

# Video Review

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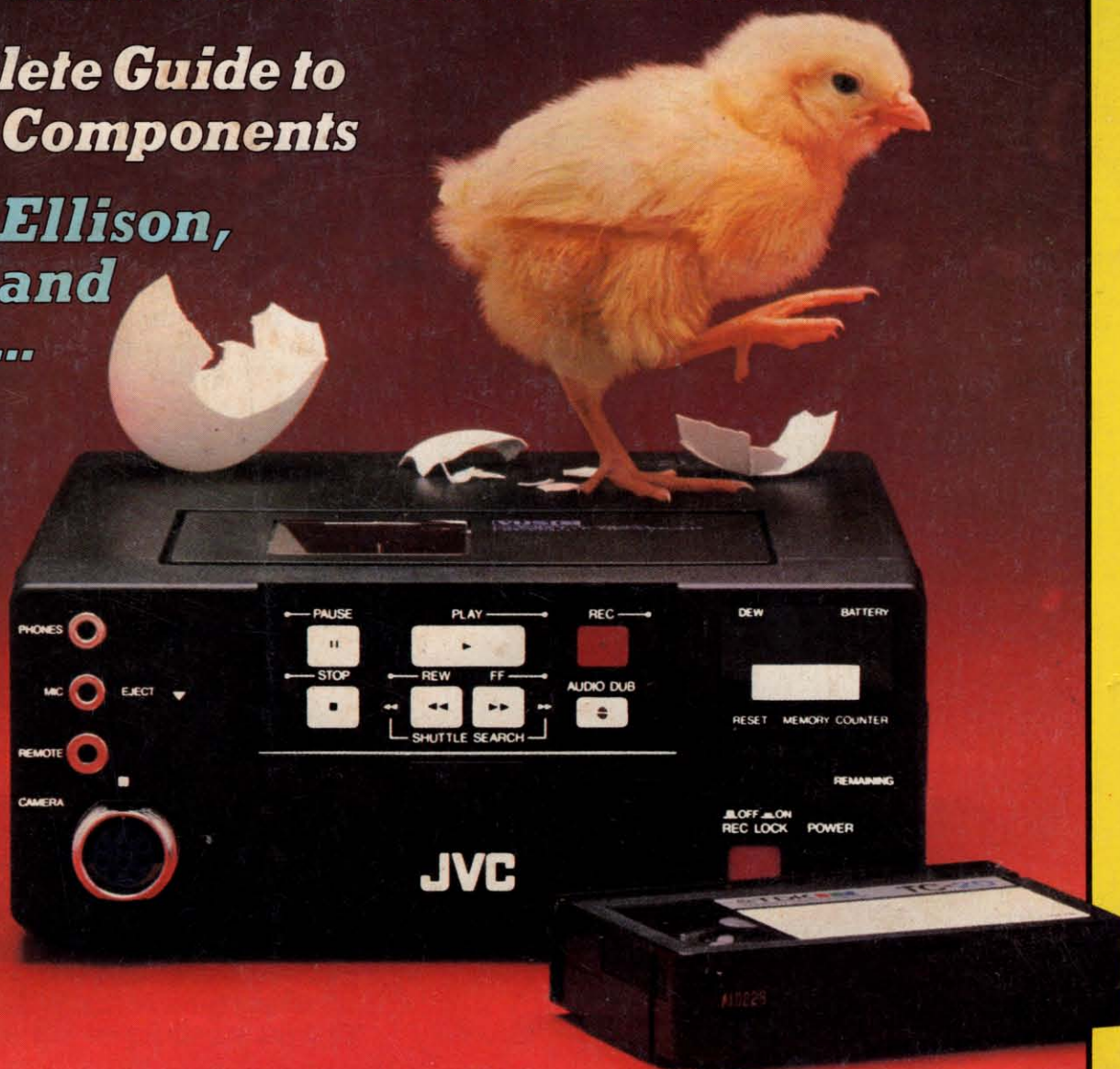
New Section:  
Top Critics  
Review  
All the Latest  
Video Games

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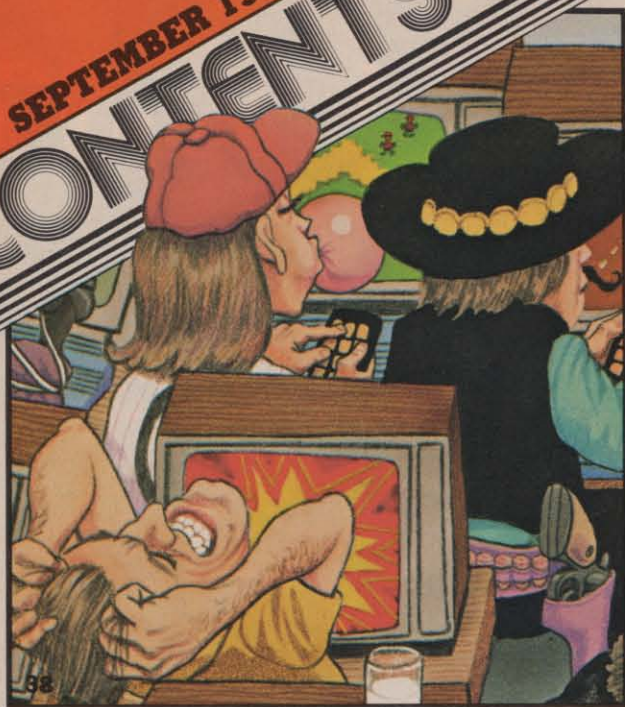
**Plus: Ellison,  
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More...**





SEPTEMBER 1982

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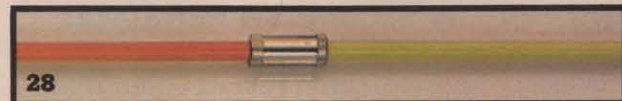
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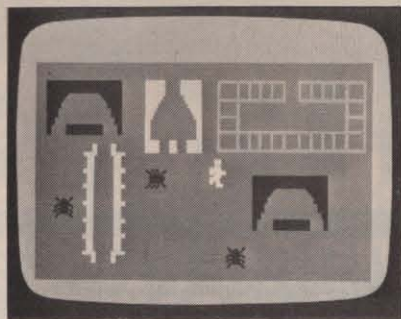
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### INTELLIVISION Video Game Cartridges Tron Series \$29 to \$36

If art imitates life, these game cartridges go art one better. They're based on the Disney movie *Tron*, which took its inspiration from something larger than life: video games.

In "Tron Deadly Discs," players must avoid onscreen electronic discs thrown by evil warriors, then chuck the discs back. In "Tron Maze-A-Tron," players must rescue Tron from the clutches of the integrated circuitry of a deadly alien computer, while warding off messenger bits.

A third game, "Tron Solar Sailor," is even more unusual. As part of the Intellivoice series of cartridges with built-in voice-synthesis chips, the game involves helping Tron get out of the computer he's trapped in.

Each of the three cartridges has four levels of play.

*Mattel Electronics, 3600 Sepulveda Blvd., Manhattan Beach, CA 90266 (213) 416-9169*

### LETAP Blank Videotape T-60 \$12.95, T-90 \$14.95, T-120 \$18.95

Here's another new brand of tape for budget-minded video fans. It comes in a new line of 60-, 90- and 120-minute blank cassettes.

*Letap Electronics, 11-12 Clintonville St., Whitestone, NY 11357 (212) 767-2200*

### TATUNG Videocassette Recorder Model VRH-8200U \$1,059

Traditionally a maker of TV sets and portable radios, the Taiwanese company Tatung is going video with a VHS-format recorder with four video heads and a 10-function wired remote control.

Its functions include forward and reverse scan in SP, LP and EP modes. You can program this model's timer to tape eight events over a two-week period.



*Tatung Co. of America, 2850 El Presidio St., Long Beach, CA 90810 (213) 979-7055*



### CANON Videocamera Model VC-10A \$1295

This first videocamera from one of the most popular names in photography enables you to shoot both up-close and at a distance. Its f1.4 (11 mm-to-70 mm) zoom lens has macro and auto focusing and variable zoom speeds. Features include an auto exposure lock and an interval timer.

