

Video Review

INCORPORATING
HOME VIDEO

\$1.95

THE WORLD AUTHORITY ON CONSUMER VIDEO

BUDGET VIDEO!

FIRST TEST OF THE CHEAPEST GEAR EVER

Complete Handbook to New Portable VCRs

M*A*S*H: TV Taper's Guide to All 247 Shows

**Exclusive: First Atomic Game
By Ralph Nader**



MARCH 1983

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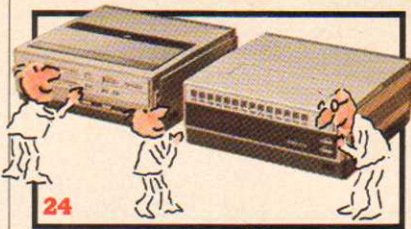
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Cover Photo: Michael Wainne



Censorship, sex and 'Custer's Revenge'

DISC TALK

In your January '83 Questions column, you published a response to Bruce Coughlin's question re "cross talk" occurring on laser videodiscs. For your response, you had contacted Nick Milazzo, a technical supervisor for Pioneer Electronic Service Corp., which is a Pioneer subsidiary independent of Pioneer Video, but which has the responsibility for servicing our laser-optical videodisc players.

Nick Milazzo's response was technically correct (that cross talk is caused by a warped disc, which can occur from an improper glue mixture to hold the two sides of the disc together, or excessive heat or pressure during shipment).

But it should also be noted for the benefit of your readers that disc warping more often results from improper disc storage in the consumer's home. Laser videodiscs which may play perfectly at the time they are purchased can develop cross-talk problems many months later if they are not stored properly.

It should be noted that if consumers experience cross-talk problems with all their laser videodiscs, they should have their videodisc players checked by an authorized service center for proper alignment and tracking of the laser.

Ronald F. Petty
Director of Communications
Pioneer Video, Inc.

•For more on preventing—and curing—warped discs, see "Secrets of Superior Disc Care," page 42.—Ed.

ANTI-SEX?

You're lucky I renewed my subscription last month. If I were faced with that choice after reading the Backspace article in the January *VR* by anti-sexual advocate Kristen Reilly, I might not have renewed.

This past year, I have read your otherwise excellent magazine, trying to ignore your constant use of the word "person" as a suffix, when "man" or "woman" is clearly the better choice. Such misuse of the language is anti-human, since humans are sexual beings. Your (as well as the government's) attempt to unisex everything makes me want to vomit. What's wrong with sex roles?

Getting back to Ms. Reilly, (Miss or Mrs. is not deserving of her), her misplaced social conscience and that of Women Against Pornography is censor-

ship, pure and simple. Her reference to Nazis is laughable, since her organization tends to lean in just the same direction.

True, the game *Custer's Revenge* is based on fantasy, not reality. What video-game isn't? And just what is wrong with fantasies—sexual or otherwise? Most men and women have entertained fantasies of rape, but certainly do not seek it out in real life.

I almost feel sorry for people such as Ms. Reilly who can't seem to separate fantasy from reality, and don't think other people can either. To me, *this* is obscene.

James M. McCoy
Big Lake, TX

•Kristen Reilly replies:

As soon as a woman challenges the bastion of male-dominated sexuality, she's called anti-sex. This is a popular way to silence women.

Sex roles are censorship, whether one is conditioned to be weak, dependent and passive, or strong, aggressive and dominating.

Pornography can't be dismissed as harmless fantasy. It reflects and feeds cultural realities, from women's low status as sexual objects to violent physical abuse of women.

Women Against Pornography doesn't advocate censorship. Could Mr. McCoy be just slightly threatened by the idea of sexual equality?

THE TV SPIELBERG

What a Christmas present! I'm referring to your December issue's Critic's Choice—"Spielberg's Unknown Video Movies."

As an avid fan of Steven Spielberg since the theatrical release of *Jaws* in '75, I have been scrambling to find even a decent list of his pre-fame television works.

Now, with your article, I can start a videotape collection of Spielberg's TV shows to go with my collection of his motion pictures.

Video Review—thank you!

Brian Turns
Greenwood, IN

COPY RIGHTS

The very thought of "spoiler" anticopy systems ("Can You Copy?", Jan. '83 *VR*) is sheer insanity!

First, if people really desire to copy a record or videotape, they will always figure out ways to do it.

Second, I truly believe that if I want to

copy something for my own personal and noncommercial use, some hotshot film or music executive does not have the right to stop me! The Xeroxing of printed material from books and magazines for personal use has been okayed by the courts, and the authors of these materials surely are not going broke because of it.

Third, if these companies weren't trying to gouge us consumers with outrageously high prices for records (nine or 10 bucks!) and videotapes (up to 100 bucks!), then consumers wouldn't be copying even half of what they currently are!

Fourth, I think it's high time we audiophiles and videophiles start organizing and begin letter-writing campaigns before these big corporations rule every aspect of our lives!

R. Katerzynske
Ripon, WI

THANKS

I want to express my appreciation to you for your concern regarding my problems with a video company, Galaxy Electronics. I really appreciate your contacting Galaxy and myself to be sure I wasn't having any more problems with the company and that I received the products I ordered. I'm glad to see how concerned you are about your subscribers and the business practices of your advertisers.

I surely wouldn't hesitate to recommend your magazine to anyone looking for the best video magazine available.

Kevin Overbeek
Bemidji, MN

ART STALKER

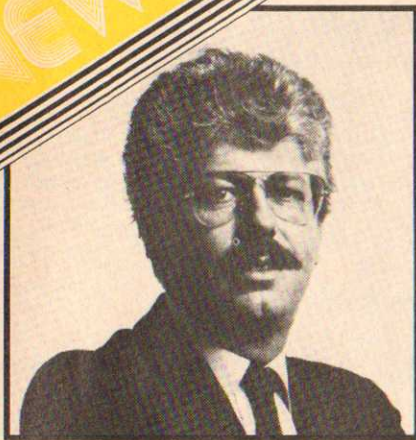
We enjoyed the review of our video-game *Night Stalker* in the December *Video Review*. However, it was disappointing to find the art screen had been reversed with that of another company's game, *Cosmic Swarm*. Since the visual portrayal of a cartridge is one of the most important aspects of a game, we would appreciate a correction in your next issue.

Alison Hill
Consumer Spokesperson
Mattel Electronics

•Oops. Sorry about the slip-up.—Ed.

Correspondence addressed to Video Review is only answered in print in the Letters or Questions pages, space permitting. Sorry, no personal replies.

Special: Flashes from the big show



□ **AN OFFICER YOU CAN'T REFUSE:** Price slashing is endemic to home video lately—as witnessed at January's blockbuster Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas—and Hollywood studios are now joining fray. Paramount used CES to unveil yet another budget-priced cassette—*An Officer and a Gentleman*, which will go on sale for \$39.95 in VHS and—more importantly—\$29.95 in the new super-sound format, Beta Hi-Fi. (See page 36.) Paramount says it will scan its full library for movies it can issue in the \$39.95/\$29.95 price range. Possibilities? *Grease*, *Pretty Baby*. Other studios at CES indicated they'll soon follow.

□ **TORRID TECHNOLOGY:** Technology was still star of CES, with dazzling and futuristic robot and home computer displays prompting many home video companies to each flaunt its own technological process. GE, for example, used exhibit to show off lab breakthroughs in video display technology, including proposed new Comband high-resolution picture system. GE says beauty of Comband is fact that it can be applied to current NTSC broadcast standards. Comband operates by eliminating redundant information now displayed on conventional receivers, then using that space for additional information, resulting in compressed picture with better resolution. GE says it's studying application in home video. Comband can also be used by cable-TV systems to double number of channels offered.

* * *

□ **TALARIA HYSTERIA?** GE drew heavy crowds to CES exhibit with other advanced display proposal: Talaria high-definition projection system which uses light-valve as opposed to standard cathode-ray tube technology. Result, as seen in GE booth: Huge (25-foot wide) screen featuring crystal clear HDTV picture. GE says Talaria—now for professional use only with a \$75,000 price tag—will eventually be made for home use. Also news at show, though not on display, was Panasonic revelation to VR that it's mounted crash program on development of flat-screen, wall-hung projection system for home. Though details are sketchy, executive told us home models could be in stores within three to five years. Meanwhile, Panasonic followed Kloss into portable projection TV sets, whipped wraps off new 60-inch projector which uses plain wall as screen and can be stored in closet after use. Price: \$1,995.

