

# Video Review

INCORPORATING  
**HOME  
VIDEO**  
MAGAZINE

**\$1.95**

THE WORLD AUTHORITY ON HOME VIDEO

## A NEW WORLD!

### THE LAUNCH OF THE 8mm AGE

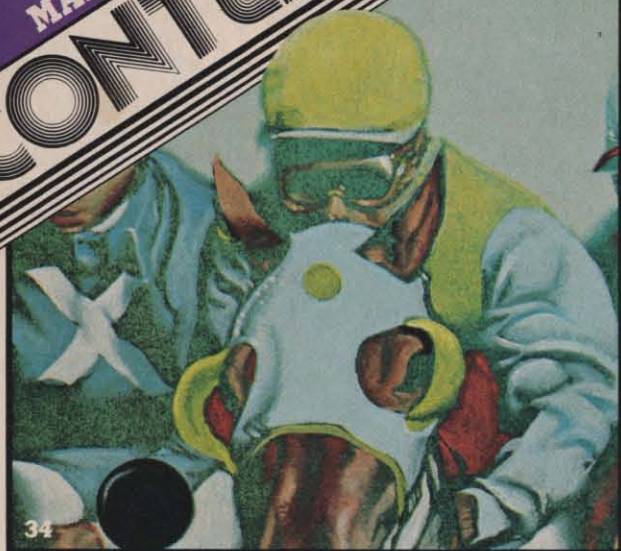
**High-Tech Sex,  
Drugs and Jail!**

**Mondale, Glenn  
On Tapers' Rights**





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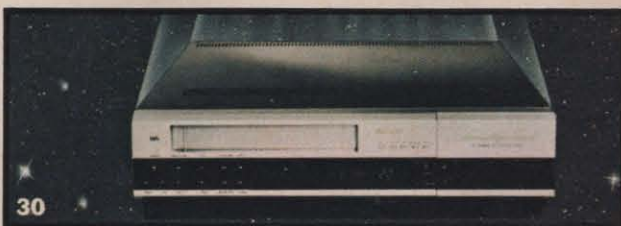
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## On dishes, dots and decoders



**STEVE ALLEN**

*Entertainer*

**Q** The TV series you wrote and produced, *Meeting of Minds*, was one of my all-time favorites. Why hasn't it been released on videocassette for home viewing?

**C. Alexander**  
Republic, MO

**A** As a matter of fact, videocassettes of *Meeting of Minds* have been available for purchase and rental for a while now. However, the agency in charge of distribution, which shall remain unnamed, did a poor job.

Right now I'm exploring the possibility of alternative distribution for future widespread release of the series on cassette and videodisc.

—Steve Allen

### THE HOT SEAT

#### NOT ADAPTABLE

**Q** I'm looking for an adapter that will let me play game cartridges from other companies on my Odyssey<sup>2</sup>.

**R.W. Ulisky**  
Binghamton, NY

**A** There is no adapter that will make your Odyssey<sup>2</sup> compatible with other game cartridges, and there never will be.

An adapter contains a composite video-

out which transfers all the picture and game information from the cart to the console on which you want to play games. But the Odyssey<sup>2</sup> lacks a composite video input to receive this information, so you can't play other game cartridges.

Also, an adapter would put extra power demands on the Odyssey<sup>2</sup>, and its power supply is not large enough to handle it.

#### IBM INQUIRY

**Q** I've been thinking of buying an IBM PCjr but am hesitant because I've heard that it is not compatible with a lot of programs that can run on the IBM PC. What's the story here?

**Karen Paulsell**  
Oakland, CA

**A** Three factors determine software compatibility between the IBM PC and the PCjr: the number of disc drives, memory capacity (it must be the same), and the hardware chips that are activated by software.

The PCjr has one built-in disc drive; currently there is no device for connecting another one. Software that requires two disc drives isn't compatible with the PCjr.

Both models have 128K memory, but the PCjr's 128K memory is, in effect, only 88K. The video buffer, which controls the display of text and graphics on the screen, automatically uses 16K. The DOS 2.1 (a disc operating system that tells the micro-processing circuitry how to interpret software designed for the IBM PC) uses up 24K, leaving a memory capacity of 88K.

The third determinant, the hardware circuits activated by the software, can vary from program to program. But as a general rule, it's not a problem so long as the other criteria are met.

#### DECODER DILEMMA

**Q** I'm planning to subscribe to the local teletext system here in Cincinnati. However, I really don't want to have another box in my living room. I know there are now TV sets that are



*Zenith's decoder: use it while you wait.*

"cable-ready," meaning I don't need an extra box to receive basic cable channels. Does the same thing exist for teletext decoders—or do I have to get the box whether I like it or not?

**Georgia Ann Mandeville**  
Cincinnati, OH

**A** Since you live in Cincinnati, you may be in luck—if you're willing to wait a while. Zenith plans to introduce a line of TV sets with built-in teletext decoders compatible with the Cincinnati system, but won't have those sets in stores until the end of '85, according to a company spokesperson.

No other TV set company will get in-



*IBM's PCjr: a computer that's driven.*



# TV, cold and other turkeys



## Daze of Our (Futuristic) Lives

*General Hospital*, move over—stat. Make way for "Adventures of Starv Artisto, Part II," a computerized soap opera that ran for six months in '80 and has been resurrected by Art Kliner, editor of *CoEvolution Quarterly*.

Starv's adventures take place on EIES (Electronic Information Exchange System), an on-line computer conferencing service run by the New Jersey Institute of Technology. Each participant needs a personal computer, a modem, a telephone and the password in order to join in. (There's also a monthly EIES subscription fee.) Each participant takes the part of at least one character, and keys in dialogue via his or her keyboard.

When Starv Artisto, a down-and-out artist living in lower Manhattan, was last "seen" in Part I, he had married a woman named Wistful after returning from a trip to the center of the earth. Kliner, who played the narrator, introduced various twists into the story (whose plot was made up as the story progressed) including an on-line funeral that drew many a keyed-in tear.

