

# Video Review

INCORPORATING  
**HOME VIDEO**  
MAGAZINE

**\$1.95**

THE WORLD AUTHORITY ON HOME VIDEO

## SUPER TV SETS

**GIANT TV TAKES OFF**

**Could Your Video Components Be Counterfeit?**

**Isaac Asimov: Tomorrow's Games**

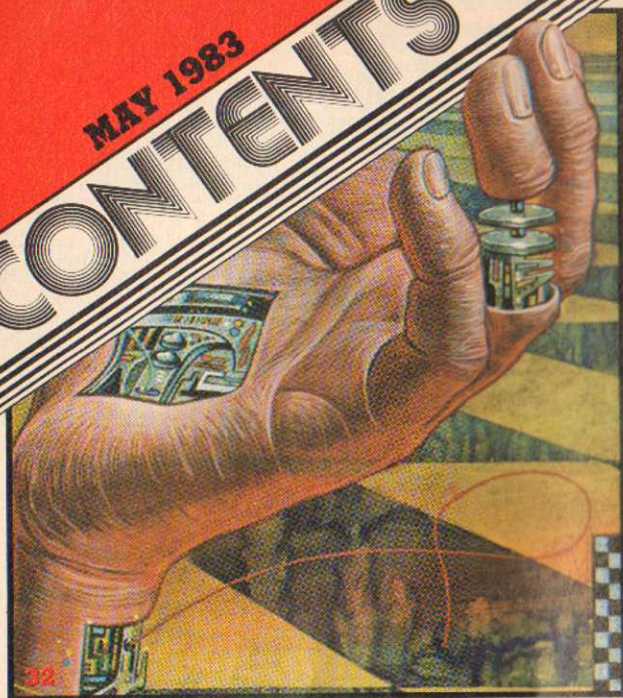
**Special Lab Test: 11 Video Switchers**





MAY 1983

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Everything is a plain old audio record.

Steve and his wife, Jayne Meadows (alternately called "Mrs. Steve Allen" and, for some inexplicable reason, "Miss Meadows"), co-narrate. They urbanely answer some of the most common computer-related questions: Why do I need a home computer? What does BASIC mean? Can I show myself in public without enough K? They don't answer my biggest question: Why are they doing this in the first place? To be fair, the record does come with an illustrated booklet—which approximates

space (or maybe a few inches to the right) the bicycle-generator/TV-set contraption which Holmes' brother-in-law, a Boeing engineer, devised to help fill the prescription.

It seems the doctor's children have recovered nicely from their ailment. They watch perhaps half an hour of TV a day—without pedaling—and then go about their normal affairs unharmed. But Holmes himself has suffered from a rare form of the disease. His contraption was such a hit that it landed him spots on TV talk shows, where he's been spotted doing some pedaling—and peddling—himself.

I guess TV is no exception to the rule: Everything runs on cycles. (M.R.)□

### Best (?) Of the Class

Regular wrap-ups have been appearing in *VR* covering equipment, tapes, discs and games. Yet there's one aspect of the magazine that always gets neglected.

In an effort to put an end to this discrimination (in the best sense of the word), here are the year's Best *VR* Classifieds. All are reprinted exactly as they appeared, though names and addresses have been withheld to protect the guilty.

**ADULT NOVELTY** 3-D Femal nudes in "reach out and touch 'emcolor"; ten views plus viewer per set, specify Blond or Brunette...

(Could we be a little more specific?)

**LET'S PLAY STRIP POKER!** All you need is a VCR, a deck of cards and our Strip Poker videocassette. You'll never have to play solitaire again...

(At least we play with a full deck.)

**HYPNOTIZE BY VIDEOTAPE** Made for doctors. Hypnotic induction on tape. Place subject in front of television. When hypnotized, control turned over to you by name...

(Makes us sleepy just thinking about it.)

**MEMBERSHIPS FREE.** Photos, films etc. ...accepting modeling applications, details \$1...

(We knew there was a hitch.)

**HOLLYWOOD IS LOOKING FOR NEW BODYS & FACES** Rent, buy or borrow, then send us a VHS T-120 videocassette. Record on the first 5 minutes or more your best erotic performances. With releases we will distribute to Hollywood Entrepreneurs and other contributors, then return your tape with over one hour of similar recordings...

(Beats hanging out at Schwab's.)

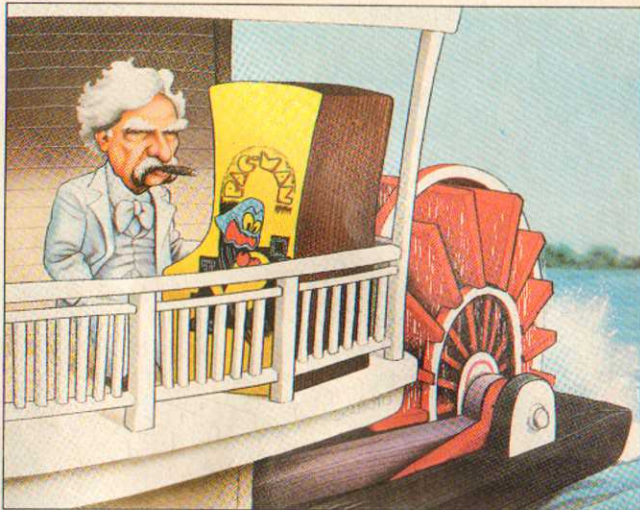
**BOXING VIDEOCASSETTES** Let's trade Joel Ballon...

(We'll give you two bantamweights and a middleweight to be named later.) (D.C.)□

below, shows off his puss to the judges. We lie. Actually it's one of our freelancers who'll do anything to get in print. We think he should've won anyway. (M.R.)□

### Never the Twain Shall Play

The Mark Twain Riverboat isn't actually a boat—or much of anything, really, these days. What is was supposed to be was a videogame arcade in the Florida town of



### Dog Day Afterthought

Once in a while, we run across a video program we know is destined to be famous—or infamous. We've tripped on such a title in the Los Angeles Video Library's *Festival of the Saws/The Ugliest Dog Contest*.

The first feature is a humorous documentary of the First Annual Musical Saw Playing Festival held in Santa Cruz, CA, in 1979. The second was taped at the annual Ugliest Dog Contest of '78. *Video Review's* contestant, featured



Tamarac. The Riverboat, however, has been scuttled.

The blast that sank the boat was in the form of a city ordinance with a 20-line title that boiled down to what the locals call "The Amusement Center Ordinance." It appears the locals were not amused. The ordinance doesn't actually ban videogame arcades, but it does "set forth restrictive requirements as far as the number of games and the security measures," according to a Tamarac spokesperson. Loading the cannon were members of a group called Section 8—how appropriate—who lobbied for the anti-videogame ruling.

Tamarac, it should be noted, is a condo-filled retirement community, so it's probably a good idea that the townfolk are protecting themselves from videogame-crazed youth. I wonder if pizza parlors and grandchildren will be the next things to go? (F.L.)□



about one minute of video.

This we get from one of TV's Golden Age pioneers? Wake up, Steverino, and repeat after me: V-I-D-E-O.... (F.L.)□

### FF Follow-Up: Pedalvision

It was almost two years ago that we told the tale of Dr. Jim Holmes, M.D., whose remedy for his children's video addiction was simple: Make 'em pedal for their programs. We also described in this very



Stewart comedy with Melinda Dillon; *The Far Pavillions*, a \$12 million mini-series set in India, with Omar Sharif, John Gielgud, Ben Cross and Amy Irving.

Elizabeth Taylor will return to the stage with her former husband, Richard Burton, for Noel Coward's *Private Lives*. And familiar faces Laurence Olivier and Jackie Gleason will pair up for *Mr. Halperin and Mr. Johnson*, a play taped in London. In concerts, HBO is following up performances by Fleetwood Mac and Blondie by nabbing Dolly Parton, Kenny Rogers, Willie Nelson, Kenny Loggins, Pat Benatar, the Little River Band and Sheena Easton.

In preparing its series, Showtime is gambling that subscribers who grew up watching series on free TV want to do the same when they pay for it. The twist is offering no commercials, a little sex and what the Showtime thinks is alternative fare.

*The Paper Chase*, one of the new series, aired briefly on CBS in '76. In the Showtime remake, John Houseman returns as Professor Kingsfield. In *Faerie Tale Theatre*, another series, actress Shelly Duvall helps celebrities Christopher Reeve, Robin Williams, Jessica Lange, Jean Stapleton and Mick Jagger act out fairy tales.

Several soaps have also been taped exclusively for the pay-TV service, including *New Day in Eden* and *Loving Friends and Perfect Couples*, a daily serial from Dallas creator David Jacobs about interlocking relationships and a political scandal. *What's Up America* is Showtime's new magazine program, and *Bizarre* features John Byner in comedy skits. □

## GAMES FIT ON WAFERS

Are conventional game cartridges old hat? They may be soon for some of the well-known game makers. Coleco, for one, is using a newer technology—a microcassette, or Super Wafer—for its home videogames. The ColecoVision Super Game Expansion Module 3, which soups up ColecoVision to near arcade quality, uses a microcassette with four times more memory capacity than Coleco's standard game cartridges.

The same microcassette technology can also be used to increase memory in home computers. Texas Instruments already uses it in its Compact Computer 40. Other home computer companies are looking at it for their own machines as well. (C.S.K.) □

## Cave In

Surrendering to videophile demands, TV makers have been forced to offer direct input jacks, the video-ready feature now found only on higher priced color TV receivers and semi-professional monitors.

RCA, Sony and Zenith have taken the lead in designing sets that can serve either as displays for broadcast and cable programming, or for videogames, videodisc players, VCRs and home computers. Both companies will offer input jacks on many of the 1984-model color television sets due in stores this summer. Similar plans are in the works by other set makers. (R.G.) □



My First Computer: for micro processors.

## GAMES GROW UP: COMPUTERS BORN

By Carl S. Kaplan

Gamers who own Atari's VCS 2600 videogame consoles—an estimated 10 million—will soon be able to buy a low-cost keyboard to transform it into a home computer. Tagged My First Computer, the keyboard will be available for less than \$90 by September. It will accept standard VCS software as well as a new Atari line of specially designed computer software featuring Miss Piggy and the *Peanuts* characters.

Atari is not the first company to upgrade its VCS into a computer. That honor goes to SpectraVision, which introduced a keyboard add-on last January. But Atari should be the first with a keyboard for an advanced model (its 5200 videogame system), expected late this year.

Additions to game systems are also expected this fall.

Odyssey plans to introduce a raised keyboard Command Center with more memory than the Odyssey<sup>2</sup>, and Mattel's Intellivision III, with a built-in voice synthesizer, high-resolution graphics and extensive color capabilities, is due out in September. □

## PBS Books Text Test

By Gary Arlen

Public television stations, in need of money, are turning to teletext and related electronic publishing services to fill their shrunken coffers.

KCET-TV, the public TV station in Los Angeles, has already started broadcasting a news reports service within the TV signal space intended for closed captioning services. The station's specially formatted news stories can be picked up in area shopping malls and stores and displayed on billboard-type strips which cycle headlines on LED (light-emitting diode) screens. Ads for stores can be inserted at each location using a computer device. If the L.A. station succeeds, others around the country are likely to offer similar "billboard" services.

Even now, the Los Angeles station is not alone. PBS and several public TV stations in rural areas are sending agricultural information—timely weather and commodity reports—encoded within the regular broadcast transmission. □

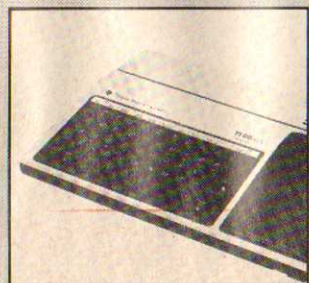
## Shock Alert for TI 99-4As

By Marcy Ressler

Owners of Texas Instruments 99-4A home computer: Beware. Company tests have determined that use of the computer can be hazardous to your health.

