

Arcade Alley

A Critical Look at Video Games

by Bill Kunkel & Arnie Katz



The Fourth Annual Arcade Awards

As long-time readers of "Arcade Alley" may recall, this is the month in which we traditionally cover the annual Arcade Awards competition. For the fourth year, the best designs in all segments of electronic gaming—video-game cartridges, computer programs, stand-alone devices, and coin-op video games—vied for honors.

The scope of the awards has expanded greatly in tune with the booming state of electronic gaming. There were more prizes given to publishers of deserving games at this year's Arcade Awards presentation than in any previous year—but there were also more worthy titles competing for the statuettes. As a result, this edition of "Arcade Alley" will cover only the video-game cartridges that copped Arkies this year. Next time, we'll look at

computer software that earned similar distinction.

□ Video Game of the Year: **Demon Attack** (Imagic/Atari VCS). This multi-screen invasion game turned out to be the yardstick against which gamers measured the quality of each new cartridge during 1982. Superior graphic and sound treatment made "Demon Attack" as much a delight to the eye and ear as it was a challenge to the mental and physical capabilities of home arcaders. Certificates of Merit: **Star Master** (Activision/Atari VCS), **Atlantis** (Imagic/Atari VCS).

□ Best Science Fiction/Fantasy Video Game: **Defender** (Atari/Atari VCS). This home version of Stern's popular coin-op game provides non-stop action and a severe test of any arcader's abilities. It's a scrolling shootout in which the goal

is to save survivors of a nuclear attack while zapping enemy ships lingering in the area for a final kill. If the rules governing the Arkies didn't forbid any game from winning more than 1 honor, "Defender" would have been a strong candidate for at least a couple of additional statuettes and probably a Certificate of Merit award as well. Certificates of Merit: **Space Jockey** (US Games/Atari VCS), **Encounter at L-5** (Data Age/Atari VCS), **Threshold** (Tigervision/Atari VCS).

□ Most Innovative Video Game: **The Great Wall Street Fortune Hunt** (Odyssey/Odyssey²). The third game in Odyssey's Master Strategy Series continues the high standard of quality set by its 2 predecessors, "Quest for the Rings" and "Conquest of the World." This stock-market trading game features on-screen stock and news tickers to keep the wheeling and dealing going for one or more participants. Certificates of Merit: **Nexar** (Spectravision/Atari VCS), **Word Zapper** (US Games/Atari VCS).

□ Best Solitaire Video Game: **Donkey Kong** (Coleco/ColecoVision). Three different playfields highlight the home-screen edition of the world's most popular electronic climbing game. Can you guide Mario to the top of the half-completed skyscraper and rescue the kidnapped girl from the giant gorilla? It won't be easy, especially while dodging the barrels Donkey Kong rolls in Mario's direction. Certificates of Merit: **Berzerk** (Atari/Atari VCS), **Infiltrate** (Apollo/Atari VCS), **Gorf** (CBS/Atari VCS).

□ Best Multi-Player Video Game: **The Incredible Wizard** (Astrocade/Astrocade). This home version of Midway's "Wizard of Wor" is the finest cartridge ever produced for this system. One or two gamers can work together or square off head to head in this maze-shoot. Arcaders must overcome a range of challenges, including invisible attackers, multiple playfields, and the powerful Wizard himself. Certificate of Merit: **Conquest of the World** (Odyssey/Odyssey²), **Bowling** (Mattel/Intellivision).

□ Best Video Game Audiovisual Effects: **Smurf** (Coleco/ColecoVision). Once

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This was the game to beat in '82: Imagic's 'Demon Attack.' No one managed.

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you've pointed out that playing "Smurf" is like walking through a Saturday morning cartoon show, what else needs to be said?

Certificate of Merit: **Phasar Patrol** (Starpath/Atari VCS), **Triple Action** (Mattel/Intellivision).

□ Best Arcade-to-Home Video Game Translation: **Frogger** (Parker Brothers/Atari VCS). Even in a year in which first-rate home editions of top coin-ops abound, "Frogger" is something special. As players hop across the crowded highway and then across the swift-flowing river, they experience all the thrills of Sega's play-for-pay original. Certificates of Merit: **Galactic Invasion** (Astrocade/Astrocade), **Venture** (Coleco/ColecoVision).

□ Best Action Video Game: **Chopper Command** (Activision/Atari VCS). Players need a strong trigger finger for this scrolling shootout, in which you must command an armed helicopter that is the only force standing between a variety of attackers and a truck convoy on the ground. Certificates of Merit: **Space Cavern** (Apollo/Atari VCS).

□ Best Adventure Video Game: **Pitfall** (Activision/Atari VCS). Swing through the trees with that great white hunter, Pitfall Harry, on his gold-finding expedition. The sheer number and variety of possible situations is almost unbelievable in a VCS-compatible cartridge. Certificates of Merit: **Earthworld** (Atari/Atari VCS), **Riddle of the Sphinx** (Imagic/Atari VCS).

□ Best Sports Video Game: **Hockey** (Activision/Atari VCS). Though other cartridges may simulate the rink sports more faithfully, none packs as much rock-'em-sock-'em excitement as this version. Each coach controls a two-man team in this contest of skating, passing, and shooting. Certificates of Merit: **Super-Challenge Baseball** (Mattel/Atari VCS), **Super Challenge Football** (Mattel/Atari VCS).

□ Most Humorous Home Arcade Game: **Megamania** (Activision/Atari VCS). The concept behind this multi-scenario invasion game is that a pilot has fallen asleep after a big snack and is dreaming about being attacked by a variety of foods and household items. Can you repel the dreaded hot dogs or stop the assault of the radial tires? It's sure fun to try! Certificates of Merit: **Fast Food** (Telsys/Atari VCS), **Sneakers** (Sirius Software/Apple II).

And there you have 'em: the best video game cartridges of 1982. Meet us here on "Arcade Alley" next month for a rundown on Arcade Award-winning computer games.

