

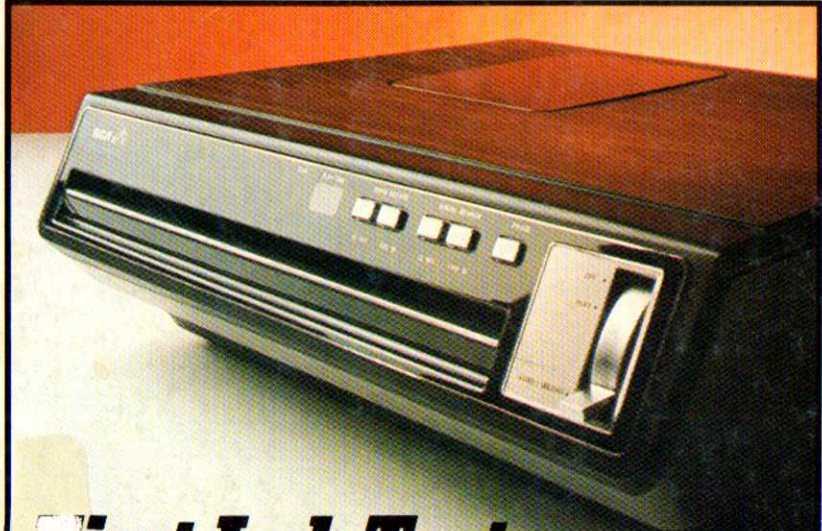
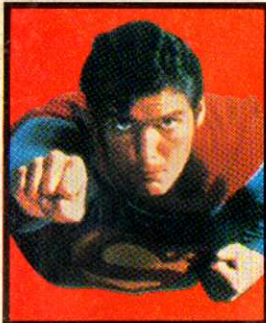
Video Review

Latest Tape & Disc Reviews and Equipment Test Reports

\$1.75

THE WORLD AUTHORITY ON CONSUMER VIDEO

GREAT GIFT IDEAS PRODUCTS & PROGRAMS FOR THE HOLIDAYS



**First Lab Test:
RCA Videodisc Player**

NOVEMBER 1981

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 8

THE WORLD AUTHORITY ON CONSUMER VIDEO

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Video Review

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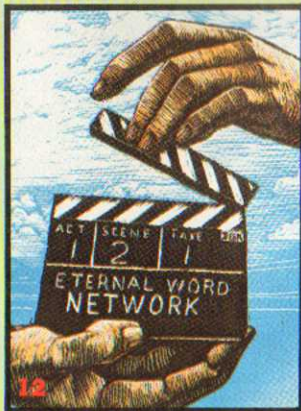
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Flashes, dispatches and video scuttlebutt



Art Levis

□ **VHD DELAY** Third consumer videodisc format, VHD (video high density), won't see retail shelves until June, 1982—six months later than original plan. Problems attributed to chemical compound used to make discs. But companies coming out with VHD players and discs say there's silver lining in postponement: Unlike incompatible LV or CED disc players, VHD models will be capable of playing back discs recorded under any one of world's three color TV standards (PAL, SECAM, NTSC).

* * *

□ **SONY SNAPSHOTS** Instamatic's days may be numbered. Sony has developed system capable of taking electronic "snapshots" for playback on TV set. Called Mavica, unit uses reusable revolving magnetic disc to take and store pictures. Companion Mavipak Viewer permits pictures on disc to be displayed on TV set. Sony says U.S. introduction of Mavica—roughly size of 35mm film camera—could come in 1983. Price is expected to be in \$650 range. Hard-copy printer to convert electronic information into color prints is in works.

* * *

□ **SANYO COMBO** Meanwhile, Sanyo has joined race to develop other new kind of video product expected to change way world takes pictures—all-in-one VCR/camera combination product. Sanyo prototype Handy Video weighs 6.4 pounds, measures roughly 7.8 by 7.3 by 2.6 inches and uses quarter-inch cassette offering up to 20 minutes recording time. If and when Sanyo and other three companies ready to make VCR/camera combos (Hitachi, Matsushita and Sony) reach agreement on standards, compact all-in-one devices could eventually make home movies on film obsolete.

* * *

□ **IBM GETS PERSONAL** Giant IBM, deciding time is finally right to throw its muscle around in infant personal computer field, will sell mini models ranging from \$1,565 to \$4,500. New computers will be sold through IBM's own stores, plus new network of computer stores being set up by Sears and 160 stores in Computerland chain.

* * *

□ **JAPANESE PROGRAM** Though IBM entry could give them some second thoughts, leading Japanese computer and electronics companies are determined to carve out niche in U.S. personal computer field. NEC, Sharp, Canon and Toshiba have just begun marketing small computers in U.S., with Hitachi and Oki Electric poised to enter.

* * *

□ **NEW ZIP FROM ZENITH** In continuing effort to establish modern new video image, Zenith has added five new Beta-format VCRs to its Video Hi-Tech family of products. Among new models is relatively inexpensive (about \$800) home deck with visual scan, freeze-frame and optional remote control. Meanwhile, Sanyo dropped price on its nine-pound Beta portable from \$1,045 to \$795, lopped \$50 from companion tuner/timer (now \$300) and slashed \$200 from camera with zoom lens (now \$995).

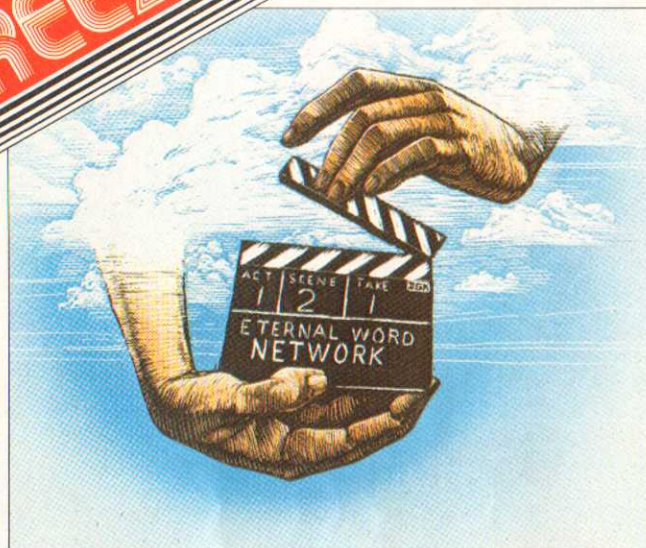
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□ **KOREAN CONNECTION** Worldwide interest in videodiscs continues to grow, latest manifestation being license granted by RCA to Korean consumer electronics company Taihan for production of CED disc players. Another Korean company, Samsung, also has CED license from RCA.

* * *

□ **AWARD WINNERS** National Association of Record Merchants presented Video Programming Awards at First Annual NARM Video Retailers' Convention. Awards were based on sales and rentals of tapes and discs, and were voted on by retailers. Winners in Most Popular Current Movie category were *Ordinary People* (Paramount), drama; *Fame* (CBS Video Enterprises), musical; *Airplane* (Paramount), comedy; *The Muppet Movie* (Magnetic Video), children's. Most Popular Classic Movies: *African Queen* (Magnetic Video), comedy; *The Wizard of Oz* (CBS Video Enterprises), children's. Other winners included: *Blondie "Eat to the Beat"* (Warners), *NFL Football Follies* (NFL Films Video), *Exercise Now* (Karl Video), *Space Invaders* (Atari).

A lighthearted look at video people & events



Heavenly Airwaves

Every other day, it seems, a new report surfaces announcing that yet one more cheesecake program is scheduled for a spot on cable TV. Both *Playboy* and *Penthouse* recently made media splashes when they unveiled plans for pay TV versions of their magazines, with copycat rags such as *Cheri* not far behind in the cable biz.

Yet while many viewers don't object to video eroticism, it's still true that cable homogeneity can be depressing. So it's in a spirit of Thanksgiving good cheer that I pass along an item about the 13 nuns of Our Lady of Angels Monastery in Birmingham, AL.

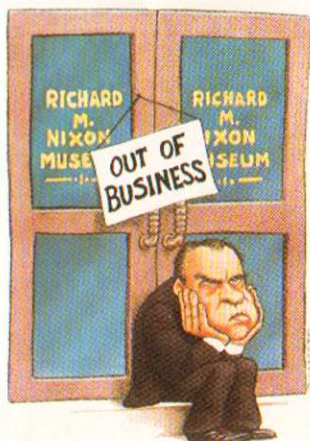
Beginning at the end of last summer, Mother Angelica and her crew began broadcasting the country's first Roman Catholic cable-TV service. It took two years to finance the requisite equipment (including an uplink dish whose signal bounces off the Westar III satellite); headquarters for the operation is a concrete-block studio adjacent to the monastery.

Mother Angelica predicts

that her Eternal Word network will be on the air 24 hours a day by 1984. At present, the network is on the air for four hours.

"We're after the man in the pew, the woman who is suffering from heartache, the child who is lonely," says Mother Angelica, EWN's chief programmer.

No sniggers, please. 1,981 years of human history ought to convince you that Mother Angelica's sponsor is at least as durable as Barbie Benton's.



Nixon Redux

Once in a while the great sports reporter Jimmy Can-

non used to write a column under the headline, "Nobody asked me, but..."

