

# Arcade Alley

A Critical Look at Video Games

by Bill Kunkel & Arnie Katz



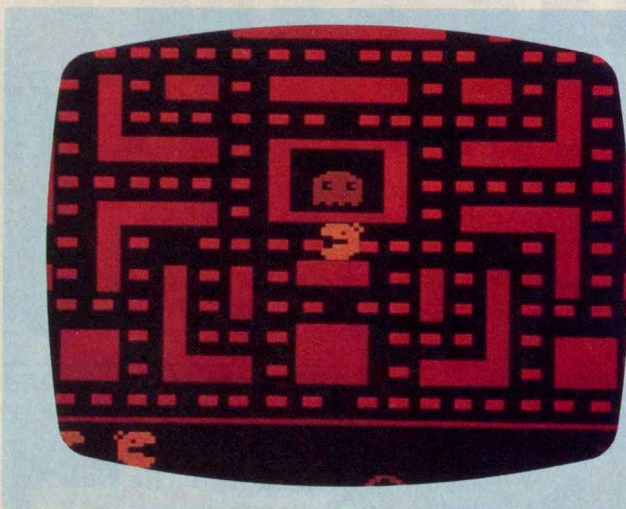
## The Arcade Awards, Part 1

Reese Communications began sponsoring the Arcade Awards five years ago, and this column announced the first slate of winners. The idea was to promote the publication of top-quality games by praising the *creme de la creme*.

Electronic games have improved dramatically since then, and though this can't all be attributed to the beneficent influence of the Arkies, competition for this prestigious set of awards has helped spur publishers and designers alike to ever-greater efforts.

In this month's and next month's "Arcade Alley" we salute the winners of the 1984 Arcade Awards in the Videogame, Videogame/Computer Game, and Computer Game divisions. These are the top choices of the more than 5,000 players coast to coast who participated in the balloting.

□ **1984 Electronic Game of the Year: Miner 2049er** (Big Five/Atari 5200/Atari computers; Micro Fun/Apple/ColecoVision; Tiger/Atari 2600). The Judging Committee created this "super Arkie" in response to unprecedented public demand: no home-arcade title has had the impact of this multi-screen climbing game. "Miner" is available on so many systems that it's become the most widely played home electronic game of



*Top-notch visuals and the sultry appeal of the lady herself make 'Ms. Pac-Man' as fun to watch as it is to play.*

all time. Bill Hogue's 10-screen classic casts the player as Bounty Bob. He must fully search each playfield, avoiding deadly mutants and leaping chasms. Each playfield is characterized by a unique set of challenges, climaxing in a wild scene in which the player fires Bounty Bob to the top of the screen like a human cannonball!

□ **1984 Videogame of the Year (Less than 16K ROM): Ms. Pac-Man** (Atari/Atari 2600). Atari displayed plenty of courage—not to mention faith in its designers—by producing this cartridge af-

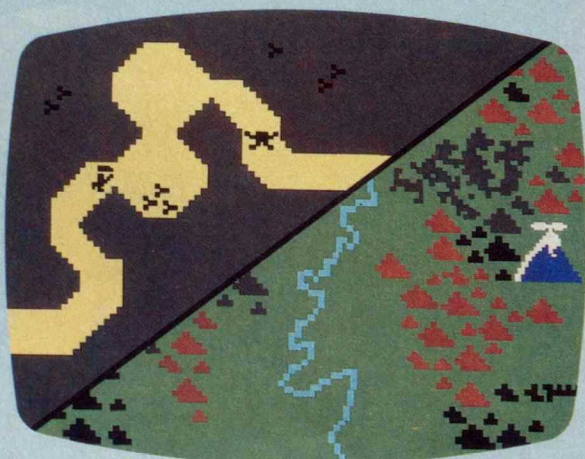
ter last year's 2600 "Pac-Man" debacle. But as Ms. P. says in the commercials, this multi-screen maze-chase is much, much more than just "Pac-Man with a bow." "Ms. Pac-Man" 's graphics are so good for a 2600 cartridge that it was bound to receive plenty of attention from gamers. What makes it truly great, however, is how the visuals integrate into the play-action. Excellent joystick response and individualized bonus objects are just two of the reasons this one is a winner.

Certificates of Merit: "Burger Time" (Mattel/Intellivision); "Dracula" (Imagic/Intellivision); "Keystone Capers" (Activision/Atari 2600).