In routine lab tests in February, Texas Instruments discovered that transformers in some of the models could—under certain conditions—overheat, posing risk of electrical shock. In accordance with Consumer Product Safety Commission rules, the

company removed remaining models from store shelves until corrective measures could be taken.



TI 99-4A: marked machine?

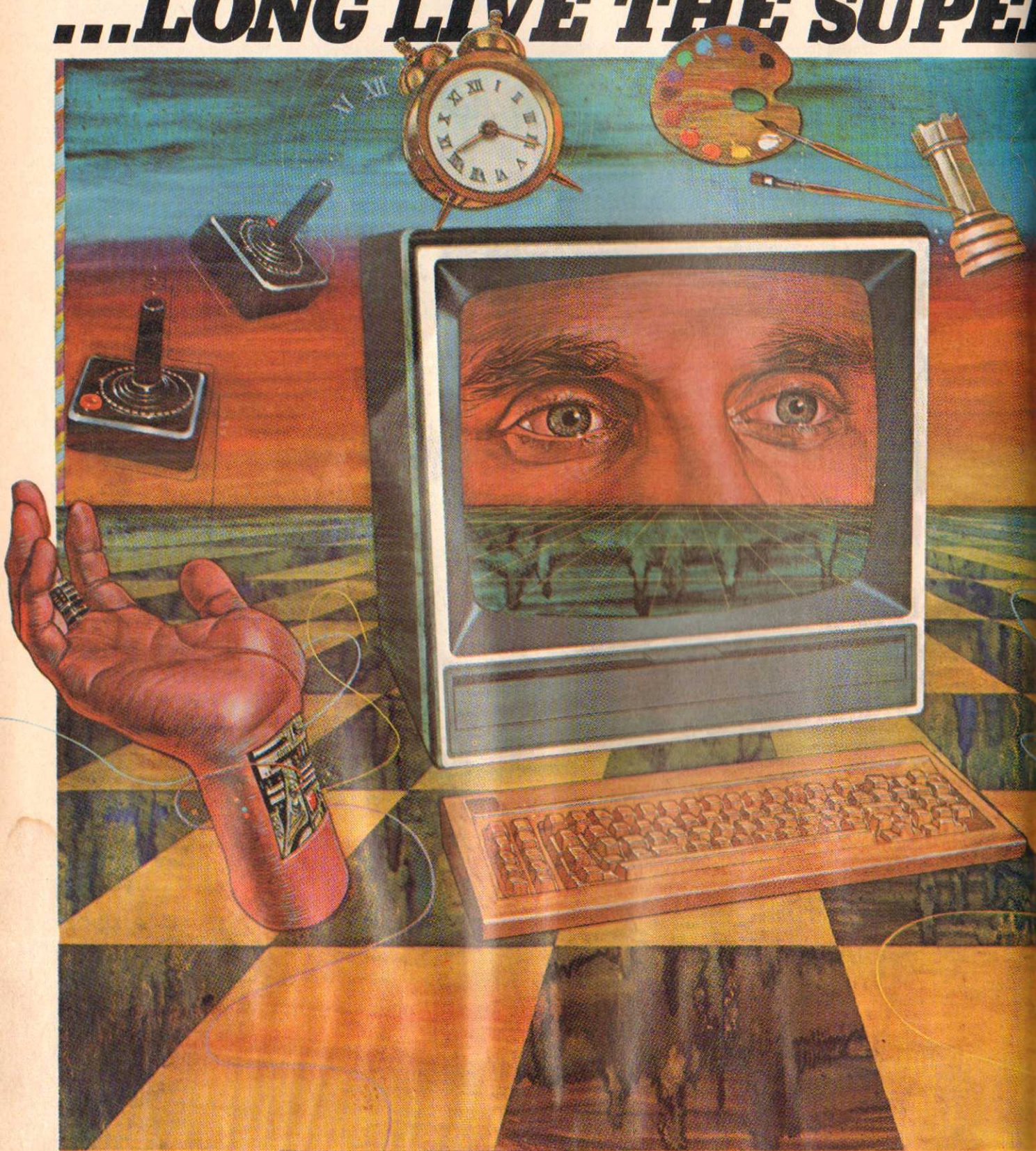
Working with government officials, the company has agreed to send a transformer adaptor to the hundreds of thousands of owners of the TI 99-4A home computer. It plans to notify consumers through direct mailings, newspaper advertisements and press releases about the availability of the new transformer adaptor.

"We are satisfied with the fix," says CPSC compliance officer Kevin O'Brien. "With those adaptors, there's no safety hazard." □



# VIDEO GAME

## ...LONG LIVE THE SUPER





# IS ARE DEAD GAMES OF TOMORROW!

By Isaac Asimov

Games in youth are a rehearsal of life in maturity. This has always been observed in those animals which are sufficiently advanced to indulge in play. Puppies, joyously mauling each other, are rehearsing the battles they'll fight later. Kittens, pouncing on a fugitive piece of paper, are learning how to pounce on a mouse when the time comes.

It's not so different with human beings. A girl with a doll is in obvious preparation for the role of mother with child. Most contact sports stir the spirit of competitiveness and encourage the qualities of mind and muscle that will come in useful later. Wellington is supposed to have remarked that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playingfields of Eton.

With all that in mind, we must ask ourselves for what videogames—the latest wrinkle in youthful amusement—might serve as rehearsal.

If we consider the most popular videogames, the answers can only be vague. They accustom the young to a computerized society (though they don't necessarily teach them anything about computers as such). They encourage combativeness and striving, exercise quickness of response and speed of judgement. And—perhaps that's all.

In fact, most of the games seem to involve the shooting down of invaders and their war weapons. They might, in that sense, be said to be preparing the youth of the world for war and destruction, at a time when it is vitally necessary that the world experience peace and cooperation among nations. In that sense, videogames might seem to be retrogressive, even dangerous, in their effects.

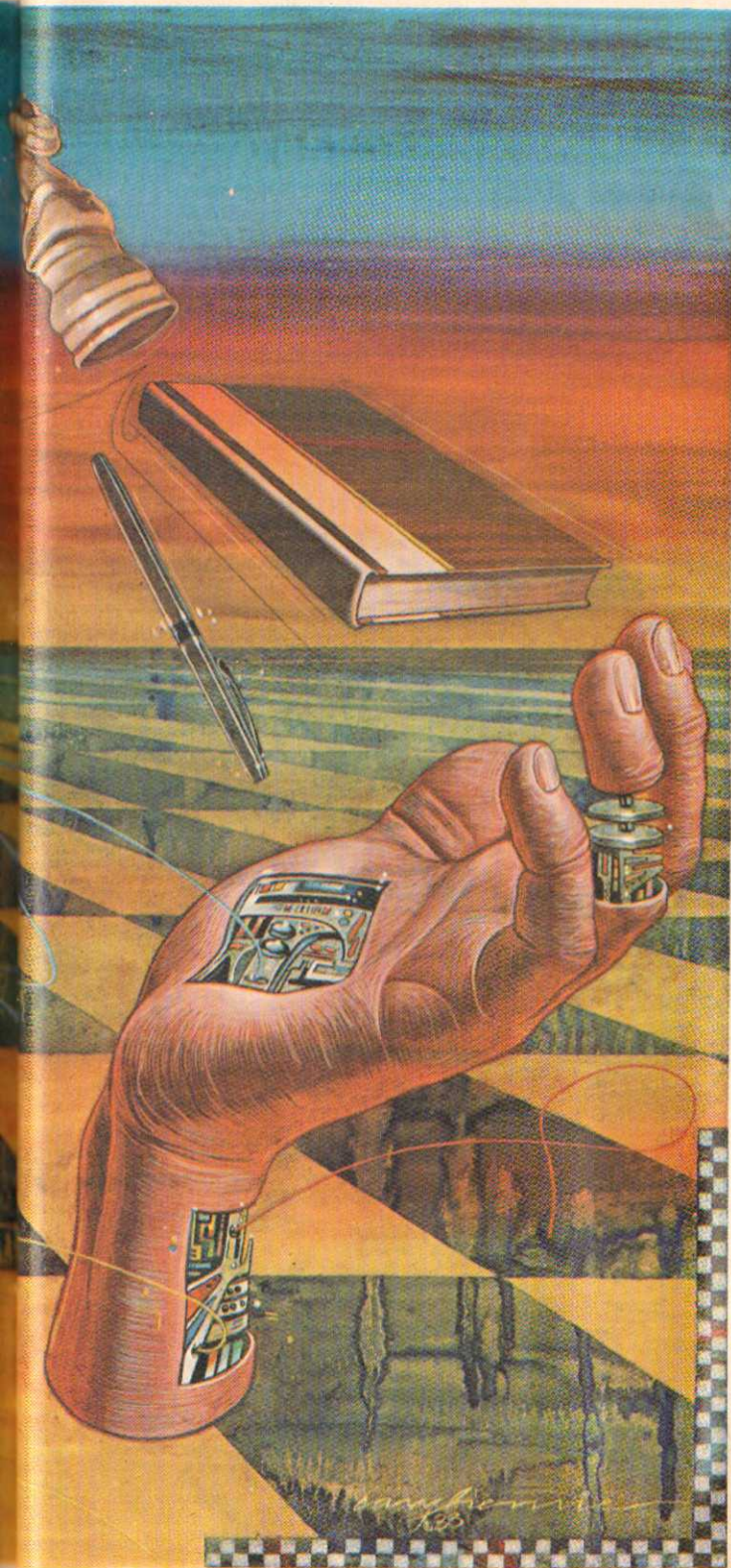
But the principle remains. Games are an important (perhaps unequalled) teaching device, and even in this primitive period of the videogame era, there are examples that are less trivial than that of *Pac-Man* and the like.

## All in Chess

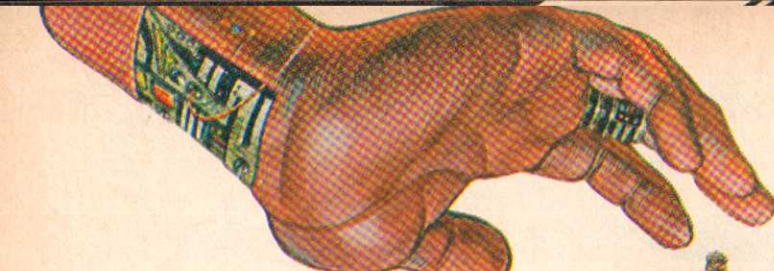
It's possible, for instance, to play chess with a computer. While computers don't play chess brilliantly, they don't make obvious mistakes, either. A chess dud such as myself, therefore, is bound to lose to a computer. However, in doing so, it is possible to see where you have made mistakes and to decide to watch for such situations and avoid them. Eventually, you can perhaps hold a particular chess program to a draw or even occasionally win.

You are, in effect, playing chess, but you're also *learning* chess—and doing so from a chess player who's always available when you are, never gets tired or impatient, and never indulges in sarcasm at your expense. The ideal teacher.

If we look into the future, are there still more important







teaching feats we might expect of computers—in the guise of games? Undoubtedly any number, but I want to pick one that is particularly near my heart. It's the knack of writing.

I don't mean professional writing. There are relatively few people who can make a living out of writing, and we can forget them. The vast majority who aren't professionals are, nevertheless, working amateurs at the craft.

