

Video Review

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THE WORLD AUTHORITY ON HOME VIDEO

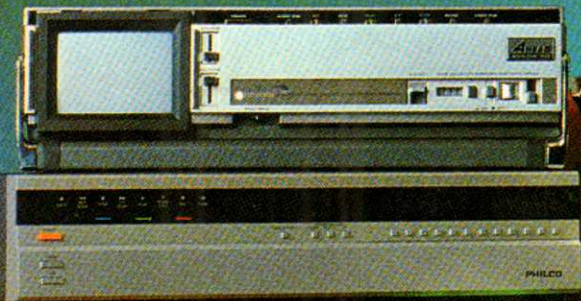
INCORPORATING
HOME VIDEO
MAGAZINE

HOLIDAY VIDEO

SEASON'S GREATEST HOME-VIDEO GIFTS

**Adam Computer Software:
Exclusive First Review**

**CBS Labs Test Beta
Hi-Fi Portable**



NOVEMBER 1983

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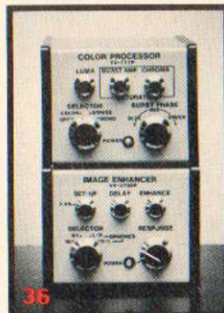
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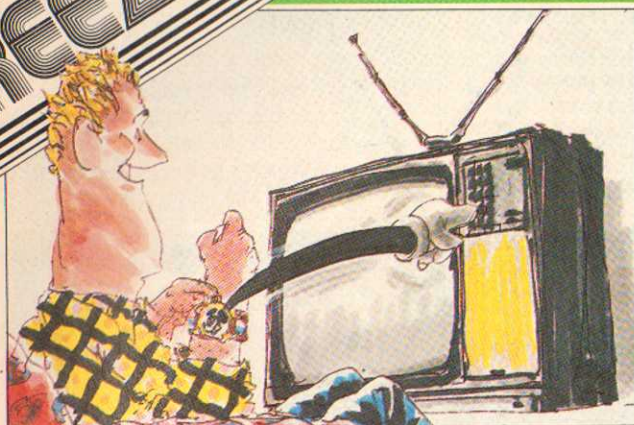
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Liars, freebies and the Silicon Valley Diet



Watch 'n' TV

Never again will you have to say, "I can't tell you what time it is, I'm changing TV channels."

Thanks to a company appropriately called Innovative Time, a unique watch is now available. What makes this watch so special is that it's also an infrared remote control. The watch and its power module go for \$79.95, and there already seems to be a large demand for it.

Just think: No longer do you have to be coordinated to check the hour and change the channels at the same time.

This could be the perfect gift for the person who wants everything. Does anybody know what time it is? Sure, it's a quarter past 13. (J.M.)□



C&C's Next Movie

Cheech & Chong without a bong? Hard to believe, but Tommy Chong and Cheech Marin are going (relatively) straight in their next flick, a funny (they hope) remake of *The Corsican Brothers* called *The Corsican Brothers*.

The premise alone of Cheech

& Chong starring in a remake of *The Corsican Brothers* is in itself hilarious. But, considering that Cheech & Chong have built up their following with drug-related comedies, this might prove a risky move. It might just go up in smoke. (J.M.)□

Dream Date

Hype for movies on videocassette usually comes in three standard sizes. There's the cut-the-price approach, the print advertising approach, and, of course, the personal appearance approach. In the latter case, normally, a movie star makes the rounds of TV chat shows, local video stores, etc., to drum up interest in the movie.

A unique variation on the personal appearance promotion is being sponsored by a company called Atom Film, which is running a contest to advertise the video availability of its X-rated movie, *A Taste of Money*. The company is offering a date in Acapulco with the flick's star, porn queen Constance Money. A special drawing to determine the winner will be held next March 15. (Contestants, naturally, must be at least 18 years of age.)

Money is currently travelling around the country performing routine personal appearance chores, such as holding autograph sessions at theaters and giving interviews to the press. What chores she'll personally perform in the Mexican resort are anybody's guess. (C.S.K.)□

Cartoon-Cade

They said only Pac-Man could do it. Only Pac-Man had the charm, the style and, more importantly, the mass appeal to cross the barrier from being a videogame character to make it as a cartoon character. But this season, he's been joined in his Saturday morning fun by such arcade and home videogame stars as Donkey Kong, Donkey Kong Jr., Frogger, Pitfall Harry and Q*bert in a group show called Supercade.

Each character has his (yes, they're all male) own series, complete with typical cartoon adventures. For example, Donkey Kong Jr. and his human buddy Bones roam the countryside in search of Junior's dad who has escaped from the circus. Frogger, meanwhile, is a reporter for the Swamp Gazette and is constantly in search of The Big Story.

What these shows prove is that a videogame can go wherever someone wants to push it. (The obverse is also true, by the way: Just about anything can be made into a videogame if a programmer tries hard enough.) Cartoons have been made into games; games have been made into cartoons. Even primetime TV shows have been made into videogames, but none of the shows for the more "mature" TV audience have been based on videogames.

For the network whose fall lineup isn't getting the ratings it hoped, we have the following suggestions:



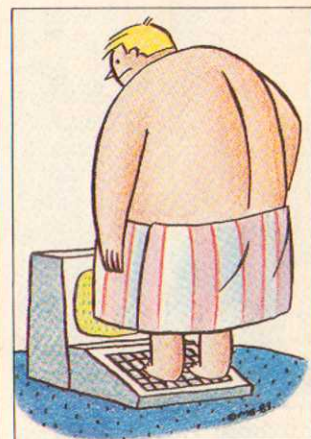
•*Keystone Kapers* (a light-hearted *Hill Street Blues*)

•*Enduro* (*The Dukes of Hazard* with the dialogue cut out)

•*Burgertime* (*Alice*, moving a little faster) (A.R.)□

Dieting on Chips

How Americans lose weight—or try to do it—is one of the most accurate gauges of where society's faddist instincts stand. The



Scarsdale Diet fizzled with Jean Harris; the Cambridge Diet now only seems logical to academic nuts; and the Beverly Hills Diet's star has faded. They're all being replaced by the Silicon Valley Diet.

How do we know this is a trend? Besides the computer-software packages designed to help you create a diet for yourself that are showing up on store shelves, the computer diet has reached supermarket tabloids. *The Star*, for instance, even has its own computer diet. All the prospective dieter has to do is fill out a questionnaire about what types of food he or she likes to eat and send \$9.95 to *The Star*, and a couple weeks later a personalized diet arrives in the mail.

What makes computer diets attractive seems to have less to do with their effectiveness than with the dieters' illusions about high-tech sophistication. Everybody dreams of that incredible diet that lets you eat whatever you want, but you lose weight nonetheless. That's basically what this sort of diet promises, and it really must

Home-movie mania: Beta, VHS, 8mm



Taping text: on-screen image from new ITT video recorder.

MINI GEAR STARS AT GIANT SHOW

By David Hajdu

WEST BERLIN—Affordable, aim-and-shoot home-movie machines simple enough for adults to use are a lot closer to the American video scene since September's Funkausstellung international electronics fair. In a dizzying nine-day show of technology from 409 companies in 27 countries, hundreds of thousands of video pros and consumers shoe-horned the fair to see such innovations as digital TV, teletext, videotex, direct-broadcast satellites and video phones. But the hottest products at the show were two kinds of videocamera-recorder combos that the world had never seen before.

In fact, not many people at Funkausstellung were able to see samples of one of those two kinds of products, 8mm video. Since 122 companies from around the world agreed last March on technical standards for this format of the future, insiders have been anxious to see and use the first samples of 8mm video. But almost everyone at Funkausstellung—including literally everyone in the press—was turned away. Still, through interviews with those

manufacturers and their colleagues who saw 8mm machines at exhibits by Hitachi, Panasonic, Sharp and Toshiba, the details of most interest to video fans could be pieced together.

Until 8mm makes it to American video stores—by most accounts, late next year at the earliest—three prototypes of the format are circulating among equipment manufacturers:

- A portable, battery-powered camera-recorder with a removable recorder portion able to be powered by wall-socket electricity for playback of 8mm tapes;
- A portable, record-only camera with a separate indoor

8mm tuner/timer/playback component;

- A one-piece, battery or wall-socket camera that can play back tapes as well as record them.

In every description, the performance of the working prototypes was "acceptable" at best. All were mono, not stereo nor AFM as the 8mm standards permitted.

As for blank 8mm tape, Agfa and 3M were at Funkausstellung with 60-minute cassettes, each about the size of a standard audiocassette.

More immediate news for home moviemakers is that many of the companies behind the VHS video-recording format used Funkausstellung to introduce a camera-recorder meant to go on sale in the US as well as in Europe by spring '84 (following a fall '83 introduction in Japan). Unlike the first such product, the Betamovie (currently available from NEC, Sanyo and Sony), the VHS "Videomovie" can play back tapes as well as record them. Offsetting that somewhat, however, is the fact that it's not strictly a VHS system; it's VHS-C, the unusual tape-within-a-tape configuration sometimes questioned for its practicality. Moreover, like all VCRs, the Videomovie's running time is in part a function of the length of its tape, in this case 20 minutes (as opposed to Betamovie's three hours).

