

# Video Review

INCORPORATING  
**HOME VIDEO**  
MAGAZINE

**\$1.95**

THE WORLD AUTHORITY ON HOME VIDEO

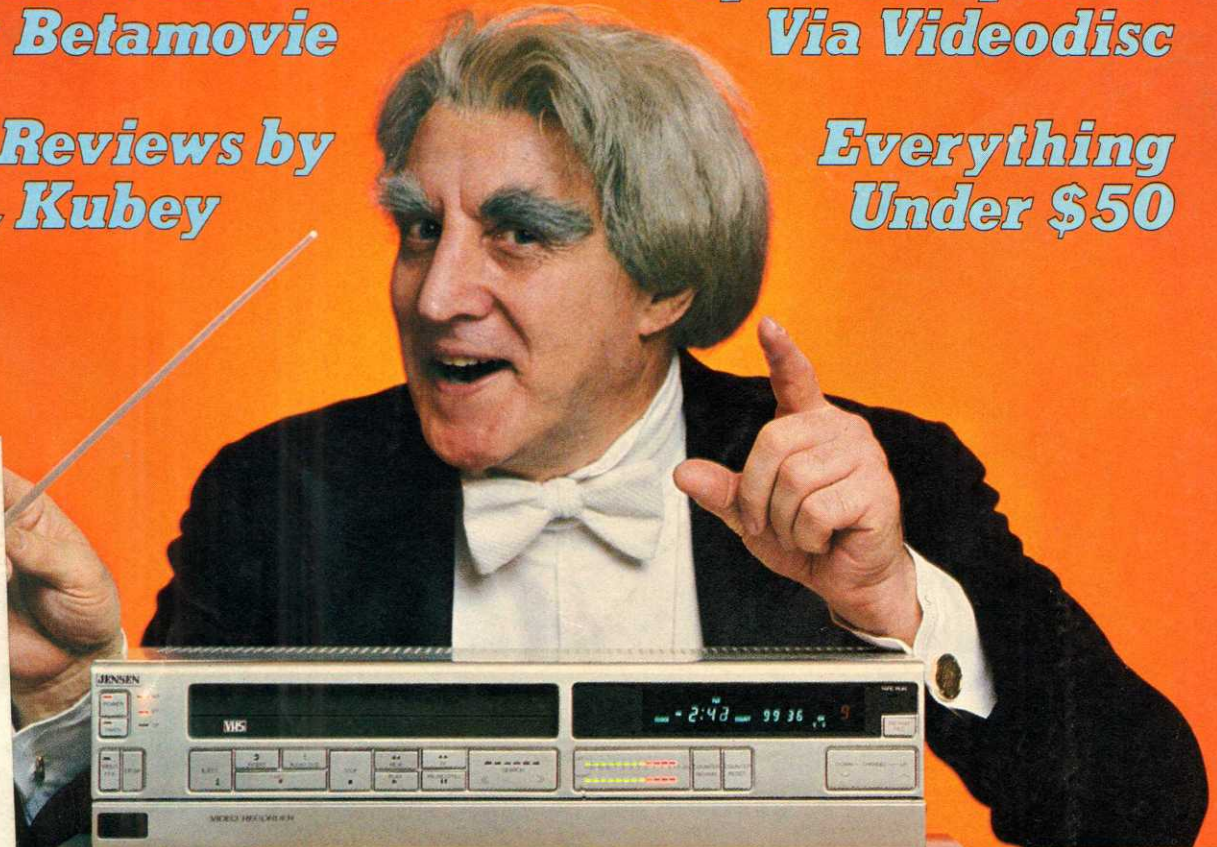
## **A NEW CLASSIC?** **VHS GOES HIGH-BROW WITH HI-FI**

*Exclusive First Test:*  
*Sony's Betamovie*

*Super Computers*  
*Via Videodisc*

*Game Reviews by*  
*Albin, Kubey*

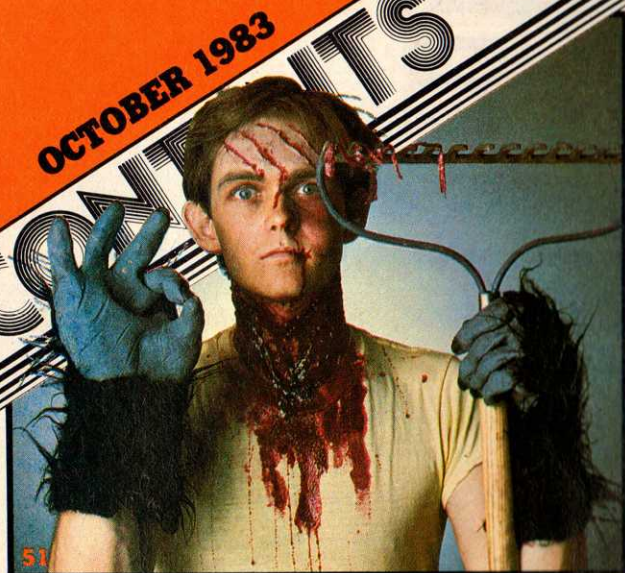
*Everything*  
*Under \$50*



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OCTOBER 1983

# COMMENTS



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GLITCHES, FLICKERS AND  
FREEZE-FRAMES

# Ottumwa, Annie and Porklips Now



## Exer-Game Bicycle

If you've been tantalized over the last six months by those two-minute spots on the evening news about the Aerobics Joystick, good news. It's actually coming out.

If you've missed all the publicity about this new device, you'll be glad to know that it combines two of America's favorite fads, so people involved with them have time for both.

This absolutely for-real device interfaces between a standard exercise bike and an Atari VCS or 400/800/1200XL computers. Suncom, the company behind the ingenious gadget, claims it can be installed in 10 minutes or less. Said to work best with Activision's *Enduro* road-race game, the Aerobics Joystick allows all the muscles in your body to participate in the game play: The faster you pedal, the faster the car on the screen moves. (When you have to pedal yourself, *Enduro* seems aptly named.)

The Aerobics Joystick also works with shoot-'em-up games (in which everything goes faster as you pedal more furiously) and Suncom is hoping that games specifically designed for it will be

developed by other companies.

The addition of massive muscle manipulation to the normally minuscule maneuverings of videogames promises to add at least one other element: pain. After all, the mild discomfort of "joystick finger" fades beside the agony of de feet after pedaling miles just for the thrill of victory.

But the best thing about The Aerobics Joystick is that it promotes the efficient use of time. You can kill two birds with one stone (so to speak) as you train for *Phoenix* and the *Tour de France* at the same time. And, if you play *Burgertime*, you can work off last night's hamburger even as you make another. (Fredric Paul) □



Any self-respecting M\*A\*S\*H alcoholic can tell you that the claim to fame of Ottumwa, Iowa, is that Corporal Radar O'Reilly is from there. But Ottumwa Mayor Jerry Parker would disagree: Ottum-

wa's claim to fame is, in fact, that it's the Video Game Capital of the World, so called by Iowa Governor Terry Branstad, unnamed Atari representatives and Glen Braswell, a spokesperson for the Amusement Game Manufacturers Association.

How is it that a little town (population 27,000) in the Midwest, rather than some sprawling settlement in Silicon Valley, is the Video Game Capital of the World?

It's all because of a videogame arcade on Main Street that sits between a shoe store and an optometrist's office. This arcade, the Twin Galaxies, is no ordinary arcade: It houses the Twin Galaxies International Scoreboard. "People call in with their scores," explains Mayor Parker, "to see how they compare with the top scores. We probably get 40 calls a day." When someone calls in with a score on a particular game that beats all previous scores on that game, it's automatically recorded in the computer (which holds the top 25 scores on all the games). The player must then confirm the score (no, not by replaying the entire game) by signing a sworn statement to that effect.

They take videogaming pretty seriously in Ottumwa. "Ours is really a family center," says Mayor Parker. "No smoking, no drinking—if a kid makes trouble, he's not allowed back." In fact, at the Ottumwa medical center, they ran tests to determine if certain kids were inherently better at videogames than others and if playing the games has an effect on the physiology and psychology of the kids. The conclusion: It doesn't hurt kids or the family any more than Little League baseball.

(That should come as great news to our Surgeon General, who's been skeptical, at best, about the short- and long-term effects of gaming on America's youth.)

I just can't help wondering if all the RF interference from the games would have fouled up Radar's ability to hear things 10 miles away. (A.W.R.) □

## School/Work

What's wrong with college students these days? Particularly at Stanford, many of them seem to be losing touch with traditional academic values—they're spurning Frisbee, cutting down their exposure to rock 'n' roll, walking past *Three Stooges* retrospectives. Instead, they're shutting themselves up with their computers and *earning money*.

These kids mean business. Whether designing videogames or firming up software deals, so many computer brats are running their own campus-based computer companies that Stanford decided to form a Center for Entrepreneurship—sort of a junior capitalists' club for advice and contacts. Harvard and Dart-



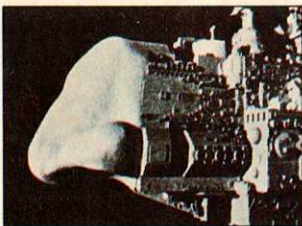


mouth are joining the IC league and along with Carnegie-Mellon are reportedly also developing such centers. Should these schools start giving extra credit for such student businesses, a new award, particularly pleasing to proud parents, would be in order: *summa cum cash*. (F.L.)□

## Reel Spoofs

Critic Andrew Serious called it a "definite must." To Rex Speed, the movie was "a theatrical blockbuster." To Pauline Stale, the movie was "hilarious satire."

To have all three critics agree on any movie is almost a joke in itself, but these folks are (sort of) serious in their praise for *Reel Spoofs: Movies That Poke Fun at Other Movies*. Besides, what else could they say about "Murder in a Mist," in which a sexy private eye tries to stop the mob from



dealing heroin inside feminine-deodorant spray cans? What else could they say about "My Donut with Annie," which records the intellectual parrying of two flower ladies during afternoon tea?

These are but two of the 10 take-offs in *Reel Spoofs*, which has been distributed to theaters around the country by Serious Business Co. and is scheduled for TV showings "sometime soon." Other titles in the collection include "Porklips Now," "Mandarin Oranges," "\$20.01: A Chinese Food Odyssey," "The Good, The Bad and The Furry," and "Illegal Alien." For the most irreverent, there's "Dog of Nazareth," directed by Obedience Windsock. (M.R.)□

## ROM on The Road

There's a little-known fact that has escaped the history books but it's important to remember nonetheless: You can chart a country's course by the products of its peddlers.

Take the '50s, for instance, when calm and order reigned supreme. That was the decade door-to-door vacuum cleaner salespeople really cleaned up. Or consider the '60s, when social relationships took on new forms and meanings, and The Graduate was told to go into "Plastics." Then think how popular Tupperware parties were and how they (temporarily) put the lid on selling to and by strangers. The list goes on. In the "Me Decade" of the '70s, Mary Kay Cosmetics get-togethers experienced the blush of success.

Where does that leave us in the '80s? With computer peddlers, of course: A California-based company has put ROM on the road. Ekos of San Rafael has a team of computer salespersons spread across the nation, selling computers, software and peripherals door-to-door and through home parties. The company's line includes Franklin computers, which use software compatible with Atari, Commodore 64 and several IBM personal computers.

The company offers a five-hour "sales-training session" for \$99 and offers bonuses for enlisting new sellers. What's more, joining the Ekos sales force enables you to deduct your own home computer from your taxes—as a business expense. What better sign of the times could you ask for? (M.R.)□

## Air Fare

It's a bird. It's a plane. No, it's a videogame!

Videogames are reaching new heights as airlines test a new flight

frill: videogame trays. Altus Corporation of San Jose, CA, and Air Video of Toronto, Ontario, have both developed game trays that are being tested by Canadian Pacific Airlines—and being looked at by several other airlines. The idea is that instead of flipping down the usual beige food tray, you'd be able—for a fee, of course—to flip down a game to play.