Well, nobody asked me, but I think the reason "A Bit of History"—the privately owned museum in San Clemente dedicated to Richard Nixon's presidency—is a financial bust is that the exhibit doesn't have any video footage to show customers.

During the past eight months, the museum has drawn only 10,000 visitors. The coffee shop closed last May. Adjoining banquet rooms are usually empty. The entire building was sold recently, and the newly formed San Clemente Historical Society has to vacate by the first of December.

"We have some nice photographs of Mr. Nixon visiting the Pyramids," a museum spokesperson explained to Freeze-Frames, "and some other pictures of the president talking with Leonid Brezhnev, and of him walking on a beach with Pat."

"But how come there's no video?" we asked. "Watergate footage, some campaign newsreels or even some home movies might have enticed some more people to drop by?"

"I'm sorry, we only have still pictures and memorabilia." Click.

Can't blame Freeze-Frames for trying. □

Scalpel... Videotape...

Isn't it comforting to know that the American Medical Association has enlisted video in its never-ending quest to boost physicians' incomes.

A small item in a medical trade paper informs doctors that a new videocassette called *Borrowing Money: What a Doctor Needs to*

Know is now available from the AMA for sale or rental. While not exactly a top-10 video candidate, the tape is expected to be a relatively hot seller. I understand the program, which contains instruction and dramatization (actor's lament: four years of Yale Drama for this?), follows a young doctor as he learns about borrowing money.

In addition, the 27-minute cassette explains how to bud-



get money for a new practice, explores financing options and shows "how to prepare to deal with a banker."

That last topic particularly tickled me. Precisely how does one prepare to deal with a banker? Watch *Gilligan's Island* reruns in order to get Thurston Howell III's accent down pat?

But I digress. The dramatic content of the tape is the thing that really sets the mind wandering:

Banker: "Ah, sit down, Dr. Kildare. What's on your mind?"

MD: "I need \$200,000 to start a geriatric practice in Miami. Business is booming."

Banker: "Does Dr. Gillespie know about this?" □



Rev. Apple

If the IRS goes along, "Rev. Apple" will be the first computer in U.S. tax history to be deducted as a "religious article."

Rev. Apple, you see, is a marrying computer, the brainchild of Reinhard Jaenisch, 30, an executive headhunter in Sunnyvale, CA. Jaenisch, alias Rev. Ron, is a part-time minister in a mail-order enterprise called The Universal Life Church.

"Hello, my name is Rev. Apple," reads the text on a video screen. "I'm the world's first ordained computer. Groom, what's your name?"

Rev. Ron says he devised the computer wedding "as publicity for the church." He adds that the video service is modern but efficient. When the marriage text reaches the bottom of the computer's display screen, Rev. Apple politely asks the couple to "please press space bar to continue." Also, the conventional marriage line, "I do," doesn't register here. The celebrants have to press the "y" key for yes.

Computer weddings are free at Rev. Ron's church. Apple II marriage-counseling is available to all comers, and a divorce program is even in the works. □

Computerized Casa

A building in lower Manhattan will soon be the world's

first apartment complex to offer a personal computer and video terminal in each apartment as a standard appliance.

When I heard about it, I quickly decided to call the landlord. "In which room would the computer/video terminal be installed?" I asked. The kitchen? The bedroom? A separate info room? After all, the future landscape of our culture may (or may not) depend on just this kind of precedent.

Jonathan Rose, president of the Tipitina apartment development group, set me straight. "The apartments are all open space lofts," he said. "You can put the computer terminal wherever you want."

So much for cultural prospecting. Undaunted, I asked, "Why provide condo owners with a computer in the first place?"

"Because," said Rose, "the



computers can access a wealth of information. The more information available, the more choice you have in your daily life. The more choice the more freedom. And the more freedom the better."

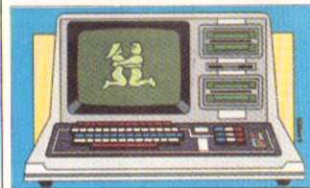
Rose also admitted, *sotto voce*, that he's gotten a lot of free publicity out of the computer angle. "The more publicity," he might syllogize, "the more attention. And the more attention..."

Incidentally, if computers do indeed become standard items in apartments of the future, I suppose the "Emergency Numbers" list in the kitchen of tomorrow will read: Fire; Doctor; Chinese Food Take Out; Software Programmer. □

Games Videophiles Play

Video games, alas, are not just for little boys and girls anymore.

The Houston-based Syntonic Software Corp. is selling an "adult" video game cartridge compatible with Ap-



ple and TRS-80 (Radio Shack) personal computers. The game works like this: By responding to a series of questions flashed on a video screen, a couple is led through a systematic probe of their sexual fantasies. Based on their answers, at the end of the game the computer matches the couple with an appropriate scenario to act out.

"The game is called 'Interlude,'" says Syntonic marketing exec Sandra Brown. "The scenario at the end of the game ranges from the very romantic to the slightly kinky. One suggestion the computer might give is 'take a cold shower!'"

Brown's voice appeared

steady, so I persisted. "If a cold shower is at one end of the spectrum of scenarios, what is at the other end?"

Slight pause here. "Oh, a light bondage scene with satin ribbons. But, you know, a lot of people enjoy just answering the questions."

Send your cards and letters to Syntonic Corp., 10635 Richmond St., Houston, TX 77042. □



By Hooker, By Crook

Perhaps the most exclusive home computer database in the world emerged recently when the Santa Ana, CA, police department raided a \$1.2 million per year computerized prostitution ring.

Computer wiz Joseph Allen Harvey, 35, of Irvine, CA, was charged with conspiracy to promote prostitution. According to Santa Ana police Sgt. Dan Felix, Harvey used two computers to keep track of 25 call girls and more than 4,000 customers. (Put your calculators away. The math works out to 160 johns per lady of the evening.)

Harvey reportedly used his computer "pimp" to store other business-related information, too—all capable of immediate callup on a video screen: names and disguises of local undercover cops, names of known rapists, clients' credit references. Bills, at \$150 per hour, were invoiced as "consulting fees" from a front firm.

It's nice to know the oldest profession is keeping up with the newest electronic technology. □

THE LATEST IN NEW PRODUCTS

New viewables, tunables and usables



IBM Home Computer IBM Personal Computer \$1,565

The Goliath of corporate computers has joined the personal computer field with its first system for homes and small businesses.

The console has a connected 83-key keyboard, and includes a built-in speaker and an expandable

16,384-character memory. By attaching the two-piece system to any TV set, you can produce on-screen charts, graphs and other displays. IBM offers 20 accessories to enhance the basic setup. You can also hook up this personal computer to various data banks. *IBM Corporation, Old Orchard Rd., Armonk, NY 10504 (914) 765-1900*

VIDEO INFORMATION SYSTEMS Conversion Wheel

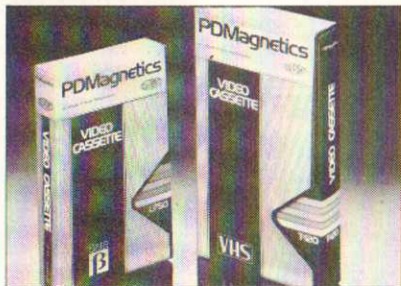
Video Time Machine \$14.95

Converting VCR digital counter-numbers to real elapsed time or remaining time takes no time with calibrated conversion wheels. Lining up the arrow with a particular counter number gives you up-to-the-second figures for most VCRs, and for all the different speeds.

The company also offers a printed chart to help you match your particular VCR to the model number of



the conversion wheel designed for it. *Video Information Systems, Inc., 78 E. 56th St., NY, NY 10022 (212) 355-0160.*



PDMAGNETICS Blank Videocassettes Beta \$13.95 to \$21.95 VHS \$17.95 to \$25.95

There's a new brand of videotape around, from two companies long familiar for their audiotape innovations. PDMagnetics, a joint effort of Phillips and DuPont, now offers a collection of Beta and VHS blank videocassettes.

The standard-grade tape comes in L-250, L-500 and L-750 Beta lengths and T-60, T-90 and T-120 VHS lengths.

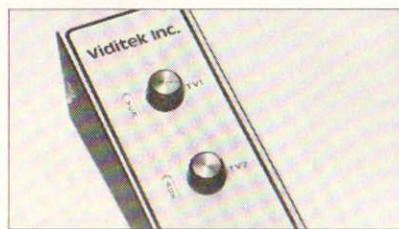
PDMagnetics, DuPont Airport Site, Building 1, Wilmington, DE 19898 (302) 999-4251

VIDITEK Switcher

Super Switcher SB43 \$79.95

You can connect a VCR and pair of TV sets to this three-knob switcher to help reduce home entertainment clutter. Each knob has positions for VCR, cable-TV, broadcast-TV and auxiliary inputs and outputs. A set of four interconnecting cables can be purchased separately.