Nonetheless, the Videomovie unveiled at Funkausstellung is full of features: an electronic viewfinder, a half-inch Saticon

pickup tube, a 6:1 power-zoom lens and such special effects as search and freeze-frame. Its weight: 4.6 pounds with battery (about two pounds lighter than the Betamovie). Price: about \$1,500 to \$2,000 (comparable or slightly higher than that of the Betamovie).

In other new products at Funkausstellung, there were several VCRs with built-in teletext and videotex decoders for German video fans, who already have access to teletext and videotex as well as to stereo broadcasts. There were plenty of digital TV sets, something Americans will also be seeing in the coming months. There was a 3D adaptor for use on any conventional (2D) TV set, which raised a lot of eyebrows in the



8mm meets matchbox.

crowds and raised a lot of suspicion among technical experts. There were also: a laser-disc player prototype from Hitachi; a TV set with a clear-plastic chassis from Lowe Opta; a picture phone from the Deutsche Bundespost. And, as in the States, there was a range of new equipment in Beta Hi-Fi, some prototypes of VHS Hi-Fi gear, and a great deal of talk about technologies around the corner, especially DBS. □

Coleco-AT&T: Phone-y Games

By Barry Jacobs

NEW YORK—Videogame enthusiasts will soon have even more opportunity to reach out and zap someone. Coleco and AT&T Consumer Products recently announced plans for a joint venture to download games over existing phone lines into consumers' homes with the

use of a special modem.

Whether the system will be strictly compatible with Coleco game consoles and computers is as yet unclear. A Coleco spokesperson indicates that the teledelivered games may "possibly" be playable on any videogame system or home computer. The spokesperson also suggests that the

AT&T/Coleco set-up will allow for multi-player games—those which include more than two participants, each playing from their own homes.

In addition to the teledelivery of interactive and strategy games, the downloading of other kinds of entertainment software is planned. Start-up is slated for sometime in '84. □

DBS: OKAY FOR '86

By Robert Angus

GENEVA—Direct broadcasting from satellites (DBS) vaulted an important obstacle recently at the Regional Administrative Radio Conference in Geneva, Switzerland. The new mode of delivering feature movies, sports and other attractions to inexpensive, one-meter-wide satellite dishes now appears on schedule for its promised '86 introduction.

Representatives of 25 Western Hemisphere nations at the conference parceled out 24 cel-

estial "parking spots," designed to shape the satellite communications capabilities of the Western nations well into the 21st century. Under the plan, the United States got eight orbital slots, Canada six, Brazil five, Mexico four and a consortium of Caribbean nations one. Each slot can handle five or six satellites, each with a capacity of four to six channels, thus providing the US with 256 channels. Each channel is capable of delivering a single DBS program at a time to approximately one time zone.

Silly Video

By Robert Gerson

Announcements out of Europe of a revolutionary video format and of a black box attachment that will let you watch all your color TV in 3-D may herald a whole new video era. But it's just as likely, though, that they're part of the silly season that comes at the end of each year, as inventors haul out their latest brainchildren in search of financial backing.

In England, video circles have been buzzing for months with word of McNallyvision, billed as a laser-read cassette player that will be available for under \$250. But in a recent demonstration, it turned out to be nothing more than a self-contained rear-screen film projector. There was no sign of a laser, just a standard projection bulb. Inventor Gordon McNally

showed prototypes of what he said were to be McNallyvision players designed to work with a standard color TV set and one built into a projection-TV system. But these were non-working mock-ups—there was no explanation of the electronic wonders they were designed to contain.

On another front, a West German company announced it had come up with adaptor circuit kits to turn standard color TV sets into 3-D display devices. The kits, which will supposedly sell for \$60 each (excluding the cost of professional installation), produce a double image on the screen which, when viewed through special glasses, gives some viewers the impression of depth. Other viewers may get headaches or nausea from eyestrain. The company says it's looking for backers to make the devices available in US stores. □

Videogames to Come to Life: H'wood Shoots Double Images

By Carl S. Kaplan

NEW YORK—It's an open secret that the next generation of videogames, due out late next year, will be played on home computers hooked up to laserdisc players. But less well-known is the role Hollywood intends to play in the making of these videodisc computer games—going so far, in fact, as to include actual movie footage in some of them.

The movie studios, of course, tried to leave their stamp on

home videogames in the past, with games such as *M*A*S*H* and *E.T.* But these games never captured the real excitement of the movie experience—they took favorite Hollywood characters off familiar turf, and the hybrid just didn't work.

Fox Video Games, with its new videodisc computer games, has decided to keep the heroes in Hollywood. Fox Games president Frank O'Connell says the company is co-filming portions of 20th Century-Fox motion pictures now in production

What this means is that the US can have 61 national (four-time zone) DBS channels once the system is fully operational. If high-definition DBS transmission is introduced in the future, as is being discussed as likely, representatives predict there will be fewer available channels.

Other topics discussed at the conference were the amount of transmitting power DBS satellites will use and the exact size of the dishes to receive the signals. Representatives also moved to better distinguish signals coming from adjacent satellites, in order to improve TV reception for people who now own the larger satellite dishes. □

TEL TEXT TR UBL

By Gary Arlen

WASHINGTON—Will the first teletext services bring you technical headaches along with timely information? The Federal Communications Commission has recently warned local television stations to beef up their "preventive maintenance programs" if they begin transmitting teletext. The warning is part of an effort to counter the technical problems which have cropped up in the early teletext experiments.

In particular, a new FCC study found that when a teletext signal was present, a buzzing sound was heard on the audio circuits of that channel; the buzzing was even louder when the signal was put through a videocassette recorder or a cable TV converter. According to the FCC report, teletext was not the "sole cause" of the buzzing problem, but rather a "victim" of transmitter deficiencies. "As the popularity of teletext transmission expands, the number of complaints about a buzz in the audio of TV stations may increase," the FCC warned as it urged TV broadcasters to strengthen efforts to avoid such problems.

At about the same time the FCC issued its report, the National Cable Television Association published its own study of teletext, particularly signals which are retransmitted by cable-TV systems. According to the NCTA analysis, broadcast teletext, particularly of signals which are retransmitted by punctuation marks when carried on channels—defects which make the signals unreadable. (See "Real Life with Teletext," page 32.) The findings were developed to support NCTA demands that cable systems should not be required to carry teletext information generated by broadcast TV stations. One reason for this seeming lack of cooperation is that the newest cable-TV technology for addressable decoders uses some of the same vertical blanking interval space as broadcast teletext, so the cable industry seeks to eliminate such rival uses which compete for the scarce spectrum. □

MERGER

By Jefferson Graham

HOLLYWOOD—You can expect more offbeat, classic and specialized movies and original programming from Showtime and The Movie Channel, thanks to a recent merger between their two respective owners, Warner-Amex and Viacom.

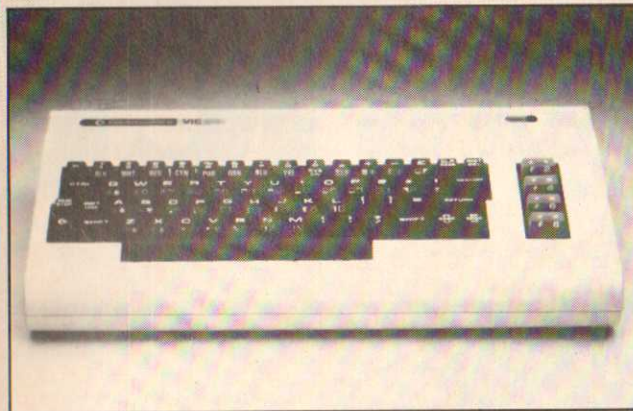
Both services are expected to remain separate, but will see format changes. Besides having more movies on TMC, duplication of titles will be eliminated.

The merger couldn't have come at a better time for TMC. Once ranked third among pay-TV services it has now dropped to number four. HBO's companion service Cinemax has taken TMC's former spot, giving Time Inc., owner of HBO and Cinemax, a two-thirds market share of pay TV. □

VIC-20: Nine Lives

Rest in Peace, VIC-20. While Commodore will neither confirm nor deny rumors that production has ceased on its bestselling VIC-20 home computer, well-placed sources say the computer's days are

recently dropped its price on VIC-20 software by 50%). The bad news is that other software companies, such as Sierra On-Line, are starting to reevaluate their future commitments to the VIC-20. New games may be



Commodore's VIC-20: headed for oblivion?

numbered. All this portends both good and bad for VIC-20 owners.

The good news is that some software companies may soon sell their VIC-20 programs at substantial discounts to reduce inventory. (Commodore itself

few and far between.

"By all reports we hear the VIC-20 is or will be discontinued shortly," says HES marketing manager Michael Humphress. "This seems to have been in the planning stages for over a year and a half,

and the recent price drop in the Commodore 64 illustrates that the company is ready to move the VIC-20 out."

Elliott Daham, marketing vice president at Creative Software, a leading VIC-20 software maker, is not so sure the VIC-20 will soon be retired, and so long as

the machines are around, he'll be making software for them. He dismisses the rumors as "just Commodore's way of doing business," saying it's an attempt by Commodore to scare off independent companies from making VIC-20 software. (C.S.K.)□

Senate TV

By Lucy Huffman

WASHINGTON—It has been called the most exclusive club in the world and for the past two years, the United States Senate has fended off attempts to get television cameras into its chambers.

Senator Howard Baker has twice brought the matter before the Senate, arguing that the public has a right to see and hear its elected officials at work.