This time around, Starv reappears in the fictional town of Disbelief, Vermont, where mystery enshrouds the suicide of a man named Phil Ingsuspension, whose family was one of the first

to settle in the area. (If he left a will, it would be—that's right—the will Ingsuspension of Disbelief.)

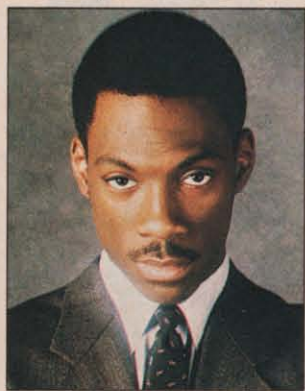
Currently, just a handful of participants keep the story running, though Kliner hopes the number will soon swell to match the 24 that took part in the original soap, which he describes as one of the most "suspenseful experiences of his life."

Will more people tune in? Will home hackers abandon *Days of Our Lives* for "Bytes of Our Lives"? Don't access us. (J.G.)□

## Murphy's Flaw?

Do you suffer from Eddie Murphy's Disease?

If so, there's a new foundation that was started up to help you. The EMDF, "officially named after one of [the disease's] most famous sufferers, Eddie Murphy," was begun after its founders watched and heard some of Murphy's comments in his HBO special, *Delirious* (now



on Paramount cassette and disc) and his Columbia album *Eddie Murphy Comedian*.

What is Eddie Murphy's Disease?

According to the EMDF, it's homophobia, or the irrational fear of homosexuality.

The EMDF points out that in his special, Murphy says, "I'm afraid of gay people. Petrified. I have nightmares about gay people." He goes on to explain that he is most afraid of AIDS. "AIDS is scary 'cause it...kills people! It petrifies me 'cause girls be hanging out with them. And one night they could be in the club having fun with their gay friend and give him a little kiss and go home with their AIDS on their lips!" (The EMDF points out that scientific evidence indicates casual contact with AIDS victims cannot spread the disease.)

Murphy's agent Robert Wachs disputes the EMDF's diagnosis saying, "Eddie Murphy is not anti-gay, he's anti-AIDS." But the EMDF maintains Murphy is "the purest homophobe since Anita Bryant," and that, given the public's fear of AIDS, his comments are like "yelling 'Fire!' in a crowded theater." Their motto: "A creative mind is a terrible thing to waste."

For a free bumper sticker that reads "Eddie Murphy's Disease Can Be Cured!" write to the EMDF, P.O. Box 691585, Los Angeles, CA 90069. As for us, we'll just wait for the telethon. (J.B.M.)□

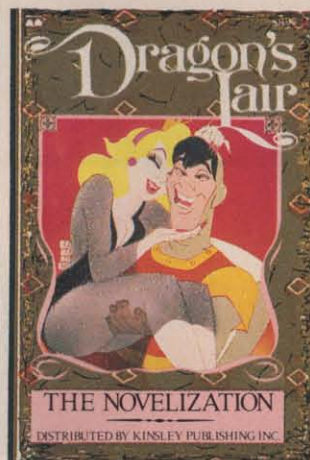
## Novel Ideas

*Dragon's Lair*, the hit laser disc-based arcade game, has been so successful that it will soon be joining the glorified ranks of such multi-media stars as Pac-Man and Strawberry Shortcake. Like them, *Dragon's Lair* will soon be appearing at your local store on stickers, lunch pails and candy, transfers, bubble gum and trading cards, party favors, puffy stickers, plastic figurines, painter and French Foreign Legion hats, comic books, games and puzzles, dart board games, knitted tops and pajamas.

If you think you've seen it all, though, think again. Licensing has taken a giant step in, well, in some direction (forward, backward, left field—take your pick). Magicom, the maker of the game, has sold the rights for—are you ready?—the *novelization* of the game. And who has Magicom sold it to? To itself.

Actually, Don Bluth Animation, one of three companies that make up Magicom, did the buying. According to a spokesperson at Don Bluth Animation, the book will feature the characters of the game and will be published "in the very near future." The company has not yet worked out such details as plot.

We feel sure that *Dragon's Lair—The Book* will soon be joined on bookshelves



worldwide by such destined-to-be-classics as *I Can't Get Next to You* (the autobiography of Mario the Carpenter), *I Was a Teenage Dot Addict* or *The Thousand Screens of Pac-Man* and *Life in the Fast Space Lane: The Adventures of Zaxxon*. (A.R.)□

## Improbable Dream

Allan Ledwith is a man who won't take no for an answer. But the strange thing is his question.

For some time now, Ledwith has been trying to sell his idea for "Sweet Talk" TV shows, records and, now, videodiscs to TV networks, to record companies, to home video outfits—just about anyone who'll listen and many



## Commodore Commands Non-Conformist Computers

By Abigail Reitsnyder

LAS VEGAS—Computer owners and buyers can start breathing more easily: Few new computers were introduced at this year's Winter Consumer

at the Show made a stir at all. As promised, Commodore showed its new computers, the 264 and the 364, which feature 60K of user-accessible memory (as opposed to the 38K of the model 64). Both also allow "windowing,"



The Commodore 264: more memory, fewer features?

Electronics Show, which means that shoppers can purchase current models with fewer fears of obsolescence.

In fact, only two introductions

## Spontaneous Software

The words "not in stock" may soon become obsolete in stores that sell computer software. A procedure called electronic distribution of software would enable software shoppers to walk into a store, look through a catalogue of thousands of titles and walk out five minutes later with the desired title—never having to worry about whether the title's actually in the shop.

Three companies—Cumma, Romox and Xante—have installed in test-stores machines to which software from a variety of companies can be downloaded. While each company uses a slightly different system, the idea is basically the same: Put a blank cart or disc in the machine, type in the title and—zapp!—the program is now on the cart or disc.