* * *

□ **TURNPIKE TV:** Ready for latest twist in "home" video? It's new in-dash car stereo system with built-in two-inch black-and-white TV set, introduced at CES by American Audio. Company says there's no danger of enraptured viewer/driver careening off road, since TV set goes off when ignition goes on. Price, including AM/FM radio and audio-cassette player, is \$1,495. It's scheduled to hit stores this spring. Other new wrinkle in TV sets are pocket-size TV sets from Casio and Magtone. Casio model, which uses LCD (liquid-crystal display), has 2.7-inch screen, will appear in stores some time this summer. Magtone says it will introduce a pocket TV/AM-FM radio combination in near future at about \$200.

* * *

□ **HIS MASTER'S RANDOM ACCESS:** It's been in talking stage for year, but RCA used CES to make it official: Next CED videodisc player will be model featuring random-access and interactive capabilities. RCA says player will go on sale in mid '83, accompanied by library of interactive discs. Pricing details aren't available, but it will clearly carry premium over current top-of-line \$499 stereo model. Meanwhile, dormant VHD system is stirring once again. Just when industry had declared VHD dead, developer Matsushita announced it will begin selling home VHD players in Japan this spring. And at CES, one of original US backers—GE—said it will stick with VHD format once system is ready here. Earlier industry rumors had GE dropping VHD for other disc format.

* * *

□ **INSIDE SEGA:** CES witnessed entry of major new name in home videogames. Paramount affiliate Sega, major coin-op arcade game company, will start offering cartridges for videogame consoles. Games will be based on current Paramount movie titles. Examples: *Marathon Man*, *Star Trek II: Wrath of Khan*, *Friday the 13th* and *Airplane*.

THE LATEST IN NEW PRODUCTS

Latest gear from Atari, Olympus, more



ATARI
Home Computer
Model 1200XL

Who said you shouldn't mix business with pleasure? This home computer enables you to work and play—and it aims to make it easy for you to do so.

The computer has 64,000 bits of RAM inside a polished metal exterior. It features a spectrum of 256 colors

for monitor display, four distinct sounds through built-in speakers and two controller ports for use with joysticks or paddles.

In addition, the keyboard shifts into a European character set complete with symbols for currency and accents. It is compatible with any TV set or monitor.

Atari, 1265 Barregas Ave., Sunnyvale, CA 94086 (408) 942-1900.

AMBICO
Tele-Cine Converter
Model V-0610 \$49.95

Get rid of old, outdated film or slide equipment, but save your memories with this slide and home-movie converter.

To use, project super 8mm film or a slide into one side of the converter and aim your videocamera into the other side. The result is a tape recording of your first birthday party and cherished footage of your Little League home runs.



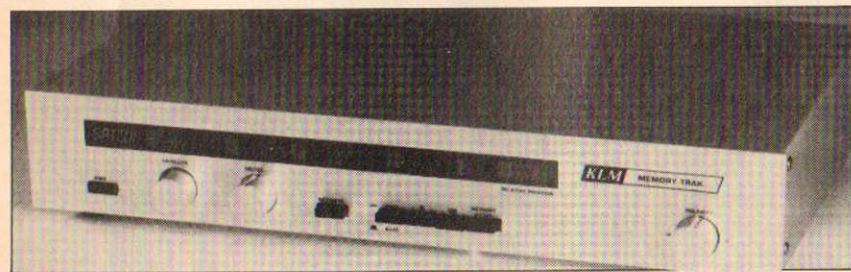
This tele-cine converter can be used with any videocamera and any slide or film size.

Ambico, 101 Horton Ave., Lynbrook, NY 11563 (516) 887-3433.

KLM
Satellite Dish Control Console
Memory-Trak \$986

Not even a power failure will cause this new remote dish-control console

and a memory safety lock to protect against accidental programming changes. The console also contains a 0° to 180° relative dish-position read-out and comes with a 12-volt motor



to lose its memory—not for eight hours, at least.

This model, which programs and recalls up to 50 satellite positions, features eight-hour memory retention

module to power the dish.

It can only be used with KLM's satellite antenna.

KLM, 16890 Church St., Morgan Hill, CA 95037 (408) 779-7363.

PALMTEX
Videogame System
The Palmtex PVS

Here's the first palm-size videogame system with interchangeable cartridges offering color graphics, 3D effects, sound muting and a pause button.

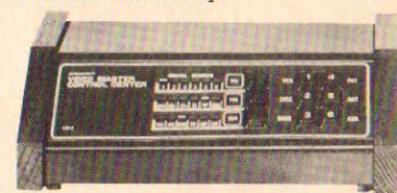
Insert cartridges into its front and use your other hand to control the joystick. The game itself appears on a 3x2-inch screen.

The battery, meant to last 300 hours, weighs about four ounces.

Palmtex, 1167 Chess Dr., Suite E, Easter City, CA 94404 (415) 341-3366

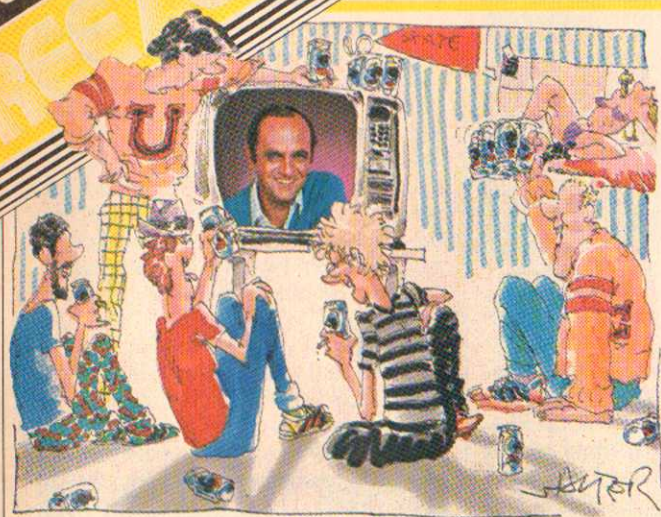
RECOTON
Home Entertainment Control Center
Model V612 \$199.95

Easy come, easy go is what happens with this digital switcher. You can connect it to six different video components and it will operate any three simultaneously.



The switcher includes three hook-up cables and contains a built-in 10 dB signal amplifier.

Recoton, 46-23 Crane St., Long Island City, NY 11101 (212) 392-6442.



Bobbing for Booze

Shakespeare was wrong—there's quite a bit in a name. Take Bob, the name that's the basis for a new video-age campus game.

It's called Bobbing. Not bobbing, as in ducking for apples, but Bobbing. It's got nothing to do with British police, either. The root is Bob Newhart.

Devised at an upstate New



York college, the game works this way: With everyone collected around a keg of beer and a VCR, mugs to the ready, someone slips in a cassette of a randomly chosen episode of *The Bob Newhart Show* (into the VCR, not the keg.) Whenever a character

says "Bob," everyone drinks until the next word on the show is uttered.

God forbid "Bob" should be the last word before a commercial. (F.L.)□

Three-Legged Racism?

Last month, the people at American Multiple Industries were delighted their "X-rated" home videogame, *Custer's Revenge* (photo left), was sparking nationwide protests from groups against pornography. "Any publicity is good publicity," a company spokesperson said.

So it comes as no surprise that the company has filed a lawsuit against Suffolk County, NY, and against a Suffolk legislator who seeks to ban sales and distribution of the game. And it isn't surprising that AMI called a New York City press conference—just before Christmas—to announce the \$11 million suit.

But there were more than a few surprises at the press conference, as John Weston, AMI's lawyer in the Suffolk County suit, tried to describe the game.

"This game doesn't portray rape," he said. "The quality of

videogames is very limited. Rape is well beyond the current technology." Moreover, Weston added, with a straight face, there isn't any violence depicted on the game playfield. "I can assure you, he said, "that the only bullets fired are entirely organic."

Why, then, he was asked, has the game generated such controversy and so many lawsuits? If not rape and violence, what does it depict? The description from Weston, who saw the game once, briefly—but has never played it—went something like this:

"There's a woman stick figure, and the only way you know she's a woman is because there are two triangles beneath her head and above her pelvic area. There's a man, and he has two legs and a shorter third leg. During the game, the man's shorter third leg becomes perpendicular to the other two..."