All of us have to write once in a while. We must write letters, friendly or business, if nothing else. Many of us must write resumes in search of jobs, or various technical reports, directions, descriptions, accounts, in the course of the jobs we have. Yet few of us are really at ease in our writing. What's more, I don't think anyone knows how to teach writing. If you don't have the knack (whatever it is) to begin with, you may never learn it.

But perhaps making a videogame out of it would help.

### The Only Game in Nouns

Suppose, for instance, a couple of books by Charles Dickens or by Ernest Hemingway are fed into a computer, and it's programmed to take all the words, as well as all the two-word, three-word and four-word combinations it finds, and record them, together with the number of times they all occur. The computer can then print out such word and word-combinations in their proper proportions according to what simple rules can be worked out that govern which words or word-combinations can follow which. The result will be gibberish, to be sure, but it will be gibberish that has a Dickensian, or a Hemingwayan, quality.

You can then play the "game of author" with the computer. You can write a letter that tries to get the sound of the writer for which the computer is programmed. You can read half of the letter into the computer and have it write the other half in computerese (very likely senseless), and see how close in style it comes to what you have written.

There are different ways of "having fun" with the game of author. You might have a computer programmed for the literary styles of several different authors and see how a particular piece of writing, say, a short story, could be

finished in the style of each, and be amused by the results.

Or you might stick to one author but hold a competition with one or more friends, each of whom completes a piece of writing, with the result then being compared with the computer product to see who comes closest. (In something as complex as writing, there are bound to be disagreements and arguments in this matter, but that might well be part of the fun.)

### Author Possibilities

A third thing you might do, once you have played the game of author long enough, is to collect the things you've written and read them into the computer, programming it for your own style. You can then complete some piece of writing in the computer's version of, say, Sinclair Lewis, and also in the computer's version of yourself, and compare the two versions.

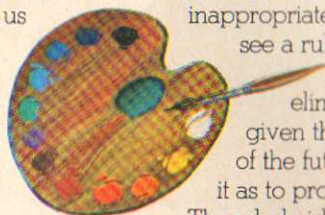
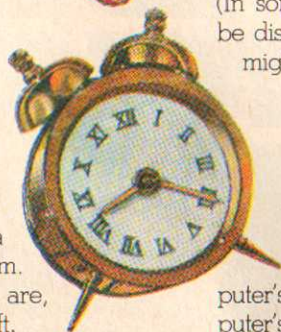
Naturally, as you go along, you'll discover particularly inappropriate examples of gibberish and will perhaps see a rule that can eliminate that. By incorporating the new rule into the program, you'll eliminate one source of nonsense. In fact, given the vastly improved computer capacities of the future, you may well, in time, so program it as to produce material that's not so nonsensical. The whole idea of the game of author has such complexity, it seems to me, that everyone who plays it can work out his or her own variation, something he or she finds particularly amusing or interesting.

Of course, many people may not be interested in such a game at all, and others may be interested for a while and then grow tired and turn to other things. A number of people, however, may become connoisseurs of the game and these, it may well turn out, will, without intending to, learn the knack of better writing.

Just as you learn chess by playing the game of chess against a computer, so you will learn to write by playing the game of author against one.

In fact, you may learn good writing more quickly and more pleurably than you possibly could in the conventional way of attending a school that offers courses in the subject.

It is possible, in fact, that professional writers, too, might play the game of author in an attempt to hone their abilities to an even finer pitch. It would surely be worth it if it meant that I (for instance) would then get fewer rejections from the human editors with whom I play a non-computer version of the game of author. □



An internationally renowned science and science fiction writer, Isaac Asimov is the author of more than 268 books (at presstime). Foundation's Edge (Doubleday) is his recent bestseller. His new book, Winds of Change and Other Stories, has just been released.





# NEW PRODUCT PREVIEWS

## Latest gear from Coleco, Canon and more



**CURTIS MATHES**  
**Portable VCR**  
**Model JV773 \$899**  
**Videocamera**  
**Model JC768 \$1,299**

These two pieces are designed to go together. The VHS four-head stereo videocassette recorder comes with its own carrying case.

The videocamera has a Newvicon tube and an 8:1 f1.6 (12mm to 96mm) zoom lens. It also comes with an electronic viewfinder and auto focus.

Both pieces together, with cable and shoulder pads, weigh less than 14 pounds. Curtis Mathes, 1411 Greenway Dr., Irving, TX 75062 (214) 659-1122.

**DISCWASHER**  
**Fire Control Adaptor**  
**\$9.95**



This adaptor lets you add constant firing power to your joysticks by holding down the fire button. It fits between the joystick and the game console, regardless of format. Discwasher, 1407 N. Providence Rd., P.O. Box 6021, Columbia, MO 65205 (312) 449-0941

**BASF**  
**Blank Videotape**  
**Model TC-20 \$11.95**

Now there's a new brand of videocassette you can use with a compact VCR.

The formulation of this high grade, 20-minute tape is chromium dioxide. It's half-inch tape,

*Unless otherwise noted, all New Products specifications are manufacturers' data—not results of Video Review tests. All listed prices are manufacturers' suggested retail. Availability varies.*

but comes in a cassette about a third the size of a standard VHS cassette.

BASF, Crosby Dr., Bedford, MA 01730 (617) 271-4000



**MATTEL**  
**Computer Keyboard**  
**Model 4187 Under \$150**

You can change graphics, skill level, game action—all but the rules—with this computer keyboard for use with Intellivision I and II consoles.

The 49-digit keyboard, which resembles a standard typewriter, can be programmed to perform home computer functions as well. It comes with an Intellivision computer adaptor with

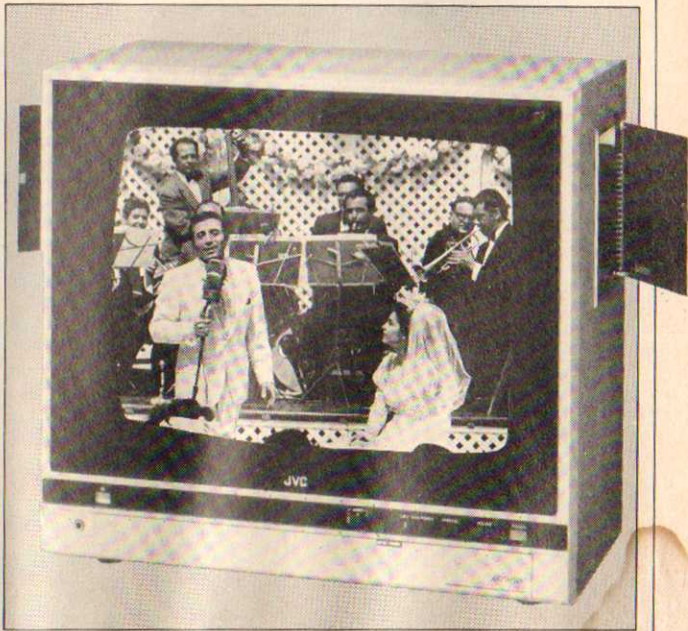
2K of RAM and 12K of ROM for added programmability. Mattel, 5150 Rosecrans Ave., Hawthorne, CA 90250 (213) 978-5150



**JVC**  
**Receiver/Monitor**  
**Model AV-2010US \$850**

Part of JVC's first full line of TV sets and monitors, this 134-channel model accommodates

three independent video inputs and one video output. It contains built-in speakers on each side for stereo sound. JVC, 41 Slater Dr., Elmwood Park, NJ 07407 (201) 794-3900



**MASADA**  
**Color Video Title and Character Generator**  
**Model One \$395**  
**Model Two \$595**

You select the name of the game with this video title and character generator. Its 40-function touch keyboard permits simple animation in six colors as well as function displays. Masada Equipment Corp., 3940 Montclair Rd., Suite 401, Birmingham, AL 35213







**KAYPRO**  
**Portable Computer**  
**Kaypro 10 \$2,795**

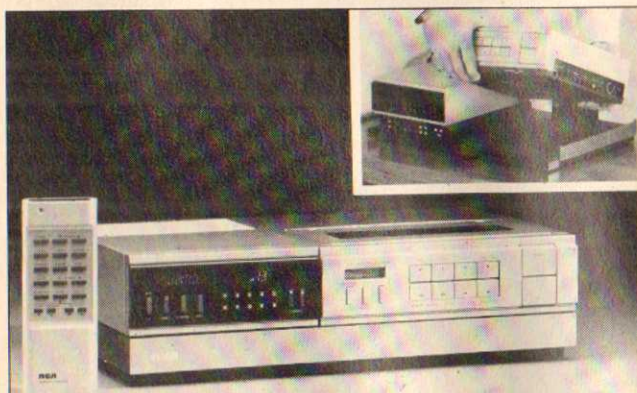
This hard-disc portable computer has the memory of an elephant—10 megabytes—but not the beastly weight.

Its nine-inch screen is said to be capable of displaying 80 columns by 25 lines of characters. It

uses 5¼-inch floppy discs.

The 27-pound model comes with a detachable 72-character keyboard, disc drive, monitor, interface devices and several software packages.

*Kaypro Non-Linear Systems,*  
 533 Stevens Ave., Solana  
 Beach, CA 92075  
 (619) 755-1134



**RCA**  
**Portable/Tabletop VCR**  
**Model VJP900 \$1,300**

Neither wires nor cords nor connector cables will stand between you, your portable VCR and your tuner/timer anymore.

Here's the first portable VCR that simply snaps onto a TV tuner/timer. Its modular docking design makes the portable

model instantly convertible to a tabletop system, too.

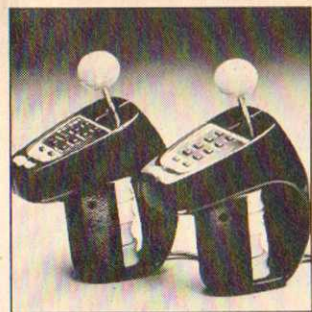
The VHS recorder has five-head scanning designed to improve picture quality and can be programmed to record eight programs in 21 days. It offers stereo sound and can receive 133 channels.

*RCA, 600 N. Sherman Dr.,*  
 Indianapolis, IN 46201  
 (317) 267-5000

**COLECO**  
**Joystick Controller Set**  
**Model 2491 Under \$70**

You make the moves when using these joystick controllers with a ColecoVision videogame console. The controller set for two contains an eight-direction joystick designed to offer full field movement of characters. It has a speed roller to control the characters' speeds.

Coleco's Super Action Baseball cartridge comes with the controller set.



*Coleco, 945 Asylum Ave.,*  
 Hartford, CT 06105  
 (203) 278-0280

**QUASAR**  
**Videocassette Recorder**  
**Model VH5635WW**

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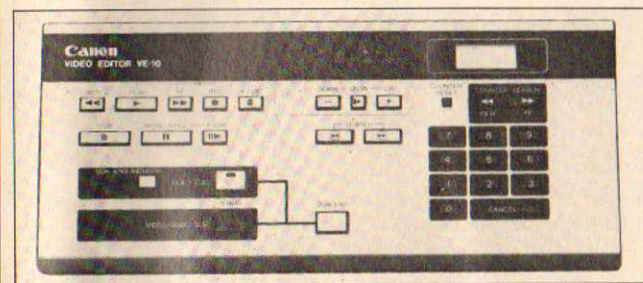
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**ON THE DRAWING BOARDS**

**CARD PLEASER:** It looks like a credit card, acts like a computer, serves as identification and pays for clothes, food, gas, doctor visits and transportation. It's an integrated-circuit memory card and can be programmed to do anything you want. **Smart Cards** is already testing these memory cards widely in France and recently opened a US office to make an American deal. **IBM, Polaroid** and **NCR** have similar hopes. But first an American standard has to be set . . . which may take a few years.