*Canon, USA, One Canon Plaza, Lake Success, NY 11042 (516) 488-6700*

### JENSEN Audio/Video Receiver Model AVS-1500 \$990

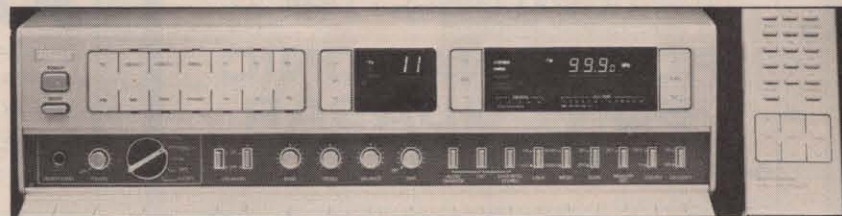
If you like listening to Mick Jagger but would rather watch Betty Grable—this receiver can give you it all.

In audio features, it has a digitally synthesized AM/FM tuner and a 50-watt per channel amplifier. In video, it has a cable-ready, 133-channel video tuner and a

microprocessor-controlled input/output switcher.

Separate amplifiers and switching circuitry allow you to listen through headphones to Mick while perusing Betty on video or TV. You can control both performances with a wireless remote.

*Jensen Sound, 4136 North United Parkway, Schiller Park, IL 60176 (312) 671-5680*



## ON THE DRAWING BOARDS

**Combo drumming:** The first consumer VCR/camera combo, could come from **Elbex**. The company is saying it'll beat **Sony's** Video Movie VCR/camera to American homes, sometime late next year. The Elbex model will use CVC tape, with recording time of 35 to 40 minutes.

**Switching sources in midstream:** Camera-company biggies who currently put their famous names on video gear custom-made by other companies are now thinking of doing it all themselves. **Canon** will begin manufacturing its own video equipment in February. **Pentax** says it's considering the same thing.

**MOS S.O.S.:** Hitachi has scrapped its tubeless VKC 1000

camera because of color resolution problems in favor of the new, improved version, VKC 2000. The 2000, coming this fall, will have a new color filter.

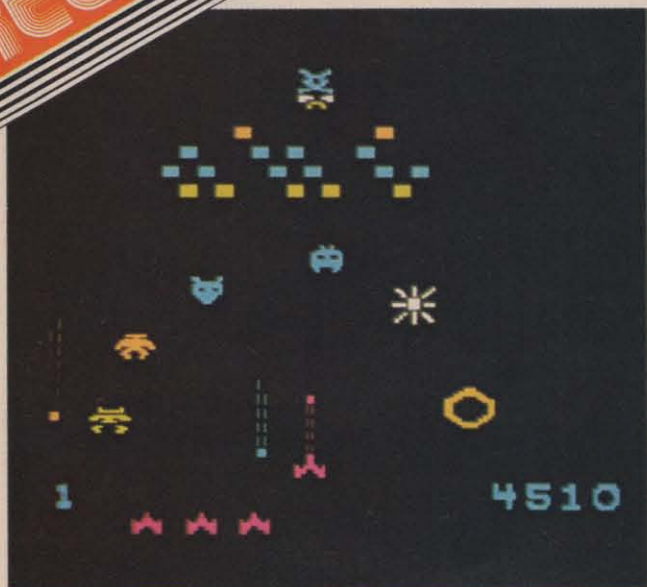
**In videotape:** **TDK**, **JVC** and **3M** are planning 60-minute VHS-C blank cassettes in anticipation of the addition of EP to SP mode in the next generation of portable VCRs. . . JVC and 3M are thinking thin-base films in this area.

**Component proponent:** Newest video company planning a line of video components is **Mitsubishi**, with upcoming 25-inch monitor, 105-channel tuner and 22-function remote. New 45-inch and 50-inch projection TVs are also on the way.

—Barry Jacobs



# Scary Reds from the video void



## Red, Right and New in Games

Most video game cartridges have uninspired sci-fi names like "Asteroids," "Star Maze" and "Galaxian." So, a video-game company called Arcadia apparently thought that what's missing is a touch of social import. Hence the title of its new game cart: "Communist Mutants from Space."

"Communist Mutants" costs \$14.95 and can be played on the Atari console. The plot is as follows: A radioactive centipede lays eggs across the top of the screen. The eggs hatch and mutants start dropping. Your job as player is to blow them away.

Originally, Arcadia was going to name its game "Frenzy," but an expensive research study proved that this title didn't have enough oomph with the kids. That was sort of a waste of money since no eight-year-old knows what the word frenzy means. There probably aren't many who understand the meaning of "Communist Mutants From Space," either, but it's sure to

attract young and old, capitalist and non-capitalist alike.

In fact, it's enough to make William F. Buckley Jr. buy a video game. □

## Enough Already!

What's next on the agenda for video games? One visionary, Ramon Zamora, co-founder of FuturePlay, told *Computer Merchandising* magazine a chilling tale: (one) possibility is to equip the speakers at drive-in theaters with paddlegoods so that at intermissions people can sit in their cars and play an interactive game with everybody else at the drive-in—using the screen! □



## Robot Logic

If violent TV shows make kids violent, as so many parent and teacher organizations claim, it stands to reason that the converse must also be true. Happy shows should make kids happy, right?

Well, psychologist Joyce Sprafkin thinks so.

Dr. Sprafkin recently gave a group of delinquent youngsters in her care a steady diet of upbeat video in hopes of improving the kids' behavior.

The boys and girls of the Sagamore Children's Center in Melville, NY, ranging in age from eight to 18, were given a "positive" TV dose of network reruns and videotapes—*Happy Days*, *The Brady Bunch* and *Fat Albert*, among others—for a half-hour each night for two weeks.

Their behavior was evaluated the following week and showed a significant improvement, said Sprafkin.

Of course, one-week is no indication of what the long-term effects might be. Will the kids start getting stuck in windows and shouting "Heeeeeeey" at each other? □

## Acting Up

Remember the story about the girl in the tight sweater in Schwab's drugstore? Now another Schwab is helping actors and actresses achieve success. As long as they'll take those sweaters off.

Larry Schwab, a self-professed therapist, writer, director and acting teacher who lives in California, recently explained to me that, with the advent of adult entertainment on videocassette and cable TV, the porn industry is changing. Audiences, he says, are more sophisticat-

ed, the movies are produced better and require people who can act. So Schwab is offering acting lessons for stars of cinema smut.

Schwab's course meets one evening a week for 12 weeks in his acting studio. Tuition is \$250. According to Schwab, class exercises include touching, kissing and something called "sensate focus." I was afraid to ask what that entailed. All classes, of course, are in the nude.

"I teach my students how to be in control of their bodies and how to relate to other



people," says the maestro. "We also teach craft—how to work with the cameras."

At this point I asked Schwab two questions: (1) Isn't it true the porn industry has managed to survive for the past 5,000 years without acting classes? He laughed. (2) What did you do before you started teaching acting? His answer "I spent 10 years as a staff director with NBC. I directed Milton Berle!"

Who can argue with a qualification like that? □

## Have Sex, Will Videotape

Bill Girmonde, a full-time florist and part-time videophile in upstate New York, noticed a slew of magazine ads for "confiden-





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For more information, write: Atari, Inc., Dept. D15P, P.O. Box 16525, Denver, CO 80216. \*A Control Data CYBERWARE™ product manufactured under license from Control Data Corporation © 1980. Estimated availability of Caverns of Mars and My First Alphabet, mid-1982. © 1982 Atari, Inc. All rights reserved.



# THE WINNERS' PRIMER TO...

By Dolores Haze

**T**he video game contest had skittered to a three-way tie among the tough, well-prepared combatants. As 43-year-old technical writer Bob Reynolds settled down at his console for the runoff with Mattel's "Auto Racing" cartridge, he could feel his concentration ebbing. He became distracted, he said, "at the very last lap at the very last turn," and finished in four minutes and 16 seconds—a full second behind the two winners. He was out of the race.

It didn't have to happen. Winning video game contests is less of a knack than a learned skill, and can be developed by almost anyone able to wield a joystick or press a fire-button.