□ **1984 Videogame of the Year (16K or more ROM): Lady Bug** (Coleco/ColecoVision). Pinball-type scoring blends with innovative maze-chase play-mechanics in this outstanding home edition of a coin-op-palace cult favorite. Though it's in the same genre as "Pac-Man," "Lady Bug" offers unique challenges and the opportunity to exercise strategy as well as deft joystick work. It's the movable walls that make "Lady Bug" fascinating. Bumping into one of the turnstiles can instantly alter the design of the labyrinth, throwing pursuers off the trail and setting up prime scoring opportunities.

Certificates of Merit: "Spinball"

*In 'Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Cloudy Mountain,' adventurers travel the wild (bottom right) and search for treasure and monsters to kill in underground labyrinths (top left).*



(GCE/Vectrex); "Zaxxon" (Coleco/ColecoVision).

**1984 Best Science Fiction/Fantasy Videogame: Vanguard** (Atari/Atari 5200). What's next? That is the key ingredient in the success of "Vanguard," a scrolling shootout extravaganza. Whether it's the coin-op or any of the excellent home editions produced by Atari, players can't resist the opportunity to steer their ship through the zones toward the final confrontation with the Gond. This mono-directional scroller has done well as a 2600 cartridge too, but it's the 5200 version with its out-

standing graphics that has won gamers' hearts.

Certificates of Merit: "Phoenix" (Atari/Atari 2600); "Moon Patrol" (Atari/Atari 2600).

**1984 Best Videogame Audio-Visual Effects (Less than 16K ROM): Dolphin** (Activision/Atari 2600). Matt Hubbard's game requires that players use their ears as well as their eyes. The Dolphin must swim through gaps in the vertical columns of sea horses, a feat made possible by the aquatic mammal's sonar. Sonar also helps the Dolphin get more energy. When the player hears the

special "ping" that signals the flight of a seagull overheard, it's time to head for the surface—and lunch.

Certificates of Merit: "B-17 Bomber" (Mattel/Intellivision); "Dragonfire" (Imagic/Intellivision).

**1984 Best Videogame Audio-Visual Effects (16K or more ROM): Donkey Kong Jr.** (ColecoVision). Sometimes sequels do manage to maintain the standards set by the original. "Donkey Kong Jr." is a fine example: this is no rehash of "Donkey Kong." Rather, it extends the theme and presents a radically different play-action. ColecoVision's cartridge is an accurate translation of the Nintendo coin-op, chronicling the efforts of Donkey Kong's son to find and free his daddy from a cage in the heart of the jungle by overcoming an assortment of enemies and obstacles. It's great fun.

Certificate of Merit: "Qix" (Atari/Atari 5200).

**1984 Best Action Videogame: River Raid** (Activision/Atari 2600). Carol Shaw's cartridge lets the arcader grip the throttle of a fighter plane for a mission deep in hostile territory. The object is to follow the course of the mighty river that dominates the playfield and blast every opposing ship, plane, and tank in the vicinity. As the vertically-scrolling playfield unrolls the jet jockey faces a limitless succession of dangers. "River Raid" provides the brand of non-stop excitement that blast brigadiers adore.

Certificates of Merit: "MegaForce" (Fox Video Games/Atari 2600); "Polaris" (Tiger/Atari 2600); "Super Cobra" (Parker Brothers/Atari 2600).

**1984 Best Adventure Videogame: Advanced Dungeons & Dragons** (Mattel/Intellivision). This is the first videogame version of the role-playing game that has entertained millions for many years. In command of a three-man team of explorers, the player moves the adventurers across the terrain until they reach a cave entrance, and then it's into the underground maze to fight monsters and collect treasure.

Certificates of Merit: "Jungle Hunt" (Atari/Atari 2600); "Tutenkham" (Parker Brothers/Atari 2600).

**1984 Best Sports Videogame: Enduro** (Activision/Atari 2600). This new multi-phase racing game features some of the best graphics presented by a 2600 and boasts an intriguing concept. Not one of those auto games where the whole object is to stay on the road and drive as far as possible, "Enduro" 's goal is the same as in authentic racing: to roar past the checkered flag ahead of the pack.

Certificates of Merit: "RealSports Baseball" (Atari/Atari 2600); "RealSports Football" (Atari/Atari 2600).

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