

Video Review

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THE WORLD AUTHORITY ON CONSUMER VIDEO

EXTRA:
The Complete
BEATLES
On Tape
At Last!

MICRO MAGIC!

**FIRST WORK-OUT OF
SONY WATCHMAN**

**CBS Labs
Test Blank
Beta Tapes**

**Special:
Guide To
New Game
Consoles**

**Plus: Rocky
Graziano,
Russell Baker**



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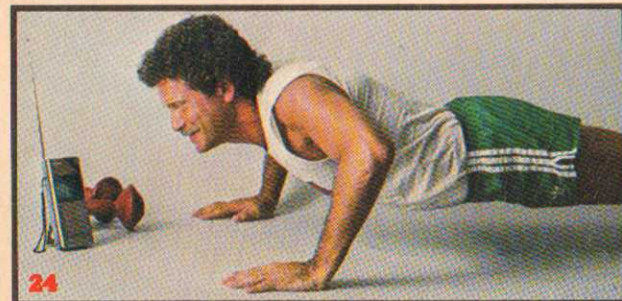
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Porno games and other flashes



Art Levis

□ **PORNO-MAN:** Inevitable has finally come to pass—X-rated videogames. Caballero Control, which offers X-rated videocassettes, is releasing *Mystique Presents Swedish Erotica* line of Atari-compatible cartridges. First three titles: "Custer's Revenge," "Bachelor Party," "Beat 'Em & Eat 'Em." Cartridges will be more expensive than conventional Atari-compatible cartridges, carrying suggested retail price of \$49.95 each. In future, Caballero expects to add game versions of existing cassette titles, including *Talk Dirty to Me*, *Filthy Rich* and *I Like to Watch*. Just how raunchy are new games? They are, said mailgram announcing line to distributors, "elegantly and tastefully presented—for adults only, of course."

* * *

□ **...AND PORNO PRESSURE:** New X-rated games could fall under scrutiny of national Moral Majority-type groups, now stepping up efforts to ban porno videocassettes. Citizens of Decency Through Law (Phoenix, AZ) is cooperating with law enforcement officials in such communities as Phoenix, New Orleans, Memphis and Atlanta to curtail distribution of X-rated tapes. Meanwhile, staid old RCA is acquiring sexy new image through CED videodisc of *Last Tango In Paris*. Company exec told *VR* that it has received copy of letter sent to Springfield, VA video store by local authorities stating that *Last Tango* "violates Virginia pornography laws."

* * *

□ **PRICE ISN'T RIGHT:** You're going to see VCR prices dip even lower and rise even higher. Contradictory situation stems from bulging VCR inventories in this country (roughly one million unsold at presstime), plus new Japanese government directive ordering VCR manufacturers to cut back on exports. To deplete inventories, manufacturers, distributors and retailers are pushing through new round of price cuts. Example is Sony, which is running promotion on new front-loading deck which will allow dealers to sell it at around \$500. But Japanese are increasingly sensitive to trade imbalance with US, and one result is current export cutback. That inevitably will whittle away at inventories, probably driving prices back up.

* * *

□ **ATLANTIC OVERTURES:** While overwhelming bulk of VCRs sold in US is produced in Japan, European companies have quietly been mapping American VCR plans. Latest is Germany's Schneider, which hopes to begin selling VHS-format recorders sometime in '83. Tentative plans call for VCRs in \$600-\$800 price range.

Schneider is also planning to sell 22-inch color video monitor in US early next year. Monitor will be compatible with company's new "direct-contact" audio systems, which eliminate need for external component-to-component wiring. If VCR market stabilizes, company may also introduce portable VCR using quarter-inch format developed by Funai, Schneider US president Phil Welch told *VR*.

* * *

□ **SONY'S CODER:** In first major step toward network pay TV, Sony has won approval from Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to offer new AESOP-I encoding/decoding device. System will allow pay-TV companies to send scrambled signals to subscriber homes late at night. Signal is stored on VCR, can be played back at convenience. ABC will be first to use AESOP-I, when Home View Network pay system is launched. Meanwhile, CBS, seeking to join pay-TV fray, has asked FCC to approve over-air multi-channel system to serve New York, L.A., Chicago, Philadelphia and St. Louis.

* * *

□ **TOUTING TELETEXT:** With CBS and NBC braced to begin teletext broadcasts as early as late fall (though more likely next year) AT&T, Matsushita, RCA and Zenith are all readying decoders or teletext-ready TV sets for home use. Exact date of availability and format of the equipment is still up in the air until a single teletext standard is decided upon, according to the manufacturers.

* * *

□ **SCREEN GLEANING:** Sony says it'll bring out a black-and-white home printer next fall for use with home computers and teletext equipment. A color printer is in the works for possible release in '84.

* * *

□ **TRAINS OF THOUGHT:** *Model Railroader* magazine is on its own track with new line of how-to hobby cassettes. *Building Model Railroad Scenery with the Experts* inaugurates the training series. Other new programmers: Cumberland Video and Video West, each with roundup of public-domain Western movies.

THE LATEST IN
NEW PRODUCTS

New Pentax VCR, Atari console and more



ATARI Videogame System System X Model 5200 \$299.95

Now you can get a clearer bead on bobbing asteroids with this new system's high-resolution graphics—higher than those of any previous Atari home console.

Ten cartridges, including "Break-out" and "Pac-Man," are available with this game system. These can't

be played on any other Atari console, but cartridges for older Atari systems can be adapted to this one with a separate module.

You can monitor game speed and put the action in pause with switches on the two handheld controls. A separate voice synthesizer is also available.

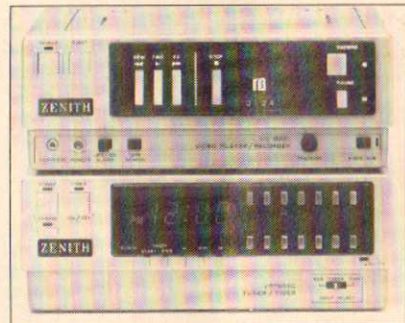
Atari, 1265 Borregas Ave., Sunnyvale, CA 94086 (408) 745-2200

ZENITH Portable Videocassette Recorder Model VRT9500 Tuner/Timer Model VRT9550

Seek and ye shall find fresh tape to record on with the blank tape search function of this portable Beta-format VCR. Just press a button, and the tape will fast-forward through recorded portions, stopping as soon as the tape is blank. Other features include forward and reverse search, pause and audio dub, as well as a five-function wired remote.

The accompanying tuner/timer has one day/one event programmability and comes with an electronic AM/PM digital clock.

Zenith, 1000 Milwaukee Ave., Glenview, IL 60025 (312) 391-8181



QUASAR Video Home Editor Model VE582UQ

This editing console for home use lets you electronically splice your tapes, though you still need two VCRs.

The console does both insert editing (adding video or audio to an existing tape) and assemble editing (compiling scenes on a blank).

The editor is compatible with Panasonic and Quasar portable VCRs. Other VCRs need adaptors. Quasar, 9401 W. Grande Ave., Franklin Park, IL 60131 (312) 451-1200

OLYMPUS Videocamera Model VX-301 \$1,250

Videotaping is hardly an "Olympian" feat when one of the biggest



names in photography steps in. This first Olympus videocamera has a Newvicon pickup tube and a f1.4, 6:1 (12 to 72 mm) variable zoom lens, as well as an electronic viewfinder.

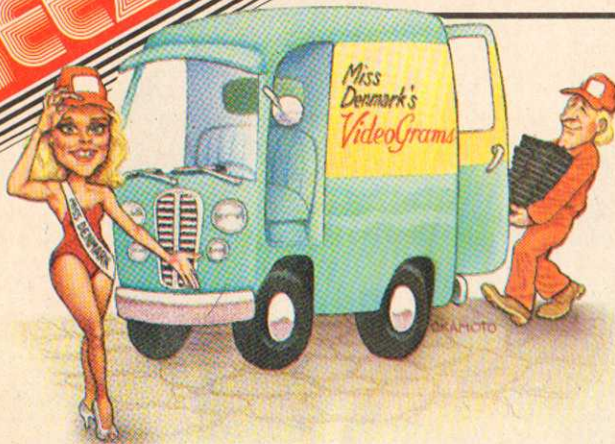
The camera comes with automatic exposure and focus, auto fade-in/out and a boom microphone.

An optional film transfer adaptor allows you to transfer color slides to videotape.

Olympus, Crossways Park, Woodbury, NY 11797 (516) 364-3000

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

Fire, fish and pols at play



Danish Modern

Last year, Kirsten Alprin, Miss Denmark '77, made a name for herself in the US with a videotape-your-will business. For \$350 a pop, customers could walk into one of two NY studios and give their heirs the business.

Ms. Alprin's latest scheme is videograms—for \$49 per message.

"Videograms are going to be a very big thing," says the 27-year-old entrepreneur. "In a couple of years, no one is going to write letters anymore. That's sad, I know, but that's the technology of the times."

Ms. Alprin's first job in this country was as a Las Vegas showgirl. From there she went to UCLA to study photography.

