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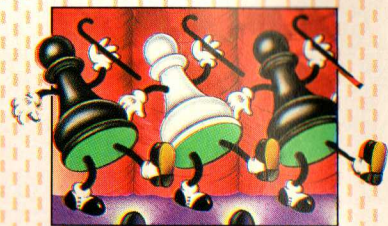
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DIFFICULTY RATING

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

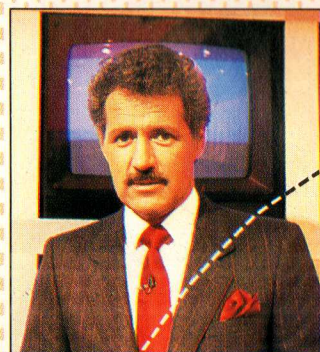
Cover Maze Design Anna V. Walker Photograph Dean Powell Puzzle Robert Leighton



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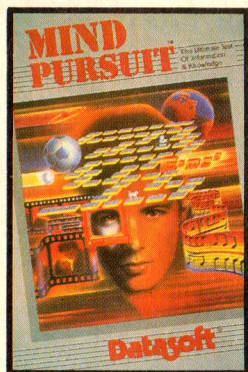
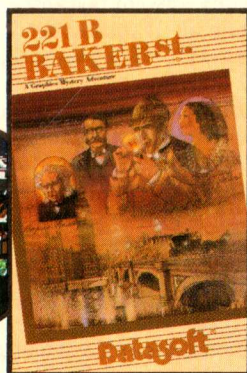
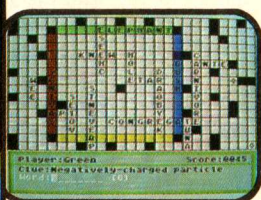
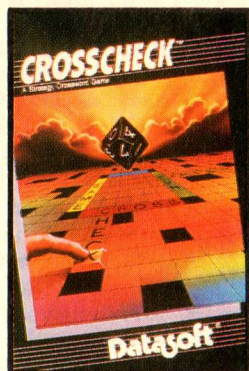
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GAMES & BOOKS

EDITED BY BURT HOCHBERG



POWER "THE GAME"

**Power Games USA, P.O.
Box 99, Soulsbyville, CA
95372; \$29.95 postpaid**

This is a good war game for people who really don't like war games. There is no attempt at historicity, and the rules can be learned in 10 minutes, yet there's enough strategy to challenge even a hard-core wargamer.

The board shows four countries, each consisting of a corner home base plus an island divided into nine sectors. Five smaller neutral islands act as bridges when land units (infantry and tanks) move between countries. "Sea lanes," which only ships can occupy, separate the countries.

The game is primarily for four players, though it works well for three (the fourth army's units can be used by any or all players), and even for two (commanding two allied armies each). Each player receives a supply of 43 units of various types. A flag, two infantry, two tanks, two fighter aircraft, and two destroyers are placed in each base. Other forces enter the game

through winning battles, occupying enemy territory, and upgrading by exchanges.

Working against a timer, each player records up to five commands, each command moving a different unit its maximum movement allowance or less. Infantry can move up to two spaces, tanks up to three, planes up to five, and ships (confined to sea lanes and coastal spaces) only one.

When the time is up, all commands are executed simultaneously. If any space is then occupied by two or more players, a battle occurs, which is won by the player with the most power on that space. Each type of unit has a power value, ranging from 2 for an infantry up to 10 for a destroyer; but these values can be increased, as explained below. The victor in a battle captures all enemy units involved, trades them for matching units from his own supplies (the new units are placed in a "reserves" area near his home base), and returns the captured units to the opponents' supplies.

A player earns one "power unit" for each enemy country he occupies at the end of each round. Power

units can be exchanged for additional forces according to the forces' power values.

In addition, three identical smaller units occupying the same space can be exchanged for a similar unit with a much bigger bang. For instance, three infantry units (with a combined power value of 6) occupying the same space can be exchanged for a regiment (with a power value of 20); three destroyers (30) for a cruiser (50). An accumulation of power values totaling 100 can be exchanged for a megamissile, which can fly to any space on the board, destroying everything at that location, including itself.

An opponent is eliminated when his flag is captured in its home base, but the capturing force must include a slow-moving infantry or regiment unit. All surviving units of the vanquished army defect to their conqueror; they are removed from the board and traded for the captor's own units. The last survivor wins the game.

The rules are well written, though there are a few minor loose ends. These can be resolved in any way satisfactory to all players without affecting the game.

—Sid Sackson

LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS

**By Stephen Meretzky;
Infocom, on disk for most 64k
computers; \$39.95**

Once again Infocom has come through with an innovative work of interactive fiction. Although the company's particular brand of humor has been present to some degree in all of its

games, only twice before—in Planetfall and in The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (both by Steven Meretzky)—has Infocom attempted science fiction comedy. Leather Goddesses is, of all things, a science fiction sex comedy.

