

THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE

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A Critical Newsletter for the Serious Gamesman

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1

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Two Dollars

KEEP THOSE QUESTIONNAIRES COMING!

Many thanks for all of you who have filled out and returned the questionnaires we sent out last month. As we expected, you have some pretty interesting things to say about us, the hardware, software, and much more. If you haven't filled it out yet, please take a moment to do so. We are compiling all the information and will report back to you what everyone else thinks (we think we already know which controllers you overwhelmingly love!). We want to respond to *your* needs!

In that regard, one comment that has made over and over is your wish to see more "field's of play" and pictures with our reviews. We agree completely and work, month after month, to provide them for you. Unfortunately, there are factors which make it impossible to be totally successful. Because we pride ourselves on giving the reviews to you when you need them (as opposed to when you read about games in most other publications). You might have noticed that we, more often than not, print a review of a game before the other publications have a chance to re-print the press release and give their personal views on what's coming. Also, we are often ahead of the manufacturer's art departments. AND there are companies who don't understand the importance of artwork for their games. These are a few of the problems that are beyond everyone's control. We will run pictures whenever it is at all possible, even when all we can get is something that is slightly on the fuzzy side. Be assured we will continue to pursue the pictures, as well as early copies of the games so you can read about the games AS or BEFORE they appear on your retailer's shelves.

Another comment that has repeatedly turned up is the feeling that we spend too much space on Atari 2600-compatible information and reviews. It should be noted that fully seventy-five percent of new information and reviews are geared to that market by the various game manufacturers. There are very few game companies addressing the Atari 5200, ColecoVision, Intellivision, or Vectrex and whatever information we do receive about those systems, we cover. From the cooperation we receive, we also find many of the Atari 2600-compatible manufacturers seem to release much more information—most likely BECAUSE of the competition in that area. We do not slight the other systems on purpose and make a point to give you ALL pertinent information we receive.

WICO For our many readers who have asked about the availability of the new WICO controllers (see February issue), we recently spent some time with WICO and they assure us they're on schedule for a May release for the various joysticks. We will, of course, review them for you.



A new joystick, previously unannounced, will also be coming in May—this one known as **THE BOSS**, their new "affordable" joystick which will retail at \$19.95. This joystick is similar to their current popular joystick, with a few changes to bring the cost down. THE BOSS will feature one top-mounted fire button and will be smaller and lighter. Unlike the bat handle on the current model, this will feature a grip handle. The joystick will include a high quality PC board with five built-in leaf switches. THE BOSS will be backed by an extended, limited warranty. This unit is constructed of durable, high impact plastic and has four non-skid rubber feet and a 5-foot cord. Like its "big sister", this one is designed for

direct plug-in compatibility with the Atari 2600, 4/800 computers, Commodore VIC-20 and 64. It will also work with your ColecoVision on games which do not need the keypad for gameplay. Plans call for the expansion of the "BOSS" line to include other game controllers in the future.



Plans call for conversion of their games to the PAL system by the end of this month. They also plan the release of 3 new titles in May/June. The first will be an adventure game; the second a family/party game (8 games for four people); and the third game will feature "lots of rabbits". The working titles for this game are "HAREBRAIN" and "HOPALONG CATASTROPHE". Between June and December, an additional 5 games will be released for a total of 8 new games. Starpath will also enter the Atari 4/8/1200 software arena with their most popular 2600-compatible games: Communist Mutants, Dragonstomper, and Escape from the Mindmaster. They expect to have these available in May/June



Watch for our review shortly on HAPPY TRAILS, the only Intellivision-compatible game planned in the first half of the year. It's a trail-blazing maze with a twist. You must gallop through a twisting and turning Wild West landscape, collecting treasure and rounding up outlaws. The catch is that you've got to rearrange trails as you ride creating pathways and avoiding pitfalls. It's a game where you have to move fast and think even faster.

NEW COMPANY UPDATE

As we continue to sort out the new companies for you, four new ones get ready to enter the arena. **UNITOYS** plans, this Fall, to introduce a plug-in computer adaptor for the Atari 2600. It will plug into the cartridge slot. You will also be able to use a cassette tape drive. They plan to produce games for the cassette tape drive (ala STARPATH). **ANSWER SOFTWARE** plans entry into the 2600-compatible cartridge area sometime later this Spring or Summer. No further details are available at this point. **AMIGA** has several plans. Among them include a 2600-compatible joystick in April (watch for our review); an expansion module (again ala STARPATH) with a custom 6K chip and 1K ROM which will be available in June along with several game cassettes for the system; and finally, something that, at least, *SOUNDS* intriguing—a Stand-on Controller which will be packaged with SKIING! Could this mean that you will be able to ski down the slopes on your big screen TV in your own living room?? The package will be available with either a 2600-compatible cartridge (about \$50) or cassette-form (for their expansion module system) at around \$40.00. **K-TEL** (the company who has brought you "Greatest Hits" records that are traditionally advertised on TV), plans their own line of videogames and hope to launch the first titles this Summer for the 2600 VCS.

FALCON PROJECT REVEALED!

As reported in our March issue, Atari has been working on a secret project known only as "The Falcon Project". We have now learned more about it. Atari is entering the home telecommunications field by offering "smart" telephones. With a hoped-for target of early 1984, the modular telephone would significantly broaden telephone uses—for example, tapping into remote data bases, providing the capability of remotely turning on or off devices in the home, and possibly having the ability to play video games with a neighbor while each player stays in his own home. From what we have learned, the unit is basically a telephone with a video display and an attachable keyboard and would be priced in the area of \$300.00 with add-ons and peripherals to expand its capabilities available at no extra cost. We will continue bringing you the news FIRST as we find out the whole story!

APRIL SPRINGS INTO NEW SEASON

Here are just a few of the items you will find in this month's issue of The Update:

ENDURO takes top honors this month as we see some fantastic effects for the 2600. Just when you may be thinking about a new system, someone jumps in with a monumental breakthrough for the existing VCS. Leave it to someone like Activision!

Also, we have been reading some of those questionnaires you've been sending back to us, and we have decided to print the results **NEXT MONTH** after we compile everything. We appreciate your honesty and the fact you took US to task over a few items!! So far, we CAN report that the Video Game Update seems to be right on target with our reviews and previews. And, most of you appreciate getting those reviews ON or BEFORE the date they hit the retailers shelves. A few of our readers think we spend too much time with Atari and Atari compatibles. We DO spend a lot of time with these reviews BECAUSE the basic VCS is in SO many homes, compared to the Intellivision system, as well as Odyssey, Coleco, etc. And, of course, there are many more manufacturers making games for the VCS than for any other system and our vow, when we started The Update was to bring you reviews of ALL the games for ALL the systems. This issue should have something for everyone. We hope you understand that we WOULD review FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F if THAT was the overall best selling system!

Rightly so, some of our readers don't yet understand the computer reviews. Let us explain: Our entire thrust is electronic video game entertainment. We consider COMPUTERS to be yet another system. The Atari 4/8/1200, the VIC-20, the T199/4A... all these are ALSO VIDEO GAME SYSTEMS! In fact, there are MORE games and game companies making software for home computers than all other systems put together! Soon, many of you will have a home computer. As a result, you will start buying COMPUTER versions of YOUR favorite games!!

For those of you who already have a computer, we offer the enclosed reviews of some of the most popular games. Thus, THE COMPUTER ENTERTAINER!!! But take heart. We will NOT abandon ANY of the serious game players who choose not to buy a home computer! (That should answer YOUR question, M.S. of Hawaii.)

If you HAVE been shopping around for a home computer, look no further. The Video Game Update has two comprehensive comparison charts to allow you the opportunity to decide what's best for YOU (computerwise, and video game system master unit-wise) in the privacy of your own home!

Additionally, something nobody has yet mentioned... The Video Game Update has started doing INTERVIEWS with some of the most important (and interesting) people in the video game industry. This month we venture to Northern California, to an area that grows computer chips (as opposed to chocolate chips) and find out about RAM and ROM from someone who knows the real deal.

Altogether, this is a great month for the Update!

THE FALL-OUT CONTINUES

As we predicted in our February issue, the fall-out with the software companies continues. This time it's U.S. GAMES that has, according to informed sources, decided to exit the game manufacturing business. In the case of U.S. GAMES, we do not feel it is reflective of their current and planned product, as the quality of their software had begun to really improve (see our ratings of their most recent games in our February issue). In fact, the prototype of their PINK PANTHER series which they had planned to introduce later this year looked very exciting in both graphics and sound. We hate to see ANY company be forced out of this business, but we especially hate to see a company which was beginning to produce some very good games disappear.

Meanwhile, over at APOLLO, no one has heard a word and the promised March games have not shown up at any distributors. We have spoken with several distributors who are in the dark as much as anyone regarding Apollo's future plans.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING...



KILLER BEES (★★½/★★½) is a fast-moving game for one player only which can be used with the Voice of Odyssey². You control a white swarm of bees, which you move around to sting alien Beebots by touching them. In each successive wave, the Beebots increase in number, moving faster, and it takes more than one sting to kill them. This would be fairly easy to do if it weren't for the nasty red, blue and green swarms which attack your white swarm. Each time your swarm is touched by the attacking swarms, you lose one or more bees until your entire swarm is eliminated. However, at the beginning of each new wave, your swarm is restored to full strength. Fortunately, you're equipped with a Bug Zapper to defend against the attacking swarms, but it's good for only one use and can be reactivated only by killing another Beebot. (Swarms can be zapped whenever they occupy the same horizontal section of the screen as your swarm.) We found that it was best to zap them as soon as they emerged from one of the six boxes spaced around the edge of the screen. The top portion of the screen shows the current player's score, plus high score for the current playing session and a place for the high scorer to record his or her initials. The game is very simple, without the usual multitude of variations available in games for this system. Unfortunately, the only contribution made by the Voice is a "Bzzz-Bzzz" sound at the start of the game and between waves, "More, more, more" as your new swarm forms, and "Oh!" or "Oh, no!" at the end of the game. Kids may enjoy this one, but we would suggest taking a look at it before deciding to buy it. (MSR \$39.95)

DEMON ATTACK (★★★★/★★★★) is the first game by an independent software producer for the Odyssey², and it's very good news for owners of this system. Surely everyone is familiar with the



basics of this popular game, but in case you've spent the last year on the moon... This is a slide-and-shoot invasion game in which the alien attackers are exotic bird-like creatures that swoop and move erratically, dropping bombs in their attempt to wipe out your ground-based laser cannon. In this version, the Demons attack in pairs, and only the lower of the two drops bombs. The Demons' shapes and modes of attack vary from wave to wave, getting tougher to handle as you amass more points. Once past the first few waves, you'll encounter Demons that are not eliminated by your first shot: they turn into two smaller Split Demons, which are worth double points when hit. When you hit one of the lower Split Demons, its remaining partner becomes a Diving Demon, which will flutter toward your cannon while chirping. The Diving Demons earn you quadruple points when hit, but sometimes your best move is to avoid them. If you think these Demons are tough, just wait 'til you encounter the revolving Demons that almost disappear when they present their narrow side to you! (They also split when hit.) By the way, for anyone who has played the Atari 2600-compatible version and learned the trick of "hiding" in the corner where the Demons can't shoot you, be warned that this technique will not work in the Odyssey² version. In addition to the basic game for one or two players (alternating turns), there is an advanced game starting at a higher wave level. There is also a cooperative game in which two players alternate control about every four seconds within the same wave, and elimination of one player's cannon will add 500 points to the other player's score. Each of these variations is available with a tracer shot option, allowing you to steer your shots after they are released from the cannon. Graphics in this game are the most intricate we've seen yet for the system, and game play is varied and exciting. **DEMON ATTACK** is a must for the Odyssey² owner. Recommended. (MSR \$31.95)

Update on Tigervision cartridges and ColecoVision Expansion Module No. 1: after reporting in March that Tigervision games DO work in the Coleco module for Atari 2600-compatible games (contrary to an item seen in another game publication), we heard from a reader whose MARAUDER cartridge does NOT work in the module. We spoke with Willy Watkins, Tigervision Repair Services and Quality Control Manager, who is familiar with the problem. It seems that the chip for Tigervision games requires four volts of power to be activated, so that the game can be played. Due to the voltage regulation in the ColecoVision unit, a slight low voltage situation in your house current, unnoticeable in everyday electrical use, can cause LESS than four volts to reach the chip. Result: no game! If you have this problem with a Tigervision cartridge under warranty, just send it to Mr. Watkins' attention (address in the instruction book), and he will add the necessary part to make it work. The same problem has occurred with a few other manufacturers' games; check with their service departments for help.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING... ATARI 2600-COMPATIBLE



