

FOR OWNERS OF ATARI 2600/5200, COLECOVISION, INTELLIVISION I/II, ODYSSEY-2
ASTROCADE & VECTREX VIDEO GAME SYSTEMS AND COMPUTER ADD-ONS

the logical gamer

THE MONTHLY HOME VIDEO GAMES REVIEW

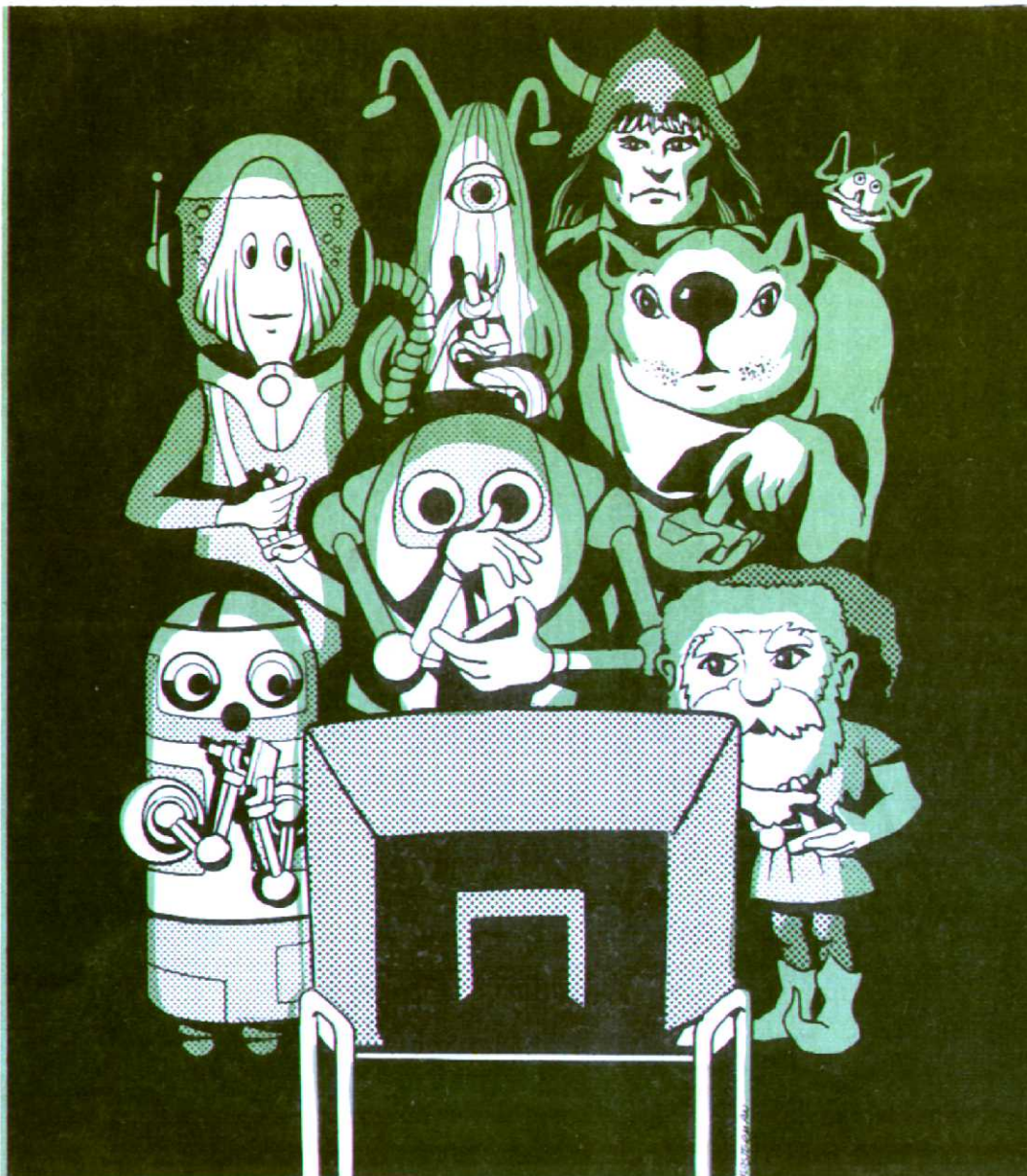
August, 1983

Volume 2, Number 1

\$1.50

SPECIAL FIRST BIRTHDAY ISSUE!

A CONVERSATION WITH ACTIVISION'S LARRY MILLER



**96 GAME
REVIEWS
INSIDE!**

REVIEWED INSIDE:

MINER 2049ER

ROBOTANK

M*A*S*H

SPACEMASTER X-7

TAC-SCAN

CAKEWALK

KEN USTON
BLACKJACK/POKER

BURGER TIME

MISSION X

BUZZ BOMBERS

WHITE WATER

NOVA BLAST

DEMON ATTACK

ATLANTIS

SPINBALL

ANDROBOT DEBUTS VIDEO GAME ROBOT

Other Full-Fledged Robots Coming, Too!

On June 5th, Androbot, Incorporated, introduced Androman, the world's first real-life three-dimensional video game robot for children and adults. Designed for use with the Atari VCS 2600 or other VCS-compatible machines, Androman should excite veteran and fledgling players alike with new goals and challenges never offered in conventional screen-action-only games.

Each basic starter system will include a 12-inch-high miniaturized Androbot (which is controlled by joystick via a remote infrared signal); a game cartridge; a transmitter; a game playing field; a set of game pieces imprinted with coded information; and an instruction manual.

While specific scenarios and objectives will vary from game to game, basic Androman play involves transmitter-

controlled action that shifts between the monitor screen and Androman's domain, which is the real-life 3-D landscape on the playing field that is provided. After a certain number of points are accumulated during screen play, the Androman robot must be navigated through an obstacle course on the playing field, where his contact with coded game pieces triggers a further series of interactions. The intrigue is heightened as Androman occasionally speaks to the player, uttering encouragements or warning about unseen dangers. As a basic rule, completion of on-screen game-

play quickly and successfully is rewarded with additional time maneuvering the robot.

Like its fellow Androbots -- B.O.B., Topo and F.R.E.D. -- Androman has been designed with the principal of "expandability" in mind. After mastering the live action video game contained in each starter kit, consumers will be able to purchase additional games and accessories, to provide new challenges and add to the overall playing enjoyment. Suggested retail price and release date information was not available at press time.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

FULL LINE OF QUALITY CONTROLLERS COMING FROM D-ZYNE

The first product from D-Zyne Video Products was the "Supr-Stick Deluxe," for Atari-type video games. D-Zyne Video now announces controllers for ColecoVision and Intellivision. These controllers come equipped with a full-function key pad and two action buttons. Also coming from D-Zyne is their new "Supr-Stick XL" (extra light), an alternative to the original "Supr-Stick Deluxe," at a lower retail price. The "XL" controller is about one-third the weight of the "Deluxe" and about sixty percent its size. A new remote-control system, for use with all of their new controls, is also under development at D-Zyne, as well as a new controller system that utilizes active bio-feedback from external signal sources (and others).

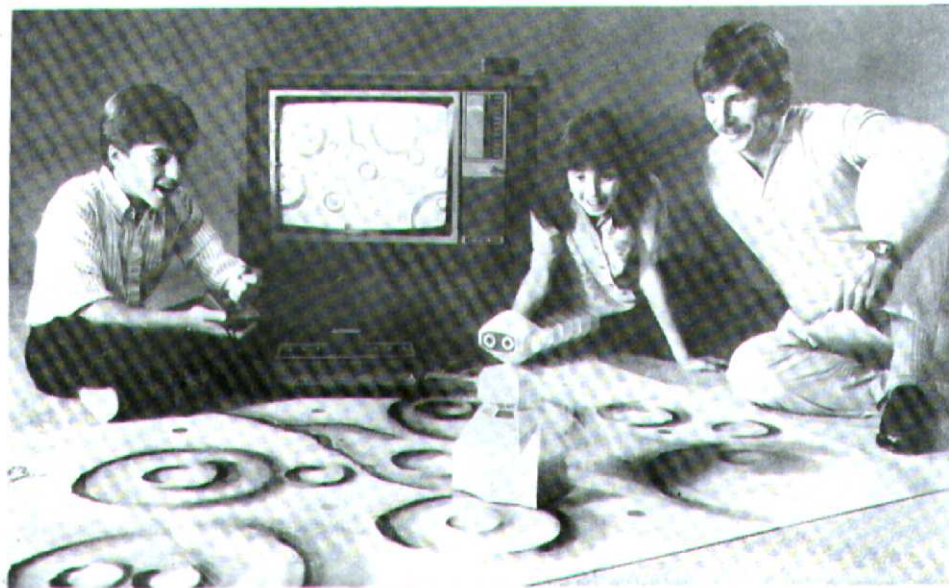
D-Zyne Video Products is currently producing the only full line of joystick controllers using micro-switches. These micro-switches have a minimum life expectancy of thirty million activations. The original Atari and other



D-Zyne Video's new Coleco "Supr-Stick" controller.

similar controllers use a "dimple" or "bubble"-type switch, which has an extremely limited life by comparison. These switches are activated by pushing down on this "bubble" by means of a plastic or nylon washer. Inevitably, the "bubble" either collapses or the activating washer warps, making contact impossible and rendering the joystick inoperable.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)



Androbot's new Androman will allow players to manipulate an actual robot with the Atari VCS joystick, and will come packaged with a compatible game cartridge.

ACTIVISION TO RELEASE DREADNAUGHT FACTOR

Activision, Incorporated, has announced the release of **THE DREADNAUGHT FACTOR**, a space battle between squadrons of agile "hyperfighters" and a monolithic masterpiece of weapons technology known as the Dreadnaught. At stake is the life of Terra, a tranquil, peace-loving planet.

THE DREADNAUGHT FACTOR is the first game for Activision by designer Tom Loughry. It's the fourth Intellivision-compatible game from Activision, and will be available in September, retailing for a suggested price of \$39.95.

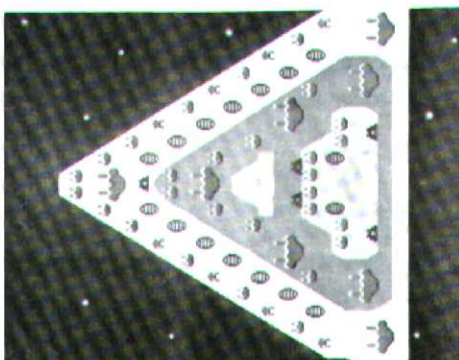
In **THE DREADNAUGHT FACTOR**, the aqua planet Terra's galactic radar reveals a strange, plodding delta configuration which is 100 par-

secs and closing in fast. A Terran hyperfighter -- mobile, lightweight, made of a titanium-beryllium alloy, the finest battlecraft in the galaxy -- peels away from its fleet to investigate. Entering Terra's stargate, the hyperfighter is automatically hurled into star-jeweled hyperspace and accelerates to meet the unknown "factor."