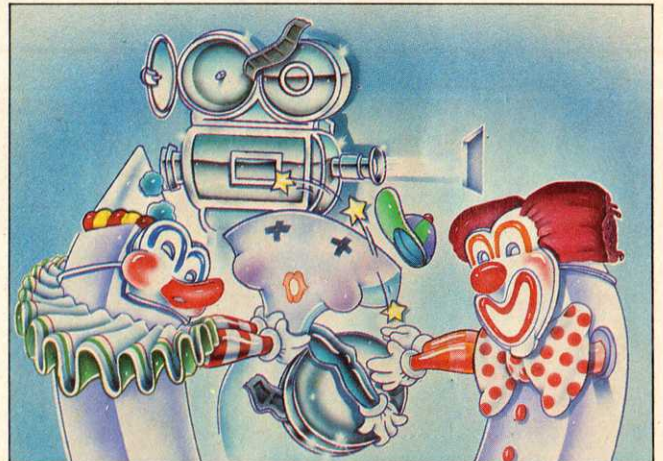
Both companies believe their game trays would also be appropriate in situations other than air travel. Charles Roome, a spokesperson for Altus, says the company "has had inquiries from children's hospitals, where the boredom factor is great." Michael Thorek, Air Video presi-

And speaking of captive audiences, we can be pretty sure that if prison officials go for the games, they won't be looking at *Bank Heist*. (A.W.R.)□

## Bozo The Pirate

Video piracy is no laughing matter. But when a pair of video clowns stole a print of *Return of the Jedi* from a Santa Maria, CA theater, they had the audience on the floor. Since the theft was at gunpoint, however, probably no one in that captive audience laughed.

Perhaps these felonious clowns were influenced by Kubrick's *The Killing*, in which a thief uses a



clown mask disguise. Could this mean that the thieves might be identified by their m.o.s—*movie operandi*? (F.L.)□

But as any videogamer knows, it's not the packaging—tray or otherwise—that counts, but the game in the package. While we don't know which games will be offered to air travellers, hospital patients or other captive audiences, we've got some pretty good guesses about what you won't see.

Two definite losers for air fare would be *Parachute* and *Air Traffic Controller*. Something about them hits a little too close to home. As for hospitals, *Microsurgeon* is probably not the best therapy. Amtrak, which is reportedly also checking out the trays, should definitely stay away from *Locomotion*—too realistic.



clown mask disguise. Could this mean that the thieves might be identified by their m.o.s—*movie operandi*? (F.L.)□

## Did You Hear The One About...

A genius of a home putterer invented a computer with the greatest memory in history. He introduced into the memory every fact about human existence known to humans; details of every work of art were included; stories and fables were included.

By the time it was done, the computer was the repository of all human information, fact and fiction. It could call on this information to quickly answer even the most obscure questions in less than a minute.

One day the man sat down to ask it the one question that had bothered him all his life:

"Is there," he typed in, "a God?"

After only a few seconds, the answer appeared on the screen.

"There is now."□

# Stereo TV: sounds like '84

## More Than Music Coming?

By Lucy Huffman

WASHINGTON—American viewers may be more than ready for stereo TV, but their TV sets won't be until early next year, at the soonest. That's when the Federal Communications Commission and the nation's broadcasters and cable operators will probably conclude a series of efforts to upgrade the audio portion of TV signals.

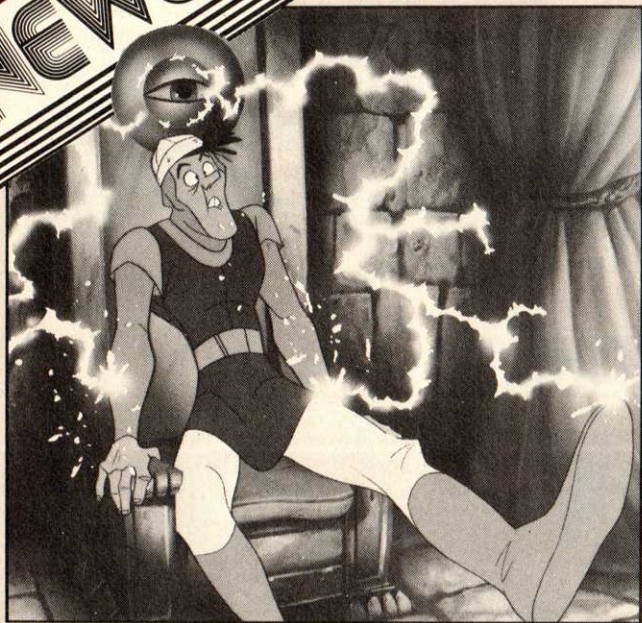
Last summer, the FCC took a major step toward bringing better-sounding music to TV viewers' ears with a proposal to lift restrictions on how broadcasters can use a small but crucial portion of their signals. If the FCC approves the proposal, which is likely in early '84, the tiny band could be used not only to make TV sets sound better, but also to do such things as help bring program information to the hearing- and the sight-impaired, or to broadcast music.

Free, over-the-air stereo telecasts (as opposed to those requiring home satellite receivers or cable-TV/FM-radio hook-ups) won't begin until broadcasters, cable operators and TV-set manufacturers can agree on a standard for stereo broadcasting and cablecasting. But

that's a standard the Reagan-era FCC, with its predilection toward "marketplace forces," refuses to set. The FCC argues that viewers, through their buying habits, will eventually select for themselves the best standard. But the TV industries say that without a standard, both the consumer equipment as well as the professional gear involved in stereo TV will be too expensive and quickly obsolete unless all parties agree on the technology.

However, the FCC's action of last summer and its apparent commitment to lifting all restrictions on the stereo-TV band could be leading to renewed industry efforts to pick a standard. An industry study group scheduled to finish research on several proposals by early fall could soon after recommend a single standard. In fact, some experts believe that TV sets capable of receiving stereo broadcasts could be in the stores by next spring.

Still, broadcasters and cable operators may decide that the financial pay-off for bringing viewers stereo sound may not warrant the investment in equipment to upgrade their facilities. If that's the case, says the FCC, the stereo band can be used for a number of more esoteric and potentially lucrative ventures such as delivering electronic messages to business. □



Dirk the Daring in *Dragon's Lair*: home-coming knight.

## 'DRAGON'S LAIR' BREATHES VID FIRE

By Abigail Reifsnnyder

NEW YORK—Coleco, which has the home rights to the first laser disc arcade game, *Dragon's Lair*, has announced that it will be coming out with interfaces for laser disc players and its ColecoVision game console and new Adam computer.

The arcade *Dragon's Lair* has been achieving a success that, while impressive, is not surprising given the fully animated, Disney-style visuals which allow the player to manipulate detailed cartoon characters rather than highly stylized, computer-generated characters. In fact, Coleco purchased the home rights to the game from manufacturer Starcom (for two million dollars) before it even made it to arcades. (For more on home applications of laser disc-microcomputer technology, see "The Home Computer-Video-disc Connection: The Best of Both Worlds?" page 34.)

Because of *Dragon's Lair's* success, Starcom plans to release a second game, *Space Ace*, before the winter holidays.

Don Bluth, a former Walt Disney animator, will again be doing the animation. The game will feature Ace, whose girlfriend has been kidnapped by the evil Borf. Borf is trying to control Earth by using the Infantaray, which turns people into children.

At presstime, no one had yet bought the home rights to *Space Ace*. □

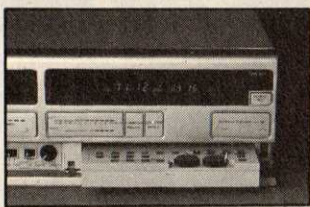
## Hi-Fi Format Flip-Flop

By Robert Gerson

NEW YORK—Late-breaking news from the VHS-format VCR makers indicates that VHS Hi-Fi won't be here till June '84. The announcement of an agreement among 10 major companies on standardization of the format changes the plan for a year-end introduction of super-audio VCRs much like the current Beta Hi-Fi models.

The agreement calls for the same double-layer (or, as it's now called, "depth multiplex") recording explained in Len

Feldman's special report (page 24). The only major change is the selection of the newly



VHS Hi-Fi: long time coming.

developed PNR noise reduction system in preference to Dolby and dbx.

Joining in the standardization

agreement were Akai, Canon, Clarion, Hitachi, JVC (which will make Jensen's model), Matsushita, Mitsubishi, Orion, Sharp and Tokyo Sanyo. Tokyo Sanyo makes the VHS-format VCRs sold here by its affiliate Fisher, while its parent company, Sanyo Electronic, produces Beta VCRs. Panasonic, a subsidiary of Matsushita, said it plans to ship VHS Hi-Fi recorders to American videotape duplicators by January so that Hi-Fi prerecorded cassettes will be available when the VCR is launched next year. □

**"H**igh-tech," "high-res," "hi-fi,"—all the buzzwords of better video—tend to mean one thing: high finance. But, as smart shoppers know, it doesn't have to be that way.

While glamour products such as VCRs, videodisc players and videocameras are not exactly pocket-change purchases yet, there is a wide array of less glamorous video products that can be found for as little as 50 dollars apiece—or less. Everybody knows that relatively simple stuff, such as cables, connectors, head-cleaning cassettes, other maintenance products and blank tapes, not only costs less than \$50 apiece, but also rarely costs more than \$50. But there's also a variety of lesser-known products priced under \$50 that can enhance and upgrade an existing home entertainment center. Such equipment ranges from a home computer to joysticks to black boxes to equipment storage modules.

Keeping up with the video revolution can be positively restrictive. Though suggested retail prices of

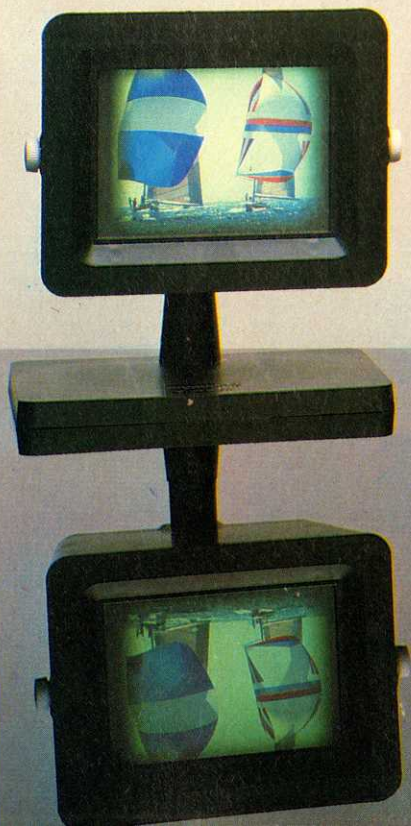
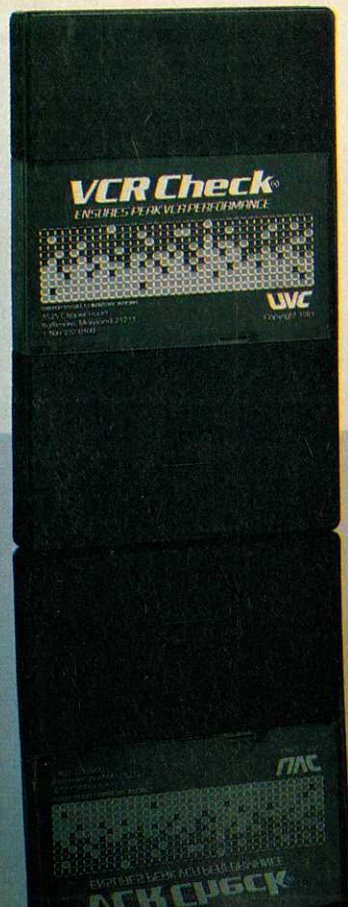
home computers seem to be lowered on an almost daily basis, only the Timex/Sinclair 1000 lists for under \$50 (which means, of course, that at the right time and the right place, it can probably be had for even less). The computer features the programming language BASIC built in and a membrane (flat, no keys) keyboard, and there's a wide selection of software available for it. Though not equipped with the same computing power as higher-priced computers, it does make learning about computers affordable, and can be used to do such things as titling home-made video productions and controlling a VCR.