This system offers shoppers not only a wider selection of titles, but, even more important, lower prices. With packaging costs and middlemen out of the picture, prices could drop as low as \$11 on titles originally priced at \$35.

The results of this winter's tests should be in soon—with national deployment of the systems expected as soon as fall. (A.R.)□

the ability to partition the screen to see more than one program at once. Sprites (graphic blocks that can be moved independently of the rest of the screen) have not,

however, been included in the new models. More significant is the inclusion of built-in software. When the two computers go on sale in April, consumers will be able to choose one of a variety of built-in programs—word-processing, household management, business accounting or educational software. The idea is for shoppers to purchase machines for their own particular computing needs.

Unveiled in a back room at the Show was a home computer from Amiga, a company best known for its joysticks and videogames. "Lorraine" (as the machine is code-named) is slated for release late in '84 and is the only 16-bit microprocessor-based home computer available for under \$1,000. (The IBM PC and PCjr are the only others currently available.) Featuring graphics and audio capabilities that surpass virtually any other home computer, "Lorraine" will run all software written for 16-bit machines and will be PC-compatible. □

## FOUR-RING CIRCUS ON ACTIVE TV

NEW YORK—The man who invented *Pong* and helped turn home videogames into a craze is hoping to do the same thing for interactive television. Atari founder Nolan Bushnell, through one of his new ventures, Catalyst Technologies, plans to introduce ACTV (active TV), a system that allows the simultaneous transmission of four different programs over a single broadcast or cable TV channel.

Ready for use in private closed-circuit TV systems now, and being prepared for consumer tests next year, ACTV lets viewers choose the transmission they want by pressing buttons on a hand-held remote control which then feeds the information to a control box attached to the TV set. Broadcasters using the system could, for instance, send four football games at the same time on the same channel. Viewers would have one game occupying most of the screen, with three others showing in smaller pictures along the bottom. They could then switch around among the four games to catch the best action. Or, instead of four games, they could choose among four different camera angles of the same event, turning their living rooms into miniature TV control studios.

ACTV can also be used to provide branching adventure-type videogames, with players choosing four possible moves. Another possibility is to use the system to show X-rated, R or PG versions of the same movie. The control box that connects to the TV set is programmable and would allow broadcasters to send special-interest shows to selected viewers. Likewise, advertisers would be able to use ACTV to send commercials specifically targeted to the incomes and habits of different members of the audience by transmitting different commercials on different parts of the television channel.

The company estimates that a home ACTV system could be installed and leased for about the same price as basic cable TV. Actual introduction into the American home, however, is still considered by many experts to be sometime in the future. (R.G.)□



Pioneer disc player: digital on the way.

## LV DISCS FLIP

Four recent developments in laser-disc technology will quite likely give tomorrow's LV player owner better sound and greater choice:

- Laser discs with digitally recorded sound will be made later this year by Pioneer Video, which will also offer special disc players to play them. To ensure compatibility with existing LV players, the new discs will also have the usual analog sound track. The new sound system will, of course, be used primarily with discs that feature music programs.

- A combination laser videodisc/digital audiodisc player

will also be introduced this year by Pioneer.

- Sony recently announced that it will produce a home laser-disc player dubbed Lasemax. (The company already produces players for industrial use.) The company will sell it in Japan this spring, but says it hasn't decided when to start selling home players in the US. If it follows its past patterns, the US debut will be about six months later.

- As reported in the Sept. '83 VR, Pioneer will introduce eight-inch video "single" discs with 23 minutes of music programming. Expected release date is sometime this summer. (R.G.)□



# Games

## INFIDEL ★ ★ ★ ★

Designed by Michael Berlyn. (Infocom, disc for Apple II/II+ /IIIe. \$49.95)

By Phil Wiswell

"Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee," said Anne Morrow Lindbergh, "and just as hard to sleep after." *Infidel* would have given her insomnia. This new text adventure is an example of good communication. (The game is available for most home and personal computers and is virtually identical in all formats.)

As always, the folks at Infocom set an attractive stage with their packaging. A partial diary explains why you now find yourself alone in your search for a buried pyramid. An unsent letter written by you makes your expedition sound as if it is under control. Hah!

The language used by the game is no mere collection of words, though. It is highly descriptive, frightening, imaginative, funny. It is literature. Here's a typical example (the player's instructions are in italics):

Half covered with sand is a bright piece of foil which catches your eye. Sitting by a rock is what looks like a matchbook.

• *Examine foil.*

It's an empty pack of Camel cigarettes.

• *Take foil, then take matchbook.*

Taken.

• *Light match.*

You now have lit a match.

• *Burn down tent.*

I don't think you can burn the tent. Your match went out. And it burned your fingers, too! You are becoming quite thirsty.

• *Walk west to the river.*

You are on the bank of the river Nile. The shoreline is sandy and cool, and reeds wave in a light but warm breeze. Directly to the north and south, thickets make strolling along the bank impossible. You are hot, and the cool rippling water to the west looks inviting. But you're not alone in that thought—crocodiles bask on the west bank, eyeing you hungrily, just waiting for you to enter their watery domain....□

## TRAINS ★ ★

Designed by Interactive Picture Systems. (Spinnaker, disc for Atari 400/800/1200XL. \$39.95)

By Ira Fistell

If you've read my book *America by Train*, you know how much I love railroads. And if you've heard my radio call-in program, you know how much I dislike computers. It's hard to decide which is greater—my fear of computers or my love

of trains. I put aside my computer phobia to check out this electronic train set.

As with electric train sets, you're the engineer here. But keeping your train running isn't the only job on this railroad. You also must turn a profit by picking up and delivering four different products to their proper markets while you travel on a variety of track layouts in several territories. Coal must be purchased to keep your train running, and payroll expenses must be met every few minutes. It's tough to balance these costs with the challenge of making money with deliveries, but that's why working on the railroad takes "all the live-long day."