REALSPORTS TENNIS (★★★★/★★★½) broadens Atari's new line of RealSports games and shows just how far video games have progressed since PONG. This cartridge allows you to play a very realistic singles game against the computer or against another player—great for those bad-weather days when you can't play the real thing! The court is represented by a narrowed rectangle that gives a good three-dimensional effect, and the two players are clad in differently colored tennis togs. At the top of the screen (back of the court) is a tennis scoreboard that can be personalized by writing in the name(s) of the player(s), a feature we believe will be appealing to most gamers. Whether playing against the computer or a friend, the game may be set for slow or fast speed. The difficulty switches govern racket control: the "A" setting requires you to press the joystick firing button to swing the racket and hit the ball, while the "B" setting causes the computer to swing the racket automatically whenever your player is in the proper position. In single-player games, the right difficulty switch controls the expertise of the computer player. The computer will always make the forehand/backhand decision for your player, again depending on his position. When you are ready to begin, the ball will bounce in place at the baseline until you press the firing button to serve the ball. The game follows normal tennis scoring (15-30-40-game), with players changing ends of the court after the appropriate number of serves. To win a game, a player must have a two-point advantage, so the game provides for DEUCE (40 to 40) and AD (one player has scored a point after DEUCE). The first person to win six games with a two-game lead wins the set, but if the game score is six to six, a seventh game is added to break the tie. Two out of three sets wins the match. Three kinds of shots are available: normal (player is standing or moving side-to-side), smash (player is rushing the net), and lob (player is running away from the net). This is a very good, realistic simulation of tennis, and one that may appeal even to those who don't ordinarily care that much for video sports games. The graphics contribute a great deal to the success of the game, particularly due to the apparent depth achieved on the screen by the court layout and good use of a shadow under the ball. Though it has absolutely no bearing on game play, we really like the title screen that bounces just like a tennis ball! Recommended. (MSR \$29.95)

STARPATH CORPORATION KILLER SATELLITES (★★★½/★★★★)

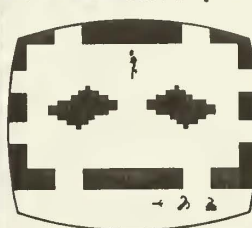
the Supercharger is an attractive-looking, but unremarkable scrolling shoot-out for one player. The premise is that a group of orbiting satellites have come to life, and they attack Earth in an effort to obliterate all life forms on the planet. You are the test pilot of the only rocket ship that can intercept these baddies and save the world. (Sounds familiar, doesn't it?) You start with six ships, and you fly back and forth, shooting at the variously shaped satellites as they drift and descend from the top of the screen. (Merely avoiding the top of the screen can save you a lot of ships!) The goal of the satellites is to knock out buildings on the surface of the Earth, and you must try to shoot them before they do. Each of your ships has a limited amount of fuel (replenished after each wave), and your laser guns can overheat, becoming temporarily inoperative if you fire heavily and repeatedly. The buildings on Earth are separated from space by an energy barrier, which doesn't affect satellites but will fry your ship if you fly too low. You are provided with a Global Radar Scanner, which reveals the positions of the killer satellites. The early waves are easy enough for beginners or children to handle comfortably, but the action escalates in later waves when the attackers are much faster. In all, there are 99 waves, and you have some choice of starting point in the game (wave 1, 5, 10, 15...95). We recommend that fairly experienced players start no lower than wave 40, or else they will become bored. About the tenth wave, the satellites are joined by erratically moving "meteorites," which must be avoided because they cannot be destroyed. (From the nitpicking department: these are technically meteors because they're still in space—meteors are known as meteorites after they hit the Earth.) Graphic rendition of the satellites and your space ship is especially good in this game. Every time you apply thrust to your ship, a flame appears at its tail—a nice detail. Use of sound effects is minimal. Game play doesn't measure up to the graphics, however, because it's just too similar to many other scrolling space games. With the increased memory capacity afforded by the Supercharger, we were surprised at the lack of a high score memory for the current playing session. Not recommended. (MSR \$14.95)



REALSPORTS SOCCER (★★★/★★★★) is fun to play, but it's not exactly like real soccer because there are only three players per team (probably due to limitations of the system). There are plenty of game variations available for one or two players at any of three skill levels in games lasting five or nine minutes each. The teams are clad in different colors, and the one player you control at any given time is brighter in color than the other two. Play starts with the ball in the center of the horizontally scrolling field's halfway line, and

either team can take possession of the ball. Each soccer fielder is assigned to one of three horizontal lanes on the field and must dribble the ball within that lane or pass to another fielder. On offense you control the player with the ball, but on defense you can switch control among your three players by pressing the firing button on your joystick. The defensive controlled player is always able to move faster than the offensive ball handler, so you have to be clever to maintain control of the ball once you have it. If you're playing defense, it's possible to use the screen wraparound feature to have your controlled player run off one side of the field and onto the other (not the ends). Points are scored by kicking the ball into the goal area, and the referee's whistle will blow to bring the ball back to the center of the field. (The whistle is also heard at kick-off and at the end of the game.) This is a good game that's easy to learn, but complex enough to require repeated play to build skills. However, we find ourselves in the odd position of not recommending the game to zealous soccer fans because it will not be close enough to the real game to satisfy them. Recommended, except for purists! (MSR \$29.95)

WORDQUEST II: FIREWORLD (★★½/★★★★½)



second of four adventure games comprising the search for the Sword of Ultimate Sorcery which began in EARTHWORLD.

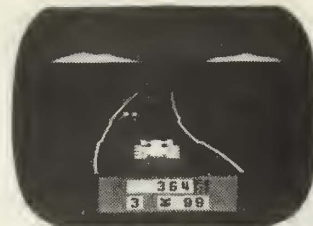
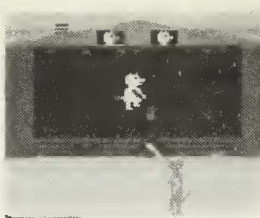
This is another game for serious adventure enthusiasts willing

to spend many, many hours unraveling the clues contained in the game itself and the accompanying comic book. The FIREWORLD puzzle is based on the Tree of Life, with ten hallways linked together by ten different rooms with various doors. There are sixteen objects randomly located throughout the treasure chest rooms, including swords, shields, water, food, an amulet, a grappling hook, and others. The most important object of all is the chalice, because you must possess it to enter a secret room at the center of the Tree of Life. As in EARTHWORLD, leaving the right object(s) in the appropriate room(s) will result in a clue display. In FIREWORLD, entrance into every one of the ten treasure chest rooms requires your performance of a "skill and action sequence." These include battles with Deadly Snakes, Flaming Firebirds, Flying Fire Goblins, Flaming Hot Knives, Fire-Breathing Dragons and Jawing Salamanders. (Each is previewed briefly after you insert the cartridge and before you start to play the game itself.) Learning how to survive these sequences requires a certain amount of experimentation with the joystick and the firing button, because Atari does not give any specific instructions for these tests of skill. We ran into an unusual problem with some of these sequences that led us to downgrade what would have been higher ratings for both graphics and game play. Our screen was so bright that we found it hard to see the objects we were to avoid or shoot at, making our task unnecessarily difficult. We tried turning down the TV's brightness setting, which did help, but this made some subsequent scenes too dark to see well. We also tried with a different TV, and the picture was still overly bright, but it was easier to see. Perhaps the designer was attempting to portray a "white hot" setting, but the effect doesn't quite work. With the exception of this criticism, we thoroughly enjoyed the game. It is challenging in the extreme, but even the overly bright scenes can be mastered. The puzzles are many and should lead to many hours of mentally stimulating adventuring. Recommended. (MSR \$37.95)

ACTIVISION **PINK!** (★★★½/★★★) is based on the familiar children's story of the three little pigs whose houses are destroyed by the big, bad wolf. In this game for one or two players, the wolf huffs and puffs, trying to destroy the three pigs' houses of straw, wood and brick. In the single player version, you control the three pigs, one at a time, as the wolf blows out pieces of the floor. (My, what strong breath you have!) In the first house, your pig can grab pieces of straw from the ceiling and drop them into the holes just made by the wolf. (In the next two houses, the pig reaches for wood or brick to fill the holes.) Points are earned for each hole in the floor that is filled. The action moves faster and faster until the wolf inevitably makes a BIG hole, pulling your pink pig through it. The pig runs off the screen, squealing away, while the bully of a wolf sings a taunting tune that all kids will recognize immediately. The typical two-player game in which you take turns controlling the pigs against a computer-controlled wolf is one choice for playmates, but there is also a version which allows both players to have fun at the same time. We think most kids will get a big kick out of playing the wolf in one round, then being the blue piggie in the next—this could be an ideal game for competitive siblings. Graphics are quite good, with the pigs particularly well drawn. The game is obviously directed at children, and it's likely to appeal primarily to those under the age of ten. However, this is a game with enough good play action to keep even older children and adults interested in joining the little ones for a few rounds. Recommended. (MSR \$31.95)



G.I. JOE (★★★½/★★★½) is another original from Parker Brothers—some familiar elements combined with new concepts to create an unusual game for one, two or three players. While it would seem obvious that this game is intended for the chief consumers of the G.I. Joe toys (little boys up to the age of eleven or twelve), we feel this game will appeal to older kids and even some adults, as well. In the single player game, your task is to protect the G.I. Joe recruits from attack by the giant Cobra as they run between two buildings at the bottom of the screen. With your paddle-controlled shield, you must block the vaporizing venom dropped from the Cobra's fangs and the occasional laser beams shot from the Cobra's eyes. While you're shielding the recruits, you must also try to destroy the Cobra by hitting him eight times squarely in the eyes. This can be tough to do, not only because the Cobra moves erratically, but also because your shield becomes inoperative as soon as you go on the offensive. To shoot at the Cobra's eyes, you must keep the firing button depressed while using the paddle knob to guide your missiles to their target. We felt like the proverbial one-armed paperhanger until we got our offensive and defensive movements coordinated, but the game became both enjoyable and challenging with practice. There is a very good two-player cooperative game in which two may play simultaneously, allowing for various strategies against the Cobra. For competitive players, one is G.I. Joe, and the other uses a joystick to control the Cobra. The three-player version is quite unusual, allowing the cooperation of two G.I. Joes against the Cobra controlled by the third player. (Whenever the Cobra is player-controlled, points are scored only by the G.I. Joes.) Game variations allow for selection of all possible combinations of fast or slow speed for both shields and the Cobra, creating enough challenge for even the most experienced game players. Setting the difficulty switches to "A" makes the game even tougher by limiting the shield positions from which you can move to the offensive—sheer suicide, in our opinion! The graphics are very well done, especially the great hooded Cobra that looms over the G.I. Joes, and game play is intriguingly different. It's nice to see the under-utilized paddle controllers in a new game, although we found the feel unlike any other game that uses them. The slightest paddle movement affects the shield, which almost seems to float in mid-air. The game is probably too difficult for very small children, unless they're playing the cooperative game with an older child, but it would be a welcome addition to the game libraries of many pre-teens and teenagers. Recommended. (MSR \$29.95)



ENDURO (★★★★/★★★★) is an extremely impressive auto racing game. It's one of those rare games that elicited comments from our staff like "Wow—this is incredible!" You have to remind yourself that you're playing this game on an Atari 2600, not on one of the more "advanced" systems! We feel so strongly about ENDURO that we're reviewing the game an issue earlier than we normally would because there will be other auto racing games available soon, and we want our readers to be aware of this one before making buying decisions. ENDURO allows you to drive your race car from a normal perspective. The car YOU control is in the foreground on your screen, while the road stretches out in front of it, diminishing to a point at the horizon, so that you have a feeling of depth and distance. Control of your car is achieved with left and right movement of the joystick, and the firing button becomes an accelerator—shifting is automatic. Your racer can be slowed down by releasing the firing button or by applying the brakes (pulling the joystick toward you). The object is to pass a specified number of cars each day while covering as many miles as possible. The bottom of your screen displays mileage on an odometer, the number of the current day, plus a descending counter which keeps track of the number of cars remaining to be passed. (You begin the race at dawn on the first day with 200 cars to pass.) You start the race confidently as your head fills with the roar of your engine, but your pulse suddenly quickens as you narrowly miss a car on a tight curve. Now on a straightaway, you accelerate and gleefully pass another dozen cars, but the road curves again and you rear-end one of the racers. The counter at the bottom of the screen starts adding cars as several racers streak by. You recover from the collision (they are never fatal in this game), increasing your speed and concentration in equal measure. Once again at full throttle, the dry road suddenly becomes a giant snow field! You can hear the hushed sound of tires cutting through the blanket of white, and your racer becomes less responsive—slow down! Soon enough, you're back on dry roads as the sun begins to set, gradually spreading an orange glow above the horizon. Night falls, and cars are visible only as red tail lights. Just when you think you're doing well, you drive into a fog bank which cuts your visibility drastically. The fog lifts, and soon you hear a series of warning tones because it's nearly dawn. If you pass that 200th car before morning, green flags wave and you continue to race through the second day and night, with a new goal of 300 cars to pass! We found ENDURO to have that marvelously addictive quality that makes you play "just one more time" because you're sure you can pass a few more cars the next time. Some might prefer a paddle controller for this type of game, but we found the joystick quite easy to manage. (Because of constant pressure on the firing button accelerator, using a joystick with top-mounted button was far less tiring than using the standard model.) While auto racing as a video game theme is not new, ENDURO is far superior to existing race games for the 2600 because it makes you part of the action, not just a detached observer/manipulator. Graphics are excellent, from the tread on the tires to the glorious blaze of sunset sky. There is no roadside scenery, but this does not detract from the game. While we have not yet played (and therefore cannot review) the final version of TURBO by Coleco for the 2600, we feel that ENDURO compares very favorably to the Coleco Vision edition of TURBO in game play—no small accomplishment by the designer, Larry Miller. Recommended. (MSR \$31.95)

FLASHES

- ...Informed sources have told Video Game Update that Coleco will incorporate a "pause" feature in all cartridges starting with the Blackjack/Poker cartridge (see Availability Update).
- ...Imagic has made the decision not to introduce the 2600-compatible cartridge, SKY PATROL (also known as AERIAL ACE). Video Game Update applauds Imagic for not only testing the cartridge heavily and ADMITTING that it did not receive high enough consumer appeal, BUT they put out a Press Release indicating what they had done. Time and time again, other companies withdraw games before they reach the market, but never make an announcement, leaving everyone in the dark regarding the disappearance of an upcoming title.