AMI president Stuart Kesten, also at the press conference, explained, "It's a sexual scenario. The gentleman figure and the woman figure are coupled." The male figure is named Custer, he said, because "Custer and the Indians—that's basically what we grew up with."

It all makes you wonder where Kesten and Weston grew up. Or if, in fact, they ever have. (M.R.)□

No-Beta Belmondo

If you combined Paul Newman, Clint Eastwood and Burt Reynolds and made the combination French, you'd get the appeal Jean Paul Belmondo has for French audiences—and a lot of women all over the world. Lately, though, Belmondo is creating

more controversy than the three Americans put together ever have.

Belmondo's business partner, Rene Chateau, who distributes Belmondo's movies on cassettes bearing France's Chateau label, announced that the star's latest blockbuster, *L'Ace*, would be released on cassettes—in the VHS format only. No Beta, no Philips V-2000 (Europe's third home format).

To make matters worse,

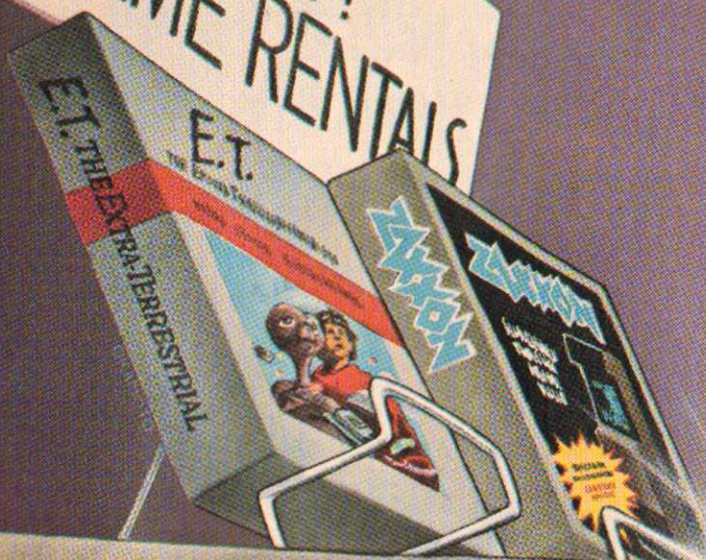


Chateau "derided" Sony and Philips for not doing a better job of selling their formats. Right now, VHS makes up at least 75% of French videotape purchases, according to *Variety*.

As L'Ace might say, "C'est le video." (D.C.)□



NEW!
GAME RENTALS



E.T.
THE EXTRA-TERRE
VIDEO GAME CARTR



RENTAL TAPES



MICHAEL SMITH



WORKOUT



STEVE MARTIN

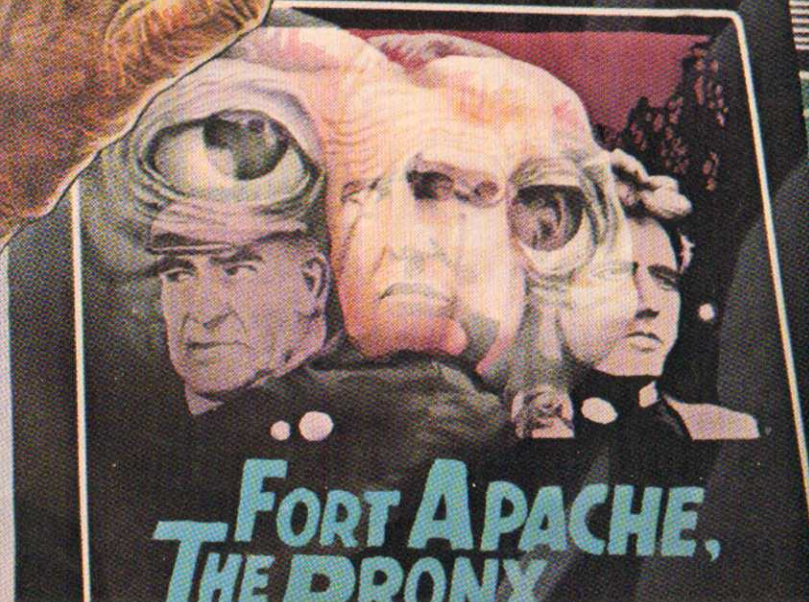


RENTAL DISCS

UPERMAN
THE MOVIE



FORT APACHE,
THE DRONX



THE DOLLARS AND SENSE OF VIDEOGAMES FOR RENT

By Mark Trost

Oh yes, you can judge a book by its cover—if the cover says something such as “Pulitzer-Prize winner,” “Gothic romance” or nothing at all (with a plain, brown wrapper). The same is essentially true of most other forms of home entertainment, including audio records, videotapes and discs. But what about videogames? How can players begin to guess if they’ll like a game with a title like *Android Creeps from Bayonne*?

Rent it. That’s the way thousands of players have begun to evaluate new home videogame cartridges over the past few months, and the notion is catching on fast. The problem, owing to the newness of game rental, is that new game renters have little idea of what to expect—or to reject—in game-rental plans.

Unlike videocassette rental, game-cartridge leasing didn’t begin because the game companies concocted elaborate rental schemes nor because of video-store owners’ interest in keeping gamers from buying second-rate cartridges. Like most retail gimmicks, this is plainly another ploy to try to get players to buy more cartridges. Rather than have hordes of gamers huddled around the stores’ demonstration console, more and more store owners are choosing to rent their cartridges for a few nights, allowing players to take their time trying out games. It helps keep wild crowds away, gives the store owners a few extra bucks and often hooks the players on the rented cartridges.

Playing on Borrowed Time

Retail psychology aside, game rental has both assets and liabilities for cartridge fans. Here’s how a typical operation works: Captain Video’s Game and Disc Annex in San Francisco offers a combination game- and video-cassette-rental club membership for a yearly fee of \$50. Members are each charged \$4 for a three-day game rental. Non-members can take the same cartridge home for \$6.

According to manager Kevin Cassidy, the store tries to keep in stock every game for the Atari VCS, the Mattel Intellivision and the Coleco ColecoVision systems. “Right now we have 90 games available for the Atari VCS,” says Cassidy. “I attempt to make it a point to keep a least one or two of every game available for rent. But it’s getting harder with all the new companies coming out with four and five titles apiece.”

In Lafayette, LA, Video Store Galore offers a similar game-rental plan. A \$35 membership to the store’s cassette-rental club entitles the card-carrying game fan to rent a cartridge for \$2.50 a night, \$5 for three nights or

\$7 a week. The store offers a selection of more than 100 games for the Atari VCS and 5200 and the Mattel Intellivision systems, and claims to add to its library as each new cartridge comes out.

Not all stores are so willing to stock everything from *Amidar* to *Zaxxon*. Video Store Galore doesn’t offer any ColecoVision titles, and neither Galore nor Captain Video (nor anyone else *VR* surveyed) rents *Odyssey*², *Astrovision* or Fairchild Channel F cartridges. Obviously, then, it’s wise for any renter to make certain before plunking down a membership fee that the store carries games compatible with his or her home system.

Renting the ‘Bottom 10’

It’s equally important to be sure the store carries a good variety of games. Not every storekeeper is as willing to keep up with the newest games as Captain Video and Video Store Galore are. More than likely, most stores that rent will have *Donkey Kong*, *Pitfall!*, *Demon Attack* and most every other Top-10 game title. But many won’t offer the “Bottom 10,” and more likely than not, those are the games many players would rather rent than buy.

“It’s a very expensive proposition to stock every game,” says George Atkinson, president of the Video Station, a chain of video stores with more than 500 affiliates in 49 states and Canada. “There are so many copycat and obviously inferior games that it doesn’t make sense to offer every game for rent. Instead, we’re more selective, offering only the most popular or interesting games.” (Atkinson takes the opposite approach to the cassette field, priding himself on carrying almost every prerecorded tape and disc title in current release.)

For prospective game renters, the only thing worse than a store that doesn’t carry every game in its rental inventory is one not offering game rental at all. To some extent, Atkinson, like other video-store owners, does something similar by limiting his game rentals to tape-rental club members only. But others have flatly barred rental to everyone. “I refuse to rent games,” says Gail Pierce, president of Video Exchange Unlimited in Brandon, FL. “Why should I rent something that everyone

While some stores flatly refuse to rent videogames, others find it a profitable way to help customers choose games. In many cases, it’s the customers who convince retailers to rent.

wants to buy? That just doesn't make any sense."