Right now, Alprin is busy expanding her video empire from two stores to 77 franchises. She claims she will have 10 mobile vans rolling across 10 states to bring her video services to the multitudes. □

Fun and Profits

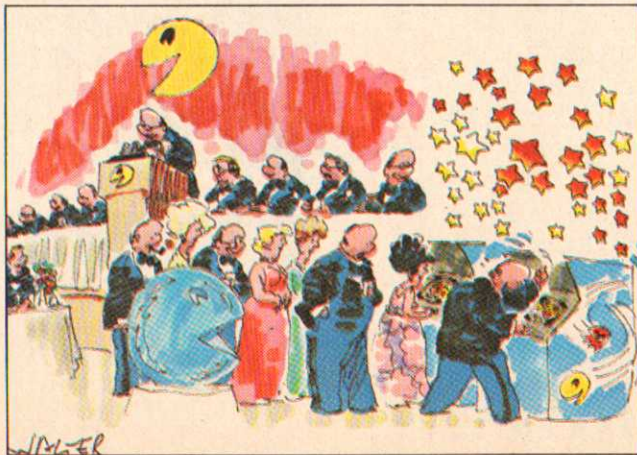
With elections only a month away, Washington DC is in the grip of the political fund-raising season. This month, hors d'oeuvres makers are rolling in dough, liquor stores

are open late and incumbents spend their jogging time thinking up ways to fleece well-heeled lobbyists.

Enter Rep. James Coyne (R, PA), 35, with a novel idea. The congressman recently threw a bash at the exclusive Capitol Hill Club complete with four "Ms. Pac-Man" machines. A quick \$200 at the door and wheel food, drink and unlimited play.

Coyne's press secretary says over \$10,000 was raised at the affair. Citizens of all stripes showed up, including Secretary of Transportation Drew Lewis and Secretary of Health and Human Services Richard Schweiker.

High score for the night was 32,000 points, racked up by the congressman himself. Wonder how he finds time to practice? □



Caravelle Club Computers

"Atari 400/800 Home Computers are the official computers of two Club Med villages in the Western Hemisphere, it was announced today. Club Med-Caravelle (French West Indies) and Club-Med-Eleuthera (The Bahamas) . . . will feature computer workshops at no cost to vacationers."—Atari/Club Med press release.

Dear Mom and Dad,

My Club Med vacation is really going great. The food is great. The people are great. The weather is great. In fact, everything is great. Including Lisette. I love her.

Today, after nude scuba diving, a round of nude volleyball on the beach, then eating a big meal of melons and iced tea, then lying under palm trees and tickling each others noses, we got up to learn how to program computers.

At first I thought it was wierd learning about ROMs and RAMs far away from civilization, but when I found out the class was nude it wasn't so bad.

I'm learning French from

the Atari computer. Lisette says I'm doing very well and that I have a cute accent. I can't wait to try it out on you when I get home.

Love,
Donny

P.S. Lisette says *bonjour*. □

Video Never Forgets

Vincent A. (Buddy) Cianci Jr., mayor of Providence, is an old friend of J. Joseph Garrahy, governor of Rhode Island. Sure they're members of different parties. And sure, they ran against each other for governor in 1980, but they're pals. Video pals.

A short time ago, Governor Garrahy gave a speech

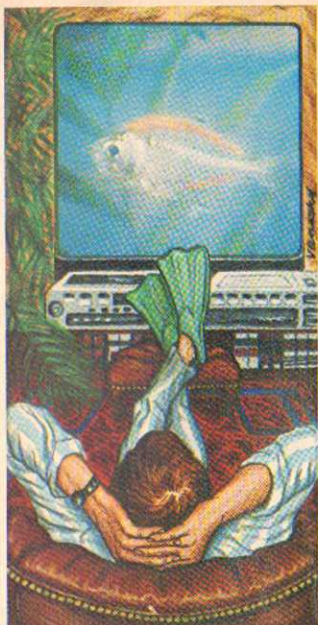


to the effect that the state needed to tighten its fiscal belt, otherwise—big deficit time. Well, one week after the announcement, Cianci, a man who knows how to bide his time, called a "routine" press conference.

Let's pick it up from the *Providence Journal*:

"... A reporter asked if the mayor wanted to comment on Gov. Garrahy's speech. 'I thought you'd never ask,' Cianci replied.

"An aide pulled back a red velvet curtain to reveal a videotape recorder, then pushed a button. An image of Cianci during the 1980 gubernatorial debate appeared on a screen, predicting that the state was in for hard fiscal times.



"The state government has a deficit, or will have a deficit, that it's not telling us about," the videotaped mayor contended.

"The aide shut off the machine.

"Next question," the mayor said." □

Fish Story

Last spring, the syndicated columnist George Will wrote an essay about a videocassette called "Fish I." Sold by Candle Corp., a California computer company, the tape is a one-hour movie of a tropical fish tank. The soundtrack: tiny bubbles. Not the Don Ho version.

Someone from Candle attended a seminar at a school of veterinary medicine, Will reported, and learned that bonds between humans and lower animals can be relaxing. Since the people at Candle are interested in reducing stress in the work place of the future, they figured a fish tape that could be plopped into the office VCR was a good beginning.

"We got a great deal of response out of Mr. Will's article," Wade Evans, Candle's associate director of video productions, told me recently. "We're selling the tape to all kinds of people.

"For example, a nursery school teacher shows "Fish I"

to her students; she gets the kids to relax before nap time. And a dentist I know ceiling-mounted a TV monitor above his drilling chair. He makes patients watch fish while he's injecting novocain."

What's on the drawing board?

"We're currently working on a clouds tape, a waterfall, ocean waves and a field of rippling wheat."

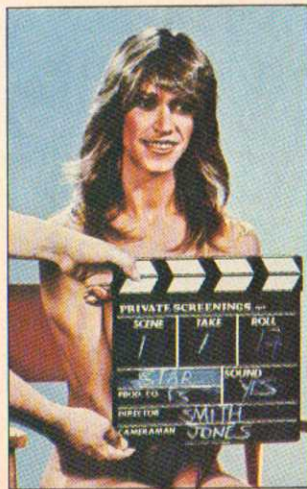
Fish lovers send \$35 to 10880 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 2404, Los Angeles, CA 90024. □

Behind the Green Envelope

Sometimes the Freeze-Frame "in" box nets a catch so shiny and preposterous that one's faith in the creativity of press agents is restored for another week.

Not too long ago I received a package from Private Screenings, the New York-based cable TV company that syndicates an R-rated movie channel throughout the country. The envelope contained: 1) a canned letter and 2) an 8x10 black-and-white glossy of Marilyn Chambers with the inscription: "Carl, Love & Hot Licks—Marilyn Chambers XXXX."

Fishing the letter out of the garbage, I discovered that Marilyn had just signed on with Private Screenings as official spokesperson/hostess. By the end of this year, she'll be introducing every Private Screenings program, as well as making public appear-



ances for the company. Kind of like what Ronald Reagan did for *Death Valley Days*. The personalized photo was a nice touch.

As for Marilyn, she must have killed one entire night signing pictures. Bet she's the only porn star around with writer's cramp. □

Justice?

The constitution of the United States is rightly regarded by governments around the world as a monument to liberty, justice and the rights of man. But for Sheldon Gamhy, a lawyer for two New York City videogame



parlors, the frame has its chinks.

Let's start at the beginning. Last year, the City of New York brought suit against 50 sex shows and videogame parlors on the principle that said parlors and shows violated local zoning laws by causing traffic problems, noise and crowds.

Recently, Manhattan Supreme Court justice Thomas Galligan ruled on the matter. His verdict: The city can use zoning laws to close 27 videogame joints but cannot use the same laws to shut down peep shows and live sex theaters. Sex establishments, said the judge, could be instances of free expression protected by the First Amendment.

At this point in the story, our hero, losing video lawyer Sheldon Gamhy, walked out of the courtroom and into the pages of oral history. "This is some city," he told a reporter. "A teenager can't play 'Pac-

Man' but he can watch dirty movies." Maybe if Ms. Pac-Man strips. . . . □

Videogame Grotesques

As we blithely walk through the electronic age, let us occasionally pause to note some byways—in this case, videogames of questionable taste:

Fire! (Palmtext): A burning building sends people leaping from balconies. With right and left buttons, the player moves net-bearing rescuers across the screen. Correctly caught, a fire victim bounces into a waiting ambulance

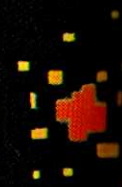
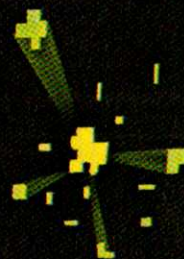
—score one point. A miss—oops!—and an angel appears in the upper righthand corner. Three angels and the game is over.

Micro Surgeon (Imagic): A body appears on an operating table. Vital signs are low. You check the pa-

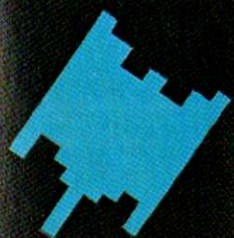


tient's chart—heart attack. You quickly shrink down to atomic size and enter patient through ears, nose or mouth, then travel to the disease center and blast away at cholesterol buildup. Next, you speed through an artery to the lungs and dissolve a patch of nicotine. Escape through an orifice before the white bloods cells catch you. □

COMPLETE SHOPPER'S GUIDE TO VIDEO-GAMES



ALL THE LATEST GEAR



By Frank Lovece

All the world's a videogame, and the people merely players. At least that's the way things probably seem if you're one of the eight million or so people about to choose one type or other of videogame system this year. The superficially simple "Pepsi or Coke" choice between Atari and Mattel has suddenly spilled over to encompass more than a dozen compatible, incompatible, stand-alone and home-computer videogame consoles that may leave anyone planning to buy one feeling as helpless as Pac-Man with all his energy pills gone.

Why the sudden interest in—and confusion about—videogame equipment?