...More details have been made available on Mattel's XIV WINTER OLYMPICS cartridge expected this winter. The cartridge, which has been named the official videogame of the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia will feature ski jumping and a bobsled race.

ENDURO FROM THE DRIVER'S SEAT

In our last issue, as you may have guessed from several other comments made in this issue, we sent questionnaires to a cross-section of readers. One of the many questions that kept coming up was, "HOW a video game is made?" So many of you spend a lot of time with your games, we feel that you deserve to get to know some of the designers of various games, and find out what they are thinking about when they are creating what you will spend countless hours with.

One such person is designer Larry Miller. You may not be aware that he designed Spider Fighter, but within the next month, almost everyone will be acutely aware that he designed ENDURO (see review this issue). Larry lives in Sacramento, California and designs video games for Activision from his home. Jon Badaux of Video Game Update spoke to Larry about several things including ENDURO, and here's what they had to say. JON: You know, Larry, everyone in this office was so taken with ENDURO, I'm very curious what type of computer you use to write such a marvelous game.

Larry: Well, I have an Apple Computer and believe it or not, I do all of my development on the Apple Computer.

JON: That's funny, I use an Apple Computer, but all I seem to be able to manage is editing text. Do you write in BASIC?

Larry: Nope, I use assembly language. All commercial games I know of are written in assembly language.

JON: For those who don't know what "assembly language" is, can you explain it?

Larry: That's a language the computer itself understands, the chip inside the video game. BASIC is a language PEOPLE understand and it requires a translator, but assembly language is what the chip itself understands, so you're telling it what to do in the most direct manner by programming in assembly language.

JON: When you start out on a project like ENDURO, how do you start programming the game and how do you start DEVELOPING the game?

Larry: Usually it starts brewing in my mind for a half-year or so off-and-on. But I really buckle down to work on it. I sit around and think about how I'm going to do it. I ultimately think about what I want the game to look like AND what is possible to do on that video game machine. I have to go back and forth between the two. I think, "well, I'd like it to look like this" and then see if I can do that. Then I go back and maybe get some other ideas of what I want it to look like and if I CAN do them. It works back and forth. I just outline to myself if what I want to do is possible, how I want it to look and how I would do them. Then I put it down in an outline form.

After doing this for about a month I start getting into the nuts and bolts of writing the computer code itself (the instructions which tell the computer what to do).

JON: How does it get to the cartridge ROM "chip" stage?

Larry: There is a source code which consists of names for the machine instructions and the machine instructions have semi-English names that makes it a little easier for us to understand. And the source code consists of a list of those instructions by their names. Then other things along with it that tell what they do and what they act on. And the way you write these programs is to manipulate AROUND the source code, add to it, move things around, delete things from it, and you use an editor to do that.

Then when you have it to a point where you want to see what it looks like in the game, you assemble it. Which means you set it up so the video game machine can execute those instructions. That only takes a couple of minutes. So you do that and you see what the games does, how it looks and if there are problems with it, you just go back for the next round and you work on the source code again. You might add more instructions, take some away, or move them around and just keep on going back and forth. When you really get into it, you might do ten of those go-arounds per hour. Then sometimes, I'll just take off for a day or

two with a print-out of all the instructions, sit down and look at it, and make changes with a pencil. You can daydream a lot, then the next day maybe I'll go back and put it into the computer and see how that looks on the video game.

JON: Let me ask this—something I do all the time—do you ever forget to back up your material... or for that matter, do you ever forget to save what you have written?

Larry: Never! It has not happened. There is almost a panic associated with saving what you've done three or four or five times. I mean, I have a stack of twenty print-outs to make sure I don't lose it, and I back it up in all kinds of different ways.

JON: In another section of our April issue, we speak to someone at Atari to find out what RAM and ROM mean, as far as memory is concerned in a video game. How much of either is in ENDURO?

Larry: There is 4K of ROM, and there is the usual amount of RAM which comes with a video game.

Jon: That would be 1 or 2K?

Larry: NO, it's only one-eighth of a K.

JON: ONE-EIGHTH?

Larry: Yes. You can do a lot with that eighth of a K, I'll tell ya! All of the programmers have to work with that.

JON: What inspired you, Larry Miller, to write something as creative as ENDURO?

Larry: I've done a lot of driving, practically all in California and I have been through fog and sunny weather, night, day, snow, ice... I've been through it all. And I wanted to make a realistic driving game.

JON: Every other game for this system has put the player in the position of watching the game from above a track or something like that. Why did you write this from the DRIVER'S SEAT point of view?

Larry: That's what we call "first person", and I think that's the most realistic way to do it.

JON: The best anyone here has managed so far is the fourth day of the game. How many days can you drive, and what is the progression of numbers of cars you must pass on different days. In other words, day one is 200 cars, days two through four is 300 cars. What happens after that?

Larry: OK, after the first day, the second and all subsequent days you must pass 300 cars. The number of days will go up to 99 and it just gets harder and harder with the higher days. But it doesn't get harder because you have to pass more cars, it's the number of days. The other cars drive a little faster and they kind of spread out on the road and block you a little more. But it is always possible and you're good enough there is no limit. Even after the 99th day you can keep on going. The days don't change but you can keep on driving until you don't meet your quota one day.

JON: Some of our readers are really good players and always ask if a game can be "turned over". In other words, on ENDURO, can the odometer be reset to zero miles?

Larry: That's at 99 THOUSAND miles and something like 500 DAYS. If they can do it, that is pretty incredible! I mean, I think 99 days is incredible, but it would take 500 or 600 days to roll it over.

JON: Do you call people in to help on your projects?

Larry: No, I do have friends come in and PLAY the game, but I work on the games alone.

JON: Sound effects have really come a long way. How does a designer come up with new sounds, such as the muffled tire sounds during the snow scene in ENDURO?

Larry: That's an interesting question. I have gone through and listened to all the sounds you can make on the video game systems and I have written them down and gotten a feel for them. When I need a sound I will try out ones that I have heard that sound reasonable. For the snow scene, I tried out a sound called "number eight", which is kind of a hissing sound, and I liked it. So that is how it got into the snow scene. You just sort of try out different sounds, and after a while you get a feeling for what each one sounds like.

JON: I'm sure it was difficult to program a game where roads curve and change. When we saw TURBO by COLECO for the ATARI system in January at the Consumer Electronics Show, it had basically straight roads, but a lot of design on the sides of the road. ENDURO has scenery on the horizon, but not on the sides of the road. Is there a trade-off involved with the 2600...

Larry: YES, there really is a limited complexity to the graphic pictures. You are limited as to how much you can put on the screen and they are very serious limitations. In all the games, the designer has to make those trade-offs. They try to put ON THE SCREEN what is the most relevant and the most pleasing and then you just can't put anything else on the screen. I try to put as much as I can, and I did for ENDURO, yet still retain the feel of the road. I WANTED that road to curve, I WANTED the mountains in the distance. It was extremely difficult to put THOSE in and it just wasn't possible to put anything else in.

JON: How long did it take you to write the entire program start to finish?

Larry: About three months, BUT it was about 1500 hours worth of work, often with 100-hour weeks.

JON: So when you say you buckle down, you really do it!

Larry: Oh, yeah!

JON: Working specifically for Activision, do they ever suggest to you what KIND of game they would like you to work on? In other words, do they ask for a TURBO or POLE POSITION-type of game?

Larry: NO, not at all! I just come up with the ideas and then do them. The only thing I encounter is skepticism when they say "You can't do that". So I go away and come back a few months later and I did it.

JON: What's next on the horizon for Larry Miller?

Larry: Well... I really can't talk about that yet. But, oh yeah, I am working on something!

JON: Larry, I really want to thank you for answering these questions. I have a few more technical questions that I think I'll save for someone less interesting than you.

Larry: It was my pleasure, Jon. Call anytime. And be sure the people in your office give you a chance to play the game. I hope you like it.

After our chat with Larry, I had a chance to speak with Jan Martin-Risk from the Activision marketing department, and she told me even Activision has no idea what Larry or anyone else is working on. She says all designers basically come up with their own ideas and they go to work on them and really don't talk about them. Marketing has nothing to do with that process. She also amazed us with the news that Activision has 31 designers on staff at this time. Not all are producing games as yet, but there are 31 designers to keep Activision competitive.

Jan also informed me that after taking a look at ENDURO, the consensus was that 14 to 34-year-old males would go crazy over this game. I informed her that here in our office, 14 to 34-year-old FEMALES were holding the game from me for ransom, which she was delighted to hear!



In our discussions with Parker Bros., we have some updated information on their software plans for the next six months. First, the 2600-compatible cartridges planned in conjunction with the next STAR WARS movie, "Return of the Jedi" (earlier entitled "Revenge of the Jedi") have now been titled. Available in July, the first one, DEATHSTAR BATTLE, and the second, planned for October, is EWOK ADVENTURE. They're also planning the release of Q*BERT for all systems—June for the 2600; August for Intellivision, September for the 5200 and ColecoVision! Other forthcoming games NOT listed in our AVAILABILITY UPDATE (see back page) are: LORD OF THE RINGS in September, for the 2600 as well as THE INCREDIBLE HULK and POPEYE in August; for Intellivision, look for SUPER COBRA, POPEYE AND 007 in August, SPIDERMAN in September, in the fourth quarter, DEATHSTAR BATTLE, REACTOR, GI JOE, and in early 1984, EWOK ADVENTURE and LORD OF THE RINGS. Simultaneous releases for the Atari 5200 and ColecoVision are planned for the late third quarter. The titles include FROGGER, Q*BERT, TUTANKHAM, SUPER COBRA, and POPEYE. Obviously, *all release dates* are always subject to change, but it appears that there will be some really good titles coming for ALL the systems from Parker Bros.!

This month, THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE is pleased to give you the current and most up-to-date comparison chart on the most popular video game SYSTEMS (hardware). Most of you are aware of what your system does, and in most cases what the Atari 2600-VCS will do. However, when put in black & white and side-by-side, one can get an overview of the other systems he or she may be considering! Please keep in mind, these figures are based on the systems AS OF PRESS TIME. For instance, there are no "third party controllers" for the Intellivision-II, but we are certain SOMEONE is planning SOMETHING.

ATARI 2600-COMPATIBLE

Telesys DEMOLITION HERBY (★★★/★★★★½) is a clever variation on the standard maze-chase game for one or two players, and there are game variations suitable for all ages, including young children. In the single-player game, you control Herby, a little green car whose only aim in life is to travel the miniature highways of a vertically scrolling maze. As Herby moves, the highways turn from white to red, and he can cause blocks of the maze to blacken by turning their perimeters red. The object is to blacken all the squares of the maze before running out of fuel, which would be easy enough if it weren't for the three chase vehicles—two cars and a truck. Not only do they turn Herby's red roads back to white, but they also try to bash him off the track! Herby can bash them, too, but he must always hit them from behind to throw them off the maze. Whenever Herby or one of the chase cars is bumped, it starts bouncing around and ricocheting off the sides of the screen before coming to rest. This can lead to some crazy results when Herby bumps a chase car off the maze, and it comes careening back on the rebound to knock him off the maze! It's also possible for Herby to lose all three of his lives from only one crash if he ricochets back and forth into several chase cars. While the pursuit by the chase cars can get relentless, Herby has the fuel-guzzling overdrive option, which allows him to get to a less crowded part of the maze fast. Unfortunately, he doesn't turn the roads red in overdrive unless he has just knocked all three chase cars off the track. We liked the two-player game even better than the single-player version, because it was great fun to play the spoiler by controlling the chase cars. Since one of the three chase cars is faster, that's the one you concentrate on to eliminate Herby. The action can really become hysterical when two players go head-to-head on this one, happily bashing each other off the track! Graphics in this game are fairly simple, but the vehicles are really cute. Game play will definitely appeal to kids, but we suspect many adults will sneak this one out when the kids aren't around. Recommended. (MSR \$29.95)

SHOOTIN' GALLERY (★★★★/★★★★★) is as delightful a game as we've seen lately. Although the package bears the notice, "Ideal for ages 9 and under," the game also proved irresistible to adults and older kids who tried it here. The game is a charming, musical representation of an old-fashioned shooting gallery with four variations, two timed and two without time limits. The screen is riotously colorful, with red-and-white awning-striped borders at top and bottom, and multi-colored targets including monkeys, kangaroos, seals, penguins, squirrels, frogs, snails, elephants, and lots more. There is even a cute little train that rides a track back and forth through the middle of the screen. The colors and constantly moving shapes will enchant the little ones, and they will be quite content to shoot at anything they think they can hit. However, older players will want to take advantage of the various strategic possibilities in this game. For example, hitting the train's caboose before the engine is good for 5000 points, while knocking out the engine first will earn but 100 points and make the train disappear until you hit another target. The more cabooses you hit, the higher the point value for the extra shot targets in the bottom row of the gallery. Above the train, a monkey swings along from window to window. Certain targets appear in the top row only after you've hit the monkey a specified number of times. If you are playing one of the "Speed-ups," the pace of the entire game quickens each time your score reaches a multiple of 20,000 points, and the action can really become hysterical at the higher levels! The game variations with time limits involve a cuckoo clock at the upper center of the screen: spots on the face of the clock disappear one-by-one, and you must hit the clock before they are all gone. Should you be distracted by other targets and forget to hit the clock, the cuckoo will emerge and nab four of your limited supply of bullets. The most difficult variation of all is the combination of bullet-stealing cuckoo and speed-ups. We found that the basic "Target Practice" game (no time limit and targets do not speed up as you progress) was most suitable for the youngest players. Speed-ups and time limits made the other game variations most suitable for older players. It is inevitable that SHOOTIN' GALLERY will be compared to the Atari 2600-compatible CARNIVAL by Coleco, because the games share the same basic theme. Both are very good games, but we believe that SHOOTIN' GALLERY has the edge due to more game variations, a more diversified cast of characters, and lower price. Recommended. (MSR \$24.95)

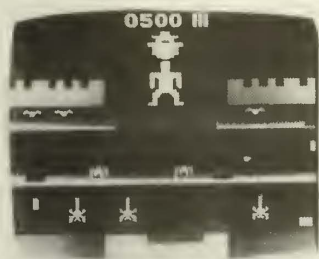
NOT JUST ANOTHER COMPUTER STORE!