While Pierce's anti-game-rental policy is the exception as far as video specialty stores are concerned, it's the rule when it comes to non-specialty outlets. Many places where video fans might ordinarily rent tapes, such as drugstores, book stores, supermarkets and record shops will usually have no part of game rentals. The cost of the cartridges is too low and the amount of paperwork too high for these outlets to really succeed with a videogame rental plan.

Still, if your local store doesn't rent games, you don't have to play the *Combat* cartridge that came with your game console for the rest of your videogaming life. Since the game-rental trend is so new, many stores haven't started programs, yet we've heard of more than one story in which a customer walked into a store that carried a wide variety of games and suggested a rental plan. By presenting a persuasive case, perhaps explaining to the manager how another store is renting games, it's possible to turn a non-renting store into the discriminating gamer's friend.

Once you find (or manage to convince a video store to

offer) a game-rental operation, there are still some pitfalls (excuse the pun) to watch out for. For starters, don't pay a hefty up-front club cost for the privilege of getting \$1 or \$2 off a nightly cartridge rental, unless you are somehow assured that the person you're giving all that money to won't race away faster than a car in *Turbo*.

It also makes sense to avoid those stores that seem to cater to only one system, even if it's the one you own. After all, adaptors make many games designed for different systems compatible. And you might even change game systems—or add another one—after you've committed yourself to a long-term membership in one game club.

If you're patient enough, try to track a store's record of introductions of new cartridges. Is it the first—or the last—to get hot titles such as *Spider-Man*, *Zaxxon* or *Gorf*? Does it have enough of the newest cartridges to keep your gaming urges satisfied?

If you're blinded to the flaws in a videogame-rental plan by the prospect of cheap access to *Donkey Kong* and *Ms. Pac-Man*, you could wind up a loser before you ever complete the first round. □

FUN FOR RENT: 8 SAMPLE SET-UPS

The following video stores renting game cartridges give a good indication of what's available for the gamer who'd rather rent than switch the machine off. We've noted the essential differences between membership fees, rental rates and cartridge availabilities. While most differ in these categories, there are similarities. All stores refund the rental fee upon purchase, keep their game inventories up to date (usually offering the latest cartridges immediately for rental) and waive the deposit for club members.

ARIZONA VIDEO CASSETTES 3241 E. Shea Unit C, Phoenix, AZ 85028 (602) 953-1623. *Membership fee:* No membership fee charged. *Rental rates:* \$2 per night, \$10 deposit. *Cartridges available:* Most Atari VCS-compatible games (Atari, Activision, Imagic, Coleco, Parker Brothers).

CAPTAIN VIDEO'S GAME AND DISC ANNEX 2268 Lombard St., San Francisco, CA 94123 (415) 921-2839. *Membership fee:* \$50 first year, \$25 each additional year (includes videocassette club membership). *Rental rates:* \$4 for three days (member), \$6 for three days (non-member). *Cartridges available:* All Atari VCS-, Intellivision-, ColecoVision- and Atari 5200-compatible games.

CHANNEL 4 EAST 5691 Quince, Memphis, TN 38119 (901) 685-9481. *Membership fee:* No membership fee charged. *Rental rates:* \$2.50 per night, \$7 for three days (no deposit required). *Cartridges available:* All Atari VCS- and Intellivision-compatible games.

VIDEO ENTERTAINMENT CENTERS 645 Delaware St., Denver, CO 80204 (303) 573-6831. *Membership fee:* \$19.95 first year, \$10 each additional year (Video Game Club privileges only). *Rental rates:* \$5 per week (member), \$10 per week (non-member). *Cartridges available:* Most Atari

VCS- (Atari, Activision, Imagic, Coleco, Parker Brothers, M-Network, Mystique), Intellivision- and ColecoVision-compatible games.

VIDEO PLUS Old Path Village, 969 Concord St., Framingham, MA 01701 (617) 875-6855. *Membership fee:* No membership fee charged. *Rental rates:* \$4.95 per week. *Cartridges available:* All Atari VCS-, Intellivision-, ColecoVision- and Atari 5200-compatible games.

VIDEO STATION 11906 Wilshire Blvd., W. Los Angeles, CA 90025 (213) 453-5535. *Membership fee:* \$9.95-\$19.95 per year (fee depends on individual franchise). *Rental rates:* \$1 per day, two day minimum (only available to members). *Cartridges available:* Most top Atari VCS-, Intellivision-, ColecoVision and Odyssey²-compatible games. (Note: Video Station currently has over 500 affiliates nationwide. Most adhere to the above stated figures, but prices may still vary widely.)

VIDEO STORE GALORE 4652 Johnston St., Lafayette, LA 70503 (318) 988-2080. *Membership fee:* \$35 per year (includes videocassette rental club). *Rental rates:* \$2.50 per night, \$5 for three days, \$7 per week (same rates apply to members and non-members). *Cartridges available:* Most Atari VCS- (Atari, Activision, Imagic, Parker Brothers), Intellivision- and Atari 5200-compatible games.

VIDEORAMA 1391 Oaklawn Ave., Cranston, RI 02920 (401) 885-4910. *Membership fee:* \$9.95 first year, \$5.95 each additional year, \$19.95 lifetime. *Membership fee includes:* free birthday rental, seven-day reservations, \$2 off all purchases, 10% off all accessories. *Rental rates:* \$5 per week (only available to members). *Cartridges available:* All Atari VCS- and Intellivision-compatible games.

Racing, radiation and rock 'n' roll



Nuclear reactor in *China Syndrome*: avoiding overreactions

Cartridges

CHINA SYNDROME ★ ★

Designed by Harry Fox. (Spectra-
vision VCS-compatible cartridge. \$30)

By Ralph Nader

Most significant issues and currents in society have ended up, sooner or later, on the movie screen; videogames may ultimately disengage from space and *Pac-Man* mazes and move in that direction, too. *China Syndrome* is one sign. This is an unusual game. The aim is not to blow something up, but to prevent a nuclear power plant damaged by an earthquake from generating massive destruction. I wonder if the game's makers had any particular plants, such as the Diablo Canyon reactor built along an earthquake fault line in California, in mind.

This much can be said for *China Syndrome* (which allegedly isn't related to the movie, *The China Syndrome*): In the game, as in actual life, it pays to avoid a nuclear meltdown. The game's instructions warn that once the game's over-extended core-meltdown sequence begins, the player cannot stop it, though "you may," they add,

Consumer advocate Ralph Nader and his Washington, DC-based Center for Study of Responsive Law have recently published Reagan's Ruling Class: Portraits of the President's Top One Hundred Officials.

"turn your machine off in desperation." This is actually a rare bit of verisimilitude for videogames. After all, a real-life meltdown would have results far more catastrophic than a few minutes delay in playing time, and this is not a bad way to get that message across.

The goal of the game is admirable, the lesson of failure in the game is admirable, but the game itself is a bit less than admirable. The object is to capture escaped fuel particles with a robot arm controlled by the joystick. Each time the escaped particles bounce off the reactor walls, they split. If you do not catch enough in time, the nuclear core melts down, and you have to sit through the meltdown sequence before you can start again. That gives you a big advantage over a real-life meltdown, which would offer neither a second chance, nor even anything with which to start again.

The robot arm, however, is difficult to control precisely; the joystick lacks the sensitivity to give you a real fighting chance against the bouncing fuel particles. A different type of joystick might alleviate this problem. (It wouldn't, though, help the game's audio effects, which are more irritating than stimulating.) One strategem is to lie in wait for a particle along its path, rather than to chase it with the difficult-to-stop robot arm. If overused, however, this approach can waste precious time.

While all this may convey the message that controlling a nuclear reactor is a difficult and dangerous business, playing an un-

rewarding game probably takes the lesson too far. The makers have an excellent idea—a videogame that rewards safety, not destruction—but the application still needs some work. Nonetheless, *China Syndrome* is a model that other manufacturers should consider emulating. □

JOURNEY/ESCAPE ★ ★

Designed by J. Ray Dettling and team, with assistance from Jim Welch and Nightmare Inc. (Data Age VCS-compatible cartridge. \$34.95)

By Dave Marsh

Ballyhooed as "the world's first rock 'n' roll videogame," *Journey/Escape* can't live up to expectations. True, the game is fun—for a while. But if rock 'n' roll were only amusing, it wouldn't have lasted 30 years. And far from representing rock, *Journey/Escape* isn't even challenging or ambitious enough to represent the best of videogame technology.