But the "Factor" turns out to be unlike anything seen in Terra's galaxy; it is a gigantic alien spacecraft that is, in fact, much larger than the entire video screen. One thing becomes immediately certain: the Dreadnaught is nothing less than a floating fortress bent on planetary destruction, and, when one is destroyed, another one takes its place.

Guiding his or her hyperfighter through a series of attack passes, the player fires laser bolts and drops deadly strontium bombs on the methodically advancing enemy. But the Dreadnaught is 1000 times bigger than the hyperfighter, and it's bristling with sophisticated weaponry: blue battalions of fixed rocket cannons, which fire straight ahead; yellow towers that unleash deadly, heat-seeking "swarms"; large and

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)



Gamers must overcome the gigantic alien ship pictured above, which is much larger than the player's TV screen, in Activision's new game.

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VIDEO SWAPPER...

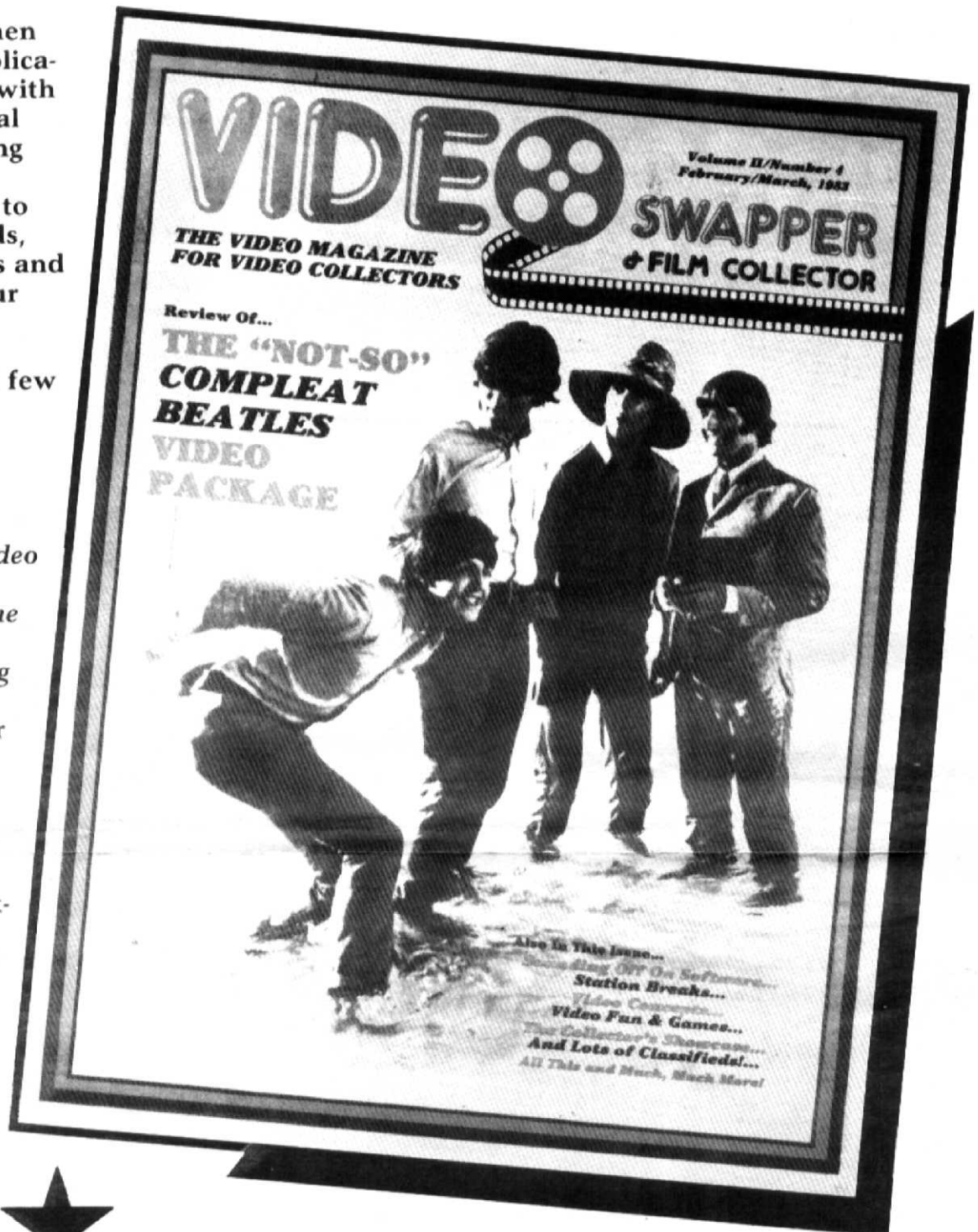
The Original Video Hobbyist Magazine for the Video Collector!

If you are a video or film enthusiast, then *Video Swapper & Film Collector* is the publication for you! Each exciting issue is filled with stories, news, new product reports, special features, columns and the most interesting part of all—our very own *Trading Post* classifieds (which, by the way, are FREE to all readers!) and *Collector's Showcase* cards, all of which offer hundreds of videotapes and video-related items for sale & trade by our thousands of readers.

Here's just a sampling of what our subscribers have been reading in the last few issues of *Video Swapper*...

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INFOSOFT TO PRODUCE ADAM SOFTWARE

Undoubtedly, one of the most outstanding unveilings at this summer's Chicago Consumer Electronics Show was Coleco's new Adam, the amazing complete home computer system that most likely will shake up the computer world like the release of the ColecoVision video game shook up the video game industry last year. The system will allow consumers to buy an affordably-priced home computer and access a wide range of business and professional software - a function of the computer's operating system as well as the word processing software which accompanies Adam -- all developed for Coleco's new computer by InfoSoft.

InfoSoft has been writing both system and applications software since microcomputers first appeared in the late 70's, and is now breaking new ground by bridging the gap between "home" and "business" computer systems. The Norwalk, Connecticut - based software company has announced the formation of a new division to develop and market applications software for the Adam computer. The first offering will be a key applications package for the ColecoVision Computer Module. Future software developments will be in the educational and other markets. InfoSoft Systems' I/O/S is an advanced CP/M-compatible operating system, for use on the ColecoVision Computer Module.

For more details on what InfoSoft will have available for your new Adam computer,

contact: InfoSoft Systems, Inc., 80 Washington Street, Norwalk, CT 06856, (203)866-8833.

NEW LOW-COST VCS GAMES FROM MYTHICON

In a break with traditional video game marketing strategy, Mythicon, Incorporated, has introduced three new VCS games at suggested retail prices of \$9.95. The initial games from the Cupertino, California-based company are **MYTHICON SORCERER**, **FIRE FLY** and **STAR FOX**.

FIRE FLY and **MYTHICON SORCERER** are multi-screen games with advanced graphics; **STAR FOX** introduces Mythicon's artificial intelligence technology; and all three games offer varying levels of playing difficulty for novice through expert gamers.

Founded a year ago, Mythicon, Inc. is a consumer-oriented computer software company. Its initial products are the 4K video game family. Three 8K games, sequels to the 4K games, that will reportedly feature greatly expanded graphics, will be ready for shipment in the third quarter of this year. The company also expects to enter other areas of the consumer software market.

Atari VCS owners can now purchase two heavy-duty arcade-style controller consoles for use with their systems-of-choice, from Gim

Electronics, Inc., a New York video game component and accessories manufacturer.

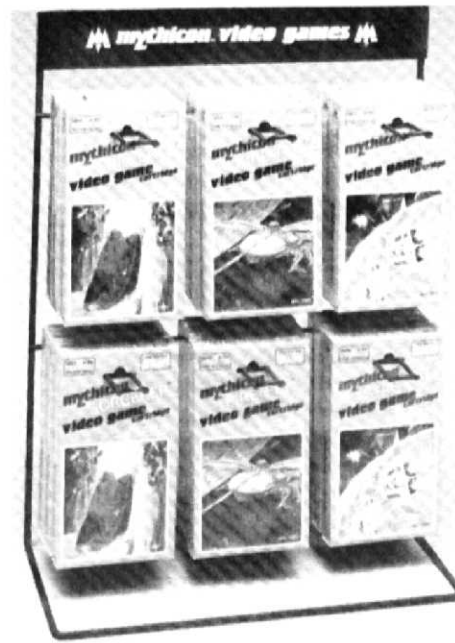
The Fire Command #2001 from Gim uses leaf-type switches just like the ones used on arcade controllers, set into a large and heavy die-cast metal housing for the feel and stability of a real arcade joystick. The controller also features rubber feet, so it can be used on virtually any surface without slipping, a large fire button on either side of the joystick, for left- or right-handed play, and a six-foot cord. The eight-way joystick is large, with a ball-grip for easier use. The Fire Command #2001 measures 6" deep, 11" wide and 5" high, weighs approximately five pounds and comes with a 90-day limited warranty. \$59.95 is the suggested retail price.

Gim's new Fire Command #2000 also works with the Atari VCS, and is similar to the #2001 in shape, size and weight. The difference is that the player's own standard joystick sits inside this unit and becomes the console joystick. Both large fire buttons work the fire button on the original controller inside. The Fire Command 2000 comes with a one-year limited warranty and sells for a suggested retail price of \$39.95.

Gim also produces a 12-foot extension cable for use with Atari VCS joysticks, retailing for \$7.95 list, a Lefty joystick adaptor for converting VCS controllers to left-handed use, retailing for a suggested \$8.95 and a replacement TV/Game Selector Switch, selling for \$6.95, suggested retail.

To find out more about this company's products and their availability, contact: Gim Electronics, Corp., 164 Glen Cove Road, Carle Place, NY 11514.

For more details on Mythicon's new games, contact: Mythicon, Inc., 10050 North Wolfe Road SW1-281, Cupertino, CA 95014, (408)446-2020.



Mythicon's \$9.95 VCS games come in boxes the same size as a paperback book.

BRUSHING OFF THE PLAQUE

by Deborah Wickert

Joseph Amor of San Jose, CA, scored an outstanding 69,465 points in the "Activision **PLAQUE ATTACK** Brushoff" on June 18, to take home a super first prize of a VCS game console and a six-game library of Activision cartridges.

The contest, held at the South Bay Health Center to benefit the Easter Seal Society of Santa Clara and San Benito Counties, featuring Steve Cartwright's newest game, which gives you a chance to fight back against those nasty little things which cause tooth decay. Previously, Steve has contributed **MEGAMANIA**, **SEAQUEST** and **BARNSTORMING** to their line of VCS software.

Second prize of a six-game Activision library went to Kurt Rein with a total score of 67,570 points. Ted Amor, Joseph's brother, ran a close

third and took home a **PLAQUE ATTACK** cartridge, with a score of 67,330 points.

Denise Steel, Product Publicity Administrator and Richard Valencia, Senior Engineer, were on hand from Activision to run the contest and award the prizes, which were donated by Activision.

The South Bay Health Center, which matched all entry fees for donation to the Easter Seal Society, was represented by Lee Sherman, Public Relations Director of the advertising agency which handles the center.

Joseph, who won second prize in the recently-held "Battle of Silicon Valley," seemed to have no trouble totaling up his winning score. When asked for some tips on how to beat the game, he replied, "Just shoot everything down." Sounds like a good idea.