Data Equipment Supply, a computer company in Downey, California, has several very popular board games (as well as a few other good games) for the VIC-20. In fact, their whole thrust is for the VIC-20. They have a printed catalog that's free of charge by writing to D. E. S., Inc., 8315 Firestone Blvd., Downey, Ca., 90241. They will be happy to send you a catalog of ALL the VIC software they handle. It would be nice if you send a stamp to help cover the cost of postage. Most of their original software is available on 16K cassette.

If you own a VIC-20 or Commodore-64 and wish to do some typesetting via modem, drop a line to Steve Westmoreland at Type-Share at the above address for D. E. S., or give him a call at (213) 923-9361, or (714) 778-5455. This is really a fascinating and inexpensive way to go about setting type and doing your own printing for profit. Anyone with a computer and modem can do it, however it is much easier to use the Commodore systems because the software is written for that. The typesetting language is pretty easy to pick up (after a bit of trial-and-error) but the results can be great. The Video Game Update has been using Type-Share for three months now, and all the typing errors you see are attributed directly to operator error, not to Type-Share. The person inputting the information promises to have it down letter-perfect within a few weeks. (Ha!) If you know anyone that might be interested... give him a call. Steve is a nice guy, easy to talk to (even yell at) and he spends about 16 hours a day at the above phone number.

NO ESCAPE! (★★★½/★★★★½) is an intriguing game with a theme based on Greek mythology. In this game for one or two players (alternating turns), your role is that of Jason after he has stolen the Golden Fleece. This act has angered the gods, who have imprisoned him in the Temple of Aphrodite, goddess of love. Jason is guarded by the Furies, who have been given the power to duplicate themselves whenever Jason hits one of them with a rock. However, Aphrodite has taken pity on Jason, giving him enough extra strength that any rocks he throws can chip out sacred bricks from the ceiling of the temple. These bricks are capable of eliminating any Furies they hit. What we have is a game of geometry: Jason can move anywhere along the floor of the temple, and he can kill Furies in the vertical lineup above him by bouncing rocks off the temple walls or directly into the temple roof so that the bricks hit the Furies. Only indirect, rebound shots will eliminate Furies—if at all possible, you must avoid having Jason hit a Fury directly with a rock, because that one hit Fury will be replaced by two Furies. Initially, the Furies maintain a straight line, marching back and forth within the temple. As Jason survives ensuing waves, the Furies become smarter, moving faster and more independently plus chasing Jason's rocks so that they can clone themselves. Jason has a lifeline, which is displayed on the screen below your score. Each hit sustained by Jason shortens the line, until the game ends when his lifeline is gone. Surviving a wave without being hit will lengthen his lifeline. Bonus points are awarded for bricks remaining in the temple roof after each wave. When the game ends, Jason can be seen floating upward on the back of Pegasus, the well-known winged horse of Greek mythology. (Does Imagic have a sequel in mind for this game?) The graphic detail in this game is very good, as we've come to expect from Imagic, and the game is an unusual test of eye-hand coordination that requires good strategic thinking, especially in the more advanced waves. This game will be sold with a mail-in certificate good for a free Atari-compatible Zircon joystick direct from Imagic. Recommended. (MSR \$29.95)





FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER (★★½/★★★★½) is a clever variation on the standard climbing game. The setting is Dr. Frankenstein's castle, and you must prevent the ghoulish doctor from completing his humanoid creation by fetching stones from the dungeon to build a barricade around the monster at the top of the screen. You start to the right of the monster, where you must drop quickly through a trap door in the floor (there's a rope to climb) before a little

blue ghost scares you into immobility for a few moments. On the middle level, you must avoid the sting of tarantulas as you jump over holes in the floor, traveling right to left until you reach a trap door with a rope to the dungeon level. Your goal is the right side of the screen where you must retrieve a stone. Unfortunately, the dungeon is full of nasty spiders that drop on you unexpectedly plus a moat of deadly acid in the middle of the floor. You must hop onto the island in the moat, then run and hop to the right side to pick up the stone. And getting there is only half the fun—now you must retrace your steps across the acid pool, up the rope, past the tarantulas and up the last rope (avoiding the ghost) to the monster. BUT...you can't place the stone in the barrier until you've made it through the second screen, a wild race upward through flocks of vampire bats. Then it's back to the castle, where the dangers have multiplied—more tarantulas, more trap doors and smaller, moving islands in the acid moat. The contest becomes incredibly challenging, requiring split-second timing and absolute accuracy. While you try your best to collect stones, you face a time limit because the monster becomes energized, gradually turning green from the toes up. Once he is totally green, he will come alive, lurching toward you to let you know you've failed! Scoring is novel, because you start with 500 points, losing points each time you touch any of the creepy-crawlies, fall through a trap door or drop into the acid. (The latter will also lose you a life.) A bonus of 500 points is awarded for each stone placed in the barricade. Graphics are a mixed bag of good and not-so-good: the monster is very blocky, but your character looks good. While the graphics could have been better, play action is great—we had a tough time putting this one down to work on other cartridges to be reviewed! The moat sequence at the higher levels was especially challenging, and it kept us playing again and again in an attempt to master it. Recommended. (MSR \$31.95)



The PointMaster FIRE CONTROL from Discwasher is a nifty little gadget that plugs in between your Atari 2600 (or Sears Video Arcade) and your current joystick to provide for constant fire in

games that do not already have this option. The FIRE CONTROL is clearly marked, so you'll have no problem knowing which end to connect to your game unit. We tried it out and found it to work beautifully on such games as Atlantis, Spider Fighter and Asteroids. It does wonders for relieving that firing-finger-cramp we've all suffered! In some games you won't want constant fire, but you'll discover these with a little experimentation. The packaging for the FIRE CONTROL does not mention compatibility with ColecoVision, and for good reason. Although many ColecoVision owners have been using Atari-compatible joysticks, the FIRE CONTROL WILL NOT provide constant firing with the Coleco games. Discwasher pointed out to us that the ColecoVision controller socket does not have a "power supply out" pin. This pin, required for operation of the paddle controller, is present in the Atari 2600 socket, and Discwasher simply took advantage of the pin for their FIRE CONTROL device. (Our thanks to a reader, Dr. George Haden of Binghamton, NY, for bringing this situation to our attention.) Use the FIRE CONTROL with the system for which it is designed, and we think you'll like it. Recommended. (MSR \$9.95)

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EXPLANATION OF RATING SYSTEM: ★★★★★=EXCELLENT ☆☆☆
 First set of stars--quality of graphics ★★=GOOD ☆☆☆
 Second set of stars--quality of play action ★=FAIR ☆☆☆
 ★=POOR ☆☆☆

Any game for a given system is compared only to other games for that system. In other words, all Atari & Atari-compatible games are judged separately from Intellivision & Intellivision-compatible games, etc.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING... GAME ACCESSORIES

THE VIDEOPLEXER from Compro Electronics, Inc. is a new electronic game selector with fingertip control, currently available in two models: A800 for use with Atari 2600 and Sears Video Arcade and M800 for use with Mattel Intellivision (I or II), Sears Super Video Arcade and Tandyvision I. (A third model for use with the Commodore VIC-20 is scheduled to be available in late summer.) Eight cartridges are plugged into the VIDEOPLEXER, which is then connected to the cartridge slot of the master game unit. The M800 plugs directly into the side of your Intellivision unit or

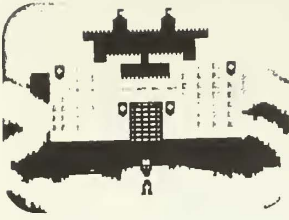
into your IntelliVoice Module. You should be aware that the M800 will take voice-compatible cartridges in the first two slots only. These two slots will also accept standard cartridges, but the remaining six slots will not accept voice cartridges. The A800 has a surrogate cartridge attached to it by a ribbon connector, and this surrogate cartridge is plugged into the Atari 2600. Once the connections are made, you can then sit back, relax, and instantly bring any of the eight games to your TV screen by simply pressing one of the numbered positions on the flat, membrane-type, miniature keypad at the front of the VIDEOPLEXER—it's just that simple! When you're not playing games, the VIDEOPLEXER provides a dust-free environment for storing your cartridges via a smoke-colored plastic dust cover that fits over the games. (It makes for an attractive appearance, too.) We gave the unit a work-out for several hours of playing time and found it to work beautifully. We're probably typical of most game players in that we're likely to play several games when we play for fun (as opposed to putting a game through its paces for review purposes), and we loved the ease of punching up game after game without handling a cartridge. Aside from the delightful convenience of this unit, there is an important, practical benefit to its use, too. Every time you insert or remove a cartridge from your game unit, you're putting a certain amount of stress on the contacts present in both cartridge and cartridge slot. The VIDEOPLEXER minimizes these stresses on both the games and the master console. This unit is also handy for the retailer who would like to minimize stress on his demonstration units and games. In fact, Compro plans availability of a point-of-purchase display for retailers, which will incorporate the VIDEOPLEXER with a lockable dust cover for cartridge security. (For information on the P-O-P display, contact Compro at 714-641-9156). Recommended. (MSR \$59.95)



New from Electra Concepts is the TRIGA-COMMAND joystick, which is compatible with Atari 2600/Sears Video Arcade, Atari 4/8/1200

computers, and Commodore VIC-20 and 64 computers. Our first impression of the TRIGA-COMMAND was that the joystick handle was huge, because it looked so much fatter than any joystick we had seen. However, once we tried it with some of our favorite games, our initial misgivings disappeared. That huge handle with its diamond-cut, textured side panels fits comfortably into the hand, and the positioning of the firing button on the front, immediately underneath the index finger, is ideal for both right and left-handed gamers. This position is also ideal because the index finger has the quickest reflex action of all the fingers. Whether we played with steady pressure for constant fire or pressed repeatedly for intermittent firing, we noticed none of the typical signs of fatigue that can set in with other designs. We also noted slight scoring increases, probably attributable to a combination of quicker response time and less fatigue. Although TRIGA-COMMAND is easily held with one hand and operated with the other, it comes with three suction cups to be inserted into holes in the base if you prefer one-handed operation. Of course, these require a smooth playing surface to adhere well. In use, the suction cups will remain seated in the base of the joystick unless you play like a wild man. If you handle the stick with a lot of force, the suction cups will adhere to your table, but the joystick may separate from the suction cups. You'll soon find out if you prefer two-handed operation or use of the suction cups with TRIGA-COMMAND. We really like this joystick in action, and it qualifies as a "best buy." Recommended. (MSR \$19.95)

INTELLIVISION-COMPATIBLE



ICE TREK (★★★★/★★★★) will be a great game to play this summer—just looking at all that ice and snow should be enough to keep you cool! Your role is that of the legendary Norse hero, Thor, as you attempt to reach and destroy the Frost Giant's castle. Three skill levels are available in this single-player game with three screens. In

the first screen, Thor does some cross-country skiing through a herd of stampeding caribou, complete with a soundtrack of thundering hooves. Although Thor has an axe to defend himself, use of the weapon should be avoided because killing a caribou will cause the Goddess of Wildlife to shoot her arrows at him. Once you get Thor through the caribou, he must cross a river full of floating icebergs. We found this to be the most difficult of the three screens. Thor has a grappling hook to snag icebergs and make them into an ice bridge. Capturing the icebergs isn't too difficult, but what will really try your patience is keeping low-passing icebergs from shortening Thor's bridge. He has a fiery torch for melting the troublesome icebergs, but you won't catch them all in time. We guarantee that you'll become very familiar with the sickening, squeaky, crunching sound made by an iceberg as it collides with Thor's bridge and carries a piece of it downstream! Your reward for completing the bridge is Thor's arrival at the Frost Giant's castle, a beautiful but deadly blue-and-white confection that could have been created by a pastry chef. This portion of the game is basically a slide-and-shoot contest in which you must direct Thor's torch to melt the deadly ice crystals thrown by the ice beasts. The torch is also used to blast both side sections of each castle tower and then destroy the midsection where the ice beasts lurk. If you can accomplish all of this without having Thor lose his life, you'll finally see the Frost Giant's home dissolve into a puddle, complete with the accompaniment of a brief Wagnerian theme. This is a marvelously entertaining game—actually three games in one—with excellent graphic and sound effects. While we enjoyed the entire game, we were especially impressed by the ice bridge sequence. Recommended. (MSR \$34.95)