Consider the game's premise. Rock quintet Journey has just completed a concert and collected \$50,000. Each musician now has about a minute (60 onscreen time units) to reach the limousine (a "scarab escape vehicle") which will transport him—once all are assembled—to the group's next concert and another 50 grand. In order to reach the limo, the player must steer each musician through barricades and onrushing "love-crazed groupies," "sneaky photographers" and "shifty-eyed concert promoters," who come vertically, horizontally and diagonally onto the screen. Bumping into any of these costs time and money (\$300 for a groupie, up to \$2,000 for a promoter). The musicians are aided both by their roadies, who upon being touched render the band members temporarily unstoppable, and their elusive manager: He's worth not only oodles of free time but \$10,000.

Imagine this as Journey's view of the world. For such rock stars, everyone not directly employed by them is against them: The purpose of employees is to screen the star from any contact with outsiders; the function of concerts is not to play music but to collect the dough and split. *Journey/Escape* repeats this process five times, with each new post-concert run being a little

RATINGS

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

faster than the last. Those who consider Journey a "faceless" band will be happy to know that, aside from their initials on the screen, the game gives none of the musicians any individual characteristics. This isn't rock 'n' roll, no matter what the credits claim. This is industrialized escapism, and it too quickly grows tedious.

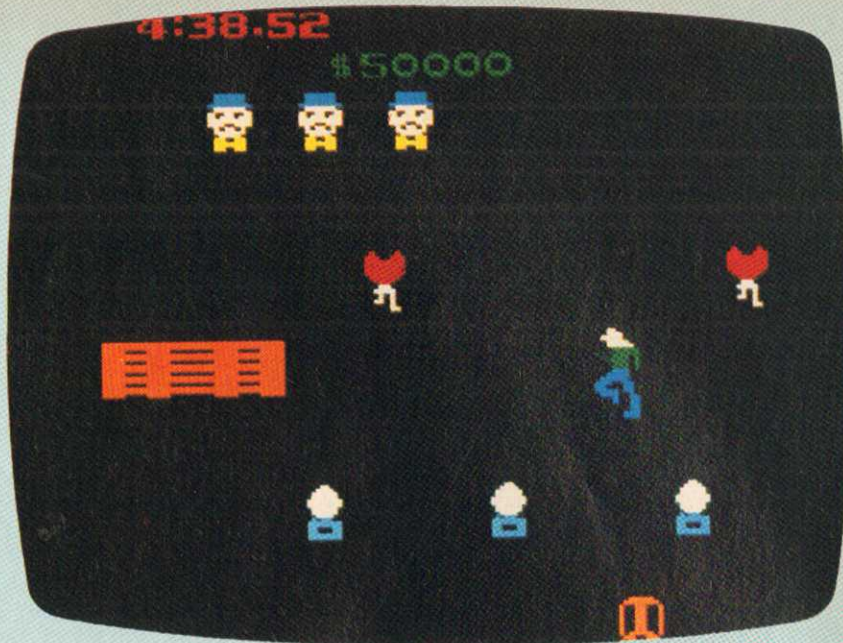
As a flashy show-biz metaphor, *Journey/Escape* is a let-down. As a videogame, its graphics are crude and it lacks sufficient strategic options to make it as tricky and fascinating as the music business itself can be. I do have a couple of playing tips, though: Race the musicians through as fast as possible or they'll never make even the first limo; worry about time, not money, since even when the band's broke, it can get to the next gig (and more cash). Finding a manager is the key to success (a piece of strategy that is pretty close to rock reality).

As far as sound effects go, rock may prosper with three chords, but limited, as it is here, to about three notes, the music is incapacitated.

One might blame the game's shortcomings on the limited memory of the Atari VCS, but *Journey/Escape* is a poor also-ran compared to such VCS games as *Frogger* and *Super Breakout*.

Because so much rock is designed for (or talks about) the world of arcades, living rooms and candy stores where videogames are played, there's an inevitably intimate connection between the music and the new game technology. But that has nothing to do with *Journey/Escape*, which can't even provide videogame enthusiasts with the one thing rock has always meant to its devotees: lasting pleasure. □

Rock critic and author Dave Marsh is a regular contributor to Rolling Stone, Record and other publications, and is a videogame enthusiast.



Journey/Escape, the first rock-inspired videogame: not too jazzy.

TURBO ★★★

Designer uncredited. Adapted from the Sega arcade game. (Coleco ColecoVision-compatible cartridge. Included with \$60 Expansion Module #2.)

By Michael Blanchet

Would a driving game be very realistic without a steering wheel? How about without an accelerator pedal and a gearshift? Yet that's the way most have been presented up until now. Coleco's second expansion module for its ColecoVision console confronts this limitation by putting a simulated racecar cockpit and controls at your fingertips.

Now every armchair mechanic knows

that a car won't start without keys, gas and a battery. I'm not saying you'll need to keep a jerry jug full of high-test beside your ColecoVision console, but you will have to feed the driving module a steady diet of four "C" batteries. Batteries! I thought they were strictly for handheld games. I'd venture to say even Robert Conrad would be miffed about this one.

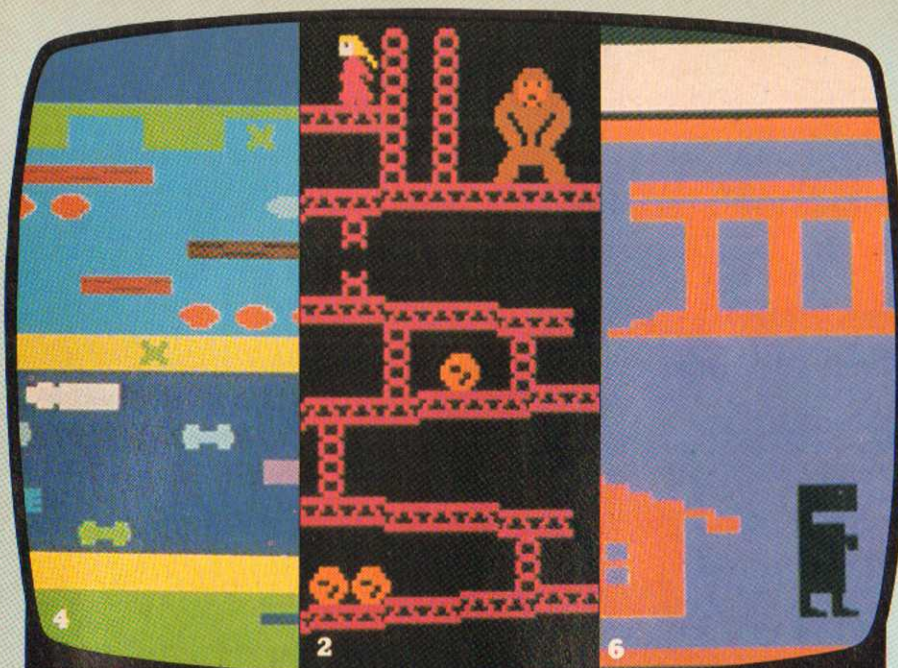
Anyway, whatever bad feeling one might have over the issue of batteries is quickly forgotten after taking the driver's seat and gunning the *Turbo* racer along the ever-changing racecourse. The scenery switches from Art Deco skyscrapers to lonely country fields to tree-lined vistas with almost each new stretch of highway. To enhance the illusion of depth, you view the onscreen action from a 45° overhead angle.

As far as play in the wheel is concerned, *Turbo* responds more like a Caddie than a Bimmer. One complete rotation of the wheel moves your onscreen car from one side of the road to the other. Considering the size of the car in proportion to the circumference of the steering wheel (6½ inches), the manner in which the racer responds is somewhat sluggish. Even at higher speeds, the road-handling characteristics show little or no noticeable improvement.

For the safest trip and highest score, I recommend following the simple rules of the road. Always look as far ahead as possible. Each opposing car will first appear as a dot in the distance, so correct your car's position as soon as you determine which side of the road the oncoming vehicle occupies. To avoid being cornered by two cars in close formation, ride the center line as often as possible; this way, you afford yourself the most latitude. Be aware that, for some reason unexplained by all known laws of physics, your car has a tendency to creep to the left or right even when the wheel is held



Coleco's Turbo: worth the \$60 module needed to play it?