It's actually a spoof of the kind of superhero science fiction that was prevalent in comic books of the 1930s. (For anybody who has never seen one, Infocom has provided an example in 3-D, along with red-blue glasses to read it with. And read it you must; it contains important clues.) The story takes the hero (or heroine—the program allows the player to be either male or female) from the restroom of a seedy bar in Upper Sandusky, Ohio, to the jungles of Venus, the canals of Mars, a tiny house in Cleveland, and the palace of the Leather Goddesses on the Martian moon Phobos, among other locations. Our hero, it seems, is slated to be the subject of certain unmentionable experiments which will enable the Goddesses, after invading Earth, to make humans their sexual playthings. For some reason, this must be prevented.

As you move about, collecting the various items you need to defeat the LG of P, you encounter members of the opposite sex, and what happens then depends on your willingness to engage in . . . well, you know. But the author has cleverly arranged things to minimize the risk of offending anyone. At any point in the game you can switch to any of three naughtiness levels—"tame" (about as racy as a Betty Crocker cookbook), "suggestive" (no more so than on TV's

Moonlighting), or "lewd" (lewd).

Many of the puzzles you must solve in order to get to the places you need to get to and obtain the objects you seek involve wordplay: There's a word search puzzle (of a particular type that GAMES readers will recognize), a cryptogram, a riddle, and an "odd machine" whose function is a delight to discover. There's also a bi-level labyrinth full of nasty creatures; getting through it will require more than the map provided.

The level of difficulty is "Standard"—tougher than Infocom's "Introductory" adventures but not as hard as "Advanced" or "Expert." Leather Goddesses is one of Infocom's finest achievements, pure pleasure from start to finish.

—B. H.

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE GAME

Mayfair Games, Inc. \$17

Eagerly awaited by mystery fans, and long overdue, Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine Game is finally here. The wait has been worthwhile: It's a real mystery-lover's game, with all the excitement and flavor of a well-crafted whodunit.

The game comes packed with material. The glossy double-sided game board depicts Manhattan on one side, and on the other the fictitious rural town of Bromlee Station ("Bromlee" is a combination of the names of the game's designers: Darwin Bromley, president of Mayfair Games, and Laird Brownlee). There's a four-page Basic Rules booklet, an eight-page Advanced Rules booklet, a New York Detective's Guide (chock full of useful information for any visitor to the Big Apple, and including 229 different clue locations for players of the game), a Chamber of Commerce

Guide to Bromlee Station (with 150 clue locations), and cards describing the detectives. The five cases presented in the thick Casebook run the gamut from the murder of a mystery writer to a neat locked-room mystery.

Game play is easily grasped. Players each select a detective from the six provided (including Ellery Queen himself), each of whom has special contacts and areas of expertise which allow him to get extra information at certain locations and from certain characters.

The introduction to the selected case is read from the Casebook, and the players place their tokens on the indicated numbered locations on the board. The numbers refer players to a Location Index, which in turn refers them to a Clue Index, which tells them where in the Casebook to find the appropriate clue. Although having to check three different references is a bit cumbersome and confusing at first, the cleverness of the system more than compensates for this. Some clues are revealed automatically as the game progresses. In competitive play, each detective can "squelch" up to three clues, rendering them unavailable to the other players. Solitaire rules are also provided.

The guide books play a key role. Specific locations are listed for any type of information required (communications, art, chemistry, etc.), and a list of neighborhoods includes the types of information to be found in each. There are, for instance, five banks, three libraries, six "hangouts," and a host of churches, clubs, hotels, stores, etc. Each turn, a player may either stay within a neighborhood and look up two clues, move to an adjacent neighborhood and look up one clue, or move two neighborhoods away but see no clues.



To win, a player first proposes a solution and then silently reads the correct solution in the Casebook. (Keep a mirror handy, since the solutions are printed in mirror-image.) If he is correct in every detail, he wins the game.

Mayfair plans to release supplemental cases, but the game includes everything you need to create your own, from blank clue and

location indexes to hints for constructing a suitably convoluted mystery.

Similar in spirit to the now-classic Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective (see *The Games 100*, November 1986), Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine Game is an excellent production and well worth the mystery lover's serious attention.

—Matthew J. Costello

LOGICMASTER

Logicmasters, P.O. Box 7795, San Diego, CA 91207; \$3.95 plus 75¢ postage

LogicMaster consists of 25 colorful pieces of laminated cardboard in five different shapes. Each shape has several areas on it containing solid colors or patterns—green X's, red circles, purple dots, and so on. The object is to sort the pieces into five sets, each set containing one piece of each shape, with no two

shapes having the same pattern or solid color.

The first few steps are easy: If four triangles contain purple X's and the fifth does not, a circle with purple X's must go with the fifth triangle. But later steps are trickier and subtler, requiring you to combine two or three bits of information at one time.

Beware: Beneath LogicMaster's bright appearance lurks a real four-star challenge. Helpful hints are provided, but the solution is not.

—S. M.