But a small group of Senators remains adamantly opposed to bringing in cameras, saying that the presence of TV will destroy the tradition of senatorial debate because senators will play to the cameras instead of to the issues.

Whatever the merits of Senate TV, people seem to want to see

their government in action. For the past four years, C-SPAN—Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network—has been beaming proceedings of the House of Representatives to more than 14.5 million cable subscribers nationwide and has been so successful that it expanded its broadcast day to 24 hours, seven days a week. It's even reserved extra satellite space in anticipation of the day when the Senate goes video.

But the question comes down to party politics. Republicans, by and large, like the TV idea. But Democrats, fearing they'll get short shrift on "air time," would just as soon put off the TV issue. Despite this, Senator Baker has pledged to bring the matter up one more time before this session of Congress adjourns next January. □

Kramer Electronics...State-of-the-Art Video & Audio Processors, originally designed for the professional market, now available to the home video enthusiast.

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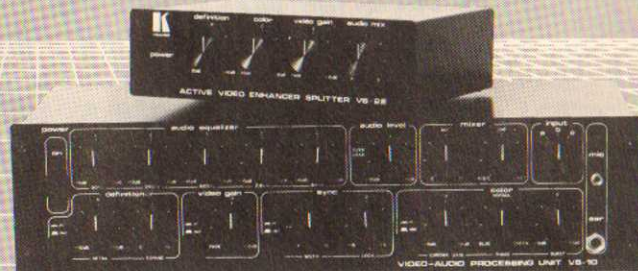
The VS-10 Integrated Video Audio Processor The VS-2E Video Audio Enhancer/Splitter

The Kramer VS-10 combines all new exclusive design, high resolution video enhancement with full video expansion, video gain and fade control with full sync retention, video stabilizer with multi system stabilization, video color processor with complete color correction and color burst phase and chroma regulation, full bypass switching in each video section, RF video and audio conversion, digital three input video switcher with three isolated video outputs. The audio features include a five band audio equalizer, audio level and amplification with overload detection, a five input audio mixer including both line and microphone inputs and four individual audio outputs, a patented stereo synthesizer circuit with stereo line and headphone/speaker outputs. This allows conversion of monophonic videotapes for stereo recording and VCR playback through a home stereo system.

The Kramer VS-2E includes video gain control with fade to black and 10 dB boost; high resolution video enhancer with definition control; color improvement circuit with control for color saturation. It features "Automatic Noise Limiter" to reduce "video noise," and incorporates three independently amplified and isolated video outputs along with a two input/three output audio mixer, allowing conversion of stereo videotapes for monophonic recording with proper channel balances.

All Kramer units may be DC-powered, enabling field production portability, and are backed by a three-year warranty on parts and labor.

Kramer Electronics is a leader in the fields of video and audio technology. Our statement, "Electronic Art at Your Fingertips," represents our ongoing commitment to state-of-the-art engineering. Customer satisfaction is our highest priority.



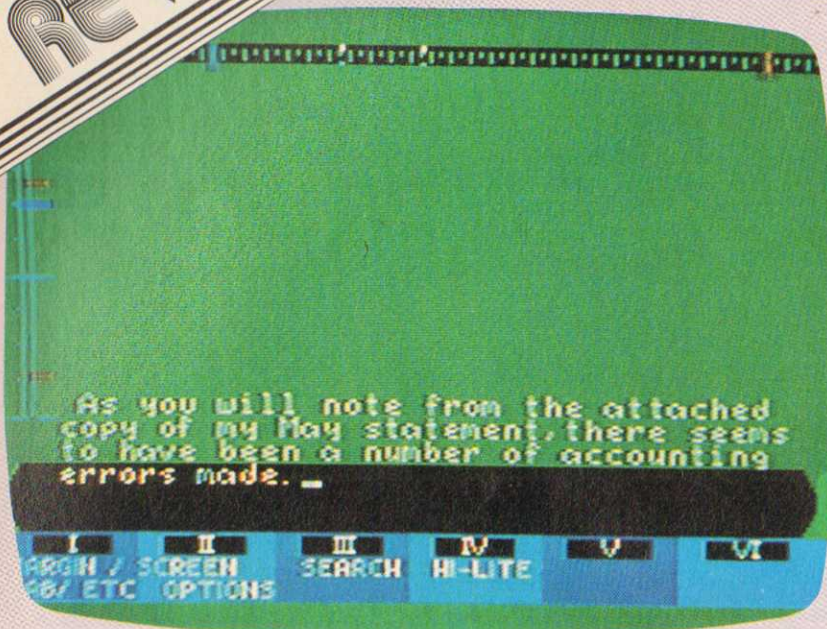
Kramer Electronics is sold at better video stores. For complete information and location of your nearest dealer, write to: Kramer Electronics, 48 Urban Avenue, Westbury, NY 11590. Tel. 516 333-5300. Represented by Brownstein Associates, Tel. 503 222-3414. Dealer inquiries, please call 1-800 645-2318.



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WHEN ONLY THE BEST WILL DO.

Exclusive: first review of Adam software



SmartWriter: word processing with a new-fangled video typewriter.

Personal

SMARTWRITER ★ ★ ★ ★
Designer uncredited. (Coleco, built into the Adam)

By Abigail Reifsnnyder

Even the most technology resistant writer could be drawn into the computer age by *SmartWriter*. When you turn this word-processing program on, you see not a blank screen but a black typewriter platin at the bottom of the screen with a margin and tab setting bar at the top. As you type, the page scrolls up from the platin.

More important than this visual reassurance, however, is how incredibly easy *SmartWriter* is to use. This derives in large part from the design of the keyboard. All the word-processing functions are performed by using keys that are separate from the actual typewriter keyboard. Because Coleco built the program into the ROM of the computer, it was able to designate these separate keys to perform the functions.

There are 10 command keys (move copy, insert, delete, etc.), five cursor control keys (four direction arrows and a home key

that takes you back to the beginning of the copy) and six "smart" keys that perform a variety of functions and redefine themselves depending on what you're doing.

Most functions are performed in conjunction with the cursor-controlled highlighting features. Let's say you want to move a sentence from the beginning to the end of a paragraph. Using the cursor control keys, you'd move the cursor to that sentence, turn on the highlighting feature and underline the sentence. Then you'd turn off the highlighting feature and move the cursor to the end of the paragraph to indicate the destination of the sentence. Finally, you'd hit the move key. *Ei voila*. If you then decide that it was better at the beginning, you'd simply hit the undo key and it's back at the beginning.

There are a number of features I was pleasantly surprised to find in a word processor for a home computer. I feel compelled, however, to mention the one aspect about which I have ambivalent feelings. Though the screen is capable of holding only 36 characters across, you can set your margins as wide as 80 characters apart. This can be visually disorienting as one line of type appears as two or three on the screen. As I spend more time with the program, I was able to adjust to seeing two lines of type as one, but was still bothered by the fact that what I saw on the screen was not what I got on the printer. This is a minor complaint, though.

SmartWriter is one of the best word processors I've seen for a home computer. □

BANK STREET WRITER ★ ★ ★
Designed by Intentional Educations, The Bank Street College of Education and Franklin E. Smith. (Broderbund Software, Atari 400/800/1200XL-compatible disc. \$69.95)

By Kathleen Mooney

A computer is often only as good as the software that's written for it. The Atari computers may seem to some to be little more than sophisticated game machines. But a word-processing program such as this one proves that there may be more to these machines than meets the joystick.

One of the most important criteria for judging a word processor is the ease with which it can be learned and used. *Bank Street Writer* scores high on this count. I was able to figure out practically all the commands and functions without even looking at the instruction booklet. This is because the top part of the screen always tells you what you are doing and prompts you for the next appropriate command(s).

The program consists of three modes: Write, for composing a document; Edit, for making changes and corrections; and Transfer, for saving, deleting, renaming and printing a document. In the Write mode, there are only two operations; indenting and centering. That's a problem: You can't see on the screen how your document will look when printed.

The Edit mode allows you to delete and add copy, move sentences and paragraphs around and find words. It is surprisingly easy to do all of these functions.

It isn't until you get to Transfer mode and call up the Print-Final function that you actually format your document. This is when you determine such parameters as how many characters wide each page will be. The program lacks more sophisticated features such as boldfacing and setting tabs.

On the whole, this is a good, though limited, word processor. A professional writer would probably find the lack of sophisticated features limiting, but a student who writes term papers would find it more than adequate. □

Kathleen Mooney is the head of VR's typesetting department.

THE MONEY MANAGER ★ ★ ★ ★
Designer uncredited. (Timeworks, Timex-Sinclair 1000, Sinclair ZX81-compatible 16K cassette. \$16.95)

By Bob Gerson

If you, like many of us, have got the quills because you haven't kept your promise that your computer would be more than a

RATINGS

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

glorified game machine, *The Money Manager* will solve your hang-up faster than a psychiatrist. It's a home-budgeting spreadsheet program that's so simple to use that the instructions cover less than a page.

Setting up the household books can take a while. Under "Budget" you enter your estimated gross income plus your anticipated expenses for up to 15 different outlays on a monthly basis for a full year. At the end of each month, you key in your actual income and outgo. As the year goes on you can call up and display ledger sheets for any of the 16 categories, all neatly totaled to show you which months you were over or under budget and how you stand on the year to date. The same information can be displayed as bar charts.