Viditek Inc., 9555 Owensmouth Ave., #14, Chatsworth, CA 91311 (213) 998-8029



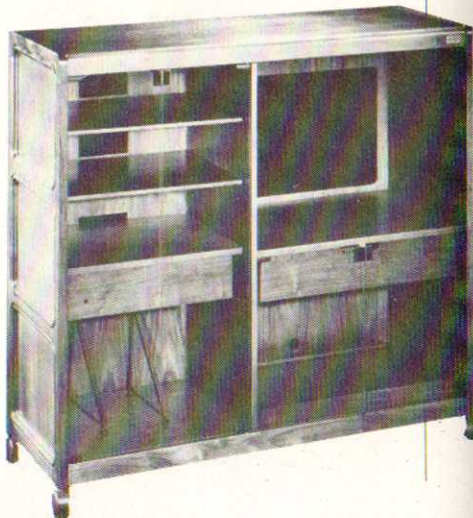
SOUNDESIGN Video Furniture

Model S-868W \$399.95

Now you can "go natural" and surround your video equipment with real wood. This home entertainment center has space for both audio and video gear, videocassettes and discs, records, accessories and a 19-inch (diagonally measured) TV set.

Two of the three shelves are adjustable, and the doors are made of tempered glass.

Soundesign Corp., 34 Exchange Pl., Jersey City, NJ 07302 (201) 434-1050





VIDEO ACCESSORIES LTD.
Video Game Storage Center
Model VID301 \$5.95

When you've had enough of "Space Invaders" hang it up—along with 17 other Atari, Activision and Odyssey game cartridges you can store in this wall-mounted, or free-standing, storage center. The black plastic games holders can also stack on top of each other.

Video Accessories Ltd., 14 Sherry Lane, Darien, CT 06820 (203) 655-3309

GENERAL ELECTRIC
Videocassette Recorder
Model 1VCR2002X \$989

Basic playback and recording capabilities without a host of "bells and whistles" mark GE's new two-hour/six-hour tabletop VCR. This VHS-format recorder offers 10-day/one-event programmability over 12

channels, and a digital counter with memory.

The transport controls include fast-forward, although there are no playback "special effects." A wired-remote pause control is included as standard equipment.

General Electric, 1 College Blvd., Portsmouth, VA 23705 (804) 483-5000



GILLASPIE & ASSOCIATES
Satellite Antenna Amplifier and Signal Splitter
Model ASP-100 \$495

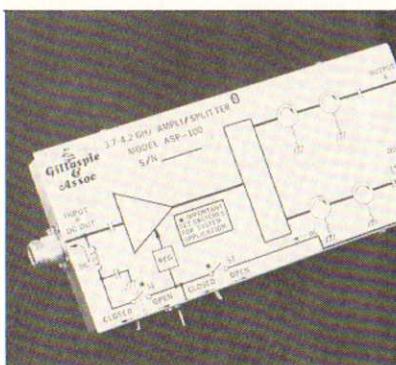
Splitting up is easy to do with a signal splitter designed to connect two or more home satellite receivers to a single "neighborhood" dish-and-amplifier system.

The weatherized Ampli-Splitter combines a line amplifier (to help counter signal loss) and two-way microwave splitter. Additional receivers can be connected by adding more splitters along the nec-

essary interconnecting cables (not provided).

The dish owner can't charge for programming under FCC regulations, but everyone on the line *would* have to watch what he or she watches.

Gillaspie & Associates, Inc., 177 Webster St., Suite A455, Monterey, CA 93940 (213) 372-4771



Unless otherwise noted, all New Products specifications are manufacturers' data—not results of Video Review tests or measurements. All listed prices are manufacturer's suggested retail. Availability of products varies according to supply and locality.

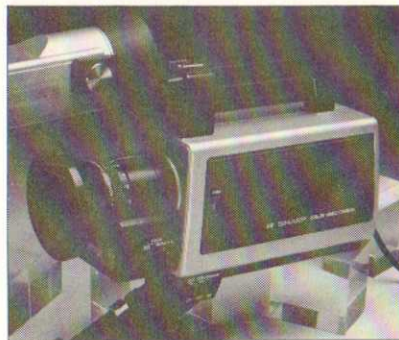


HEATH
TV Set Kit
Model GR-2500 \$724.84

If you have about 15 hours, you might consider putting together your own color TV set. Heath's latest mail-order kit gives you all the instructions and Zenith parts for a 25-inch (diagonally measured) TV set with electronic channel tuning, on-screen channel and time display, wireless remote control with "Space Phone" telephone answering, plus two pairs of woofers and tweeters (although the set has only monaural sound).

Without cabinet and Space Phone, the kit sells for \$639.95.

Heath Co., Benton Harbor, MI 49022 (616) 982-3200



SHARP
Color Videocamera
Model QC-40 \$1,100

Sharp's latest videocamera offers a range of features, including automatic focus and iris, an adjustable electronic viewfinder for shoulder mounting and a macro lens for close-ups.

The f1.4 low-light lens has a 6:1 manual zoom. The image-pickup tube is the standard 2/3-inch Vidicon type.

Sharp Electronics Corp., 10 Keystone Place, Paramus, NJ 07652 (201) 265-5600

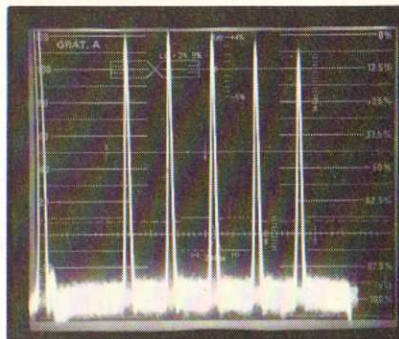
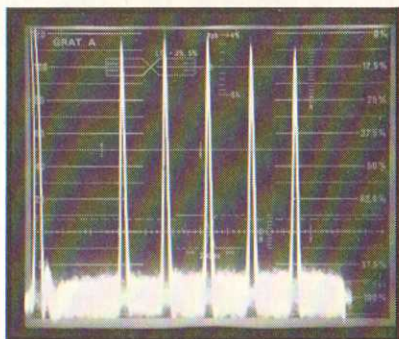
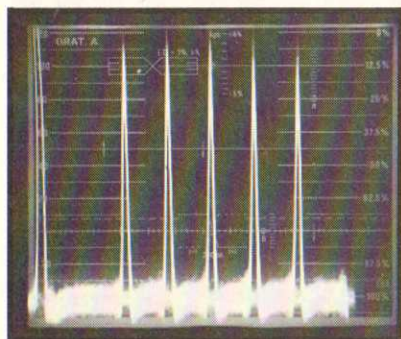


Fig. 6. Stairstep linearity measured via TV output (from left) at SP, LP and EP.

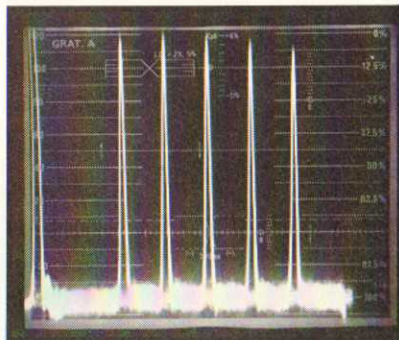
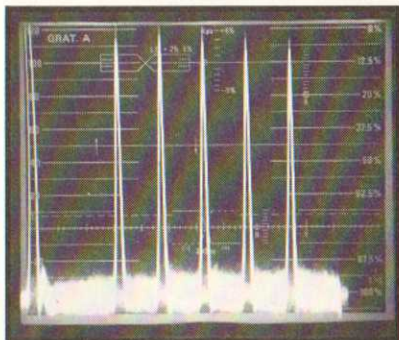
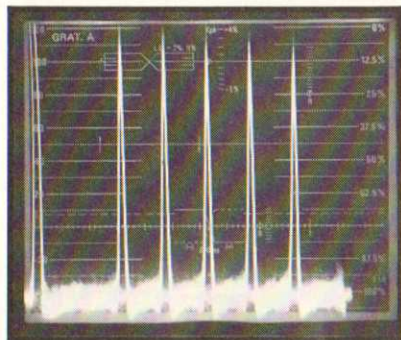


Fig. 7. Stairstep linearity measured via video output (from left) at SP, LP and EP.

tuner/timer connectors are hidden behind a tiny swing-down door on the rear surface and the channel 3/4 switch is also at the back.

We measured frequency response,

which is directly related to picture detail or definition, by means of a series of multi-burst test signals which contain frequency bursts ranging from 0.5 MHz to 4.2 MHz. (See Figures 2 and 3, page 33.)

At the two-hour (SP) tape speed, response was somewhat poorer than we have come to expect from the VHS format, while at the four-hour (LP) speed it

Continued on page 39

ELECTRONICS CENTER

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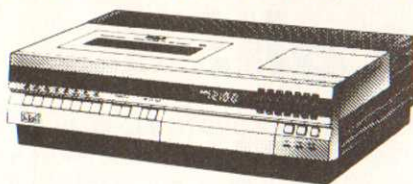
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VIDEO REVIEW'S SECOND ANNUAL...

Compiled by Roberta Goldstein

Whether the upcoming holiday is Christmas or Chanukkah for your family, 'tis now the season to start shopping for all the video fans on this year's gift list. And so, in the tradition *Video Review* began last year, we've asked some of our experts in video equipment and programming—plus a few video-fan celebrities—for their

recommendations for the season's greatest video gifts.

Their suggestions for Santa follow, with this clause: They are only representative (and subjective) suggestions. All the products and programs listed are not meant to be the final word on every possible present for every video fan.

For such comprehensive shopping guidance, you'd need a gift subscription to *Video Review*.

