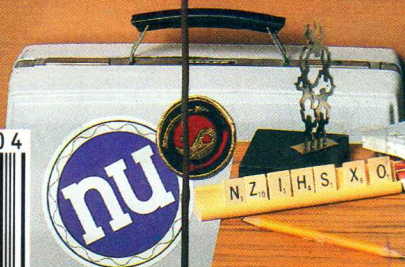
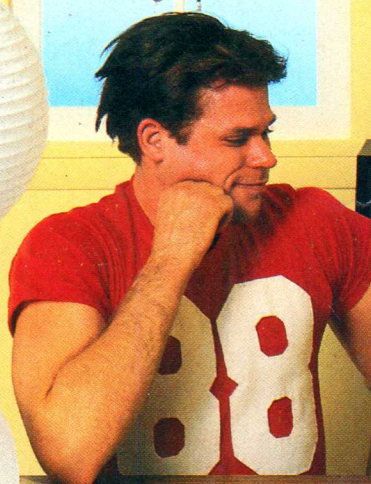


GAMES

*Head
over
Heels in
Love*

WHAT'S WRONG WITH
THIS PICTURE?
ANSWER, PAGE 20.



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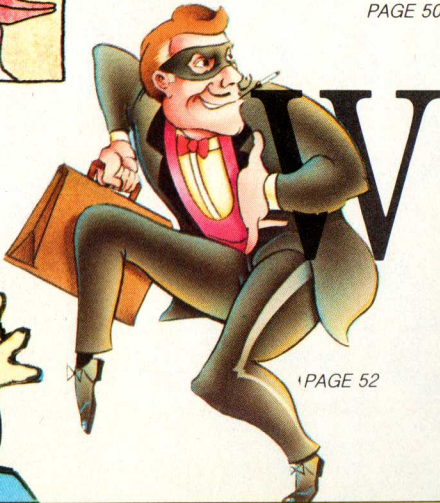
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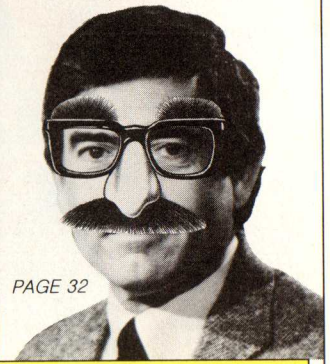
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Cover Photograph Walter Wick **Puzzle** Don Wright and Stephanie Spadaccini



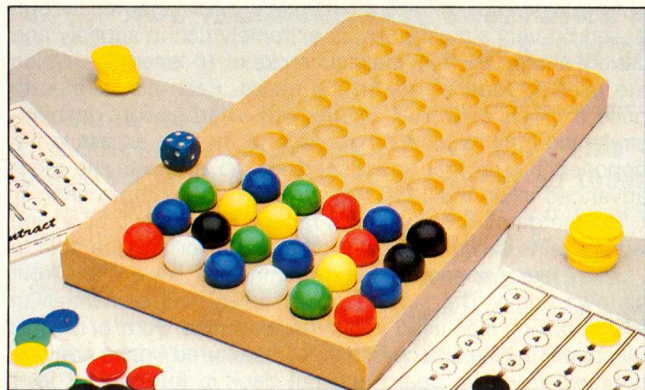
GAMES & BOOKS

Edited by R. Wayne Schmittberger

Show Biz (Prestige Games, 2 Birds Hill Rise, Oxshott, Surrey KT22 0SW, United Kingdom; price, including airmail postage, is \$32 by check, \$30 by International Money Order)

If you think you can predict what types of performers will make it big in show business, Derek Carver's new game is for you: It abstractly—but accurately—re-creates the life of a theatrical agent.

Balls of six different colors represent public demand for various types of artists. At the start of the game, 12 balls are



PHOTOGRAPH BY STAN FELLERMAN

drawn randomly from a bag; six go in the bottom row of indentations on the wooden board, and six in the second row, to represent demand for the first two years. Artists are represented by disks whose colors match those of the balls. The first of two to six players draws one disk from the "talent pool," hoping to sign that artist to a contract. Other players may submit secret bids for that artist, too, with the highest bidder signing him to a contract of one to five years. Then the next player draws a disk, and play continues in this way until everyone has six artists under contract, which ends the first year. Players earn points according to how many of their disks match the balls on the board; that is, how well they have met the public demand that year.

At the beginning of each year, a die is rolled to determine "market stability." Players who sign big stars to long contracts prosper if the market is stable; an unstable market favors short contracts. In either case, when a new year begins, six new balls are placed in the next row of the board, and play continues as before, with the number of new artists limited to the number whose contracts expired the previous year. The game continues for 10, 11, or 12 years (the end is determined randomly), and the high scorer wins.

The rules require the demand balls to be returned to the bag before a new draw. To give players a better chance to predict what's coming (since the number of balls of each color is known), we recommend removing used demand balls from the game beginning with year three. —Sid Sackson

Oil's Well by Thomas Mitchell (Sierra On-Line, on cartridge for Atari and Commodore 64 computers; \$35; available soon for other systems)

Laying the Alaskan pipeline can't be much tougher than playing Oil's Well. Joystick in hand, you maneuver your drill bit from the refinery at the top of the screen down through a maze of underground tunnels, earning points as you try to collect all the oil pellets in each of eight successive boards (eight different "oil fields"). The play is reminiscent of Pac-Man, but because you lay pipeline behind you as your drill bit bores on, you're vulnerable along your entire path.

The enemies are three: the "oozies" and bombs that move through the tunnels, planted by rival oil barons; and time. You begin the game with three lives, and earn an additional life for each 10,000 points you score. A life lasts up to 99 seconds (a timer on the refinery displays the time remaining), but it may well end sooner. If, for instance, you chomp an ooze with your drill bit, you'll earn extra points, but if the ooze collides with your pipeline... boom! A bomb, on the other hand, won't harm your pipe, but will detonate if it comes in contact with your drill bit. Fortunately, you can retract your pipeline quickly by pushing the action button. There's also a "petromin" (energy pill) buried deep in each field—when you run over it with your drill bit, the oozies slow down, and you gain a few extra seconds to reach the less accessible pellets (of which there are many, especially on the more advanced boards).

A good strategy is to clean up an entire board except for

one or two pellets, then grab oozies for points while the clock runs out—extra lives will come in very handy later on. Although the first few oil fields are laid out simply, in subsequent ones some areas can be reached only by a single tortuous route requiring you to extend your pipeline to very dangerous lengths.

Once you've consumed the pellets on all eight fields at "regular" speed, you run through the same fields again with the oozies moving at the faster "unleaded" and then "premium" speeds. (We do have living proof that it's possible to complete all eight boards at all three speeds, but we consider ourselves pretty swift when we get past the sixth oil field at regular speed.)

The game is so fast that you may not have time to plot your most efficient routes, or to appreciate the elegant design of each oil field. We suggest pressing the ESCAPE button when you first encounter a new field—this will pause the game and allow you time to study the screen. —B.H.