You control your train with a joystick, moving the engine and cars forward and back, accelerating, braking and switching tracks, while the joystick button is used to pick up and drop off supplies.

Keyboard commands show you industry status. You can actually see the different products' levels of supply and demand, and use that knowledge to maximize your business. Market update messages also flash on the screen periodically. If you act quickly on these notices, you'll earn more money than usual.

This program is a lot like running an electric set: The mechanics of starting, stopping and backing up are the same, and the layout is very much like what you'd get with a good electric train set. There are several different layouts in four different terrains (desert, mountain, plains and city). The graphics are beautiful, and the sound effects are excellent.

The best thing about the game is the number of variables which the player has to consider at all times. You must think about distance, coal supply, what you're carrying and so on. *Trains* succeeds in teaching children about the many variables that exist in *anything* they do.

With people like myself who are in love with railroads, there is no cure, no remedy and no satiation. The designers of the game obviously have a feel for the subject, and their success at putting some thinking into the exercise, along with the railroad theme, makes this a good addition to any train-lover's collection.

But I would have liked it to be a little tougher. By throwing a few "wild cards" (such as inclement weather, broken tracks and other obstacles) in the path of the train, the designers would have created more of a game. As it stands, for non-railroad fans, *Trains* may become more of a repetitive exercise than a continually challenging, "fun" game. □

## AMBULANCE ★ ★

Designer uncredited. (Funware, cartridge for TI-99/4A. \$44.95)

By Dan Gutman

"Get sick people to hospital before they die." No beating around the bush in this one-player game. Everyone in town, it seems, is dropping dead and you've got to patrol the streets to save lives. Actually, it's hard to work up much sympathy for people who are only represented on-screen as brightly colored blocks, even if they are critically ill. *Ambulance* is a Mondrian-inspired *Freeway* sequel that has simple graphics, simple sound, and not a lot of human depth.

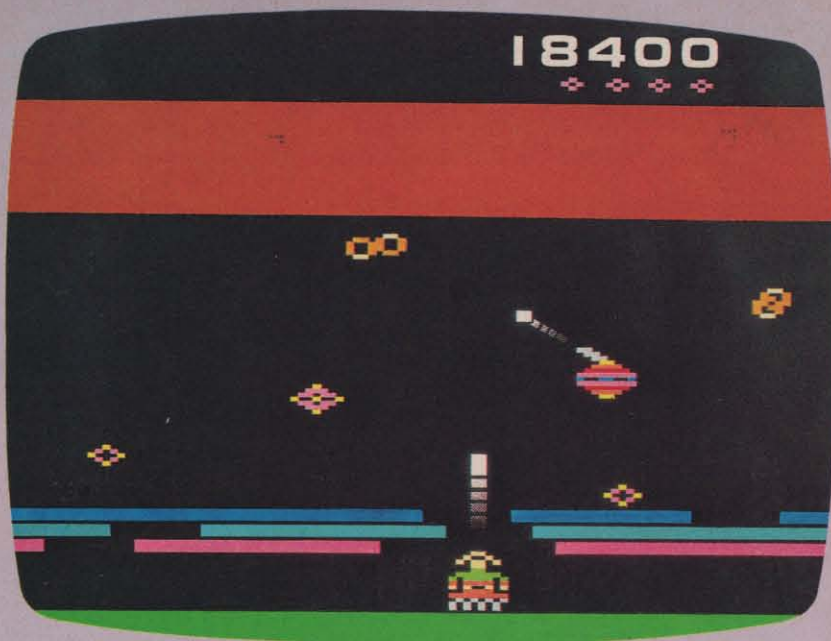
Even so, the game is almost fun. There are plenty of ways to get killed. You can get run over by trains or have head-on collisions with other cars, or the victims can die before you even reach them. The game's big problem, however, is that once you get past the first level, suddenly you find your ambulance isn't turning corners easily. Three joysticks failed to improve the steering, which was fine on level one. If this



Working on the railroad entails playing the market in *Trains*.

Ira Fistell, author of *America by Train*, hosts a nightly call-in show on the ABC Talkradio Network.





*Stronghold: Medical paraphernalia abounds in this M.D. shoot-'em-up.*

is a program bug, Funware should recall these cartridges and send out new ones. If it's intentional, it's a lousy way to make a game more challenging. □

### **THE SEARCH FOR ELSOLIADO ★ ★ ★**

**Designed by Stefan Schramm.**  
(Adventure International, disc for  
TRS-80 Models 1 & 3. \$29.95)

**By Ken Kubey**

If you like traveling through space, blasting aliens, earning money and saving the civilized world, *The Search for Elsoliado* is the game you've been waiting for.

Your Emperor has given you a ship that can fire lasers and reach "supra-light" speed. You have been dispatched to find Elsoliado, a distant planet whose wealth could ensure the welfare of the Empire. To find the mysterious planet, you must buy information from aliens, using credits you've earned through intergalactic trade. But be careful: A cunning alien may give you false directions in order to set up an ambush.

You build up your cargo and supply of credits by conducting trade between starbases and freighters. You buy and sell textiles, gems, animals, plants and a rare food rumored to be an aphrodisiac. Prices fluctuate, so follow the first axiom of economics: Buy low and sell high.

When you encounter alien ships, you have a choice of either fighting your way through or bribing them to let you pass. If your first bribe is refused, be ready to fight: Second offers are rarely accepted.

Once you find Elsoliado, you must defeat its dreaded guardian, Xylol Rex, whose ship looks like a giant eyeball. You

*Ken Kubey was the technical advisor on The Winners' Book of Video Games, a 1982 best seller.*

waste his ship by—what else?—destroying its reactor.

The TRS-80 screen is divided into four sections. From the upper-left, going clockwise, they contain the ship's main viewing screen, a readout of navigational and general information, a battle and engineering command menu and a communications display.