TROPICAL TROUBLE (★★★/★★★) is another of the "cute" games that have become so popular recently. You play the role of a shipwrecked little guy who is trying to rescue his girl from a bully of an ape. One or two players (alternating turns) can try an easy, medium or difficult rescue attempt that spans the length of a tropical

island. The girl's cry for help appears on the screen as the ape takes her away, and he gives the little guy an unceremonious kick to push him to the left side of the screen. You pursue the ape across a beach littered with snapping clam shells and occasional bouncing coconuts, trying to grab your girl's handkerchief when she drops it because it will make you temporarily invincible. Another ape lurks at the left edge of the screen, and he will bonk you if you stop or slow down. Being bonked will cost you a life, but running into a clam shell or coconut will only stun you for a moment. You must also watch out for snakes on the beach at higher skill levels. (All obstacles can be cleared by running around them or jumping over them.) The next section of the island is a jungle of palm trees, and there's an ape running along rolling coconuts in your path plus ferns at your feet to slow you down. The third screen is a lava field below fiery volcanoes, and you must avoid volcanic fireballs which rain down on you. In the fourth screen you'll find that the ape has taken your girl onto a bridge. It would seem easy enough to rescue her at this point, except that the bully keeps throwing boulders at you. If you can rescue the girl, you will have crossed one island, earning you a bonus life and the chance to try all over again on the next island. Graphic treatments of scenery and objects are very good. Shadows under bouncing coconuts and falling fireballs are especially helpful in knowing where to move your character. The characters in the game, particularly the little guy and his girl, are blocky. This is what kept us from rating the overall graphics very good to excellent. The game is humorous and fun to play, and it can be very challenging at the higher skill levels when everything happens faster and obstacles litter the screen. It strikes us as a game that will appeal more to kids than adults. Recommended. (MSR \$34.95)

Intellivision U.S.C.F. CHESS (★★★½/★★★★) offers the chess enthusiast a chance to play the best video version of the game currently available for any home game system. There are three modes of play: player vs. computer, computer vs. computer, and player vs. player. It should be noted, as Mattel does in the instruction booklet, that this cartridge does *not* teach the fundamentals of chess. You must already know and understand the game before this cartridge will be of use. For enthusiasts who can't always find an opponent, though, this cartridge is ideal. Skill levels suited to anyone from beginner to serious player are available, though the computer can take hours to decide on a move at the highest levels. In these situations, a special timing option allows the player to leave the room and do other things while the computer goes through its options. It will signal the player with a "gong" sound when it has settled on its move and then save the move until the player returns and presses the controller disc. When playing against the computer, it's also possible to force the computer to move. However, this will cause the computer to move before it's ready, meaning that you're actually playing at a lower skill level than the one you've chosen. Other interesting features allow you to take back the last move you made or have the computer make your move for you, providing a kind of chess tutorial. It's also possible to set up special chess situations for problem solving, including one in which the computer tries to checkmate in least number of moves. Another feature allows you to turn the board around, in case you prefer to make your moves from a particular side of the board. By the way, you can't fool the computer—it will not allow illegal moves. Although this is the most expensive game for the Intellivision to date, it's a worthwhile purchase if you really love chess and would like to practice against the computer. For player vs. player games only, why not just set up a chess board? For those who will be playing against the computer—Recommended.

ATARI AND COLECO SETTLE THEIR DIFFERENCES!

Atari and Coleco have settled their dual lawsuits out of court, avoiding a long and costly battle for both companies. As you may recall, Atari sued Coleco for patent infringement over the Expansion Module One (allowing Atari 2600-compatible cartridges to be played in the ColecoVision), and the forthcoming GEMINI master system (see our February issue) which Coleco plans for this summer. Coleco then countersued Atari for antitrust. In any event, it's been worked out and the Expansion Module, as well as the planned Gemini, will stay on the market. Although both parties refused to give details of the settlement, we are quite certain that it took on the same flavor as the ATARI/ACTIVISION lawsuit of a couple of years ago. For those of you who don't remember that, Atari sued Activision over the software that Activision was producing for the Atari system. Also settled out of court, the settlement called for Activision (and ANY third party software company) to pay Atari a set royalty for each and every cartridge they sell for the Atari system. In addition, there was some legal requirements in their advertising (that's why you see "video game cartridge for use with the Atari® Video Computer System™"). Of course, that settlement opened the doors for any third party software company to produce cartridges for ANY hardware system, just as long as a royalty was paid and certain legal language adhered to. Now, we see the same thing happening on the hardware/module side of things. This will open it up and you can really expect to see many companies making modules for various systems (such as the one Mattel has planned for their Intellivision II which will allow the use of the Atari 2600-compatible cartridges in their system). So, look out for modules, master systems, and who knows what from who knows who for who knows which system!!

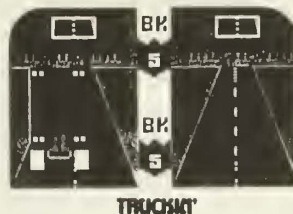
CRITICALLY SPEAKING... Intellivision-compatible



TRUCKIN' (★★★½/★★★★) offers a whole new kind of fun for Intellivision owners. If you've ever wished you could ride the highways in command of an 18-wheeler, here's your chance! This game makes full use of the system's capabilities, allowing one or two players to drive their rigs in one of two timed games. In the easy game, the object is to visit eight different cities as quickly as possible. You start out with \$1500.00, a map of the U.S. Interstate Highway system, and a computer-provided list of the cities you must visit. (You may specify any one city of the eight.) This basic game goes for five days (ten minutes). Naturally, you must fill your tanks with diesel fuel before you can move, and this takes quite a chunk of your funds! Once on the road, you must watch for other trucks, most of which are terrible road-hogs in this game, because collisions cost you time plus the money for repairs to your truck. You must also watch your speed—exceed the limit for very long and the police will pull you over and demand a fine for your ticket. A strip down the center of the screen lets you know which Interstate you're traveling and in which direction. It's up to you to watch for any turn-offs you may need. Once in a while, the computer will decide that you're tired and must rest before proceeding—safety first! Because this game uses a split screen, two players may each drive their own rig at the same time. In the more difficult strategy game, the object is to gain as much cash as possible in the number of days selected at the start of the game (up to 60 days, or two hours in real time). Two players may compete or cooperate in the strategy game. Whether playing alone or with a friend, you must pick up and deliver cargoes such as gravel, corn, milk or cattle in various cities, calling ahead or locally to find what is needed where. Strategy is important because some cargoes are worth more money when delivered than others, and more than one load may be carried at one time. This is a game with a wealth of options and the entire U.S. as your playing field. It will be good for many hours of playing time, and you just may improve your sense of direction and knowledge of geography while you're at it! Graphics are clean, crisp and colorful with lots of scenic clues as you travel the nation's highways. One minor criticism: sound effects are a bit sparse. There's a good, throaty honk when you want another rig to pull over, but engine noises are heard only during acceleration. Altogether, **TRUCKIN'** is a truly original game that deserves to be a big hit. Recommended. (MSR \$34.95)



COLECO VENTURE (★★★½/★★★★½) brings owners, this one based on the Exidy coin-op. One or two players (alternating turns) can control Winky, the adventurer, at any of four skill levels. Armed with only a bow and arrows, Winky enters a dungeon with four treasure rooms. Between rooms, the hallways are guarded by terrible Hallmonsters, which cannot be shot, so they must be avoided. Winky is represented as a cursor until he enters one of the rooms, when he turns into an orange "happy face" with a point so that you'll know which way to aim his arrows. Each room has a treasure, which is guarded by a group of monsters bent on Winky's destruction. Grab the treasure and RUN, eliminating as many monsters as necessary. If you spend too much time in a room, a Hallmonster will enter the room, and it's curtains for Winky! Each treasure successfully captured will cause that room to become a solid color on the dungeon screen, and a question mark will be removed from the opening screen. Capture all four treasures in one dungeon level, and move on to the next, for a total of three dungeon screens which are repeated at faster speeds as you progress through the game. This is a really great game that's loads of fun to play. The usual problems with the Intellivision controller are present, but they're more easily overcome in this game than in many others. The graphics are very colorful, with quite a wealth of different kinds of monsters, such as snakes, goblins, and many others. The use of different musical themes is superb, and the music really adds to the charm of the game. Recommended.



NOVA BLAST (★★★★/★★★½) is a fast-paced, sophisticated, arcade-type space game for one player that has really stunning visuals. You haven't seen anything quite like this on your Intellivision before! The game may be played at any of three skill levels: Cadet, Captain or Admiral, and they're all challenging. You control a zippy little spaceship, the Novon Skysweeper, and you must defend the four cities on the surface of the planet beneath you from attack by airborne and ground-based alien forces. The bottom of your screen provides necessary information, including a yellow bar which indicates how much reserve energy your ship is carrying, a damage counter (ten hits and it's all over), and a radar screen showing all four cities in relation to the positions of your spacecraft and the alien forces. The trick is to keep an eye on the radar screen as much as possible so that you can defend your cities effectively. Each wave of attackers is announced on the screen, and they bear such fanciful names as Orion Fighters, Sonads and Tadeks. (They all look alike, but each succeeding wave is tougher and consists of more attackers.) The airborne aliens will not fire at your ship, but they will attack your cities. The first hit destroys the city's forcefield, and the second annihilates the city, so you must work quickly. The ground-based hovercraft shoot at your ship and at the cities, so they're doubly dangerous. Both top buttons on your controller allow your ship to fire in the direction it is flying, and the right bottom button controls the bombs you need to destroy the hovercraft. Fortunately, it is possible to obtain continuous firing by holding the buttons down. The left bottom button has two functions: it can be used to replenish your energy reserves by beaming up supplies from the energy stations on the planet's surface, and it can be used to beam down a temporary shield to protect a city that has lost its forcefield. Bonus points are awarded for cities still standing at the end of each wave. While games of this type are plentiful for the Atari 2600 (**DEFENDER** comes to mind), Intellivision owners haven't been able to play a scrolling outer-space shoot-out until now. **NOVA BLAST** is exciting, loaded with action, and has some interesting features that make it worth adding to your collection. The graphics are absolutely dazzling—we really loved the translucent effect of the domed forcefields over the cities. Recommended. (MSR \$34.95)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING...



BEDLAM (★★★★/★★★★½) pits your lone spaceship against invading alien colonists bent on claiming all inhabited worlds as their own. One or two (alternating turns) can play, controlling a ship in the center of a star-like galactic sector as various types of aliens attack. Your ship is capable of rotation only (fast or slow), so there is no way to escape the aliens. You can fire your anti-molecular cannon, or if the situation gets really desperate, you can "zap" everything on the screen, but only once per sector. Attackers include Escort Ships that move straight in at your ship; Astral Defenders that tend to attack from the rear when you are otherwise occupied; Destroyer Droids that circle your ship to pounce at your most vulnerable moment; and Colonist Transports with powerful shields that can only be forced back, but not destroyed until all other ships in the sector are gone. The first sector is a simple three-pointed star, but ensuing sectors become many-pronged, with attackers often emerging from more than one point at a time. In the higher levels, some sectors rotate, shrink or pulsate, adding to the challenge. For those who have mastered the first level, it is possible to start at the second or third level. As with all Vectrex cartridges, high score for the current playing session is retained. We found this game quite difficult at first because it is unlike anything else we've played—a definite plus. Once we got used to it, we were able to get through several sectors, discovering new challenges in each one. The rotating sectors were especially tough, requiring constant adjustment to keep the enemy in range of fire. Recommended. (MSR \$34.95)