This fall, a host of major home video game companies, cartridge manufacturers, stores and video clubs are launching a series of national and local home video contests across the US. Armed with some tips from past winners, high-scoring players and strategy experts, you might progress from being a dedicated home player to being a national video game champion.

## Photo Grief

It may sound obvious, but the first rule of successful gaming is to practice. Serious players generally play a contest cartridge anywhere from one to 2½ hours each day and have game strategy figured out within three weeks. Even the best prepared and fastest player can get a little rattled when playing on a podium under the glare of camera lights, so have strategy down pat.

Game strategy is almost as varied as the number of people playing the games. Video gamer Reynolds cracked the strategy of "Skiing" (Intellivision) by photographing the video screen every few seconds and then memorizing the different positions and patterns of the skiers. Once he'd figured out the patterns, he used the photographs to train friends and bring them up to his competitive level. "The cartridges are rather sophisticated," Reynolds says. "You have to

Illustration: Mike Okamoto





learn the idiosyncrasies of the game itself, and you have to know what's coming."

Books to help in formulating and planning better strategy include *The Complete Guide to Video Games—How To Win Every Game in the Galaxy* by Jeff Rovin (Collier Books, 1982) \$5.95; *How to Master Home Video Games* by Tom Hirschfeld, (Bantam Books, 1982), \$2.95; and for arcade enthusiasts, *Score! Beating the Top 16 Video Games* by Ken Uston (Signet, 1982), \$2.50.

Whether to practice alone or with others is a question in some potential competitors' minds, and there's something to be said for both sides. World Class Dragster Club member Todd Rogers (at presstime, the holder of third place with a score of 5.57 seconds) believes beginners can learn best by watching skilled players and picking up some of their strategies. Watching is no substitute for playing, of course. Rogers, who puts in about four or five hours daily at the game console, was playing video games when reached by telephone.

"When you compete, there's going to be other people around and you might as well get used to it," says author Rovin, who recommends practicing with others. He doesn't advise, however, playing simultaneous games on the screen, because that tends to slow up the players. Fellow game fanatics are helpful, he says, in discussing the different strategies and patterns and in watching how they attack certain problems. But, he adds, "You will learn more by playing than by watching."

After hand-eye coordination has been mastered, the next quality to develop before entering into serious competition is concentration. Most top players can't quite put their techniques for developing concentration into words. "You just have to get into it," says 24-year-old Janet Stucky, of Indianapolis, IN, the first person to score one million points in two and a half hours. (Two months later she broke her own records, shaving off another five minutes.)

### 'Beowulf' Man

Concentration can be learned, however, and once learned doesn't tend to evaporate during stressful times. "I think people make a grievous error in concentrating only on video games," Rovin says. "Concentration is a broader skill for more than video games." Rovin, for instance, reads *Beowulf* in the Old English to enhance his concentration and sharpen his thinking. The point is to find something—anything—that challenges you enough for you to delve into it hours on end. The more you work at it, the better your concentration will become.

Timing and pacing in any game of skill are essential, and video game contests are often time-limited. Contestants playing a video-game that can be spun out for hours at home may be limited to just 10 minutes or less, during which time they must shoot for the highest score

# VIDEO GAME CONTESTS





possible. "Train yourself at home to see how your strategy works under time constraints," Sharpe says. "Get a stopwatch, and set up different times—three, seven and 10 minutes, and see how to change your focus of attention."

The night before the contest can be the most crucial period of all. Try to get a good night's sleep, sleeping, if possible, a little longer than usual. Most players say they practice the day before, but don't overdo it. And keep calm. "My suggestion basically is to relax," says David Abramowitz, 16, a senior at Woodward High School in Rockville, MD. Relaxation is often a side effect of preparedness combined with self-confidence. "I wasn't expecting to win," Abramowitz says. "But I knew that I was good and the person who beat me would have to be pretty good." The same sentiments are echoed by writer Ken Uston whose credits include being a video game expert, blackjack maven, holder of a Harvard MBA and past senior vice president of the Pacific Stock Exchange. "You should be well rested and well prepared in order to have a positive attitude and confidence in yourself." Adds 15-year-old Frank Cretella of New York City, winner of Atari's November 1981 Asteroids contest held in Washington, DC, "you have to know the game and *like* the game."

### Staying Alert

Relaxation, concentration, timing, pacing—and the reflexes of a Jedi pilot—are difficult to achieve, but there are some tricks to maximize performance immediately before, during and toward the end of the actual contest. "People get thrown off by the atmosphere of a video game contest," Sharpe says. "You kick yourself later for not doing as well as you should have. The TV cameras, the

reporters, and you're up there on a platform all by your lonesome." Both Rovin and Sharpe advise that, if the game rules allow, familiarize yourself with the game controllers. And try to block out everything except that video game. "Just keep your cool; take a deep breath," Uston says. "When I play [arcade] games, I bend my knees and keep my body taut, which prevents me from getting too relaxed, and keeps my mind alert." Along a similar line, Rovin advises doing some exercises before the contest—perhaps 50 pushups a half-hour before your turn. Then, when your turn does come up, make sure you're comfortable before you begin playing.

### Pumping Ions

In terms of really getting those competitive juices flowing, it's probably best to schedule a later rather than earlier turn, if you're allowed to do so. Contestants competing against an already established score or time get that little extra push that makes them pump a few more points into their scores and shave a few more seconds off their times.

How risky to play the game and how many chances to take are individual decisions—so it's not surprising that the experts disagree as much as they do. Uston feels that if your score is close to the highest already established, and you're one of the last contestants, a more conservative strategy might be in order, lest you endanger the points you've already racked up. Rovin takes an opposite tack. "Of course, the object of the tournament is to score high," he says. "You should gun ahead. But don't lose sight of the real object of the game—to try to pit yourself against the equipment and try to reach beyond your grasp. The points are meaningless in themselves. If you play just for the points, you're left with a shallow experience." □

## UPCOMING CONTESTS: WHERE AND WHEN

**N**ame a video game console manufacturer or a popular cartridge. Chances are there's a home video game contest to go along with it. On the national level, Magnavox is sponsoring a "Pick Axe Pete!" contest for its Odyssey system. Local Magnavox dealers have organized the contest, and entry deadlines—scheduled to run through August—may vary from store to store. To enter, the highest score on a home game must be photographed and submitted to the dealer. The top five scorers will be flown to the World's Fair in Knoxville, where the play-offs will take place October 8 and 9 at the Odyssey exhibit. The winner will receive a one pound gold bar.

Mattel's Intellivision parent/child competition (the parent must be at least 18 years old) has been traveling around the US. It started August 14 in Houston, and moved to Dallas on August 15. The rest of the itinerary is: August 21, Denver; August 28, San Diego; August 29, Los Angeles; September 8, Portland; September 11, San Francisco; September 25, St. Louis; September 26, Minneapolis; October 2, Chicago; October 3, Detroit; October 11, Pittsburgh; October 16, Baltimore; October 17, Washington, D.C.; October 23, New Jersey (location to be determined); October 24, Long Island (location to be determined); October 30, Philadelphia; November 6, Boston; and November 13, Atlanta.

Finals will take place in Los Angeles from December 9 to 12.

Finalists (the winning parent/child combo plus two other family members) will be flown to Los Angeles. The grand prize for the winning team had not been announced at presstime. Contestants are required to play "Skiing" (one heat; the best combined time of parent and child), and, if not eliminated, go on to "Astrosmash" (2½ minutes timed play, best combined score), then qualify for "Bowling".

Activision's "StarMaster" contest will have six winners from different age categories who will be flown to Hollywood (with a parent, if the winner is under age) for three days and two nights. To enter, submit a photograph of a high game score. Entry forms are available from participating Activision retailers. Entries must be received no later than September 20, 1982, and should be mailed to Activision's Greatest American Hero, PO Box 4148, Blair, NE 68009. The six finalists will visit the set of the TV show, *The Greatest American Hero*, and be videotaped with the stars of the series, Robert Culp and William Katt. Although the segment won't be broadcast, winners will receive the tape and a videocassette recorder.