SOON:

OUR "YEAR-END" WRAP-UP CONTINUES, WITH MINI-REVIEWS OF ALL THE GAMES WE COVERED DURING OUR SECOND SIX MONTHS.

"Inside Joysticks" will fill you in on repairing and modifying your video game controller.

PLUS:

REVIEWS OF **SOLAR FOX**, **TRUCKIN'**, **SAFE CRACKER**, **THE DREADNAUGHT FACTOR**, **VCS SMURF**, **Q*BERT**, **QIX**, **5200 FROGGER**, **SPIKE**, **STAR CASTLE** SOME OLDIES LEFT BEHIND BY OUR CES ISSUE, AND MORE NEW GAMES THAN WE CAN LIST HERE.

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THE MONTHLY HOME VIDEO GAMES REVIEW

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SEND US YOUR NEWS!!!

Game Reviews



THE EDITOR SPEAKS

READ ANY GOOD REVIEWS LATELY?

by Alan R. Bechtold

I've discussed this before. As the competition in the video game business continues to heat up, so it goes in the video game magazine business. And -- just as some new game cartridges are better than others, (which is why we're here), so it also goes with your video game reading material.

Let's face it. With so many big-budget newsstand video game magazines hitting the streets every month, there's a constant struggle for subscribers. Some publishers will stoop to anything, including cheating their readers, to get new readers!

Slick-paper full-color magazines cost a lot to produce -- and they take a lot of time to put together. On the average, it takes at least two months to get a piece from the typewriter into print and on the stands. Consequently, some of these magazines are taking some rather rash steps to get their reviews to the readers first.

I wondered aloud, in my previous editorial, about how some of these guys got reviews of games that were never released, or that haven't yet been released to reviewers, anyway, into their magazines. A very few get an occasional advance preview of a new game-in-progress. The rest, I always suspected, just wandered into a Consumer Electronics Show, took pictures of all the screen displays, fiddled with the joysticks a while, and wrote their "reviews." Now I am sure of it.

At the last CES in Chicago this June, I saw reviewers for two newsstand magazines doing just that -- talking to company reps, fiddling with the joysticks a few minutes, and making copious notes -- while their photographers went from screen to screen, taking pictures of the games they will soon be "reviewing" in upcoming issues.

Unlike another newsstand publication that just folded, I'm not going to name names and get into the business of reviewing our competition -- that ain't kosher. I do, however, want to warn you of this practice, so you can be on the lookout for yourselves.

The problems should be apparent. Many of the games that are shown at CES may never see distribution. They were shown to get initial dealer reaction to projected new products, and often the dealer reaction didn't warrant the eventual production of the final product -- so it never sees release. Other games are still being changed and improved. The versions these guys are reviewing might not be the ones that eventually get released to the public. And -- let's face it -- how can you "review" a game based on a few minutes of fiddling with the joystick and a few words with the company rep? Reviewing games takes time. Some grow on you and some grow away from you after a few hours of play. First impressions rarely hit the mark. Maybe that's why so many of the lesser newsstand publications don't ring too true when it comes to honest game reviews that are truly useful.

So -- be on the lookout for full-color slick publications reviewing a lot of games that haven't hit the streets yet, especially if a few of those games never do. Chances are, all you are getting from these periodicals are "previews," thinly-disguised as reviews. And don't criticize the better newsstand magazines for being a bit late. If the reviews are consistently late, the chances are good that the critic at least waited for the finished product -- and played it a while for an honest reaction.

Take my word for it. Your best bet for getting the honest reviews first are newsletters and newspapers. I'm a bit biased in this area, so I won't suggest which is the best

for you. Reading the reviews in a couple of issues of the better ones will tell you which are closest to your own tastes and needs. Just do me a favor -- don't waste all your money on expensive slick paper and full-color printing unless you're sure you are getting what you paid for. Personally, I'd rather buy games with the money it costs to subscribe to most of the newsstand "review" magazines. 'Nuff said.

On another subject -- it's our first birthday! THE LOGICAL GAMER has been running for a year now, and we've covered a lot of happenings and reviewed a lot of games in just 12 short months. This issue's main feature is a run-down, in brief, of the games we've reviewed in our first six months. We were going to run the whole year in brief, but we ran out of room -- so the last half of the past year will be run in our next issue -- along with a ballot for you to use, to vote for your favorite games. Meanwhile read over what we had to say. Some of our opinions have changed a bit since we wrote those comments what seems like so long ago, but, in the long run, fewer than I expected. If you want more details and opinions on a certain game or games -- be sure to check out our list of back issues elsewhere in this issue. We're running low on several of the more popular numbers, so you'd best order them now if you want them. And -- if you're new to THE LOGICAL GAMER -- you might want to take advantage of our complete boxed set of all 12 back issues. There's a wealth of valuable money-saving information in them and we'd like to see you benefit from our experience.

"Till next month ---

IN-FLIGHT VIDEO GAMES

Donkey Kong at 40,000 feet? It's now a reality. Canadian Pacific Airlines has pioneered the introduction of in-flight video games for passenger rental aboard CP Air flights between Vancouver, B.C. and Amsterdam.

CP Air offered passengers six portable video game sets, for rent in the non-movie section of the aircraft, for a trial one-month period beginning June 10. The game sets, which fit snugly over dinner trays that fold out from seat backs, are **BLACK JACK, BASEBALL, BOXING, DONKEY KONG, SNOOPY TENNIS** and **MICKEY MOUSE**. Rental cost of the video sets was \$3.50 (Canadian) for the nine-hour flight.

According to Dave Hewitt, general manager, in-flight services, "if the concept proves to be popular with the passengers, permanent sets built in the seat trays would eventually become more sophisticated, offering not only games but also flight and safety information and perhaps even computer capabilities."

CP Air is reported to have experimented with two products: Airplay, manufactured by Altus Corporation of San Jose, California and Air Video, made by Thorek, Scott and Partners, of Toronto, Canada.

Let's hope the experiment

was a success, and that the practice will not only become commonplace with CP Air, but other airlines as well. More news as soon as the results are in.

VIDEO GAMER'S GIFT PACKS

A new product from Kropp Enterprises has been developed for those who play space battle-type video games. Their new Starfighter Command recognition gift pack is generic in design and can be used by the players of many different games in this category. Selling for \$2.98 plus 50 cents shipping, they make a good low-priced video accessory for all those video fighter pilots who already have everything.

Other gift packs are now being designed, for other types of games (such as racing games and etc.). Like the Starfighter Command gift pack, they will feature an ID card, 8" X 10" certificate and iron-on patch.

To order your Starfighter Command gift pack, or to find out more about future gift packs that are soon to come, contact: Kropp Enterprises, Inc., P.O. Box 656, 240 Edgewood Drive, Clermont, FL 32711, (904)394-4727.

DREADNAUGHT...

(Continued from Page 1)

small launchers, armed with relentless "tracker" missiles; and the ominous black silos, which house the doomsday warheads that will destroy Terra if the Dreadnaught reaches the stargate. To even the odds, however, the player can destroy the yellow "bridges," which reduces the overall firepower of the Dreadnaught by 50 percent.

The hyperfighter, David-like above the Goliath bulk of the Dreadnaught, can only fly forward as it makes its attack passes. To destroy the enemy, the player must drop

bombs on its achilles heels: 16 energy vents. Once the fighter flies beyond the Dreadnaught, it passes through an auxiliary stargate and returns for another assault on the behemoth invader.

The Dreadnaught approaches Terra, parsec by parsec, never flinching, but it can be slowed by crippling the four red actinium-powered engines at its rear. Every Terran attack pass brings the Dreadnaught closer to the Stargate, where it will destroy the peaceful planet, if any of its Domsday silos are left operational.

D-ZYNE...

(Continued from Page 1)

Another type of switch, commonly used by the "high-end" controller manufacturers, is the "stack" or "leaf"-type. The drawback here, according to company spokespersons, is the construction of the switching mechanism itself. The "leaf"-type switch is activated by pushing one metal strip into another, which eventually results in metal fatigue, also rendering these types of joysticks inoperable.

By comparison, the micro-switches used in the entire D-Zyne controller line are activated by a stainless steel lever and all contact points are enclosed. Because of the indirect nature of the lever-activated micro-switches, no undue pressure is ever placed on the switching mechanism itself, resulting in its extra long life. Other commercial uses of micro-switches are in aerospace, aircraft and military applications, where reliability and long life are imperative and cost is not a factor.

The D-Zyne "Supr-Stick Deluxe" works for left or right-handed players, and is compatible with all Atari-type games and computers, featuring a six-foot cord and lifetime warranty. The controller sells for a suggested \$39.95 and should already be available. Units produced after September 1, 1983, will also feature suction feet and an automatic fire control.

D-Zyne's "Supr-Stick Xtra-Light" is identical in design to its big-brother "Deluxe," but enclosed in a lighter, smaller and easier-to-hold base. Set for September or October release, the unit will sell for a suggested \$22.95, featuring a six-foot cord and life-time warranty, but **not** the suction-cup feet or auto-fire control that the "Deluxe" will soon feature. Also due out in September or October.

The new D-Zyne "Supr-Stick CC," for ColecoVision, will sell for a suggested retail price of \$32.95. Utilizing the same micro-switch technology as the "Supr-Stick" for Atari systems, these new controllers will also feature a full keypad with slot for overlays and two oversize action buttons, and D-Zyne's usual life-time warranty. This one, too, will reach retail outlets sometime this September or October.

D-Zyne will produce two different Intellivision-compatible "Supr-Sticks," with keypads and four large side action buttons, for Intellivision I and II. The controller D-Zyne has designed for use with the original Intellivision Master Component will come packaged with a connector pigtail, to allow the consumer to connect it to their systems easily. Both controllers will be nearly identical to the one coming for use for the ColecoVision system, with D-Zyne's usual life-time warranty. Release dates and prices for these two controllers were not available at press time.

D-Zyne's new line of game controllers were due to hit stores as early as August,

but a new development is now being worked into the joysticks they will soon be producing: remote-control capability. According to company president, David T. Zurzuski, release of the new controllers was held off for a month or so, to add the ability to adapt all of their new joysticks for full remote-control capability.

When they hit retailers, D-Zyne's new joysticks will come equipped with antennae and battery boxes. Soon, D-Zyne "Supr-Stick" owners will be able to buy a transmitter and receiver for about \$39.00. The transmitter will slide into the cartridge slots of the compatible system, and the receiver, about the size of a standard Zippo lighter, will slide into a space provided on existing D-Zyne joysticks, giving players full remote-control capabilities, including the use of all keypad functions and the joystick/firing button(s), too. A second receiver will be available as well, without a transmitter, for about \$15-20 retail. It is interesting to note that since the new remote-control transmitter will plug directly into the cartridge slot, then the games into it, owners of the original Intellivision equipment won't have to take their machines apart and install their joysticks that have the remote-control capability. The exact expected release dates for these new products were not available at press time, but we will keep you informed as soon as more is known.

A line of joysticks utilizing bio-feedback response to external signals, such as certain game sound effects, is also in the works, but details are sketchy at present.