'76: All's Fairchild

As early as 1976, while other companies were busy churning out basic, "dedicated" consoles that would play a limited number of built-in games, one farsighted outfit, Fairchild, introduced the first consumer console that would accept interchangeable game cartridges. Within the next two years, Atari, Bally, Magnavox and RCA developed their own programmable consoles, three of which have evolved into game systems today. Even the fledgling field of home computers produced some game consoles in those days. Yet an aura of unfamiliarity and a few technological quirks—especially "TV-screen burn," which left indelible streaks on TV sets, but has since been virtually eliminated—kept most video fans away from games.

Now, as videogame investment analyst Thomas Kully explains, "Big arcade videogames being adapted for the home are bringing their popularity with them. The audience is broadening, too. 'Pac-Man' was probably the first real family game—girls could play it, all ages could play it, and it's cute and nonviolent compared with earlier, war-like games."

Whatever the reason, more people than ever are trying to decide on the right videogame system to buy, and with orders from retailers backlogged (GCE, for example, says it has already "pre-sold" every Vectrex console it can manufacture this year), prospective buyers should start to consider their myriad choices now.

Console-ation

Actually, the choice was never really as dull as just between Atari and Mattel, though largely thanks to TV ad campaigns as relentless as waves of Space Invaders, those *have* become the two most visible brands. In fact, though the name Atari is threatening to take on the same generic tone that the Xerox and Frisbee people have been trying to avoid with their own brand names for years, older videogame systems are catching up and a host of new ones are springing in. You won't find Atari in the dictionary except preceded by APF, Arcadia and Astrocade—and followed by everything from Coleco to Zircon.

You might expect that choosing the right videogame console for your home would be relatively simple. Once you've determined (a) your price range, (b) who'll be using the console most of the time (adults or kids) and what kinds of games they like, and (c) whether or not you'll want to expand the system for uses other than playing games, you could expect a logical choice to jump right out at you. Unfortunately, things jumping out at you can

WHO'S GOT WHAT IN GAME CONSOLES

MANUFACTURER/ BRAND	COMPATIBLE CARTS*	CONTROLS/ KEYBOARD	CARTRIDGE ROM/PIXELS	FEATURES/ ACCESSORIES	SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE
APF MP-1000	13	2, joystick/fire button/ keypad./ 12-key numeric on each	4-6K/16 horizontal, 32 vertical	"Rocket Patrol" game built-in./ MPA-10 expandable home-computer console (\$200); D-100 disc drives (\$799)	\$99.95
ARCADIA The Supercharger (Atari VCS add-on)	7	Uses Atari VCS console and controls./ None	2K ROM, 6K RAM in Supercharger./160 horizontal, 192 vertical	"Phaser Patrol" cartridge included./None	\$69.95
ASTROCADE Astrocade	25	2, joystick/knob/ trigger./ 24-key numeric on each	2-8K/160 horizontal, 102 vertical	2 games, calculator and design generator built-in; BASIC program- mable; 4-player capability./ ZGRASS-100 home-computer console (\$599); additional controls (\$54.95/pair)	\$299
ATARI Video Computer System (VCS)	139**	4, 2 joystick/fire button; 2 paddle/fire button./None	NA/NA	"Combat" cartridge included; B&W/color switch./ 12-key control (\$21.95/ pair); cartridge cases (\$9.95-\$14.95); cartridge/console case (\$34.95)	\$199.95
System X model 5200	10	2, joystick/paddle/ keypad/fire buttons./ 12-key on each	NA/NA	Automatic TV/game switching; pause button; control storage area./ NA	\$299.95 (available October)
COLECO ColecoVision	15-17 approx.	2, joystick/2 action buttons/keypad./ 12- key numeric on each	4-32K/256 horizontal, 192 vertical	"Donkey Kong" cartridge included./ Driving-game expansion kit (\$60); Atari VCS compatibility module (\$60)	\$185 approx.
COMMODORE The Max Machine	20	Purchased separately./ 66-key alphanumeric on console	4-6K/320 horizontal, 200 vertical	Game included; BASIC programmable; audio- and video-out jacks./ Joystick/fire- button control (\$9.95); joystick/keypad control (price NA); paddle control (\$19.95/pair); others	\$179.95
EMERSON Arcadia model 2001	20	2, joystick/disco/keypad./ 12-key numeric on each	4K/128 horizontal, 208 vertical	75/300-ohm switch; on/off LED indicator./ Car/boat 12-volt battery adaptor	\$199.95
ENTEX AdventureVision (stand-alone)	4	1, joystick plus 2 sets (right- and left-hand buttons./ None	NA/Not applicable	Built-in 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (diagonally measured) screen; "Defender" cartridge included; mini- headphone jacks; audio muting./ None	\$69
GCE Vectrex (stand-alone)	13	1, joystick plus set of buttons./ None	NA/NA Not applicable	Built-in 9-inch (diagonally measured) vector-screen; "Mine Storm" game built-in; 3-D and zoom effects; screen overlays./ Wired joystick/control panel (\$30)	\$200 approx.
MATTEL Intellivision	44**	2, disc/fire buttons/ keypad./ 12-key numeric on each	NA/ 160 horizontal, 192 vertical	"Poker/Blackjack" cartridge included; 3-part-harmony audio capability./ Intelli- voice voice-synthesis module (price NA)	\$260
ODYSSEY Odyssey ²	41	2, joystick/fire button./ 49-key alphanumeric	2-4K/160 horizontal, 192 vertical	"Speedway/Spin-Out/Crypto-Logic" cartridge included./ The Voice voice- synthesis module (\$99.95); Organizer console/cartridge case (\$19.95)	\$199.95
SEARS Video Arcade	139**	4, 2 joystick/fire button; 2 paddle/fire button./ None	NA/NA	"Target Fun" game included./ See Atari VCS	\$147.99
Super Video Arcade	44**	2, disc/fire buttons/ keypad./ 12-key numeric on each	NA/ 160 horizontal, 192 vertical	"Poker/Blackjack" cartridge included; 3-part-harmony audio capability./ See Mattel Electronics Intellivision	\$267
TYROM Video Game Center model VGC-300	30	2, joystick/paddle./ None	2-4K/160 horizontal, 192 vertical	None	\$99
ZIRCON Fairchild Channel F System I	26	2, joystick/fire button./ None	NA/128 horizontal, 64 vertical	"Tennis" and "Hockey" games built-in; speaker; non-removable controls./ None	\$59.95
Fairchild Channel F System II	26	2, joystick/fire button./ None	NA/128 horizontal, 64 vertical	"Tennis" and "Hockey" games built-in; speaker; plug-in controls./ None	\$99.95

*At presstime. **Includes cartridges made by other companies. NA: Information not available.

Compiled by Frank Lovece.

miss, especially when it comes to home videogames.

For one thing, it's impossible to judge videogame consoles from what you see in TV commercials, and hands-on comparison is hampered because not all brands are available everywhere. Also, while large department stores generally provide interactive displays where you can try out videogames for yourself, some video specialty shops simply refuse to set up game consoles—ostensibly to discourage kids from gathering. Some even suggest turning to the TV commercials if you want to see a particular system in operation. Plus, prices for the same brand of console at different stores can vary as widely as quotes for auto repairs.

Yo Ho Ho and a Bottle of ROM

Direct comparison of consoles becomes difficult for many reasons, especially because they look so essentially similar. Most take but two minutes and a screwdriver to attach to your TV set's antenna leads. And aside from easily replaceable joystick controls on some models, there seems to be little variation from model to model.

The major differences occur in the quality of the games themselves—in their screen graphics and their game play. One way to compare graphics is to look up each console's specification for "pixels" or picture "cels," the smallest element of color and delineation into which the screen can be divided (something like the dots which comprise a newspaper photograph). Comparing memory capacities is also helpful, but since each console uses its own exclusive circuitry, the RAM (random-access memory) of game consoles isn't directly comparable.

However, the ROM (read-only memory) of game cartridges is comparable, and a cart with 2K (2,000) "bytes" of information usually produces less sophisticated graphics than one with 6K or 8K. ROM capacities, however, can vary widely even among game cartridges put out by the same manufacturer. And, unfortunately, unlike audio-equipment and automobile specifications, pixel and ROM figures can be difficult to obtain, especially from companies with less-than-brilliant graphics.

When you do settle on a console, it's something like choosing a spouse—a whole family of videogame car-

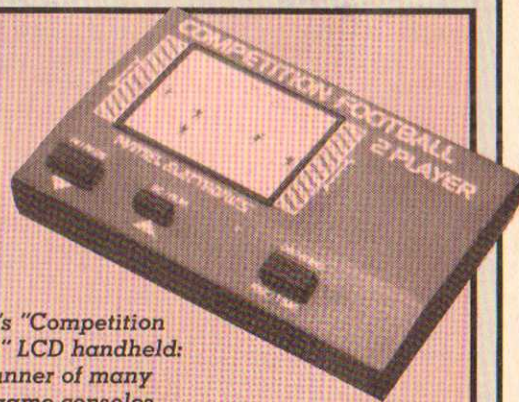
UNDERSTANDING STAND-ALONES

If game consoles are the staid and sturdy homebodies of the videogame world, "stand-alones" are the free and footloose type.

