

JULY 1984

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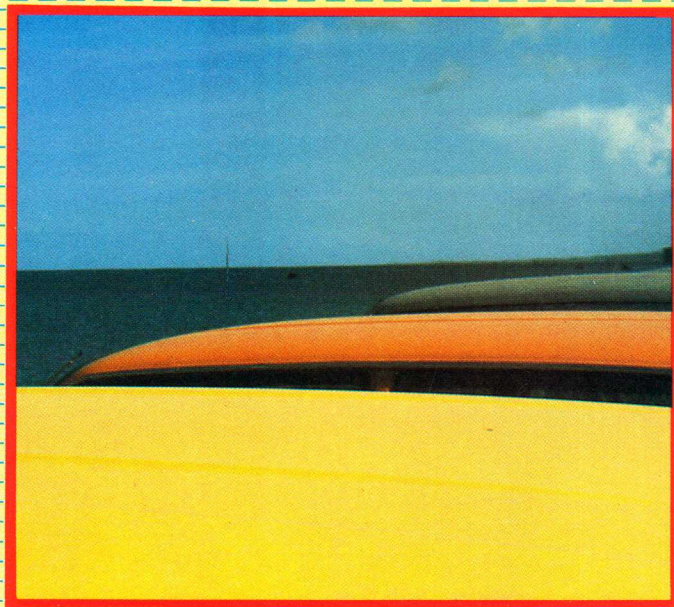
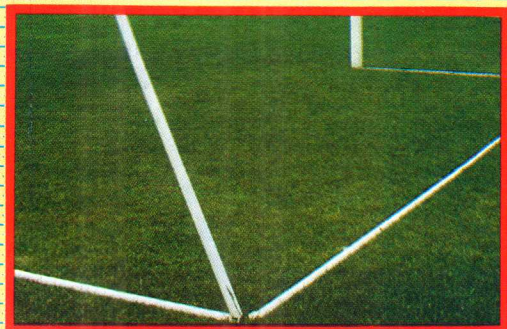
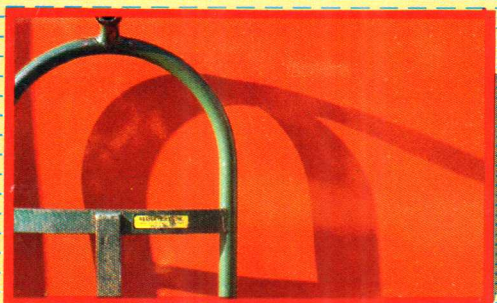
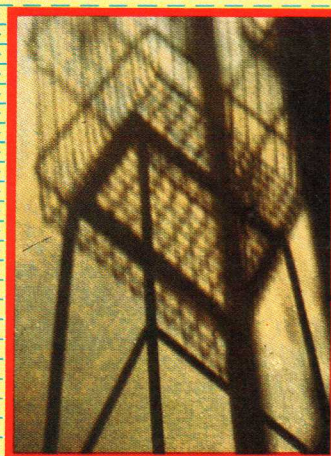
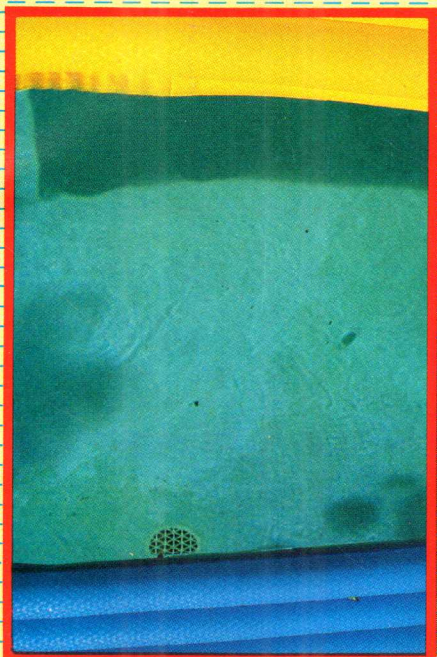
WIN
A JVC VCR AND
VIDEO CAMERA
EYEBALL BENDERS CONTEST PAGE 4

GAMES

WHAT ARE THESE OBJECTS?

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*Snap
Judgments*



JULY 1984

GAMES

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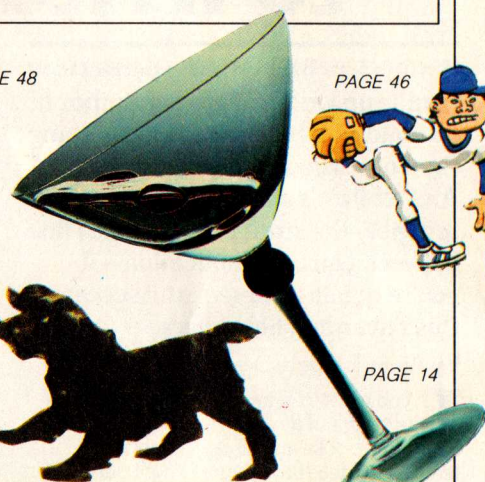


