressing for finishing touches, though the game's just as much fun in black-and-white.

In case you don't know where to begin, the disc includes four demonstration pinball tables. Some are fun to play as they are, but you're free to change anything about them. Begin by modifying one of the four basic designs. Then try building one from scratch.

The kit is well enough designed that anyone with a bit of patience and some understanding of what makes a good game can create intricate, challenging, professional designs that would appeal to even the most discriminating pinball aficionado. BudgeCo even includes a graphic "magnifying glass" that allows you to change minute details of the board, pixel by pixel.

A four-star rating seems too low for a single disc that is really a high-level programming language in itself. You won't need to buy another game of computer pinball until—and if—a better kit arrives. □



Crystalizing standards for movie/game adaptations.

THE DARK CRYSTAL ★★★★★

Designed by Roberta Williams with Ken Williams, Chris Iden and Christopher Cerf. (Sierra On-Line floppy discs for the Apple II/II+ computer with 48K. \$39.95)

By Suzan Prince

Conventional and computer videogames have been ostensibly based on movies before, but *The Dark Crystal* is the first true game adaptation. I can think of a few other movie-game duos which have failed miserably because the latter didn't stand up to the former. But so completely in tune with its movie namesake in terms of character, plot and graphics is this version of *The Dark Crystal* that a standard has been set.

The introduction to the instruction booklet (which is done in beautiful calligraphy) tells you that Jen, hero of the movie and now your screen persona, must find and restore a mystical shard to the titular Crystal before the Great Conjunction of the three Suns. If he fails, the world is doomed to live forever under the rule of the evil Skeksis. Thus the movie and the game begin on identical footing.

Basic knowledge of the movie is a plus (and adds to the fun) but isn't necessary, because after the premise of Jen's mission is established, the computer goes off in a zillion wonderful directions—many of which echo the movie, some of which have nothing to do with it and some of which contain elements of plot twists Jim Henson abandoned by the completion of the movie.

The Apple computer is Jen's eyes, ears, hands and feet, not to mention a flexible communications tool. Using the keyboard, you must discover (on your own, although the manual offers hints) the proper commands that move the game along. When Jen finds himself facing a stream, keying in "Cross Stream" will either result in the

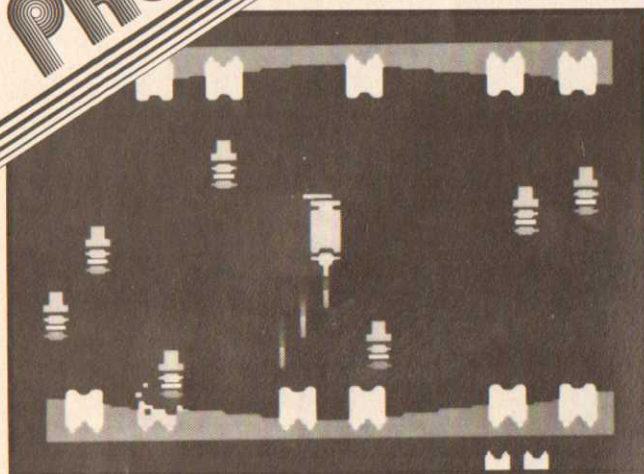
graphic depiction of Jen wading through the water or prompt the programmed reply, "The water is too deep. Jen cannot cross the stream." In that case you might instruct your electronic elfling to go north along the stream until he finds an area shallow enough to tackle. Chris Cerf, who provided the textual input, programs with a marvelous sense of humor. At one point I asked a winged, bird-like creature on-screen if it had anything to contribute to the hunt. "Talk Creature," I keyed. Back came the response: "This is *Dark Crystal*, not *Dr. Dolittle*."

Mapping is essential here, as it is in any decent adventure game, but even more so since this epic is of epic proportions; with nearly 200 pictures and literally hundreds of possible routes, the game is contained on both sides of two diskettes—500K in all.

The Dark Crystal is not a child's plaything. Although eight-year-olds who know *Adventure* or similar games will understand it, Cerf stresses that *Crystal* requires logic, patience and strategy that would sorely test the mettle of all but the most prodigious child. Grown-up or child, you'll spend weeks with *The Dark Crystal* before solving its mystery (there's a "Save" function that allows you to pick up exactly where you left off), but that, of course, is the pleasure of adventure/strategy games. In fact, you may wish to spend that much time just exploring caves, tunnels, mountains, valleys and other fantasy environments that populate the screen before you even begin settling down to the serious business of play. Once the mystery is cracked, however, it's unlikely that the game will entice you all over again. Getting there, as usual, is half the fun.

As both a movie game and an adventure game, *The Dark Crystal* is all that is promised and more. I can't wait to see how Sierra On-Line and Henson follow it up. □

Coming next in cart, cassette, disc



Activision's Plaque Attack: brush with death?

CARTRIDGE

BANK HEIST Video cops 'n' robbers, with the player on the wrong side of the law. After your antihero breaks into an on-screen bank vault, an auto chase ensues. Also in Commodore VIC-20 and Atari 400/800/1200XL computer versions. (Fox, VCS-compatible)

BZZ BOMBERS Armed only with a special bee repellent, your screen persona turns angry honeybees into honeycombs. (Mattel, Intellivision-compatible)

DIG DUG Your tunnel-burrowing miner is equipped with an air hose and a pump with which to blow up (in both senses) such underground enemies as Fygar, the fire-breathing dragon, and Pooka, a giant tomato with goggles. Extra points for crushing them under rocks. Adapted from the Namco-America arcade game. (Atari, VCS-compatible)

MISSION X On a top-secret bombing raid behind enemy lines, your jet fighter must wipe out battleships and enemy planes on the way to a strategic target. Includes night and day sequences. (Mattel, Intellivision-compatible)

