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GAMES

TO OUR READERS

Everyone's folded but our pal Lucky and a mean drifter named Killer. We felt so sorry for Lucky (after the bowling accident) that we hid clues to Killer's hand all over the room. Using those clues, can you help Lucky decide whether to bet his life savings on his two pair? --The Editors
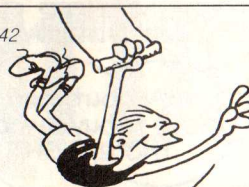
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DOWNTOWN
LIONS CLUB

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Difficulty Rating   Smooth Sailing ★   Uphill Climb ★★   Proceed at Your Own Risk! ★★★   Mixed Bag ★☆

Cover Photograph Walter Wick   **Puppets** Sandra Forrest   **Puzzle** Don Wright

Edited by R. Wayne Schmittberger

James Bond 007 (Victory Games: Basic Game, $9.95; *Q Manual*, $9.95; Gamemaster Pack, $8.95; Adventure Modules, $6.95 each)

From the danger-filled corridors of Dr. No's island lab to the chambers of the shapely warriors in Octopussy's palace, the world of the inimitable superspy James Bond is vividly recreated in this major new role-playing game. The Basic Game book provides detailed rules for the players and the gamemaster (who runs the game), and effectively captures the tongue-in-cheek flavor of the Bond movies. A five-stage "seduction" process, for instance, starts with "The Look" and ends with "When and Where?" And the player of the Bond role, appropriately, has the advantage of being a connoisseur of food, drink, and etiquette.

There are some deft innovations, such as the clever use of "time" and "ease" factors, which, for instance, let an expert pick a lock more quickly and easily than a third-rate safecracker. A "sixth sense" skill gives a player the opportunity for the same kind of illogical luck that Bond always seems to have. "Fame" points can make it hard to get around without being noticed, while "hero" points can save Bond's scalp in the nick of time.

Included with the Basic Game is an all-too-short solitaire adventure, The Island of Dr. No, to help you learn the rules. The Gamemaster Pack provides such playing aids as charts, character record sheets, and die-cut character and vehicle figures. Two full-size adventure modules, Goldfinger and Octopussy, have also been released, each with an excellent Gamemaster book of its own and an Agent Briefing Dossier (marked "For Your Eyes Only").

The *Q Manual*, also in book form, will appeal to all Bond fans, even nonplayers. It's a compendium of detailed specifications for all those gadget goodies developed by the ingenious engineers of Q Branch: the *From Russia With Love* exploding attaché case, the underwater sled from *Thunderball*, Bond's trusty Aston-Martin DB-V, and radios, guns, and gizmos of every description. It's fun to read, and it adds an element of double-0-seven realism to all the Bond games.

This highly detailed role-playing game is not for beginners, but certainly will satisfy players with experience in the genre. The play is exhilarating, the women are beautiful but deadly, and the villains are hard-pressed to beat the impeccably dressed Englishman.
—Matthew J. Costello

## Gumball (Broderbund, on disk for Apple II/II+/IIe; $30)

If the game screen looks like a Rube Goldberg cartoon, the frantic play is reminiscent of Charlie Chaplin working on the production line in *Modern Times*.

You're a gumball sorter whose job is to make sure that each of the colored balls coming off the conveyor belt at the top left of the sorting machine drops into a bin of the matching color at the bottom. Using joystick or keyboard, you can vary the speed of the conveyor belt and move the bins right or left to align them with appropriate chutes. You determine which chute a ball will drop out of by opening or closing six gates located at strategic points throughout the machine. It's easy to direct any individual gumball to the chute of your choice, or, if you miss the right chute, to send it back up to the top of the machine. When two or more gumballs are in play, though, you have to do some quick mental juggling, because when you change the position of one gate, you change them all.

Each board assigns a quota of gumballs that must be correctly sorted within a time limit. On the first board you have only two different colors to separate, plus an occasional "rotten" gumball that you must "reject" by sending it to the far right drop chute. The next two boards add a third and fourth color and increase your quota. To be successful on levels three and up, you must increase the conveyor belt's speed. This in turn will greatly increase the chance that something will go amiss on the right while you are watching the balls and gates on the left. Failure to catch gumballs increases your quota. But a far more serious error is to allow one to drop into the wrong color bin, after which an angry quality-control inspector comes on-screen to dump out the entire contents of the contaminated bin.