D-Zyne also manufactures a complete line of video game cords and adaptors. Included in the line are a 6-foot extension-cord selling at retail for \$7.75, a 6-foot extension cord for running from between the game console to the TV, selling for a suggested \$3.25, and two "Y"-extensions, allowing either simultaneous use of any compatible controller with the original equipment or, with the second "Y," the use of one "super-controller" for two-player games.

To find out more about the entire line of D-Zyne products, write: D-Zyne Video Products, Inc., 64 Dayton Rd., Waterford, CT 06385, or call: (203)443-8354.



D-Zyne Video's "Supr-Stick" line includes the above VCS joystick controller.

THE NEWS ... IN BRIEF

***Competition is getting tough in the home video game business. When officials from Atari visited a Lexington consultant, recently, they learned that Activision, one of their hottest competitors, had an office in the same building. Atari arranged to hold all further meetings with the consultant in a different location.

***Telesys, Incorporated, has announced the acquisition of some inexpensive chips, and will begin producing a line of new VCS games that should retail for under \$10, according to Vice president of marketing, Jack Woodman. The first release, **THE IMPOSSIBLE GAME**, is a puzzler, with the same kind of mind-bending mental challenge the Cube had. More are reportedly on the way.

***Gammation, the Ohio-based producer of home video game controllers and repeat-fire modules, has announced plans to produce games for use with the Starpath Supercharger, for the VCS. Details were sketchy at press-time, but more news is expected shortly. They will be the first independent producer of software for use with the add-on module.

***Most manufacturers have announced lower across-the-board hardware and software prices for 1983, raising the speculation that sales of home video games equipment and software will soar this year. One estimate suggests the possibility of 12 million more game systems sold, and 85 million cartridge sales, for the rest of '83.

***CBS Video Games has changed the name of their software unit to CBS Electronics. They're the ones who develop software for video game and computer systems. CBS Software is another unit of CBS, which will continue responsibility for their educational, personal enrichment and home management programs for computers.

***Mattel, Incorporated has turned the tide on Atari, and sued the video game giant for allegedly trying to obtain trade secrets from three former Mattel employees. Mattel has further alleged in their suit that Atari hired the three ex-employees so that they could begin producing Intellivision-compatible games in time for Christmas. \$40 million in punitive damages and an unspecified amount in actual damages are being sought.

***Activision has gone public, becoming the first independent video game software producer to offer common stock on the open market.

***Recently-announced price cuts include Coleco, which has cut the wholesale price on their ColecoVision video game system by \$20. Meanwhile, the company reports that sales are soaring. In a recent interview, Coleco president Arnold Greenberg reported sales of more than half a million ColecoVision game systems during the first quarter of 1983, and more than 400,000 expansion units for the system during the same period.

***An agreement has been reached between Nolan Bushnell, the founder of Atari, and Atari, Incorporated. Nolan was due in October to once again enter the video game market, possibly as a direct competitor to the company he left five years ago. The new agreement, between Atari and Bushnell's Pizza-Time Theatres, gives Atari the consumer rights to coin-op games developed by Bushnell, Joseph Keenan, Pizza Time Theatre and Sente Technologies.

***Inside sources at AT&T have revealed plans for telephone-transmitted cooperative games, using low-cost modems and cartridges that will modify existing games and game systems. Rumor has it that testing has already begun, and that AT&T's group working on the project has already modified Atari's **STAR RAIDERS** for two players, who control two ships, both visible on the screen at the same time while they fight for the same alien targets.

***Magnetic Tape International, which announced before summer plans to produce a line of home video games for the Atari VCS and other systems, announced shortly before the June CES that they have discontinued their projected line of video games. The company's product line will, instead, be devoted to audio and video tapes, and computer discs.

***Parker Brothers has licensed **ASTRO CHASE**, the First Star computer game designed by Fernando Herrera and winner of the Atari Star Award. They reportedly plan to produce and market home video game and computer versions of the popular award-winning title. First Star, the original license-holder, still retains rights to coin-op, hand-held and counter-top versions.

***Industrias Gradiente Brasileira, a Brazilian firm, will soon begin assembling and selling Atari 2600's to Brazilians who want to enter the video game scene. The agreement between the Brazilian company and Atari was recently announced and production is expected to begin in late 1983.

***The introduction of Coleco's new Adam computer wasn't totally without mishap, it appears. Coleco claims they bought rights to the name from a company that owned the trademark, but another firm, Logical Business Machines,

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

GAMES NETWORK SIGNS WITH EDU-WARE

Jim Summers, Vice President of Program Acquisition for The Games Network, announced that Edu-Ware Services, Incorporated, has licensed its software to the new premium cable programming service.

Edu-Ware has been in the forefront of developing educational software and will be included in TGN's programming mix, when the service launches later this year. According to Summers, "During the past three years, Edu-Ware has been a leader in expanding educational software in the home computer industry." He adds, "...including their software in our programming line-up is exciting because TGN's programming philosophy is to always provide its subscribers with the most innovative and state-of-the-art software available."

Edu-Ware is currently working on ARMEGEDDON, its third program of their Empire Series, and is looking forward to the reaction from cable subscribers when the game is offered on TGN. Ac-

ording to Sherwin Steffin, Edu-Ware's Chairman of the Board, "Users (subscribers) will be extremely challenged with ARMEGEDDON. It's truly a timely and thought-provoking game."

Steffin feels very positive about the new relationship with The Games Network. "I see The Games Network as a new delivery system for current homeowners, who don't have a computer, or for those who want to try games in a less expensive way than going out and buying them first," he said.

The Games Network will offer cable-delivered interactive video games, in educational and entertainment formats. For a monthly fee, subscribers will be offered a variety of 20 games, with at least five updated every month. The new service has been set to launch this December, in Orange County, California.

For more information on The Games Network, contact: The Games Network, 637 South Lucerne, Los Angeles, CA 90005.

NEWS BRIEFS... (Continued from Page 5)

claims they have marketed a \$20,000 office micro-computer system under that name since 1975. The two companies are reportedly talking out their differences.

*****Anyone who thinks the video game market is dying is dead wrong, according to a recent statement by David Ruckert, Senior Vice President of Marketing for Atari's Consumer Electronics Division. At a press conference during this summer's CES, the company spokesman said that VCS cartridge sales were up 10% over last year, and that 10% of all households will buy a VCS game system during the next year.**

*****The Games Network has delayed start-up of its premium cable service for video gamers until December, to improve the product, according to company spokespersons. The new device subscribers will use to access the service will be closer to an actual computer than it is to a game system, with a full alpha-numeric keypad and ten game-playing keys, 64K -- "and the subscriber won't have to purchase it." The initial launch will be on Southern California cable services.**

*****John J. Morgan, formerly a vice president at Phillip Morris Company, has been named chairman and chief executive officer of Atari. Ray Kassar, the former head of Atari, resigned earlier this summer, under fire for Atari's recent poor performance in the video game market and dropping profits.**

*****Layoffs are running rampant throughout the video game industry, too. Atari laid off 2000 of its blue-collar workers earlier this year when they moved most of their manufacturing facilities overseas, and the company has announced the lay-off of almost 1000 white collar non-manufacturing employees soon. Mattel has also announced the layoff of 260 of their electronics division employees, in a cost-cutting effort a company spokesperson said will let the company increase its commitment to the future of electronic video entertainment.**

****A recent report from Fox Video Games indicates they have just added some sound and graphic specialists, and veteran designers, in an effort to "do away with the current game design mentality." They are looking to expand their ability to provide quality programs for ColecoVision and home computer systems, including voice synthesis, digital sound and new types of animation. Rumor has it that the team will first work on a game adaptation of the t.v. show, "The Fall Guy." They hope to have it ready in time for Christmas.**

CORRECTION TIME: OOPS! It's impossible to say how it happened, but our last issue, with the special CES coverage, should have been "Number 12," instead of "Number 11," as it appeared on the cover. Apologies for any confusion this might have caused. The issue number was correct on the inside front page, with the publisher's information box.

ANOTHER CORRECTION LONG OVERDUE: In our May issue, we reported that David Crane was the designer of Activision's SEQUEST. Actually, the game was designed by Steve Cartwright, and our heartfelt apologies go out to both designers, and to Activision.

ANDROBOT...

(Continued from Page 1)

B.O.B. (Brains-on-Board), is a newly defined, fully expandable personal robot. B.O.B. will navigate a living space and talk in a human-like voice, randomly choosing over one hundred stored words and phrases. Infrared sensors attract B.O.B. to humans, whom he may follow at will; in the process, he'll avoid inanimate objects in his path via his ultrasonic sensing devices. One additional feature of note: B.O.B. can retrieve a beer or soft drink from an optional AndroFridge, and bring it to wherever his master may be waiting.

B.O.B. has nearly limitless potential for expansion, both through add-ons to his existing electronic brain, as well as through user-created and commercially available software. B.O.B. is set to sell for a suggested \$2995.00 retail. Release dates were not available at press time.

Topo, another interesting new product from Androbot, is a walking, talking personal robot which is set to provide entertainment and education for youngsters and adults.

Essentially, Topo is a mobile extension of the home computer, which actually serves as his brains and memory. Designed to interface with most popular, widely-used personal computers via a remote IF (infrared) communications link, Topo's current capabilities for text-to-speech talking and movement could make him an ideal tool for parents and teachers, to encourage children to sit at the keyboard of a computer and learn to program.

Two basic methods of control enable the user to direct Topo's actions. Teach Mode provides for either joystick or keyboard-entered commands to instruct the robot in what to do or say; any sequence of commands thus ordered may be imprinted simultaneously on disk, to be retrieved later at the user's option.

Similar to his "smarter big brother, B.O.B.," Topo is equipped with an internal "bus" system which will allow for future upgrades via newly developed software and electronics. This fall, the company plans to market optional sensors for Topo which will enable him to navigate with even greater speed and versatility.

Topo's suggested retail price will be \$795.00. Again, an expected release date was not available as we went to press.

F.R.E.D. (Friendly Robot Educational Device) is a junior-sized member of the company's line of personal robots. A compact and mobile extension of the home computer, F.R.E.D. also can be operated independently by a remote infrared controller, thus broadening his potential use to consumers who don't own a computer.

When placed on a table top or other flat surface, F.R.E.D. can be programmed to perform any series of movements without tipping off, since his mechanical sensors automatically tell him to avoid dangerous edges. Place a sheet of paper or white poster board under F.R.E.D. and, using his drawing-pen attachment, this Androbot can execute precise renditions of complex geometric shapes designed on the computer screen.

Packaged with F.R.E.D. will be a mini-Androwagon, enabling him to transport small items from room to room. Planned options, including an accessory arm, are currently under development, and will provide F.R.E.D. with additional abilities and functions. F.R.E.D.'s basic design allows for expansion via future software, such as a voice synthesizer for user-programmable speech.

F.R.E.D. is set to retail for a suggested price that will be below \$300.00, and will be aimed at the 6-14 age group. No release date was provided yet.