At presstime, Atari and Games by Apollo were planning to launch fall video game contests, but details were not yet available.

A final note: If you want to check your video arcade scores against others, The National Scoreboard (515 684-6421) keeps a computer record of high scorers.



a supposed Akai 1/2-inch cassette format incompatible with Beta or VHS, and says that "consumer cameras have shrunk to a point where they are too small to rest on a shoulder"—while picturing a shoulder-mounted consumer camera on another page. The authors occasionally editorialize, push unattributed and often questionable observations as facts and offer unintentionally funny bits—such as "Console VCRs are heavier and less portable (in a sense, not at all portable) . . ."—in a manner not unlike *Green Acres'* Mr. Kimble.

*Making Home Video* is still a wellspring of interesting ideas—although not everyone will want to learn yoga, as the book suggests, in order to hold a videocamera more steadily. □

### **WATCHING TV: FOUR DECADES OF AMERICAN TELEVISION (1982)**

**By Harry Castelman and Walter J. Podrazik. (McGraw-Hill Books, 314 pages, \$22.95 hardcover, \$14.95 paperback)**

**Reviewed by Deirdre Condon**

*Watching TV* might be more interesting if it looked *inside* TV, but it does just what the title says: It watches, and passively at that. This ho-hum hymn to TV concentrates, like a bored viewer, on the successful shows, bypassing, for the most part, the unsuccessful and unusual. When these are mentioned, it's usually casually, as one might watch one episode, then pass on the rest of the series.

This isn't a book to read straight through. If you do, the repetition will put you to sleep more surely than a rerun. Like furious channel-switching, explanations and chronologies are suddenly interrupted, and interrupted again, to be picked up later—or maybe not. Each author must have taken every other chapter; that's the only explanation of the choppy organization. The emphasis on some events to the exclusion of others is inexplicable. *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*, for example, gets more than twice as much space as all the space flights combined.

Having made a decision to stick to successful commercial TV, they might have said more about the commercials that made it possible (they don't, except in references to "nervous sponsors"). Or they could provide us with a good dose of trivia about bit players, guest stars and directors. Even that is rare. (The only new item I picked up was that Jerry Brown appeared on the Mickey Mouse Club in 1957.)

Barring either of these approaches, they might have tried in-depth analyses of the shows instead of the cliché-ridden plot synopses presented here. Or they might have tried humor. But the writing is textbook-style at its worst. It's positively turgid in spots, and the few witticisms are smug ones at that.

In describing the failure of early TV to

capture the excitement of the stage, the authors explain (twice) the format of placing a camera center stage, 35 rows back, not close enough to catch the animation of the actors and too far to capture the whole scene. The same problem pertains to this book, which is too close to the subject to be a true social or political history, too far away to be a history of the medium, and too close to center to catch the artistic and personal flavor of what's always going on at the fringes. □

### **VIDEO INVADERS (1982)**

**By Steve Bloom. (Arco Publishing, Inc., 220 pages, \$11.95 hardcover, \$5.95 paperback)**

**Reviewed by Randi Hacker**

Con conversationally—if a little insipidly—written, *Video Invaders* is a fairly comprehensive work covering video games from their inception ("Pong") to the game explosion. Bloom has interviewed most of the key people in the field, including Nolan Bushnell (the father of "Pong"), and he's devoted an entire section to the designers of games—the unsung heroes of video games.

Though Bloom's punny style got on my nerves almost at once ("The Chip Witch" and "Birth of a (Corporate) Nation" being just two examples of his idea of funny chapter heads), I must admit this book covers everything in great detail, with tips on how to beat several of the most popular arcade games and brief descriptions of more than 10 home games. □

### **HOW TO MASTER HOME VIDEO GAMES (1982)**

**By Tom Hirschfeld. (Bantam Books, 198 pages, \$2.95 paperback)**

**Reviewed by Randi Hacker**

Much of what Hirschfeld says seems simplistic to me. For example, one of the nine steps to mastery that he lays out is "Practice," and somehow I feel that this is something anyone who wants to get good at anything can figure out. I also think it's sort of silly to put, under the subheading "Dangers" inherent in the "Asteroids" game, "When you run out of ships, the game is over." Anyway, there are a lot of good tips here on how to beat (or at least give a run for their money to) the more popular and difficult of the home video games.

The book is divided into three sections: Atari—"Asteroids," "Combat," "Missile Command," "Space Invaders" and "Warlords"; Intellivision—"Armor Battle," "Astrosmash," "Sea Battle," "Space Armada" and "Space Battle," and Activision—"Dragster," "Freeway," "Kaboom!," "Laser Blast" and "Stampede." Inside information such as the number of asteroids that can appear on the screen at any one time, the difference between "fast" and "slow" asteroids, how often UFOs will appear and how to attack them best, as well

as several strategies, such as which asteroids to go after first and how many shots to fire, are all laid out in an orderly fashion.

There is even a chapter called "The Proud Programmer," in which Hirschfeld describes how to get to the programmer's room hidden in the Atari "Adventure" cartridge. Most players, says Hirschfeld, don't even know this room exists. Apparently, the designer of the game was so proud of his achievement, he hid his name in this programmer's room.

One section, however, reduced me to laughter. I simply have a lot of trouble taking seriously any in-depth attention to exercises meant to strengthen your video forefinger. Hirschfeld has put together a section that is devoted solely to calisthenics for the digits and, frankly, I can't believe that even he took them seriously. Detailed instructions involving running your index finger clockwise around a doorknob while holding a pen tightly with your other fingers are treated as legitimate exercises. In fact, Hirschfeld uses the term "in training" throughout the book. Come on now. □

### **CONSUMER'S HANDBOOK OF VIDEO SOFTWARE (1981)**

**Compiled by Videologs Inc. (Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 203 pages, \$9.95 paperback)**

**Reviewed by Roy Hemming**

Although mistitled (the book deals only with *movies* on videotape and videodisc, not all kinds of video programming), this is a generally well-put-together basic reference volume to some 2,000 movies that have been released in video formats.

Visually, the book is a little livelier than *The Video Source Book*, mainly for this one's modest scattering of black-and-white stills from some of the major movies included. But otherwise, information is a bit scantier, and most of the descriptions of the movies sound as stereotypically silly as *TV Guide's* blurbs about TV shows.

If movies are your thing, though, this is a useful, clearly designed volume (despite very small type). Entries are listed alphabetically by movie title, and a supplement in the back breaks down the movies listed by genre (documentary, children, musical, adventure, etc.) that video buffs with specialized movie interests will find quite handy.

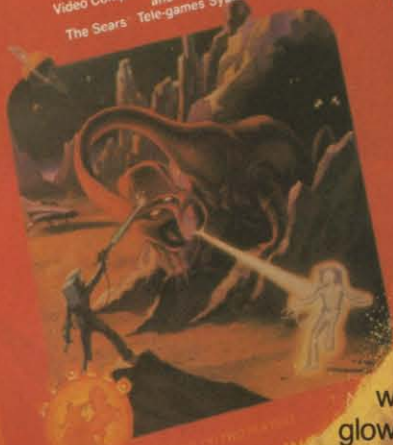
As with *The Video Source Book* and, in fact, with any book of this sort, the chief problem is that continual changes in the video field made some of its entries out-of-date before it even got off the presses. Movie titles, in particular, get withdrawn and released as rights change hands or are challenged—or for any number of reasons particular to a relatively new field such as video. So don't blame the book if you find a title listed, then go to buy it and either can't get it or find it on another label. □



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# Game stars on Star Wars, Trek and more



"NFL Football": extra points for graphics, game play and sound effects.

**NFL FOOTBALL ★ ★ ★ ★**  
Designed by Mattel. (Mattel Electronics Intellivision-compatible cartridge. \$29.95)

By Rocky Blier

The first few times I played this game, I lost. That's a pretty good indication of how challenging this video version of pro football can be. But you don't have to be an NFL veteran like me to pick it up quickly and enjoy all the possible strategies of the game. Anyone over the age of 12 will have the major choices mastered in an hour or two—then it's a matter of developing speed.