It's a shame that the on-screen messages are repetitive and that the graphics are simplistic. The commands, however, are easy to understand, as are the battle format and trade system. The User's Manual is a laugh a minute (or at least every other minute). Game play is reasonably swift and the audio effects are quite adequate.

The most useful feature of *The Search for Elsoliado* is the ability to transfer a "copy" of the current game to disc. Thus, if you lose, you can return later to the exact situation that existed when you made the copy. This means you don't have to trudge over and over again through the beginning levels. □

### **STRONGHOLD ★ ★ ★**

**Designer uncredited. (CommaVid,  
cartridge for Atari VCS. \$21.95)**

**By Craig Kubey**

*Stronghold* was obviously designed by a group of demented doctors. Most every object seen in the game can be found in a hospital. You are represented on the screen by a spaceship that looks like a vaporizer that is wearing slitty Devo sunglasses. You fire out the vaporizer vent, which you can move in eight directions.

You are attacked in turn by a host of other medical objects. First, there is a covey of flying "drones," each of which looks just like the traditional physician insignia (a winged staff with a serpent wrapped around it). The drones try to run into you.

Next, several lines slide out from the left and right sides of the screen (these may symbolize the status lines that separate doctors and patients). Above the lines appear two more kinds of medical monsters: "interceptors," which look just like double-helix DNA molecules, and "patrollers," which expand and contract just like hearts. Both of these, like the drones, attempt to collide with your Vapo-Ship.

Beneath the lines is the "Command Crawler," which looks like an oscilloscope-type cardiac monitor on wheels. To move on to the next wave of *Stronghold*, you must shoot holes in the lines and then fire through a hole and hit the Crawler. The Crawler selfishly uses the holes you have created, firing through them at you.

If you lose five Vapo-Ships through collision or being shot, you are transferred to the video morgue.

This is a pretty good game, no more, no less. It's challenging and offers 16 game variations. The chief drawback is that the Vapo-Ship, in both attack and defense, is not as fast and maneuverable as the player would like. *Stronghold* deserves the M.D. degree: It's Moderately Decent. □

### **WORM WHOMPER ★**

**Designed by Tom Loughry. (Ac-  
tivation, cartridge for Intellivision.  
\$34.95)**

**By Len Albin**

Believe it or not, the act of worm-whomping never appears on my desk calendar in my daily list of things to do. And though a cartridge called *Worm Whomper* is now available, whomping worms still doesn't excite me. Cockroaches, maybe—but not worms or any of the other pests (snails, caterpillars, moths, millipedes and snakes) that it's your task to exterminate in this game. The problem is that the *Worm Whomper* game has some bugs of its own.

First of all, the theme of *Worm Whomper* is uninspiring and silly. You manipulate a farmer who's toting a can of lethal bug spray, in order to kill horizontally traveling waves of assorted pests. If these rural pests elude the spray, they devour the rows of corn plants behind the farmer. Only eight-year-olds, it's safe to say, will be intrigued by this too cute premise. I'd rather see the worms and their allies attack the farmer, not the corn. But as it is, *Worm Whomper* gets boring as early as your first game, and the musical accompaniment (the classical tune "Sorcerer's Apprentice") becomes annoying.

Secondly, there are some serious design mistakes in this cartridge. When you press the disc on the hand-controller to reposition the farmer in his battle against the agri-pests, he zips to his new spot wildly and too quickly. In other games, like *Centipede*, that speed helps you stay alive. But in *Worm Whomper*, it hurts the player. You see, to kill the inchworms that crawl across the screen in a straight horizontal line, you must



line up your farmer precisely. So while you struggle to position the farmer for the kill, snails (which swerve in their path) blow by the farmer into the corn crop. The other big flaw in the game is the wide variety of enemies. They all behave differently, but they're too small and graphically blurry to identify quickly. So, before you can tell what it was, it's in the cornfield already.

If you must play *Worm Whomper*, though, one suitable strategy is to have the farmer stonewall in front of one of the five rows of corn—a ploy equivalent to defending your last city in *Missile Command*. But the best strategy is not to buy the *Worm Whomper* cartridge in the first place. It's, er, organic fertilizer. □

## DROL ★ ★

Designed by Aik Beng. (Broderbund, disc for Apple II/II+ /Ile. \$34.95)

By Michael Blanchet

In French, "Drol" means humorous. I imagine that in any language this game could qualify as funny but I am not sure to what degree. While it is certainly not a from-the-belly, eye-watering guffaw, it should elicit more than just a nervous giggle from most people.

If naming this game had been left to me, it would have been called "Unlikely." I mean, c'mon, picture this: A little red-haired girl and her propeller-driven-beanie-adorned brother have been lured into the ruins of a

lost civilization by a witch doctor's curse. Your job is to help the rocket-backpack-equipped hero fend off the denizens of the dungeon, rescue the kids and reunite them with their mother.

The action is fast, the graphics good; but, I must admit, the intended humor escapes me. Sure, the bizarre collection of enemies (flying turkeys, green vacuum cleaners and magnets, to name a few) is good for a few laughs. Overall, this game reminds me of the poorly told story that somehow just sailed over my head. I guess you had to be there. □

## ONE-ON-ONE ★ ★ ★ ★

Designed by Eric Hammond. (Electronic Arts, disc for Apple II/II+ /Ile. \$40)

By Michael Cooper

I've been playing against Julius Erving and Larry Bird for five years in the NBA. It's my job to try and stop them. In *One-on-One*, the bad news is that you have to try and stop them. But the good news is that you can take the part of either Dr. J or the Bird, and use his talents and skills to face the player you didn't choose. In most videogames, all players look and play alike, but in this one the two guys have completely different moves. Dr. J is a little quicker, jumps a little higher and is a bit more acrobatic than Larry Bird, who has more power, hits more outside shots and grabs more rebounds than the Doctor. So pick your player, grab your sneakers and hit the hardwood.