Although consoles seem to be getting all the attention these days, stand-alones (be they tabletop or handheld models) have been around almost as long as today's consumer video-recording formats. Each contains a tiny screen and is "dedicated" to one or two particular games, usually with a couple variations. Though they began with such traditional games as chess and backgammon, stand-alones now encompass both original games and adapted arcade-video hits. So even if you're not a whiz, you can have "Crazy Climber," "Defender," "Frogger," "Galaxian," "Pac-Man" and other arcade faves in the palm of your hand.



Coleco's "Pac-Man" tabletop: more faithful than Atari's home version.



Mattel's "Competition Football" LCD handheld: forerunner of many videogame consoles.

Since the rights to such hit games are precious, the stand-alone rights may belong to different companies than the ones with videogame cartridge rights. For that reason, owners of Atari's VCS videogame console had to wait a few months for Atari's official "Pac-Man" cartridge, though stand-alone players had already brought home Coleco's more faithful version of the arcade game.

The latest trend in stand-alone videogames is to make them programmable through interchangeable cartridges. Entex's AdventureVision and GCE's Vectrex are the harbingers of this change, and though other toy makers are getting into standard cartridge videogames, electronic- and toy-industry observers both expect more and more brands to start releasing new stand-alones.

Aside from those mentioned, Mattel, Milton Bradley, Parker Brothers, Radio Shack, SciSys, Tomy and Tryom are now offering stand-alone games, some with video monitors, some with LCD displays. As the holiday season approaches, the choices among brands, games and—perhaps most important—prices will be wider than ever. (F.L.)

tridges come along with it. This limits you to a particular brand's game cartridges, which isn't so bad since you can at least check out game titles before you buy. Since videogame carts can cost up to \$50 at suggested retail, though, you should consider whether you're a strategy, shoot-'em-up, sports or maze-game buff, and judge game selection accordingly.

Fortunately, not only is there a lot of diversity within different videogame lines, but also there are many similarly themed adaptations of such coin-op video hits as "Donkey Kong," "Frogger," "Pac-Man" and "Space Invaders." For the sake of originality—not to mention avoiding copyright-infringement lawsuits—such variations on a theme are distinct enough from manufacturer to manufacturer that it's wise to get some idea how well different companies have adapted your favorite arcade game for the home. Atari, for example, has exclusive videogame cartridge rights to "Pac-Man," yet similar games (most notably the somewhat too familiar and now outlawed "KC Munchkin" from Odyssey) can have better graphics and play action than authorized versions, plus their own variations and game options.

Atari vs. Mattel

Game selection, though, may be the single biggest reason that Atari's Video Computer System (VCS) has become the most popular videogame console ever. With the 48 game cartridges made by Atari and the several dozen Atari-compatible carts put out under at least a dozen brand names, there are more games for the VCS than there are for the next two most popular consoles—Mattel's Intellivision and Odyssey's Odyssey²—combined. In addition, one company, Arcadia, makes a module called "The Supercharger" which plugs into Atari's VCS and allows you to play any of seven Arcadia games—which are on cassette and played on an audiocassette recorder—using Atari's console and controls.

Mattel's Intellivision, the Avis to Atari's Hertz, is more expensive but generally offers better graphics than those of the Atari VCS. (Atari, however, is introducing its improved System X model 5200 in October, basically an Atari 800 home computer stripped down to its videogame essentials.) Although the current truism among video retailers—that most people buy Atari for its game selection and Mattel for its graphics—blatantly overlooks the other game systems available, it is basically true. Yet game-cartridge makers such as Activision, which already produces Atari-compatible carts, are gearing up to produce their own Intellivision-compatible game cartridges. In addition, the Mattel console allows you to utilize the PlayCable cable service of 24-hour-a-day Intellivision games, at a monthly fee of about \$12 in the areas that offer this special service.

VCSears

Incidentally, if you're not star struck by brand names, the VCS and the Intellivision consoles appear as the Sears Video Arcade and Super Video Arcade, respectively. Sears' suggested retail prices are lower than those of Atari and Mattel, but Sears pretty much sticks with its prices. Atari and Mattel consoles, on the other hand, have been known to show up on discounters' shelves for as much as \$60 off the suggested retail of a machine.

Once you start to dig a little deeper, though, you can find several lesser-known brands with their own unique

qualities. Odyssey's Odyssey² console with a built-in keyboard, for example, is the first to come with videogames designed to be played in conjunction with elaborate playing boards. Moreover, since the newest Magnavox videodisc players can be interfaced with the Odyssey² console, some highly sophisticated videodisc/game-cartridge combinations are in the works.

The Arcadia model 2001 from Emerson (not to be confused with the separate videogame company called Arcadia) comes with a 12-volt car/boat battery adaptor which lets you power your game console on the road. Tryom's Video Game Center is the only new videogame console priced below the \$100 mark. Then Zircon's Fairchild Channel F, sold strictly through mail order, lets you get into the videogame revolution for just 60 bucks.

Aside from these consoles, each of which hooks up to a TV set and is strictly for videogames, there are two interesting hybrids, one old, one new. The newer hybrid has taken the notion of the self-contained, "stand-alone" game—which comes with its own monitor attached—and has added cartridge programmability. Thus, Entex's new AdventureVision and GCE's just-as-new Vectrex not only have built-in games, but also come with their own libraries of game cartridges. Plus, because they use monitors designed specifically for videogames, they can offer potentially better graphics than possible using conventional TV screens.

Douglas Thompson, president of the Toy Manufacturers of America trade group, calls such stand-alones "the next step. They're more mobile than Atari or other game consoles and you don't have to tie up the TV set."

Electronic Fun with Computers

The other hybrid has been around a while—the computer-expandable videogame console. Not quite the same thing as a home computer which may be capable of playing videogames, this is simply a videogame console which is designed as a component to which you can, at your option and at your leisure, attach separately purchased home-computer components. These systems have the added advantages, next to this versatility, of some minor computing capability and greater memory capacity than simpler consoles, resulting in very advanced graphics and game play. APF, Astrocade, Commodore and the latest brand, Coleco, all have computer-expandable videogame consoles ranging from about \$100 to about \$300. "Home-computer manufacturers are licking their chops," because such sophisticated game consoles may acclimate potential home-computer buyers, says a source at the Electronic Industries Association.

Other industry observers point to a major drawback of this arrangement, namely that home computers purchased a component at a time cost more in the end than a whole setup bought at once.

Still, most insiders seem to feel the path videogame consoles will take leads inevitably to home computers. "For a relatively small increment in price," says Thomas Kully, "consumers in 1984 or '85 may opt for home computers that play videogames." Games are already plentiful for such home computers as Atari's models 400 and 800, the Apple II and Commodore's VIC-20. Yet whether home computers will be home for videogames or whether game-only consoles will follow the same drop in price handheld calculators experienced remains to be seen. □

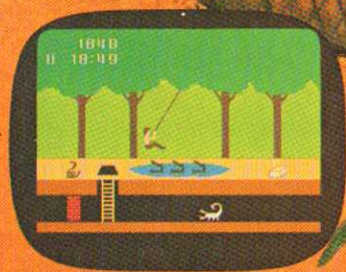
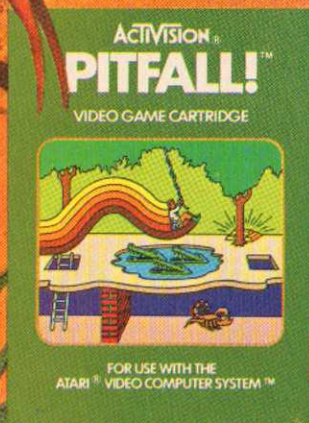
"DON'T BE ANOTHER STATISTIC!"

—Pitfall Harry,
Veteran Jungle Guide

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Therefore, Activision urges you to prepare yourself for some very unusual video game dangers. For example, you and Harry will swing on a vine over crocodile infested swamps. Climb down into dark underground passages. Traverse tar pits, quicksand and vanishing bogs. And even leap over scorpions, rolling logs, open mine shafts, fires and deadly cobra rattlers. So please be careful when you play Pitfall!™ by Activision®. Because every step you take, could be your last.



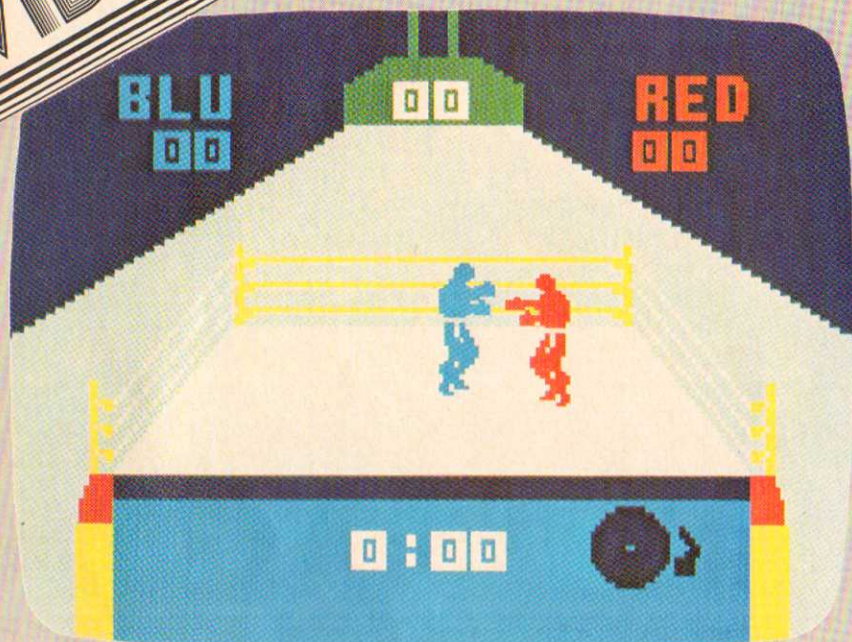
Designed by David Crane.