With some exceptions, this game follows real NFL football right down to the sideline markers. The four levels of play—High School, College, Semi-Pro and All-Pro—are separated by speed of play (narrowing the amount of time you have for making decisions) rather than the number of options at your disposal.

According to Mattel, there are 196 options at each level, and that's enough to keep the game challenging without it being too complex. This number is possible because the game comes with two keypads as well as a floating disc for controlling your player.

## RATINGS

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

for instance, the players (five on each side, one of which you control) go back to the huddle and crouch down. There's even crowd noise—cheers after a touchdown—and a gun at the end of each quarter.

You can play this game solo, but it's really designed for two. It has enough variation in speed and strategy to appeal to all the football fans in the family. □

*Rocky Blier, former Pittsburgh Steeler halfback and author of Fighting Back, is now a TV sportscaster.*

**PITFALL ★ ★ ★**  
Designed by David Crane. (Activision Atari-compatible cartridge. \$31.95)

By Ken Uston

With "Pitfall," Activision has entered the realm of multi-board games, the type in which new screen playfields, or "boards," appear when the hero goes off one side of the screen. "Pitfall" can also be considered a distant cousin of the highly popular arcade game "Donkey Kong." Instead of an Italian carpenter climbing a series of structures to save a girl from the clutches of a gorilla, we have an adventurer, Harry, running and jumping through the jungle, seeking treasures and avoiding obstacles.

If Harry collects the gold, silver, diamonds and money located at various spots in the jungle, he racks up thousands

Two playbooks, with formation diagrams that can be called up with the keypad, come with the game and are easy to follow.

With all these options, the one addition I'd make to the game is a 30-second clock, so no player can sit around trying to decide what to do while the clock is stopped.

The graphics are good. After each play,



Activision's "Pitfall": Jungle adventurer Harry can swing both ways.



of points for the player. But he's challenged continually with obstacles which can destroy him, including crocodile-infested swamps, quicksand, "cobra-rattlers" (Activision's own breed) and blazing fires. He may drop into underground tunnels which allow him to travel more rapidly, but which are inhabited by deadly scorpions.

The graphics of the game are excellent, with dark green trees, light green jungle verdure, blue watering holes and glittery treasures. Numerous sounds emanate from the jungle, including an electronic Tarzan-like yell when Harry swings on a vine, a funeral dirge when Harry meets his demise and an upbeat off-to-the-races blare when Harry picks up a treasure.

"Pitfall" will appeal to those who like cerebral multi-board games, such as Atari's "Adventure" and "Superman." It's definitely not for those who are drawn only to "Space Invaders"-type shoot-'em-ups.

Although Activision proclaims there are 256 possible screens, many of them are merely the basic scene with slight differences, such as two rolling logs instead of one, or a fire instead of a cobra-rattler.

The player has 20 minutes to rack up as many points as he or she can, but if Harry loses three lives, the game is over. Beginners won't come close to lasting 20 minutes and should take the Bee Gees' advice and just concentrate on "Stayin' Alive." This is done by playing deliberately and conservatively, and by not worrying too much about colliding with the logs, which costs points but not lives.

One important hint for all players is to have Harry traverse the jungle to the left, rather than the right, for two reasons: (1) Few, if any, logs must be jumped, since all logs move from right-to-left; and (2) after a life is lost, that particular screen is effectively completed, since the reincarnated Harry appears on the left and can then exit stage left to a new screen. The challenge for more proficient players is to collect as many treasures as possible within 20 minutes. Speed and daring now become important.

Hard-core buffs may well spend hours practicing to pick up all 32 treasures that appear, amassing the theoretical maximum score of 114,000 points (this assumes no points are lost falling into pits, hitting logs, etc.). This will require a pencil and paper and careful plotting of the locations of the treasures and of the underground tunnels, since some paths save the player time and others lead into dead ends. This task appears so herculean that I think the first person to reach the maximum score (no doubt some six-year-old) deserves an all-expense-paid safari to Africa. □

*Internationally acclaimed games expert Ken Uston is author of the bestselling Mastering Pac-Man, Buying and Beating the Home Video Games and other books.*

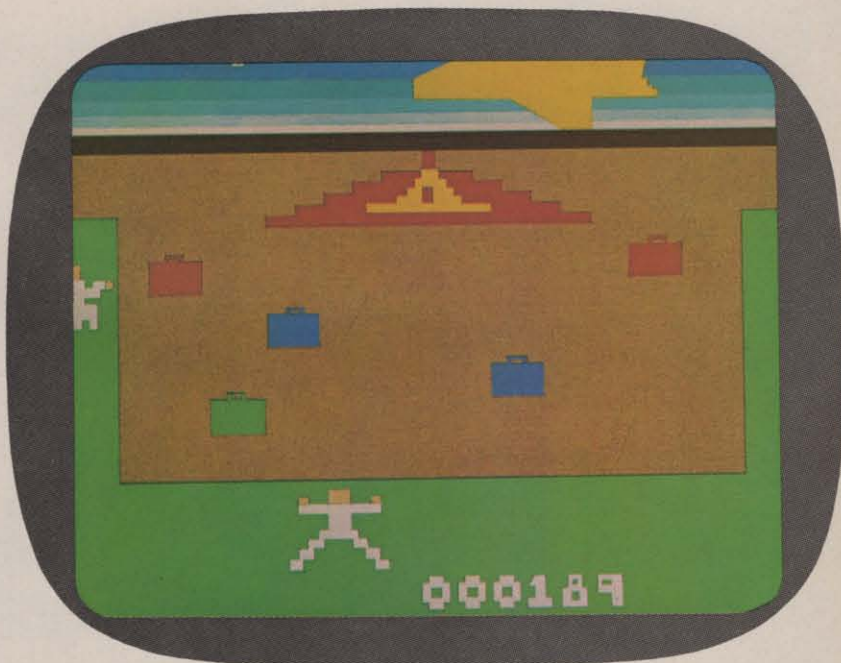
## **LOST LUGGAGE ★ ★** **Designed by Ed Salvo. (Games by Apollo Atari-compatible cartridge. \$31.95)**

**By Maury Z. Levy**

This is actually the second review of this game I've written. I wrote the first shortly after playing a preview version of "Lost Luggage" at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago. It was a really good review—very witty, very incisive. I was pleased with it as I packed the review into my suitcase to head back to New York.

I must say, the airline people were very pleasant about the incident. The customer service representative told me that my valise had arrived very safely indeed. In Denver.

I will, then, try to rewrite this from memory.



"Lost Luggage" from Games by Apollo: things that go "Kaboom!" on a flight.

"Lost Luggage" is simple to play. Your plane has just landed. Your suitcases hit a baggage carousel gone amok and get thrown all over the screen. You, represented by the obligatory one-dimensional box figure, try to catch the bags. They fall faster and faster. You move your joystick up and down and back and forth to sweep them up. You miss one, and all the cases on the screen open up, revealing bras, panties and apparently dead bodies.

In the six variations of the one- and two-player game, there's even something called "Terrorist Suitcase," in which one of the suitcases has a bomb in it. You miss that one and . . . kaboom!

Kaboom, huh? That's really the bottom line with "Lost Luggage." Once you get over how cute it is to see all those unmentionables falling out (and you get over it rather quickly), you realize what you're playing is little more than a jazzy twist on Ac-

tivision's "Kaboom!" the game in which a mad bomber drops his load from the top of the screen and you try to catch the bombs at the bottom.

So I'll give Apollo credit for being cute, but that's about it.

The graphics are lacking a bit. Somehow, the designer of this game seems to have had trouble filling up the screen. The resulting border is annoying. The use of the joystick (instead of the paddle controls needed for "Kaboom!") allows you a distinct advantage when it comes to vertical movement, but that's hardly worth the price of the flight.

I'll say your best bet is to wait until a friend gets this game, play it a few times, chuckle over the underwear, and then stick with "Kaboom!" □

*Maury Z. Levy is editor of the Playboy Guide to Electronic Entertainment.*

## **COSMIC ARK ★ ★ ★** **Designed by Rob Fulop. (Imagic Atari-compatible cartridge. \$31.95)**

**By Randi Hacker**

The object of this space game is to destroy meteorites and asteroids hurtling toward your ship, and then cruise the universe, hover above strange planets and pick up aliens. This isn't as much like Club Med as it may sound.