Nolan Bushnell, undoubtedly the major force behind Androbot, poses with his new android friends. Androman, one of the company's new products, will be video game compatible.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ACTIVISION'S LARRY MILLER

Designer of SPIDER FIGHTER and ENDURO

by Alan R. Bechtold

Larry Miller has only been working at Activision for the past year, and already he's produced two hit games for the VCS -- **SPIDER FIGHTER**, and his latest release, **ENDURO**. **ENDURO** has just reach #1 position on a number of charts, and it's being hailed as the best first-person VCS racing game ever made.

When I interviewed Mr. Miller, during the Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago this June, he looked a bit uncomfortable with sitting in a hotel room being interviewed by members of the media, one at a time, but nonetheless happy with his recent success. He'd just heard that **ENDURO** was ranked at the top of a survey that was making the rounds at CES and was, obviously, in seventh heaven over the news. But -- if he was a bit uncomfortable -- his discomfort did nothing to hide the highly intelligent, articulate craftsman that sat before me.

Larry was a physicist before he started designing video games, and claims he will stay a physicist, in addition to continuing his highly successful career as a video game designer. He also said he had 20 years' experience with computers before he designed his first game.

"I found in my past experience with computers that I was doing many of the things I'm doing now -- trying to make the computer run as efficiently as possible."

I asked him how it was that he designed his first video game. "I was doing some research," he replied, in a voice that was both soft-spoken and thoughtful, "and we had an Apple computer that I was using for some data processing." He decided to write a game on it in his spare time. "It took me about six months. I wrote a space-flight game, somewhat similar to **STAR MASTER**, for the Apple computer, and I got that published. Then I wrote another couple for the Apple: another space-flight game and a maze game. That took me about a year altogether. Then I decided to write a game for the VCS, so I wrote **SPIDER FIGHTER**, and it was at that point that I joined Activision."

I was curious, as are a lot of gamers, what the illustrious game designer's workday is like. He told me it takes about 1500 hours to design a game, and he usually works 100 hours a week until the game is finished.

"Typically, what I do, is get up in the morning, work two hours, rest an hour, work two hours, rest an hour, and I keep that up all day, then go to bed about midnight." He said he keeps it up, every day, seven days a week, until the game is done. Generally, it takes about three months. "That's how I did **SPIDER FIGHTER** and **EN-**



Larry Miller, Activision's new star designer.

DURO."

Larry said he enjoys working for Activision, because he gets to work at home, and he's perfectly happy designing for the VCS. "It's an interesting little computer," he said. "It's interesting that it's taken five or six years to begin producing state-of-the-art games for the VCS. The VCS is interesting because it wasn't designed for the kind of graphics anything like what people are getting on it." He added that he doesn't think the newer game systems have nearly been tapped for their full potential, either. "In the next five years," he said, "the state-of-the-art \$90 machine will be even more incredible and there will be just unbelievable games on it. But I really think it will be a game machine."

Larry thinks video game machines are here to stay. "I think video games in their own right are going to get better and better," he said. "We'll see more and better video game machines in the future."

He doesn't think the home computer will push video game machines out of the market, because, "Video games really require hardware all their own. They require high-speed graphics and the technology on that is just improving by leaps and bounds every year. Home computers are more like a keyboard and a terminal and a very basic processor, and will remain so, probably, and will be perfectly adequate. But video games require very special hardware to generate

the kind of graphics that are going to be needed for the improved video games."

That's why Larry Miller says he will continue writing for the VCS, and doesn't plan to expand to other systems in the near future. "My games are very fast-action," he explained, "and I couldn't do that for the Apple because the action is severely limited. You can get more detail on the screen, but not the really fast action."

Larry also had some solid advice for budding future game designers, which he said he enjoys seeing more than anything else. "I do think that if you look at all the game designers," he said, "you'll find that they have a lot of education, scientific and mathematical." His advice? "My advice to anyone who wants to be a video game designer is go to college and get an education. Really get to know that stuff. You not only have to get an education, but the things that you're learning you have to love."

There's more: "Buy a computer and really get to know how it works inside and out. Learn to program on it in assembly language. And enjoy it. It has to be something that's enjoyable."

Larry added that video game design is something most anyone can learn, with patience and dedication to the task. "It's really not beyond anyone's reach. I hate to see people thinking that learning to program is above them, because it really isn't."

Once you have the ability,

Larry said, the hardest part is coming up with and developing a concept -- then honing that concept down to something that will work for the system. "For **ENDURO**, I wanted to do a first-person racing game and I knew what I would have liked -- I would have liked just a beautiful realistic scene, but compromising yourself down to where you can do something that will fit on the machine is the hardest part. It took five or six weeks of just sitting down with a paper and pencil and tearing my hair out, not even getting near a computer, trying to figure out how I was going to do it." But, obviously, it can be done. "Finally, what it boils down to, was I just had to make all of these trade-offs, like I couldn't put objects on the side of the road, because I needed all of the registers for the cars on the road."

You might also learn something from Larry Miller's philosophy of game design: "You want the game to be playable. You want it to be a challenge of your skill at any level, and not just a random thing that will throw you out arbitrarily or something where you feel like you're coming up against the limits of the computer. And -- as your skill increases, you want to be able to go farther and farther into the game."

This philosophy is certainly evident in Larry's games for Activision, which he says he enjoys playing, too. Gamers might be interested to know that, at this writing, Larry claims to have made it to only six of the 99 possible days of driving in **ENDURO**. On **SPIDER FIGHTER**, he says he's managed a top score of about 80,000 points. Guage yourselves accordingly.

For potential game designers: You might want to watch out who you wind up working for. "There are many ways in which Activision is really a superior company," Larry said. "A lot of large companies aren't particularly nice to their designers when it comes to providing them a good designing environment." Activision, obviously, is nice to their designers.

To wrap it up, Mike had one question for Larry. He said he has noticed some similarities between Alan Miller's **ROBOTANK**, and Larry Miller's **ENDURO**, in the scenery and changing weather conditions, and he wondered if Activision's designers ever helped each other out on a program.

"That's interesting," Larry replied. "I admire Alan Miller a lot. I think he's a very mathematical designer, which I tend to be, but we didn't work together at all. In fact, I didn't see **ROBOTANK** at all until the program was almost finished."

"There is actually very

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 11)

THE FIRST YEAR IN REVIEW

All the Games We've Covered So Far -- In Brief Review

HERE THEY ARE -- MINI-REVIEWS OF ALL THE GAMES WE COVERED DURING OUR FIRST SIX MONTHS. WE WERE GOING TO GIVE YOU THE WHOLE YEAR IN REVIEW, BUT WE RAN OUT OF SPACE. NEXT ISSUE, THE MINI-REVIEWS WILL CONTINUE, BRINGING YOU UP TO THE PRESENT.

PLEASE NOTE: The following reviews are extremely shortened, and assume that you already know of the game and are familiar with the way it plays. Keep in mind that our comments on each game that follows are paraphrased from the reviews that were written at the time the games were released, and are based upon the games that were available for each system at the time. Next month we'll feature a ballot, so you can vote for your favorite games.

FOR THE ATARI VCS. . .

AUGUST, 1982:

DEFENDER (Atari)

ALAN: DEFENDER has everything a shoot-em-up alien-fighting video gamer could possibly want. It belongs in the cartridge library of any gamer with such leanings.

MIKE: This game combines everything that a good video game should have: speed, quick thinking and strategy, along with good graphics, for an overall great time.

DEMONS TO DIAMONDS (Atari)

MIKE: This game incorporates an idea that's very similar to SPACE INVADERS, with a single cannon moving along the bottom, but it's not nearly as challenging, if you ask me. It's too slow in the one-player mode, but gets exciting for two players.

ALAN: I thought the graphics on this one were good, and the game-play gets really hairy in the two-player sessions, especially the ones where the players can also shoot each other.

BERZERK (Atari)

MIKE: The action in BERZERK is faster than your run-of-the-mill video game, and it can get downright testy in the upper levels of play. BERZERK rates a definite "yes!" from me.

ALAN: Yes -- this is a good choice for arcade game freaks, and for any gamer looking for an interesting and challenging addition to their library.

DEMON ATTACK (Imagic)

ALAN: Although all the various aspects of DEMON ATTACK will require serious attention and work to fully master, the cooperative two-player versions make this game more unique and challenging than some.

MIKE: It appears as though this is one of those games that will look great in the stores, but might prove to be a bit disappointing when it is paid for and finally in your home.

STAR VOYAGER (Imagic)

MIKE: Fighting off the aliens while racing home through several Star Portals, so you can refuel on your way, is solid action. STAR VOYAGERS is tremendous fun.

ALAN: Personally, I don't think the one-player game gives the player enough to do with his or her ship. STAR VOYAGER might not stand up to the graphically superior and more complex first-person games that are sure to come right on this one's heels.

LOST LUGGAGE (Apollo)

ALAN: This is just a clever twist on the KABOOM! theme, but it does have merit as a novelty cartridge. The actual game play will be too simplistic for most sophisticated video gamers. I tired of it fairly quickly.

MIKE: Joystick action on the suitcase-catchers allows up and down motion, adding a little more range to the play not available with the paddles. This one is a good possibility if you like novelty cartridges.

SHARK ATTACK (Apollo)

ALAN: I like this game a lot. It's a pleasant and inventive variation on the PAC-MAN theme without ever appearing to be a copy.

MIKE: Sheer frustration describes my reaction to this game. The movement of our very greedy diver is too slow and bothersome. I cannot, like Alan, recommend this cartridge.

SEPTEMBER, 1982

ATLANTIS (Imagic)

ALAN: I think this cartridge is a pretty safe investment for those who want something different in a shoot-em-up.

MIKE: I can't recommend ATLANTIS as highly as does my esteemed partner, because I still think there is too little

for the player to do over the long haul.

COSMIC ARK (Imagic)

MIKE: The graphics on this one are not nearly as good as they are on the ATLANTIS cartridge, and the play is even less exciting than the graphics.

ALAN: This game has some redeeming qualities and some serious problems. I liked ATLANTIS better, too. COSMIC ARK is a decent follow-up, but definitely not a great one.

STARMASTER (Activision)

MIKE: STARMASTER is the next logical step in the progression of the first-person video game art. You'll enjoy this one. I like it a lot.

ALAN: I must say I definitely like STARMASTER, too. It's a game Activision should be very proud of. Another winner to add to their catalog of winners.

CHOPPER COMMAND (Activision)

ALAN: The game itself reminds me too much of Atari's DEFENDER. It's just not an original, if you ask me. I think I'll be playing DEFENDER long after I've tired of this one.

MIKE: You should really enjoy the visuals, though the overall play might get a little stale in the long run.

RACQUETBALL (Apollo)

ALAN: This one was just too frustrating. I didn't care for it.

MIKE: The little handshake at the beginning is a nice touch, but everything that was good about the game ended there for me.

OCTOBER, 1983:

FROGGER (Parker Brothers)

ALAN: This game is pure unadulterated fun. And it's good-natured fun at that.

MIKE: There have been few home video games transferred from the arcade with such finesse. I commend Parker for a job well done.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (Parker Brothers)

MIKE: This is an attempt at bringing the thrills of the movie to a TV game. It was a good try, but I think it fell short of its goal.