### VCS Rx

For the videogame addict who can't get any satisfaction from his or her VCS anymore, there's one alternative that's definitely cheaper than buying a whole new game system: the Starpath Supercharger. Originally priced \$69.95, Starpath recently reduced the price of the Supercharger (which comes with a game,

*An under-\$50 fiesta—everything from cleaners and converters to a computer. Pictured below, from left: VCR Check for \$39.95; Ambico telecine converter for \$49.95; Discwasher disc drive cleaner for \$24.95; Channel Master Video Control center for \$49.95; Rhoades Teledaptor for \$29.95; BP Electronics accessories—stabilized and RF converter for \$45; Discwasher Pointmaster for \$16.95; Fuji video head cleaner for \$34.40; and Timex Sinclair 1000 for \$49.95.*

# HOME-VIDEO SHOPPE EVERYTHING



Phaser Patrol) to \$44.95. The Supercharger plugs into the cartridge slot of the VCS and attaches to an audiocassette player, increasing the memory of the VCS 50-fold. The games, on audiocassette, are, as a result, capable of better graphics and more complicated game play.

Many videogamers believe that the way a joystick functions can make or break a game; some games just don't seem to be designed to play well with the joystick that came with the game console or computer. While there are joysticks that cost as much as \$100, the vast majority are priced between \$19.95 and \$44.95, depending on the materials used to make the joystick and on the system with which it is compatible. Joysticks for the ColecoVision are, for example, almost always a good five dollars more expensive than those for the VCS. Trackball controllers are consistently priced just below \$50.

Two joysticks stand out by virtue of their uniqueness. The first is Amiga's Joyboard, priced at \$39.95, which comes with the skiing game *Mogul Maniac* (reviewed this issue, page 111). The second is the Aerobics Joystick from Suncom. Priced at \$39.95, the Aerobics Joystick hooks up between a game console and an exercise bicycle. Directional movement is still controlled

**Move over, Monty Hall. The big deals of these video days range from joysticks to furniture to computers – each for less than \$50. But only certain makes and models go for that certain price.**

by a standard joystick, but the speed of the player's on-screen character depends on how fast the player cycles.

Significantly less expensive than replacement joysticks are joystick adaptors, usually pieces of hard plastic that attach to joysticks to make them easier to handle. These range in price from \$3.95 to \$9.95. Three companies make adaptors that hook up between the game console and the joystick to allow for rapid fire. Newport Controls offers the Prostick Accelerator for \$12.95; Questar makes the Blaster!, also for \$12.95; and Suncom offers the Uzi-Fire (suggested retail unavailable at presstime). Other companies that make joysticks or adaptors include Atari, C & T, Comrex, Creative Computer Enhancement, Discwasher, D-Zyne, Entertainment Systems, Koch, Laskey, Push-A-Matic, Pusher Recoton, Wico and Zircon. (Continued)

Photo: Aaron Rezny

# R'S GUIDE TO (ALMOST) UNDER \$50



For many videophiles, a game console or a computer is just one device among many pieces of equipment that all need to be hooked up to their TV sets or monitors. The mass of wires and the bother of attaching and detaching equipment are nearly enough to drive some people wild. Fortunately, there are switchers. Unfortunately, many of these cost over \$100 and some as high as \$199. But there are models that can be found for under \$50. (For in-depth information on switchers—including possible trade-offs when buying the less expensive models—see "The Secret of Video Super-Systems: Switchers," April '83 *VR*.) Companies that offer switchers priced under \$50 include Amco, BP Electronics, Channel Master, Colormax, Fidelitone/Permo, Jasco, Marshall Electronics, Rhodes National, Video Link, Video Commander and Viditek.

Switchers, however, are not the only "black boxes" that can spruce up a video system for less than \$50. Magnavox offers a cable converter (model MX-40CCBK02, \$27.50) that converts all standard, mid- and super-band CATV channels to UHF range for any programmable VCR. What that means is that the cable channels can bypass the cable box, thus retaining the functions of the VCR's remote control (which are usually lost with cable hookup).

For video dubbing or sending video signals to a second TV set or monitor, enhancers, or signal amplifiers, can come in handy. Colormax offers the model H-310 Indoor Signal Amplifier for \$21.95, and Video Link makes the model 13100 Signal Amplifier/DA for \$29.99. These improve reception by boosting the RF

*Continued on page 129*

## WHO MAKES WHAT IN UNDER-\$50 GEAR...

**AMBICO INC.**, 101 Horton Ave., PO Box 807, Lynbrook, NY 11583 (516) 887-3434. Tele-Cine Converter.

**AMCO ELECTRONICS**, 9181 Gazette Ave. Chatsworth, CA 91311 (213) 882-9027. RF Switcher.

**BP ELECTRONICS**, 260 Motor Parkway, Hauppauge, NY 11799 (516) 435-8778. RF Switcher, Image Enhancer.

**CARDINAL INDUSTRIES**, 21-01 51st Ave., Long Island City, NY 11101 (212) 784-3000. Cassette/Game Storage.

**CASE MANUFACTURING CO.**, 2601 Greengate Dr., Greensboro, NC 27406 (919) 272-1133. Electronic Furniture.

**CHANNEL MASTER**, Ellenville, NY 12428 (914) 647-5000. RF Switcher.

**COMREX INTERNATIONAL, INC.**, 3701 Skypark Dr., Suite #120, Torrance, CA 90505 (213) 373-0280. Joysticks.

**COVER CRAFT CORP.**, PO Box 555, Amherst, NH 03011 (603) 889-6811. Carrying Cases, Dust Covers.

**CREATIVE COMPUTER ENHANCEMENT**, PO Box 545, Franklin Park, IL 60131 (312) 451-9270. Joysticks.

**C&T CREATIONS**, 127 Weybosset St., Providence, RI 02903 (401) 331-3200. Joystick Add-ons.

**DISCWASHER**, 1407 N. Providence Rd., PO Box 6021, Columbia, MO 65205 (314) 449-0941. Joysticks, Joystick Add-ons, Video/Computer Care.

**D-ZYNE VIDEO PRODUCTS**, 64 Dayton Rd., Waterford, CT 06385 (203) 443-8354. Joysticks.

**ELECTRA CONCEPTS CORP.**, 125 Wilbur Place, Bohemia, NY 11716 (516) 567-1440. Joysticks.

**ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEMS**, PO Box 376, Oakhurst, NJ 07755. Joystick Add-ons.

**EUCALYPTUS RECORDS**, Samoset Building, 128 Singleton St., Woonsocket, RI 02895 (212) 795-0560. Video Game Music.

**GUSDORF CORP.**, 6900 Manchester Ave., St. Louis, MO 63143. Electronic Furniture.

**KOCH CO.**, 14252 Culver Dr., Suite A187, Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 857-4208. Joystick Add-On.

**KRAFT SYSTEMS**, 450 West California, Vista, CA 92083 (619) 724-7146. Joysticks.

**LASKEY VIDEO DISTRIBUTING**, 20 Morning Dr., Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 857-6370. Joystick Add-On.

**MAGNAVOX/NAP CONSUMER ELECTRONICS**, I-40 & Straw Plains Pike, Knoxville, TN 37914 (615) 521-4316. Channel Converter.

**MUSTANG VIDEO**, PO Box 8861, Trenton, NJ 08650. Video Library System.

**PERMO INTERNATIONAL**, 3001 Malmo Rd., Arlington Heights, IL 60005 (312) 640-2450. RF Switcher.

**PUSH-A-MATIC**, 22458 Venture Blvd., Suite "E", Woodland Hills, CA 91364 (213) 347-6280. Joystick Add-On.

**PUSHER SALES, INC.**, PO Box 6588, Woodland Hills, CA 91311 (213) 341-0330. Cassette/Game Storage, Joystick Add-Ons.

**QUESTAR CONTROLS INC.**, 670 NW Pennsylvania Ave., Chehalis, WA 98352 (206) 748-8614. Joysticks, Joystick Add-Ons.

**THE RACK FACTORY**, 730 Perez, PO Box 7331, San Antonio, TX 78207 (512) 227-7734. Cassette/Game Storage.

**RECOTON CORP.**, 46-23 Crane St., Long Island City, NY 11101 (212) 392-6442. Stereo Simulator, Joystick Add-Ons, Cables, Connectors, Image Enhancers.

**RECREATIONAL PRODUCTS MFG.**, 2142 W. Fulton, Chicago, IL 60612 (312) 226-0930. Cassette/Game Storage.

**RHOADES NATIONAL CORP.**, PO Box 1052, Highway 99 East, Columbia, TN 38401 (615) 381-9001. Stereo Simulator.

**SOUTHERN CASE INC.**, PO Box 28147, Raleigh, NC 27611. Carrying Cases.

**SPECTRAVIDEO INC.**, 39 W. 37th St., New York, NY 10018 (212) 869-7911. Joysticks.

**STARPATH CORP.**, 20005 De La Cruz Blvd., Santa Clara, CA 95050 (408) 970-0200. Video Game Enhancer.

**SUNCOM INC.**, 650 E. Anthony Trail, Northbrook, IL 60062 (312) 291-9780. Joysticks, Joystick Add-ons.

**TG PRODUCTS**, 1104 Summit Ave., Suite 110, Plano, TX 75074 (214) 424-8568. Joysticks.

**TIMEX COMPUTER CORP.**, PO Box 2655, Waterbury, CT 06725 (203) 573-5000. Home Computer.

**VCR CHECK**, 3532 Clipper Rd., Baltimore, MD 21211 (800) 232-0100. VCR Test Kit.

**VIDEO LINK**, 13038 Satcoy St., North Hollywood, CA 91605 (213) 765-9611. RF Switcher, Image Enhancer.

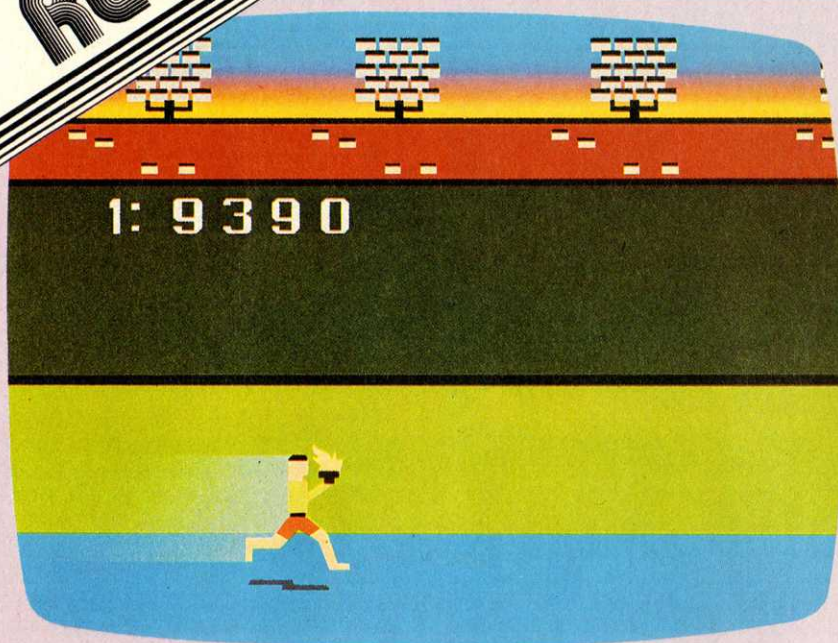
**VIDEO SPECIALTIES**, 33045 Automation Dr., Mt. Clemens, MI 48043 (313) 792-5966. Cassette/Game Storage-Dust Cover.