In fact, "Cosmic Ark" is more biblical than anything else. The game is a sequel to another Imagic game called "Atlantis." According to the company, the survivors of "Atlantis" have gone on to the Cosmic Ark with the mission of collecting two of every extraterrestrial and using them to populate a planet. Or so I understand it.

The first of the game's six variations starts off, as all do, with a pink mother ship, which floats down from the top of the





Imagic's "Cosmic Ark:" meteorites, asteroids and a Biblical storyline.

screen and then hovers in mid-screen. Suddenly, meteorites and asteroids start to fly at it from four directions. You must destroy these space rocks by pulling the joystick in the direction of the oncoming projectiles. (You don't need to press the red "fire" button on the controller.)

Once you've cleared the screen, you fly off and hover above the surface of a planet where two little aliens dash frenetically back and forth. The mother ship sends down a small scout ship controlled by the joystick. You must position yourself directly above an alien and beam it up using the "fire" button. The higher the scout ship, the longer it takes to beam up the alien, so get as close to the planet as possible. If you let go of the beam before the alien's been completely beamed up, it gets away.

You only have a short amount of time to catch these guys before the mother ship beeps a warning that means the scout has to hustle back and re-enter through a chute on the underside. Then there's one more random rock from space that you have to destroy before the mother ship flies off into the void again. The cycle repeats itself with a couple of variations: (1) The bombs come faster, and (2) on the planet surfaces, columns grow up on either side of the screen and take shots at the scout ship, causing you to drop the aliens.

The number-two variation seems to require you to shoot at only bombs. No aliens. Number three is a two-player version: The left joystick counters the meteor attack while the right joystick, in a cooperative effort, gathers aliens. Games four, five and six are the same except the mother ship is less maneuverable.

Unless I'm missing some fast action by

not being able to progress beyond the fourth planet, the game could become boring after a while.

The graphics, though, are excellent, each alien species having a different shape. The colors are vivid and the expanse of space is, well, expansive. □

#### **YARS' REVENGE ★ ★**

**Designed by Howard Warshaw.  
(Atari cartridge. \$31.95)**

**By Suzan Prince**

There's only so much a fly—even an armored alien fly—can do to idle the day away, and that's the ultimate weakness of "Yars' Revenge." While it's an initially

challenging and visually stimulating Atari original, I found that once you've mastered Yar's moves, revenge is more predictable than sweet.

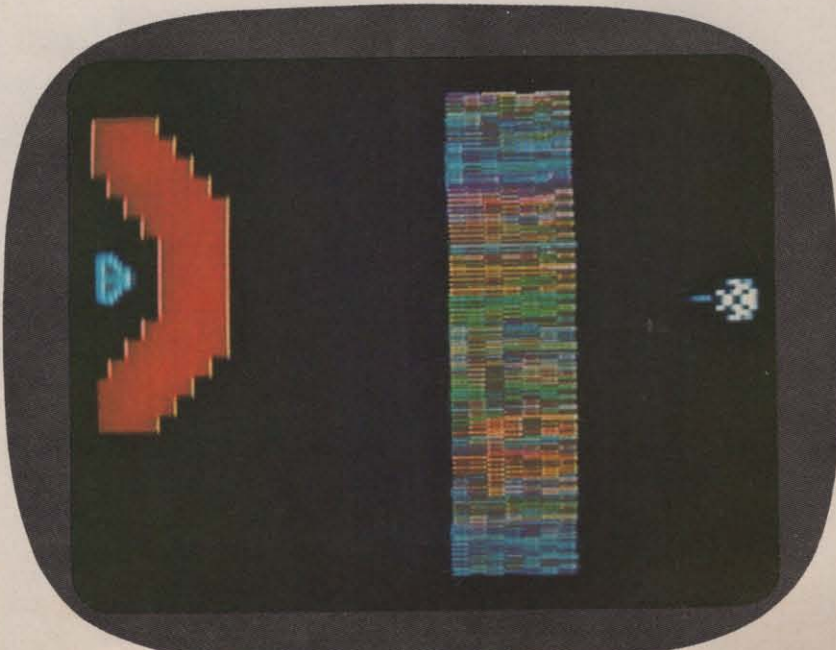
As a Yar (whose name derives from the reversed spelling of Atari chairman Ray Kassar), you must do away with: (1) the natural enemy of all Yars, the Qotile, a gas-mask-shaped villain guarded by a pair of moving shields; (2) a guided destroyer missile that seeks out the Yar wherever it may go; and (3) the deadly Swirl, which hurls from the Qotile at furious speed.

To counter the Qotile, a Yar has an inexhaustible supply of shield-blasting energy missiles and the only weapon in the universe that can destroy a Qotile or Swirl—the Zorlon Cannon.

The main advantage of this game is the especially facile way it works with Atari's joystick control. A Yar can quickly fly around the screen in any direction, an ability that allows players to engage in effective and high-scoring hit-and-run tactics. Making matters difficult, however, is the method of calling up and aiming the cannon. In order to deploy the weapon, the Yar must touch the Qotile or eat away at the shield, decide the cannon's trajectory, fire it and then get out of the way before the cannon blast hits the Yar instead of its target. Whenever possible, the Yar should eat a shield's cell (or touch the Qotile), set up the cannon, wait for a Swirl to fire and launch the cannon. Doing so will earn 6,000 points and an extra life.

While many aspects of "Yars' Revenge" are very appealing, I found that when you get good at the various strategies, the repetition could bug you. □

*Suzan Prince is the author of How to Win at Home Video Games, to be published this fall.*



Atari's "Yars' Revenge:" With a Zorlon Cannon, a Yar can blast Swirls and Qotiles.

*Randi Hacker is the author of Video Review's upcoming guide to video games.*



## ASTROSMASH ★ ★ ★

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

By Marc & Robert Wielage

It's time to take a nice, hot meteor shower. That's the idea, at least, behind "Astrosmash," a now classic Intellivision game. The situation is this: Stuck with a laser cannon (and four back-ups) on a far-off planetoid, your responsibility is to repel an endless rain of meteorites, "spinners" (mysterious whistling bombs), guided missiles (which automatically home in on your cannon) and UFOs, which appear after you've topped 20,000 points.

The pinwheel-shaped spinners, which

reach level two, signified by a bright blue background dazzling enough to be distracting.

We found it helpful to just leave the auto-fire button turned on, and that way managed to reach level five in less than an hour. By that time, there are enough UFOs, missiles and spinners to make jumping to hyperspace standard operating procedure. Luckily, you've got an endless amount of laser charges and you get a bonus cannon each time you gain 1,000 points.

The sound effects in Astrosmash are excellent, though the steady "tish, tish" in the background makes it sound as if Buddy Rich is playing in your ear. The graphics are adequate, with spinning



Intellivision's smash "Astrosmash." How long can a classic game hold on?

come in two sizes, are probably the most dangerous foes. When just one of them hits the ground, your cannon's permanently out of commission, so once you hear a spinner's distinctive screaming whistle, concentrate on keeping the spinner from hitting the ground.

The game offers a couple of niceties to help you against the overwhelming odds: an "auto-fire" button, which fires three laser blasts a second without requiring you to squeeze the trigger, and the "hyperspace" control. The latter sends you into never-never land for just a blink of an eye, making you reappear elsewhere—perfect for evading missiles.

One key problem we had while playing the game was avoiding getting hit from the sides by wandering meteorites. Another problem we had was with the screen colors. After you pass 1,000 points, you

shapes rotating smoothly and falling at different speeds—difficult achievements for any computer game. □

## STAR WARS: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK ★ ★

Designed by Rex Bradford, Sam Kjellman. (Parker Brothers Atari-compatible cartridge. \$30 approx.)

By Harlan Ellison

Nothing in this world beyond the first seconds of a baby's birth is innocent. Nothing is precisely what it seems to be. Anything can be a paradigm of life's important lessons.