Level four is practically impossible to complete and seems to be too great a jump in difficulty over level three. Not only is the quota huge, but now overzealous dental assistants are trying to blow up the factory. Whenever a bomb rolls into the machine, you must quickly deactivate it by moving a set of crosshairs to it. This task is easy in itself, but can be a ruinous distraction at the high speed at which the board must be played. Rumor has it that Robert Cook, the game's inventor, has reached the rarely seen level five—once or twice.
—R. W. S.
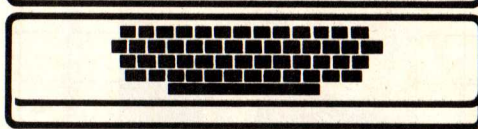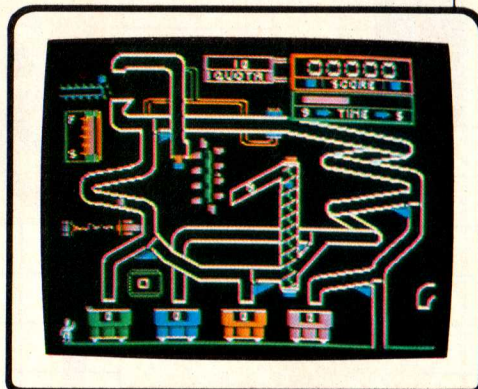
Shuttles
(Shoptaugh Games, 3204 Hollis St., Oakland, CA 94608; $10 plus $3 postage)
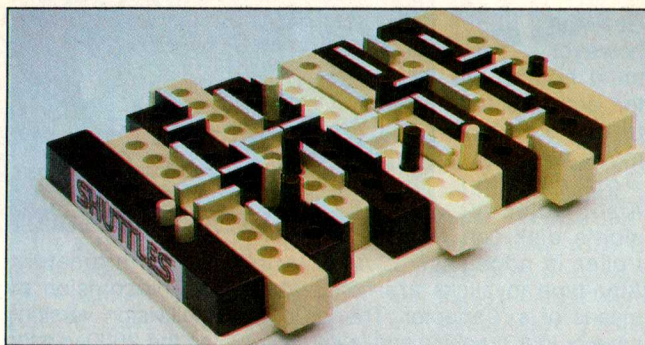
Computer monitors light up with mazes that shift and change at confounding speeds, but this board game provides a tactile, more relaxing alternative.

The Shuttles board is a variable maze that is shifted not by microchips but by you and your opponent, and only after due deliberation. The rectangular board consists of nine horizontally sliding bars ("sliders"), each with a row of nine holes and an arrangement of barriers that form the walls of the maze. Each slider may be pushed the equivalent of two holes to the left or right. At either end of the board are two stationary bars, each with a row of five holes, that serve as one player's starting position and the opposing player's goal.

On a turn, a player may move a piece one or more spaces forward, backward, right, or left, but not past a barrier, across a gap left by unaligned bars, or over another piece (although a piece may jump over an adjacent enemy piece). Instead of moving a piece, a player may use his turn to shift one of the four sliders of his color—tan or brown—one notch to the right or left, thus also shifting any pieces that are on the slider. The white central slider may be shifted by either player.

Two potential problems are not covered in the rules. As the directions stand, a player can leave a piece in its starting position, preventing his opponent from occupying his goal. This may be prevented by awarding a player the victory when his goal is filled by any five pieces. The other problem occurs when two adjacent sliders, or a piece and a slider, are repeatedly shifted back and forth. Usually one player can find a favorable way of breaking the impasse. If not, players who dislike settling for a draw may want to add a rule prohibiting repetitions of moves.

Philip Shoptaugh, Shuttles's creator, gives some succinct and useful pointers on strategy and suggests methods for handicapping to allow players of different strengths to compete on equal footing. —Sid Sackson

Winning Poker
by David Sklansky with Roger Dionne (Prentice-Hall, 1983, 242 pages; $7.95 paperback)

Poker is the most difficult of all card games, surpassing even bridge in complexity, and most players have only a vague or incomplete understanding of its correct strategies. This book will fill the wide gaps in the average player's knowledge, and, by explaining how the champions think during a game, should start readers along the road to expertise.