**WICO CORP.**, 6400 W. Gross Point Rd., Niles, IL 60648 (312) 647-7500. Joysticks.

**ZIRCON INTERNATIONAL, INC.**, 475 Vandell Way, Campbell, CA (408) 866-9600. Joysticks.



# Tut, a Mogul and other maniacs



*Fatigue and boredom are multiplied by 10 events in Decathlon.*

## **DECATHLON ★ ★**

**Designed by David Crane. (Activision, VCS-compatible cartridge, \$34.95)**

**By Craig Kubey**

*Decathlon* recalls the story of the one-armed violinist. Perhaps the quality of his performance is beside the point: It's impressive that he can play at all. Here, it's admirable to make *any* home videogame of something as complicated as a 10-event competition in track and field. But just as a one-armed violinist doesn't fare well when placed onstage next to Isaac Stern, Activision's *Decathlon* earns no gold medals when contrasted either to the real sport or to leading home videogames.

Whether you're a track-and-field expert or know so little that you think the pole vault is a bank safe in Warsaw, *Decathlon* is a bore. If you *do* know a lot about track and field, *Decathlon* is an *annoying* bore: it could easily have been a more realistic imitation of the sport, but the folks at Activision didn't complete their homework.

The game is a bore for the same reason Atari's infamous *Video Olympics* was a bore: too much repetition, repetition, repetition. In *Decathlon*, the repetition is not on the screen but in the living room: Every one of the events requires largely identical

*Craig Kubey wrote The Winners' Book of Video Games, which Playboy called "the best videogame volume in the universe."*

effort by the player. This is the effort of jerking the joystick back and forth. This is fascinating for three seconds and tolerable for five or six. Thereafter, however, it begins to decline in appeal.

The game also requires more effort than it's worth: I got so overheated jerking the joystick through a mere 56-second 400 meters that I had to take off my shirt. The 1,500 meters is a double feature, providing the exquisite boredom of moving a joystick back and forth for roughly four minutes *plus* the fatigue associated with the same effort.

On a superficial level, *Decathlon* does faithfully replicate the Olympic decathlon program. The cartridge's best feature is its first: an electronic-tone rendition of part of the stirring Olympic anthem. Then it provides competition in all 10 of the official decathlon events, and in almost the exact Olympic order: There's the 100 meter dash, long jump, shot put, high jump, 400 meter dash, 110 meter hurdles, discus throw, pole vault, javelin throw and 1,500 meter run (in the Olympics, the order of the hurdles and the discus is reversed).

But, on further inspection, many inaccuracies are found. The little man on the screen—who looks the same regardless of which (of up to four) players he represents—runs with the same precise form whether the event is the 1,500 meters or the javelin. He performs a creditable Fosbury Flop in the high jump, but doesn't pivot in the shot put, even though Parry O'Brien revolutionized the weight event a few years

before Activision began work on this cartridge (O'Brien won the gold medal in Helsinki in 1952 and in Melbourne in 1956).

Although the tiny athlete gets to fall into an airbag in the high jump and pole vault, there is no special area into which to throw the shot or discus or javelin or into which to leap in the long jump: Instead of dirt or sand or grass, it's just more of the same old blue panel that serves as track and runway.

With the real Olympics set to begin next July in Los Angeles, there would be heavy appeal in a videogame that excitingly portrayed the centerpiece sport of the Olympic Games, track and field. But *Decathlon* dishonors its athletic namesake. For \$34.95, you can get into a track event at Los Angeles next summer or you can buy a pair of running shoes. Either of these, or most anything else, would be a much better use of your money than spending it on this disappointing cartridge. □

## **SAFECRACKER ★ ★ ★**

**Designed by Marvin Mednick. (Imagic, Intellivision-compatible cartridge, \$39.95)**

**By Dr. Vladimir Sakharov**

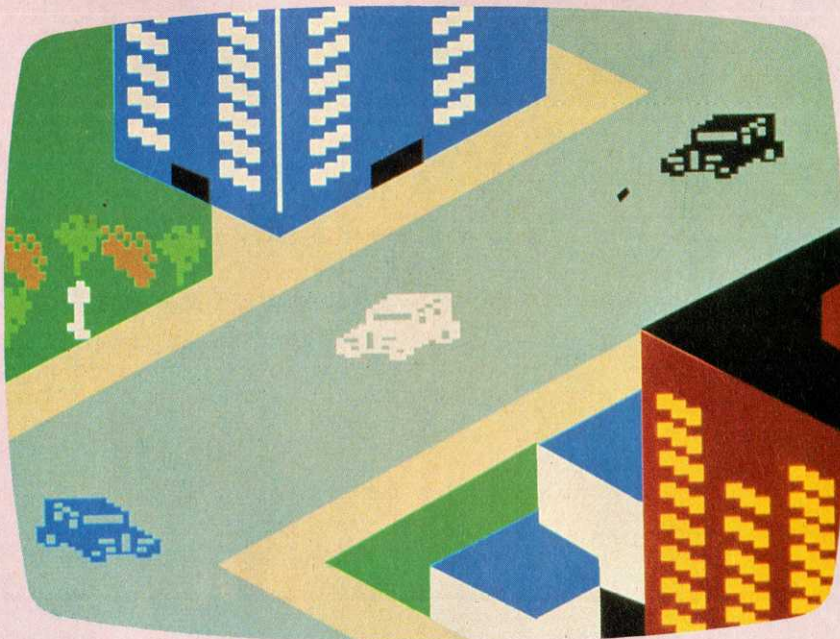
Everyone knows about James Bond, the secret agent who's constantly surrounded by danger (as well as beautiful women and the latest technological gadgets). But the life of a real agent isn't always full of glamour.

I was born in Moscow, and worked for Soviet Intelligence in the Middle East. But after several years, I wanted out of the KGB, so I approached the CIA and began working as a double agent. Eventually I was brought to the US, where I was de-briefed for a year, before becoming a private American citizen.

The scenario of *Safecracker* is actually fairly typical of what an agent often does. Your assignment is to drive an on-screen car around in search of the proper foreign embassy. Once you've found it, you press the button on the controller to see the vault, which you must open before time runs out. There is no guessing involved in punching in the right combination—it's just a matter of catching the correct numbers (which flash in red) as they flash on the screen. Succeed, and you gain valuable material, a clue which helps you when you get to your ultimate destination (the Treasury Building) and that staple of all videogames ... *points*.

After you hit an Embassy, you return to the hideout (or "safehouse," as it is known in

*Vladimir Sakharov was a KGB-CIA double agent and is now a US citizen.*



Mission: possible. Safecracking is easy compared with driving the streets.

the trade) where you get additional points and your next assignment.

Getting into the embassy is not too difficult. Reaching it alive, however, is another matter. The streets of this city contain the worst civilian drivers I have ever seen—even worse than those in Greece or Kuwait. They drive all over the road, and you must brake and swerve to avoid them. There are also secret police who shoot as they chase your car through the city. You can fire back, of course, but if you shoot innocent citizens the secret police will be after you with an even greater vengeance.

To add to your troubles, you must drive an automobile that is definitely Soviet-made: Soviet cars are the hardest to drive in the world. (In fact, Soviet spies prefer to drive American cars!)

To succeed in this assignment, you'll need the same training that I had—skill in driving cars, ability to memorize codes and tactics of survival in a foreign atmosphere. Don't be in a hurry in the city. Drive slowly to see what is coming at you. Don't panic in the Embassy or Treasury when going for the safe's combination. And try not to shoot on the streets; Intelligence officers never shoot unless it is absolutely necessary. Try to be discreet.

A good thing about this game is that there's really something to it. It takes time to play out all the stages, and is much more than just another "shoot-'em-up." □

#### TUTANKHAM ★ ★

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

By Michael Blanchet

The story line of any game designed for the Atari VCS is pure hogwash. In fact, most of the pretty pictures and prose text printed on product packaging to pique

consumer interest seldom have anything to do with what you see on the screen. On this count, Parker Brothers' translation of the coin-op *Tutankham* breaks away from the norm. The title conjures an accurate picture of the game's premise. The action, though, muddles between a maze contest and an adventure game. It succeeds as neither.

You control an archaeologist, who must wander through a series of chambers in search of treasures. Of course, there are dungeon denizens with which to contend. When confronted by a cobra, desert scorpion or bat, the player must rely on a horribly inaccurate blaster that, true to its coin-op counterpart, only fires left or right.

In the arcade version of *Tut*, the east-west-only firing restriction poised a unique tactical consideration. In the home version,

though, because of the oversized corridors, it makes for more of an annoying quirk than an addition to the game play. Since the creatures move so quickly in comparison to your archaeologist, *Tut* is more of a cover-your-backside contest than a treasure hunt.

Graphically, *Tutankham* is too simple to be taken as the inside of an Egyptian pyramid. The playfield is so nondescript that one could easily mistake it for a rough floor plan of an office building or a school. One would expect the translation of a licensed coin-op to be true at least to the spirit if not the letter of the inspiration. But only the bare essentials have survived the jump from coin-op to cartridge here. This is plodding and very frustrating stuff. □

#### BUZZ BOMBERS ★ ★ ★

Designer uncredited. (Mattel, Intellivision-compatible cartridge. \$27 approx.)

By Len Albin

Every year in the US, billions upon billions of bees pollinate countless flowers and work seven days a week to support the American honey industry. And what thanks do they get? In *Buzz Bombers*, these selfless bees (which buzz—get it?) get their reward. They're blown away into fuzzy little balls of vapor. Obviously, in the world of videogames, bees come under the classification of "insects"—which, of course, are enemies, like centipedes and fleas.

That's the object of the game: committing insecticide. By maneuvering a can of bug spray side to side, you zap bees, which fly horizontally, then reverse direction at the side of the screen. PhD candidates in videogame history should recognize this theme from *Space Invaders*, although here there are stops and starts in the enemies' movements. When the bees reach bottom, they leave flowers behind. At first, these only limit the movement of your spray can,



Bombing buzzers to end the "Flight of the Bumblebee."

but when the bottom level is filled with flowers, your bug spray is jostled off the screen. This is the equivalent of "getting destroyed" as in other games.

As you'd suspect, points are scored by plugging bees. But, more interestingly, dead bees transform into honeycombs at the spot where they're plugged—and these honeycombs serve as roadblocks for bees, much like the mushrooms in *Centipede*. If you manage to build an L-shaped wall of honeycombs, by carefully murdering bees, chances are that some of the bees still alive will get stuck near the wall and change into beehives. These are worth plenty of bonus points at the end of each level. The bad news is that both beehives and honeycombs can be accidentally destroyed by spray-gun fire. What's more, you can't leave honeycombs precisely where you'd like because the hummingbird—your ally—roams the screen to gobble honeycombs for extra points, too.

It takes time, however, to discover these subtleties. For beginners, *Buzz Bombers* is likely to produce hives—like the ones on your skin. The graphics are sharp, but the characters are overly cute and the soundtrack consists of the same eight bars of Rimski-Korsakov's "Flight of the Bumble-Bee" repeated *ad nauseam*. Then, just as your eyes begin to glaze over, a lightbulb flashes on in mid-brain, and you notice the addicting nuances of the game. At first, the best strategy seems to be exterminating all but the last bee per level, then letting the hummingbird devour those point-filled honeycombs. This works fine, until you realize there's a much bigger payoff in building beehives. Besides, in this style of play, there's less of a need to chase bees. In this strategy, though, the hummingbird—your alleged pal—becomes more annoying than the bees. Fortunately, you can shoo the bird off the screen temporarily by spraying him four times.