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Tron, Graziano on Boxing and more



"Boxing" from Intellivision: ringside seats and versatile fighters.

Cartridges

BOXING ★ ★ ★ ★

Designed by Mattel. (Mattel Electronics Intellivision-compatible cartridge. \$30 approx.)

By Rocky Graziano

In boxing, you have to take a beating to win. I made some money at it. But I like video boxing games, because you don't have to get hurt. I've played around with a few, and this is one of the best I've seen.

This game is cute. Very cute. Boxers aren't cute, but this game is. There're crowd sounds, and the guys on the screen can throw all kinds of punches, and if you win by a knockout, the other guy goes down like he's supposed to. It's a nice game.

There are six boxers you can choose from—"strong defense," "strong offense," "exceptional endurance," "unpredictable" and two "balanced" fighters. With the 12-button hand control, you can make any of the fighters throw left- and right-handed punches, low, medium and high,

RATINGS

- ★★★★ Outstanding
- ★★★ Good
- ★★ Average
- ★ Below Average

and also feint and duck. With the disc control, you can dance around the ring.

I picked balanced fighters like myself most of the time. A balanced fighter takes care of himself. He moves. He jabs constantly. He keeps his right hand easy on the spot, keeps it ready. He bobs and weaves. He feints to get the other guy off his guard. And he not only punches, but

counterpunches. This game lets you do all of that. Amazing.

The instruction book is very good. Nice language. Easy for kids to understand. If I can understand it, my grandchildren should!

One thing I didn't like, though, was the "double knockout." I've never heard of that. Double knockdowns, but not double knockouts.

Another thing is that you can never tell when or if a knocked-down fighter will get up. It looks as if the game machine kind of randomly decides.

But kids—boys especially, I think—will like this game. It's a good little way to teach them the fundamentals of boxing without their getting hurt. □

Rocky Graziano is a former world middleweight boxing champion.

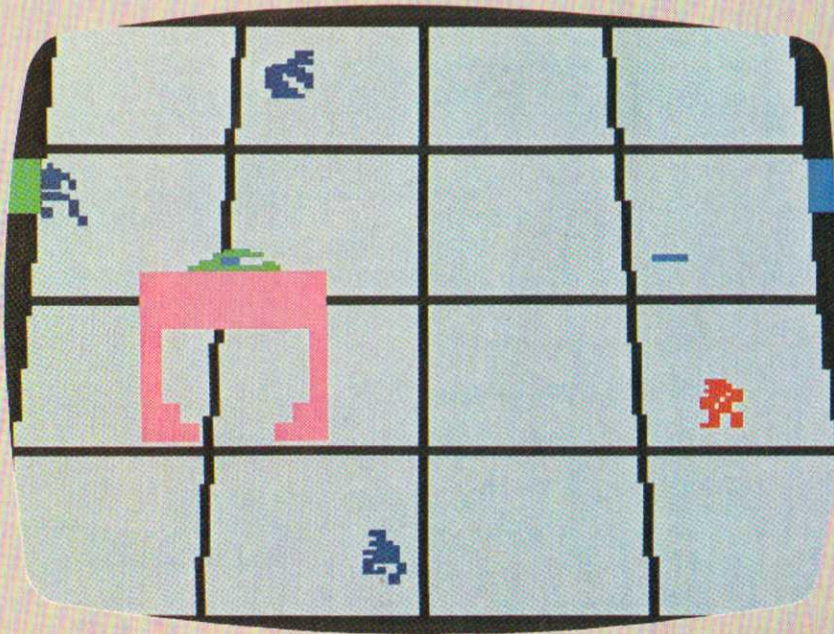
TRON DEADLY DISCS ★ ★

Designed by Mattel. (Mattel Electronics Intellivision-compatible cartridge. \$30 approx.)

By Howard Polskin

What's the trouble with "Tron?"

First, it is one of Mattel's least visually appealing games. The screen looks like a vast, barren ticktacktoe board with a dull, off-white background. Tron, a little, brown stick figure of a man, stands alone in the middle of the grid. His only weapon is a small, yellow disc that he hurls at enemy



Intellivision's "Tron": Disney's hero (l.) meets the Recognizer (r.).

warriors who attack him from suddenly opening doors on all four sides of the screen. Tron must try to mow down these warriors while they throw their own discs at him. (Fortunately, at the early stages of the game, their aim is lousy.) The goal of this one-player game is to score as many points as possible before Tron is inevitably wiped out by the disc-throwing warriors.

The player controls Tron's movements, blocking shots and firing discs. But this is not a pure shooter's game like Mattel's "Space Armada" or "Space Battle." It is frustratingly difficult to aim the disc, and it goes flying in any of several directions. When the disc hits a side of the screen, it comes bouncing back to Tron, taking several seconds and slowing down the action considerably as Tron must wait for it before he can go on the offensive again. Regrettably, Tron is not capable of rapid fire or quicker movements.

Still, there are some interesting dimensions to "Tron." The doors through which the Warriors enter the screen can be "jammed," allowing Tron to disappear into a door on the left side of the screen only to appear instantaneously on the right. If enough doors are open on the screen, an ominous horseshoe-shaped creature called the Recognizer drifts in and sends out a black beam to close the doors. That may sound exciting, but it's really not that much fun trying to destroy the Recognizer with a direct hit to its elusive white eye.

"Tron" sounded to me as if it might've been an exciting game, especially since its name was licensed from the special-effects-laden Disney movie about computer games. But its slow pace and undistinguished graphics make "Tron Deadly Discs" a disappointment. □

Howard Polskin writes about videogames for TV Guide and other magazines. He joins our regular reviewers this issue.

FROGGER ★ ★ ★ ★

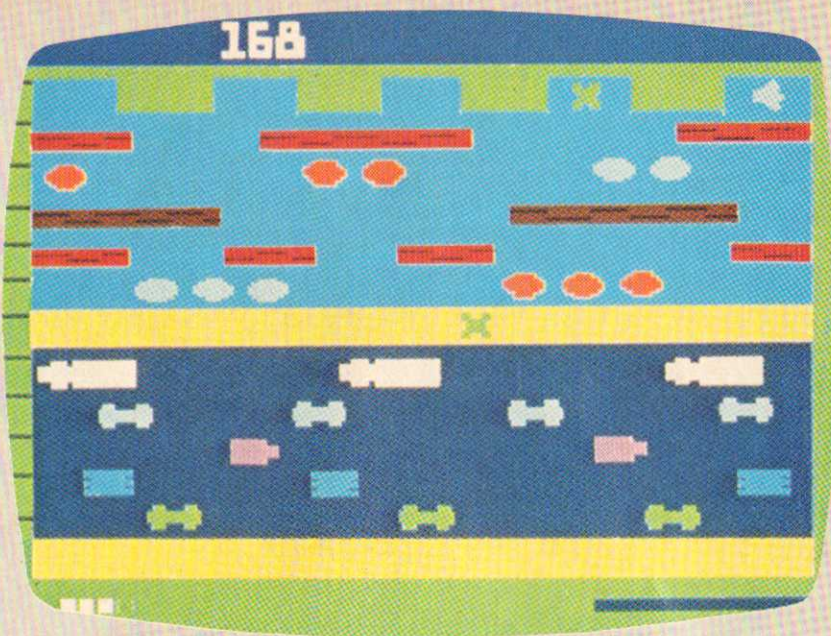
Adapted by Ed English from the Sega arcade game. (Parker Brothers VCS-compatible cartridge. \$30 approx.)

By Randi Hacker

One of the plagues of ancient Egypt, you'll recall, was frogs. One of the plagues of modern America (if you ask some people) is the videogame. So it's only natural that the two come together. And they have.

The object of this game is to move a frog from the bottom of the screen to home bases at the top by crossing five-lane highways and "five-lane" rivers without getting it killed. You get five frogs and 30 seconds per frog. Each time you get a frog safely across, you get a bonus frog. If you get all five across, you move to the next difficulty level.

The graphics are excellent. This adaptation of the popular Sega arcade game



Parker Brothers' "Frogger": Why did the frog cross the road?

bears more than just a slight family resemblance to its parent. Also, the frog is remarkably responsive to the joystick—too responsive, perhaps, in that the slightest move can jeopardize the frog's life. This may be the only frog in the world that is faster than an automobile. If you are trying to get your frog to outpace the car behind it, it will overtake the car in front of it and get itself run over. The game is, in fact, full of frogs getting run over. Wait until Greenpeace gets hold of this information.

There are six variations: Games one, three and five are for one player, while two, four and six, oddly enough (or evenly enough), are for two. Games one through four are the easiest.

The difficulty switch alters the game only slightly. In the easier of the two positions, the frog can ride a floating log off one side of the screen and ride it right back through the other without harm. In the other position, trying to do this is like trying to walk through a wall. Obviously, this is good for neither the frog nor your score.

Two tips:

- Every once in a while, a lady frog appears on one of the floating logs. Landing your frog on her log, close enough so she can hop onto its back, will get you a high-pitched sound and extra points. (If this doesn't bring out the Moral Majority, I don't know what will.) So, try to time your jump so it coincides with the lady frog's appearance.