At first encounter, Parker Brothers' new video game cartridge "Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back" seems to be merely another of the seemingly endless permutations of the callus-producing rage that has swept an entire generation of Orphan-Annie-eyed, overfinanced, leisure-surfeited teenagers into the maelstrom of electronic game madness.

But even the botulism bacterium looks innocent at first encounter. And I believe "The Empire Strikes Back" video game is an analogue for the Myth of Sisyphus.

Having never played a video game before, and having stared with creeping horror at the legions of silent, intense kids mesmerized in front of "Pac-Man," "Space Invaders" and "Donkey Kong" machines in Pizza Time Theatre parlors, I greeted the request to review this new cartridge with mixed emotions ranging from fearful curiosity to outright dismay.

I had no reason to think this fad was any more dangerous than stuffing phone-booths, swallowing goldfish, Hoola Hoops or wearing one's hair in imitation of Farrah Fawcett. Yet the vast amount of money being poured into these games, the accumulated years of time lost playing them, the apparent absence of any benefit to the players, had produced in me a *frisson* of concern. In a nation where reading is becoming an arcane art, where TV has become the universal curriculum, where the lemming-like pursuit of mindless "entertainment" has taken on the noble obsessionalness of a search for the Holy Grail, I thought the inspired exploitation of the *Star Wars* totem in video-game form could emerge as the most virulent electronic botulism of all.

The Atari console system was rigged to a TV set in my home, I read the simple instruction brochure, and I proceeded to bore my ass off for the next few hours becoming as adept at "The Empire Strikes Back" as I cared to be.

Kindly refrain from moaning that a 10-year-old can become more proficient at one of these twiddles than I, an adult at least in years, could ever be. Yes, a 10-year-old very likely could beat me 99 out of 100 times. But no 10-year-old I've ever encountered could create a Sistine Chapel fresco, write *Moby Dick* or copulate with any degree of expertise. Mind you, none of those are taught by any video game.

The extremely simpleminded parameters of Parker Brothers' "The Empire Strikes Back" are consistent with virtually all other video games. Destruction is the object. A line of two-dimensional Imperial Walkers plod toward a Rebel power generator on the Ice Planet Hoth (if you can believe those mundane pastel readouts represent an Ice Planet). You, as player, have to blow them up with blasts from the five Snowspeeder aircraft you are given. The object of the game is to destroy as many of the Walkers as you can before they reach the power generator and blow up the entire planet. (It takes 48 direct hits to neutralize a Walker.) Terrific object lesson for kids to learn; invaluable for everyday life in a world where Nuclear Holocaust paranoia already immobilizes us.

The Walkers fire missiles at the Snowspeeders. They can track the zipping aircraft, fire "smart bombs" that loop and follow a Snowspeeder, blast fore and aft of

VR West Coast editor Marc Wielage and his 15-year-old brother Robert write regularly on video games.



themselves, and otherwise cause you aggravation. Occasionally a "bomb hatch" will open—as indicated by a minuscule dot of light that strobes too briefly for anyone to hit save someone who has devoted his or her life to playing this game. Then the Walker is offed at once.

Your Snowspeeders can be repaired and go back into action, but only twice. If you knock out a Walker, another one appears—smarter, stronger, with new abilities. Points are amassed for various degrees of destruction to the Walkers; and for every 2,000 points scored, you get an extra Snowspeeder.

There's a lot more hurly-burly. Walkers change color and are weakened as a result of amassed hits; you can crash your Snowspeeder into a Walker; sometimes you acquire The Force and cannot be destroyed... 32 variations of one- and two-player games.

But here's the bottom line, quoted directly from the rules brochure: "END OF THE GAME: The game ends when the lead Imperial Walker reaches the power generator—or—when the last of your Snowspeeders is destroyed."

In other words, you cannot win.

The game ends when you lose.

It may take you 10 minutes or 15 years. The level of your expertise may grow so elevated that the game will have to be concluded by your grandchildren, but... you cannot win!

In classical Greek mythology we find the familiar legend of Sisyphus, founder and king of Corinth who, because of his avarice and fraudulence, was condemned to the lower world, eternally to roll a great stone to the top of a steep hill, whence it always rolled down to the bottom again. This ghastly punishment, perceived through the ages as a paradigm for the worst eternal fate that could be visited on an errant mortal, is spoken of thus in *Webster's Dictionary of Proper Names*: "Hence, a Sisyphean task, an unending task on which immense energy is expended with little to show for it."

Hence, to play "The Empire Strikes Back" videogame, costing, with its console, enough to buy a good set of the collected works of Mark Twain, and fostering a solitude of activity that separates the player even more from the real world.

Over and over and over, you roll that great rock up the hill, killing Walkers only to have the rock roll down on you again, only to have faster, cleverer, more destructive Walkers come to life on the screen. And you play, and you play, and in the twilight you find the cobwebs have smothered your imagination, your leg has gone to sleep, your money is gone, your friends have grown up and died; and you are all alone

*Award-winning screenwriter, novelist and critic Harlan Ellison wrote the feature movie A Boy and His Dog and episodes of TV's Star Trek and Outer Limits among many others.*

there in the gloaming, with the radiant screen and its two-dimensional electronic death-machines... firing, firing... lumbering... making no progress, and winning no awards.

But does it really matter? Clearly not. Because life—as viewed by this and other video game Body Snatchers—is a pitiless congeries of rocks being rolled up a steep hill, only to fall back. This is the lesson one learns from "The Empire Strikes Back"—unless one has the presence of self to become rapidly bored.

That's a helluva recommendation: The best one can hope for is that one yawns before one's soul is snatched. □

Colliding boulders occasionally uncover a new pick, which he has a few seconds to grab. Sometimes they uncover something else—elusive golden keys which he can use to get through any of three revolving doors in the maze, and into further mazes where the pace of the game slows down for a breather.

Traveling through the door from maze to maze is a trip in more than one sense. Harkening back to the astronaut's dimension-shuttling in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, there's an electrifying audiovisual barrage that you expect will land Pete in Rod Serling's lap. The variety of mazes in which he can find him-



"Pick Axe Pete!" from *Odyssey²*: mining his own business—ore not?

#### PICK AXE PETE! ★ ★

Designed by Ed Averett. (*Odyssey²* cartridge. \$32.95)

By Frank Lovece

"Pick Axe Pete!" mines some familiar ground. The idea of boulders tumbling through descending levels of a mine shaft while the hero tries to dodge or destroy them owes a little to both the arcade game "Donkey Kong" and the movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Still, "Pick Axe Pete!" contains a couple of clever touches, and Pick Axe himself is one of the most versatile characters in the *Odyssey²* cast.

The titular hero works the Misty Mountain Mine, a labyrinth of 77 possible mazes that would challenge a team from the UMW using power-driven equipment. Pete is stuck in one of 11 opening mazes with a single pick that effectively clobbers boulders for points. The instrument disappears after several seconds' use, though, and he's left to merely dodge rolling rocks (easily) and bouncing ones (with great care), or else try to escape via sporadically appearing ladders.

self—including invisible ones—helps to keep the game interesting and makes it difficult to come up with any surefire pattern.

Now for a few playing tips. Keep Pete away from the doors—boulders can roll out and bowl him over unexpectedly. Avoid walls—even if Pete dodges a boulder, it can bounce back at him. He also doesn't have to hit a boulder head-on to break it; by leaping or crouching with the pick, he can smash boulders on levels above or below him.

As for general strategy, I find it better to concentrate on getting the keys (10 points each) and going through the doorways (20 points each) once Pete's initial pick disappears than to go after another pick and strike boulders (three points each).

I think one detail of this mine game is particularly important. Instead of killing the hero, as some of the more morbid video games do, this game's boulders merely knock Pete over. This is probably a lot less unsettling, especially to kids, and besides, how do you explain it when the "dead" figure gets up again for the next game? Reincarnation? □ (Continued)



## STAR TREK—THE MOTION PICTURE ★ ★ ★

Designed by Mark Indictor. (GCE Vectrex Arcade System-compatible cartridge. \$30 approx.)

By Mark Trost

The only thing you can't do with this video-game version of the famed TV/motion-picture series is push a button for Mr. Spock's advice. But then again, he's dead—sort of.