Though *The Money Manager* hasn't got the flexibility of the more professional spreadsheet programs such as *VisiCalc*, it can be used for limited forecasting. You can, for example, see what the impact on your overall budget would be if you put aside \$20 a month for your vacation.

The Money Manager is a well-written, practical program with educational value, and will fit in anyone's software library. □

Games

THE WITNESS ★ ★ ★ ★

Designed by *Stu Galley*. (Infocom, Apple-, Commodore 64-compatible disc. \$49.95)

By *Ken Uston*

The Witness is a text adventure—all words, no pictures—from Infocom, the well-known producer of bestselling adventures, including the chart-busting *ZORK* trilogy.

You are a small town Chief Police Detective who has just received a telegram from a multimillionaire socialite, Freeman Linder, who claims his life has been



The Witness: physical evidence of how good a text adventure can be.

threatened. The story begins "somewhere near Los Angeles, on a cold Friday evening in February, 1938..." You are standing at the entrance to the Linder property as the computer awaits your first instruction.

As Chief Detective, you are supplied with a dossier on the case, including a newspaper clipping reporting the suicide of Linder's wife, an apparent suicide note from Mrs. Linder, a mysterious book of matches and a February, 1938, copy of *Detective Gazette Magazine*.

The Gazette is, in effect, an instruction manual for *The Witness*, complete with realistic advertisements for police products such as handcuffs, police badges and fingerprint kits. A careful reading of *The Gazette* is necessary since it contains tips on how to crack the case and valuable advice on how to enter instructions.

You are given 12 computer-simulated hours to solve the case. Far more actual time will no doubt be required for most players to unravel this complicated mystery. You have many options: You may follow people surreptitiously, hide and observe them, arrest suspects and accuse them of crimes to test their reactions. You proceed through rooms, hallways and the grounds outside the main house, and should make a sketch of the premises as you proceed.

The investigation has its personal risks. On my first attempt, I was shot while standing in Linder's office. As blood filled my lungs and a scream emanated from my lips, the case was abruptly and unsuccessfully terminated.

If, as Chief Detective, you get stuck, you may ask your assistant, Sergeant Duffy, for help. There is justice in this world, however. If you ask Duffy for an excessive amount of advice, he, not you, gets the credit for solving the case. □

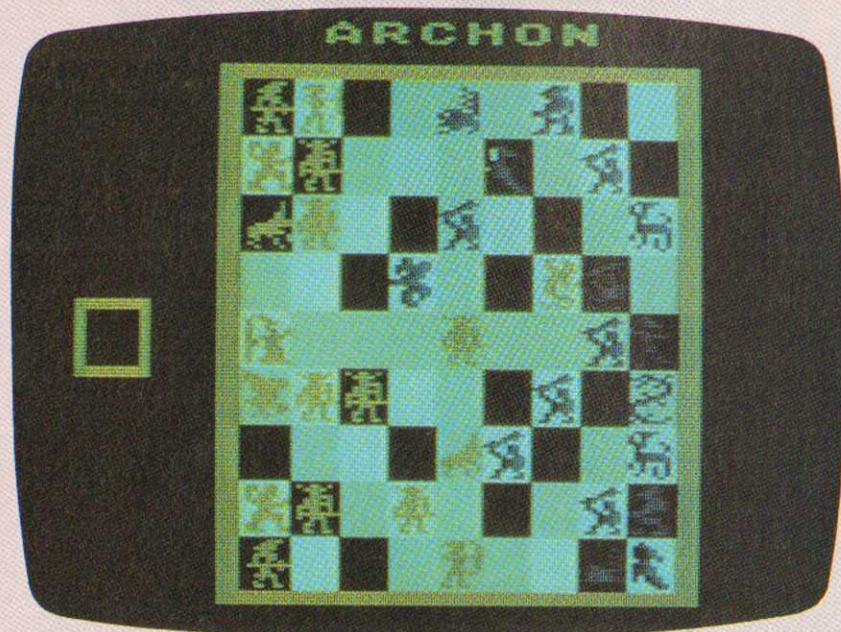
ARCHON ★ ★ ★ ★

Designed by *Anne Westfall, Jon Freeman and Paul Reiche III*. (Electronic Arts, Atari 400/800/1200XL-compatible 32K disc. \$40)

By *Phil Gerson*

What do you get when you combine *Dungeons & Dragons* with chess? *Archon*, a spectacular strategy/action game which depicts the struggle of Light and Darkness. The pieces making up the Light side are such good guys as unicorns and knights, while the Dark side is composed of such creatures as goblins, trolls and, of course, a dragon. In all, each side has eight differently functioning pieces which are not identical to those on the other side. The sides, however, are reasonably balanced in terms of power.

The game is played on a nine-by-nine-square "chessboard," with each side's pieces set up as they are in chess. The object of the



Serpents, swords and sorcery are part of the strategy in Archon.

game is either to kill all of your enemy's men or to capture the five power points on the board. One power point is at the center of the board, the others are in the center squares on the four outside rows. Most of the squares on the board are either black or white as on a standard chessboard, but some go through a luminosity cycle, alternating between black and white. The color of a square is immensely important as creatures fight better on a square of their own color.

You capture a square by moving one of your creatures into it. But when you move a creature into an occupied square, instead of just capturing the enemy piece, your creature must do battle for possession of the square. For such combat, the display changes to an enchanted forest with moving trees, and the two foes use their powers in a one-on-one battle. The winner returns to the contested square and the loser disappears.

Such combat is far from a simple shoot-

THE DREADNAUGHT FACTOR ★★★

Designed by Tom Loughry. (Activision, Intellivision-compatible cartridge. \$39.95)

By Len Albin

Just when you thought it was safe to go back into outer space, here comes *The Dreadnaught Factor*, yet another shoot-'em-up with vicious aliens in the cosmic void.

Make no mistake about it—these aliens take no prisoners. They've bothered to come all the way from deepest space (the planet Zorbax, to be exact), armed with the latest in expensive weaponry, just so they can blow up the planet Earth.

Your job, as earthling, is to steer a tiny space fighter armed with both laserblasts and bombs against the enemy ships (or "dreadnaughts"), which are engaged one at a time. These alien craft, which visually are hundreds of times the size of your ship, are

especially since your ship-supply is limited. But knocking out these weapons won't save Earth. No, our planet isn't safe until the dreadnaught's blinking black "silos" are bombed. Silos are where aliens keep Earth-sized nukes. On the other hand, it's tough to fly over these silos and bomb them through a hail of weapon fire. Even if you destroy all the silos, you still have to destroy the dreadnaught. That is done by bombing each of its 16 "energy vents." This is also an indirect way of saving Earth and the only way to get to the next round.

All told, the best strategy in *Dreadnaught* seems to be guerilla warfare. Instead of going for the jugular, it's better to bomb the craft's engines (which delays its approach to Earth) or laser its "bridges" (which reduces its gun and missile barrage). The best flight pattern is a "sine-wave," so your ship can dodge bullets or fly so far up or down that the alien's ship and bullets disappear off the screen. Your weapon fire disappears, too, but at least your ship stays in one piece.

For added thrills, the cartridge has seven difficulty levels ranging from Practice (one dreadnaught) to Impossible (100 dreadnaughts). In the higher levels, the aliens' firepower gets denser, and you'll have to face all five different shapes that dreadnaughts come in: the "wedge," the "cigar," the "ring," the "molar" and the dreaded "pizza crust." That one's long and thin like the "cigar," but it comes at Earth vertically, making a sine-wave flight plan reckless. On the bright side, though, you'll never be able to master the game—or get bored with it.

To top things off, the graphics are sharp and stylish, and the sound effects are brilliant and terrifying. □

STAR TREK ★★★

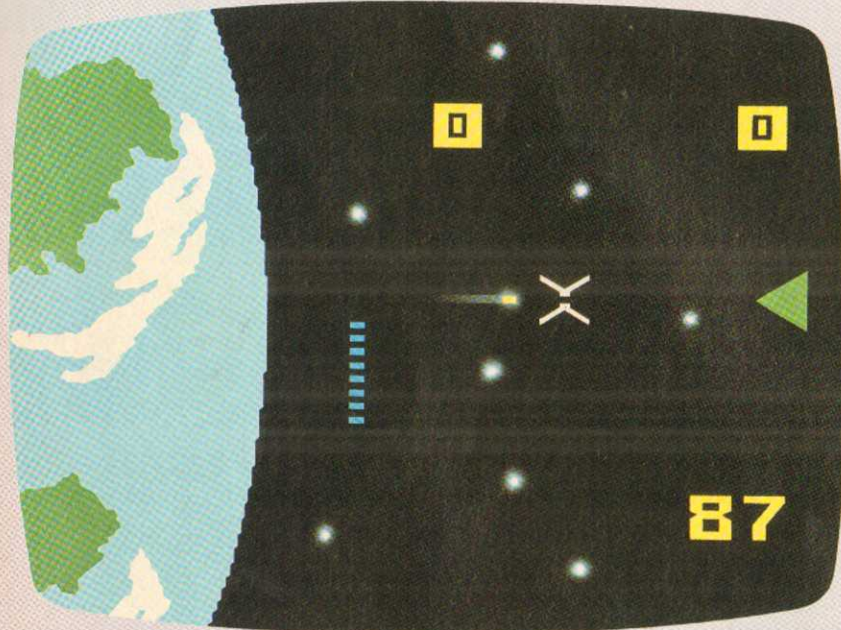
Designer uncredited. Adapted from the Sega arcade game. (Sega, VCS-compatible cartridge. \$30 approx.)