BOB ANGUS

Long-time electronics mavin

Compiling a holiday shopping list is, along with addressing the Christmas cards, one of those chores that convinces me every year at about this time that Scrooge had the right idea. Fortunately, thanks to an avalanche of new video products and accessories this year, the task is going to be a lot easier for my video-fan friends and relatives.

Take my father, for example. He was the first on his block with a VCR—a venerable Magnavox two-

speed machine which is beginning to show its age. He's going to get a **Fast Scan II do-it-yourself special-effects kit** from Video Club (1807 East Lake St., Minneapolis, MI 55407), which adds wired remote control, visual scan (in forward and reverse) and freeze-frame to his recorder. Of course, he has to do the wiring inside the set himself, but I get off for \$70.

Then there's my brother-in-law in Trinidad. **The Beamscope TS 25 projection TV set** from International Marketing Services (710 Red-

mac Street, Port Richey, FL 33565) should make him a pretty big man down there, and it only costs \$60. Okay, so it's not the topnotch Kloss Novabeam, which I recommend for anybody. But then, what should a brother-in-law expect? I'm likely to get \$20 worth of sugar cane in return.

For my lawyer, who got me through another year without prosecution for libel, I'm going to give **The Producers** (Magnetic Video videocassette). For my money, it's one of the funniest movies ever made, and it may give him some ideas for next year.

My wife Sheila will get a subscription to **SatGuide** so she'll be able to keep track of all those great movies coming in on the big satellite dish in our front yard. Published by Comtek Publishing (PO Box 1700, Hailey, ID 83333) for \$36 per year (\$68 by first-class mail), SatGuide covers the programs on all 20 active transponders on Satcom I, with limited coverage of programming on the Comstar D-2 and Westar III satellites as well.

For my publisher, a **Vidicraft Detailer II**, for \$250. Of course, I don't seriously expect him ever to use it. But it's the thought that counts—right, boss?

To Fred the butcher, who's been saving us the choice cuts all year—and charging accordingly—I'll give a tape of my favorite pork chop, Miss Piggy, in **The Muppet Movie** (Magnetic Video videocassette). He also deserves some prime chuck, so I'll throw in **Superman** (Paramount cassette) and Dolly Parton's movie debut, **9 to 5** (Magnetic Video videocassette).

For my secretary, some **TDK HG blank tapes**, just because she



Holiday products and programs (clockwise from top): Vidicraft Detailer II enhancer; Kloss Novabeam projector; TDK HG blank videocassettes; The Producers.



doesn't drink, but does have a VCR.

Finally, if anybody out there is looking for a gift for yours truly, I have just the thing: a computerized, motorized mount for my 12-foot spherical satellite antenna. □

MARJORIE ROSEN

Author, movie critic

I'm not sure how Santa is going to manage to squeeze down my family's rather modest chimney with all the holiday gifts I've got in mind. But since I'm treating this list as something of a flight of fancy allowing me to play Lady Bountiful at no cost, I'm counting on Santa

to squeeze down the chimney.

At any rate, since my entire family still lives in the video stone age, I'd like to splurge and give everybody a VCR: **Zenith's sleek new model BR9775**. That done, and with money on this imaginary shopping list still being of no object, I'll tack on tape libraries suitable to each person's needs and appreciations.

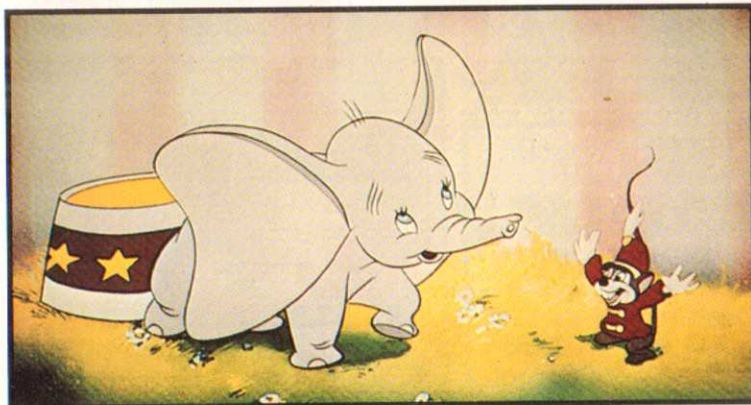
And so my dad will find a home-recorded set of cassettes capturing **all the major heavyweight fights**

of the century, including the Dempsey-Tunney bout in 1927, the Louis-Schmelling match in 1938 and the Walcott-Marciano fight in 1952, right up through the latest closed-circuit contenders.

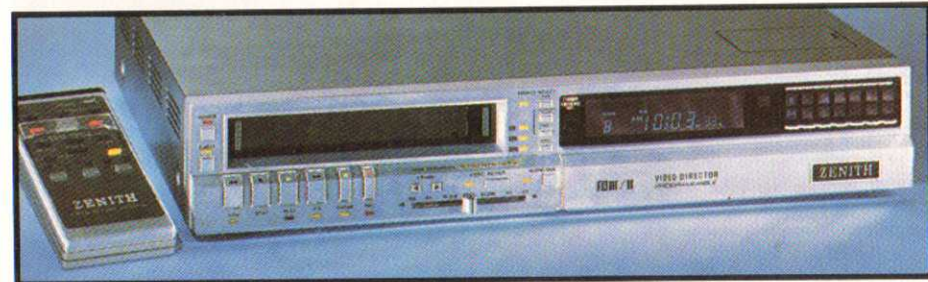
My two little nephews and my niece, ranging in age from seven-years-old to six months, will receive a tape library of children's movies including those I once adored (and could be persuaded to see again . . . and again), including animated

features such as **Dumbo** (Disney Home Video video-cassette) and live-action pictures such as **Treasure Island**

GREAT HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS



Clockwise from top left: Walt Disney's Dumbo; Akai's model VCX-1 color video-camera with automatic focus; Magnavox's Odyssey video game console; Zenith's sleek model BR9775 VCR; Christopher Reeve in action in Superman.



(MGM/CBS Home Video videocassette) with Bobby Driscoll.

My sister and her husband are game-and-card lovers, so the perfect present for them is a **Magnavox Odyssey video-game console**, with cartridges of card games. Moreover, I will make sure an **Akai model VCX-1 color videocamera** finds its way into their home, so we can all tape the milestone moments in the kids' young lives and in our family's collective life.

Which, finally, is why I want to give myself a magical (not-yet-invented), **at-home, sound-and-picture video editing system**—something I view as an antidote to all those home-made movies that never end. With this system it wouldn't matter whether I've already "edited" in the camera or not; neither would I need special off-line editing facilities. As with film, I could snip and cut and do some plain and fancy editing in my own living room. Imagine the possibilities not only for making compilation tapes culled from Hollywood movies already in existence, but, best of all, for taping creative personal documents and dramas—all made short and sweet and to the point. □

BOB HOPE

American institution

The videocassette I'd most like to give as a holiday video present



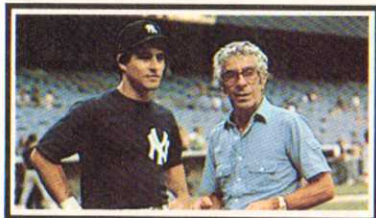
would be a remake of **Gone With the Wind**, with myself cast as Rhett Butler.

What I'd most like to receive would be a cassette of my first vaudeville act. And I'd make sure that there's only *one* copy! □

GENEVIEVE KAZDIN

Children's video reviewer

This year the video gift opportunities for kids are better than ever. There's something for every youngster of every age.



GREAT HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

Clockwise from top left: First National Kidisc; Maxell HG blank videocassettes; The Nutcracker; Greatest Comeback.

It is always important to consider the individual child when choosing a gift—his or her age, attention span, special interest, etc. Also, I don't think you should automatically rule out a tape or disc supposedly made for adults if it seems to suit a particular child perfectly.

For instance, a young dancer may just adore the Bolshoi Ballet production of **The Nutcracker** (CBS Video Enterprises videocassette). His or her sports-nut brother or sister may enjoy **The Greatest Comeback Ever** (VidAmerica videocassette), a made-for-video record of the glorious triumph of the New York Yankees over Boston in 1978.

The Incredible Magic of Magic Volumes I and II (Brandwein/Laub) may be a little difficult but certainly not beyond some 12-year-old tricksters.

For every youngster whose family is equipped with an LV videodisc player, I want to be the one who gives them **The First National Kidisc** (Optical Programming Associates videodisc).

Dunderklumpen (Video Gems videocassette) is my first choice for little ones who are just discovering the joys of fantasy.

For those Junior High students



who hate missing their favorite daytime TV "soaps," I recommend plenty of **Maxell HG blank tape** and time-shift programming instructions, so they can keep up with Luke, Laura or whomever.

As for me, I would dearly love a **cooking instruction tape** for baking perfect puff pastry and other goodies—oh, yes, and an exercise instruction tape. □

ART LEVIS

Editor, Consumer Electronics

They may be a little bulky to stuff in a stocking or tuck beneath the tree, but this year there are enough snazzy new video products to meet any holiday gift need—if price is no object, that is.

Start with your friend (or husband or wife) the sports freak. Nothing could be finer than **Sampo's triscreen TV set** (one 19-inch color and two five-inch black & white screens). With this dandy \$995 set, the addict can turn Sunday into a three-ring event, watching the Super Bowl on the 19-inch screen, while monitoring the NBA *Game of the Week* on one of the five-inch screens and Muhammad Ali's latest comeback on the other.