- Try to fill the three middle homes first. They're the easiest to get your frogs into and get you lots of points. The home bases on either end are tough to fill, especially when you're playing in the more difficult mode, because if your frog comes too close to the edge of the screen, it's frog's legs. □

DONKEY KONG ★ ★

Adapted by Eric Bromley and team from the Nintendo arcade game. (Coleco ColecoVision cartridge. Sold only with \$185 ColecoVision console.)

By Frank Lovece

How disappointing—this home game is almost exactly like the arcade version of "Donkey Kong."

The resemblance is uncanny, in fact, especially in comparison to most other arcade-to-home videogame adaptations. Yet the popular arcade "Donkey Kong" seems to lose something on the home screen. The reason, I think, is that at least a couple of "Donkey Kong"-inspired games have beaten the original to the home, picking up their own variations and idiosyncrasies and, in the process, becoming more interesting than the game which spawned them.

Part of the appeal of the arcade version of "Donkey Kong" stemmed, judging from the reactions and comments of the local whiz-kids when the game surfaced in my neighborhood, from the freshness of its premise. True, the once-popular "Circus" featured jumping figures *a la* hero of "Donkey Kong," but the "Circus" clowns weren't hopping obstacles or embroiled in a plot. "Donkey Kong" has a storyline with a tried-and-true angle—Mario the carpenter must dodge or, using a hammer, destroy barrels and fireballs as he ascends girders to try and rescue the fair and unnamed damsel from the clutches of the titular ape. And unlike most earlier videogames—even the hits "Space Invaders" and "Pac-Man"—the playing field of "Donkey Kong" changes around to help avoid monotony.

Yet monotony is what you get when you compare either the home or the arcade

versions with even the graphically cruder "Pick Axe Pete" or "Pitfall," Odyssey and Activision games, respectively, which are "Donkey Kong"-inspired. The stick figure of Pete, for example, has any number of opening and subsequent moves, while Mario has only one. Pete can search for and locate as many protective picks as he likes, while Mario is stuck with the two that appear in the same spots in every playfield. Most pointedly, Pete can maneuver up and down the different levels more easily than can the much less versatile Mario, who can't jump nor climb ladders while he has hammer in hand.

Since Mario's moves are so limited, it's not hard to get him caught in a pattern in which the giant monkey can keep rolling barrels rapidly enough to pin Mario, leaving him to jump helplessly while not advancing. Like the endless loops that can

ing up with such a sophisticated game system. But if I had a hammer, I'd hammer on the cartridge. □

K-RAZY KRITTERS ★ ★ ★

Designed by Torre Meeder and Keith Dreyer. (K-Byte cartridge for Atari 400/800 home computers. \$49.95)

By Suzan D. Prince

Would you spend fifty bucks to get pulverized—and I mean wasted, mashed up, sayonara'd—by an assembly of colorful little space Kritters over and over again, with virtually no shot at reaching the highest game level? K-Byte, one of the first manufacturers of home-computer videogames on cartridges rather than floppy discs, is betting on the affirmative.

As challenging and frustrating as the

column, while an Alien Patrol Kritter cruises from right to left across the top.

You can't destroy an Alien Kritter, only avoid it—as soon as one's hit, it heads for your ship. And although columns remain stationary, if you hesitate too long between hits, Alien Kritters will break away on their own and pursue your ship. Free-Falling Kritters fall in a straight line and can be destroyed easily and even used as a shield against Alien Kritters.

Scoring is complex: Alien Kritters are assigned color-coded point values ranging from 100 (white) to 1,000 (red). Naturally, the reds are the most difficult and dangerous to reach. Free-Fallers' point values also descend from 1,000 to 100. Hit them at the top of the screen and get 1,000; bottom-screen hits get 100—but if you let them fall below a certain level, 100 points are subtracted from your score. Hitting the Alien Patrol Kritter simply earns you another Command Ship (to a maximum of five), and the right to exist a while longer.

For maximum effect and before things get out of hand, remove the two center columns, and perhaps the two columns immediately to the left and right of center. Then try to wipe out one remaining side at a time. Hint: Superbullets (one per screen) can scatter an entire column. To use them you must press the hand control's red button while pushing forward on the joystick. They're also cumulative, and experts will learn to "bank" them for later, deadlier rounds. Pay attention to the soundtrack: The more ominous the throbbing beat, the more your ship is in peril.

Home-computer videogames are generally more challenging than standard home videogames because of their greatly expanded ROM (read-only memory) capacity. "K-Razy Kritters'" designers, in taking full advantage of this extra memory, have concocted a positively irresistible space-attack game simple enough to immediately involve novices, yet difficult enough to keep potential experts sweating Superbullets. □

CONQUEST OF THE WORLD ★ ★ ★

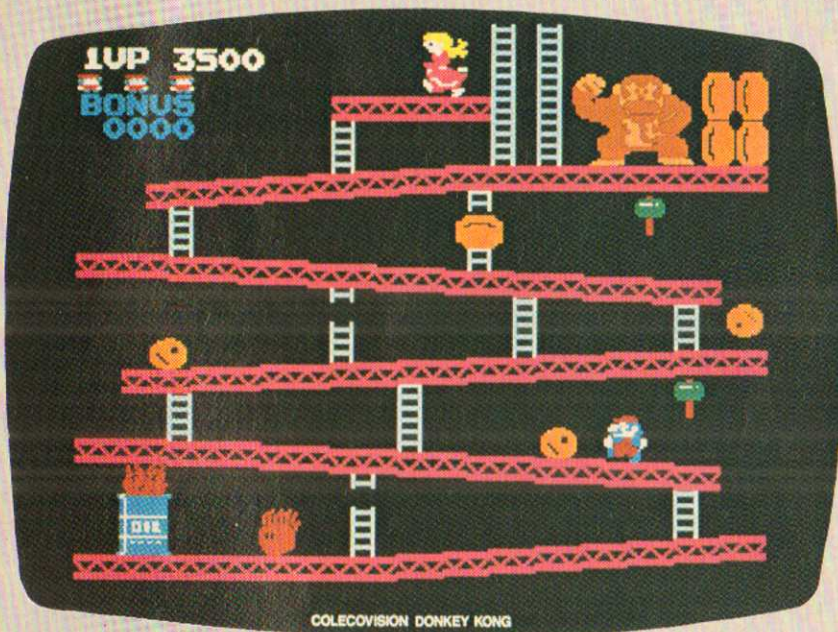
Designed by Ed Averett, based on ideas by Steve Cehner. (Odyssey cartridge, playing board. \$49.95)

By Phil Gerson

Some of the best graphics and the greatest versatility of any of the Odyssey games come with this second in Odyssey's Master Strategy series. Designed for two to six players, these games are uniquely created to be played on a supplied board in conjunction with a TV display, utilizing the Odyssey² console's alphanumeric keyboard.

The graphics, including the images of

Sixteen-year-old Phil Gerson has played virtually every arcade and home videogame of the last 10 years.



"Donkey Kong" from Coleco: less fun than a barrel of monkeys?

occur in "Breakout," this is neither challenging nor fun.

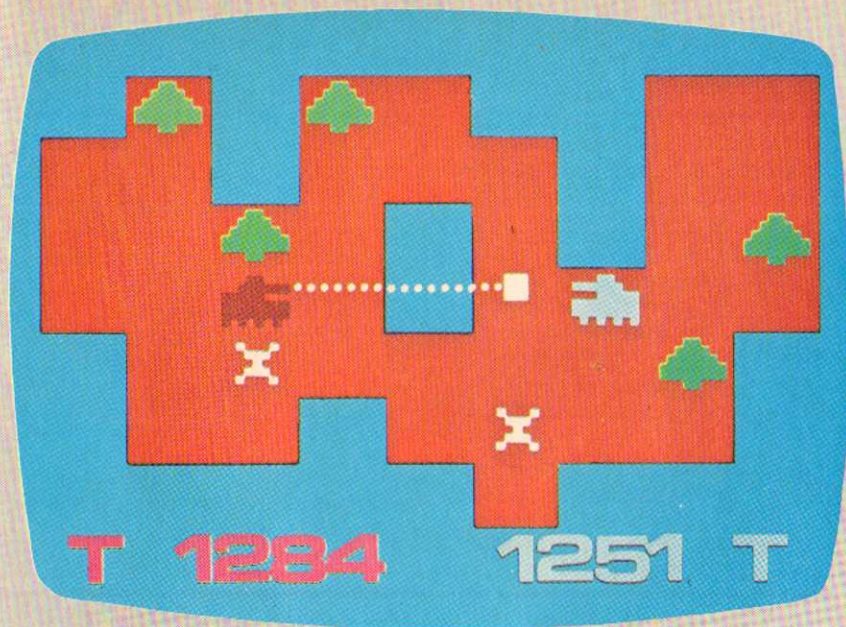
If you do manage to get the bouncing bambino through the second playfield (where Mario picks up rivets while dodging fireballs), you do reach an interesting third playfield where Mario has to jump onto and off of moving elevators in a manner similar to the log-hopping of "Frogger." After that, it's back to the original playfield, though with more obstacles than the first time.

While I managed to reach the third playfield more or less regularly, I couldn't come up with any strategy more incisive than to avoid the barrels. They unpredictably cut corners and otherwise ignore the laws of physics, following no apparent patterns. One tip: Since you get more points for reaching new playfields rapidly than you possibly can by smashing obstacles, go for the girl.

Coleco should be applauded for com-

firm's first release, "K-Razy Shootout" (modeled on "Berzerk"), "K-Razy Kritters," with its 10 play levels, offers opponents a hopeless, no-win situation. Paradoxically, it's that fact plus the vastly superior graphics of this home-computer videogame in contrast to those of standard home videogames which make "Kritters" well worth the expense.