VIDEO GAME COMPARISON CHART

	ATARI 2600	ATARI 5200	INTELLIVISION II	ODYSSEY	COLECOVISION	VECTREX
PRICE	\$99	\$269	\$169	\$99	\$199	\$169
ROM	2K	10K	4.25K	2K	32K, Super Module 3-125K	64K
RAM	Less than 1K	16K	1.5K	NO	16K	NO
CONTROLLERS	8-position joystick removable, paddle controllers, trackball coming	360° non-centering analog joystick w/ keypad removable, trackball coming	8-position directional disc w/ keypad removable, joystick planned	8-position self-centering joystick; hard wired	8-position joystick w/ keypad removable; driving controllers, super action controllers trackball planned	8 position joystick w/4 action buttons
3RD PARTY CONTROLLERS	YES	this Spring	NO	NO	2600-compatible joystick; keypad planned	NO
MAKES OWN SOFTWARE	YES (large library)	YES (approx 1 per month being released)	YES (approx 8-10 per yr)	YES; only obt 3 new planned	YES but running far behind schedule (only obt 10 out now)	YES, w/ obt 8 out now 5 new games planned within next 3 mos
3RD PARTY SOFTWARE	largest library (over 500)	NO, but planned	YES (approx 10 now with many planned)	YES-Imagic	NO, but planned	NO
COMPATIBLE TO OTHER SYSTEMS	NO	NO, but 2600 module planned	NO, but 2600 module planned	NO	YES, 2600-compatible	NO
EXPANDABILITY	keyboard	plans for keyboard	planned: computer adaptor, keyboard, music synthesizer	NO	keyboard, Super Module	keyboard, touch screen, light pen planned
GRAPHIC RESOLUTION	LOW	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	HIGH	HIGH
VOICE SYNTHESIS	NO	voice module planned	YES-voice module	YES	voice module planned	built-in
SPORTS GAMES	good selection	Football out; 3 more coming this Spring	it's what they're known for	YES	way behind scheduled-1st one coming this Summer	Football, Soccer
FANTASY-ADVENTURE GAMES	good selection	Space Dungeon planned Summer	Dungeons & Dragons a classic SWORDS & SERPENTS	Master Strategy Series	NO	NO
EDUCATIONAL GAMES	Children's Computer Workshop will bring series to the 2600 Math Grn Prix	NO	Word fun; Math Fun	several	NO	NO
MAJOR LICENSES	Peonuts, Muppets, Walt Disney; also has some major arcade games like Dig Dug, Qix, Kongaroo, Centipede		Burgertime & Tron but most are "in-house" ideas	NO	very license orientated Buck Rogers Planet of Zoom, Pepper 2, Looping, Smurf, Donkey Kong Jr. Gets major licenses from Sego, Exidy, Toita	NO
3rd PARTY LICENSES	Parker Bros.: Super Cobra, Tutankham, Frogger, etc; Coleco: Donkey Kong, Turbo, Smurf, many others	NO	Coleco: Donkey Kong, Carnival, Lady Bug, many others; Parker Bros: planned-Frogger, Super Cobra, etc.	NO	NO	NO

We have attempted to include all the information you need for honest comparisons between these systems. If we have not addressed an area that you need answered, please drop us a line. We will do our best to get you an answer. If it's an area in which we feel our readers will benefit we will PUBLISH an addendum chart! We've come up with the most complete comparison chart available anywhere to help guide you in your purchasing decisions. We have put this chart together NOT to recommend one system over another, but to lay out all the pertinent information about the various systems so you can make an intelligent decision, based on those features which are important to *YOU!*

COLECO

The interest in the Expansion Module 3 continues as many of our readers are asking questions. Still planned to release "sometime before Christmas", a little more explanation about the wafers that will be used in conjunction with the module. ALL game screens, plus introduction, intermission and closing screens that you see in the arcade version of any given game WILL be included in the wafer version. Also, a feature that many of our readers have indicated strong interest in is the "HALL OF FAME" for recording high scorer's initials. The Wafers *WILL have this feature*, along with *PERMANENT MEMORY RETENTION!!*

And, in answer to the all the questions we are receiving about the Coleco Computer Keyboard—the company plans its introduction at the June Trade Show and, until that time, are remaining absolutely mum about any features, memory capability, etc. regarding the keyboard. They simply feel the market is so competitive they don't want their competitors knowing what they are up to several months ahead of time. The keyboard is planned for pre-Christmas release. So, if you have questions, either hold them or drop us a note and when June rolls around, we'll have the answers for you *FIRST* as always! And, again, our reviews will be just that: reviews. Not a rehash of press releases!

A FEW BITS ABOUT RAM AND ROM

Rightfully so, many of you have asked some technical questions about your video game systems, so we decided to go right to the source, and ask Sally Upjohn of Atari, Inc. in Sunnyvale, California. Sally, among other duties, works on game design from a marketing point of view. Jon Badeaux, one of The Video Game Update editors, had a chance to spend a few minutes with Sally and ask some of the most popularly asked questions:

JON: Just exactly what is the difference between RAM and ROM as it pertains to video game systems as opposed to computers?

SALLY: Basically, ROM, inside a game, is used as the instructions to the central processor for handling the software. In other words, when the software says something, the ROM interprets what it says and allows the machine to function. It is basically the brain of the machine. It tells it how to deal with the software that comes in.

JON: When you say software, you mean the game itself.

Sally: Right, the cartridge. The cartridge ALSO contains ROM, or "read-only-memory". It's permanent so both the operating system and the cartridge are going to be in permanent memory once the game is turned on.

RAM is like a "scratchpad", in that the software and the operating system's ROM will use the ram of the cartridge in order to store data, store pictures, do calculations, things like that, that would be used as part of the gameplay. So really, it's the size of your computing scratchpad, and to some extent it determines how fast, how many different screens you can have, and how long you have to wait between screens because you have to STORE the data BEFORE you put it onto the TV.

JON: Is that why on most new games, a song is played while the game is downloading into memory, or between the different screens?

Sally: Yes, sometimes video data can't be fed fast enough so they will put in some audio to "fill in the gap". I don't think that's the case with the 5200 because it has such large RAM space in the master unit.

JON: What is the amount of ROM on the Atari 5200 system?

Sally: The built-on operating system on the 5200, is about 5K (thousand). That's not the exact number, but that's a rough idea.

JON: Could a video game system exist without having ROM in the central processor (master unit)?

Sally: No, without having ROM it wouldn't know what to do. It would just sit there. The ROM space is not that important and you just have to have enough ROM to control how the thing operates and it is MUCH smaller than the RAM space in all cases.

JON: So, are you saying the biggest bulk of the memory is stored in the game itself... the actual cartridge?

Sally: Not necessarily. You'll find a lot of cartridges are 16K of ROM and the top-of-the-line game machines have about 16K OF RAM, so you have it almost split between the ROM and the RAM.

ROM as part of the cartridge will also help improve pictures, in that if you have more ROM in the cartridge, you have more video information stored there and you have different screens you can put up—you can store more screens in there and you can store more complex game play. So the amount of ROM you have in your cartridge is significant to what you see on the screen just as the RAM is significant.

JON: Is the Atari-2600 REALLY limited as to what it can and can't do or could a cartridge with A LOT more memory space be put into it to give a game more graphic capability, better and sharper gameplay? In other words make it more like a 5200?

Sally: Yes. By using more ROM in the cartridges you can make a 2600 have better pictures. As it is, it has been used pretty well by a couple of the game manufacturers, not only Atari. Other people have done some cartridges that use a lot of the ROM space that's possible to use for the 2600.

Our new "MY FIRST COMPUTER" significantly expands the ROM and RAM space of the 2600, so you will have graphics that are halfway between the current capability of the 2600 and that of the 5200. It's actually a booster to the 2600 system. Not only does that make it into a computer, it gives much better game graphics—it's obvious that this is a really hot system. In fact this keyboard gives the 2600, in my opinion, better graphics than the Intellivision system. This has always been the big debate.

JON: As a point of reference, do you know how much memory (ROM) is in the Intellivision master unit?

Sally: I only know what I get from our engineers, and this is not precise, but they have 1.5K.

JON: And ColecoVision?

Sally: Coleco has 16K of "dynamic RAM". That's RAM that can be used to improve the graphics. They have a little bit more which might be used for other purposes that are internal. That's used as a trade-off for ROM.

JON: Why is Intellivision known as being the slower game system?

Sally: Part of that is because the Intellivision controllers, are not really meant for quick action. They rely a lot on pressing buttons as opposed to controlling play with a joystick. The joystick is a much quicker way to control action. That is why they have been so strong in the sports games where they use strategy, and not very strong in the arcade games where speed and skill is important.

JON: You seem to have your hopes high on the MY FIRST COMPUTER project. Can you share some of your expectations with us?

Sally: The 2600 computer is expected to do two things. Probably the primary thing is to give consumers who are hesitant about buying a full computer, the opportunity to do it at a very low cost compared to the other computers—even compared to the low end Timex-type computer. At the same time, we give them better gameplay. So we're giving them the better system. We are making the system more competitive, from the game point of view, and we are introducing them to computers. I don't at all want to downplay MY FIRST COMPUTER because it is actually more powerful than the VIC-20 and more powerful than the Timex Sinclair as far as ROM & RAM.

JON: Will this be an "expandable" system?

Sally: Yes, definitely! It can be expanded to include mass storage. And, anything else you want to do. It could have a printer and all those kinds of peripherals.

JON: When Atari looks for software for the 2600, 5200, and now MY FIRST COMPUTER, what do you look for?

Sally: We are looking for two things, one is the titles, especially the arcade titles. And, the quality those titles are presented with. The QUALITY lies in the hardware, the titles are the software that's available. I think those are the two most important factors.

JON: I don't want to put YOU on the spot, but if you could respond to the fact that Imagic and Activision, just to name a couple of companies are offering really terrific software for Atari 2600, and undoubtedly eventually for the 5200. Does THAT enhance the desirability of owning Atari master systems, or does Atari frown on such activities. The reason I mention this is because originally Atari was up in arms with other companies who were interfacing with YOUR system. The end result seems to be more Atari VCS sales, more Imagic-type software sales, and perhaps less sales for Atari software.

Sally: Quite honestly, Jon, there is no official position on that. At least I have never heard it—and truthfully I think this is up for debate. I have heard people argue both sides. Initially, I'm sure Activision and Imagic prospered by selling their software as did Atari selling the consoles, but there is no telling what the long-term effect will be. I should reiterate these are my personal observations.

JON: Sally, we really want to thank you for taking time out of your very busy schedule and giving us some information directly from the inside of Atari.

The Video Game Update would like to thank Atari and Sally for the ease of obtaining a few minutes with Ms. Upjohn. We hope to bring you more and more interviews from the people behind the scenes who all together help bring you the best products they can. In the months ahead, we will be speaking with more and more people, and we invite you to submit the names of people you'd like to see interviews with, along with questions for them. Or, if you would like to know the answer to just one question, send it in, and we will try to get right to the source.

ATARI 2600-COMPATIBLE

TIGERVISION

POLARIS (★★★/★★★) is a challenging game for one or two players (alternating turns) in which you command a Polaris-class nuclear submarine defending your country from attack.

In the first of two screens, your sub is in waters patrolled by enemy subs and an occasional destroyer that drops depth charges. First, two squadrons of high-altitude bombers attack from above (up to five planes at a time), dropping bombs on your sub. You must fire Polaris missiles to destroy the bombers. Enemy destroyers and subs can also be fired on, but you may choose to simply avoid them. (Collision with them or the ocean bottom will destroy your sub.) If you're going for high scores, destroy everything you can! If you eliminate the bomber squadrons, the enemy will send a dive bomber armed with torpedoes that will home in on your sub. You'll have to be quick to avoid the torpedoes and shoot down the dive bomber, but success will move you to the second screen, an underwater channel. Your first encounter with the channel is a get-acquainted mission in which there are no hazards except running into the channel's sides or obstacles in your path—not as easy as it sounds. If you still have subs left after navigating the channel, you must engage the enemy in battle again. Speed and/or numbers of enemy attackers will increase the longer you

play. Starting with your second trip through the channel, you must destroy underwater mines with your torpedoes, which makes it one tough obstacle course. We've seen a lot of underwater games so far this year, but this is the first to provide a fairly traditional sea battle between subs and their typical enemy attackers. The addition of the dangerous, scrolling maze in the mined channel, however, lifts this game above the average in play action and adds considerably to the challenge of the game. Graphics are good, with all craft very recognizable. If you enjoy straightforward combat games with lots of challenge, take a look at this one. Recommended. (MSR \$29.95)



High Altitude Bombers



Dive Bombers

The COMPUTER ENTERTAINER

CRITICALLY SPEAKING... ATARI



QIX (★★½/★★) offers the Atari computer owner an authentic version of the Taito arcade game for one or two players (alternating turns). The field of play is a blank rectangle in which a whirling, multi-colored helix (the Qix) roams while trying to block your attempts to box in portions of the screen. You draw fast or slow lines (Stix) with your joystick, while two Sparx are on your trail. (There is a 40-second time line at the top of the screen; each time this line runs out, up to the first three times, two more Sparx appear, until there are eight Sparx.) If you stop drawing for a moment, a Fuse will ignite and travel down your Stix. Your ultimate goal is to fill in 75% (the threshold) of the screen—or even more for bonus points. Unlike the Atari 5200 version of this game (reviewed last month) the computer version does not allow for differing skill levels by allowing the player to choose the threshold score he wants to beat. However, the player can vary the length of the time line, controlling the emergence of new Sparx, from a minimum of 10 seconds to a maximum of 90 seconds. Graphics are very simple and not at all exciting, but they duplicate the arcade game perfectly. Game play, too, is just like the coin-op—highly addictive. QIX is a nice change of pace from the usual run of shooting, maze and climbing games. (Cartridge) Recommended. (MSR \$44.95)