ALAN: What at first looks like a real challenge quickly turned into a painful bore.

REALSPORTS VOLLEYBALL (Atari)

MIKE: The key to this one is SPORTS! If you like sports on TV, this one is worth a close look.

ALAN: If you like sports games, you'll like REALSPORTS VOLLEYBALL.

RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX (Imagic)

MIKE: Get this game if you want a change of pace that will provide many hours of ever-changing entertainment. Go get this one.

ALAN: This is as involved, complex and engrossing as anything available so far for any system. Only die-hard arcade-games-only players could possibly dislike this one.

FIREFIGHTER (Imagic)

ALAN: Imagic is to be congratulated on a fine piece of VCS video artwork. It's just too bad they had to do it with such a nothing game.

MIKE: The play is very poor and only for the very young. They are the only ones who will not be bored with this game in a matter of minutes.

INFILTRATE (Apollo)

MIKE: It takes some getting used to to handle the movement of the secret agent, the firing and ducking of incoming bullets, but, with a little practice, you survive -- for a while. You'll enjoy it.

ALAN: INFILTRATE proves the fact that a solid, fast-moving game is more important than flashy graphics and arcade tunes any time.

KING KONG (Tigervision)

ALAN: This is a really solid adaptation of the DONKEY KONG theme for the VCS.

MIKE: Give this one some serious consideration. It might prove to be a worthwhile investment if you like DONKEY KONG.

THRESHOLD (Tigervision)

MIKE: I cannot recommend this cartridge for anyone.

ALAN: The graphics aren't very impressive and the differences from all the others that are similar aren't worth

the price.

NOVEMBER, 1982:

MATH GRAN PRIX (Atari)

ALAN: This game simply doesn't move like the Gran Prix race it's supposed to emulate, and I wonder if the math problems are difficult enough for kids who are old enough to figure out how the joysticks work.

MIKE: This might be a good choice for those of you who want to teach the younger ones, but you could probably get the same effect by buying a box of flash cards and spending a few minutes of your own time with them.

ASTROBLAST (Mattel)

ALAN: Personally, the game bored me on Intellivision and it bores me on the VCS, too.

MIKE: I think **ASTROBLAST** for the VCS is an excellent job of translating a game from one system to another. Overall, it plays with all the intensity of its big brother.

SUPER CHALLENGE BASEBALL (Mattel)

MIKE: If you have the VCS and enjoy Baseball, this is the best version available so far.

ALAN: **SUPER CHALLENGE BASEBALL** is fun, realistic and exciting, even for the non-sports-freak.

SUPER CHALLENGE FOOTBALL (Mattel)

MIKE: **SUPER CHALLENGE FOOTBALL** is an excellent sports cartridge for the Atari VCS. Get it.

ALAN: I can't possibly see how anyone who likes football could not like this game.

BUGS (Data Age)

MIKE: **BUGS** is definitely not destined to become even a minor classic in the home video games field. I doubt that it will even be remembered as a good try.

ALAN: There really wasn't much challenge to this game, to make up for a display and sound effects that were only fair at best.

ROOM OF DOOM (CommaVid)

MIKE: This game is similar to a backwards **BERZERK**, but the similarity ends there. I enjoyed it a lot.

ALAN: The graphics are good and the sound effects are adequate. When you have a game that is as much fun to play as this one is, that's all you need.

COCO NUTS (Telesys)

ALAN: This is a cartridge with a real sense of humor, but **COCO NUTS** is not a game. This one's a no-go for me.

MIKE: The graphics on Stanley are exceptional and his movements are realistic, but I doubt seriously that I could stay awake long enough to learn to play this one well.

DONKEY KONG (Coleco)

MIKE: This game was definitely a disappointment all around and I really couldn't seem to overcome that feeling, no matter how much I played it.

ALAN: Look at some of the similar games for the VCS if you want climbing action, but avoid this one.

PITFALL (Activision)

ALAN: Get this one if you are looking for something really different -- no matter what type of gamer you are or which system you have.

MIKE: Activision has certainly come up with one you should look at -- regardless of how many systems you own.

VENTURE (Coleco)

ALAN: This one is worth considering if you're looking for shooting action and treasure hunting fun with a lot of variety, but don't expect it to hold your attention for a long time.

MIKE: If you like **VENTURE** in the arcades, you should definitely give **VENTURE** for home play a shot. It's a lot of fun.

DECEMBER, 1982:

STAR RAIDERS (Atari)

ALAN: I'm sorry, Atari. This is a really noble attempt, but I have to say I was a bit disappointed.

MIKE: I liked **STAR RAIDERS** a lot. I think it adds a new dimension to the VCS that has been long overdue.

FINAL APPROACH (Apollo)

ALAN: Get this one if you long for something different that will hold your interest for a long while.

MIKE: This game is almost madness in its ability to be so simple in form but so complex in the play. It makes for a very challenging game indeed.

WABBIT (Apollo)

MIKE: Look at this because it's pretty, but you'd probably be best off leaving it at that.

ALAN: There really isn't enough meat to this game for adults to stay interested in it for long.

SPACE JOCKEY (U.S. GAMES)

ALAN: Give this one a look-over, but only buy it with

care.

MIKE: I think **SPACE JOCKEY** is well worth a look at in the stores. You might just think it's worth the money.

COMMANDO RAID (U.S. Games)

MIKE: This one is too much like others that have already been done better.

ALAN: I think **COMMANDO RAID** is an interesting early attempt from U.S. Games, worth looking at if arcade action is your thing.

WORD ZAPPER (U.S. Games)

ALAN: I think this game has a lot going for it especially for the younger set.

MIKE: **WORD ZAPPER** isn't an easy game to conquer, but it doesn't really hold your interest for very long, either.

COMMUNIST MUTANTS FROM SPACE (Starpath)

(A SuperCharger Game)

MIKE: The play is quick and you can do some really neat tricks with the guided missiles.

ALAN: Starpath has taken a very familiar theme, one that has been overworked, in fact, and made it truly different and challenging.

SUICIDE MISSION (Starpath)

(A SuperCharger Game)

MIKE: I couldn't believe that I was inside the human body playing **ASTEROIDS**, but there I was, playing a poor copy of the game. I was very disappointed.

ALAN: This game does nothing to go beyond what has already been done for the VCS without the Supercharger.

FIREBALL (Starpath)

(A SuperCharger Game)

ALAN: Definitely get this game if you don't already have **BREAKOUT**. Think about getting it even if you do. It just might be an improvement over the original Atari hit.

MIKE: I doubt if this one is really a good buy, considering all the other video game challenges that are now available.

FAST FOOD (Telesys)

MIKE: In short, **FAST FOOD** isn't as bad as some games I've seen recently, but I still have to give it a "no-go."

ALAN: **FAST FOOD** is interesting for a while, but I can't rate its interest level very high.

SSSNAKES (Data Age)

MIKE: This is one of those games that almost needs to be buried. I say "buried," only because I hesitate to use the word "burned" in conjunction with one of my reviews.

ALAN: I found this game to be utterly disappointing. It offers very little. Avoid it.

WARPLOCK (Data Age)

MIKE: Forget **WARPLOCK**. I really can't think of one good thing to say about it, except that the game only gives you one ship to lose, so it is over quicker.

ALAN: There are better games available along the same lines. Get one of them if you hunger for this type of action.

LOCK 'N' CHASE (Mattel)

ALAN: You really should look into **LOCK 'N' CHASE** for the VCS if you like maze games at all. Mattel has come up with a good one for you.

MIKE: I'm afraid I wasn't too fond of **LOCK 'N' CHASE** for the VCS. It came off too simplistic and repetitive of other maze game concepts for my tastes.

JANUARY, 1983:

E.T. (Atari)

ALAN: This game is a lot of fun for adults who liked the movie. I can recommend it for that audience with no problems.

MIKE: I'm still trying to figure out what kind of game **ET** really is. I do know that it's a game patterned after a very popular movie that was better than the game turned out to be.

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK (Atari)

MIKE: This one is certainly difficult enough to figure out and master to keep someone with the energy and interest playing quite a while.

ALAN: **RAIDERS** could well be just the challenge adventure gamers have been looking for for a long time, if complexity and difficult play are important. I just don't think I can recommend it.

FROGS & FLIES (Mattel)

ALAN: It's just two frogs jumping at a variety of electronic insects. Not much to them.

MIKE: The constant jumping, jumping, jumping for a meal that never satisfies doesn't satisfy me as a gamer, either.

DARK CAVERN (Mattel)

MIKE: It all simply didn't set well with me. It just seems like there are better maze games out there.

ALAN: I liked the combination maze/shoot-em-up action in

this version. I think you will find it well worth the price.

TOWERING INFERNO (U.S. Games)

MIKE: TOWERING INFERNO isn't destined to become a video game classic, but I enjoyed it a lot because it's just plain fun. Try it and see what I mean.

ALAN: I liked TOWERING INFERNO even more than Mike did, and I think it's one of the best games from U.S. Games so far. It's easy to learn and addictively hard to stop playing. If you are looking for some daring arcade fun that is truly different, get it.

FOR THE ATARI 5200. . .

JANUARY, 1983:

GALAXIAN (Atari)

MIKE: Enjoy this game if you have the Super System. It's hours of fun.

ALAN: I got tired of GALAXIAN a long time ago and, although the 5200 version is a quality rendition of the venerable classic, it didn't exactly send chills up my spine.

CENTIPEDE (Atari)

MIKE: This is a sports cartridge for the true soccer lover, and for those of you who still think soccer is some dumb European sport.

ALAN: I can safely say that if you like sports action and have the 5200, get Atari's SOCCER. It'll make you yell and rant and rave and jump up and down while you play.

FOR INTELLIVISION. . .

SEPTEMBER, 1983:

SPACE HAWK (Mattel)

MIKE: This is another Intellivision space game that just doesn't make the grade with me. I cannot in all conscience recommend this game.

ALAN: SPACE HAWK is a good shot at an arcade-style game for the system, but it missed the mark.

REVERSI (Mattel)

MIKE: If you like the board game Othello, you will like this one.

ALAN: I've always liked Othello and this is most likely the best video version I've seen yet.

UTOPIA (Mattel)

ALAN: UTOPIA is the very kind of game Intellivision was made to play, and I'm hopelessly hooked on it. BUT - DON'T BUY IT IF YOU ONLY LIKE TO SHOOT AT THINGS.

MIKE: I highly recommend this game for all you Intellivision owners out there who love strategy games.

NIGHT STALKER (Mattel)

ALAN: I really liked this one right off the bat, and it grew on me the more I played it. The game is a ball.

MIKE: Overall, this is a good cartridge that will continue to provide many hours of fun.

NOVEMBER, 1982:

SPACE SPARTANS (Mattel)

MIKE: SPACE SPARTANS would be a welcome addition to any Intellivision owner's library.

ALAN: This game plays well. The challenge is strong and the upper levels can be devastating to those who don't practice regularly.