But video's really become an out-

door event, and the new **Sony Betapak portable VCR** is heaven-sent for that loved one or just good friend who's into making home movies. The tiny new Betapak (unpriced at presstime) is light compared to earlier portables, weighing in at just over nine pounds.

Looking for something special for someone special? Spare no expense and get him or her the Cadillac (or should I say the Datsun 280 ZX Turbo) of VCRs. It's the feature-laden **Mitsubishi HS-310U home VCR**, retailing for \$1,350. Among its snazzy features designed to satisfy even the most demanding videophile: a 14-function wireless remote module which permits the user to exercise total control over all of the recorder's functions without ever leaving the chair.

What would make my Christmas morning merry and bright? Promise me anything, but give me the new

Limited Edition \$10,000 Sony 30-inch Trinitron color TV set, handcrafted in Japanese Tamo ash. Hurry up and buy it now, though, so Sony will have time to inscribe my name on the special numbered plaque which will be attached to each of the 1,000 models. □

WILLIAM K. EVERSON

Movie historian, critic

Since these are the holidays, and we're entitled to magnify our wishes, I've decided to shoot the works and come up with a "dream list" in the hope that some fairy godmother is a subscriber to *Video Review*. Besides, I already own tapes or films of virtually every movie I want from normal and orthodox sources. For a fairy godmother, then, this is a reasonable list: There are no "lost" films among those here. Every picture exists. In fact, I've seen all but one over the past five years, and

some of them have even been on British TV.

I haven't bothered to allocate any of the following movie gift suggestions to individual family members: None of them deserve gifts of such magnitude, and they would probably turn them over to me anyway.

First and foremost, I recommend a home-taped recording of James Whale's never-shown version of **Waterloo Bridge** (1931), simpler and better than the Vivien Leigh remake, as an excellent holiday gift.

I also suggest **The Last of the Mohicans** (1922), a classic piece of movie Americana, directed by Maurice Tourneur and Clarence Brown.

Finally, to wind up on a realistic note, two Paramounts from the '30s that crop up on TV but I think should be released on prerecorded cassettes: **King of the Jungle** (1933), a much underrated, intelligently and elaborately made adventure yarn with Buster Crabbe; and **Remember the Night** (1939), charming, funny, touching, a marvelous collaboration of director Mitchell Leisen, writer Preston Sturges and star Barbara Stanwyck. □

LEN FELDMAN

Writer, technical whiz

Most of my family and friends who own VCRs are beginning to complain about the problems connected with cataloguing and maintaining essential information about their growing libraries of cassettes (prerecorded and otherwise). I know how they feel, since I've spent frustrating hours trying to find that special segment I know is recorded *somewhere* on one of my cassettes. (But if only I knew which one!)

My wife, a librarian by profession, came to the rescue not long ago by suggesting that I buy a ready-made kit of forms and procedures to help me organize my cassette library. I, in turn, am suggesting this same system as a good holiday gift many video fans don't already have. It's made by Video Information Systems, and called the **VIS Video Library Catalog Index Cross Referencing System**.

I am now ready for something a little more expensive, thank you. My back yard is just begging for a **complete satellite-receiving earth station**. □

Continued



GREAT HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

Clockwise from left: Sony's Betapak VCR; King of the Jungle; MGA model HS-310U VCR.





JIMMY "J.J." WALKER

TV star, comedian

For anybody—any friend or relative of mine—I would give a tape of **The Blues Brothers** (MCA videocassette/MCA DiscoVision videodisc). I loved that movie.

As for myself, I'd love a tape of **every World Series game** ever played—even those before there was TV. □

PHIL WISWELL

Electronic games expert

I come from a strange family of video game addicts, so I did all my Christmas shopping this year in the same store—an electronics game

shop on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue.

Grandma doesn't like these "newfangled" action games, preferring something more cerebral. That's why I got her **Atari's Backgammon** cartridge.

Grandpa used to hustle money in pool halls during what he calls his deprived youth, so to let him relive that sordid era I got him **Pocket Billiards (Magnavox)**.

Mom's favorite sport is skiing, and the Alpine slopes provided in **Mattel's Skiing** cartridge are just her style. There are moguls, ice patches, fast courses, slow ones, slaloms and downhills, but best of all Mom can just ski if she wants to, ignoring all objectives.

Dad has been having trouble with his chip shots onto the green, so I thought I'd give him a little practice course with **PGA Golf (Mattel)**. It's a nine hole course complete with sand and water traps, fairways that dogleg, roughs, etc.

Uncle Butch drives a Mack truck for a living, so I thought I'd give him a bit of fun with two games: **Dragster from Activision** and **Demolition Derby from Bally**.

Sister this year gets one of my favorite new games from **Activision**

called **Stampede**, in which you are on horseback with the object of lassoing a herd of galloping cows.

Brother gets the real action stuff: **Space Invaders (Atari)** like the arcade game and **Red Baron (Bally)** an airwar simulation for two players. □

HANS FANTEL

NY Times electronics columnist

Having among my close friends a pair of passionate "tapeworms" who program their VCR far in advance to catch anything with Humphrey Bogart and whose home-recorded tape collection boasts a nearly complete collection of the *Mary Tyler Moore Shows*, I can't think of anything they'd rather have for Christmas than a commercial killer.

This gadget, officially known as the **Shelton Video Editor**, is one of the glories of technology. It automatically recognizes commercials and obliterates them with nary a trace. That way, subsequent playbacks of the *Late, Late Show* will give you Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara without jarring *entre'actes* about deodorants.

What I'd most like to get myself no one can buy me yet. But wait till next year. By then, **Vidmax**, a new company with ambitious plans for producing videodiscs, plans to have the whole **National Gallery on a laser disc**, intermixing stills with motion pictures and having an exploring camera search out significant picture details under expert guidance. Remembering how effectively the BBC did this sort of thing in its series with Sir Kenneth Clark, notably "Civilisation" and "The Romantic Rebellion," I can hardly wait for the videodisc to bring the National Gallery into my living room. □

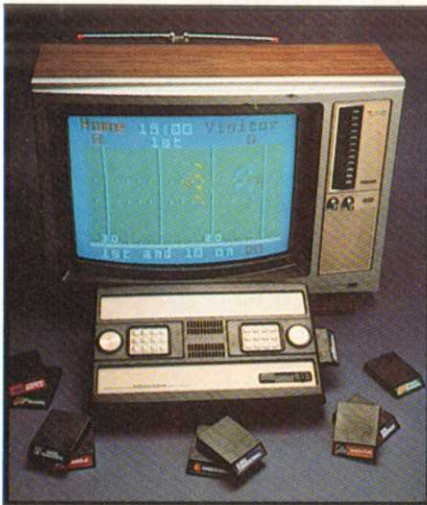
LEONARD MALTIN

Author, movie and TV critic

A holiday gift should make someone happy, and to my way of thinking, movies from Hollywood's "golden era" are unbeatable for giving people that feeling.

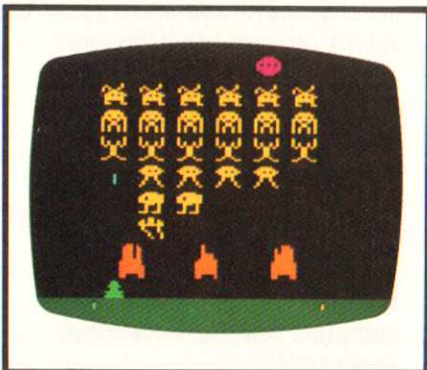
While looking over a list of video releases, two titles brought a smile to my lips. Just the memory of watching them made me feel good, so I have chosen them as holiday gift suggestions.

First, I recommend **Captains**



GREAT HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

Clockwise from bottom:
The Blues Brothers; "Space Invaders";
Mattel's Intellivision
video game console.





GREAT HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

Clockwise from left: Pioneer's LV-format laser-optical video-disc player; Sony's Profeel component video monitor; Warner's Gentleman Jim.



Courageous (MGM/CBS videocassette) the outstanding production of Rudyard Kipling's wonderful story about a pampered boy who learns about life from a Portuguese sailor on a fishing boat. Freddie Bartholomew and Spencer Tracy star with an entirely wonderful cast, including Lionel Barrymore, Melvyn Douglas and Mickey Rooney. Victor Fleming directed. This is family entertainment in the best, non-condescending sense of the term, and storytelling of a kind movie fans see too rarely these days.

My second choice is a home-recorded videotape of **Gentleman Jim**, an absolutely delightful Warner Brothers picture about the famous boxer Jim Corbett, starring Errol Flynn. Under Raoul Walsh's direction, this movie has spunk, spirit and a lively Gay '90s framework. In short, it's tremendous fun.

An ideal present for me would be a collection of some really rare 1930s movies—missing links from the vaults of MGM, Paramount, Warner Brothers, *et al.* I'm speaking of the titles only a movie nut like me could love: not so much **Public Enemy**, but rather **The Famous Ferguson Case** (Joan Blondell). □

MAURY Z. LEVY

Editor, Playboy Guide to Electronic Entertainment

This is my Christmas list, which makes it different from my New Year's resolution list, on which I resolved last year to not make any Christmas lists this year. This then is a not-so-instant replay of last year's Christmas list.