MR. DO Mr. Do the clown mows paths to pick cherries in his orchard. Chased by the evil Badguys, he must also throw Power Balls and drop squashing apples on his pursuers. Letters littering the paths can be nabbed for extra points. Based on the Universal arcade game. (Coleco, ColecoVision- and VCS-compatible)

MOGUL MANIAC A first-person skin-run challenge with gates, trylons, flags and other obstacles. Comes with

Amiga's Joyboard accessory for the VCS. (Amiga, VCS-compatible)

MOON SWEEPER Miners are trapped on several moons of Jupiter. Through two screens, your rescue ship must first dodge asteroids and land on each moon, then scour the surface for stranded miners while avoiding deadly aliens. Intellivision version in September, ColecoVision version (one of Imagic's first) in October. (Imagic, ColecoVision-, Intellivision- and VCS-compatible)

OFF YOUR ROCKER An abstract game based on player reactions to colors, lights and other stimuli, described by the manufacturer as similar to *Simon* and *Twister*. Designed for use with Amiga's Joyboard accessory for the VCS. (Amiga, VCS-compatible)

PLAQUE ATTACK On a playfield consisting of a mouth with a set of teeth, you navigate a loaded tube of toothpaste to defend your enamel territory against hot dogs, hamburgers, ice cream cones, candy canes, french fries and other comestible creeps. (Activision, VCS-compatible)

ROBOTANK Through day and night sequences, your on-screen tank fights enemy robot tanks. The playfield is equipped with on-screen radar for determining relative positions. An enhanced-memory, 8K cartridge. (Activision, VCS-compatible)

SATAN'S HOLLOW Your two objectives are, first, to do battle with the Prince of Darkness and his swirls of flame, and then to build a bridge so you can cross the blazing River of Fire to safety. Adapted from the Midway arcade game. (Coleco, ColecoVision-compatible)

SLITHER On a desert landscape, your screen persona must elude or blast slithering snakes which can divide to conquer, prickly cacti, strange lizards and birds of prey. Designed for use with the Roller Controller trackball accessory (included). Adapted from the Century II arcade game. (Coleco, ColecoVision-compatible)

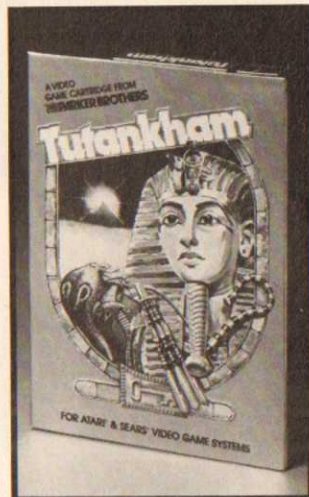
SOLAR STORM Alien crafts attempt to overheat your planet. Using a photon blaster and solar shield, your ground-based screen persona must first eliminate this wave and then attack the flagship far above the planet. (Imagic, VCS-compatible)

SURF'S UP A first-person surfing game, with your screen persona cutting across waves, riding the curl, hot-dogging and trying not to wipe out. Designed for use with Amiga's Joyboard accessory for the VCS. (Amiga, VCS-compatible)

SWORDQUEST: WATERWORLD The third cartridge in Atari's SwordQuest quartet. An adventure game placing your onscreen heroic adventurer on the planet WaterWorld and pitting him against mysterious water spirits who tease and test him before allowing access to the Sword of Ultimate Sorcery. (Atari, VCS-compatible)

TUTANKHAM Your screen persona enters King Tut's tomb in search of keys to unlock secret vaults. An ancient curse, however, unleashes six spirits who do battle against your hero's modern lasers and bombs. In two formats. Adapted from the Konami arcade game. (Parker Brothers, Intellivision- and VCS-compatible)

WILD WESTERN Player meets out frontier justice as a six-shootin' sheriff doing battle with a band of would-be train robbers. A train running on vertical tracks divides the screen and provides both a shield and a nuisance. Includes a bonus screen in the ColecoVision version. (Coleco, ColecoVision- and VCS-compatible)



Tutankham: cartoon cartouche.

COMPUTER

ASTROSMASH, TRON DEADLY DISCS, UTOPIA New computer versions of the popular Intellivision games. (Mattel, Aquarius-compatible)

STAR LEAGUE BASEBALL Another version of the national pastime, this one incorporates options for one or two players such as power-hitting and a roster of starting and relief pitchers. (Gamestar, Atari 400/800/1200XL floppy disc) □

GAME PLANS

NAME THAT GAME: Parker Brothers will finally release the first of the long-awaited *Jedi* games in August, with another to follow in October—but the company still hasn't decided on titles... Meanwhile, **Imagic's Safecracker**, a cops and robbers game where the player is the robber, is going through a face-lift and possible name-change operation due to complaints from the media and public that its theme was unethical. The company says the theme is being changed to a *Mission Impossible*-type scenario, but that game play remains the same. **FROM CATHARSIS TO THE CLASSROOM:** Wizard Video Games, maker of the first horror-movie based games, **Halloween** and **Texas Chainsaw Massacre**, is shifting emphasis to educational software for home computers, with trivia games as intermediate step. First such release: **Movie Trivia Game**.

IF YOU CAN'T PLAY 'EM, LISTEN TO 'EM: Atari has made a deal with Kid Stuff Records to make "Atari-inspired recordings." First titles based on **Missile Command**, **Asteroids** and **Yar's Revenge**. **DOWN BUT NOT OUT:** Despite rumors that it's going out of business, **Starpath**—maker of the Supercharger, a memory expansion module—says it will be releasing six new titles throughout the summer. Starpath will also be releasing ColecoVision-compatible versions of three games in September.

—Abigail Reitsnyder