By Craig Kubey

Whether or not you'll like *Star Trek* depends on what you're looking for. If you want a fine home version of the coin-op game, buy this cartridge. If you want to feel like Captain James T. Kirk, hire a hypnotist instead. Like the arcade game, Sega's home *Star Trek* relies on very spare, two-dimensional representations of the Starship *Enterprise*, the Klingons and so forth. You don't feel just like you're out in space fighting off a sinister attacker. Rather, you feel just like you're in your living room playing a home videogame.

But a good home videogame. The game provides so many different challenges and so many different factors to monitor (shields, photon torpedoes, warp drive, extra points for not docking at the Starbase for repairs, etc., etc.) that the instructions I got with the game run to six and a half typewritten pages. It's not hard to learn, though.

Learning is facilitated by a small plastic panel (like those for the Intellivision controller) which you place onto the joystick controller. It falls off easily, so secure it with



Guerilla space warfare is the best defence against the Dreadnaught.

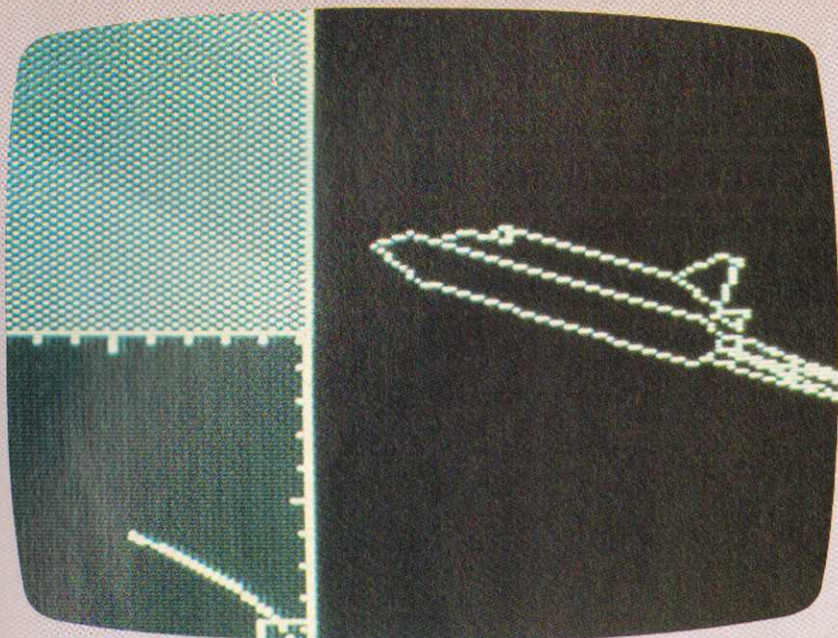
out. Some pieces fight with arrows, spears and other missiles; for others it's hand-to-hand combat with swords and clubs. Successful play demands the use of a good deal of strategy. This includes fighting when the luminosity cycle is in your favor and properly using the seven magic spells allotted to each side. It's this need for thoughtful strategy, combined with good graphics and action, that makes *Archon* a terrific computer game.

For those of you with a sharp mind and a taste for battle who want to try this game, there are some ways to improve your chances for victory. Pay close attention to the luminosity cycle and make major attacks when the colors are in your favor—it can make a tremendous difference. When your combat piece is one of the more powerful ones, be aggressive. The damage you can do against your enemy with just one hit is often greater than he can do with two. □

laden with dozens of weapons much like a Navy battleship. As in the videogame *Scramble*, your ship can move up and down or accelerate, but it can never move backwards. If it flies past the aliens' craft, the screen shifts back so that your ship can make another left-to-right attacking pass.

Since the enemy is awesome, you'll need several assaults to dispatch one dreadnaught. Unfortunately, there's also a time limit to this mayhem. If time runs out, planet Earth is history.

That's the game of *Dreadnaught* in a nutshell, and it's certainly a snap to learn. But its long-term appeal lies in how complicated the strategy becomes. It's a shoot-'em-up, of course, but like a "real" starship captain, you must decide which of the targets to destroy first. Obviously, the dreadnaught's blinking, black "silos" are bombed. Silos are where aliens keep Earth-launchers, for example) can be deadly,



Your ship must achieve Earth orbit before it can Rendezvous.

tape until you've learned all the controller positions (then remove it and use it as a bookmark for sci-fi reading). Also, Sega provides several very helpful strategy tips.

Despite the game's strengths, its manufacturer did not exactly squish that refrigerator-size arcade game into a little black plastic cartridge without loss of quality. In fact, both video and audio suffer. The lines that draw various figures are not half as sharp as the ultra-clean, vector-type lines of the arcade machine. The sounds of the *Enterprise* engine and the phasers and torpedoes are neither realistic nor pleasing to the ear, and the arcade game's voice synthesis (which supplies much of the limited realism of that machine) is entirely absent. Also, the Atari joystick is far inferior to the steering dial provided in the arcade.

All told, this is one of the best VCS space-battle games ever. Of course, to some extent, that's like saying a particular automobile is one of the flashiest Chevettes ever or one of the safest Le Cars. So don't expect a very strong game: Expect a very strong game *considering* it's for the VCS. □

RENDEZVOUS ★★ ★ ★

Designed by Wesley Huntress. (EduWare, Apple II, II+, IIe-compatible disc. \$39.95)

By Dr. Edward Gibson

Most videogamers take the role of spaceship pilot at one time or another. Flying through space, dodging asteroids and blasting aliens is fun, but for those assignments all you need to do is dodge and blast—the flying is automatic.

Here's a game—really a simulation—that's different. If you're interested in what flying a spaceship and docking in space would

Dr. Gibson spent 84 days in space as the science pilot of Skylab 4 in 1973-74.

really be like, you'll enjoy the challenge of this computer game.

The disc consists of four phases. You start at Earth's launchpad, where you blast off and try to achieve orbit. The second phase starts with your command module and the space station (represented as tiny objects) circling Earth in different orbits. Here you must execute a "Hohman Transfer" (a series of maneuvers) to match orbits and rendezvous with the orbiting station. In the third phase, you look out the window of the command module and adjust all three directional velocities (in a field of stars) to bring you within visual range of the station. And, in the final phase, 3D graphics come into play as you look through the window and attempt to maneuver around, near and finally into the docking bay.

I spent hundreds of hours in command module simulators during my NASA training, and also helped design the training programs for the space shuttle astronauts. This simulation can be a good "first cut" for some people, a chance for them to learn the basics.

In all four phases, it's best not to attempt to adjust every error immediately, because all you'll do is "hose off" fuel. Let the miscalculations in distance and velocity build up a bit; just put in small adjustments so that the errors will gradually be corrected by the end of the phase. Work on one aspect (horizontal or vertical velocity) at a time.

Many people are interested in what's being accomplished in space, and they can get closer to the "what" by getting close to the "how"—how you get there. This is a good way to learn about the "how."

The colors and graphics in *Rendezvous* are not as splashy as in other videogames, but the displays and readouts more than hold your interest. Finally, this is a game that doesn't get boring the more you play it. If you put some thought into it, the game becomes more interesting *each* time you play it. That's the kind of challenge I like. □

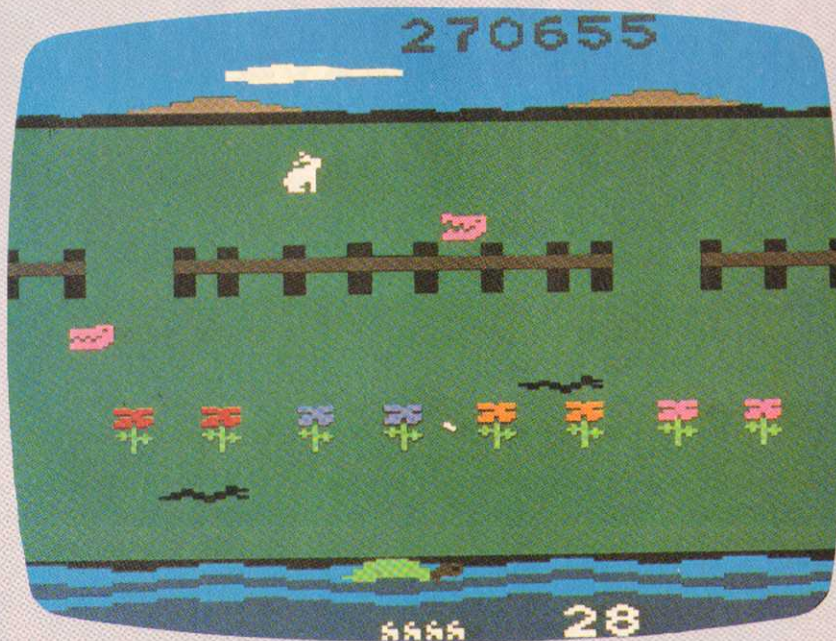
RABBIT TRANSIT ★ ★ ★

Designed by Brian McGee. (Starpath, Atari VCS with Supercharger-compatible cassette. \$14.95)

By Dan Gutman

Frogger plus *Q*Bert* does not exactly equal *Rabbit Transit*, but elements of both games are in this delightful cassette from Starpath. You must get your rabbit through the Mysterious Meadow (*Frogger*) and the Land of Ledges (*Q*Bert*) in order to find the rabbit's wife and make baby rabbits. Strange, but true.