Since I don't want my children to watch television, I am giving them **Intellivision game console**. I think they will appreciate that. And if they do, next year I might even give them a compatible cartridge.

The education will do them good, since they don't seem to get much of it in school. Maybe I'll get an **Apple** for their teacher.

I am giving Hugh Hefner a home-recorded videotape of **Little Women**. I am giving his daughter and colleague Christie Hefner a videotape of Hugh Hefner watching little women.

I am giving Rocky Akoi an **Akal**, and his son a **Pioneer (videodisc player)**. I am giving my mother an endless tape loop of me eating liver. No, she'll never believe that. I'll give her a **Kloss Novabeam**, which will make the liver look bigger. Every

story tells a picture, as they say.

I am giving my Uncle Max a **Beta**, so he can watch a **Profeel** and know what makes Kim Carnes blush.

And last, if not lust, I am giving my wife her very own copy of Annette Haven in **Barbara Broadcast** (Quality X Videocassettes). That will give her plenty of time to get her technique down pat. Pat is our electrician. Whatever turns him on.

As for me, Haven can't wait. I want Annette. I've been working too long without one. □

DR. JOYCE BROTHERS

Psychologist, author

Videocassettes and equipment seem to provide the ideal solution to parental problems concerning children's viewing habits. Through the careful selection of videocassettes, parents can not only monitor their children's exposure to certain topics, but perhaps more importantly, can direct them toward intellectually and creatively stimulating programs.

The sort of videocassette I would most like to give as a gift is **Dumbo**

Continued on page 143

(Disney videocassette) or another full-length Disney cartoon such as **Bambi, Fantasia, Snow White, Pinocchio**, etc.

Disney's extravagant and fantastic characters and plots enable a child to use his imagination, to extend his own fantasies and to visualize both. They allow parents to discuss with their children things that frighten them in their world—for example, the loss of a mother. At the same time, Disney fantasies provide some moral direction for the viewer. □

ANDREW SARRIS

Movie theorist, critic

When Santa drives his reindeer into the video age this year, I'll have asked him to deliver to my mother specially recorded tapes of all the musicals featuring her favorites: Jeanette MacDonald, Grace Moore, Lily Pons, Deanna Durbin, Allan Jones, Nelson Eddy and Bobby Breen.

For my whiz-bang tennis-playing partner and wife Molly Haskell I'd like to give a tape of the **two Borg-McEnroe matches at Wimbledon**, and their final at Flushing Meadow.

For my various godchildren I would like a complete home-record set of the **silent movies of Buster Keaton**, plus such Disney features as **Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Pinocchio, Bambi**, plus all the **Goofy** sports shorts.

For friends who read murder mysteries religiously, I prescribe Rene Clair's **And Then There Were None** (VCI videocassette), still the most entertaining rendering of Agatha Christie's work on the screen, including Billy Wilder's **Witness for the Prosecution**.

For hardcore Hitchcockians like myself I could think of nothing more delectable than the total Hitchcock oeuvre, particularly **Psycho** (MCA videocassette, MCA DiscoVision videodisc). □

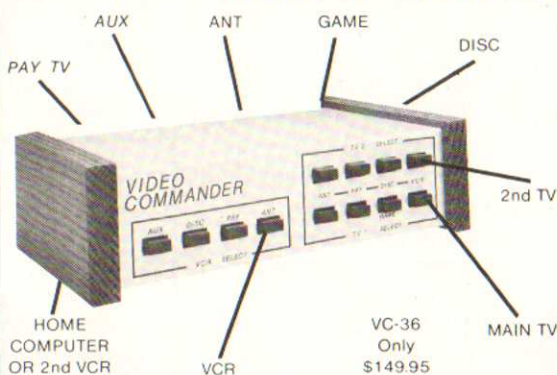
MICHAEL O'DONAHUE

Video writer, producer, director

For my father, I'd give **The Quiet Man** (Nostalgia Merchant videocassette), because he's Irish. I know he'd enjoy it. But the all-purpose video gift would be Michael Powell's **The Red Shoes** (RCA Selectavision CED videodisc). That's a great movie for kids or people of all ages. □

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Furthermore, some manufacturers express minimum illumination in "lux," and others in "footcandles." Some even give both. Footcandle units are approximately one-tenth of lux units, but how is the average video equipment shopper supposed to translate "10 footcandles or 100 lux" into meaningful information?

Can Standardization Help?

Despite such widely varying—and often deliberately vague—specifications, certain roadblocks to standardization are planted fairly solidly. For one thing, some companies take measurements both in the U.S. and in Japan, then publish the *better* "typical" figures. Other manufacturers publish just the Japanese measurements. In other words, some video gear is tested for publication more often than other equipment, which immediately throws a wrench into the standardization gears.

For another thing, video engineers seem to be divided as to whether or not standardization could be a boon. The reason, according to Zenith engineer Quentin Samelson, is that "a lot of times, it's the specs *not* given that make the difference between one VCR's 'look' and another's. Unless you want a whole page of engineering jargon, you couldn't really give the consumer anything worthwhile."

That may or may not be so. But since videospecs today are largely meaningless anyway, according to most engineers and video industry observers, what would consumers have to lose with standardized specs? Although no formal plans are underway to standardize home video specs anytime in the near future, that question could be answered soon as more and more inquisitive consumers begin to ask for meaningful specifications.

Guidelines

Some particularly concerned engineers—notably VR's own technical editors and our Test Report colleagues at CBS Technology Center—have already suggested guidelines for standardization. Measurements specified at low, high *and* medium contrasts, at *all* tape speeds and for both color and B&W signals should be some primary considerations, they say. Standardized terminology ought to be another. So should the separation of variable performance specs with the already informally standardized input/output, TV-signal and TV-standard specs. Most experts also suggest giving reference points

for ratio specs, such as decibel level, plus noting which specs are estimates and which are quantitative measurements. These, they add, are only some basic ideas for starters.

Could standardization happen? If the audio industry is any example, the answer is yes it should and it could.

The same Electronic Industries Association (EIA) that periodically revises the IHF and other voluntary audio standards would "certainly consider standardized specifications for video," according to Jack Wayman, the EIA consumer-group vice president. "But it's never been brought up."

Now it's been brought up. □

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WORDS BY WIRE: **TELETEXT** **(FINALLY) COMES TO AMERICA**

By Gary Arlen with Suzan D. Prince

We'll all be reading as well as watching our TV sets in the next few years, if things continue to go the way they're headed. "Teletext" and its look-alike cousin technology "videotex" are already offering news, sports, business and weather reports via video in a handful of experiments around the U.S. And these systems—which marry sophisticated computer services to ordinary TV sets—are among the hottest topics throughout the broadcasting, cable TV, telephone and video fields.

Equally important, these computer/TV technologies open the door for the next wave of home services, such as electronic shopping, electronic mail, new videogames and interactive projects.

If all the professional buzzwords—"teletext," "videotex," "teleshopping" and more—blur together, don't worry. Even the people who are working day-to-day in the field can't decide on what terms to use to describe their services. By general agreement, however, "teletext" refers to information which is transmitted via a standard broadcast TV signal, digitally squeezed onto the vertical blanking interval—the thick black line you see when your TV picture rolls over. "Videotex" (sometimes called "viewdata," a name given to it in England) brings information into your home TV set via a telephone line or, perhaps, a cable-TV hook-up. To further confuse things, some people are using the term "videotext" (with a "t" at the end) as an umbrella word for all types of services which bring words and graphics onto a TV set.



Complicating the name game a bit more is the frequent use of the terms used in each of the countries which helped invent the new technology. "Antiope" is the French term; Canadians call their version "Telidon" and the British use the words "Ceefax" and "Oracle" for their current teletext services and "Prestel" for the nationwide videotex system.

Whatever it's called, the new technology is an impressive and an addictive one. Originally, it was conceived as an "information retrieval" service, designed to enable viewers to look up material anytime they want by pushing a few buttons on a decoder hooked up to a standard TV set. The decoder, potentially about the size and shape of a handheld calculator but conceivably as large as a home-computer terminal, would permit you to request certain "pages" or "frames" of information stored in a computer at the TV station's transmitter or at another location. Each page would be numbered and linked to other pages in the database, so by pushing the right buttons at home, you could thumb through the electronic arena.

Tests in Progress

What kind of information would you want to look up on teletext?

That's exactly what the experts are trying to find out via a number of field tests now underway in Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington, San Francisco, Miami, Columbus and other cities around the country. Do Americans want:

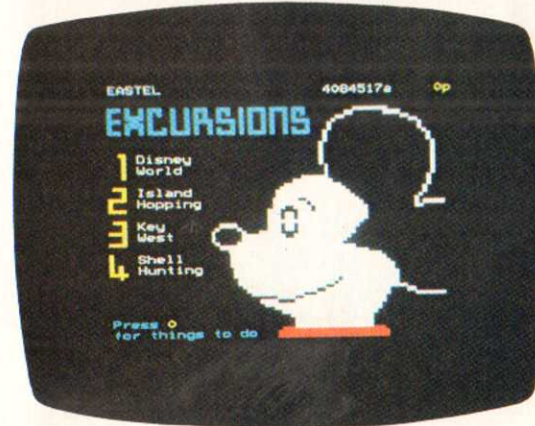
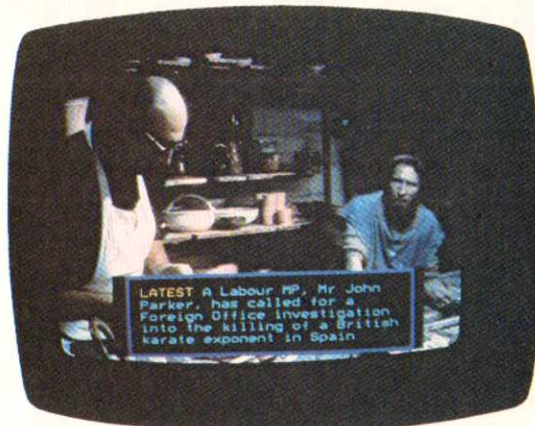
- Sports scores or stock-market data at any time of the day or night?
- Program listings of what's on TV channels—sort of an electronic TV Guide?
- Airline schedules or freeway traffic conditions—before you head out the door?
- Real estate listings, with prices and floor plans before you call a realtor?
- Prices and special sales at local stores?