B-17 BOMBER (Mattel)

ALAN: The graphics are superb and they follow realism to the utmost. Get the Intellivoice, if only so you can play this cartridge. You won't be wasting your money.

MIKE: I liked B-17 BOMBER a lot and would be very surprised if boredom ever set in while playing it.

DECEMBER, 1982:

LOCK 'N' CHASE (Mattel)

ALAN: You should look into this one. Mattel has come up with a really good maze game for you.

MIKE: Don't get this one for your Intellivision if you get frustrated easily.

TRON: DEADLY DISCS (Mattel)

MIKE: DEADLY DISCS is fun to play for a short time, but in the long run it's probably not what you bought your Intellivision for.

ALAN: Overall, I don't think this one will hold a serious gamer's interest long, either.

STAMPEDE (Activision)

ALAN: Intellivision owners should buy this game. It's an Activision original for use on their system of choice.

MIKE: If you liked STAMPEDE for the VCS, this is a really good one for your Intellivision. Go get it.

JANUARY, 1983:

ADVANCED DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS (Mattel)

ALAN: Get this one for your Intellivision. It's not a very good party game, but it will keep you going long after the guests are gone.

MIKE: I just really didn't care for this one. It's not the TSR game on TV, if that's what you are looking for.

BOMB SQUAD (Mattel)

ALAN: The entire concept and set-up of the game play is refreshingly original. Try BOMBSQUAD for your Intellivision, but only if your hands are steady.

MIKE: I think Intellivision has something really fine going with their new Intellivoice module, but they didn't use what they have to the fullest with this one.

FROG BOG (Mattel)

ALAN: It's just two frogs jumping at a variety of electronic insects. Not much to it.

MIKE: The constant jumping, jumping, jumping for a meal that never seems to satisfy doesn't satisfy me as a gamer much, either.

DONKEY KONG (Coleco)

MIKE: One could almost be led to believe Coleco designed this game to make their own hardware look better. Nothing at all I can say about this version of the game could possibly be construed as being complimentary.

ALAN: I was shocked to see an Intellivision version of a game that had already seen Atari VCS release -- and had worse graphics than the VCS version did. I can't recommend this one for any Intellivision owner.

DEMON ATTACK (Imagic)

ALAN: I've played better video games, but if you are looking for a tough slide-and-shoot, Intellivision DEMON ATTACK is the one. I just can't rate the game-play very highly.

MIKE: Imagic's DEMON ATTACK is probably the best space game that has been developed for Intellivision play yet. It's not my style of fun, but you might just like it. Check it out.

FOR COLECOVISION. . .

OCTOBER, 1982:

COSMIC AVENGER (Coleco)

MIKE: This is a really good game that should be in the library of anyone who owns a ColecoVision machine.

ALAN: It's great. If you own a ColecoVision you should have COSMIC AVENGER.

NOVEMBER, 1982:

VENTURE (Coleco)

ALAN: This one is worth considering for a good shooting/treasure challenge with a lot of variety. Don't expect it to last long, though.

MIKE: If you liked this game in the arcades you'll like it on ColecoVision. It's a lot of fun.

LADY BUG (Coleco)

ALAN: LADY BUG is the ultimate maze game!

MIKE: LADY BUG is a definite "must-buy," even if you don't usually like maze games. It's a job well done, by any standards.

SMURF RESCUE IN GARGAMEL'S CASTLE (Coleco)

ALAN: The age group that would be interested in this game for very long is too limited to make it really worth the money.

MIKE: I can't recommend this game for anyone of any age. It's just a pretty picture with no substance at all.

JANUARY, 1983:

TURBO (Coleco)

ALAN: TURBO is a flying joy, a fantasy come to life, a heart-gripping spin through an imaginary Le Mans-style course that is guaranteed to blur the eyes of even the hardest-core driving game buff. I liked TURBO a lot.

MIKE: For the price, I can only recommend this game for those of you who absolutely and without question must have an arcade racing game. The rest of you should wait to see what other driving games come out for the module before springing for it.

MOUSETRAP (Coleco)

ALAN: There are some better maze challenges now available, but this one will appeal to the kids while it also holds the attention of the adults in the house. Look for it for family fun.

MIKE: This game should prove enjoyable to maze lovers looking for a little change of pace. It's not the best, I agree, but there are plenty of games out there that are worse, too.

FOR THE VECTREX . . .

NOVEMBER, 1982:

STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE (General Consumer Electronics)

MIKE: STAR TREK is not a game for arcaders with slow reflexes. This is one of the best space games available for the Vectrex system.

ALAN: This game is a definite "must buy" for Vectrex owners. Jump on it, then beam yourself up for some fun!

CLEAN SWEEP (General Consumer Electronics)

ALAN: Maze-loving owners of the Vectrex system should look for CLEAN SWEEP. It's good clean fun all the way through.

MIKE: If you are really picky about the type of maze game that you like, you might want to wait for a better one.

BERZERK (General Consumer Electronics)

MIKE: All I can say about this game is that it's BERZERK and it plays like BERZERK.

ALAN: Vectrex BERZERK is a solid adaptation that is well worth the money.

DECEMBER, 1982:

SCRAMBLE (General Consumer Electronics)

MIKE: SCRAMBLE plays just like the arcade version. It's a good game for the unit, and one might be well-advised to get this one.

ALAN: The graphics on SCRAMBLE are impressive and the game keeps you on your toes throughout. You'll find yourself playing it a lot.

HYPERCHASE (General Consumer Electronics)

ALAN: I can safely recommend HYPERCHASE for all owners of the Vectrex system looking for something other than realistic space battles.

MIKE: If you like driving games, this one is a video race in the purist form. Get it.

SOLAR QUEST (General Consumer Electronics)

MIKE: If the thrill of playing the home versions of arcade classics like ASTEROIDS is your cup of tea, then you might want to take a look at this one. I, for one, will wait for a better offering.

ALAN: It's just ASTEROIDS for the Vectrex and their MINE STORM, a similar game that comes already programmed into the console, is better.

FOR THE ODYSSEY - 2 . . .

SEPTEMBER, 1983:

FREEDOM FIGHTER (N.A.P. Electronics)

ALAN: The action is fast and gets increasingly faster, the lasers are easy to operate and are very accurate, and the challenges challenge. What more could any serious gamer want?

MIKE: This is a good one for all Odyssey-2 owners out there. FREEDOM FIGHTER is an excellent choice. It should provide you with a lot of fun.

PICK-AXE PETE (N.A.P. Consumer Electronics)

MIKE: Overall, this is a good cartridge, but I really can't get carried away with it.

ALAN: Based very loosely on the DONKEY KONG concept, PICK-AXE PETE is a clever, fun game to play.

K.C.'s CRAZY CHASE (N.A.P. Consumer Electronics)

ALAN: This game is as fun and versatile as its no-longer-available predecessor, K.C. MUNCHKIN, was.

MIKE: This game is really one fine piece of work for the Odyssey-2 video game system.

DECEMBER, 1982:

TYPE & TELL (N.A.P. Consumer Electronics)

MIKE: Go find this one in the stores. Play with it for a few minutes. Enjoy it, grin about it, then leave it in the store.

ALAN: Get this one only if you have a lot of money to burn and want a neat plaything for about a week.

NIMBLE NUMBERS N.E.D. (N.A.P. Consumer Electronics)

ALAN: Overall, this is an ambitious effort that has been carried off well, but don't count on the game portion of the cartridge offering you much entertainment.

MIKE: This is a reasonably effective learning tool, and if that's what you are looking for in a video game, this one might be a good buy.

BE WITH US NEXT MONTH, WHEN WE CONCLUDE OUR WRAP-UP OF OUR FIRST YEARS' REVIEWS -- AND GIVE YOU THE CHANCE TO VOTE FOR YOUR FAVORITES. YOU COULD ALSO WIN SOME NICE PRIZES JUST FOR VOTING!

LARRY MILLER...
(Continued from Page 7)

little interchange between the designers," he went on to say, "and it has to be that way, because game designing is a very individual thing. The only interchange that goes on is when the game is about 80% finished and then the other designers add their input -- mainly things they would like to see improved

and so on. But that last 20% probably makes an enormous improvement in the game."

In short, Larry Miller is obviously a video game designer to watch. He knows what he's doing and he enjoys his work. With such dedicated craftsmen always working on new video games, is it any wonder that Activision's games just keep getting better?

"ENJOY STICK" COMING FROM TG PRODUCTS

A joystick for Atari-compatible computers and video games was unveiled at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show by TG Products, of Plano, Texas.

The "Enjoy-Stick," model TJS-400, is "the first joystick designed and contoured to fit comfortably in the palm of the hand," says Don R. Geyer, vice president and director of marketing. The joystick is also "ambidextrous." It has a fire button on one side for use by right-handed players and can be converted for use by left-handers, by flipping the button to the other side.

The new TG joystick also features a self-centering

control stick that operates smoothly, to facilitate long hours of continuous play without causing "joystick fatigue."

The announcement included news of versions of the new Enjoystick for the Atari VCS 2600 video game system, as well as for popular computers, including the Atari 400/800 and 1200XL, the Commodore 64 and the NEC PC-6000. The new controller should already be available from retailers, carrying a suggested retail price of \$34.95.

For further details, contact: TG Products, 1104 Summit Avenue, Suite 110, Plano, TX 75074, (214)424-8568.

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HOME VIDEO GAMES REVIEWED

by Alan R. Bechtold and
Mike Wilson

NOTE: THE LOGICAL GAMER's reviews now feature an additional combined rating, covering four important aspects for each cartridge reviewed.

Points covered include Concept, Sound/Graphics, Skill and Interest. Concept is ranked by how new to the home video games market the game is, either "new," "familiar" or "too familiar." A familiar arcade game brought to the home front for the first time will still earn a "new" rating. A new twist on a familiar theme will be ranked as "familiar." A familiar theme done with no real improvements or major changes will be ranked as "too familiar."

Graphics and Sound are self-explanatory. These ratings will be based solely upon the reviewers' opinions and will be expressed as "Excellent," "Very Good," "Good," "Fair," and "Poor."

For the Skill rating, the reviewers will carefully consider the amount of skill generally required to play and enjoy the game by ranking players according to the amount of general video games experience they have had. These ratings will include "Master," "Graduate," "Student" and "Beginner." A "Beginner" rating is not always bad, since many games are better for the fact that total newcomers can just sit down and start having fun right away.

The Interest rating is possibly the most important. This is based on the length of time both reviewers think the game will be played often by the average gamer. Ratings here will run anywhere from "1 Week" to "1 Year," at the reviewers' discretion. Games they both think will simply not wear out will achieve a rating of "Infinity." Those which hold absolutely no interest will be ranked as a "Yawn."

The list of four ratings for each new game will be compiled from the separate rankings of the two reviewers, combined into one set of averaged ratings. The addition of this system will, it is hoped, better enable our readers to see what we think at a glance. Let us know if you like it!

MINER 2049ER

From Big Five Software, for the Atari 5200. Designed by Bill Hogue.