Essentially a mixture of the arcade games "Gorf" and "Battlezone," "Star Trek" is an enjoyable cartridge, particularly for those who identify with a certain overzealous starship captain (now ad-

miral). As played on the self-contained Vectrex system, the claim to fame of which is outstanding three-dimensional graphics of the "Asteroids" arcade game variety, you view space, the final frontier, from the captain's chair of the *Enterprise*. Your mission is to destroy the Klingon mother ship. To do so you must combat up to eight waves of torpedo-spewing Klingon and Romulan ships.

Unlike most video games that allow you to fire phasers (or lasers) endlessly, "Star Trek" adds a dash of realism (particularly to those familiar with the series) by incorporating working and ever-decreasing power gauges for shields and phasers. If you, as Scotty would say, "roon out of

poo-ah," you can refuel at a space station, but only once per sector.

Players also have the option (which they can utilize at any time but only once) to encounter the mother ship without going through all eight rounds by entering a black hole. This reprises the "warp" or "hyperspace" effect seen in both *Star Trek* movies along with appropriate sound effects.

After extensive play (during which I must have lost every ship in the Federation) I found it best to time the trips to the space station carefully. You only have one per sector, so taking time to fuel up when phaser banks and shields still have 40% or better is a mistake, as is leaving a sector without utilizing the facility.

Point-conscious players should place the black hole in sector five or six to maximize the number of points earned before the speed of the attackers becomes too great.

Yet, since resetting the game reprises a version of the movie theme, even losing can be pleasant in "Star Trek." □

## MEGAMANIA ★ ★

Designed by Steve Cartwright. (Activision Atari-compatible cartridge. \$31.95)

By Randi Hacker

This new game by Activision pits you against ordinary, everyday objects (such as hamburgers, radial tires, irons, dice and bow ties) which fire at you from outer space. You, in your rocket at the bottom of the screen, must try to destroy them.

Using the joystick to move your ship left and right, you dodge the deadly flotsam and, at the same time, fire back by depressing the red "fire" button on the controller. In games one and three, you have four rockets and can activate the continuous fire mode by holding the button down. In games two and four, you only have one rocket and have to fire each shot individually.

The objects come at you in waves. The first wave is a frontal attack by pink flying discs. They float across the top of the screen, shooting at you while you shoot back. Once you've gotten rid of all these menaces you are confronted with a wave of irate hamburgers that move not only across the screen but also down it. (We always knew hamburgers could give you heartburn, but didn't know they were armed.) If you don't eliminate the bottom row quickly, you'll get wiped out when one of the burgers bumps into you.

Despite the originality of the attackers, the game is just a little too much like so many other space games today, and this, I feel, will keep it from getting into the Video Game Hall of Fame. They shoot. You shoot. They shoot faster and move around. You shoot faster and move around. The game is by no means easy, but even the variations aren't particularly exciting, and the graphics are not great. □

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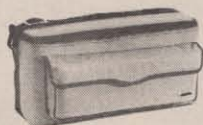
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## Arcade-grade add-on for Intellivision

Okay: how many of you have had a little trouble getting used to the Intellivision hand controller? Raise your hands. C'mon, let's be honest—"in-tell" the truth!

It's been my experience that most seasoned gamers seem to have a hard time adjusting to Intellivision's flat, circular disc controller, as opposed to the more conventional joysticks adopted by companies such as Atari and the arcade-game manufacturers. But since no one currently offers a separate electronic joystick for Intellivision, joystick lovers playing Mattel's system have been out of luck . . . until now.

A company called Video Product Sales has come to the rescue with a remarkably simple little device it calls the In-Joy-a-Stick. It's the first ac-

cessory of its kind, and it allows true joystick action on the Intellivision console with minimal expense.

Installation is a snap. You simply remove the two screws from the Intellivision controller, remove the old disc, and replace it with the plastic In-Joy-a-Stick. *Voila!* You've got a joystick—or at least a close approximation of one.

### Stick-lers

For certain games, I found the In-Joy-a-Stick a true joy to use. I managed to nearly double my score on "Space Armada," though a few other gamers told me the In-Joy-a-Stick gave them a little trouble with "Star Strike" and a couple of sports games such as "Baseball."

As Earl Laskey, president of Laskey Video Distributing, told me, "It's all a matter of individual taste. Me? I

can't use anything else nowadays."

In-Joy-a-Stick can be found in many video stores or bought from Laskey Video Distributing, 20 Morning Drive, Irvine, CA 92714.

To change the subject completely, is it possible to learn how to beat video games by reading a book? Apparently a lot of publishers think so, as at least a dozen video-game guides are filling up newsstands and bookstores across the country.

Two of the best I've seen so far are *Score! Beating the Top 16 Video Games* by Ken Uston (Signet, \$2.50) and *The Winners' Book of Video Games* by Craig Kubey (Warner, \$5.95). In his book, Ken Uston (widely known as one of the world's leading experts on "Pac-Man") employs an extremely patient and methodical approach towards dissecting and evaluating the various

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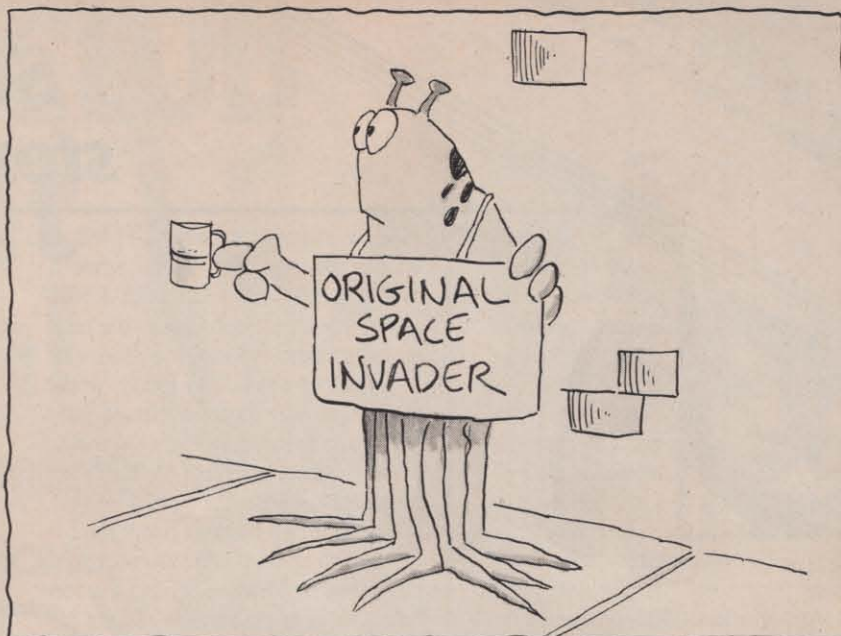


strengths and weaknesses of 16 arcade games, including "Pac-Man," "Ms. Pac-Man," "Donkey Kong," "Defender" and some dozen others. Game board patterns and strategies are covered in depth, and are as thorough as any yet provided on the subject.

While Uston's book is an excellent guide for arcade gamers, it falls way short on providing any worthwhile coverage on home games, relegating them instead to a four-page overview at the back of the book. As an arcade guide, however, it's tops.

### Arcade Arcania

Kubey's lengthier paperback goes further toward helping the reader make discoveries for himself, discussing various tactics and general principles applicable to all video games. Still, exhaustive analyses of no less than 28 arcade games and 25 home games are provided, along with an abbreviated list of the top video-game arcades in North America, lighthearted descriptions of video-game "sicknesses" ("joystick hands," "video eyes"), plus some miscellaneous background material.



Neither book is current enough to provide any information on the latest games such as "Zaxxon," but the wide majority of what you're likely to find in most arcades is covered quite thoroughly.

One question remains: Is it really possible to learn game tips and tricks from a book? Some gamers we

know pooh-pooh these books, and rightly point out that nothing beats a solid day of game playing to get some honest experience, learning by doing. On the other hand, since these books are relatively inexpensive, they add up to less than the cost of a day of play for most arcade fanatics, and they won't hurt. □

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