"Kritters'" programmers aren't total fatalists, however. There are ways to escape—at least temporarily—from these cute but deadly creatures. All 10 screens (there are no variations—the action simply gets faster) are set up the same way: eight columns, each containing 10 "beamed" (they look gift-boxed) Alien Kritters, and three Command Ships at the bottom. An animated touch is the Sanitation Crew, a truck that trundles in the Aliens each round, and tidies up by hauling away dead Command Ships. Free-Falling Kritters populate the spaces between each



Odyssey's "Conquest of the World": tanks for the memory.

tanks, subs and planes collapsing into flaming wreckage when hit, are delightful. The tanks, etc., also have much more freedom of movement than those in the company's earlier "Armored Encounter/Sub Chase" cartridge. Land mines, featured in tank battles, show up as dull, grey X's, however, and a hazardous mountain is an unimaginative triangle more suitable for use as an Egyptian pyramid.

"Conquest of the World" begins with each player selecting one of the 43 countries on the game board as a homeland, making alliances with unaffiliated countries and attacking each other to establish "power-base units." The object is to lead the homeland "to world domination through negotiations, conquests and alliances."

Conflicts between countries are settled by onscreen combat (so much for peaceful negotiations). Each player uses the keyboard to select a strafing plane, a tank or a missile-firing sub in order to engage in any of nine types of battle. The winner of two out of three battles wins each war. A battle loss precludes the use of the same weapon in the next battle, so a degree of proficiency with all three is a must. The winner is determined by a "playoff" conducted after all countries have been occupied.

The game has two major drawbacks (or advantages, depending on your point of view)—duration and complexity. Like "Monopoly," or the similar world-domination game "Risk," this is not a game to be started on a casual basis. A six-player confrontation could stretch out over several hours, particularly if all players aren't totally familiar with the rules. The instruction book can be as intimidating to some players as *War and Peace*, and there are voluminous ground rules

regarding alliances, attacks and so on. Also, uneven skill levels can turn combat into lopsided contests. Planes can fly off the screen in any direction, for example, and fly back in at any point, giving a surprise-attack advantage to knowledgeable players.

Such points of disparagement may have been anticipated by the Odyssey designers. The instruction book points out that aficionados of such war board games as those of Avalon Hill and SPI can substitute the cartridge for dice in their own favorite games. And you can play the cartridge alone as a shoot-'em-up: The cartridge cycles through the nine different combat combinations, giving you a chance to practice without getting into a full-scale game.

As a complete game, "Conquest of the World" is worth the effort it takes to learn it and the time required to play. But it isn't up to its price tag as simply a non-board combat game, so be sure you're willing to spend the time before you spend the money. □

BERZERK ★★★

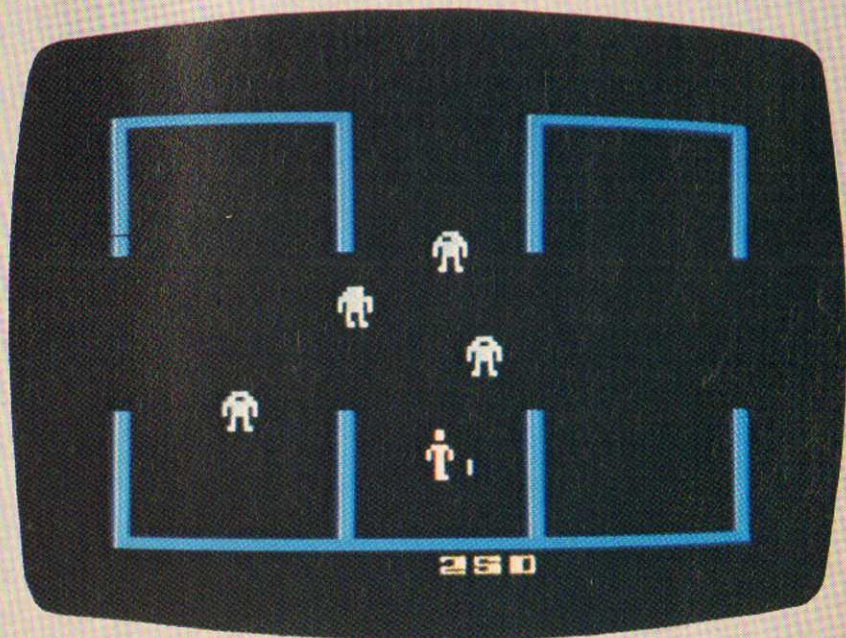
Adapted by Dan Hitchens from the Stern arcade game. (Atari VCS-compatible cartridge. \$31.95)

By Mark Trost

If you have more in common with Wonder Bread than Wonder Woman, "Berzerk" is for you. Unlike other games that ask you to assume the role of a fearless starship pilot or a lionhearted knight, "Berzerk" asks you to be nothing more than a soft, defenseless coward.

The Atari cartridge duplicates all the features and graphics of the popular arcade game with great fidelity. Like the original quarter-eating machine version, the game is best played by gamers with wide yellow streaks, for, in "Berzerk," those comfortable with running away from fights and shooting adversaries in the back will be high scorers.

As the game begins, your hero (or anti-hero) is trapped in a seemingly endless series of electrified mazes (there are actually only 16 that appear randomly) from which it must escape before armed, radar-equipped robots created by a mad scientist known as Evil Otto try to destroy it. If it manages to evade the robots, Evil Otto himself—looking for all the world like the "Happy Face" that adorned virtually every mug, beach towel and bumper sticker of a few years ago—appears to personally electrocute it. To avoid dying its allotted three times per game, your screen persona has a gun with which to kill



Atari's "Berzerk": Take the coward's way out of a robot maze.

the robots and a pair of fast-moving legs that can easily outrun the robots and their bullets, though not the indestructible and fast-moving Otto.

For every robot destroyed you earn 50 points. If your hero manages to destroy all the robots in a maze (usually no less than two and no more than eight) and escape Otto, you receive 10 bonus points per robot offed. For every 1,000 points scored, you earn an extra screen life.

The key to winning (actually, just surviving) is to rely more on mind and legs than on guns. For all of Evil Otto's mad genius, the robots are slow-moving, slow-thinking creatures that can't walk and shoot at the same time, and routinely destroy themselves by walking into electrified walls.

Use the robots' inferior thinking mechanisms to your advantage. Whenever possible, wait near a wall. The robots will sense your hero and begin to walk toward it. When they do, shoot as many as possible before they stop and shoot back. When the remaining robots get close enough to touch it, move away fast. Unable to react swiftly, the robots will usually pile into the death-dealing wall. □

THE INCREDIBLE WIZARD ★ ★ ★
Designed by Tom McHugh, Scot Norris, Julie Malan, with Action Graphics, Inc. (Astrocade cartridge. \$34.95)

By Marc Wielage

This is the kind of game that drives me berserk—understandably, since "The Incredible Wizard" bears more than a few minor resemblances to the arcade game "Berzerk" and Bally's "Wizard of Wor."

In this Astrocade version, you and an optional partner control heroic characters who are exploring a dark underground maze guarded by monsters and other

mystical beings. By dispatching these "Worlings" with Concentrated Unified-Field Disturbance Rifles (where do the designers get these names, anyway?), your heroes are free to explore the opening maze and 11 other levels.

To add a little spice, each level has fewer and fewer protective walls, which makes fending off the monsters correspondingly harder and harder. The last level, appropriately called The Pit, doesn't have any walls at all! At each level, just when you start to get a little smug, the mysterious, blue-cloaked Wizard zips through the tunnels at lightning speed and dispatches your hero in a flash. If your trigger finger is itchy enough to get him first, the screen shimmers, changes color and practically explodes, meanwhile emitting some dazzling sound effects and your score quadruples—some of the most exciting features I've seen in a game of this type.

There are six types of opponents: the dim-witted Burwors, who pop up early in the game and are easily liquidated; the Garwors, who move a bit faster as they chomp down the corridors, and, like the faster Thorwors, are invisible until almost on top of you (although the screen has radar to help you track them); the Worriors, who can shoot your heroes; the Worluks, deadly yellow- and blue-winged butterflies; and the Wizard himself.

You and your partner are each equipped with six heroes, which you use one at a time while exploring the caverns. You can choose among three levels of difficulty, labeled "easy," "medium" and "hard," although the last ought to be called "nearly impossible." Due to the nature of the Astrocade controllers, you can only fire in the direction in which your hero is going. That makes it very tough sometimes to defend your hero when it's in a corner—requiring lightning-

fast reflexes and a lot of practice. It's too bad that the designers couldn't take advantage of the Astrocade console's dual-action joystick knobs to allow aiming the rifle, but *c'est la vie*.

A final point concerning the almost unique partnership option: Having the monsters come after you in endless onslaughts is bad enough, but, depending on how sneaky or how inept your partner is, he or she can also shoot your hero. This ploy merely adds insult to injury. You're a lot better off working as a team, with each player taking one side of the maze and staying as far away from the other side as possible. □

UTOPIA ★ ★ ★

Designed by Mattel. (Mattel Electronics Intellivision-compatible cartridge. \$29.95)

By Marc and Robert Wielage

Have you ever wanted to be a dictator, ruling an island empire, with all of its inhabitants at your beck and call? Then consider taking the road to "Utopia," an unusually thought-provoking videogame.