Last Month This Month

Top Carts *

2	1	PITFALL! Designed by David Crane. (Activision, VCS- and Intellivision-compatible, \$31.95)
1	2	DONKEY KONG Adapted by Eric Bromley and team from the Nintendo arcade game. (Coleco, VCS- and Intellivision-compatible, \$30)
5	3	ZAXXON Designer uncredited. (Coleco, VCS-, Intellivision-, and ColecoVision-compatible, \$49.95)
6	4	FROGGER Adapted by Ed English from the Sega arcade game. (Parker Brothers, VCS-compatible, \$30)
—	5	TURBO Designer uncredited. (Coleco, ColecoVision-compatible. Sold only with \$60 Expansion Module #2)
—	6	E.T. Designed by Howard Warshaw. (Atari, VCS-compatible, \$39.95)
—	7	ADVANCED DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS Designer uncredited. Based on the TSR Hobbies game. (Mattel, Intellivision-compatible, \$39)
—	8	DEMON ATTACK Designed by Rob Fulop and Gary Kato. (Imagic, VCS- and Intellivision-compatible, \$31.95/\$39.95)
10	9	RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK Designed by Howard Warshaw. (Atari, VCS-compatible, \$37.95)
—	10	SPIDER-MAN Designed by Laura Nikolich. (Parker Brothers, VCS-compatible, \$28.95)

Behind the Top 10 Carts: Surprisingly, the videogame upset of the year wasn't played out in arcade competition, but in the nation's video stores. Almost everyone expected **E.T.** to top the videogame chart upon its release. After all, **E.T.** is the biggest grossing movie of all time, Atari's VCS is the most popular game console, and the cartridge was released by Christmas.

Apparently, there was only one thing wrong: Nobody checked to see whether or not it was a good game. Although appearing on our Top 10 chart (at position six), the game isn't as popular as most thought it would be. Many game buyers seem content to leave **E.T.** stranded, preferring to take up the search for gold in **Pitfall!**, battle the omnipotent **Zaxxon** or race down the changing landscapes of **Turbo**. (M.T.)

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

motionless. To prevent brushing against the shoulder, glance down at your racer from time to time and correct your position as desired. I also noticed that when passing another car, your car can safely overlap its rear tires with the other's.

One thing potential purchasers should consider is the long-term usefulness of the driving module. Once the show is stripped to its bare-bone elements, *Turbo* is still like every other driving game—little more than a simple beat-the-clock contest. Even if Coleco offers two dozen carts compatible with the driving module, how different from one another could they be?

In any event, driving games, especially those as realistically executed and visually stimulating as *Turbo*, do offer relief from the flood of shoot-'em-ups and cutesy videogames. But does the novelty of *Turbo* justify the expense of an expansion module so limited in function? □

DRAGONSTOMPER ★ ★

Designed by Steve Landrum.
(Starpath VCS-compatible cassette, \$17.95)

By Scot Morris

Maybe I expected too much. I quote from the instruction book: "*Dragonstomper*[™] is a Multi Load[™] game. The three levels of *Dragonstomper*[™] play are far too complex to be loaded into the Starpath[™] Supercharger[™] at one time." Wow! A game so big the Atari VCS can't hold it! A company with so much to offer that it trademarks four brand names in two sentences!

Of course, the Supercharger, a plug-in module that adds memory to the VCS, is an innovative idea, as past reviewers have noted. So is Starpath's self-coined multi-loading, through which you can program game sequences and have veritable videogame epics. (As opposed to standard multi-screen games, in which part of the cartridge memory is used for each screen, a brand-new, full memory is used for each here.) Maybe because this is a pioneering effort and only the second multi-load game, though, I felt let down.

There are three levels to this game. In the first, your screen persona, the heroic *Dragonstomper*, is in an "enchanted countryside" dotted with trees, lakes, castles and huts and, as you move your hero around, different parts of the countryside scroll into view. Eventually, the *Dragonstomper* encounters one of the evil critters—a ghoul, a golem, a snake, a spider, a maniac or a "demented monkey"—dispatched by the dragon of this tale. Moving the joystick in any direction allows your hero to try to move away, fight, use something or check his or her inventory.

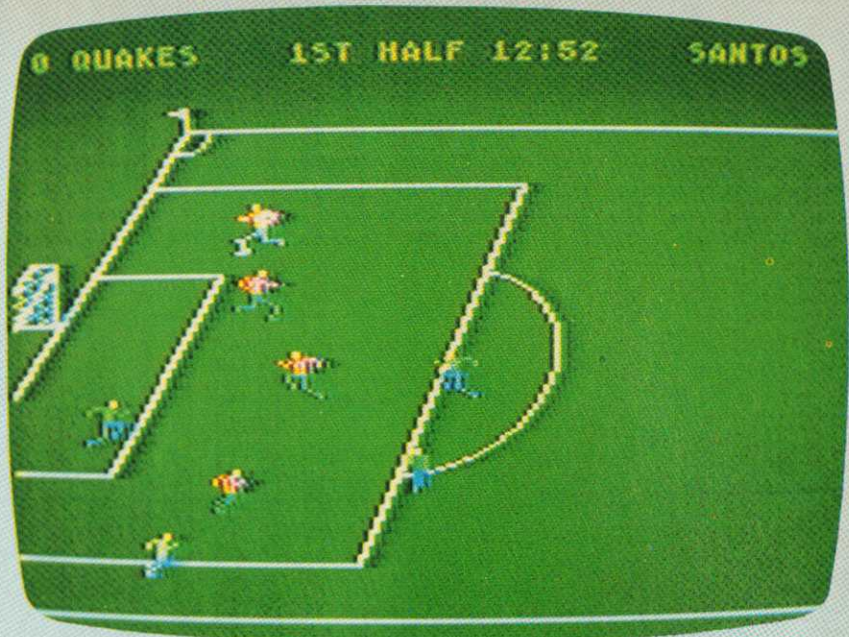
If your hero's strength points are many, choose to fight; if victorious, the *Dragonstomper* usually gets some prize, either a charm, a potion, a hand axe or a key. If you chose the third option, you can examine the objects in the *Dragonstomper*'s

inventory and pick one to use; then you're told the outcome. (A frustrating number of these either have no effect or merely make your hero "feel weird.")

To get to the second phase, the "oppressed village," the Dragonstomper has to cross a bridge, and to do that has to accumulate enough gold to bribe the guard (600 units) or find the secret scroll (it's in the blinking white castle). Once in the village, your hero goes to the marketplace to exchange accumulated goodies for various items that may or may not be needed in the third section, the dragon's dungeon. Among the provisions are a rope, a lantern, vitamins and magic spells for vision or protection. When the Dragonstomper gets to the dungeon, the final tasks are to find the dragon and to smash its evil, power-giving amulet.

If you go into this game expecting detailed graphics and fast action, you'll be disappointed. There is virtually no eye-hand coordination required, at least until your hero reaches the dungeon; this game is mostly strategic and a move-at-your-own-pace endeavor. You'll find yourself taking notes and making maps, learning which fights to engage in and which to avoid, which objects to use and which to sell. This is a game for puzzle-solvers, for people who loved Atari's original *Adventure* and the multiscreen adventure games it spawned. If you're an enthusiast of such games, give this one three or four stars. If you like games with more visual appeal and action, save your money or look into the other games for the Supercharger.

A final note: The instructions say that when your Dragonstomper finally reaches the dragon, you may choose to have your hero *rehabilitate* the creature rather than kill it. That's a clever alternative to stomping, but *Dragonrehabilitator* just doesn't have the same heroic ring. □



Atari's 5200 Soccer: four-man teams and basketball strategy.

SOCCER ★★★

Designed by John Segher. (Atari 5200-compatible cartridge. \$31.95)

By Frank Lovece

I'm not a soccer great, nor even a former great. Neither, in all likelihood, are you. In fact, most of the people who'll pick up this game cart probably never played soccer (or football, as most of the world calls it) outside of a phys-ed class. While this unfamiliarity says a lot about American appreciation of the world's most popular sport, it also sets the stage for a sports videogame that, unlike, say, video baseball or basketball, you can enjoy without having grown up with its real-life counterpart.