The book's central theme is the "Fundamental Theorem of Poker," from which all sound poker principles can be derived: "Every time you play a hand differently from the way you would have played it if you could see all your opponents' cards, they gain; and every time you play your hand the same way you would have played it if you could see all their cards, they lose." This theorem sounds a lot simpler than it is in practice. Among the relevant topics the authors discuss at length are the value of deception; how to bluff with true randomness and at optimum frequency, in accordance with game theory; why it is hard to defend against the semibluff; the difference between implied and effective odds; and how to adjust your play according to specific weaknesses of your opponents. Even the most difficult subject matter is presented in a clear, easily assimilated manner. Many principles are illustrated with concrete examples from play, and each chapter closes with a summary of important points.

Don't expect the book to make you a master overnight, though. To make effective use of the tools it gives you, you'll also need experience, particularly in observing your opponents' tendencies in various situations. —R. W. S.

Enchanter
(Infocom, on disk for Apple II/II+/IIe, Atari 800/1200XL, Commodore 64, CP/M, DEC Rainbow, IBM PC, TI Professional, TRS Model III; $40–$50)

This text adventure was written by Marc Blank and Dave Lebling, authors of the classic Zork Trilogy (reviewed in December 1983 GAMES). While many players will think of Enchanter as Zork IV, it is actually the beginning of a new trilogy. Unlike Zork, where the player is a mere adventurer, this game grants you fledgling magic powers to help you find and destroy an evil warlock. At the beginning of the game you are given a few basic spells and a "book" (part of the program) in which you can "write" (type in) new spells that you find on scrolls in secret locations as you explore the game's world. Once a spell is written in your book, you can use it over and over. Some spells, however, are too long and complicated to be entered in the book, and thus may be used only once.

Enchanter has its funny moments. Veterans of Zork will appreciate such allusions as the sequence in the Hall of Mirrors where the image of a bedraggled soldier (the Zork adventurer) appears, and the sequence where you finally get to enter the black demonic temple that was glimpsed in Zork III. (Look who's about to be sacrificed on the high altar!)

The puzzles the player must solve in Enchanter are consistent with Infocom's high standard; some of them are extremely tough. This is an impressive start for the new trilogy, and a must for all adventure gamers. —Roe R. Adams III

Born-Again Arcade Games

Joust (Atari, for Atari 2600, 5200; $35 and $40) **Q*bert** (Parker Brothers, for Atari home computers, Atari 2600 and 5200, ColecoVision, Intellivision; $30–$35) **Pole Position** (Atari, for Atari 5200; $40) **Popeye** (Parker Brothers, for Atari home computers, Atari 2600 and 5200, ColecoVision, Intellivision; $30–$35); all on cartridge.

Arcade hits are being translated into video-game and home-computer versions these days at a record pace, and usually in multiple formats (though not with uniform success). Even older games, like Centipede, Defender, and Pac-Man, which were previously available only for Atari systems, can now be played on Apple, Commodore, and IBM computers. Of the many translations of newer arcade games, the four reviewed below are our favorites.

Joust, one of the strangest games ever to hit the arcades, is a sort of medieval battle inside a cavern in which you, astride an ostrich, try to unseat Buzzard Riders by bumping into them from above. You use the action button to flap your wings—the faster you flap, the higher you fly. The 5200 version (shown above) keeps all the charming details of the original intact; naturally, the 2600 version is simpler.

It takes patience to learn how to control the diagonal movements of **Q*bert** as he hops around a pyramid of cubes to change their color, but this fascinating animated puzzle is well worth the effort. The cartridges for Atari 5200, Atari

home computers, and ColecoVision are almost perfect replicas of the arcade original. On the 5200, however, you must hold down the action button to make Q*bert move, an annoying distraction. Also, ColecoVision's disk-controller is hopelessly clumsy in this game; fortunately, Atari-type joysticks are compatible with ColecoVision by means of a Y-adaptor. The 2600 and Intellivision versions have cruder graphics and fewer cubes, and the 2600 version lacks the meanie Ugg.