The Mysterious Meadow is populated by horizontally moving tennis balls, snakes and chomping teeth, which must be hopped



Why did the Rabbit cross the garden? To multiply, of course.

around, moving the joystick only on the diagonals. When your rabbit lands on the turtle at the bottom of the screen, he is transported to the Land of Ledges. Here, as in *Q*Bert*, he must hop on every plane on the screen while a "nasty man" chucks rocks from above. If you complete this screen, there is a little intermission in which your rabbit runs off screen, apparently mates and returns with his rabbit wife and four offspring. After round two, he returns with eight offspring. And so on. I'm not sure if mating is a reward or a punishment.

The game succeeds because it changes. Suddenly, in wave two, your rabbit is confronted by snakes. In wave three, the teeth appear out of nowhere and you have to change strategy. It makes you wonder what will pop out next. There are 10 waves in the game, and eight of them are different.

This is the first "cute" game from Starpath, and the company seems to be going after a younger audience this time. The first two *Rabbit Transit* waves are ridiculously easy, as first waves should be. But adults will enjoy the game, too: Success in the Land of Ledges requires patience, planning, persistence and a good pattern. I don't know if this game merits going out and buying the Supercharger, but if you've already got one, this is a good title to add to the collection. □

Q*BERT ★★★

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

By Michael Blanchet

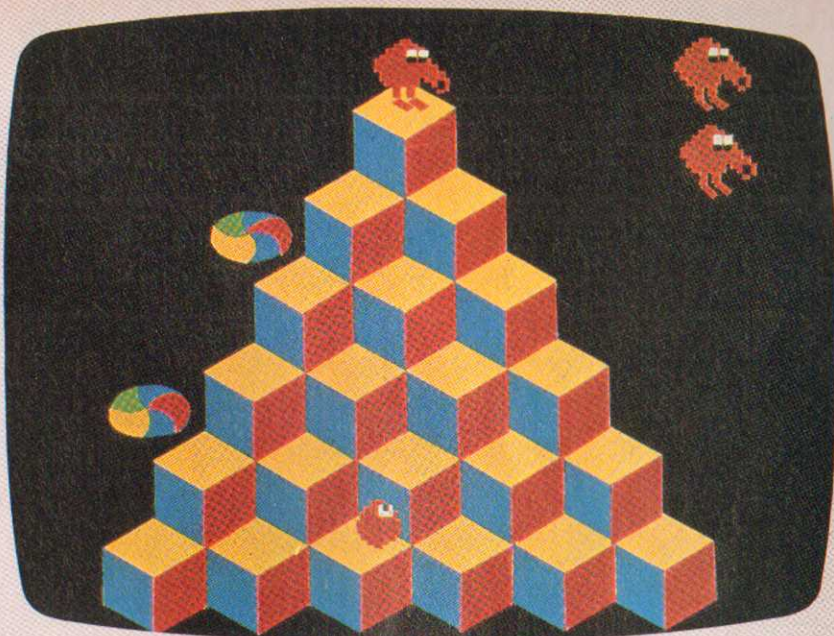
Close only counts in horseshoes and with hand grenades—and in the case of this game. Considering the limitations of the Atari VCS, Parker Brothers has come very close in its translation of this coin-op hit to home cartridge.

Although programming quirks abound in this home version, the spirit of the game has, for the most part, been retained. You control *Q*Bert*, a beach ball-like fella that's part kiwi and part anteater, who hops around a pyramid. The object of each round of play is to change the color of every block that comprises this structure. When the color of each cube is the same, the round ends. This cycle repeats until the player's supply of *Q*Berts* is exhausted.

Opposing *Q*Bert* in his quest for colors are Coily, Slick and Sam. Ugg and Wrongway, the gravity-defying beasts featured in the arcade version, have been deleted from this home rendition.

Unfortunately, the game is too predictable. It's so much so, in fact, that one could easily map out a surefire pattern after playing the game just a half dozen times. Coin-op *Q*Bert* on the other hand, always keeps you guessing—a quality, I believe, greatly responsible for its wide appeal.

Second, *Q*Bert's* adversaries, particularly Coily, simply blink onto the screen. One could easily attribute this quirk to the VCS's lack of computing power. What-



*This Q*Bert's quirks include predictable patterns.*

ever's to blame, though, I found this a bit unfair to the unsuspecting player. More than once I was hit by an almost invisible foe.

Finally, since *Q*Bert* moves diagonally (as opposed to the standard compass headings of North, South, East and West), you'd be wise to invest in a good joystick for playing this game. The standard Atari controller isn't renowned for its responsiveness, particularly when executing diagonal movements. □

QUICK STEP ★★★

Designed by Dave Johnson. (Imagic, VCS-compatible cartridge. \$29 approx.)

By Phil Wiswell

Two-player VCS games are few and far between, which is the reason *Quick Step* gets three stars instead of two. You always play the Kangaroo, and either a friend or the computer plays the squirrel—and the interaction is stimulating.

Undoubtedly, this game will remind you of *Q*Bert* as your kangaroo hops from one colored pad to another, racing the squirrel for points. Four columns of pink pads constantly scroll down the screen; jumping on one changes it to your color and gains three points. You can change an opponent's pad back to your color, but that won't give you points unless it passes off the bottom of the screen. Meanwhile, if your kangaroo happens to slip off screen, you lose one life.

Occasionally, a white "magic" pad appears that lets your kangaroo chase the squirrel, render him motionless for a few seconds and, if all goes well, send him off the bottom of the screen. You can further confound your opponent by pressing the action button when the kangaroo jumps, causing the pad it was on to disappear! Nicely structured interaction for two players. □

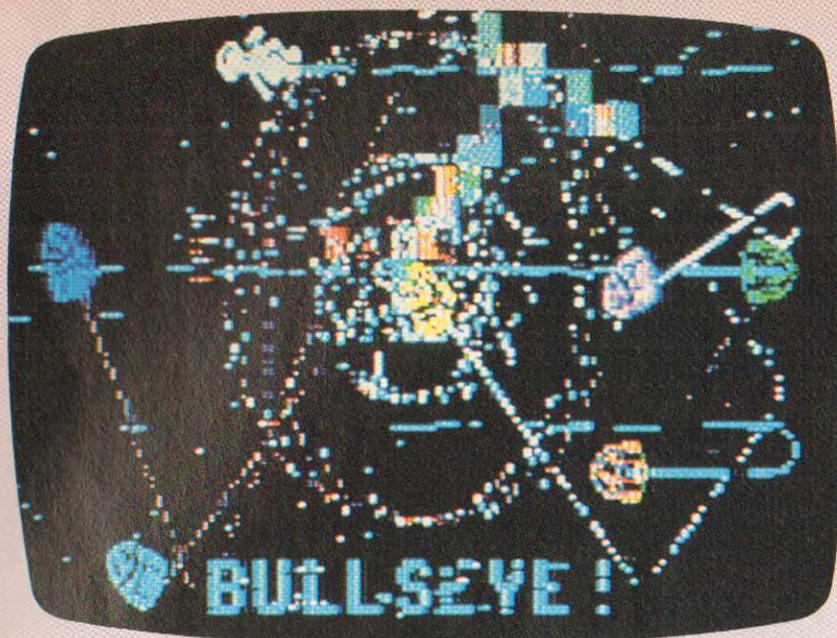
MAZOGS ★★★

Designer uncredited. (Softsync, Timex-Sinclair 1000, Sinclair ZX81-compatible 16K cassette. \$19.95)

Mazogs makes use of some of the best graphics I've seen for the T/S 1000 in a game that's both fun and entertaining. Before the start of this treasure-hunt game, you select a playing variation. The computer will then draw the maze you must follow and tell you how many moves (possibly hundreds) away the treasure lies. When you enter the maze, you'll find the deadly Mazogs, guardians of the treasure, awaiting you. You can kill them easily with one of the many swords you can pick up as you wander, but each sword can only be used once and you can only carry one at a time.

There's inside help available. Prisoners, former treasure hunters, will point out your way to the treasure, causing the phrase "this way" to be printed out along the path. The directions only stay on-screen for 10 seconds, so you have to move fast. And moving fast can be a problem as you are forced to use the "keys" on the Timex/Sinclair's membrane keyboard. The difficulty of pressing the right key and the delayed response slow down the game action and can cause frustration at first. But with practice you can move about with surprising dexterity.

Mazogs has three skill levels. "Try It Out" is good for starters. There are swords when you need them, the Mazogs stay in one place and the prisoners are cooperative. You also get free bird's-eye views of the maze, showing the position of everything in it and the treasure path if you have just queried a prisoner. In "Face a Challenge," the Mazogs have a limited ability to move and attack you, the game must be completed in a limited number of moves, there is no bird's-eye view displayed, and calling it



Smear seeds across the energy field for points, music and color.

up takes points off your score. Toughest of all is "Maniac Mobile Mazogs." As the name suggests, the Mazogs move about freely, and it's not advisable to walk around without a sword. Adding to the difficulty is that each prisoner will offer advice only once per game. This makes it imperative that you ask for directions only when you are really lost.