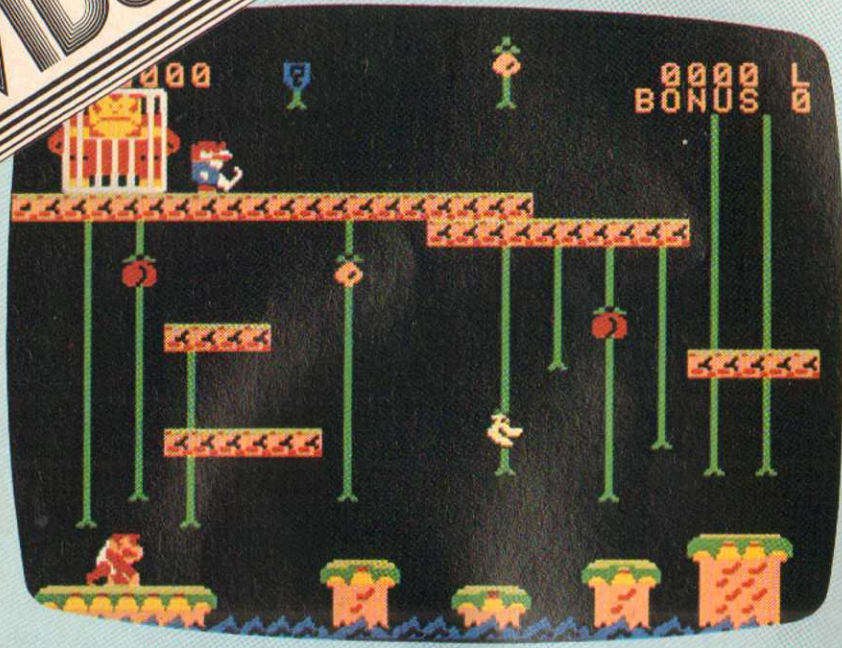
**SORRY, WRONG NUMBER:** **Sears** is changing around its camera line this summer, replacing its sophisticated MOS (metal-oxide sensor) model

with a more MOR (middle-of-the-road) Saticon tube camera that will sell for \$599. **GE**, too, has sent its current camera models back to the labs. A new Newvicon-tube model with an 8:1 zoom lens and low-light sensitivity should be available by the summer.\*

**ADD-ONS:** It's how you play the game that counts, and this summer, **Discwasher** will help you play it better. The accessories company is talking about bringing out a joystick for ColecoVision, a joystick for Intellivision II and a low-cost trackball. **Odyssey** plans to introduce a raised keyboard Command Center with more memory than the Odyssey<sup>2</sup> in the fall. (M.R.)



# Special: Wiswell on Coleco super-game



Mario vs. Donkey Kong Junior and dad: the apes of wrath.

## Cartridge

**DONKEY KONG JUNIOR** ★★★  
 Designer uncredited. Adapted from the Nintendo arcade game. (Coleco, ColecoVision-compatible cartridge. \$30)

**SUPER DONKEY KONG JUNIOR** ★★★  
 Designer uncredited. Adapted from the Nintendo arcade game. (Coleco, ColecoVision Expansion Module #3-compatible microcassette. \$30)

By Phil Wiswell

The shoe is on the other foot—a very hairy foot. In this sequel to the popular *Donkey Kong*, you control a baby ape, who's trying to get to the top of the screen where papa ape is being held caged by none other than Mario, the human hero of the original game! In other words, the battle of man vs. ape we have come to know and love has switched to ape vs. man.

This is probably the first example of such videogame role reversal. It's also the first use of an ethnic minority (the Italian carpenter) as a villain. Although this doesn't affect the

*Videogame critic and author Phil Wiswell is one of the field's most eminent authorities and a charter contributor to VR. His latest work is the videocassette series, How to Beat Home Video Games.*

game play, I don't feel game manufacturers ought to encourage the use of ethnic stereotypes. Anyway, the game is so similar to *Donkey Kong*, with the action so close and the object identical, it's hard to understand why I must now be an ape. Does Nintendo think that changing the theme also changes the game play? It doesn't. On the other hand, the game, which is fun, stands on its own merits and should have staying power. And Mario isn't so much the enemy as a symbol of the enemy. You don't notice him throwing obstacles in your screen persona's path as papa ape does in *Donkey Kong*.

Coleco, however, has done a graphically admirable job of aping Nintendo's coin-op version. As expected, there are some differences—three rather than four playfields, for instance—but the experience is reminiscent of arcade play. Cartoon intermissions appear in the "super" version designed for the new Expansion Module #3.

In the first screen, 12 vines hang at different lengths from suspended platforms. Using both the vines and the platforms, Junior tries to reach the top level where his pop is held captive. "Snapjaws" (they look like shoes with teeth) pursue the little ape. Once on the top platform, Junior must grab a key to unlock his way to the second screen. Interesting and somewhat depressing is the fact that the most efficient pattern through this board takes Junior on a route almost identical to that taken on *Donkey Kong's* elevator board.

The second screen consists of 10 hanging

chains. Some chains contain fruit, six contain keys and others are empty. While eluding both snapjaws and a pair of flying dragons, Junior must move the keys up their chains and into their locks in order to reach the top of this screen. Some keys are on adjacent chains and can be raised two at a time. Others must be moved, abandoned while an enemy passes, then moved again.

The third playfield looks much like the first. (Indeed, Junior must go through another first playfield before the third different playfield comes up.) There are vines with fruit and both snapjaws and dragons, with some of the platforms constantly in motion.

The game play of the two versions is identical, which surprises me. The super version's only differences are one more playfield, slightly better music, the wonderful cartoon intermissions and a permanent high-score list. I might be prejudging the module, but to me, those aren't very strong arguments in favor of the \$125 Expansion Module #3 and upcoming super games. With all the extra memory, why not put it to work in the game play?

The graphics of both the regular and the super versions are very high quality, and the musical accompaniment close to the parent game. Still, I wish I were playing the part of Mario. I don't care much for fighting on the side of a stupid ape. □

**M\*A\*S\*H**★★  
 Designed by Dallas North. (Fox, VCS-compatible cartridge. \$34.95)

By Michael Blanchet

In its 11-year run, the TV series *M\*A\*S\*H* enjoyed the distinction of being the only hit series staged in wartime that didn't advocate violence. So, since Fox's *M\*A\*S\*H* videogame is also nonviolent, has it captured the essence of the series in a tiny electronic chip? Not quite. True, the program was testament to the insanity of war. But even those who missed the series' social commentary could appreciate the antics of Hawkeye, Klinger and the rest. The show was fun. In light of this, the videogame misses the boat by knots.

The object is simply to save lives. It's a two-stage process. First, your on-screen helicopter must venture out into the battlefield to pick up wounded soldiers. Once

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



they've been brought into the operating room, you use an on-screen pair of forceps to remove shrapnel from a patient's body.

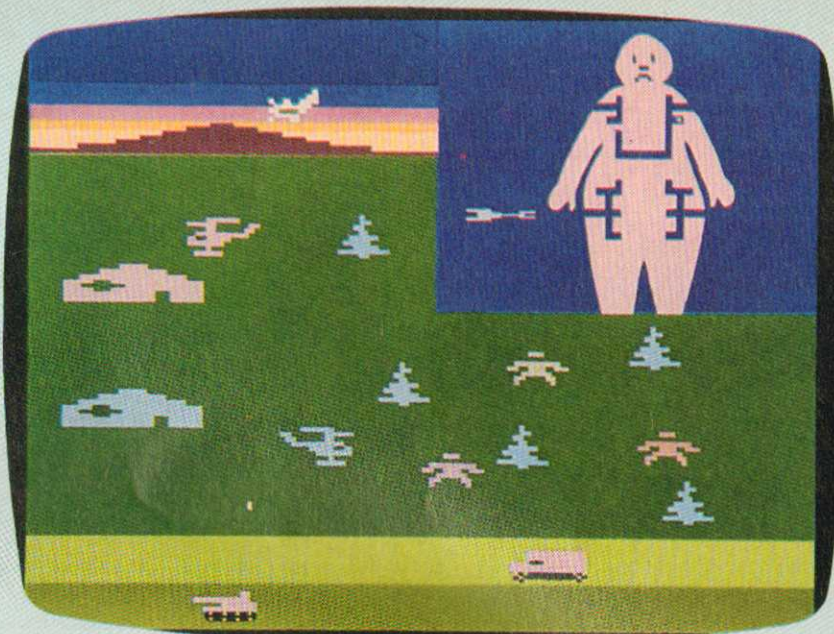
The first time I saw the battlefield sequence, I noticed a tank or two spewing shells. These, according to the scenario, are responsible for the damaged bodies. I questioned a Fox spokesperson about the tanks being part of the game play—since the visual reminder of warfare isn't in keeping with the game's nonviolent theme. The Fox exec agreed with me to a point, but added that the player can't fire back, which ostensibly preserves the pacifist and humanitarian nature of the game.

Once the rescue 'copter touches down at the 4077th, it's time to operate. The body of each GI, looking more like a pear than a fit and trim soldier, fills the screen. Hidden in one of the passageways hewn out of the body is a piece of shrapnel. Your forceps must snake through the passages without touching the patient's innards. To get credit for saving a life, this must be accomplished within a certain amount of time.

After surgery, there's no time to hit the still, let alone take your metaphoric gloves off. It's back to the battlefield to pick up more wounded, then back to the operating room. In this respect, *M\*A\*S\*H* is an accurate depiction of life at the 4077th— one patient goes out, another comes in.

Interestingly, the length of the game depends on how long you wish to compete, not, as is usual, when a predetermined number of your screen lives are terminated. For instance, a contest staged between two players can go on until a predetermined time period has expired or one contestant gives in from fatigue.

My suspicion is that playing rack 'em, stack 'em surgeon would become boring after a while, even for those who have lived their entire working life by the Hippocratic oath. But even on this point, *M\*A\*S\*H*



*Mish-M\*A\*S\*H: retrieving wounded for (inset) a tricky operation.*

remains faithful to its TV counterpart. One lament often voiced by Hawkeye was the futility of the doctors' purpose in Korea— patching up the wounded only to send them back to the front line.

When the *M\*A\*S\*H* game was in its developmental stages, Fox probably identified a plethora of possible themes, such as survival through black humor (more a hallmark of the original movie) or the prevailing attitude of the enlisted man vs. that of the average civilian. Granted these wouldn't lend themselves easily, if at all, to a videogame. Yet humor was a vital part of the TV show, and there is nothing humorous at all about this game of the same name. The *M\*A\*S\*H* series, recently retired from primetime, deserves a better epitaph. □

#### **MS. PAC-MAN ★ ★ ★ ★**

**Designer uncredited. Adapted from the Midway/Bally arcade game. (Atari, VCS-compatible. \$29.95)**

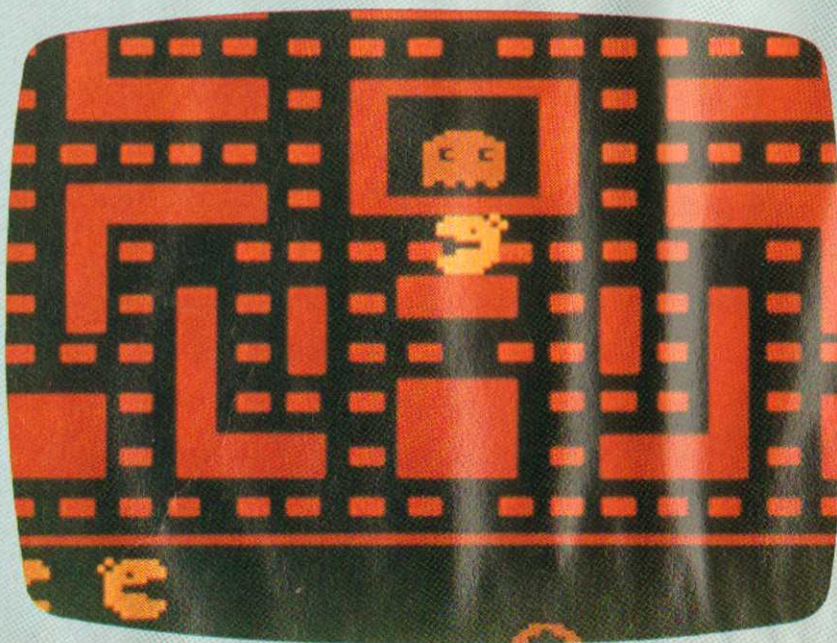
**By Randi Hacker**

A popular feminist expression: Adam was only a rough draft. The videogame revision: The VCS *Pac-Man* was only a rough draft. Without the benefit of that extra rib, an anonymous Atari designer has created *Ms. Pac-Man* for the VCS, and as far as I'm concerned she's definitive testimony to the superiority of women. Not only is she a vision of electronic loveliness, but she's also a lot more fun. If she had legs, you could say she walked in beauty. As it is, she eats in beauty, and it's no wonder those ghosts pursue her.