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Difficulty Rating

Smooth Sailing ★

Uphill Climb ★★

Proceed at Your Own Risk ★★★

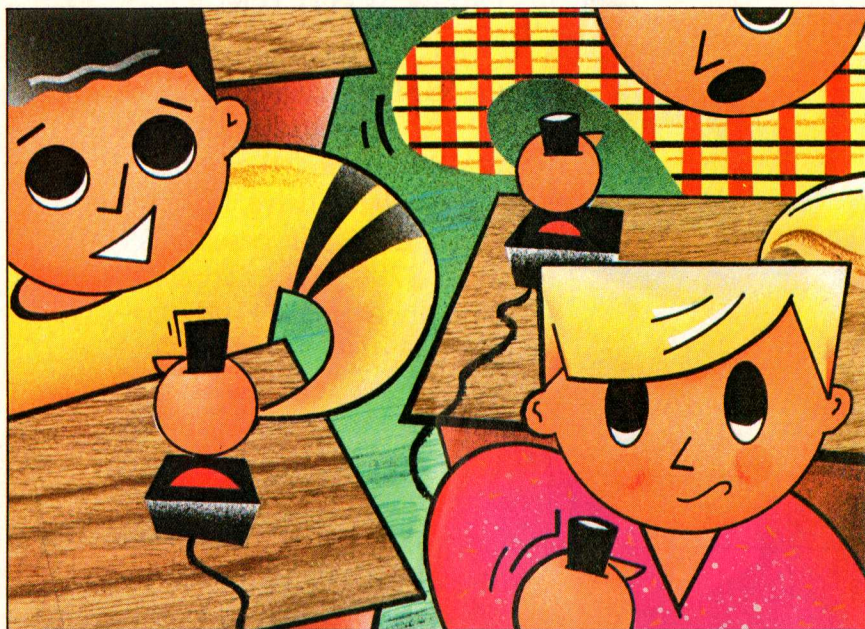
Mixed Bag ★★

Cover Photographs Hugues Colson

GAMEBITS

Edited by Curtis Slepian

ILLUSTRATION BY BOB SCOTT



Video With Class

Who says video games aren't educational? Not the San José, California, school system. Last March, to give students a better understanding of how the Challenger space shuttle works, the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades in seven San José schools played Space Shuttle, an Activision game that simulates the shuttle's launching, orbiting, and landing.

An enthusiastic Aaron Seandel, Associate Superintendent of Instruction for the school district, believes schools need such input "to provide up-to-date information about the real world."

We couldn't agree more. In fact, the pedagogic potential of video games is unlimited. Here are just a few games and the subjects they can help students learn.

- **Congo Bongo** provides a clear understanding of the European exploration and colonization of Africa.
- **Turbo** the perfect tool to teach driver education.
- **Lady Tut** a nonsexist archeological crash course in Egypt's First Dynasty.
- **Front Line** West Point will want to use this game to teach military strategy, particularly the theories of Clausewitz.

- **Centipede** a bug's-eye-view of the field of entomology.
- **Ms. Pac-Man** Students of sociology will learn about the dynamics of a consumer society.
- **Frogger** shows how man and his technology (in this case the auto) can damage the delicate ecosystem of the amphibian.
- **Missile Command** a vivid look at the failure of 20th-century politics, of special interest to members of Students for Nuclear Disarmament.—C. S.

Dancing the Night Away

"I could have danced all night," sang Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady*, "and still have begged for more." If Eliza had been at Johns Hopkins University

one Friday night last spring, she would have gotten her wish—in a 24-hour Dance Marathon held to raise money for the March of Dimes.

At 9 P.M., 71 students from Hopkins and other Baltimore-area colleges began their hard day's night. With music spun by deejays from radio stations WWIN and WJHU, some just swayed back and forth, others jumped up and down, and a few broke into all-out break dancing.

"I love to dance and thought it would be really neat to dance for 24 hours," beamed Amy Thayer, a senior humanities major, who went the distance.

Another senior, Peter Merrill, arrived in hiking boots and also danced the entire marathon—by himself. "I have an exam and a paper due Monday, and I needed to do something totally stupid. Besides, it's my first time ever to go out dancing."

All the dancers preferred upbeat numbers, especially in the tough, early-morning hours. "Slow ones make you sleepy, and you also notice the pain then," said sophomore Lauri Jackson. Favorite tunes included Bob Seeger's "Old Time Rock and Roll" and, of course, anything by Michael (no relation to Lauri) Jackson.

By Saturday evening, the 21 remaining diehards had shucked their heavy early-marathon attire for T-shirts, shorts, and socks. These sole survivors joined the entire charity staff for the finale, the Funky Chicken.