The computer will control your opponent at any one of four different levels of play. Or, a friend can use the keyboard to play defense against your joystick-controlled player. But the best game of all is between two players.

You can play a timed game (with 2-, 4-, 6-, or 8-minute quarters) or a playground game of "21" (or any other number you choose). The joystick and button make your player move around the half-court, jump, shoot, spin, steal, block, free throw and rebound. The computer even shows you slow motion instant replays.

I've seen a lot of sports videogames, but never one as realistic as this, down to details such as slam dunks and even shattered backboards (a thrill I may never have in real life!). Dr. J and the Bird play exactly the way they do in real games. Julius will spin and drive to the hoop one-handed, while Larry will kill you with his two-handed outside shot. Even fatigue is a factor in this game. If a player is tired, it shows on the screen, and you have to slow down your play or call a timeout to get your wind back.

There's also a 24-second clock, programmed hot shooting streaks and a referee who calls traveling, charging,

*Los Angeles Laker Michael Cooper has been on the NBA All-Defensive team each of the last three seasons.*

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hacking, reaching in and blocking.

The first time I faced the computer, it was the worst game I've played since I was in the "Y" program many years ago. Playing the computer was like my rookie NBA year—I was so enthralled about playing against Dr. J and Larry Bird that I had a tendency to *watch* them, and before I knew it, the ball was going the other way. It's the same thing here—if you get caught up watching, your opponent will take it away and dunk it in your face.

I've never had the chance to *really* play these guys one-on-one. It would probably be a nightmare, but here it's a great fantasy. □

**OPERATION WHIRLWIND ★ ★ ★**  
**Designed by Roger Damon.**  
**(Broderbund, disc for Atari 400/800, \$39.95)**

War simulations are more than games—they're one of the reasons you bought a computer in the first place. But activities of this nature have one common drawback: the long lag time between the moment you boot the disc and the point at which you begin to understand just what the heck you're supposed to be doing.

Although I wouldn't go as far as to say that this is the last word in war gaming, it is one of the better executions of this genre I've seen. Documentation can make or

break a war game and the accompanying literature here succeeds—in parts, maybe too well. Little is assumed in the 27-page booklet which includes eight pages of designer's notes. Each phase of the game is covered in depth. At times I found the text a bit unclear, but upon a second reading everyone's questions should be adequately answered.

The object is to reach, capture and occupy the town that rests on the far right side of the scrolling battlefield. You are given a maximum of 35 turns in which to complete the takeover. Each turn consists of five phases. After all your assaults have been resolved and your orders executed, the computer, "in the interest of fair play," will move any of its units that it has decided to move and will fire one shot at any of your units that are within range.

So much time exists between action and reaction that folks with short attention spans may find their minds wandering: This is no *Kaboom*. The pace here is a bit quicker than that of many similar games due largely to the fact that a joystick and cursor are used in lieu of the keyboard. During the combat phase, for example, you need only to position the cursor on an enemy target to direct, say, an artillery barrage.

*Operation Whirlwind* does not encumber the player with reams of charts, tables and statistics. All that business of probability and varying battle conditions is taken care of by the computer. Again, buffs may call this oversimplifying, unsophisticated or even blasphemous; I call it a boon.

Although I'm an acknowledged beginner at this type of game, I found learning how to play *Operation Whirlwind* remarkably easy. Normally, I'd have to say that a game's long-term appeal is determined by how long it takes to completely understand. *Operation Whirlwind*, though, is an exception. It's fun, different every time around, and highly recommended to those looking to break into war gaming in a painless, even pleasurable fashion. (M.B.) □

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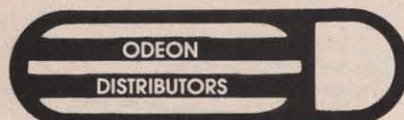


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## Educational

**BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS ★ ★ ★**  
**Designer uncredited. (MECA, discs for Apple II/II+ /Ile. \$79.95)**

**By Martin Packer**

*BASIC Building Blocks* reminds me of Oreo cookies. Everyone eats the creamy filling, but how many people really eat (or enjoy) the cookie part? Like Oreos, this program has two parts: a BASIC tutorial and the BASIC Design Tool (BDT). My guess is that most people will use the BDT and forget about the tutorial.

The tutorial takes the book-on-a-screen approach, giving a dry but comprehensive lesson in BASIC. Fortunately, intermingled with the screens of text and simple questions is an introduction to the BDT, a "debugger"



(a program to help you find problems, or "bugs," in your own programs).

Within the context of the tutorial, BDT lets you see what goes on inside a BASIC program. It allows you to move, instruction by instruction, through a basic program. By doing this, you can see how the variables and the order in which the instructions are executed change as the program runs.

The best news is that BDT can work with your own programs as well as with the tutorial. For this, MECA has included a standalone version of BDT which is more powerful than that used in the tutorial. The standalone BDT allows you to view the current values for up to 16 variables. Further, there are three ways to run programs: a single step at a time; slow, automatic stepping (or "trace"); and full-speed execution. The use of break-points enhances the value of the second two ways by allowing you to define the conditions under which execution should halt.

BDT is both easy to use and a handy programming tool. Whether you're an experienced BASIC programmer or a novice, BDT makes the price of the tutorial worth it. □

#### **SPEL•BOUND ★ ★ ★**

**Designer uncredited.** (Blyeth Valley, discs for IBM PC. \$79.95)

**By Nancy Figel**

Alas for Dick and Jane, or Becky and Peter or Colin and Megan: In spite of the computer revolution, students still have to learn to spell, if only for the sake of impressing the head of data processing when they apply for entry-level jobs in software programming.

*Spel•Bound* (for ages six to adult) is a collection of interactive games designed to improve a user's spelling and vocabulary skills. The major advantage, according to its designer, is the built-in element of control for the teacher or parent, and the ability of the data disc to be tailored to the individual's needs.