*Ms. Pac-Man* is a faithful rendition of the popular arcade game right down to the eponymous character's mascara made-up eyelashes and Clara Bow lips. Relieved of the annoying "blip, blip, blip" sounds that the VCS *Pac-Man* makes when eating, she swallows dots with a refined electronic sound instead, and she actually moves her lips in the process. The joystick action is also improved in this game, although, at times, it's still difficult to make a quick change of direction. If you want her to turn right at the end of a long straightaway, begin pushing up on the joystick early or she won't be able to make the turn.

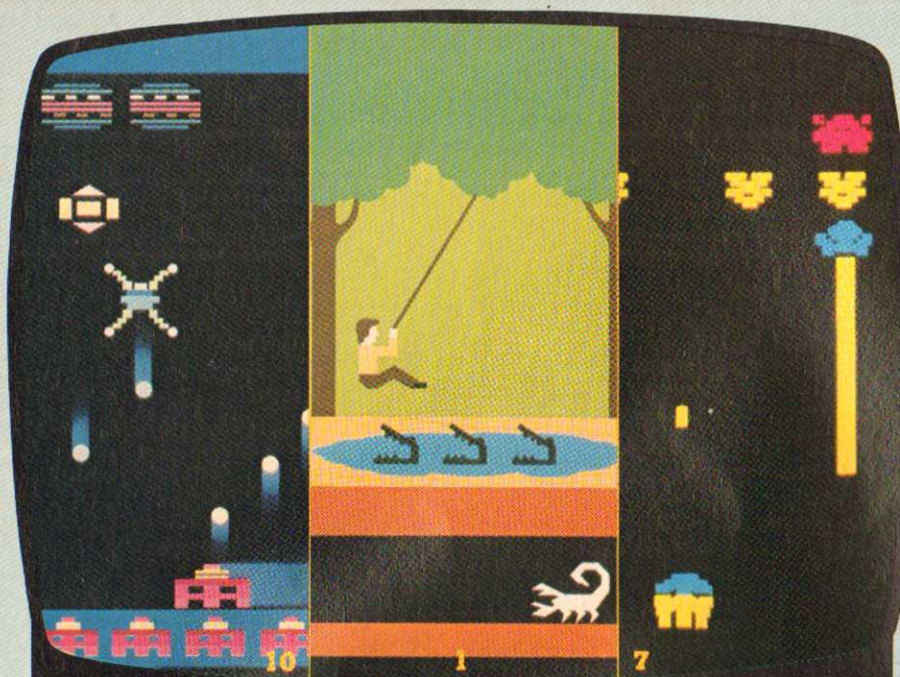
Another wonderful difference between the Mr. and Ms. games is in her ability to, as President Reagan might put it, "stay the course." Unlike *Pac-Man*, she's not swept off her metaphorical feet by any exit that comes along. She will, with no regrets, glide right past them if you don't want her to leave the maze. She's a woman who knows her own mind.

The ghosts don't flicker, the fruit



*Atari's VCS-compatible Ms. Pac-Man: The Ms. is a hit.*





Last Month This Month

## Top Carts\*

1	1	<b>PITFALL!</b> Designed by David Crane. (Activision, VCS- and Intellivision-compatible, \$31.95)
2	2	<b>RIVER RAID</b> Designed by Carol Shaw. (Activision, VCS-compatible, \$31.95)
—	3	<b>VANGUARD</b> Designer uncredited. (Atari, VCS-compatible, \$29.95)
4	4	<b>DONKEY KONG</b> Adapted by Eric Bromley and team from the Nintendo arcade game. (Coleco, VCS- and Intellivision-compatible, \$30)
5	5	<b>FROGGER</b> Designer uncredited. (Parker Brothers, VCS-compatible, \$30)
10	6	<b>DEMON ATTACK</b> Designed by Ron Fulop and Gary Kato. (Imagic, VCS- and Intellivision-compatible, \$31.95/\$39.95)
—	7	<b>GORF</b> Adapted by Joe Gaucher and team from the Midway arcade game. (CBS Video Games, VCS-compatible, \$35)
—	8	<b>ADVANCED DUNGEONS &amp; DRAGONS</b> Designer uncredited. Based on the TSR Hobbies game. (Mattel, Intellivision-compatible, \$39)
9	9	<b>ZAXXON</b> Designer uncredited. (Coleco, ColecoVision-compatible, \$49.95)
—	10	<b>SPIDER FIGHTER</b> Designed by Larry Miller. (Activision, VCS-compatible, \$31.95)

**Behind the Top 10 Carts:** Licensing fever has struck videogames, but you'd never know it from our Top 10 chart. Play value, not the name, still seems to determine popularity. Although arcade-game adaptations continue to be popular (notice **Vanguard**, **Frogger**, **Gorf** and **Zaxxon**), the real hits remain such home video originals as **Pitfall!**, **River Raid** and **Demon Attack**—partially, perhaps, because of their designers' followings.

Those companies whose fortunes are tied to licensed games (notably Data Age and Parker Brothers) maintain they will release no game until it meets rugged playability requirements. But judging from the lukewarm response most licensed titles have received so far, the new flood of licensed cartridges, offering VCS-versions of everyone from **Mr. Bill** to **Mr. T**, may become collector's curios rather than models of inventive videogame design. (M.T.)

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

resemble fruit and, after you've (inevitably) lost, a brief intermission, played against a dramatic, dark background, comes up in which the ghosts appear one by one and then do some sort of ritual dance around Ms. Pac-Man until you press the reset button.

Clearly, the sins of the Pac-Men are not visited upon their spouses. *Ms. Pac-Man* is sensational and should, if nothing else, lend credence to the old expression: Behind every great dot, there is a greater dot. Or something. □

### MOUSE TRAP ★★★★★

Designer uncredited. Adapted from the Exidy arcade game. (Coleco, ColecoVision-compatible cartridge, \$30)

### MOUSE TRAP ★

Designer uncredited. Adapted from the Exidy arcade game. (Coleco, VCS-compatible cartridge, \$30)

By Scot Morris

I have great respect for ColecoVision videogames. I've given its *Zaxxon* and now its *Mouse Trap* four-star ratings in *VR*. In my Games column in *Omni*, I even picked Coleco's *Donkey Kong* as one of the best videogames of 1982. But is Coleco intentionally putting out inferior games for the Atari VCS and the Mattel Intellivision? I don't know, but it's certainly in Coleco's interest to leave gamers with the impression that the only authentic versions of particular games are for the ColecoVision.

*Mouse Trap* is the latest example of this phenomenon. In both the ColecoVision and VCS versions, it's an addictive little *Pac-Manesque* game on a par with *Lady Bug* and *Cat Trax* (Jan. '83 *VR*). You run your mouse through the maze, avoiding cats and eating up pieces of cheese and an occasional bone. Press a button to change the position of some of the doors, and you create a new maze. Some changes give you enclosed cells in which your mouse can either hide or entrap those pesky cats. The bones can turn your mouse, for a few furious seconds, into an invincible dog with a taste for pussy cats.

The ColecoVision game has four skill levels. The first level is for practice, and higher levels bring the major mouse-killer, a hawk, which zigzags across the maze and can't be defeated, even when your mouse has on his dog disguise. When the hawk flies, all your rodent can do is stay clear.

The VCS version has four skill levels, too, for smart or stupid and fast or slow cats. Significantly, the VCS version has no hawk.

With the ColecoVision version, you can accumulate as many bones as you want, though the display shows only five at a time. On the VCS version, you can accumulate four—tops—so once you have your four, it's foolish to pick up another before you start using them to change your mouse into a dog. To make the change in the ColecoVision game, you press the keypad overlay



button with the picture of the dog on it. In the VCS version, you press and release quickly the red button. Holding the red button down longer is the Atari way to change doors and alter the maze. Coleco allows the VCS game only two mazes; the ColecoVision game has eight.

There's also a much better variety of sounds in the ColecoVision version. The VCS sounds are fewer, duller and more confusing: You get exactly the same sound when you lose a mouse to a cat as when you defeat a cat! The biggest difference between the two games is the generous bounty of bonus objects that appear in the ColecoVision maze. No bonuses are offered in the VCS game.

What's going on here? Why all the differences between the two games? Coleco may argue that the Atari system doesn't have the capability to show a hawk flying over the maze, and I'll buy that. But is the Atari system unable to show bonus prizes? And wouldn't it be possible to have a greater variety of doors and mazes? I have a hard time understanding such minor differences as points (you get one point for eating a piece of cheese in the VCS game, 90 points in the ColecoVision) without speculating that Coleco is puffing up its own games.

Activision and Imagic especially have shown that the VCS is capable of vivid and colorful graphics and solid play value, but you wouldn't know that if you only looked at such Coleco VCS games as *Donkey Kong*, *Venture* and now *Mouse Trap*. □

#### **DRAGONFIRE ★**

**Designed by Bob Smith. (Imagic, VCS-compatible cartridge. \$29.95)**

#### **DRAGONFIRE ★ ★**

**Designed by Alan Smith. (Imagic, Intellivision-compatible cartridge. \$39.95)**

**By Howard Polskin**

Paging Puff the Magic Dragon. Maybe he could blow a little magic into this simplistic game that tries valiantly to capitalize on a *Dungeons and Dragons* motif.

The dragon of *Dragonfire* may, like Puff, come across as a pussycat, but it's hardly enchanting. Oh, this dragon snorts fireballs, all right, and it menaces a young prince, but it does so in a tame game without any new visual notions. Worse yet, *Dragonfire* is boring. It might appeal to kids because the premise is simple, but it's quite difficult to rack up the high scores that shoot-'em-up gamers have come to expect. *Dragonfire* never held my interest long enough to make me want to sit around for hours trying to perfect my skills.

The goal of *Dragonfire* is to have your on-screen prince cross a bridge into a castle to loot a treasure-filled storeroom guarded by a dangerous dragon. Running your prince across the bridge is tricky. Fireballs (presumably from the

mouth of the off-screen dragon, who probably hadn't used his Crest that morning) come soaring from the left side of the screen. The prince has to either jump over or duck the blazing masses. Once he's crossed the bridge, the screen changes. The prince has entered the storeroom.

Here, the Imagic designers seem to have passed up a golden opportunity to design some graphic jewels. Instead of beautiful riches, the storeroom's treasures are merely colored shapes without any sparkle or pizzazz. They could be anything from the king's royal leftovers to dragon droppings. Imagic might well have named the game *Medieval Garbage Man* or *Prehistoric Pooper Scooper*.