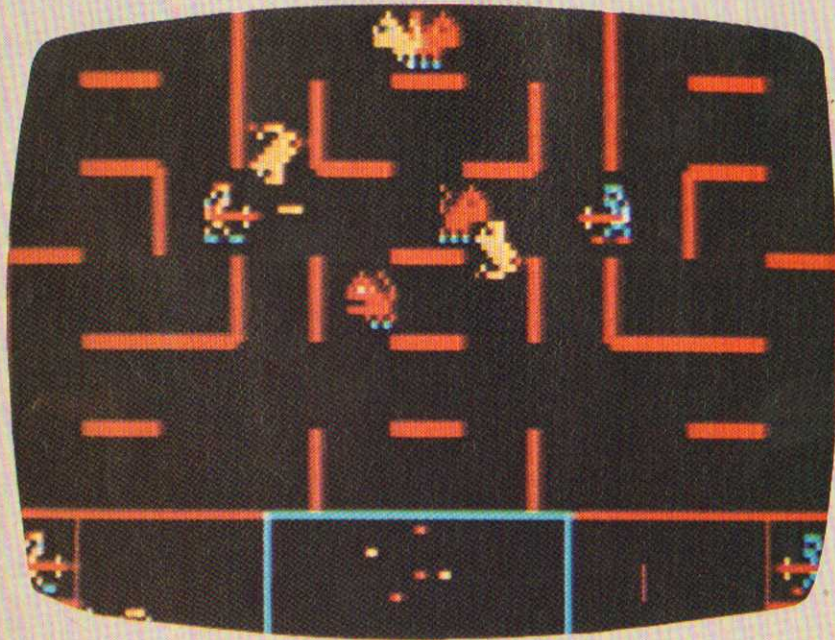
The object is to keep your people well-fed and happy. As ruler (or benevolent despot, if you will), you choose how and where to plant crops, build forts and hospitals, produce and distribute food and do all the other little tasks necessary to run a kingdom. You begin with a treasury of 100 gold bars with which to buy crops, ships, buildings, etc. After each round (about 60 seconds, equivalent to one year), you're awarded bonus points, depending on how "happy" your people are.

This game is most unusual since it takes advantage of all 12 of the Intellivision controller's buttons. By depressing the appropriate button and entering your selection, a preset amount is deducted from your treasury and the desired purchase appears wherever you place your square cursor on the screen. Your purchases have to be selected with great care, since it doesn't take long for all your precious gold bars to disappear.

To add a little spice to the game, a second player can join you as ruler of a hostile island. He or she has the same capabilities as you, including those of building forts (50 gold bars), factories (40) and hospitals (75), launching armed PT boats (40) and even deploying rebel soldiers (30), who can be placed on your opponent's island to stir up trouble.

Not only do you have this other monarch to contend with, but you have to worry about the elements as well, with rainstorms and hurricanes passing over the area at regular intervals watering and destroying your crops. In addition, enemy pirate ships occasionally drop by to sink your fishing boats, which can be guarded by your PT boats.

A fishing boat is probably the most important purchase you can make, since it's



Astrocade's "Incredible Wizard": monsters and magicians.

the one source of income you can control. By keeping the boat squarely in the middle of a rapidly moving school of fish, you earn one gold bar for every two seconds of successful fishing time. Keep your boat away from pirate ships, enemy PT boats and hurricanes.

There're really no hard-and-fast rules for strategy with "Utopia," but it's a good idea to build a factory in the first round, along with a housing unit. Forts are good, too, to help keep pirate ships from sinking important fishing boats. There's not much you can do when your opponent drops rebel soldiers on your island; they destroy anything they land on. Nothing can destroy a

PT boat except a hurricane, and there are usually more than enough places to hide should one of these strike. (We got a kick out of the in joke from the game designer, who designed the whirling hurricane to resemble the symbol used on meteorological maps—big laughs for all you weather buffs out there.)

While you can play "Utopia" as a one-person game, it's much more fun when two players butt heads. There's not a whole heck of a lot of action, but those looking for a break from flashing lights and weary missile-launching fingers might want to try "Utopia" as an amusing mind exercise. While it's not quite as challeng-

ing as chess, "Utopia" is probably one of the few videogames at which parents might be able to beat their kids. □

Cassette

PHASER PATROL ★ ★ ★

Designed by Dennis Caswell. (Arcadia VCS-compatible audiocassette. Sold only with Arcadia's \$69.95 Supercharger module.)

By Walter Salm

As the vodka ads say, here's something that leaves you breathless. This cassette game is that good.

"Phaser Patrol" is a one-player-only, outer-space shoot-'em-up with the kind of super-sharp detail that until now has occurred only in games for home computers. It even utilizes two screen displays: one of space as seen from the player's spaceship cockpit and another that maps out the galaxy. Add to this some super sound effects and excellent joystick action, and you have one of the most sophisticated Atari-compatible games yet.

The game requires more controls than those on the Atari joystick. For instance, if you want to turn off your spaceship's protective shield to conserve energy, you flip the Atari's TV-set selector switch to "black-and-white." If you want to consult the chart of the sectors in the galaxy to scout for alien bandits or to locate your repair stations, you flip the left difficulty switch. You chose the sector you want with your joystick; a touch of the red firing button jumps you through hyperspace and into that sector; and, once you finish your business there, you can flip the viewport display back on with the left difficulty switch.

Under the viewport are four status indicators for your shields, long-range radar, computer and torpedoes. Maneuver a bandit into the aiming square (a number below it tells you the enemy ship's range), and the square turns purple. Fire at that instant, and your torpedo will track the enemy down and blast it.

But the enemy can blast you, too, and direct hits can damage or destroy your radar, computer, shields and torpedoes, requiring a quick trip to the repair shop. Make few trips and blast the enemy efficiently, and you get a higher rating at the end of the game—provided you don't get destroyed yourself.

This game doesn't have the frustration level of other outer-space shoot-'em-ups, because you can actually win most of the time. "Phaser Patrol" is definitely the best game of its kind that I've seen so far. □

Walter Salm, editor of Information Electronics, has been writing about electronics including computers and videogames for 25 years, and is the author of nine books.

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Vectrex: new stand-alone star



picture tube that projects the games' black-and-white graphics.

Black-and-white? Didn't that go out with "Pong" and RCA's Studio II in 1976? Admittedly, the Vectrex's black-and-white screen is a design trade-off. But I think it's a small price to pay for the realistic, high-resolution, three-dimensional and zoom effects found in the eight Vectrex games I recently evaluated. 64K of ROM and an eight-bit microprocessor help make the Vectrex graphics come very close to matching the speed and excitement of arcade games. The

Vectrex also features the most lavish sound effects I've ever heard, clearly superior to those of Atari's VCS and Mattel's

Intellivision, with the only drawback that the sound comes from a small speaker within its lightweight 13x9x11-inch plastic cabinet (about the size of a nine-inch portable TV set). Unfortunately, there's no ear-phone jack, so you could drive your family and friends up the wall—nor can you play the great sound effects through stereo speakers.

Vectrex's price—under \$200—is comparable to those of most other deluxe programmable games, though the system's more expensive than any other stand-alone game. It comes set up for one player, with a 7½x2½x1½-inch removeable joystick controller that snaps back into the console when not in use. An additional HP-3050 controller can be purchased for about \$30 and used for two-player battles.

I found the spring-loaded joystick to be a little small for my admittedly fumbling fingers, especially for delicate moves on games such as the "HyperChase" car race. On the

other hand, it worked well on "Star Trek—The Motion Picture" (which should really be called "Star Trek—The Game"), "Berzerk" and most of the others.

Playing Cards

The Vectrex game carts are about the same size as those for Atari's VCS, and plug into a slot in the side of the console. Volume and brightness can be adjusted, and there's a reset button to manually start the game over. The screen is recessed about two inches to help keep ambient light from interfering with the display.

Thirteen games are now available for the console: "Armor Attack," "Space Wars," "Star Hawk," "Rip-Off," "Solar Quest" (Cinematronics), "Scramble" (Konami), "Berzerk" (Stern) and "Star Trek" (Paramount), along with five other GCE-developed games: "Blitz!," "Clean Sweep," "HyperChase," "Cosmic Chasm" and "Mine Storm." The last is an "Asteroids"-like game built into the console that pits the player against wave after wave of spinning alien ships and saucers in a space mine field, as opposed to a meteor swarm, but is every bit as challenging and deadly as the original.

Color Overlays

To get around the limitation of black-and-white graphics, Vectrex provides large, colorful plastic overlays that pop into the console. One problem I found with the overlays is that they have a tendency to become scratched and worn with use, but the manufacturer says they'll make replacements available at a modest charge.

Some people might not care for the graphics, since they all tend to resemble a bare-bones outline drawing of the game fields and objects. It's the 3-D and zoom effects and the overlays that make these graphics stand out.

All things considered, this stand-alone is certainly interesting enough to offer a solution to the TV set monopoly problem. □

"I'm gonna watch *Dallas!*"

"I'm gonna play my videogame!"

If there's any major change electronic luxuries have made in the American home, it's the strife and struggle over who gets to monopolize the TV set. Many families have a VCR, a disc player, cable TV and a videogame console . . . and just one color TV set. One solution is to buy a few TV sets. Another, cheaper, cure for electronic congestion is to get a "stand-alone" videogame console that comes with its own screen.

3-D and Zoom

The Vectrex model HP-3000, manufactured by California-based General Consumer Electronics, is one of the newest game consoles to come with its own built-in TV screen—well, not exactly a TV screen. The manufacturer calls it a "vector display," an 8x6½-inch