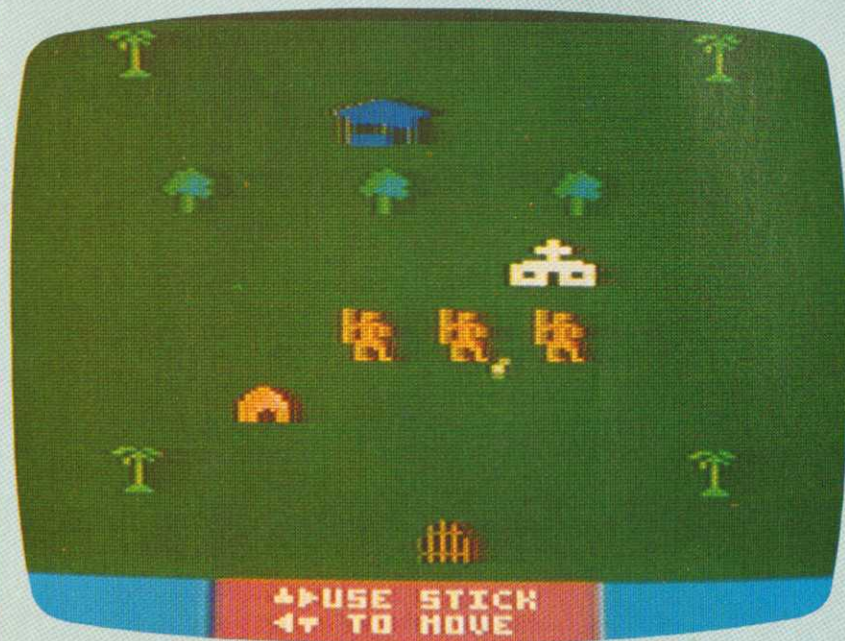
Like most sports videogames, though, this

game has nowhere near the correct number of players on the screen—four on each side rather than the customary 11. If you're a soccer buff, I can see how this could put a crimp in your strategy. Personally, I found it challenging enough to deal with the number of players I had without suffering a fate worse than Sybil.

You actually control just one player at a time, though you have to be aware of your teammates' computer-controlled movements, especially since you can switch randomly to other players by touching any of the keypad's six "Switch Player" buttons. The goalies are computer-controlled. You can choose low, medium, high and ground kicks, and can play 10- to 90-minute games, divided into halves. There are four skill levels, and you can play against a human opponent or, in an option not afforded by Mattel's Intellivision *NASL Soccer*, against the computer.

Otherwise, Atari's 5200 Soccer reminds me a lot of the Intellivision version: same angle of view, same number of players, basically similar graphics and play. There are some added touches in this game—and a few things dropped from Intellivision's version, such as control of the goalies. It seems, in fact, that while Atari's tried to design state-of-the-art games for its 5200, the company wants to emulate Mattel in the area of sports videogames.

While not an adventurous approach, it's one that at least assures that 5200 Soccer is fun to play. Strategically, it's more like basketball than soccer. (I found, for example, that basketball's three-on-two fast break is a most effective way of charging to the goal, though diagonal goal kicks are difficult to execute.) Some real-life soccer carry-overs do include the out-of-bounds throw-in and the corner kick. Strangely, I could find no way to head the ball (the instructions say you can, but don't explain



Enchanted warriors in multi-load Dragonstomper: bribery and brains.

how). This game is obviously not a strict adaptation of real-life soccer, but, taken strictly on its merits as a videogame, it's pretty good. □

Computer

KID GRID ★★★

Designed by Jim Huey. (Tronix Atari 400/800-compatible cassette. \$29.95)

AMIDAR★★

Designer uncredited. (Parker Brothers VCS-compatible cartridge. \$30 approx.)

By Ken Uston

The thematically similar *Kid Grid* and *Amidar* are geometric maze challenges. While neither is as addictive as the Atari 400/800 *Pac-Man* or the ColecoVision *Locy Bug*, at least *Kid Grid* is fun to play; *Amidar* is not, which is surprising since, in the original arcade version, it was here first.

In *Kid Grid*, the screen is divided into a grid of 35 squares. You must maneuver your screen persona (the Kid) to go through all 35 before being caught by any of the four neighborhood bullies, Moose, Squashface, Muggy and Thuggy. A question mark appears at random locations in the grid. If the Kid gets to the square in which it is located before it jumps to another, you get big bonus points. The Kid is armed with "stuns," a valuable defensive tool that can freeze the four chasers and pass through them safely.

As the Kid completes each grid, you are faced with new boards, each more difficult to complete. You're awarded an extra Kid for each 10,000 points.

It helps in this game to have an affinity for spatial relationships. You've got to be continually aware of the direction in which the four chasers are turning while at the same time concentrating on enclosing squares, avoiding the bullies and watching for the question mark. Using peripheral vision and reacting quickly to the movements of the pursuers are the keys to high scores.

These are the same keys to *Amidar*, but in this case they don't unlock anything spectacular. This game also requires the player to complete a grid, by maneuvering either a gorilla or a paint roller (they alternate from round to round), with the gorilla pursued by warriors and the paint roller chased by pigs. There's also a pursuing "tracer" which appears in each round; tracers travel only along the periphery of the maze.

The *Amidar* player must first recognize a key characteristic of the warriors and pigs in order to evade them: They *always* turn a

Internationally acclaimed videogame expert and author Ken Uston is at work on a personal-computer book. This is his first review of a computer videogame.

corner if there is one available (except when they're traveling around the edge of the grid).

The game concept in general is okay. The basic problem is the way it responds to the VCS controls. First of all, it's tough to get the gorilla or paint roller moving in the direction you want. Secondly, the player must hold the joystick in the desired direction to keep the gorilla moving. If it's released, the gorilla (or paint roller) stops in its tracks. The constant pressure that's required is bad enough, but it also makes the red firing button—which, like the stunner in *Kid Grid*, renders the pursuers helpless for a second or two—difficult to activate.

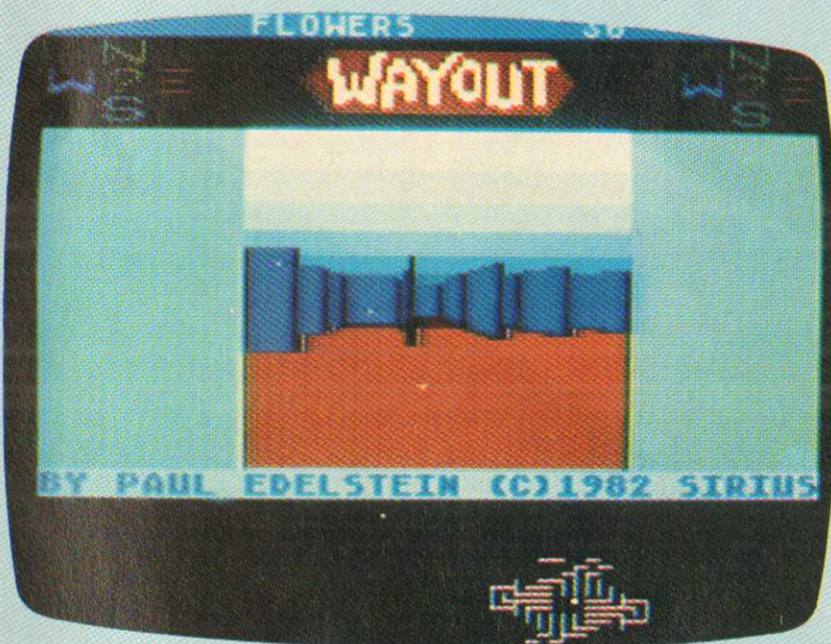
Kid Grid is a good, but not great, computer game. Because of the frustrating controller problem, though, *Amidar* pales in comparison not only to *Kid Grid* but to other Atari VCS maze games, such as *Pac-Man* and *Dodge Em*, which I find more fun to play. □

cardboard compass, I did feel a little silly. But not euphoric.

Wayout is merely another maze game, with the object in this case being to find the exit. The twist is that while most maze videogames depict a bird's-eye view of the maze, this one depicts a "worm's-eye view." The upper part of the screen simulates a first-person view of the maze interior, while, on the lower part of the screen, an overhead view appears piece by piece as you wind through the maze.

You move your character by manipulating a joystick, a paddle or the keyboard. Some innovative features help keep the game interesting. For example, the exit isn't always on an outside wall. It's represented by a panel of light (the *Wayout*) that changes color, and may be anywhere in the maze.