Anyway, the prince dashes around the room picking up the alleged treasures to accumulate points while the dragon tries to zap him with large fireballs that come streaming out of the reptile's nostrils. The dragon just paces left to right on the bottom of the screen like an anxious husband awaiting the delivery of his first child. Once the treasures have been collected, the prince makes his getaway at an exit point in an upper corner of the screen. Then the screen transforms into the bridge again, and the plot repeats itself. Each time the prince enters the treasure room, however, the dragon paces more quickly. For veteran gamers, this is certainly not one of the most imaginative story lines.

The Intellivision-compatible version is superior to the VCS-compatible version. In the Intellivision version, it's easier to control the prince as he scoops up treasures and the game is better graphically. Also, in the later stages of the Intellivision game, an archer appears in the castle overlooking the bridge and shoots arrows at the prince. But this

Imagic game really can't hold a candle—or a mouthful of dragon fire—to the games Mattel creates for its own system.

In fact, anyone who plays either version of *Dragonfire* will learn a new meaning of the word dragon. It's spelled, drag on—which *Dragonfire* certainly tends to do. □

#### **TAC-SCAN ★ ★ ★**

**Designer uncredited. Adapted from the Sega arcade game. (Sega, VCS-compatible cartridge. \$29.95)**

**By Dan Gutman**

The major home videogame companies line up to acquire arcade game licenses like vultures hovering over dead meat. But they may have to start looking elsewhere for ideas now that Sega, the maker of such coin-op classics as *Zaxxon*, *Frogger* and *Turbo*, has decided to start making home cartridges itself.

Sega's first release, *Tac-Scan*, is not some kind of reverse cancer detection, but is an excellent adaptation of an arcade space game of last year. On a black, star-filled field, you begin the game with five small, triangular rocket ships—not like most games with one on the screen and four in reserve, but all on the screen at once. Your screen personae collectively are therefore five times more vulnerable to attack, but also have five times the firepower.

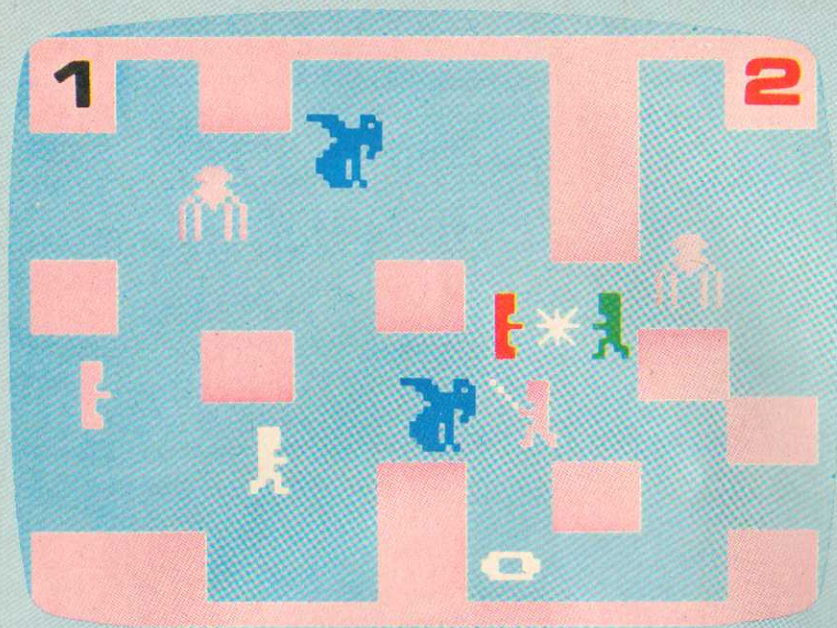
Manipulating the wonderfully responsive Atari paddle controllers, you swivel your spacecraft and, at the same time, scroll the field in the direction you have turned. You can go northeast, north and northwest to infinity, which gives you the impression you're flying around the world.

Aliens are everywhere, of course, firing slow-moving bullet clusters. Your ships' fire is quick and loud, giving you a feeling of power not common to many games. Unfortunately, as your ships absorb hits,



*Heroic prince in Imagic's Dragonfire: Root for the dragon.*





Swordplay in *Odyssey's* Master Strategy classic, *Quest for the Rings*.

you lose them one by one until just a single ship remains fighting for its life, a hopelessly outnumbered video wimp lost in space. Bonus ships are awarded at the end of each wave, and you have the option of saving them for later or adding them to your strike force immediately.

*Tac-Scan* is a lightning-fast, macho, twitch game, the kind I hate to admit I love. It could have been even better if Sega's uncredited designer had given it more depth—different types of aliens once you hit 20,000 points or background landmarks to give you the feeling you've "cleaned out" a sector before moving to the next. Unfortunately, at this point in videogame evolution, designers seem to be restricting themselves to duplicating arcade games, not improving them.

Sega's entry into the home-game field brings up an interesting question: If all the arcade-game manufacturers start making home versions of their games, will this force Atari, Coleco, Parker Brothers and the rest to devise more original games or start putting out fewer titles? □

#### THE QUEST FOR THE RINGS ★★★★★

Designed by Ed Averett, based on an idea by Steve Lehner. (*Odyssey* *Odyssey*<sup>2</sup>-compatible cartridge. \$49.95)

By Phil Gerson

*The Quest for the Rings*, the first in *Odyssey's* Master Strategy trio of games integrating game-board play and on-screen action, has garnered new interest lately, thanks in part to a heroic-fantasy trend fostered by *Conan the Barbarian* and similar movies. Yet *Quest* is not only an innovation, it's one of *Odyssey's* most enjoyable and graphically impressive games.

Reminiscent of Tolkien's *Lord of the*

*Rings* epic, the object here is to capture the 10 Rings of Power hidden in dungeons by the Ringmaster and protected by hero-eating creatures. Full game play utilizes the videogame cartridge, an overlay for the *Odyssey*<sup>2</sup> keyboard, a game board with tokens and three players. Two go on the quest as a team, while the third serves as the Ringmaster, whose task it is to oversee the rings on the board and who can periodically "possess" one of the ring seekers.

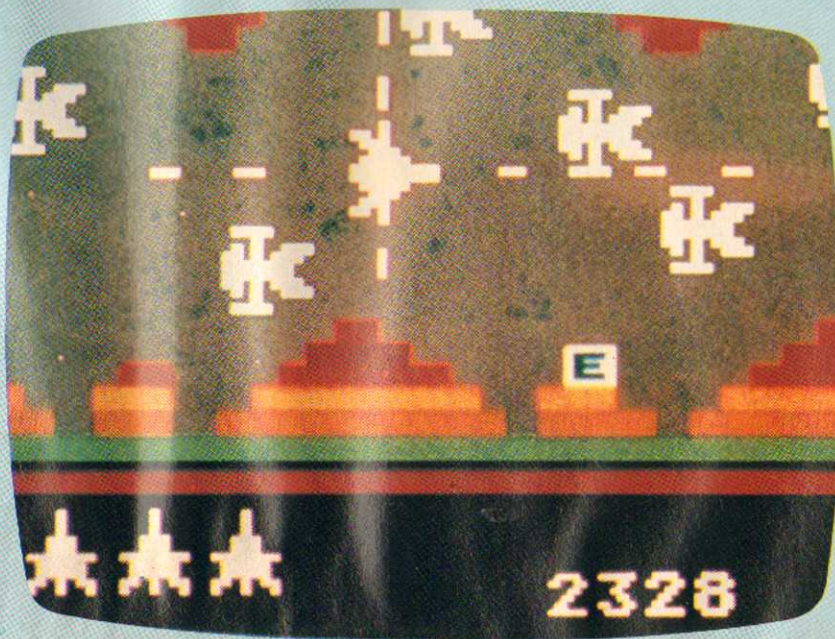
Before commencing the quest, players select the roles for their on-screen characters. The choices are a sword-wielding warrior, a spell-casting wizard, an invisible changeling and a phantom that can walk through walls. The players move their

tokens from castle to castle on the board in search of the hidden rings, and, when one is found, engage in video combat with the rings' guardians. The spidery Spydmoth Tyrantulas and the vulture-like Doomwinged Bloodthirsts are virtually invulnerable monsters (though not immortal, as the instructions say) that pounce on and devour passing heroes. Players must also deal with fire-breathing Dragons, as well as humanoid Orcs and Firewraths. All the mystical creatures are animated with superb graphics that are among the best of any *Odyssey*<sup>2</sup> game.

Players encounter four playfields. In addition to the Dungeons, a basic maze, there are the Crystal Caverns, with invisible walls, the Shifting Halls, with walls that can trap unwary players and make them easy prey for monsters, and the Infernoes, with towers of molten lava. Successfully capturing rings demands a coordinated effort, with one player holding off the evil hoard while the other dashes for the prize.

Normally a warrior's sword can't harm a Spydmoth Tyrantula or Doomwinged Bloodthirst, but both are vulnerable and will disappear at a slash if the warrior strikes while one is gobbling up the other hero. (Talk about sacrifice plays!) Striking two or more Orcs or Firewraths in quick succession will make them freeze on the screen. The shifting walls always move from left to right and do so at regular intervals, allowing players to time their movements and escape traps. With practice, it's also possible to maneuver a pursuing monster into the path of a shifting wall, trapping the creature.

Though the game is complex, the instruction book is well written, and the rules are easy to follow, so newcomers won't have to waste much time on interpretation before getting set to play. Though obviously inspired by the popular role-playing game,



Vanguarding the universe: four-way fire and a half-dozen zones.



*Dungeons and Dragons, Odyssey's Quest for the Rings* is a grand game in its own right. □

### VANGUARD ★ ★ ★ ★

**Designer uncredited. Adapted from the Centuri arcade game. (Atari, VCS-compatible cartridge. \$29.95)**

**By Dan Gutman**

Perhaps the Warner stock shock of December was just the kick in the pants Atari needed. After such '82 duds as *Pac-Man*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *E.T.*, the company has finally released a glued-to-the-tube, heart-pounding, palm-sweating, killer game: *Vanguard*.

Based on the '81 arcade smash, *Vanguard* puts you in control of an on-screen rocket ship trapped in the six tunnels of Aterria. At the end of the tunnels, in the City of Mystery, is Gond, a menacing giant. Assuming your screen persona survives the deadly Mists and the Harleys in the Mountain Zone, the Helms and the Ammos in the Rainbow Zone, the Garimes, the Barriers, the Force Fields and the Floating Paynes in the Striped Zone and the Kemlus, Snakes and Romedas in the Bleak Zone, you are entitled to a two-second death-duel with Gond. (The Mountain and Rainbow zones each appear twice.) Take heart—your ship can fire in four directions.

It is one thing to make the action in a game simply speed up as the player gets more proficient. It is another thing to introduce new characters, new situations and new challenges. This is the mark of a good game, a game you won't get tired of three days after you bring it home. *Vanguard* presents seven scenes your ship must travel through, each one tougher than the last. Your goal is not just to score points, but to reach new zones. Knowing the strict programming limitations of Atari's six-year-old 2600 console, the complexity of *Vanguard* is a minor miracle.

Unlike Coleco, whose arcade-game translations are uncannily similar copies, Atari uses the original arcade game merely as inspiration, somewhat like a book to be turned into a movie. The *Vanguard* cartridge won't say, "Bon voyage" or "Be careful" to you as the arcade game did, but it is in most other respects an excellent adaptation with some pleasant changes. The home version's tunnels are different from the arcade version's, and your enemies behave a little differently. And Gond is more striking in the home version. You get to enjoy a game you're familiar with, yet it presents you with fresh challenges.