There are a number of games on the disc, intended to appeal to all age groups depending on the level of play selected. In fact, some are clearly appropriate only for certain age groups. The games *Alphabet*, *Characters* and *Hangman* are suitable for children under six. At the first level of difficulty, *Alphabet* can help a child learn the order of the alphabet. *Characters* will challenge the child to recognize repetitive occurrences of letters in words.

*Concentration*, *Unscramble*, *Misspell* and *Define* would be more appropriate for the 6- to 10-year-old. *Concentration* has the right kind of grid appeal for children. In *Unscramble*, the player has three chances to put a group of letters in the correct order to spell one of the programmed spelling words. In *Misspell*, the computer tries to

*Nancy Figel is a teacher and freelance writer based in Evanston, IL.*

trick the player by misspelling the word in at least two ways. *Define* asks the player to match vocabulary words and their meanings.

For adults, the program's designers suggest *Concentration* (at level two), *Crossword*, *Maze* and *Party Hangman*. While these games might hold the interest of an adolescent, I'm not sure how long most adults would want to play.

By allowing the parent/teacher to change the password, code certain games (so that *Hangman* won't be played all the time by a seven-year-old who needs *Define*'s vocabulary drill) and code the printer as to when it should be used, the program

provides a built-in monitor so that the child/student can work on his own—without touching discs or drives and without a parent's presence. The parent/teacher can put in up to 200 vocabulary words and five definitions per word.

What does all this mean to the child at the keyboard? That depends on whether the child prefers his lesson prompt from Mom/Dad/Mrs. Smith or the computer: The games and the drills themselves differ only slightly, if at all, from the conventional stuff of workbooks, ditto sheets, classroom drill and the routines suffered by the generations of children who have finally, as a result of it all, learned to spell. □ (Cont.)



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# Personal

## I AM THE C-64 INTRODUCTORY SERIES ★

## I AM THE C-64 ADVANCED SERIES ★ ★

Designer uncredited. (Creative, discs for Commodore 64. \$29.95 each)

These two programs pose an important question: Why buy a disc for \$29.95 that merely duplicates information contained in a free manual? In this case, the answer is that the manual Commodore includes with the 64 is plagued by inaccuracies.

As a result, these programs can be

helpful to those who trust everything they read. For example, the disc drive manual says never to remove a disc when the green drive light is on; it should say red! These tutorial discs don't make such mistakes. And much material is covered, from the simple in the introductory series to the complex in the advanced series. The latter series is perhaps more useful because the material covered is more complex.

My advice is to try Commodore's manual first. If you are moving too slowly or not understanding the bulk of what you read, then consider buying *I Am the C-64*. But keep in mind that most of your interaction with these programs is nothing

more than electronic page flipping. You are occasionally prompted to try out a little exercise on the computer, but the manual gives you more programs you can type in and run to study their effects.

If anyone needs these discs to understand the basics of computing, that person will probably end up wishing he or she had started with a more "user-friendly" machine than the 64. The only reason to use these discs is to clarify Commodore's poor documentation. (P.W.) □

## TOTL.TEXT 2.6 ★ ★

Designed by Ann Palmer-McCarty. (TOTL disc or cassette for Commodore 64. \$39.95)

## EASY SCRIPT ★ ★ ★

Designed by Simon Tranmer. (Commodore, disc for Commodore 64. \$49.95)

By Sheldon Leemon

TOTL Software's *TOTL.TEXT* word processor isn't fancy but does provide an introduction to the joys of word processing.

Since the program was designed to be simple, there are some features that someone familiar with more sophisticated word processors might find annoying. Text editing, for example, is limited to a block of about six lines at a time. Further, it doesn't prevent a word from being split at the end of a line on the screen.

Still, there is much to recommend *TOTL.TEXT* to the beginner. It is very easy to learn to use, and many commands can be entered with a single key.

More important, perhaps, is the support the user can expect. TOTL Software is well known for its willingness to answer questions that the first-time user might have and to help its customers adapt the product to a particular use. The program is not copy-protected, so it can be changed to accommodate a particular printer or other equipment. Revisions and improvements are made on an on-going basis, and registered owners are offered periodic updates at a very low cost.

*Easy Script* is a much more powerful word processor and is proportionally more difficult to use. It allows you to move text around on the screen at lightning speed. Along with standard features, it has some unusual ones, such as the ability to see the text on the screen in exactly the same format as it would appear on paper. Since each feature requires a special sequence of keystrokes, however, the number of commands is large and it is difficult to remember them all.

*Easy Script* is available only on a copy-protected disc. This makes it almost impossible to modify, and difficult to use with non-Commodore peripherals. Moreover, the user can expect little support from Commodore. For this reason, the buyer looking for a little more power in a word processor should first make sure that *Easy Script* is suitable to his or her system configuration. □

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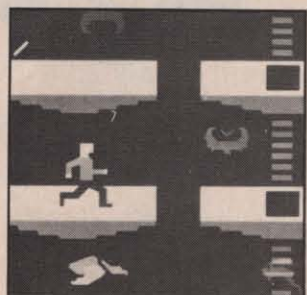
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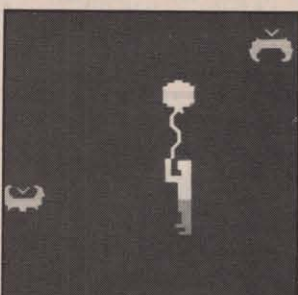
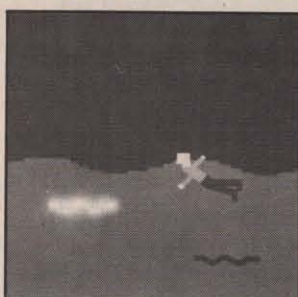
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### GAMES

**AEGEAN VOYAGE** Combining mythology and strategy, this marine action game pits the player's ship against sea monsters and the throes of the sea. For children eight years old and up. (Spinmaker, Atari 400/800, Commodore 64)