GYPSY (★★/★) is a game of munching: you play Gypsy, a bug chomping away on the leaves of a multi-screen

microcomputer games

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tree. Your fanciful enemies in this game are the Flying Ant of Tasmania, Poisonous Mushrooms, the Fandango Bee and the Locknest Spider. The object of the game is to munch lots of leaves and sip nectar from an occasional flower whenever possible. Your strength is maintained by gaining ten points for each leaf section and 200-1000 points per flower. You must avoid the other insects because four bites/stings mean the end of the game. This is a very simple-minded game, and graphics are disappointing, considering the capabilities of the Atari computers. No adult will be able to stand more than a few minutes of GYPSY with its constant buzzing sounds, and we doubt that it will appeal to any but the youngest of children. (32K disk, 16K cass) Not recommended. (MSR approx. \$40/disk, \$35/cass)

Affine **STUN TRAP** (★★/★★½) is a space "shoot-'em-up" for two players ONLY. The field is divided into two

Halfspaces (each player is restricted to his own side) and has several ways to gain points. Obviously, hitting your opponent is one way, along with hitting the various alien ships which cross your fields, such as saucers, landers, and streakers. Hitting the border behind your opponent with your missile causes a disturbance of space, resulting in the formation of a Hyperspike. Hyperspikes grow with each hit until they reach the Central Line. Contact with the Hyperspike causes instant destruction and a 100 point gain for your opponent. During play, the Central Line moves towards the losing player, causing less maneuverability his ship. You must weave around the Hyperspikes while shooting at your opponent, watching for and shooting the alien ships. Although there is a lot happening to keep you riveted to your seat, we found a couple of problems with this game. First after your opponent has been destroyed by your missile, you CANNOT shoot until the opponent's new ship comes back down on the screen. That process, in itself can be frustrating (and very time consuming) as you have no control over the location of the new ship. It can, several times running, come back to the same spot and be destroyed by a Hyperspike in its way. You look helplessly on as ship after ship is lost and your opponent sits there, unable to fire. Also, we found the game, while interesting, too easy to master with over 100,000 points in one game! In fact, it appeared, unless you trap your opponent inside a Hyperspike area, there is no limit of ships and you could play one game hour after hour. We found this somewhat dissatisfying. Available on 32K disk for Atari 800 only at this time. (MSR \$24.95)

Keep your back copies of THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE and have a complete reference guide to game reviews and all the news you need to know. If you are missing any back copies, we have them available for most months. Send \$2.00 for each back issue you want.

COLLISION COURSE (★★★/★★½) is a space game in which **ZIMAG** you pilot an escort ship for three gem-laden cargo ships through a deadly mine field. The game scrolls horizontally as you move in formation with your cargo ships from right to left, encountering mines, accelerators, and decelerators, all of which can be destroyed by your lasers. As long as you have shield energy remaining, you can also destroy mines by simply colliding with them. Collision with a mine will destroy a cargo ship, and contact with accelerators or decelerators by your ship or one of the cargo vessels will cause your whole fleet to speed up or slow down. You have a limited time to reach either a space station or friendly planet. If you arrive with one or more of the cargo ships intact, you receive bonus points, "two hearty handshakes" and restoration of your shields. Each successive mine field contains more and deadlier obstacles. Graphics are good, but we found the game lacking in excitement on repeated plays until we tried it at a higher skill level. The idea of moving only right to left takes some getting used to, since most of us are more accustomed to scanning left to right when we look at or read something, but it's not a problem once you've played a few rounds. This isn't a bad game—we just couldn't get excited about it. Try it out, if possible, before making a buying decision. (24K disk, 16K cass) (MSR \$39.95)

NINEBALL (★/★) is described as a cross between pinball and pool, and it's one of the worst pinball simulations we've seen for any system, including those for game-only systems. Atari's VIDEO PINBALL for the 2600 has better graphics! Nine numbered balls are arranged in an arc toward the top of the screen, and you use a joystick or paddle to position the shooter at the bottom. There are boxes and bumpers and bonuses, plus a moving black hole that swallows your ball in some variations. The only control you have is in setting up the first angled move of the ball and keeping the ball from falling through the hole at the bottom of the screen with your controller—not even a provision for "tilting." (24K disk, 16K cass) Not recommended. (MSR \$19.95)

CAT-NAP (★★/★★) sounds like a cute idea: a midnight chorus of cats is yowling on the back fence (right under your bedroom window), and you start throwing anything you can find to shut them up so you can go back to sleep. In playing the game, all that three and four-part feline harmony really gets on your nerves—and we like cats! The cats parade along the fence while Scruffy, the dog, sleeps on the sidewalk. You're represented by a hand at the top of the screen: grab a boot, banana peel or alarm clock, and then move to one of the windows above the cats. Ready, aim, fire! The idea is to silence all the cats for a mercifully quiet five seconds, which is not easily done. Chances are you'll wake the dog, who will begin barking, or the A.S.P.C.A. Ambulance will arrive with sirens screaming to heal a cat you've just bonked with an alarm clock. It's not a bad game to play if you turn off your TV sound, which sort of defeats the purpose of the game. If you want to make enemies in a cat-hating household, this is your game. Graphics are blocky. (24K disk, 16K cass) Not recommended. (MSR \$29.95)

RIVER RAT (★★★½/★★★) is the best of Zimag's first group of games. You race a speedboat up a river, while avoiding obstacles such as swimmers, ducks, rocks, rafts and docks jutting into the water. It's a timed race, and your boat is capable of two speeds. The slower speed affords more safety and control, but the faster one can earn you more points. Hitting ducks or people results in loss of some points, but hitting other objects will cause you to lose one of your three boats. The river also has many ramps—aim your boat into the center of one, and you'll become airborne for a few moments and earn extra points (more at high speed than at low). After you navigate the river a few times, you'll learn that some ramps *must* be taken at high speed for more time in the air, or else you'll hit the water right on top of an obstacle. One technique that works well is to aim for the ramp at low speed, then switch into high just before you actually reach it for a combination of good control and maximum points. This game is a lot of fun to play, and the graphics are very pleasing. The swimmers look great, and the wake left by your boat is a nice effect. Splashing sounds made by your boat after it jumps a ramp and hits the water are very realistic. (24K disk, 16K cass) Recommended. (MSR \$39.95)

RANTOM

THRAX LAIR (★★½/★★½) sends your Tarp (a pterodactyl-sized creature that can discharge electrochemical energy through its eyes) deep into the caves of the Thrax, which have carried Tarp eggs and young to their subterranean nests. The Tarp's aim is to fly as far as possible into these caves while avoiding or killing all Thrax it may encounter. The insect-like Thrax comprise workers, soldiers, stingers and monitors, each type successively more dangerous and worth more points when destroyed. As the Tarp flies through the dark passageways, it also earns points for speed if it moves quickly, so the player is advised to avoid the Thrax initially and go for speed points. As the Tarp penetrates more deeply and the tunnels narrow, it becomes impossible to ignore the Thrax, and some of them shoot back! The graphic rendition of the Tarp is good, reminding you of a bat, complete with flapping-wing sounds, but the Thrax and the passages themselves are unexciting. Play action is okay, but might have been better if the Thrax were more aggressive in the early stages of the game. Also, moving and shooting within an enclosed passageway is not exactly a new idea. (16K disk, 16K cass)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING... ATARI 1200

The Atari people have just released their 1200XL personal home computer and after seeing countless demonstrations, we are able to get our hands on one... and we have figured out WHY we couldn't get our hands on one. For starters, Atari is one of those systems (the 400 and 800 also are guilty) for which you need something else to make it do anything. No built-in basic, no built-in game, etc. It has one interesting feature, usually left to the service department, a self-test function. When you crack the lid on this, that is about all you can do: test RAM, ROM, audio and keyboard. Naturally if something does not work, this whole program is useless! What good is a self-test feature if the computer, say, is accidentally not plugged in? Or if the TV is accidentally mistuned, etc.? Aside from this one feature, this computer sits there displaying the Atari logo in flashy colors. Should you have been fortunate enough to have some items left over after selling your Atari 400 or 800, you might be able to play a few games, provided you have a controller or pair of controllers. The cartridge slot is located on the left of the keyboard, and cartridges tuck in nice and snug. (There is room for only one cartridge on the 1200XL.) The cartridge overrides the Atari 810 Disk Drive. If you have one of those, again, you are home free. Same thing for the 410 Cassette Recorder/Player. The same power supply is used; however, the cable for your TV set is detachable, probably a good idea.

Above the keyboard are several extra features, such as "F-1", through "F-4", the "help" key, start, select, option, reset, break, and an unusual key which, where applicable, reverses the colors on your TV, obviously to protect it from "burn" (for those of you with an Atari 400 or 800, it is the same key as the Atari-logo key. The manual is very deceptive, and here is where we have to take Atari to task. The booklet shows how you can generate graphics characters and International characters. The trick line there is "when you're working with SPECIFIC programs". They mean programs you have to go out and buy AFTER you have spend several hundred dollars on the computer.

While we are sure the Atari 1200XL is certainly a nicer looking and more capable computer computer (64K) than the 400/800, be sure to buy a heck of a lot of peripherals or you will spend countless hours staring at that Atari logo.

At least with the TI99/4A, APPLE II, VIC-20, etc., there is built-in basic to get you through the night.

Memory-wise, the only thing comparable is the Commodore-64 at a better price. Atari has the colors, pixels, sound etc. (see our exclusive Computer Comparison Chart). But as we see it, the Atari 1200XL, with a few exceptions is an Atari 800 in disguise.

Without a doubt, the Atari 1200XL would have been a dynamite computer had it been released in 1979 or 1980. For '83, our money is with Commodore, TI, Apple, and all systems with a built-in language. At least that way you force yourself to LEARN the system, and it isn't JUST a big, expensive video game.

CRITICAL MASS (★★★★/★★★★) The temperature inside a thermo-nuclear fireball could reach close to twenty million degrees fahrenheit! Count Stuportino has a plan to destroy 5 of the largest cities on the face of the globe, not for ransom... but for sweet revenge! Is this the end? No, you should be so lucky! **CRITICAL MASS** is not just a typical "Mystery House" adventure, even though first glance would give you that impression! Bob Blauschild has developed a multi-color, high resolution graphic adventure game whereby your mission is to prevent nuclear disaster. The mission begins on June 1 and the on-screen clock is ticking. By 8PM on June 9, you must prevent The Count from carrying out his plan. As you begin the adventure, you're on the top floor of the U.N. Building in a secret room. You get a telephone call that is traced to the Central Park Zoo. From the zoo you are led on a journey that takes you WATER SKIING in the Caribbean, an air flight to England, a train ride to Paris where you wander down Rue La Cat, Rue La Dog, and Rue La Pig. You find clues in the Paris sewer system... just as a flood hits the city. If you survive the flood, it's back to the airport and the U.S., via the Caribbean again! Not only colorful, the game is filled with such witty situations as, back at the U.N. building, a sign in the secret room says, "WE SELL LITHIUM". Also, during your travels, if you are not careful, a bomb will explode, and a giant piece of elephant will fall on you causing your instant death! Or, you are involved in an elevator crash where, when you hit the bottom floor, your shoulders and ankles trade places. The usual commands work here, such as "read note" and "go north" and clues range from laundry receipts to telex messages. All-in-all, this is a must-have video game for anyone with a 64K computer. In fact, this is one of those reasons to HAVE a home computer! Considering the difficulty in creating graphics on the Apple system (where we saw the game) we were extremely impressed by the end result. The difficulty level is so high you MUST take notes and constantly rejoin the game at differing times. **CRITICAL MASS** is currently available for APPLE II and above, and soon for the Atari 8/1200 and Commodore-64, from SIRIUS SOFTWARE (DISK). Recommended.