After 24 hours of dance and sweat, most students wanted only to "take a shower and go to bed." Said finisher Jerry Watson, "I want to go to a movie, but I'll probably only experience it subconsciously." —Patti Lazaro

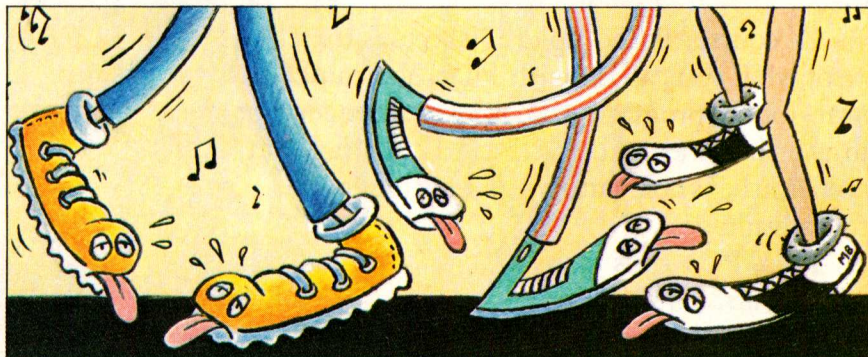


ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL BARTOLOS

GAMES & BOOKS

Edited by R. Wayne Schmittberger

PHOTOGRAPH BY STAN FELLERMAN



Oil Power (available from Indiana Mills, 120 West Main St., Carmel, IN 46032; \$17.70 plus \$2 postage)

Many games have imitated Monopoly, but there is little reason to play most of them if you already own a Monopoly set. Oil Power is an exception, combining the buying and developing of groups of properties with a novel gimmick that adds considerable drama and makes every game different.

Two to six players travel around the board according to dice throws and either buy the oil leases they land on or pay royalties when they land on an opponent's lease. Players may also trade leases. When a player owns all the leases of a single color, he may drill for oil in the center of the board, in the area matching the color of his leases.

Here's where the gimmick comes in. The board has a lot of little holes in it. Hidden in the box under the game board are about a dozen irregularly shaped plastic pieces of various heights. To drill a hole, you position an oil derrick over it and see how far down the drill shaft will go. You may find only a dry hole, but more often you will hit paydirt and discover a 50-barrel well, a 100-barrel well, or a gusher (best of all). Drilled holes are then marked with pumpers that are color-coded to indicate the value of the well. The pattern of oil is different every game; to change it, simply shake the box to redistribute the hidden pieces.

The amount of royalties you can charge an opponent for landing on your lease varies with the number and type of wells you have discovered there. Since some properties have many holes, the range of payments is potentially much wider than in Monopoly.

You can drill only one hole per turn, and it costs money to do so. An important part of the strategy, therefore, is to study the developing patterns of hidden oil and try to figure out what holes are most likely to produce revenue (especially gushers). As in real life, you will usually do better to drill next to a gusher rather than a dry hole. Sometimes, though, you may want to drill a hole because it's on a property an opponent seems likely to land on soon.

Oil Power has enough challenge and variety to hold your interest for a long time, and is the kind of game you're likely to play over and over.

—R. W. S.

Boulder Dash by Peter Liepa and Chris Gray (First Star Software; on disk, tape, or cartridge for Atari computers \$29.95–\$39.95; available later this year for Commodore 64 and IBM PCjr)

In effect, this is not one game, but 80. The basic idea is to collect (by touching) a given number of jewels in a cave full of boulders before your time runs out. The 16 different caves (screens) each vary the main idea by changing the number of jewels required (and the cave layout), reducing the allotted time, and adding new elements, such as deadly fireflies that guard jewels, and butterflies that can be turned into jewels; and each can be played at five different skill levels, which vary the elements still more.

To get to the jewels you must dig tunnels. But the digging undermines boulders, whose behavior is very hard to calculate when dozens of them, often intermixed with jewels, are falling at once. They might trap you in a cave, block access to a needed jewel, or, if one hits you, deprive you of a life (you start with three and get a new one at each 500 points). One problem is that no cave can be seen all at once (moving the joystick shifts the area of view); what you do at the top of a cave may have repercussions at the bottom that you can't see, yet must still take into account. And you have to remember where all the jewels are. The score line at the top of the screen indicates how many jewels are needed and how many you've collected.

In one of the caves, jewels and boulders are piled in three mounds, two of them at the top of the cave supported by walls with a single opening in each. Is the best strategy to tunnel into a mound and risk causing an avalanche that might bury you? Or should you let the boulders and jewels cascade through the opening, possibly cutting off access to the other mounds? This cave typifies the kinds of thinking that the game as a whole demands: choosing among several plausible strategies; calculating the effects of rock slides; learning the "physics" of the gravity-obeying boulders; and, especially, figuring out how to get at buried jewels by solving a form of "sliding-block" puzzle.

For its imaginative graphics and sound effects, ingenious concept and design, and sheer playing pleasure, Boulder Dash should be a leading contender for anybody's action-game-of-the-year award.

—B. H.