Eventually, the whole game takes on a fascinating personality, and you'll swear that the bees know when to stop short of your spray can's line of fire and that the hummingbird alights on your spray can just to be obnoxious. All told, *Buzz Bombers* satisfies the whole intellect—including that portion that likes a bit of violence. □

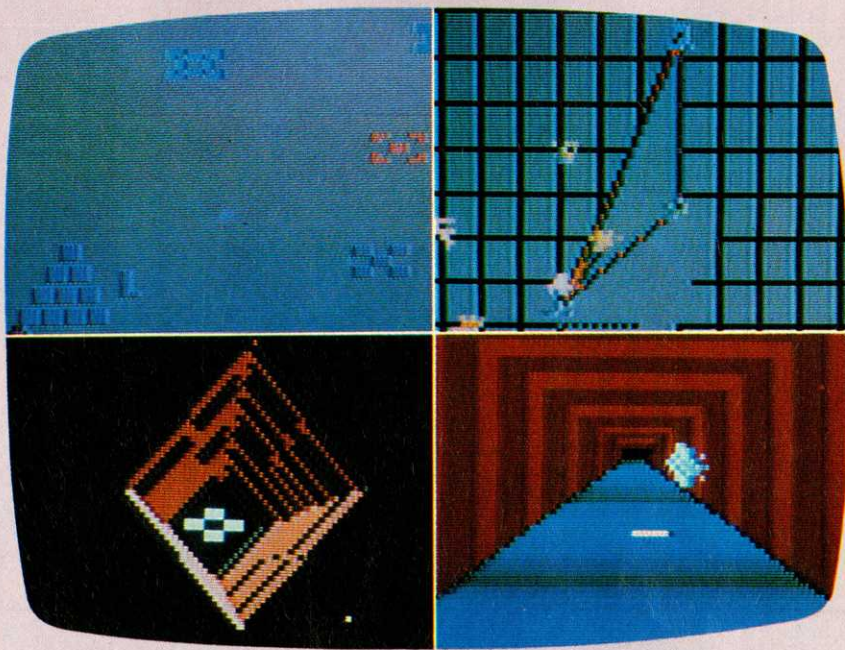
#### LIFESPAN ★ ★ ★

**Designer uncredited. (Roklan, Atari 400/800/1200XL-compatible cartridge. \$44.95)**

**By Sheldon Leemon**

*Lifespan* represents a new direction in computer games. It attempts to provide the fast-action challenge of arcade games without the violence that is often portrayed in these games. It consists of four active phases, each representing a stage in the life of your character. Thus, it takes you through the growth and development of your on-screen alter ego, literally from birth to death.

In the first phase, you try to trap bouncing



*The four phases of Childhood, Opportunities, Conversations and Experience in Lifespan.*

Character Types. You have 10 blocks which you can use either to build blockades or to hit the Character Types (as in *Pong*) into traps. The more Character Types you start out with, the more varied are your options in the following phases. In the second phase, you travel through space and time, seeking Opportunities, with the goal of entering a suitable Opportunity as quickly as possible. This brings you to the third phase, in which you must acquire common interests which allow you to enter into "conversation" with computer-controlled players. Successful completion of this phase brings you to the Experience Corridor, where you whiz through space, dodging Worries, Fears and Doubts. If you survive this phase, you go back to phase two, enriched by your experiences, and better able to take advantage of new Opportunities that come along. One convenient feature is that you can play any phase from the opening menu, so you can practice a phase you're having trouble with.

*Lifespan* is such an interesting concept that it's a shame it wasn't better executed. The graphics, though colorful, are abstract: They do not represent concrete objects that might better put across the concepts being portrayed. Yet the images are not attractive enough in and of themselves to stand alone. Therefore, what appears on the screen seems to have little to do with the story line of the game that is given in the instruction manual. In the second phase, for example, you enter an Opportunity by steering your shape into an expanding diamond. In the next phase, you acquire interests by traveling to colored squares on a grid, and you enter a conversation by moving into a triangle on the grid.

Despite this failing, however, *Lifespan* points the way toward a new type of computer game in which the player seeks positive and constructive goals. □

#### MOGUL MANIAC ★ ★ ★

**Designer uncredited. (Amiga, VCS with Joyboard-compatible. \$39.95)**

**By Phil Wiswell**

*Mogul Maniac* is a single player slalom ski race timed to tenths of a second. It has nine levels of play, which give you different combinations of maximum speed (from 22 to 40 mph) and number of gates on the course (from 25 to 63). But the only objects on screen are the tips of your skis and the pairs of poles as they appear. The snow is white, and there are no moguls in *Mogul Maniac*. In brief: It looks pretty dull.

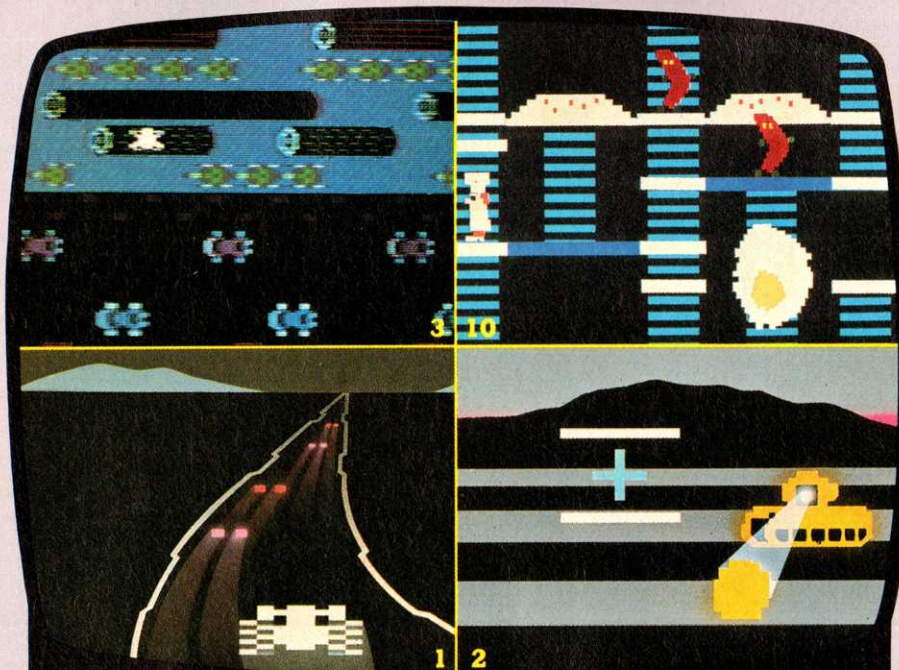
What makes it interesting is the Joyboard, an eight-direction input device for the Atari VCS. But hands off this baby, please—the Joyboard is operated with your feet.

The game play of *Mogul Maniac* isn't bad. Lean forward to gain speed, back to slow down, and, true to real skiing, you push with your left foot to turn towards the right. Nice touch. You really get some sense of skiing's physical strategy, though you are bound to wish the cartridge offered more. I did. In fact, if I were judging *Mogul Maniac* and the Joyboard separately, I'd give the former only two stars, but the latter four.

Once I became tired of *Mogul Maniac*, I wished that I could play other games with the Joyboard. Then, it hit me. Why wouldn't Activision's *Skiing* cartridge work with the Joyboard? (My early review copy of the Joyboard came with no instructions.) I plugged in *Skiing*, held my breath and turned it on—it worked! And was it ever fun! Then another thought hit me. Why not try *Pac-Man*? Friends, let me just say it was

#### RATINGS

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



Last Month This Month

## Top Carts\*

1	1	<b>ENDURO</b> Designed by Larry Miller. Activision, VCS, \$31.95
—	2	<b>ROBOT TANK</b> Designed by Alan Miller. Activision, VCS, \$31.95
6	3	<b>FROGGER</b> Designed by Ed English. Parker Brothers, VCS, Intellivision, \$30
3	4	<b>KEYSTONE KAPERS</b> Designed by Garry Kitchen. Activision, VCS, \$31.95
—	5	<b>POLE POSITION</b> Designer uncredited. Atari, VCS, \$35.45
—	6	<b>KANGAROO</b> Designer uncredited. Atari, VCS, \$35.45
—	7	<b>JUNGLE HUNT</b> Designer uncredited. Atari, VCS, \$35.45
5	8	<b>PEPPER II</b> Designer uncredited. Coleco, ColecoVision, \$30
—	9	<b>Q*BERT</b> Designer uncredited. Parker Brothers, VCS, \$30
9	10	<b>BURGERTIME</b> Designer uncredited. Mattel, Intellivision, \$30

**BEHIND THE TOP 10 GAMES:** Shoot-'em-up space games, once the favorites of video-game buffs, may be going the way of the dodo. A glance at this month's chart reveals that not one cart falls into that category. It seems game designers are attempting to reach a wider audience with games that emphasize skill rather than violence. Our current line-up finds two race games (**Enduro**, **Pole Position**), a pair of obstacle-course scenarios (**Frogger**, **Jungle Hunt**) and three "lighthearted" titles (**BurgerTime**, **Q\*Bert** and **Keystone Kapers**).

Game makers haven't given up on shoot-'em-ups, though. Instead, they're suping them up with either more strategy or cuter objects with which to do battle (CBS' **Omega Race** and Targ, Imagic's **Flap!** and Sega's **Buck Rogers: Planet of Zoom**). (M.T.)

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

like a whole new game. Holding onto a chair I could clear little more than the first screen, while losing an ounce of sweat.

I had one more discovery to make, which, to be honest, was made by my two-year-old son. He is always trying to plug things in. And after one of my wild *Pac-Man* rides, he took the Atari joystick and began working its plug on one side of the Joyboard. As I took it away from him, I noticed he had found a joystick port, so I plugged it in and handed it back to him. A wild thought occurred to me, and I slipped his favorite cartridge, *Demon Attack*, into the VCS. He loves to fire the lasers, but doesn't know how to move the joystick. I hit RESET and began sliding the laser cannon back and forth, dodging alien fire while he squealed and fired away in glee.

Thanks, Amiga. You've just given the world a lot of two-player games. □

### SHAMUS: CASE II ★ ★ ★ ★

Designed by William Mataga.

(Synapse, Atari 400/800/1200 XL-compatible disc. \$34.95)

By Ken Uston

All too infrequently, I run into a game that, when finished, makes me pound my fist, clench my teeth and generally seethe in agony and frustration. When this occurs, I know an addiction is about to set in. This happened to me after spending only 45 minutes with *Shamus: Case II*. The gold banner on the game container proclaims, "New Release Instant Hit." I'm a believer.

*Shamus II* is a sequel to *Shamus*, the most popular game produced by Synapse Software to date (over 60,000 sold). Both games are a combination of a shoot-'em-up and a mappable adventure.

You control a private detective (Shamus) seeking to destroy his nemesis, The Shadow. Shamus begins his quest at the bottom of The Shadow's underwater domain and proceeds through a series of connected "rooms" until he finds The Shadow's private throne room. Shamus must avoid threatening aquatic aliens as they descend, by jumping over them or blasting them.

Shamus needs brains as well as brawn, however, to accomplish his mission. The rooms are configured in a maze which must be deciphered. Some rooms have treasure chests which contain valuable bonuses, such as extra lives. Other treasure chests frustratingly contain worthless messages (such as a plug for another one of Synapse's games).

*Shamus: Case II* has a feature which overcomes a frequent complaint about the original *Shamus*—that it was virtually impossible to map the game without two players, one manning Shamus, the other diagramming The Shadow's lair. In *Shamus: Case II*, a simple press on the space bar stops the action and a map of all rooms successfully traversed is displayed, along with the location of deadends and the outer limits of Shamus' progress. (Cont.)

The mapping option is one of the features that makes this game so addictive: It is the rare player who will be able to quit before figuring out the entire maze. To give us a little more help, when multiple games are played at one sitting, a cumulative map of all completed rooms is displayed.

*Shamus: Case II* has many complicating features. For example, there's a "bird ally" who will attack Shamus, but if hit three times metamorphoses into an energy ball that helps destroy aliens. Also, if attackers descend past Shamus, they vaporize portions of the floor; if the entire floor is eroded, Shamus falls into the room below. Shamus' missiles can get trapped in enclosures and bounce around, destroying multiple targets, reminiscent of the old *Breakout* game.

I highly recommend *Shamus: Case II* and in fact fully expect to be playing it for weeks to come. □

### ENDURO ★★

Designed by Larry Miller. (Activision, VCS-compatible cartridge. \$34.95)

### POLE POSITION ★★★

Designer uncredited. (Atari, 5200-compatible cartridge. \$40.95)

These are a couple of pretty good driving games, no more and no less. You know most of the story if you know much about three major home videogame systems: the Atari VCS, the Atari 5200 and the ColecoVision. *Enduro* is limited by the small memory of the VCS. *Pole Position* benefits from the much larger memory of Atari's second generation system. But both suffer dramatically because they lack what ColecoVision includes: a steering wheel and an accelerator pedal.