**AIR SUPPORT** The player, in a helicopter, oversees ground battle action and moves troops around. The manufacturer claims this war game combines strategy with action and tactics. (Synapse, Atari 400/800)

**DREADNOUGHTS** Naval action is the focal point of this WWII simulation. The player controls one of four fleets—American, British, French and German—and the computer controls the rest. (Avalon Hill, Apple II/II+, Atari 400/800)

**FREE TRADER** Interstellar commerce is the setting of this science fiction game. The player must fly to each planet to buy commodities while being pursued by raiders. The Apple and the Atari versions are on the same disc. (Avalon Hill, Apple II/II+, Atari 400/800)

**GRANDMA'S HOUSE** It's a doll's life. In this electronic house, kids choose characters, then travel to different environments to gather the essentials and the non-essentials of household life. For four- to eight-year-olds. (Spinmaker, Apple II/II+, Atari 400/800, Commodore 64)

**GULF STRIKE** Ayahtollah so. One or two players can take part in this

Persian Gulf war game. Players choose between controlling Iran, the US and the USSR, with the computer controlling the unchosen power(s). Terrain, cities and, of course, oil wells are all factors in the outcome. (Avalon Hill, Atari 400/800)

**JUPITER MISSION: 1999** This space fantasy adventure consists of four discs containing 11 programs. The graphics adventure is intended for the advanced adventurer. (Avalon Hill, Atari 400/800)

**PITFALL II: LOST CAVERNS** Or, the Continuing Adventures of Pitfall Harry. The hero must search the Lost Caverns of the Incas in Peru for his niece, Rhonda, and the mountain cat, Quickclaw, as well as the Raj Diamond and caches of gold. The caverns are eight screens wide and 27 levels deep. (Activision, Atari VCS)

**RANCH** Byte Bonanza. Players try to develop a ranch, bringing in cattle and other livestock. The characters can then be animated and moved around the screen to imitate life on the range. (Spinmaker, Commodore 64)

**SPACE COWBOY** The on-screen hero must escape from jail, then traverse a "gauntlet," an elevated platform in space, to return to his ship. Lasers fire across the gauntlet, hindering his escape. (Avalon Hill, Atari 400/800)

**UNDER SOUTHERN SKIES** Playing the Reich way. In this 1939 naval battle, the player is a Nazi, the commander of a German fleet which

must locate and capture British ships without being detected. (Avalon Hill, Apple II/II+, Atari 400/800)

### EDUCATIONAL

**ABC CATERPILLAR** One of the new IQ (Intelligence Quest) series from Avalon Hill, this game for three- to eight-year-olds features a caterpillar. As letters parade across the screen, the caterpillar must eat them in alphabetical order. (Avalon Hill, Atari 400/800)

**BIG BIRD'S SPECIAL DELIVERY** Pre-schoolers must help Big Bird and his cohort Little Bird deliver the mail. Children classify the various packages to help the feathered friends deliver each one to its correct location. (CBS, Atari 400/800, Commodore 64, IBM PCjr)

**BUBBLE BURST** Expected to appeal to four- to eight-year-old girls, this game features Soapy the Serpent. Soapy's goal in game life is to take a peaceful bubblebath, but the character is harassed by Boingers and other bathtub beasts. (Spinmaker, Atari 400/800, Commodore 64)

**COAST-TO-COAST AMERICA** Five geography games in one, this package includes "State Facts," "State Quiz," "Mystery State," "Across the

**DIVEX** Answers to multiplication and division problems are carried down to earth by rockets. The player must shoot all the wrong answers, while letting the correct one land. In the IQ series for three- to eight-year-olds. (Avalon Hill, Atari 400/800)

**DUCKS AHoy** Players guide gondolas along the canals of Venice in an attempt to get ducks from the townhouse to the boardwalk. For preschoolers. (CBS, Atari 400/800, Commodore 64)

**ERNIE'S MAGIC SHAPES** This Sesame Street game emphasizes matching shapes and colors. Children ages three to six must look closely at the shapes Ernie uses in his magic act to do correct matching. (CBS, Atari 400/800, Commodore 64, IBM PCjr)

**EXTRA! EXTRA!** For aspiring Menckens. The player must use reading skills to determine the five W's (who, what, when, where and why) and submit a story before the deadline. The game has three levels of difficulty: Cub, Staff and Ace Reporter. (Milton Bradley, Apple II/II+, Atari 400/800)

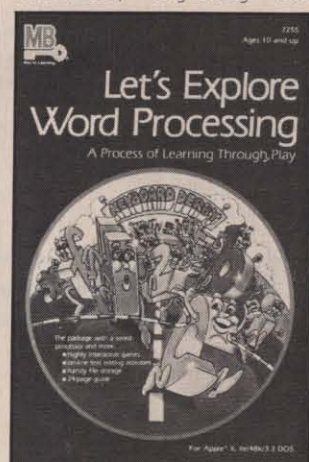
**GAME OF THE STATES** Players' knowledge of the states of the nation get a test in this game. Questions are on state names, capital city names, abbreviations, neighboring state



BASIC exploring in the fundamentals of Word Processing.

U.S.A." and "State Shoot." For children eight years old and up. (CBS, Apple II/II+, Atari 400/800, Commodore 64, IBM PC and PCjr)

**DINOSAUR DIG** This electronic journey into the prehistoric past is intended to give children a chance to explore the world of dinosaurs. In one of the variations, children can test their knowledge of specific dinosaurs. (CBS, Apple II/II+, Atari 400/800, Commodore 64, IBM PC and PCjr)



names and major city names. (Milton Bradley, Apple II/II+, Atari 400/800)

**GO TO THE HEAD OF THE CLASS** Based on the long-popular board game of the same name, this game tests the general knowledge of one, two or three players. Players advance from desk to desk by correctly answering questions on vocabulary, geography, math and history. (Milton Bradley, Apple II/II+, Atari 400/800)