Since stumbling around in this labyrinth blindly makes the game difficult, you have an onscreen compass showing you in which direction your screen persona is headed,



Wayout from Sirius: worm's-eye view of a firefly-littered maze.

WAYOUT★★

Designed by Paul Edelstein. (Sirius Software floppy disc for the Apple II computer with 48K. \$39.95)

By Sheldon Leemon

One look at the package and you know this game is going to be wacky. The cover has a photo of a clown on it, dressed in a wild suit and wearing a brightly colored, oversized mask with the word "Wayout" printed on it. He's stumbling through a luminous blue maze that looks like part of a Fellini dream sequence. "Included free: Wayout glasses and compass," the package says. There's also a line about "3D action," but this is more figurative than literal.

So you can imagine my surprise when I started the game and discovered that it wasn't the least bit wacky. True, when I put on the cardboard glasses and held the fake,

plus a map in which its previous route is traced. These tools can be stolen, however, by the Cleptangle, a rotating panel that looks suspiciously like the *Wayout*, but is a bit more mobile. An added difficulty is the simulated wind which blows through the maze and bars your persona's path in some directions. There are fireflies scattered around which indicate which way the wind is blowing, so you can plan accordingly.

There are 26 *Wayout* mazes. They have mysterious names, such as "Wheels" and "Flower," but I'm unable to discover any connection between these exotic titles and the shapes of the corresponding mazes. To me, all of them look pretty much the same—blue walls, with the odd firefly now and then to break up the monotony. That's the basic problem I had: Staring at blue walls for a long time is not my idea of fun. After a while I really was looking for a way out. □

For release on cart, cassette, disc

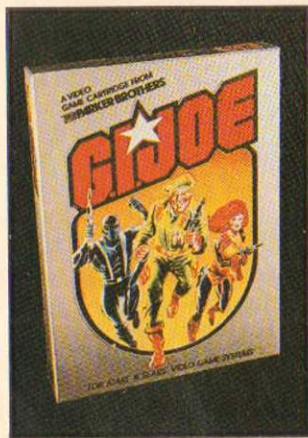


Spectravision's Master Builder: loose constructionism.

CARTRIDGES

CAKEWALK Shades of *I Love Lucy*. Cakes on a conveyor belt are coming out of an oven. Your onscreen baker's apprentice must box the cakes as they emerge. For one player. (Comma Vid, VCS-compatible)

FIREWORLD Second in the four-cartridge "Swordquest" series. The adventure game pits your onscreen heroic warrior against fire-related obstacles. Accompanied by a clue-laden comic book produced by DC Comics. (Atari, VCS-compatible)



G.I. Joe: living doll?

G.I. JOE Soldiers-of-fortune Hawk, Scarlett and Snake-Eyes must defend the G.I. Joe camp from a giant cobra. Based on the Hasbro toy and the Marvel Comics characters. For up to three players. (Parker Brothers, VCS-compatible)

GLACTIC TACTIC Morpuls from the planet Tzoris and Mirpods from Mazmer are speeding toward the *Galactic Tactic* space observation post.

Your onscreen warrior uses bi-directional laser cannons and a force field to ward them off. (Spectravision, VCS-compatible)

INNERSPACE Sequel to VentureVision's *Rescue Terra I*. Once past the ground defenses of the mining colony gone berserk, your onscreen ship continues in this game by venturing within the planet to shut down a renegade computer. (VentureVision, VCS-compatible)

MANGIA Your screen persona is trapped by social etiquette at the dinner table, while Mama keeps bringing fresh pasta from the kitchen. Your screen persona must either eat it, give it to the dog or throw it out the window before the weight of the pasta breaks the table. To be available in a limited edition. (Spectravision, VCS-compatible)

MASTER BUILDER A two-player game of building contractors racing against each other. Armed with blueprints and bricks, your contractor must complete his building first while trying to overcome rain, falling scaffolds, lightning and theft of building materials. (Spectravision, VCS-compatible)

MS. PAC-MAN Adaptation of the arcade follow-up to *Pac-Man*. Gobbling her way through a maze, Ms. Pac-Man must alternately avoid and chase a quartet of whimsical monsters. (Atari, VCS-compatible)

RUSH HOUR Your onscreen auto must blast its way through a crowded, multi-lane highway, while avoiding toll booths and other obstacles. (Comma Vid, VCS-compatible)

SKY SKIPPER Giant gorillas are once again disrupting society, this time by holding cuddly animals captive. Your onscreen barnstormer

must swoop down to save them without crashing into the ground or the surrounding buildings. Based on the Nintendo arcade game. (Parker Brothers, VCS-compatible)

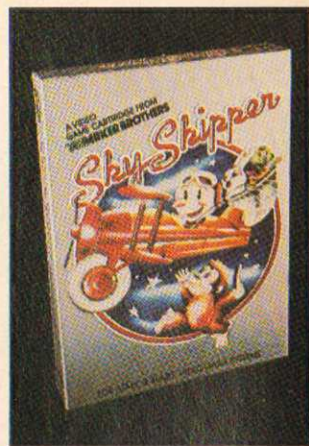
SOLAR DEFENSE Sequel to VentureVision's *Innerspace*. Now that the mining colony of Terra I is operating normally and shipping energy crystals to an onscreen space station, alien hijackers are trying to intercept the precious cargo. (VentureVision, VCS-compatible)

VANGUARD An onscreen ship with 360° firing capability must prowl tunnels and dangerous space lanes in search of the City of Mystery. Adaptation of the Centuri arcade game. (Atari, VCS-compatible)

COMPUTER

E.T. PHONE HOME Adaptation of the VCS game, *E.T.* Earth kid Elliott must help the lovable alien contact his ship and get back to the landing site. Scientists and FBI agents dog E.T.'s trail. (Atari, Atari 400/800/1200XL-compatible)

PROTECTOR Aliens are beaming up unsuspecting humans and dropping them into volcanoes. Your screen persona must combat the invaders and relocate humans stuck in dangerous areas. (HES, Commodore 64-compatible)



Sky Skipper: Fly in the firmament.

SCUBA DOOBA DOO First cartridge in the "Adventures of Dutch Doogan" sports series. Scuba-diving adventurer Dutch must locate a secret document in a sunken spy ship in the Bermuda Triangle before sharks, mines and other dangers do him in. (Gamestar, Atari 400/800/1200XL-compatible)

SLIME Using its "electric-wedge deflector" warships, the Terran Alliance must absorb the Slime Oozes dropped by Plexarian Invincibles bent on creating worldwide flooding. (HES, Commodore VIC-20-compatible) □

GAME PLANS

FAST FOOL: A source at fast-food restaurant chain McDonald's says Parker Brothers may base a new game on corporate clown **Ronald McDonald**. Already aggressive in character licensing, future PB games scheduled for '83 release include **The Lord of the Rings**, **The Incredible Hulk**, **Strawberry Shortcake**, the previously announced **James Bond/Agent 007** and two games based on Lucasfilms' **Revenge of the Jedi**, one of which will reportedly be the first videogame released concurrently with the movie on which it's based....Atari, meanwhile, will be producing games starring Charles Schulz's **Peanuts** characters....Movie-based games in the planning stages include Atari's **Fall Sale** and Fox's **9 to 5** and **Porky's**.

GET 'EM WHILE THEY'RE YOUNG: New game-cartridge maker ZiMag is coming out with a line for preschoolers. Among the VCS-compatible games: **I Want My Mommy**, a "teddy-bear adventure." ZiMag is also devising the tentatively titled "Senior Series," games tied to nostalgic themes for older citizens....Atari is kidding around as well. Its joint venture with The Children's Television Workshop (**Sesame Street**, **The Electric Company**) will yield VCS- and 5200-compatible games for young children. First ones should be out in May.

ACTIVELY INTERACTIVE: Leviathan Studios' **In Vision and Dreams** set for spring, mixes live action and animation in high-fantasy game/motion picture. OPA's **Mazeman** quartet of games should be out around the same time. Later, expect ZiMag's Africa-set treasure hunt and the first CED-format interactive game, a detective-mystery from RCA.

COMPUTABILITY: Imagic and Parker Brothers say they'll produce videogame carts for Atari computers. Parker also plans to make software compatible with Texas Instruments and Commodore gear.

—Frank Lovece