Overall *Mazogs* is a very good game and has enough action and variation to keep it interesting after repeated plays. The graphic quality is a pleasant extra. (P.G.)□

CREEPY CORRIDORS ★ ★

Designed by Don McGlauffin (Sierra On-Line, VIC-20-compatible cartridge. \$34.95)

Creepy Corridors is a maze-chase game of the "endless wave" variety, and the hook when you lose is the desire to know what, if anything new, comes out of the woodwork in the next maze. The arrangements of the maze pathways don't change from game to game, so you can work on mastering patterns, but the graphics are plain.

Fortunately, game play is much better. The object is to retrieve four diamonds, one in each corner of the screen, while shooting and/or avoiding the creepies that try to bump into you. A door to the next maze will present itself when you grab the fourth diamond, but this will also happen, and any remaining diamonds will disappear, when you kill the last creepy. So leave one creepy until you've gotten all four diamonds.

Initially there are only five creepies following you and all are spiders, but I've been in mazes with as many as 11 creepies of three species: spiders, ghosts and teddy bear faces. This last type can't be shot, and the game is never the same once they're introduced.

It's fun, but so are many similar games, and *Creepy Corridors* doesn't exploit the graphics of the VIC-20. (P.W.)□

SPECTRON ★

Designer uncredited. (Spectravideo, SV318-compatible cartridge. \$29.95)

Just as sure as every kid's first art project is an ashtray, every fledgling software company clones their flagship release after *Space Invaders*. Spectravideo, the makers of the SV318 personal computer, is no exception.

Spectron, which Spectravideo took the liberty to describe as "one of the most captivating videogames ever," lacks the one thing videogames need now more than ever—originality. This tedious rehash of *Space Invaders* plays like so many games that have come and gone before it. The player controls a landlocked bunker which is capable of moving within the confines of the lowest border of the screen. Overhead, a squadron of nameless aliens are massing for an assault on your position. Your job: Blast them before they blast you. As in so many other activities in videogame life, the objective is to simply last as long as possible.

There are a few twists employed here, but they are of token value at best. The player's ship, for example, has slight vertical mobility. This ability to move up one inch on the screen is of no real strategic value except when a lone invader comes down to your ship's level. The background graphics are quite pretty, but, contrary to Spectravideo's claim, they don't "transport you right into space." If anything, they give you less space. For cosmetic purposes, the battlefield has been moved to the far left-hand side of the screen. This was done, I believe, to accommodate the spiffy, but useless, ornamentation you'll find on the right-hand side of the screen.

Overall, *Spectron's* appearance is that of a second-rate ColecoVision game. In fact, it uses many standard audio and visual effects peculiar to ColecoVision software. When you zap an alien, for example, the explosion sounds like a rattling trash can. (M.B.)□

Activity

MOONDUST ★ ★ ★

Designed by Jaron Lanier. (Creative, Commodore 64-compatible cartridge. \$39.95)

**By Phil Wiswell
And Bernie DeKoven**

Moon dust is a very exciting thing to play with, because it's so appealing to both the eyes and the ears. While playing, you create a beautiful playfield and musical accompaniment simply by moving the joystick. You don't have to get frantic about *Moon dust*, because it's really much more effective as a piece of interactive audio/video art than as a game. Perhaps our culture is just not ready to call this activity a game.

Anyway, there are six objects constantly in motion that belong to you. One is a Spacewalker, and the others are ships. By moving the joystick you control their directions—all six of them at the same time! If you think that's a lot to keep your eyes on, it only gets worse, or better, depending on how you look at it. The ships tend to spin around when they reach an edge of the screen, and suddenly your ships and Spacewalker are heading in six different directions. Push the joystick left and they all turn left, but relative to themselves, so getting any specific sense of control is like trying to walk, chew gum, pat your head, rub your stomach, whistle *Dixie* and wiggle your ears at the same time.

One user-friendly aspect of the program is that you can move your objects around for as long as you like before attempting the challenge of the game. When you're ready, a press of the button causes the Spacewalker to drop a seed—a colored square—and an energy field to appear center screen. Every time one of the ships passes over the seed, it is smeared out into a trail of several squares in the direction the ship was heading. The object is to keep smearing the seed squares until the trail reaches the bull's-eye, or dead center of the energy field, thus gaining you points and starting the whole thing over again. You have the option of planting your seed anywhere on the screen, but the farther it is from the center, the more potential points for a successful smearing.

The graphics are soft and impressionistic rather than sharp, making the trails of squares very pretty, particularly as each ship leaves a different colored trail. They're so pretty, in fact, that we like to turn *Moon dust* on and let it do its beautiful thing without paying attention to the object. The ships, unlike those in most videogames, make graceful arcs as opposed to sharp turns, adding to the aesthetic beauty of the game. And not only does every move of the joystick affect how the board looks, it also controls the music by changing pitch, chord structure, and notes.

Moon dust is art that you can change. It is an exotic plaything that points to an important, valid direction in computer applications. Whether or not *Moon dust* is really a game is up to you. □

Education

FUN WITH MUSIC ★ ★

Designer uncredited. (Epyx, VIC-20-compatible-disc. \$39 approx.)

SYNTHESOUND ★ ★ ★

Designed by T. Dachsel and D. Hassinger. (HES, VIC-20-compatible cartridge. \$29.95)

VIC MUSIC COMPOSER ★ ★

Designer uncredited. (Thorn EML, VIC-20-compatible cartridge. \$39.95)

Can a person and a computer make beautiful music together? *Fun With Music*, *Synthesound* and *VIC Music Composer* are all intended, in one way or another, to make the answer to this question yes. And they all succeed, but with one major qualification. Although none of these programs comes out and says it, some musical background is required. Neophytes will probably find their heads spinning trying to make sense of the language of musical mechanics.

Assuming you are a musician, any one of these carts will assist you in your artistic endeavors, each to a varying degree. *Synthesound*, for example, is the only one of the lot that actually lets you hear what you're playing while you're playing it. In *Synthesound*'s player mode, the upper two rows of keys represent the basic black and white keys of a piano. This part is simple enough: Hit the keys and you are immediately treated to a song, or something close anyway.

I was, unfortunately, completely lost in the programmer mode. Here is where variables such as attack, decay, sustain and release can be adjusted to suit the user's needs. The instruction booklet is, according to HES, "user-friendly." It wasn't very friendly to this user, though. The documentation speaks to the musician, not the novice: "...when there is modulation by LFO in the decay part of one of the VCO voices, if you press a note, the amplitude height of the graph goes up to peak and then decays straight from peak to silent." Say what? So much for "easy to understand English."

The instructions accompanying *Vic Music Composer*, on the other hand, are brief but leave a lot of questions unanswered. As the name says, you compose; you don't play. Songs are written by placing notes on a scale. Once a note is positioned by the cursor keys, the user then modifies it by making it either sharp, flat or natural. You can listen to your creation by entering the play mode. At this point, you can select one of three voices and one of nine tempos.

Nonmusicians may find *Fun With Music* a bit closer to home since it makes game play

a part of the learning process. Game or no game, though, the only users who will benefit from this program are those who already possess a rudimentary knowledge of music. Like *Vic Music Composer*, *Fun With Music* is more a writing aid than a means of turning your VIC-20 into a musical instrument. As in *Composer*, notes are positioned on a scale and then modified. With both programs, songs can be saved on either disc or cassette.

Since I am more listener than musician, I found *Synthesound*, *Vic Music Composer* and *Fun With Music* all a bit over my head. People who are well versed in the ways and means of music will find any of these a great aid in writing. (M.B.) □

POKER PARI ★

Designed by Bejta Klier. (Gessler Educational Software, Apple II-compatible disc. \$39.95)

By Tom Hirschfeld

It sounds like a great idea: a French-teaching disc that sweetens the quizzing with an exciting poker format. The multiple-choice questions fall into 14 categories of language and culture, and you play a round by answering a "hand" of seven questions from random categories. If you don't like the categories of all seven "cards," you can even discard a couple before you see the questions, hoping for a better deal.

Well, it had a chance, but *qu'est-ce qu'on peut dire?* *Poker PARI* is very disappointing, both as a game and as a learning aid. Too bad. To begin with, it's nothing like poker. You score just by answering the questions, so the card stuff is only a thin disguise, with none of the excitement of poker—not even computer poker.

I know it's supposed to be educational, but must the graphics be so perfunctory, and the sound effects so meager? A more serious fault: The program leaves out accent marks, an essential ingredient of written French. Pronunciation, the hardest part of the language for Americans to learn, is ignored.

The biggest problem, though, is the list of questions. First of all, there are not nearly enough; for example, 50 questions just cannot cover all of French vocabulary, or even begin to make a dent in it.

With only 316 questions overall, for all of French grammar, vocabulary, culture, history and geography, some of the choices do seem odd. Is an American student likely to know the answer to "Which one is not a Metro station in Paris?" And many questions are just rephrasings or variations of one another, adding little to the program's teaching value. Such repeats waste disc space and your time.

To make matters worse, the questions are chosen randomly within their categories, not in numerical order, so you may well see

The author of How to Master Home Video Games, Tom Hirschfeld speaks fluent French.

the same question twice in 10 minutes or even in the course of a single hand. Not surprisingly, several repetitions in a short session can quickly douse any player's enthusiasm.