In the simulated cockpit of the arcade **Pole Position**, the sensation of piloting a racecar at too many m.p.h. turns our knees to jelly. That visceral thrill is gone in the home version (shown above), but our foot still involuntarily reaches for the brake pedal around those wicked curves. This is the most exciting car race on TV, next to the Indy 500, and its qualifying heats, sophisticated scoring system, and four course options add competitive interest. (Atari home computer and 2600 versions were not available for play-testing.)

Popeye is a difficult game to master. Its three successive screens consist variously of ladders, wraparound ledges, trampolines (in the Intellivision and 2600 versions it's a see-saw), sliding platforms, and other features. As you run around gathering hearts, notes, or cries for help sent floating down by Olive, Brutus tries to stop you, as do sea hags, who throw bottles at you. If you've got quick reflexes you'll be able to punch the bottles out of your way, but to knock out musclehead you ''gots to eats yer spinach.'' Catch Swee' Pea for bonus points in all versions except the 2600.   —B. H.
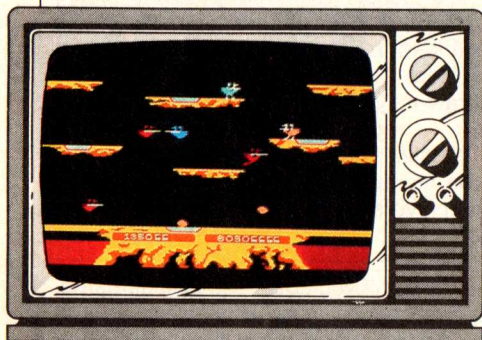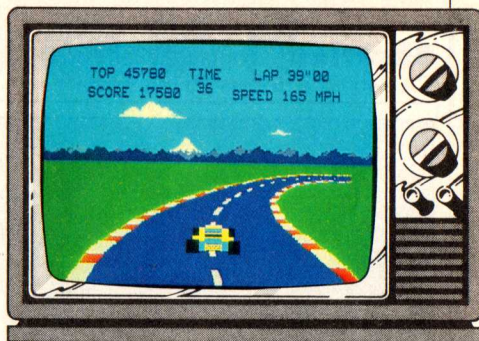
Combo (Tumark Enterprises, 109 Sierra Way, Chula Vista, CA; 92011, $4 includes postage)

Here is an interesting variation on the well-known theme (used in games such as Yahtzee and Cosmic Wimpout) of throwing and rethrowing dice to meet a series of goals. There are six dice instead of the familiar five, and the object is to arrange them into one or more groups, each of which adds up to the same total. For example, if a player's throw is 6-4-3-2-2-1, he might claim credit for 6 (6, 4+2, 3+2+1) or for 9 (6+3, 4+2+2+1).

After the initial throw, any or all of the dice can be rethrown once or twice. If a throw is successful, the number claimed is marked off on the player's score sheet. The first player to mark off all the required numbers is the winner. (But it seems only fair to add a rule that all players must have the same number of chances.)

Luck certainly helps, but in the long run the player who knows the odds will come out ahead. An important tactic is to make sure that your final unclaimed number is not one of the highest or lowest ones, which are frustratingly difficult to hit.
          —Sid Sackson

ETCETERA

Landis Links, The Devil's Ring, and **Apprentice Rings** (Evermore Industries; $10 each) are from a series of large handmade iron variations on 18th- and 19th-century American folk puzzles. Removing the three-inch-diameter rings looks impossible at first, but you shouldn't need to write the company for solutions if you're persistent. The puzzles are fashioned by Dennis Sucilsky, a Long Island, NY, blacksmith.

Dinosaurs (Grenadier Models, Price and Pine Sts., Holmes, PA 19043; $11.95 includes postage) is a set of nine metal castings of dinosaur miniatures, with paints included. The largest, the Tyrannosaurus Rex, is only two inches high, but all the models are beautifully detailed, right down to skin texture that looks truly reptilian once painted. Grenadier puts out a complete line of other miniatures, ranging from dragons to secret agents, that are useful in a variety of role-playing and other games.