Regardless of graphics, any driving game is going to *feel* unrealistic without a steering wheel (and, to a lesser extent, an accelerator pedal). Not since the turn of the century have cars been steered with sticks. Still, both these games are playable.

*Enduro* is a poor man's *Turbo*. It takes the player over a variety of terrain and through a variety of conditions, including night, ice and fog. But it's very much a VCS game—which is to say, very limited in both graphics (very simple, very unrealistic) and controls (no steering wheel, no accelerator pedal, no shifting, no brake pedal, no brakes period). It's like a comic strip: It just hints at reality.

*Pole Position* is like a cartoon show: It really reminds the player of driving, but will never be confused with it. *Pole Position* is a middle-class man's version of its coin-op namesake. Like the long-time number one arcade hit, the cartridge provides qualifying and racing, both on a circuit. The graphics are superficially almost identical and they're pleasingly colorful. Beneath the surface, however, the home version suffers: The cars are less precisely depicted, the explosions are too simple to be effective, and the roadside signs are blank. The audio is inferior, too: There's the pre-race fanfare,

but the home game has failed to employ that slightly sultry lady who announces, "Prepare to qualify."

*Pole Position* fleshes out the *Enduro* skeleton, not just with better graphics but with two forward gears, brakes, video/audio explosions, screeching skids and a half-decent imitation of the Doppler Effect, a principle demonstrated in the variation of pitch one hears in passing other cars at high speed. The game even excels its arcade parent in one respect: It presents not one but four different racing courses from which the player can select.

But without a steering wheel, both Atari's *Pole Position* and Activision's *Enduro* lack realism. And without a precise steering mechanism of some kind, the games fail to provide the sort of handling the living room Jackie Stewart desires. Still, if you like driving games, you'll enjoy a few races of *Enduro* or *Pole Position* every once in a while. (C.K.) □

the maze. The object is to have the square collect as much treasure as possible and escape before the monster in the maze closes off the exit. Though this may sound interesting, the poor graphics, slow-paced action and sheer repetitiveness make the game hardly worth playing more than twice.

"Search" is a similar game, but without walls or trails and with invisible treasures. You are supposedly collecting jewels in the Tower of London, and the guards (Beef-eaters designated by the letter "B") pop up at random and catch your persona if it happens to be standing where they appear. After a few minutes of play you start hoping for capture, but the B's are generally too inept.

In "Napoleon's Army," your character tries to outrace the charging cavalry. The cavalry creeps as your character crawls, so the game moves at a snail's pace.

"Ogre" and "Combination" are similar



*Enduro and Pole Position: Racing can be a drag with no steering wheel.*

### TIME TRIPPER ★

Designer uncredited. (Data Assette, 16K cassette for Timex/Sinclair 1000 and Sinclair ZX 81. \$19.95)

By Phil Gerson

The promotion piece says that with *Time Tripper* you're in search of treasure, passing through a galaxy of hazards in your search to find the gold." It sounds exciting. Unfortunately, this introduction is the most exciting part of the game, which in action involves little more than random number guessing and assorted button pushing.

The cassette has seven games, the best of which is "Maze." The maze is composed of many black squares, some of which are marked with a "T." These are the treasures which you collect by moving a white square through the maze. As you move your square, it leaves a visible trail. You lose if your square touches the trail or the walls of

games. In "Ogre," a word flashes briefly on the screen, and if you can key it in, you win. Think that's dull? Then skip "Combination," where the flash is of a six-digit number. "Titanic" is a random number game. You guess whether the computer is thinking of the number one or the number two. Enough right guesses you win; enough wrong ones, you lose. The last game, "Castle of Evil," also a random guessing game, is billed as "almost impossible to win." I found it to be just the opposite.

In fairness, it should be noted that the action and graphics are limited by the computer itself, but even so, a better job could have been done. There is no excuse, however, for the vague and not particularly helpful on-screen instructions or for the spelling errors and other mistakes. *Time Tripper* is for only those Timex/Sinclair owners who are desperate for software. □

*Continued*



Gentry's Spiderquake: The frill left out was playability.

### SPIDERQUAKE ★

Designed by Jim Grotian. (Gentry, Atari 400/800/1200XL-compatible disc, \$19.95)

Gentry Software is a new label created by Datasoft, an established software house, for the purpose of distributing a low-cost line of "no frills" software to mass merchandise outlets. In the case of *Spiderquake*, one of the first releases on this label, one important frill left out was playability.

At first glance, the game appears to be a *Frogger* clone. There are horizontal bands of objects moving across the screen in different directions, and your spider moves from the bottom of the screen to the top. Unfortunately, enough changes have been introduced so that any similarity to the arcade classic is only superficial. One of the most unfortunate of these changes is that the moving objects are continually reversing direction because of a simulated "earthquake." This back and forth motion realistically recreates the feeling of being in a small boat on a storm-tossed sea, making this one game you might not want to play on a full stomach. Though the game was competently executed, it does not play well enough to make it a good value even at its reduced price. (S.L.) □

### TYPE ATTACK ★ ★ ★

Designed by Jim Hauser and Ernie Brock. (Sirius, VIC-20-compatible cartridge, \$39.95)

*Type Attack* assumes videogame players actually want to acquire useful skills while shooting everything that moves. This didn't sound right to me at first. I don't want an education. I want to have fun. As it turned out, *Type Attack* let me have it both ways.

The object is to eliminate on-screen letters and words by typing the same characters on the keyboard. The faster you duplicate them, the better your typing speed and

score. You can select a speed level from 1 to 99, with 20 being a good starting level for most people. Good typists might start at 40 or 50. No matter what level, your typing speed in words-per-minute is monitored at all times by a bar on the left margin of the screen.

There are 15 different lessons, each dealing with four new letters or numbers. Each lesson has two parts—"Character Attack" and "Word Attack." "Character Attack" is clearly modeled on *Space Invaders*: An 8x8 phalanx of characters marches back and forth, but only the bottom letter in any column is vulnerable to elimination when you type it.

There are two possible strategies. The first is to carefully move up the columns in order—starting on the left. This is obviously the best way to exercise your typing skills. The second has nothing to do with skills, only playing. It says to just pound wildly on the four keys until all the characters are gone. But this forces you to monitor your mistakes carefully because you can make only 100 per lesson.

If you succeed in eliminating all three waves of characters, you move on to "Word Attack." Here, the letters from the lesson (as well as those from previous lessons) are combined to form words up to six letters long. These words scroll neatly across the screen toward the left at different heights, and though several are on screen at a time, only the underlined word is vulnerable. It must be typed exactly as it appears, and a press of the space bar makes it disappear.

One of the neatest educational features of *Type Attack* is that you can create your own lesson by typing in the combination of letters and words you want used.

While its graphics and sound effects are pleasant, *Type Attack* could have been more fun by trading off a lot of its educational value. But think of it this way:

Once you reach 1,000,000 points in *Space Invaders*, what's the incentive to reach 1,500,000? But the 40-word-per-minute *Type Attack* player still has worthwhile ground to cover. (P.W.) □

### SPIKE ★

Designer uncredited. (GCE, Vectrex-compatible cartridge, \$39 approx.)

By Frank Lovece

What is this thing called "cute"? How much should "cute" excuse? *Spike*, one of the latest in the ladder-game genre, is certainly crammed with "cute." So much so, in fact, that there's apparently no room left over for play value or, despite a superficially clever facade, much originality.

*Spike* is distinguished, however, by virtue of being GCE's first talking Vectrex game. But though *Spike* may talk, it says very little: "Eek! Help! Spike!" and "Oh, no! Molly!" This exchange—with a minor variation, the sum of *Spike*'s vocabulary—is uttered by a pair of personified stars when the heroine, Molly, is abducted by the villain, Spud, in the opening sequence. Paradoxically, this talking opening is played as a silent-movie homage/swipe, but, for some reason, only the villain is silent.

You maneuver *Spike*, in pursuit of his beloved Molly, through the playfield, which consists of three diagonally moving sidewalks, where he climbs ladders, *Donkey Kong*-style, from one alternate-direction plane to the other, *Frogger*-style. *Spike* can jump, of course, and, in the game's one fresh touch, can kick deadly birds and bouncers, which look more like TV sets with springs than the big guys at the local after-hours joint.

With just three planes and an equal number of playfield variations, plus the repetitiveness of its theme and its vocal interludes, *Spike* should have its namesake driven through its heart. □

### ICE TREK ★ ★

Designed by Pat Schmitz. (Imagic, Intellivision-compatible cartridge, \$39.95)

By Karen Schwarz

I like a little fantasy in my videogame scenarios to dress things up. Why shoot anonymous space invaders when they could be communist mutants from Mars? But when Imagic fusses up a game with something as grandiose as Norse mythology, I get suspicious. With good reason, it turns out. The bogus Norse video poetics conceal a game that is barely fun and more of an annoyance than a challenge.

Your screen persona in this game is Thor, the Nordic god of thunder. His quest is to melt down the Frost Giant's castle with enchanted fireballs. But first he's got to cross the frozen tundra where the wild caribou roam, then build a bridge out of icebergs.

Dodging caribou and scoring points while crossing the tundra is easy. But if Thor gets

stuck on a caribou's antlers, he's carried off and loses a life. Thor can also clobber caribou with his ax, but this provokes the unforgiving Goddess of the Wilderness, who's a pretty good shot with her bow and arrow. This part of *Ice Trek* becomes dull after the first herd of caribou.

I couldn't quite get the hang of building an iceberg bridge in the second section, although I do think this part is clever. Thor has to toss his hook at passing icebergs and haul them in to link up with the ice on which he's standing. Pressing the side fire-button throws the hook, which you aim with the disc. Bridge or no bridge, Thor eventually makes it to the third section.

Here, at the Frost Giant's castle, Thor is advised to toss his enchanted fireballs—which, by the way, are nothing so hot graphically—at the two outer targets first, then go for the remaining two. But the ice beasts are tossing deadly ice crystals so quickly that it's almost impossible to melt down more than one target without getting nabbed by a crystal.

Strategies? That's like asking for wind-surfing lessons in the North Sea. Why bother? Anyway, stick to the top and bottom margins of the screen crossing the tundra and don't ax caribou. You don't get points, and the goddess never misses. When Thor gets to the castle, pretend the ice crystals are asteroids and have fun blasting them. They aren't worth anything, but you'll at least have more fun than if you approach this seriously. □

#### BLUEPRINT ★ ★

**Designer uncredited. (CBS, VCS-compatible cartridge. \$30 approx.)**

**By Bob Borgen**

If you like memory challenges, this is the game for you. *Blueprint* is a race against time and a maze chase in which your character must pick up pieces of a cannon that you see scattered rapidly at the beginning in different houses around a maze-like neighborhood.

Your hero must find the parts and assemble them (in the right order) at the bottom of the maze before time runs out. If he succeeds, he can fire a few shots at the villain chasing his heroine across the top of the screen. As the game unfolds, you also get glimpses of letters which ultimately form a secret password. As with most games, the longer you survive, the tougher things get.

*Blueprint* combines aspects of several videogames and comes up with an interesting variant. For kids, this is a great memory test; adults, however, may find this to be a one-night challenge. In fact, because it requires so much concentration, the game is often more challenging than fun.

A couple of hints: Always use the speed control when carrying parts to the bottom of the screen. And number the houses in the maze one through 10, so that when the cannon parts are scattered, you can think of a long number to help you remember where the parts are located. □

#### CRACKPOTS ★ ★

**Designed by Garry Kitchen. (Activision, VCS-compatible cartridge. \$31.95)**

After aliens, insects are perhaps the most dreaded—and common—enemy in videogames. In what appears to be an effort to be different, Activision has chosen to make spiders (not, strictly speaking, insects) the enemy in *Crackpots*.