Those are the kinds of information available on some of the teletext systems now being tested. Three TV stations in Los Angeles (KNXT, KNBC and KCET), and stations in Washington (WETA), Chicago (WFLD) and San Francisco (KPIX) are deeply involved in experiments to find out what viewers want to see. There are teletext test sets in private homes and in schools, hotel lobbies, saloons, airport lounges and other public places.

Technically, teletext and videotex deliver their data quite differently. Teletext pages cycle through each frame of a TV signal, meaning that only a few hundred frames of information can conveniently be squeezed onto a channel. On the other hand, a videotex computer can store hundreds of thousands of data pages—and deliver them instantly when you push the buttons on your decoder.

Hurdles to Cross

Before any widespread service can begin, though, a lot of hurdles must be crossed. For example, the FCC is still deciding whether there should be any technical standards or rules for use of the teletext facility. Several proposals for teletext systems were submitted to the FCC during the past year, proposing adoption of the



Four samples of the Prestel teletext system (from top): news, advertising, games and real-estate shopping.

In a handful of experiments around the country, Americans are already 'reading' their TV sets like newspapers come alive. Today's teletext services offer news, sports and weather reports—but that's only the beginning.

French, British and Canadian technology as the U.S. standard. Finally, early this fall, the FCC started the official ball rolling by establishing a legal proceeding which could lead to complete teletext rules.

The process could take as long as two years—although it got a substantial boost recently when French and Canadian technocrats came up with a compatible standard. Fueling the enthusiasm about that combined system was the fact that AT&T suggested that its videotex technical standard would also be compatible, meaning that the same TV set could be used to pick up teletext and videotex transmissions. That is an important factor to the people who make TV sets and are hesitant to plunge into teletext-related production until they are fairly certain what technical format will be used by TV stations, cable TV systems and telephone companies offering the service.

Ma Bell Controversy

The role of Ma Bell is also the center of a controversy which is hunkering along with the growth of the business. AT&T has developed a number of facilities offering electronic versions of its white and yellow pages directories, plus new services, such as advertising and information. That capability has thrown a real fright into newspaper publishers and other information providers, who see such services as head-to-head competition with classified ads and other money-making parts of the paper. In fact, Congress is currently deliberating over a law which would affect what services the telephone company could offer via videotex. The current shape of that legislation was largely affected by a lobbying campaign by newspaper owners and others who fear AT&T's clout in shaping this promising new service.

At the same time, other newspaper publishers are working with AT&T to develop services. For example, in suburban Miami, Knight-Ridder Newspapers is just concluding its Viewtron test, which has been going on for over a year in partnership with AT&T. Actually, an enlarged Viewtron test will begin in 1983, giving viewers the chance to look up information as well as do comparative shopping, order theater and plane tickets and perform other electronic functions via their TV sets.

Meanwhile, several independent videotex projects are already underway—and nearly 30,000 people in the U.S., mostly computer hobbyists and professionals, are already taking advantage of the services. For example, The Source, based in McLean, VA, and CompuServe, of Columbus, OH, offer extensive databases which users can call up for as little as \$4.25 per hour. If you want an electronic newspaper (including latest news stories before they are printed in *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times* or

other newspapers), just tap them up on your home computer. You can look up specialized information—or do you just want to put a message on an electronic community bulletin board? There's room for both types of services.

As an indicator of how important these services could become, both The Source and CompuServe have been acquired recently by giant companies which are among the most familiar household names in America. Readers Digest bought The Source, infusing both money and editorial commitment. H. & R. Block, the tax people, now own CompuServe, which leads to a future prospect of doing income tax work via home computers hooked into the tax database.

Corporate Interaction

Such interactive services are the foundation of a hoped-for next phase of videotex. Will customers pay a small premium for the convenience of shopping or banking directly from their homes? Or will companies underwrite such telemarketing activities? That's part of another videotex test, much of it now being conducted on two-way cable TV systems. For example, in San Diego, Cox Cable Communications is testing its INDAX service. Among the services are at-home shopping, provided by ViewMart, a subsidiary of Fingerhut Corp., one of the nation's largest direct-mail marketing companies. The idea is to find out whether catalogue shopping can be translated to an electronic medium, with viewers thumbing through an electronic display of items, then ordering them via a coded shopping service. INDAX will also provide bank-at-home services via several local banks and savings and loans. That part of the test is being coordinated by HomeServ, a company which (not coincidentally) is owned by the same company which owns ViewMart.

Keeping Up With Dow Jones

Elsewhere on the cable TV front, Dow Jones is experimenting with delivery of information services, including high-priced material intended for investors, via cable systems. Conceptually, the service could be expanded to enable investors to conduct stock transactions by pushing buttons on their decoders.

Meanwhile, other at-home financial services are becoming more widely tested, using both cable and telephone connections. For example, in Knoxville, TN, United American Bank offers a service which allows about 400 customers to pay bills, receive current account information, apply for loans and perform other bank functions with a home computer supplied by Radio Shack. Customers pay a flat \$650 fee, which includes the cost of Radio Shack's TRS-80 terminal and communications equipment. The terminal, incidentally, is similar to one which Radio Shack built for the U.S. Department of Agriculture for its "Green Thumb" test, which was offered to Kentucky farmers, giving them the opportunity to look up weather forecasts, check commodity prices and get other information which affected their agricultural activities.

All this activity naturally excites the interest of companies which can offer special services. Time Inc., for example, is active in electronic publishing as well as

Continued on page 149

Uncle Walter's electronic debacle



Robert Gerson

Are the American companies that make home video equipment dying out, withering on the vine?

That's certainly the impression some 20 million American TV homes were given by a recent

segment of CBS's *Walter Cronkite's Universe* which dealt with the state of video technology today. The show was a hymn to Japanese innovation, and, like all hymns, had a built-in bias.

The reason I know the show started with a bias is that I was involved in the preparation of the program as an unpaid consultant to the *Universe* research staff. Over a period of weeks I had a long series of conversations with CBS researchers—sometimes two and three sessions a day.

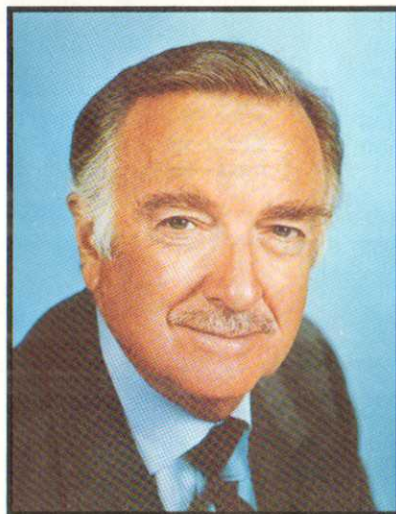
The initial plan for the *Universe* segment was to prove how the American consumer electronics industry has been crushed by more forward-looking Japanese manufacturers, and to show how domestic manufacturing has collapsed to the point at which virtually all TV sets and other major electronics products are now being made overseas. But Cronkite's staff dropped all that shortly after I explained that 16 companies currently operate color TV plants here, with four more opening soon. So the show's focus was shifted to point up Japan's alleged technological edge.

Theory of 'Universe'

Uncle Walter began this *Universe* with the big bang of a theory that the Japanese haven't exactly created much in the way of new technology, but are the leaders in application. "They are in the forefront of the advanced technology of electronics, and they are not resting on their laurels," he said, explaining that the TV sets and other video products of tomorrow are on the drawing boards in Japanese factory labs today.

He then proceeded to take viewers on a brief tour of labs at Matsushita, Sony and Toshiba, and showed prototypes of a number of products. As with most such quick TV news encapsulations, it wasn't what did appear that hurt the show, it's what didn't.

For instance, to "balance" the shots of pocket-size flat-screen B&W TV sets in the Japanese labs of Sony and Toshiba, *Universe* offered its one and only glimpse into an American re-



Cronkite on video: not really the way it is.

search and development unit, RCA Research Labs, where a flat display is being developed. But Cronkite more or less dismissed that by saying, "They [RCA researchers] are going for something like a big painting, hopefully in color. [RCA's happens to be a color-only project.] The Japanese are thinking small."

Next came a look at a Japanese video game, without a mention that the first video games were developed in the U.S. by Atari (for arcades) and Magnavox (for homes), and without a hint that those American companies' video games are still the most popular in the world.