ALPINDER (★★★½/★★★★) is one of the first games for use with the TI **TEXAS INSTRUMENTS** Speech Synthesizer. It's a climbing game for one or two players (alternating turns), in which you guide your Alpiner through three rounds of six mountains each (Mts. Hood, Matterhorn, Kenya, Garmo, Everest). The constant musical accompaniment, "In the Hall of the Mountain King" by Grieg, sets the mood as you try to beat the time limit on each mountain for bonus points while avoiding obstacles such as bears, snakes, mountain lions, and even the Abominable Snowman on skis! If you have the Speech Synthesizer, you'll hear warnings of falling objects, too, such as rockslides, avalanches and icefalls. The Alpiner character is very realistic, with good animation when climbing in any direction. The animals are static, but well-drawn. The voices of your guide and the Alpiner from the Synthesizer add a great deal to the game. You'll probably start talking back to your computer when you hear comments like "Nice try, sport," "Getting tired already?" and "Yuck!" (This last remark is heard when you're near the skunk at the wrong moment.) One feature we enjoyed is that you can choose the language of the on-screen prompts (English, Spanish, Italian, French, German, Dutch or Swedish), although spoken prompts are always in English. This is an obvious theme for a climbing game, but rendered with irresistible charm. (Cartridge) Recommended. (MSR \$39.95)

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COMPUTER

	ATARI 400	ATARI 800	ATARI 1200XL	VIC-20	COMMODORE 64	RADIO SHACK TRS-80
PRICE (MSR)	\$269	\$549	\$899	\$199	\$595	\$299
BUILT-IN RAM	16K	48K	64K	5K	64K	4K
EXPANDABLE TO	—	—	—	32K	—	16K
ROM	10K	10K	16K	16K	20K	8K
KEYBOARD	57key membrane	61key	61key	66key	66key	55key
UPPER-LOWER	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
COLORS	16	128	256	16	16	9
RESOLUTION (PIXELS)	320x192	320x192	320x192	178x184	320x200	128x64
SOUND GENERATION	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
MAKES OWN SOFTWARE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
3RD PARTY SOFTWARE	YES (large library)	YES (large library)	YES (compatible w 800)	YES	YES	YES
PERIPHERALS	recorder	printers, modem, disc drive	disc drive, modem, printer	disk drive, printer, plotter, modem, recorder	some as VIC20	recorder
GRAPHIC CHARACTERS FROM KEYBOARD	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
CHARACTER DISPLAY	24x40	24x40	24x40	22x23	40x25	N.A.
BUILT-IN BASIC	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	Additl cost

This chart has been compiled as a guideline for you based on the overwhelming need from our readers for this kind of information. If we have not addressed an area for which you need an answer, let us know and we will do our best to get an answer. Although this chart is not intended to endorse any system over another, we feel having this comparison of features, memory, price, etc., will be of major benefit to you when you go out to purchase your home computer. This is the most comprehensive comparison chart of its kind and we suggest you keep it handy for future comparisons. As the market changes and other viable companies offer comparable home computer systems, we will print comparative information on those as well.

microcomputer games

Two new titles are planned. The first (already available on disk for the Apple and Atari 800) is **TELENGARD**, a dungeon adventure game. In the mysterious underworld of Telengard, there are 50 levels of ever-more complex mazes for mighty adventurers to explore. Using wits, magic, and fast thinking the player delves deeper and deeper into the depths, to fight monsters and reap very valuable rewards. Telengard will be made available in multi-cassette for the Commodore-64, TRS-80, and Atari 4/8/1200. In **PARIS IN DANGER**, you are involved in the 1814 campaign to crush Napoleon. This will be available on 48K disk for the Atari 8/1200.

We've come across an item that is invaluable to the TI99/4A owner. Called "THE HOME COMPUTER DIRECTORY FOR THE 99/4A", Brand new and up-to-date, this directory includes such topics as System Options, Computer Advantage Club listings, Third Party Listings, On-Line Databases, User Group Listings, Programming and Technical Information, among other things. The item has a retail of \$4.95 and can be ordered directly from MICRONOVA, P.O. Box 1058, Northampton, MA 01061.

COMPARISON CHART

MATTEL AQUARIUS	TIMEX SINCLAIR	TI 99-2	TI 99-4A	APPLE II PLUS	SPECTRAVIDEO SV-318
\$279	\$68.95	\$99	\$169	\$1500	\$299
4K	2K	4.2K	16K	48K	32K
52K	16K	36.2K	54K	64K	96K
8K	8K	26K	24K	12K	32K
49key	40key membrane	48key	48key	48key	71key
YES		upper	YES	upper	YES
16	NO	NO	16	16	16
320x192	44x64	16 unique graphic characters 4x4 pixels	192x256	280x160	256x192
YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
YES (minimal)	YES	YES (minimal)	YES	YES	YES (minimal)
NO	NO	NO	YES	YES (large library)	NO
planned: recorder, printer, expansion cards, modem	40-cal printer, modem, recorder	digital tape drive	expansion box, disk drive, disk controller, memory expansion, recorder, printer	large selection from Apple 3rd parties	planned: disk drive, printer, recorder
YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES
24x40	32x23	28x24	24x32	24x40	32x24
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES



Brand new from Commodore is TOOTH INVADERS, a game for the Commodore-64. This game, developed in cooperation with the American Dental Association, combines the fun of a video game with the most important principals of dental care. The game's motto: "a clean tooth will not decay". To prove the point, characters such as D. K. Germ and PLAQUE-MAN help teach the use of dental floss, proper brushing and the dangers posed by cavities, and plaque build-up—with fast action, exciting graphics, sound effects, nine levels of difficulty and a story line to keep the kids interest to boot!!

Six new programs for the Atari Program Exchange have been announced for release soon. For the business and professional applications area, TYPIT turns your computer into a typewriter. Designed to be user-friendly, it includes 17 editing commands. In the personal interest and development area, MICROSAILING gives you a feeling of the skills required to sail a yacht! A game for two players, it offers four courses of varying difficulty with two sets of rules for each including those of the North American Yacht Racing Union. In entertainment, look for IMPACT, recommended for ages 7 and up. It's like playing bumper cars in outer space! It includes 24 playing fields with various bumpers and traps. Also DIGGERBONK is a panacea after a hard day's work. Using a joystick, you get to BONK everything in your path through a vertically scrolling maze. In the education category, you can help MATHMAN escape by solving problems in ESCAPE TO EQUATUS. Recommended for ages five-plus, this arcade-style game drills you in basic addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Answering math problems to get fuel to explore new planets is the focus of MATH MISSION. Recommended for ages six to ten, it is designed by 14-year-old!!

AVAILABILITY UPDATE

(based on projected release dates by mfrs. May change without notice)

ATARI 2600-COMPATIBLE

MARCH

x-Centipede (AT)
Frankenstein's Monster (DA)
Immies and Aggies (ZIM)
x-Killer Satellites (STP)
Pizza Chef (ZIM)
Polaris (TGV)
x-Shootin' Gallery (IMGC)
x-Sub Scan (SEGA)
x-Tac-Scan (SEGA)

APRIL

Flash Gordon (FOX)
Miner 2049er (TGV)
No Escape (IMGC)
Oink! (ACTV)
Realsports Soccer (AT)
Realsports Tennis (AT)
Sky Skipper (PB)
Strawberry Shortcake (PB)

MAY

Dolphin (ACTV)
Enduro (ACTV)
Galaxian (AT)
Keystone Kapers (ACTV)
Mr. Bill (DA)
Plaque Attack (ACTV)
Solar Fox (CBS)
Springer (TGV)

JUNE

Blueprint (CBS)
Earth Dies Screaming (FOX)
Jungle Hunt (AT)
Kangaroo (AT)
Krull (AT)
M*A*S*H (FOX)
Meltdown (FOX)
Robotank (ACTV)
Spacemaster X-7 (FOX)
Tunnel Runner (CBS)
Wings (CBS)

JULY

Alpha Beam (AT)
Big Bird's Egg Catch (AT)
Cookie Monster Munch (AT)
Deathstar Battle (PB)
Dig Dug (AT)
Dumbo's Flying Circus (AT)
Fall Guy (FOX)
Gravitar (AT)**
James Bond 007 (PB)
9 TO 5 (FOX)
Oscar's Trash Race (AT)
Pole Position (AT)
Save the Whales (FOX)
Sorcerer's Apprentice (AT)
Super Cobra (PB)
Tutankham (PB)

SECOND QUARTER

Burgertime (MNTK)
Donkey Kong Jr (COL)
Looping (COL)
Smurf Rescue (COL)
Zaxxon (COL)

**—available ONLY through Atari Club

ATARI 5200-COMPATIBLE

MARCH

x-Oix

APRIL

Realsports Tennis

MAY

Space Dungeon

JUNE

Kangaroo
Pole Position

JULY

Dig Dug
Jungle Hunt
Realsports Baseball
Vanguard

VECTREX

APRIL

Bedlam
Fortress of Narzod
Spin Ball
Web Wars

MAY

Heads Up Soccer
Spike

ODYSSEY

MARCH

x-Demon Attack (IMGC)
Killer Bees (DDY)

APRIL

Turtles (DDY)

COLECOVISION

MARCH

x-Space Fury

APRIL

Blackjack
Space Panic

MAY

Gorf
Looping
Pepper II

JUNE

Destruction Derby
Earth Dies Screaming (FOX)
M*A*S*H (FOX)
Meltdown (FOX)
Mr. Do
Roller Controller (w/Sliether)
Spacemaster X-7 (FOX)
Super Action Controller (w/Baseball)

JULY

Fall Guy (FOX)
9 To 5 (FOX)
Rocky Battles the Champ

INTELVISION-COMPATIBLE

MARCH

x-Dracula (IMGC)
Ice Trek (IMGC)
Tropical Trouble (IMGC)
Vectron (MAT)

APRIL

Frogger (PB)
Nova Blast (IMGC)
Truckin' (IMGC)

MAY

Happy Trails (ACTV)
Mission X (MAT)
SafeCracker (IMGC)
Shootin' Gallery (IMGC)
White Water (IMGC)

JUNE

Empire Strikes Back (PB)
Gorf (CBS)
M*A*S*H (FOX)
Meltdown (FOX)
Wizard of War (CBS)

JULY

Fall Guy (FOX)
Jedi Arena (PB)
9 To 5 (FOX)
Strawberry Shortcake (PB)
Tutankham (PB)

SECOND QUARTER

Donkey Kong Jr (COL)
Lady Bug (COL)
Looping (COL)
Smurf Rescue (COL)
Turbo (COL)
Zaxxon (COL)

VIC-20

APRIL

Fast Eddie (SIR)
Snake Byte (SIR)
Type Attack (SIR)

MAY

Atlantis (IMGC)
Demon Attack (IMGC)
Spacemaster X-7 (FOX)
Spider City (SIR)
Turmoil (SIR)

JUNE

Final Orbit (SIR)
Fly Wars (SIR)
Squish 'Em (SIR)
Spacemaster X-7 (FOX)
Vain Game (SIR)

ATARI 4/800

MARCH

Blade of Blackpool (SIR)
Boulders & Bombs (CBS)
Clipper Around the Horn (PDI)
ET Phone Home (AT)
x-Jumpman (EPX)
Kerplow (ZIM)
Mind of Man (ODE)-Disk
Quest for Inca Gold (ZIM)
Starbowl Football (GAM)
Star Crystals (PDI)
Twerps (SIR)-Disk
Worm War I (SIR)-Cart

APRIL

Android (PDI)
Dig Dug (AT)
Final Orbit (SIR)-Cart
Mountain King (CBS)
Repton (SIR)-Disk
Squish 'Em (SIR)-Cart
Telengard (MIC)-Cas

MAY

Alpha Shield (SIR)-Cart
Communist Mutants (STP)
Dragonstomper (STP)
Escape from Mindmaster (STP)
Nexar (SIR)-Cart
Spider City (SIR)-Cart

JUNE

Bumper Bash (SIR)-Cart
Flip-Out (SIR)-Disk
Spacemaster X-7 (FOX)
Type Attack (SIR)-Disk
Wavy Navy (SIR)-Disk

VIDEO TAKE-OUT'S TOP 10 SELLERS

1. SWORDS & SERPENTS (IMGC-INTEL)
2. DONKEY KONG JR (COL)
3. CENTIPEDE (AT-2600)
4. SEAQUEST (ACTV-2600)
5. TRON SOLAR SAILER (MAT)
6. QIX (AT 5200)
7. MS. PAC MAN (AT-2600)
8. CENTIPEDE (AT-5200)
9. FIREWORLD (AT-2600)
10. RIVER RAID (ACTV-2600)

Note regarding Coleco games: if you do NOT see a cartridge listed in our Update above, it has been BUMPED to at least the Second half of 1983. Shipping of some of the above Coleco titles also hinge on licensing agreements.



COLECO

SPACE FURY (★★½/★½) is a fairly run-of-the-mill outer-space shooting game that just doesn't measure up to Coleco's previous releases. It is based on the Sega coin-op. The game offers the now familiar choice of four skill levels for one or two players (alternating turns). The opening screen presents a kind of "talking head" of the Alien Commander, a green-faced, pointy-eared fellow whose lips move as a banner scrolls beneath him. The banner reads, "So! A creature for my amusement! Prepare for battle!" In the first play screen, your spaceship appears in the center as groups of alien scouts start moving toward each other to form large ships. The object is to fire at them, preferably knocking out the scouts before the large ships are formed, because the large ships will speed toward your ship and shoot fireballs at you. Both side buttons on the controller are used, one for firing and one for thrusting. Your ship can be rotated clockwise or counterclockwise by pushing the controller knob right or left. We found that controlling the ship, especially when attempting to thrust, fire and rotate at the same time, was somewhat awkward. Allowing for continuous firing by holding the button down would have been helpful here. The second play screen is the docking phase, in which your firepower is tripled by docking with one of three mother ships. Docking is an extremely simple operation that amounts to more of an intermission than a gaming challenge. After the first docking, you return to the battle screen to face groups of alien cruisers. If you can last long enough to dock a second and third time, you'll then face enemy destroyers and warships. Past this point you'll do battle with the entire alien fleet. Whenever your last ship is destroyed, the Alien Commander reappears to let you know the battle is over and to evaluate your performance. He'll proclaim you to be "an easy opponent" if your final score is low, but he may also find that you were "amusing," "stimulating," or...we'll let you find out for yourself. The Alien Commander is a clever addition to the game, but he's unfortunately just a gimmick with no real bearing on game play. The real game is contained entirely in the battle screen, and it's very similar to SO many other space games in which you rotate, thrust and shoot. Although SPACE FURY is the first game of this type for ColecoVision, play action is seriously hampered by the controllers. Graphics are colorful, but hardly spectacular, especially in the actual play sequences. Not recommended.

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