The scenario is similar to that of Activision's popular *Kaboom*, but rather than having you control screen personae who catch objects falling from a city building, *Crackpots* reverses the situation. As spiders try to crawl through open windows near the top of the screen, your persona—named, ingloriously, but appropriately, Potsy—tries to brain them with flowerpots. When six spiders make it, a termite eats through one level of the building. The game ends when all the levels of your building have been eaten.

The first wave, black spiders, is easy to dispatch: The arachnids run straight up the wall toward particular windows. The blue spiders of the second wave move from side to side a little, but are otherwise no additional threat. Red spiders, which crawl diagonally, come next, and the final wave of green spiders zig-zags. You get nominal points for eliminating each spider, and big points for having six left over after a wave.

For a game seemingly designed for children—with cutesy Potsy and a less-than-world-threatening situation—*Crackpots* gets awfully difficult awfully fast. (Not just for myself, but also for a world-class gamer with whom I played this cart.) With the advent of the red wave, the change is almost from one moment to the next. Even once you master the trick of anticipating the spiders' more or less predictable moves, the creatures dart about too quickly for Potsy to clobber them from one side of the playfield, then the other. Dropping pots indiscriminately works

well only for the first two waves. After that, the spiders move so quickly that, in the time it takes for a pot to regenerate, a spider can be up a wall and in a window. And, boringly, the waves simply recycle.

I just can't figure out if this game is intended for kids (in spite of the creepy spiders) or adults (in spite of the boring game play). (F.L.) □

#### ALL STAR MAJOR LEAGUE

#### BASEBALL ★ ★ ★

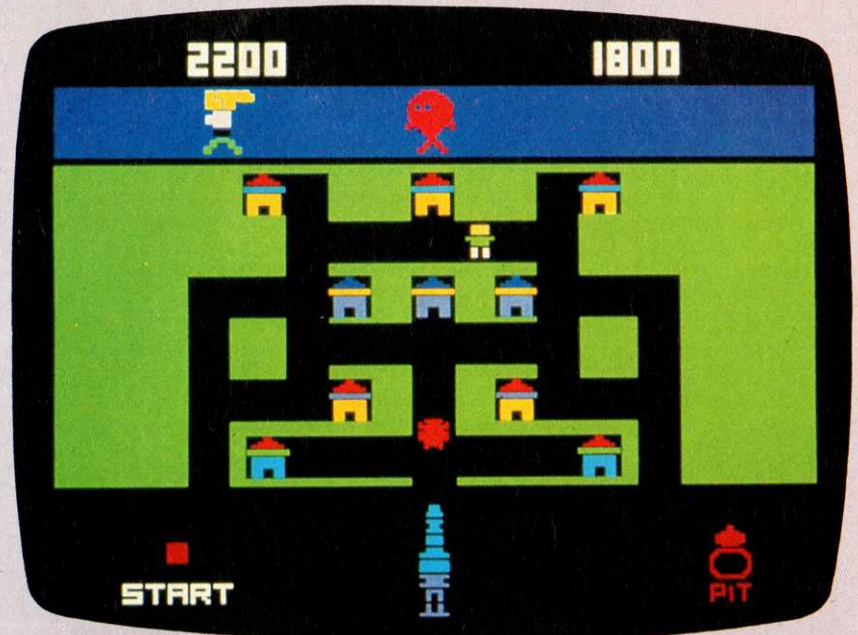
**Designer uncredited. (Mattel, Intellivision-compatible cartridge. \$39 approx.)**

Remember the excitement of Intellivision owners when *Major League Baseball* came out? They had a lot to jump about, because it was the best baseball videogame available for the home. (According to many players, it still is.)

But it was missing a few details of baseball strategy. Every ball hit was a grounder and could not be caught for an out. Not anymore. The new *All Star Major League Baseball* cartridge gives you the option of "going for the fence" when you see a juicy pitch. Or you can try to tag up a runner from second or third with a long fly ball to right field. You can slide into a base if the throw is going to be close and gain some advantage over the baseman, and you can overrun first base.

The pitching controls are the same as in the old game, with one noticeable improvement: You can control the ball to a slight degree after it has been pitched, yielding what I'm sure is the video equivalent of the "spitball."

Now for the big news, and it's a first for Mattel: You can play this game alone, because the program also includes a computer opponent! This upgraded cartridge is very nice, but I can't help wishing Mattel had done baseball like this in the first place. (P.W.) □



Picking up the pieces after your girl gets stolen in *Blueprint*.

# Coming next in cart, cassette, disc



Thor is cut off at the prehistoric past in his Quest for Tires.

**ALLEY CAT** It's a dog-eat-cat-eat-goldfish-and-bird world. The player must maneuver a cat, trapped in an alley, onto a fence, then to a clothesline and finally into a house to escape the cat-hungry dog. (*Synapse, Atari 400/800/1200*)

**BANDITS** Outer space outlaws are out to get a lunar lawman. They're also after the lunar base's supplies. The player must protect both through 28 levels. (*Sirius, Commodore VIC-20 and 64*)

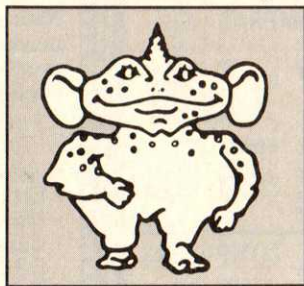
**BRISTLES** This is the house that Peter must paint—all five stories of it—in spite of the Bucket-Chucker and his army of Half-Pints. The player controls Peter the Painter, who uses elevators to go down to the supply room to get new brushes. (*First Star, Apple, Atari 400/800/1200, Commodore VIC-20*)

**BUCK ROGERS: PLANET OR ZOOM** The player zooms the ship through the enemy-infested surface channels and smasher tunnels of the planet, bucking the odd alien ships. Ultimately, the evil Source Ship must be destroyed. (*Sega, Atari 2600, 5200 and 400/800/1200, Commodore VIC-20 and 64, TI-99/4A*)

**CONGO BONGO** The player takes an explorer into the jungle, where he must climb cliffs, cross treacherous lakes, dodge coconuts, leap over poisonous snakes and outsmart charging rhinos. (*Sega, Atari 2600,*

*5200 and 400/800/1200, Commodore VIC-20 and 64, TI-99/4A*)

**DIMENSION X** Flying low takes on a new dimension in this first-person flight simulation. A new type of "altered perspective" scrolling is



Grud in Sirius space.

designed to give the impression of flying very low and very fast. (*Synapse, Atari 400/800/1200*)

**EMPIRE III: ARMAGEDDON** There's no Luke Skywalker to help destroy this Empire. The world is in chaos, and the player is surrounded by vandals, racketeers, prostitutes, beggars, preachers and Imperial guards. (*Edu-Ware, Apple II, II+, IIE*)

**ENCHANTER** Spelling magic. This first game in a new fantasy trilogy pits player against a warlock. The only defenses are cunning and casting magic spells, but the warlock has years of experience on his side. (*Infocom, Apple II, Atari*

*400/800/1200, Commodore 64, IBM PC, Osborne I, TI Professional, TRS-80*)

**FLIP FLOP** Fly the kangaroo coop in this zoo break game. Mitch the monkey helps the kangaroo dodge the zookeeper's barrage of bananas. (*First Star, Atari 400/800/1200*)

**FRENZY** Evil Otto's empire is a maze infested with robots. The player's character must shoot as many robots as possible and escape from the maze before Evil Otto catches him. (*Coleco, ColecoVision*)

**GO FOR THE GREEN** From *Golf* to *Golf*. This video golf game simulates famous golf courses, including that at Palm Springs. (*Avalon Hill Microcomputer Games, Apple II*)

**GRUDS IN SPACE** Rub-a-dub-dub, thanks for the Grud. Sirius Software's company logo, the Grud, stars in this space adventure. The object is to deliver rare fuel to a stranded (and lost in space) spaceship. (*Sirius, Commodore VIC-20 and 64*)

**IN THE CHIPS** Micro, not chocolate. In this two-player business simulation, players run their own software companies and must determine advertising, production and pricing policies. (*Creative, Commodore VIC-20 and 64*)

**INFIDEL** Raiders of the lost pyramid. In this first of a new Tales of Adventure series game, the object is to find and explore an ancient pyramid, in search of the treasure in the burial chamber. (*Infocom, Apple II, Atari 400/800/1200, Commodore 64, Osborne I, IBM PC, TI Professional, TRS-80*)

**JUPITER MISSION: 1999** A four-disc extravaganza, this game is part space adventure and part space shoot-em-up. (*Avalon Hill Microcomputer Games, Apple, Atari 400/800/1200*)

**MR. COOL** Out of the frying pan and into the video screen. The player hops an ice cube from hot plate to hot plate, cooling them off, meanwhile contending with fireballs and hot springs. (*Sierra On-Line, Apple, Commodore 64*)

**NEW YORK CITY** A cliché day in the Big Apple. The player drives a character to Central Park to buy a postcard, then to the Automat to eat. But leave the car parked too long and it gets towed, forcing the hero to use the subway, where he risks getting mugged. (*Synapse, Atari 400/800/1200*)

**NIBBLER** Slither a boa through a maze—but the farther it gets, the bigger it gets, constricting its movement. There are 30 screens in all. (*Datasoft, Atari 400/800/1200*)

**PANIC BUTTON** A videogame version of *Modern Times*, but the player's got one advantage over Charlie Chaplin: a panic button, which momentarily halts the conveyor belt. (*First Star, Commodore VIC-20, TRS-80*)

**PANZER JAGD** Tanks (a lot) move from the right side of the screen to attack the player's army of tanks. Each tank's movement is plotted separately, though they all move at once. (*Avalon Hill Microcomputer Games, Atari 400/800/1200*)

**PITSTOP** Speed gets the car around the track, but strategy is in the pits. The faster the car goes, the more fuel it burns. (*Epyx, Atari 400/800/1200*)

**PLANETFALL** A sci-fi comedy, this game requires the player—along with robot sidekick, Floyd—to save a plague-stricken planet. (*Infocom, Apple II, Atari 400/800/1200, Commodore 64, IBM PC, Osborne I, TI Professional, TRS-80*)

**QUEST FOR TIRES** Prehistoric perils and personalities. Thor, the first man and star of the B.C. comic strip, rides his stone unicycle through 30 screens to rescue his girlfriend. (*Sierra On-Line, Apple, Atari 400/800/1200, ColecoVision, Commodore 64*)

**RAINBOW WALKER** Somewhere over the rainbow, the player's



Congo Bongo's gorilla warfare.

character tries to replace missing colors from the rainbow. (*Synapse, Atari 400/800/1200*)

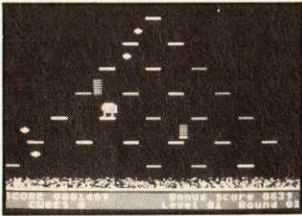
**RENT WARS** Landlord logistics in these open apartment hostilities include grabbing apartments and



furnishings with rubberband hands. (First Star, Atari 400/800/1200)

**S.A.C. ALERT** Joy riding takes on a new meaning in this first-person flight simulation using the Joyboard. The player must land on and take off from an aircraft carrier, keeping track of fuel, speed and altitude. (Amiga, Atari 2600)

**SENTINEL** Pity the alien who ever comes to earth. Player's goal is, of course, to eradicate all the aliens in



Playing it Mr. Cool.

this first-person space flight simulation. (Synapse, Commodore 64)

**SILICON WARRIOR** It's microchip warfare down in the Silicon Valley of outer space. Up to four players control Silicon Warriors trying to program each other's destruction. (Epyx, Atari 400/800/1200)

**SPITBALL** Trained by a snake as it runs around a maze, the player's character must avoid both the snake and cannonballs. With luck, the black cannonball of death gets the snake

and not the hero. (Creative, Commodore 64)

**STAR FIRE/FIRE ONE** Space meets sea in this two-in-one cart. In *Star Fire*, the spaceship must destroy enemy spaceships, while in *Fire One*, the sub must torpedo away the enemy fleet. (Epyx, Atari 400/800/1200)

**STAR TREK STRATEGIC OPERATIONS SIMULATOR** Captain Kirk to the video screen. The player commands the starship *Enterprise*, deciding when and how to use Warp Drive, Impulse Power, Photon Torpedoes and Phasers as player battles the Klingons. (Sega, Atari 2600, 5200 and 400/800/1200, Commodore VIC-20 and 64, Ti-99/4A)

**SURF'S UP** The Beach Boys never had it so good. Players use the Joyboard to ride the on-screen waves, with the Beach Boys singing in the background. (Amiga, Atari 2600)

**SWAT RESCUE** Epyx's answer to *Bank Heist*. The robbers are in the First National Bank, and the player's SWAT team must stop the robbers and rescue the hostages they have taken. (Epyx, Atari 400/800/1200)

**TARZAN** The player is Tarzan in this game. Tarzan's mission is to free the jungle animals from cages, then round them up all together to fend off the intruders. (Coleco, ColecoVision)

**WAR GAMES** From a movie about a videogame to a videogame about a movie. Need we say more? (Coleco, ColecoVision)

**WIZTYPE** The comic-strip Wizard of Id and Spirit are locked in com-

petition. The Spirit brings words to the screen and the player helps the Wizard by typing them correctly. Designed to teach and improve typing skills. (Sierra On-Line, Apple, Atari 400/800/1200, ColecoVision, Commodore 64)

## GAME PLANS

**KEYBOARDS KAPUT:** Atari has canceled plans to release expansion keyboard for its 2600, and Mattel is rumored to be doing the same with keyboard for its Intellivision system, thereby canceling related software.