*Vanguard* has a couple of touches you won't see in many home games. First, before you play, you can watch the game to get familiar with it—*Vanguard* plays itself so you can see everything from the Mountain Zone to the Bleak Zone. Second, after you lose your last ship, you have the option of starting your next

game from the same spot at which it got zapped. Gamers whose screen personas have been hit by barrels on the top girder of *Donkey Kong* will appreciate this.

Videogame players are a demanding bunch. We won't drop \$30 on a game anymore just because it has a recognizable title. There has to be a damn good game in that cartridge. Atari has learned this the hard way. With a horde of other game-makers taking away its spotlight with superior games, the sleeping giant may be waking up. Thank Gond! □

## Computer

### CRUSH, CRUMBLE AND CHOMPI ★ ★ ★

**Designed by Jon Freeman, J.W. Connelley and Toni Thompson. (Epyx, floppy disc for Atari 400/800/1200XL with 32K. \$32.95)**

**By Walter Salm**

Just about all videogames pit your screen persona against the bad guys. Sometimes, in two-player games, you have a chance to take the role of the evil opposition. But, until now, I haven't seen a game that lets you take an evil character as the primary role.

*Crush, Crumble and Chompi* lets you play the part of an invading monster. You can choose among such slightly re-named favorites as Goshilla, Kraken, Mechismo and Mantra. After you get adept at playing the monster role, you can even create your own special devastator from the bank of creature parts in this program.

You can also choose the particular city your screen persona will attempt to invade and decimate. It can do a number on New York, San Francisco/Oakland, Washington or Tokyo. The program includes a specific scenario and (simplified) map for each of these cities, and the instruction manual even includes expanded street maps.

In the course of its ravaging, your creature may smash and crumble buildings, stomp on or grab and eat fleeing humans, crunch police cars underfoot and do battle with the military and a mad scientist who hovers in a helicopter and ultimately can be your creature's undoing. Each time your monster's hit by a gunshot or a cannon round, it sustains some damage—insignificant at first. Then such messages as "Scratched" may appear on your general condition line in a text display on the screen.

The computer represents the good guys, and marshals the forces of humanity to do battle with your creature. Pedestrians run and flee—sometimes right into your monster's path and into its stomach. Police cars rush by with sirens screaming and red lights flashing.

At first, this game is difficult to learn to play, because there are so many controls and functions. Also, being the bad guy takes some getting used to. If you're having a particular problem, just pretend that the

building you're crushing is an Internal Revenue Service office, and maybe that fleeing civilian you're chomping is your ex-spouse or the guy who still owes you fifty bucks and has disappeared. The game is a lot of fun, and, I think, harmless, provided you don't insist on winning every time. After all, you're playing against the good guys. □

### THE SANDS OF EGYPT ★ ★ ★

**Designed by Frank Cohen. (Datasoft, floppy disc for the Atari 400/800/1200XL with 16K RAM. \$39.95)**

**By Hope Heyman**

English journalist and historian Jan Morris once wrote that Egypt "possessed for the British an almost pathological fascination. . . . It was alternately a beacon and a blind spot."

After vicariously wandering in the desert for hours playing *The Sands of Egypt*, I now know how the British felt. This absorbing adventure game compels but frustrates, holding your interest for hours until you solve the mystery.

The game's protagonist is Lord Charles Buckingham III, a fictitiously world-famous British explorer who, having been knocked unconscious by desert nomads, is wandering through the sands, armed only with a compass. His quest: first to find water, then to discover the secret treasure chamber concealed within the Lost Pyramid. Although the game is ostensibly about Lord Buckingham, he never makes an appearance on screen either by figure or cursor. Either he was detained at Suez or, more likely, this is a first-person game.

*Sands'* goal is to find the hidden treasure in the fewest moves, and without dying of thirst. The game has a split screen using both high-resolution computer graphics and text. (Note well: What's pictured on the screen sometimes isn't mentioned in the text, requiring you to keep a sharp eye on both halves of the screen.) The game involves plotting Lord B's tortuous progress on a map, so you should have pencil and paper on hand to note locations of useful objects, places and, of course, water.

The game screen undulates as you "key in" directions. Unlike most adventure games, the computer supplies hints when HELP is typed in, but I found the hints too subtle or mocking to be of any real use. "Ra helps those who help themselves," for example, or "He who hesitates is lost." The parched desert graphics are so convincing, however, that when Lord Buckingham does actually stumble onto an oasis—complete with camel, palm tree and pool—it could be the prettiest sight ever shown on a home computer.

If you tend toward complex puzzles or intellectual pursuits (or you have a lot of time on your hands—you're serving 20 to 30 for murder one, for example), *Sands* could be your just desserts. □

*Hope Heyman is associate editor of Playboy Guides.*



## For release on cart, cassette, disc



Winged Pegasus in *Imagic's Escape from Argos*: horseplay.

### CARTRIDGE

**BURGERTIME** Adaptation of the Data East arcade game. Your on-screen chef must run through a maze assembling hamburger ingredients before evil pickles and hot dogs can ruin the meal. In two formats. (Mattel, Intellivision- and VCS-compatible)

**THE EARTH DIES SCREAMING** Outer-space duel between an Earthling warrior and war-mongering Trillians. Based on the movie. In two formats. (Fox, ColecoVision- and VCS-compatible)

**ESCAPE FROM ARGOS** Ancient Greece is the setting as the mythical young hero Jason on his winged horse Pegasus faces the dangerous Furies. (Imagic, VCS-compatible)

**KANGAROO** Mad monkeys have kidnapped a baby marsupial. Mom kangaroo must jump over obstacles, duck flying apples and box monkeys to rescue her offspring. In two formats. (Atari, 5200- and VCS-compatible)

**KEYSTONE KAPEES** Constable Keystone Kelly chases robber Harry Hooligan through a Roaring Twenties department store. Multiboard game with a screen scanner. (Activision, VCS-compatible)

**LOOPING** Adaptation of the Venture Line arcade game. Your on-screen barnstormer must zip past rising air balloons to try to reach gate controls inside a flight terminal. Through the gate lies an obstacle-ridden maze. In three formats. (Coleco, ColecoVision, Intellivision- and VCS-compatible)

**REALSPORTS BASKETBALL, REALSPORTS DRIVING, REALSPORTS SOCCER, REALSPORTS TENNIS** Four "second-generation" sports cartridges. (Atari, VCS-compatible)

**SOLAR FOX** The titular jet must fly along a force-field grid, avoiding fireballs that erupt from solar furnaces and unraveling graphic and aural clues to reach increasingly difficult screens. (CBS, VCS-compatible)

**STAR STRIKE** Adaptation of the Mattel Intellivision game. A first-person, cockpit-eye view of a planetary trench, a gun sight and hostile aliens. (Mattel, VCS-compatible)

**TRAIL OF THE PINK PANTHER** Inspector Clouseau and gentleman thief The Pink Panther play cat-and-mouse. Based on the movie characters. (US Games, VCS-compatible)

**TRUCKIN'** Your on-screen semi hauls goods cross-country on a tight schedule, while you make strategic decisions on what to carry and over which routes. (Imagic, Intellivision-compatible)

**VECTRON** Your screen persona must try to construct energy bases while defending itself from Hungrees, G-Spheres, Splits, Sweeps and Prizums and keeping an eye on its energy supply. (Mattel, Intellivision-compatible)

**VICTORY** Adaptation of the Exidy arcade game. Your Battlestar space vessel must use lasers, a shield and

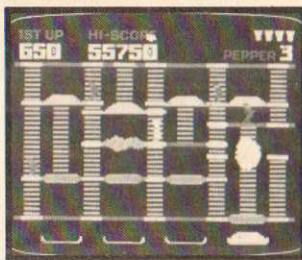
the Doomsday Device to try to keep alien ships from dropping paratroopers and releasing Quarks from underground bunkers. (Coleco, ColecoVision-compatible)

### STAND-ALONE

**FORTRESS OF NARZOD** Your Zorlon Cannon combats Warbirds, Stompers and other enemies and dodges its own ricocheting fire on the way to a legendary fortress. (GCE, Vectrex-compatible)

### COMPUTER

**QUESTRON** An adventure game blending strategy and shoot-'em-up play. Your on-screen serf tries to gain wealth, charisma, strength and other attributes in order to combat the mystical emperor Gorgon. (Broderbund, Apple III/IIe-compatible)



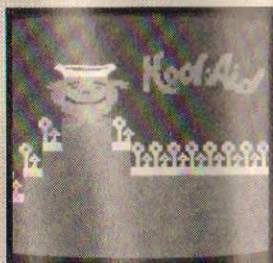
BurgerTime: meaty.

**REAGONOMICS** In charge of the nation's gross national product, you face stock-market fluctuations, an international monetary crisis and the collapse of detente with foreign powers. In two formats. (Spectravision, Commodore VIC-20- and Atari 400/800/1200XL-compatible) □

### GAME PLANS

**THE CAT IN THE HAT:** The doctor is in—Coleco has finally landed the hard-fought rights to the characters of **Dr. Seuss**. . . . Atari, with rights to the Muppet **Sesame Streeters**, will have **Grover's Egg Catch** and **Cookie Monster Maze** among others. Muppet man **Jim Henson** is designing a separate line of Atari carts for pre-teens. . . . Stars of Mattel's upcoming kids' carts include **Scooby Doo**, **Rocky and Bullwinkle** and videogames' first TV-commercial character, the **Kool-Aid** pitcher. . . . In original games, CBS has **Tunnel Runner** and **Wings**, enhanced VCS carts with 12K ROM, or about three times the standard VCS-cartridge memory. CBS also has deals for **Learning Bridge with Charles Goren** and an Intellivision line.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE:** Milton Bradley's **voice-recognition module** for Texas Instruments' 99/4A computer is due by summer.



Kool-Aid: moving pitcher.

First listening game will be video baseball. . . . The **Berenstain Bears** do the talking—via synchronized tape—in games for Coleco's upcoming **Gemini**, a \$110 module strictly for Atari VCS games. . . . Mattel will stretch into IBM and Apple computer. The company's own 4K **Aquarius** computer and 10 adapted Intellivision games are due this summer, as are Intellivision keyboards and expander module and **Intellivision II**. Intellivision **III** is planned for '83 as well.

**BUCKING THE ODDS:** Coleco's **Buck Rogers/Planet of Zoom** game will have company: a pair of VCS Buck Rogers games by Sega. Other Sega movie games include **Airplane**, **48 Hrs.**, **Friday the 13th**, **Marathon Man**, **War of the Worlds** and two based on **Star Trek II**. . . . Coleco will swing with **Tarzan** and **Wizard of Oz**. . . . Mattel moves into movies with **Godzilla**, **Rodan** and **Mr. Magoo**. . . . ZiMag has comic-strip amphibean **Conrad the Frog**.

**LET'S SPEND THE BYTE TOGETHER:** According to Data Age, rock groups **The Rolling Stones**, **Fleetwood Mac** and **Styx** have approached the company about games in their image. Rock 'n' roll, meet ROM 'n' RAM. (Frank Lovece)



futility of trying to exorcise the past and who simply recite their histories into the camera—as well as children of survivors merely describing their reactions to their parents' experience. Gina Blumenfeld, instead of integrating her own feelings into the work, chose to remain outside of it, thus eliminating that possibility of continuity.

Although there are some nice cuts from old photographs to action scenes to close-ups, *In Dark Places* does not fully exploit cinematic possibilities, let alone those of video. As a result, it's all unexciting viewing—and not likely to encourage repeat viewing as a home library tape. The quality of the print it was transferred from is

disappointing, and a mini-intermission halfway through makes no sense at all. Still, there is no other movie that examines this subject at this time. So this one may have its value to those interested in psychology, social history and the Holocaust itself.