Poker PARI could work as a one-shot quickie quiz for an advanced student. But beware: With the game so dull, and the questions so scanty, redundant and sometimes obscure, better to look elsewhere for French instruction or fun. □

HODGE PODGE ★ ★ ★

Designer uncredited. (DynaComp, Atari 400/800/1200-compatible disc. \$18.95)

By Elizabeth Crow

Hodge Podge understands little kids—and vice versa. It's a simple program. (Press a key and an image emerges.) It has a kind of gentle wit. (Press "B," and a bear appears; if you wait a few seconds, he'll smile at you.) And it's full of little surprises. (Press "I," and you'll get a vanilla ice-cream cone; press it again and chocolate chip, strawberry or cherry will appear.) It is also, as its makers promise, a "surreptitious learning" tool: It reinforces letter- and number-recognition skills, demonstrates directions, and introduces children to both the musical scale and such mathematical concepts as addition and equalities.

This may sound severely pedagogical, but it's not. Like a good teacher, *Hodge Podge* rewards experimentation and sets an unhurried pace. Images emerge gradually; they never burst onto the screen.

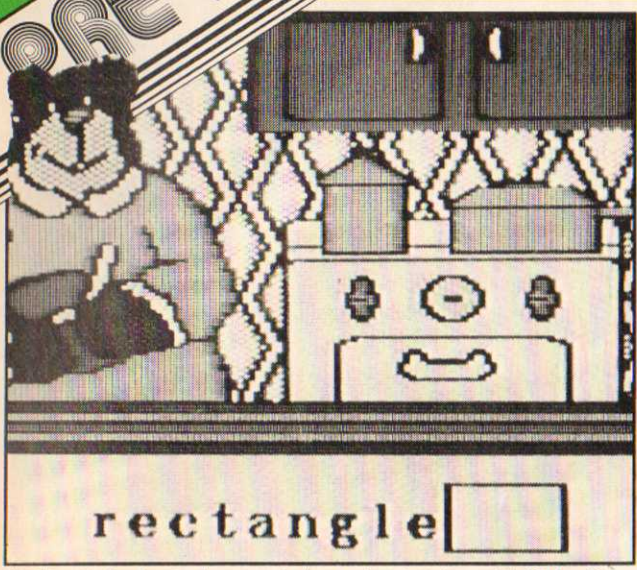
Oddly enough, too, unlike many games and programs which are solitary pleasures, isolating the player from the rest of the family, *Hodge Podge* encourages even rivalrous siblings to cooperate. In our house, where the program was introduced for three-year-old Rachel's edification and amusement, six-year-old Sam quickly emerged as her coach, prompting her to use the program by urging, "Press 'W' and see what you get." Rachel would cheerfully comply, come up with the requested letter or number, and then they'd both watch a worm wriggle across the screen, or listen to a musical tone as a note appeared on a staff. When Rachel couldn't find a letter, she'd look to Sam for help.

Hodge Podge, it must be emphasized, is designed for little children, not for their parents. It would bore anyone over the age of 10. What an adult wants in terms of speed and responsiveness just isn't here, so you can forget, for instance, trying to play any sort of coherent tune with the musical notes.

But what is a liability to an impatient grown-up can be a virtue to a pre-schooler. Rachel not only didn't mind the program's low-keyed pace, but seemed to find its unpressured routine relaxing, which encouraged her to explore *Hodge Podge*'s possibilities as she chose.

That is, after all, what learning is supposed to be all about. □

Coming next in cart, cassette, disc



Sticking to the basic shapes—circles and rectangles—with Sticky Bear.

ACTIVITY

AEROBICS Hands-on work-out. The user choreographs an exercise program for an on-screen woman, selects music, then exercises along with her. (*Spinnaker, Apple II, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64, IBM PC*)

TRAINS The first truly electronic train set. Using brightly colored tracks and train cars, the player can create complicated train sets. (*Spinnaker, Apple II, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64, IBM PC*)

PERSONAL

GHOST LETTER SERIES Four programs format letters for different requirements: *Social & Civic, Consumer & Employment, Business Operations I and Business Operations II*. (*Einstein, IBM PC*)

SMARTFILER/HOME BUDGETING/FINANCIAL ORGANIZER This program is designed to help the user develop a complete home budgeting schedule. (*Coleco, Adam*)

UTILITY

DISKEY For sick discs—and more. This program makes it possible to examine, modify or copy any disc and to recover data from a crashed disc. (*Adventure International, Apple II/IIe, Commodore 64*)

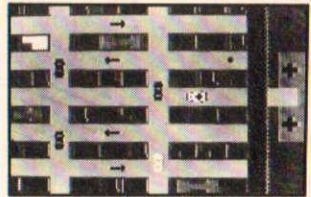
SOFTSYNC TOOLKIT An Extended BASIC program, designed to add the extras Commodore didn't put

in the built-in BASIC, including the ability to use the joystick as a "mouse." (*Softsync, Commodore 64*)

EDUCATIONAL

EXPLORING TABLES AND GRAPHS Designed to teach third and fourth graders how to make and use graphs, this educational game has the child first play a game, then use the results to create graphs. (*Xerox, Apple II/IIe/II+*)

FIRST ENCOUNTER Learning at first sight is the object of this program. A manual and a set of three tapes show and tell how to use the Atari



Red crossing intersections.

computers. The user can choose between normal and fast-track learning. (*Roklan, Atari 400/800/1200XL*)

FRACTIONS Voice narration aids in the teaching of fractions, from decimal fractions to the arithmetic of fractions and proper and improper fractions. (*Program Design, Atari 400/800/1200XL*)

IM64 Learning to use a computer using a computer. This program is designed to teach the Commodore 64 owner how to use the computer. (*Creative, Commodore 64*)

MACHINE LANGUAGE STEP BY STEP This program is designed to teach the user how to program in machine language and how to use an assembler to write the programs. (*Program Design, Apple II/IIe*)

PICTURE PARTS Putting the pieces together by adding, subtracting and multiplying. The player must give correct answers to math problems to add parts of the picture. (*Roklan, Atari 400/800/1200XL*)

SPACE JOURNEY Meteors and math are joined in this game for players 11 years old and up. The player tries to pilot a spaceship home by correctly solving problems in percent skills. (*Roklan, Apple II+, Atari 400/800/1200XL*)

STAR MAZE Divide and conquer the maze. Thid is lost in space, but if the player solves a few math problems in division, Thid will be able to find his home planet. (*Roklan, Apple II+, Atari 400/800/1200XL*)

STEP BY STEP THREE The third in a series of programs that teach BASIC programming, this one focuses on disc operating systems (DOS) and input/output (I/O). (*Program Design, Apple II/IIe*)

STICKY BEAR SHAPES This program is intended to teach young children to recognize common shapes through locating and matching exercises. A 32-page booklet is included with the disc. (*Xerox, Apple II/IIe/II+*)

GAMES

AMBULANCE Patience may be a virtue, but patients are good for points in this game. The player must drive an ambulance through a city to pick up patients and get them to the hospital before it's too late. (*Funware, TI-99/4A*)

CASTLE HASSLE A combination of *Ghost Encounters* and *Action Quest*, this game requires the player to search through the 60 rooms of an evil castle to discover 40 treasures. (*Roklan, Commodore 64*)

C'EST LA VIE This dough isn't French bread. It's \$10, \$20 and \$50 bills which the player tries to collect as fast as possible, meanwhile avoiding thieves and taxmen. (*Adventure International, Apple II/IIe, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64*)

CHIVALRY In this combination arcade/board game, players move their knights around the board in an effort to rescue the king who is being

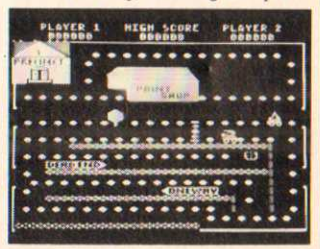
held captive in a castle. Battles and other confrontations take place on screen. (*Xerox, Apple II/IIe/II+*)

COHEN'S TOWER The original ladder game. The player starts as mailboy and tries to work his way up the corporate ladder by avoiding the boss' dog, kissing his secretary and catching the corporate spy. (*Datamost, Atari 400/800/1200XL*)

COSMIC TUNNEL Braving space mines, land monsters and rocket launchers, the player must make it through one of four tunnels to arrive at an asteroid. (*Datamost, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64*)

CRISIS MOUNTAIN Mining your own business. The player controls Kip Armstrong as he explores mines in search of bombs which he must deactivate before time runs out. (*Creative, Commodore 64/VIC-20, TI-99/4A*)

DA FUZZ Lawbreaker *Lawbreaker*. The player drives a car around a maze of a city, avoiding the police



Da Fuzz is de enemy.

and trying to get the car to the paint shop. (*Roklan, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64*)

DRIVING DEMON The player controls Pierre the race car driver, trying to drive as far and as fast as possible within a time limit. Oil slicks and weather conditions can work against him or her. (*Funware, TI-99/4A*)

FRONT LINE One of the first games to be adapted for the Adam computer, this one pits the player's soldier against enemy soldiers, tanks, land mines and other traps. (*Coleco, Adam*)

GNOME VALLEY Technology meets geology. The player must enter a cave in search of a hydrogen bomb which must be defused. Crafty gnomes are the enemy. (*Adventure International, Apple II/IIe, Atari 400/800/1200XL, Commodore 64*)

MISTER ROBOT AND HIS ROBOT FACTORY Tractor treads and transporters carry Mister Robot around the screen as he clears away