**WHY WAR II?** Despite lukewarm reception of its **M\*A\*S\*H** game, Fox plans to release **M\*A\*S\*H II** in late October or early November. At same time, **The Fall Guy**, based on TV show, is scheduled to appear.

**SOFTWARE HARVEST:** Outlook for computer software appears bright. Avalon Hill plans four new titles for December/January release: **Under Southern Skies**, **Gauntlet**, **Computer Title Bout** and **Free Trader**. . . **Dangerous Cargo**, **Saviour I** and **Top Secret** planned by First Star, as well as games based on **Marvel Comics** characters. . . In comics category, Sierra On-Line will follow first two comic strip-based releases with **Wizworld**, **Wizspell**, **Wizmath** and **Bung Juggler**—based on Wizard of Id strip—and **Dot-to-Dot Zot** based on B.C. comic strip. . . And Datsoft plans to release home computer version of the 3D coin-op game **Genesis**.

**JUST TO KEEP YOU GUESSING:** While all big videogame makers are turning to computer software, at least one software producer, Roklan, will be expanding into home videogames. In early '84, it will be releasing three titles based on ABC's cartoon show, **Ripley's Believe It Or Not**, for VCS, Intellivision and ColecoVision with Atari 400/800/1200, Commodore 64 and Apple versions to follow. Company also plans to release IBM PC exclusive pool videogame called **Rack 'Em Up**.

—Abigail Reitsnyder

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## ...Interference

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munications equipment, it's illegal to use video or computer devices that don't meet government standards. "We don't go running around issuing violation notices to people or confiscating unauthorized television sets," Casey says, except when the set causes signal interference that is annoying or harmful to others. He says the FCC receives an average of 60,000 complaints each year concerning signal interference, with agents visiting an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 interference sites.

It's not too hard to tell if the interference disease has struck—a formerly clear TV picture will often turn fuzzy, blurry and be clouded by static. But it's a lot harder to locate the source of the problem. As a rule, the farther video and computer devices are located from each other, the less likely they are to cross radio frequency signals. So the first step to getting rid of interference at home is to rearrange the position of the television set, the videocassette recorder and/or the home computer. If you're sure you have good cables and connections, the interference must be coming from other sources.

If the interference is coming from a neighbor's computer, ask him or her to change its location. If it's being caused by a computer a block away, chances are that others on the street are also suffering from poor television reception. Talking up an interference problem may help pinpoint its source. Once that's been found, it's the owner's responsibility to correct the situation, even if the home computer or the television set causing the interference meets the required government standards and has been authorized by the FCC. If the owner refuses to correct the problem, a letter describing the situation should be sent to the nearest FCC branch office.

More often than not, however, the cause of interference can't be found without special tests and equipment. Even then, it can be difficult to track down. So the best way to control signal interference, according to Casey, is to catch the problem in its beginning stages—for the FCC to set strict emission standards for video and computer equipment as it leaves the factory and to make sure that the devices sold in stores are in compliance with those standards. Only a combined effort will enable FCC agents to clear the air of signal madness. □

### CORRECTION

*Kenwood still offers its audio/video amplifier, the model KVA-502. It was mistakenly reported discontinued in the August '83 issue of VR. The product is an amp only and does not contain a video tuner.*

## ...Connection

*Continued from page 36*

But none will comment specifically on possible products or release dates.

The Computer Division of Lucasfilms, home town of the *Star Wars* movie family, is also working on disc player-computer interfacing. "The area we're looking at first is an arcade device," explains Peter Langston. "However, it's a pretty reasonable step from there to finding something people could hook up with their computer equipment, including the Atari 5200." Langston believes that disc players need to be improved before serious efforts can be made in software development.

Other than the incorporation of a microprocessor in the player, Langston and others in the field feel that an important improvement would be the capability for "continuous playback of skipped frames." This would mean that the player could skip from one frame in a program to another, not necessarily next to it on the disc, fast enough that the image on the monitor would not go blank in between the two frames. The importance of this is twofold. First, it would make it possible to record the first frame of various possible branches in a program close to each other, thereby decreasing the search time. Second, it would allow two or more sequences to be recorded on alternate frames, so that switching between them could occur virtually instantaneously.

Thus, in a football game, for example, the quarterback's view of a play could be recorded on the odd number frames, while the coach's view of the same play could be recorded on the even number frames. Then, in the context of a game, the player could switch instantly between the two views.

Another feature some software producers would like to see is the capability to encode digital data in the video signal. According to Robbins, this "is being worked on, is necessary and will have a big impact" on what can be done with programming. "Digital audiodiscs will have a big impact on this," he adds. The significance of this is that it allows for "data dumps," which means that large chunks of information about the video program can be sent directly to the computer as the program/game progresses.

Sending information directly from the disc player to the computer seems to be the key to the success of the disc player-computer connection. In fact, Steve Bagdy, director of engineering at Cinematronics, and Mark Schwartz, president of CAVRI (an interface manufacturer), both feel that by the time disc player-computer interfacing becomes a consumer reality, the interfaces themselves will be obsolete. "Videodisc players will be made with this capacity built-

in," says Bagdy. Both Bagdy and Schwartz point to the work being done in this area by CED-format disc player manufacturer, RCA.

With the introduction in August of its first interactive CED player RCA has taken an important step toward disc player-computer interfacing. (See "Interactive CED: First Hands-On Work-Out," August, '83, VR.) In order to make the CED format player interactive, RCA incorporated a microprocessor into the player. This microprocessor would make interfacing possible, and according to Jon Clemens, staff vice president, consumer electronics research, RCA is "planning to create microprocessors and interfaces."

Cutting down the search time is more of a problem with CED format players since they use pickups similar to those of audio turntables: The pickup must be touching the disc to get a signal and must physically be moved to another spot on the disc. Clemens believes they've got this problem licked, though. "What we're excited about," he explains, "is that we've been able to get this instantaneous response without using two pickups (which would be more costly). We're using a term called 'stylus dancing.' This allows you to move from one groove to another very quickly. You can put various scenes on a disc all mixed up." This would make possible—at least, in theory—continuous playback of skipped frames. But players equipped with this capability are still in the future.

In the meantime, the big game companies and some videodisc producers will be bringing this technology into the home with games as well as how-to and educational programs. □

## ...Under \$50

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signals. Interference filters, on the other hand, improve reception not by boosting signals, but by filtering out unwanted signals, otherwise known as interference. The model TVFM-HP/CXRF Hi-Pass Interference Filter from Electronics Specialists retails for \$18.75 and hooks onto the antenna to filter out interference.

The video fan who misses that big theatrical sound when watching videotapes or broadcast programming does have an alternative to spending a minor fortune on amplifiers and speakers: stereo simulators. While not the real thing, they do pretend to be. Recoton offers the model V-611 Deluxe Stereo Sound Simulator for \$39.95. Rhoades has two models: the model TE-100 Teledaptor (\$29.95) and the model TE-200 (\$34.95). From Video Interface Products, there's the Stereo Converter for \$49.95.

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Stereo sound isn't the only thing missing from older or less sophisticated systems; some older VCRs lack such useful features as fast scan. The Fast Scan Modification Kit from Vast makes it possible to add fast scan to a VCR for \$35. A second version sells for \$39 and serves much the same purpose.

Somewhat more obscure, but probably useful, items to complete a video system are the VCR Check which retails for \$39.95 and the Speedwinder from Suncom which retails for \$19.95. The former is a kit which includes a 17-minute prerecorded cassette, a special blue filter and an instruction booklet. It's designed to match the colors of your TV set and your VCR. The Speedwinder, a compact gadget about the size of a videocassette, works by placing the videocassette to be re-wound over the winder gears. It re-winds or fast-forwards at twice most recorders' speed, according to the manufacturer.

One of the most interesting pieces of equipment available for under \$50—if only because similar products can cost as much as \$249—is a telecine converter from Ambico. The converter is capable of transferring projected movie film onto videotape via a color video-camera, and costs \$49.95.

Going on the road with video equipment can be a surprisingly expensive thing to do. Most video carrying cases are priced above \$75, but cases for particular pieces of equipment can be found. Cover Craft, for example, offers a video tripod case made of waterproof Cordora nylon with foam padding, which retails for \$44.95. Kiwi has video tripod cases made of brushed nylon and padded. The three sizes range in price from \$22.95 to \$44.95. Kiwi also makes video accessory cases that can be used to extend a VCR bag or be attached to a belt. The three sizes, made to accommodate mikes, tapes and other accessories, are priced from \$11.95 to \$15.95.

At least three companies make carrying cases for the Atari VCS. Cover Craft offers one for \$29.95 that can also be used to carry a computer keyboard. Le-Bo/Peerless has a console case for \$30 capable of holding eight game cartridges along with the console itself. Southern Case offers the only "officially licensed" Atari VCS and 5200 carrying cases: the ACC-2600 (\$19.95) and the ACC-5200 (\$29.95).

Staying at home with video equipment can be just as much of a problem as going on the road with it. It collects dust; and cassettes and game carts have a way of getting in the way. To deal with dust, Bib, Cover Craft and Video Specialties all offer VCR dust covers in the \$16 to \$20 range. Pyramid, however, offers the only rigid

smoked acrylic covers, the VC series, for \$34.95.

For storing videocassettes, The Rack Factory makes wood cabinets capable of holding 15 to 30 tapes and ranging in price from \$24.95 to \$34.95. Shelves to hold 12 to 42 tapes from Recreational Products come in under \$50 as well. Shape offers the model 53100 Videobox for \$9.98. This box holds three cassettes and can be stacked with others of its kind.

Game cartridge storage products are available from Cardinal, Le-Bo/Peerless and Pusher, all for under \$20. A rolling stand that holds a VCS, 20 cartridges and accessories is available

from Maurice Duchin and retails for under \$50.

Keeping track of a videotape collection is, in theory at least, made easier by the Video Journal from Mustang Video, a blue-bound album with separate pages, that sells for \$11.95. Similar products are available from Video Info Systems.

Finally, for the videogamer with \$18.95 to spend and nothing to spend it on, there's music to play games by from Eucalyptus Records. The two-cassette set features music for "munchy" games as well as for "space-battle" games and is supposed to help the gamer score higher. □

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