Three shorts that comprise the rest of the cassette are really filler. *The Hangman* is a narrative poem alluding to the Holocaust, narrated by the actor Hershel Bernardi. It's illustrated by a series of animations that are of only passing interest. *The Good Omen* is a family fable narrated by artist Shay Riegel and illustrated by her paintings. *How Come Israel* is a slight, sentimental allegory narrated by a small boy who is shown



Sontag: examining Holocaust imagery.

playing in a backyard with his friends. In all, at \$64.95, this tape doesn't yield much of a return on your investment. □

## How-To

**HOW TO BEAT HOME VIDEO GAMES, VOLS. II & III (1982) ★ ★ ★**  
With Phil Wiswell. Director uncredited. (Vestron, two cassettes, color, 60 min. each, no suggested retail price)

By Michael Blanchet

In Volumes II and III of *How to Beat Home Video Games*, strategist Phil Wiswell again sets out to divulge little-known secrets about 40 of the latest home videogame cartridges. Personally, I expected a nifty dossier chock full of detailed information on program quirks and idiosyncrasies that could be exploited for whopping tallies. Unfortunately, too much wind is passed explaining the obvious—and not actual strategy.

Both tapes open with enticing commentary on the subject at hand. In Volume II (*The Hot New Games*), Wiswell boasts that most of the material covered has never before been disclosed, while Volume III (*Arcade Quality for the Home*) promises an "advanced" peek at the "latest" super systems, including Atari's 5200, Coleco's ColecoVision and GCE's Vectrex—all of which were out well before Christmas. The remainder of each program is devoted to the discussion of 20 videogames.

Amid a barrage of neat visuals and sound effects, Wiswell introduces each game. Since only two to three minutes are allotted for a discussion of each game, he rarely progresses past the point of simply explaining what each game is about. Given more time, I'm sure he could accomplish what he set out to do—which was to discuss strategy. In the cases of *E.T.* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (covered in *Hot New Games*), he does impart some solid advice on how to better one's score. I'll give him credit for his analysis of these two carts. They're both so difficult, I bet

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## SEGA

# THE ARCADE EXPERTS.



squad of Soviet all-stars on the parallel bars, horse, rings and other gymnastic events. A battle of the bulging muscles of sorts.

**THE NEW JERSEY GENERALS VS. CHICAGO BLITZ**  
ESPN, Mon., April 25, 9 p.m. to midnight

Generally speaking, keep your eye on Herschel Walker. The former University of Georgia and current New Jersey running star, whose signing to the United States Football League was a surprise boost for the new league, will likely blast the Blitz. Other Generals games, or are they simply Walker events, to be shown on ESPN are slated for May 6 and 15.

**COLONIAL NATIONAL GOLF TOURNAMENT**  
CBS, Sat., May 14, TBA; Sun., May 15, TBA

Fore score and seven putts ago. The address is the Colonial Country Club in Fort Worth, TX. The golfers are among the best in the P.G.A. The third and fourth rounds are scheduled to be broadcast live.

**DOCUMENTARY**

**LA BELLE EPOQUE**  
ARTS, Wed., May 11, 9 to 10:30 p.m.

A certain dignity, a certain style—that's what this documentary on the pre-World War I period is after.



The Great American Strip-Off: searching for the perfect 10?

Based in part on a fashion exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, it examines women's roles

during the period and includes interviews and reminiscences with leading figures of the time.

**FRENCH-AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE**

TeleFrance, SPN, Sat., May 14, 11:15 to midnight; Sun., May 15, 11:15 p.m. to midnight

Looks good, non? In this monthly series, French and American political and artistic figures pow-wow on some of the pressing issues of our time. May's program is entitled "France's Middle East Policies." Next month: "Women in Society."

**THE DIFFERENT DRUMMER: BLACKS IN THE MILITARY**

PBS, Wed., May 18, 8 to 9 p.m. Blacks and whites in green. A three-part documentary that looks at the issue of segregation in the armed forces, as well as the role blacks have played in the military. This is part one, "Unknown Soldiers." Subsequent parts will be broadcast on May 25 and June 1.

**KIRI TE KANAWA: A PROFILE**

ARTS, Wed., May 18, 9 to 10 p.m. An intimate look at one of the most talked-about new opera stars, part-Maori New Zealander Kiri Te Kanawa. (Her *Tosca* is reviewed on p. 108).

**SEX SURROGATES: INTIMATE PROFILES**

Showtime, May, TBA Baring all: A documentary featuring interviews with sex surrogates and their, uh, clients—to get at the whys and wherefores of this controversial practice. Produced by 12-time Emmy Award-winner Arnold Shapiro.

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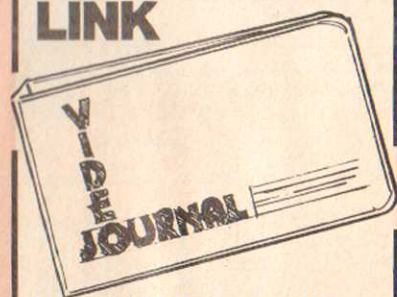
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# Why are games going to the movies?



It's getting hard to tell the game section of a store from the cassette and disc section, what with such titles as *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *E.T.* and *M\*A\*S\*H* showing up in both. What does this trend of spinning movies and TV shows into games mean to players? A lot of mediocre cartridges and a lot of faded memories.

Few, if any, movies lend themselves well to authentic recreation as a videogame. Given the physical limitations of the Atari VCS, the system most of the movie games are made for, it's almost impossible to preserve the continuity or themes established in a movie. Visually, the characters suffer, also because of the limited memory space in a game cartridge made for use with the VCS. In fact, I suspect that most players have to refer to a pamphlet to find out that the blob they're looking at on the screen is, say, Indiana Jones.

For fledgling game companies and ailing movie studios, the movie-to-game transition makes good business sense. The game company acquires a "name" that will have automatic interest because of its popularity as a movie; the studio gets a financial shot in the arm. Unfortunately, the only party that stands to lose consistently is the player, since most of the movie games aren't what they're cracked up to be.

Take, for example, *M\*A\*S\*H*, which was recently adapted as a videogame by the gaming arm of 20th Century-Fox. In its eleven year run on television, *M\*A\*S\*H* enjoyed

the distinction of being the lone show staged in war-time that did not advocate violence. Its videogame counterpart is also nonviolent in nature. Does this mean Fox did justice to the property? Not quite. The best elements of the show (the humorous antics of the cast) in no way figure into the game. In dual playfield format, the game challenges the player to first pick up the wounded and then operate on them to remove a hunk of shrapnel. No death, no game lives to lose—and no fun. Where's Hawkeye's still and Klinger's crazy wardrobe? This is the kind of stuff that made *M\*A\*S\*H* so popular as a TV show. The game would have been more interesting and accurate if opposing players could stage and pull off practical jokes on one another. Unfortunately, this is too complex a program to jam into one silicon chip. (For a more complete review, see page 68).

Granted, humorous situations are difficult to communicate through videogames, but what about scary and violent ones? *Halloween* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*,

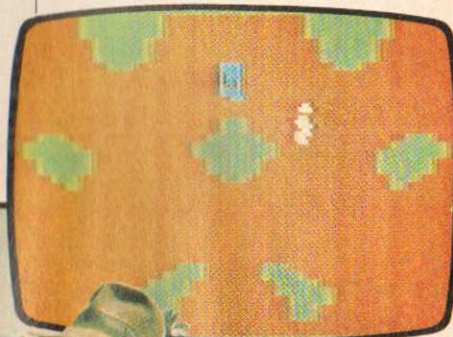


two of the most successful horror movies of all time, have been made into videogames by L.A.-based Wizard Video. Both have been billed as the first violent and scary videogames. In *Halloween*, you assume the role of the victim, while in *Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, the player's persona is the "vengeful Leatherface." One advertisement for *Massacre*

barks, "Know the pleasures of total destruction." Not only is this revolting, it's ridiculous to even imagine that a videogame could possibly recreate the horror one experienced when viewing either of these movies.

## Copying Out

Sega Electronics, the latest company to offer games for home consoles, also plans to rely heavily on movie titles as a basis for its new games. This is surprising, since Sega, one of the biggest arcade game companies, displayed expertise in the development of original games in the past. I suspect the company had little or no say in the matter. Sega is owned by Paramount, which, in turn, holds the rights to such blockbuster flicks as *Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan* and *48 Hrs.* Naturally, all these will surface as videogames later



this year. Can we expect Sega to capture the razor-sharp wit of Eddie Murphy? Will designers suddenly come up with a way to plot

any of the hilarious subtleties of *Airplane!* in the game version? I'm not putting any money on it.

Until these games start having strategies as intriguing as the movies they're supposed to be imitating, don't expect too much from a movie-inspired game.

Some things are better left undone. □



# Atari's Falcon and other scrambled news



Falcon isn't just a bird or a plane or a long-gone private detective. It's also the name of a top-secret project that Atari is counting on to restore its now fading image as the fastest growing force in home video. Concealed behind the wings of its new development venture, the subsidiary of Warner Communications is working on its entry into a new area: telecommunications.

We already have many companies producing standard in-home telecommunications gadgets. The roster of companies making and selling wired and wireless telephones, automatic dialers and answerers, as well as cords, connectors and other accessories could in itself fill a good-size phone book, and Atari knows it. So its project is designed to develop unique products that reflect the expertise Atari already has, and to give it the same kind of leading position it now enjoys in home and arcade videogames and computers.

## Video Phone

Though it may not be the first product to come out of Atari's effort, the company is, we've learned, giving top priority to a videophone. The idea of a combination TV-telephone is far from new: There are systems available for sale right now for use as visual intercoms. AT&T has offered what it calls Picturephone service for a number of years. But all these require the use of special cables or multiple phone lines.

Atari's videophone is expected to function on regular phone lines, using

its own special techniques of information compression and transmission. Color is a possibility, but we're not counting on it. As for cost, we haven't a clue yet, but based on past performance, we know Atari has no fear of selling high-priced items.

Also on the new technology front, the era of scrambled satellite transmission, discussed by Bob Angus in *VR* two months ago, is coming upon us even faster than anticipated. Home Box Office has announced it will start scrambling its transmission to the West Coast this summer, will scramble the rest of its transmission by the end of the year and will move to include its Cinemax service in early '84. Showtime says it's picking a scrambling system, and should have it in use by December.

That's not the only bad news for companies selling satellite receiving systems, or for those of you using or interested in buying one. The free TV networks—ABC, CBS and NBC—say they too are thinking of scrambling the signals they feed by satellite to their affiliates around the country.

For pay-TV operators, the motive for scrambling is profit. For the networks, who already give away (with commercials, of course) all their programs, the issues are the sanctity of the broadcast schedule, contractual obligations and privacy.

Some network shows are regularly

fed via satellite to affiliates which tape them for rebroadcast at later times. This means viewers with dishes can watch them at times other than their carefully selected slots, and this makes network vice presidents very upset. Much network sports programming is done on a regional basis. New York football fans, for instance, aren't supposed to see Jets or Giants home games on TV, but they can do just that if they intercept the satellite feed. And when they do intercept, they get the transmissions without the commercials that are inserted by local TV stations.

## Satellite Taps

On top of all that, networks use satellites to hold video conventions during which the top brass deliver inside information on upcoming shows and scheduling changes to the affiliates. Needless to say, eavesdropping is frowned upon.

About the only good news in all this for viewers who are in non-cable areas, have only one or two TV stations and look to the stars for video relief, is that the move to scrambling isn't universal. Most of the commercially supported special programming that's fed by satellite will continue to be sent in the clear. I'll grant you that none of it is up to HBO quality. But don't complain to me—I'm still upset that *M\*A\*S\*H* is gone. □