Front- and rear-screen projection TV sets were shown, without reference to projection TV being a U.S.-developed product. It never

came up that Henry Kloss, who started the whole field in America, now makes the world's most advanced projection tube, nor that Zenith, an American company, just introduced the first rear projection set with a hidden screen.

Sony's tiny flat picture tube with a side-mounted electron gun was featured, but I didn't hear anything about it being similar to one now actually in pilot production in Timex's U.K. plant.

So Many Oversights

Videodisc players from Pioneer (a division of a Japanese company) got coverage, but of course without reference to the facts that they're made under license from America's MCA DiscoVision and that they're similar to players being assembled here by Magnavox. Naturally, RCA's videodisc system went unnoticed. The list of such "oversights" could go on and on, but I don't have space for that here.

Finally, Uncle Walter provided the perfect ending for his "report" by saying that Japanese "edge" lies "in developing and applying new ideas to the production lines and getting them out to the consumer," while the camera zoomed in on a Sampo tri-screen color TV set—made in Taiwan.

Now, I take a back seat to no one in my respect and admiration for the accomplishments of Japanese innovation, which has revolutionized the face of the consumer electronics industry. But that in no way diminishes my feelings for their counterparts at American companies.

I simply get tired of the new wave of attacks on American industrial competence in one-sided, under-researched and sloppy reports designed and manipulated to prove a single point, as was this *Universe* segment. My hope is that the generators of those reports will be as embarrassed as I am now annoyed when they finally grasp the true strength of American industry. □

TELETEXT...

Continued from page 78

program distribution. With that in mind, it's no surprise that this fall Time is starting a satellite-fed teletext service, sending up to 5,000 pages of data to a cable system which it owns. Material will come from Time's extensive news and information resources; and if all goes well, Time may launch the teletext equivalent of its highly successful Home Box Office pay-TV channel.

McGraw-Hill, *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times* and other publishers are similarly plowing into the database and electronic publishing business, promising an almost inexhaustible supply of information. Texas Instruments, Radio Shack, Atari and other micro-computer makers are gearing up to supply reception equipment to use the facilities to their fullest. And, of course, TV set manufacturers such as RCA, Zenith and Sony are keeping an eye on the technologies to see what kind of sets they will have to build to make sure viewers can look in on all these new services.

Most Confusing Part

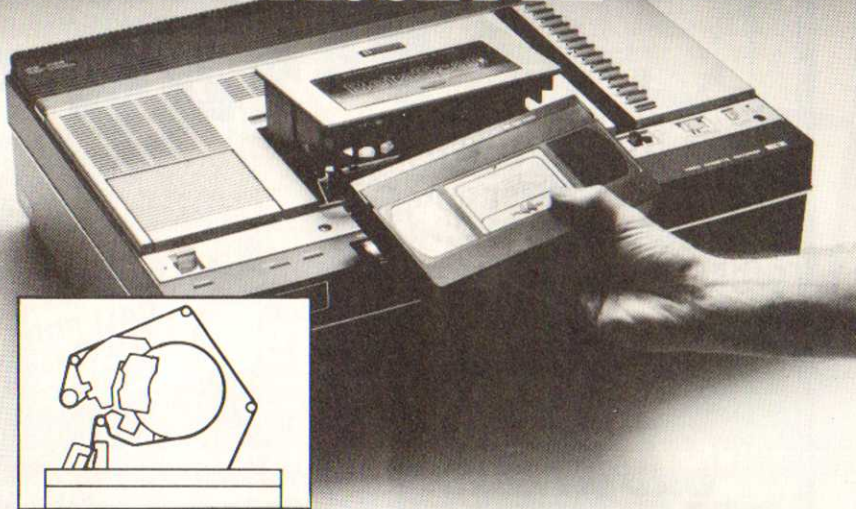
Amidst all this planning and strategizing, a number of services continue to grow. Indeed, perhaps the most confusing part about teletext and videotex is that they look so much like other services now available. For example, "closed captioning," which has been on the air for more than a year via special TV sets, is a very close cousin of teletext. Indeed, one of the functions which teletext can perform is such hidden captioning of TV shows. But closed captioning merely means that a little text material is encoded within the TV picture.

In the U.S., that is accomplished by inserting the captioned subtitles on one of the lines within the vertical blanking interval. (You can only see the captions if you have a special receiver.) The service is now mainly intended to provide subtitles for use by hearing-impaired viewers.

Currently, nearly 40,000 U.S. homes have the special TV sets or decoders (sold only at Sears now)

Continued on page 153

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TELETEXT...

Continued from page 149

to pick up such captions. But there are plans afoot to use such captioning for translations into other languages. And on several TV stations (mostly public broadcasting outlets), experiments are underway to transmit news reports, local information and other text services via the captioning circuit.

Where It's All Going

In a way, teletext and videotex are unusual communications ventures, because the United States seems to be following, rather than leading, the world. Active systems are already operating in France, England, Germany, Canada and other countries. Indeed, bringing the systems to the U.S. seems to hinge upon which of the foreign technologies will be adopted here.

The big issue—abroad as well as in the U.S.—is how the typical viewer will respond to the service. And that's the reason for the ongoing tests, as well as the close scrutiny of such online services as The Source, CompuServe and Dow Jones' several news and information services. Some prognosticators say that most of these are suitable only for business and professional applications, that executives are willing to pay any price for timely and esoteric information. On the other hand, families at home won't pay for information.

But the biggest questions remain unanswered: Do people want to read information from a TV set? Will such usage affect viewership of regular TV shows? There's not even much agreement among the experts about how many people will take advantage of such services within the next decade. AT&T recently estimated that fewer than 7% of U.S. homes will sign up for such services by 1990. At the same time a private research company, CSP International, predicted the figure will be closer to 20%, and that each home will pay up to \$15 per month for access to information and teleservices.

Such diversity of opinion makes for exciting and interesting speculation, but it also contributes to the uncertainty about the future of teletext and videotex. □

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Bally's back... as the new Astrovision



Phil Wiswell

A video gamekeeper called Astrovision has saved an endangered species—Bally's Professional Arcade game system. Long on the verge of extinction, the once popular Bally product has had its fans hung up in an awful limbo of confusion for nearly two years, with conflicting rumors of a comeback and discontinuation bouncing back and forth like video "Pong" balls. Now Astrovision is reviving the Bally Arcade, and it's a joystick to behold.

The "new" models of the Arcade retail for \$300, about the same price as Mattel's Intellivision Master Component. However, unlike Intellivision and most of today's other totally "programmable" game systems, the Astrovision Arcade is partially "dedicated," meaning that four game programs—"Gunfight," "Checkmate," "Scribbling" and "Calculator"—are built into the console.

That well-designed console, which consists of a cassette input and a 24-key pad for selection and play of games, has a dust cover above a storage area for 15 game cassettes. The hand controls resemble those you might find on the armchair of a fighter craft from *Star Wars*. You grip a control in your hand, pulling a trigger to fire and using the knob on top as a joystick for movements up, down and across the screen. You could use four controls simultaneously, but only two are included with the system.

Armchair Arcade

One convenient feature is that you can use the hand controls to reset a game or to select a new one, so you don't have to get out of your chair. By pulling the trigger after a game ends, the machine knows that you will be selecting a new game and won't reset the old one.

As for the games, "Gunfight" is a Bally classic and the best of the four, in my opinion. It's for two players, each controlling a gunslinger. After pacing off a few steps, players draw and lift their pistols at the signal "Draw," then aim and fire. There are a few sagebrushes to hide behind, but you must watch out for deflected shots as they bounce off the walls. And always count the shots you've fired because you only have six per round. A few bars of the tune "Pray for the Dead" play at the end of

and score limits are not set by the program. In "Galactic Invasion," for example, you can have one to four players, and from one to 10 star bases rather than the usual three.

One cartridge, "Grand Prix/Demolition Derby," gives you four games—three "Grand Prix" races and a smash-'em-up "Demolition Derby" that is my favorite. While navigating a figure-eight track, you must smash your opponents while avoiding being smashed by them. Aggression counts for everything.



Astrovision Arcade: Bally reincarnated, with dozens of new games.

each round unless both players miss entirely.

"Checkmate" is a lot like Atari's "Surround": Each player controls the direction of a moving wall of blocks which leaves behind a path that should not be crashed into. The object is to "eat up" more territory than your opponent and thereby force him or her to crash before you do. The winner is the player who best keeps cool under pressure.

As for the other two games, I could do without them, frankly. However, an artistic friend of mine insists that "drawing" on the TV screen with different colors ("Scribbling") beats any of the competitive games. "Calculator" is a skill-builder for arithmetic, and uses the keypad to make computations.

A unique feature of many of the optional game cartridges is that time

The "Red Baron/Panzer Attack" cartridge comes with only two games, but you may never stop playing "Red Baron." The game pits an Allied pilot against a German in a highly maneuverable air battle. You can perform barrel rolls, fly upside-down, perform loop-the-loops, and do other stunts. "Panzer Attack" really needs little explanation—if you've seen one tank battle game, you've seen most of them.

About two dozen more games are now available from Astrovision, which says it plans to keep releasing new ones. But if you've never played *any* of the Bally games, I most strongly suggest those I've just mentioned as having long play value. For more information, write: Consumer Products Division, Astrovision, 325 North State Street, Garner, IA 50438. □