This version of **MINER 2049ER** is a 5200 translation of the already-phenomenally popular computer game, soon destined to reach virtually every major home video game system in existence, for one or two players, using the joystick/keypad controllers. The player controls Bounty Bob, running him through ten different levels of a futuristic and still-radioactive uranium mine, looking for his dastardly arch-rival, Yukon Yohan.

MINER 2049ER is already well known among computer gamers, and all video gamers are also getting to know it well. Players control Bounty Bob with the joystick controller, running him back and forth in each station of the giant mine by pushing the joystick to the left or right, and making him climb up and down ladders by pushing up and down on the stick. Pushing the bottom red fire button makes him jump in the direction he is headed. Bounty Bob must completely cover all the paths in each screen, coloring the floor beneath his feet as he passes over it, to advance to the next one. A timer at the top of each screen counts the moments Bounty Bob has left to cover every floor in each mine station. More time is given to cover the more difficult screens. Each of the ten screens is different from the last one, and many introduce some interesting apparatus and features that are new concepts to video games as they are known today. Deadly Mutant Organisms patrol the various levels of each Mine Station and a variety of provisions, including mining supplies and food-stuffs, are located in various strategic locations throughout the mine. Mutant organisms will destroy Bounty



Bob if they touch him, but he can leap over them or, in most screens, grab a provision, turning all on-screen Mutant Organisms into smiling ovals for a short time. Bounty Bob can "eat" the smiling ovals and eliminate them by touching them.

Station One is an easy beginner's station. Bob must cover five mine paths, each connected by at least one ladder. Four Mutant Organisms, one at the bottom, one on the next floor and two at the top, will try to stop him. Six provisions are also located in this screen, representing the shaft to the great mine itself, for an added 1100 points.

Station Two is also fairly easy. This part of the mine features four floors that Bob must walk over. This time, the middle two floors each have two breaks in them over which Bounty Bob must jump or fall to his doom. This station's floors are also connected by a number of ladders, at least one per floor, and two slides. Bounty Bob will sail down the slides whenever he touches them, so they must be jumped over or used to his advantage. Five Mutant Organisms guard this station, including one on a slide, and seven provisions are scattered throughout, for a total of 1500 additional points.

In Station Three the

floors are broken up and scattered out over the screen more. Some of these floor sections are connected by ladders. On others, Bob must either jump or use another new device -- the Transporters -- to travel up and down four short floors located in the center of the screen. To use the transporters, the player steps Bob into any Transporter door then presses the number of the floor he or she wishes Bob to travel to on the keypad. Bob then disappears and reappears at the chosen level. Six deadly Mutants guard this station, and there are six provisions to help Bob get through it, adding 1200 extra points if all are collected.

In Station Four, the floors are broken up even more. Referred to as "The Lillypads," because of all the jumping Bob must do, each bit of floor is very small, except for the uppermost level, which runs across the top of the screen. Only two ladders, running up the left-hand side of the screen, help Bob in this screen. Seven Mutant Organisms guard Station Four, and Bob can capture eight provisions, adding up to 2400 extra points to the player's score, to overcome them.

Bob has a lot more jumping to do in Station Five, called, appropriately enough, "Advanced Lillypads." Here the "floor" is essentially gone, scattered all over the screen in little tiny bits -- and there are no ladders connecting them. Even the top path is broken up by six slides which swoop down at 45-degree angles and meet in the middle of the screen. Some of the floor bits, however, will carry Bob from one place on the screen to another. Bob can also grab seven different provisions for up to 2400 more points, and five Mutant Organisms guard the station.

The bottom of the screen in Station Six is mostly filled with a large vat of radioactive waste. Again, the floor sections are scattered all over the place, but two ladders, one on each side of the screen, help a little. Only four Mutant Organisms guard this station, but they are especially vicious. Bob can also grab seven different provisions, for an additional 1200 points.

Transporters are again featured in Station Seven, running up the left side of the screen. Three slides, one winding back and forth from the top to the bottom, are also featured, as well as a more-widely-scattered floor than ever before, and some floor pieces that will move when Bob jumps on them. Four

Mutants guard this one, and Bob can go after seven more provisions, for an additional 2300 points, or grab the "BF" at the top, to rack up a large additional bonus.

Station Eight brings in another new device -- the Lift, in addition to ladders and slides. After Bob has jumped on the lift at the bottom of the screen, the player can press the "#" button on the keypad to start it up. Then it can be moved back and forth across the screen when the joystick is pushed to the left or right. Pushing the joystick up or down then raises and lowers the lift, helping put Bounty Bob where the player wants him. Five mutants guard this station, but six possessions can be used against them -- for an additional 1500 points.

The floor starts to come back together again in Station Nine. Six large sections run up the left and right sides of the screen. A long slide runs from the top to the bottom on the right side of the left-hand floors and a single sliding piece is located to the left of each right-side floor section. Ladders also connect each section on the right. But -- across the bottom of the screen are four Pulverizers -- deadly stomping pistons that will smash Bob flat if he's caught by one. Bob has to ride the moving pieces to the left then jump the slide at just the right moment, on each level, to complete this phase.

Station Ten, the last portion of the cavern, also features the last new device -- the Cannon. Here there are few floors to cover, but Bob has to run over to the TNT shed at the left-hand side of the screen and collect the right amount of ammunition, load it in the cannon, jump in the cannon's barrel and blast off to reach them! Once Bob is in the Cannon barrel, pushing the joystick to the right or left moves the barrel so that it can be aimed. There are no provisions to help Bob munch the six deadly Mutants that guard this station, and overloading the cannon will blast Bob clear off the screen to his death.

Points are earned for each section of the mine floor covered, for munching edible Mutants, for grabbing provisions and as a bonus for the number of seconds left on the timer when each station is completed. The game ends when all of a player's Bounty Bobs are lost. A unique feature of this cartridge allows players to record the names of the top five scorers and their

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total number of points, as long as the cartridge remains inserted in the unit and the unit is left on.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: Everybody's raving about this game and I must, too. **MINER 2049er** is undoubtedly the **ULTIMATE** climbing game, with more different screens than ever before offered on a single video game and a lot of great surprises all along the way. But -- it's tough. Especially after the third station. And there is no way to go on until each previous station is completed. This might lead to a bit of frustration for those of you with less than average patience, but even the stations you can get through are every bit as much fun as any other single cartridge you've played to date. Add to that the fact that this one is so addictive you'll keep on trying until you can make it farther and farther into the mine, and you've got a sure winner.

The 5200 version I reviewed is similar in most every way to the computer programs already available -- with some minor improvements. Apparently, what I've always felt is true: video games are better on video game machines. The 5200 version of this game seems to move a bit smoother and faster than the computer versions I've seen so far -- without giving up any of the finer details of graphics or game-play.

In short, we've already spent too much space on this one. Go get it. It's the climbing and jumping game to end all climbing and jumping games! You might just find yourself playing this one feverishly for the next few years. I mean it!

MIKE: I really don't know where to begin on this one, there is such a variety of things to discuss. The graphics on Big Five's 5200 **MINER 2049er** are superb and the sound, which really doesn't add a lot to the game, are at the least functional and supportive. But play is the keyword here, since play is what this game is all about. There is plenty of play to consider, too.

At the lower levels, the game is simple and easy to play, providing you with an opportunity to get used to the feel of the action before you progress, where the play can get complicated enough to keep you busy for many years to come. But, overall, the game is quite difficult, and Bill Hogue spared nothing when it came to adding enough variety to keep things interesting for a long long time. **MINER 2049ER** won't be conquered with ease, nor is it a game that is so hard that many of us will give up trying long before we've seen the 10th screen. It's really the perfect balance in exciting video game challenges.

I had some problems with the 5200's controllers, but with a little extra care at some points in the stations,

so you don't inadvertently jump off the edge of a floor and die prematurely, this is easily overcome. The other thing I didn't care for was the fact that in the two-player version, the controller had to be passed back and forth between the two gamers. The action is at times so involving you can easily forget to pass the controller before it's too late -- and the 5200 should be sophisticated enough to allow for the use of both controllers at once. This would be a good time to come out with a "Y" cord for this system!

But -- these are only two very minor complaints from a very nit-picky critic, on a game that can only be classified as exciting and engrossing in every way -- destined to be a classic. It's so much fun to play that it's really hard to describe this one any other way. Get it.

RATINGS:

Concept: Original
Graphics/Sound: Excellent
Difficulty: Student - Master
Interest: Infinite

ROBOTANK

From Activision, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games Video Arcade, Coleco's Gemini and other, similarly-compatible video game systems. Designed by Alan Miller.

ROBOTANK is a single-player military arcade game, utilizing the first-person view from the portal of the player's tank, for use with the joystick controller. The object of the game is to maneuver a tank through the Mohave Desert, under a variety of weather conditions, eliminating as many enemy robot-controlled tanks as possible.

The central display in this game is a first-person view out the viewport of the player's tank. Miles of desert stretch out from the tank in all directions, with a mountain range visible in the distance. The gamer can rotate his or her tank turret by pushing the joystick to the left or right. The tank rolls forward when the stick is pushed forward and backs up when the stick is pulled back.

Enemy tanks can appear at any time, usually visible off in the distance at first, and often fire on the player's tank immediately. If their approaching fire explodes before the player blasts it out of the way or turns his or her tank away, one of five things may happen: Radar damage -- rendering the player's on-screen radar (explained in a moment) inoperative, Video damage, causing the viewport view to black out periodically, damaged Tank Treads, slowing the player's tank, Cannon damage, directly affecting the player's fire power, or destroying the player's tank completely. If a player's tank is destroyed, it is replaced by another tank, if there are more waiting in reserve.

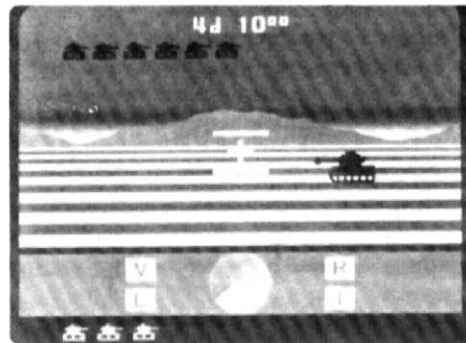
Gamers can spot approaching enemy tanks with an on-

screen radar, located at the bottom of the screen. The radar is circular. The player's tank is located in the center of the scanner. A radar blip at the top of the scanner indicates an enemy directly in front of the player's tank. On either side, a blip indicates an enemy to the right or left. The bottom of the radar scanner covers the rear. Enemy tanks cannot shoot at a player's tank unless they are visible in the viewport screen.

Players blast enemy Robot Tanks by pressing on the red fire button. Enemy tanks come in squadrons of twelve. For every twelve tanks the player destroys, he or she earns an extra reserve tank.

Play continues through a number of days and weather conditions. The battle can rage on through a day of sunshine, rain, snow or fog. Rain limits the player's tank maneuverability and vision, snow makes moving the tank trickier and fog can nearly obliterate the viewport view. At night, the enemy can only be sighted on radar and by the flash of their guns. The day and hour are displayed on-screen during play.

Play is for the total number of enemy tanks destroyed. Destroying four enemy



squadrons (48 enemy tanks) earns the Medal of Merit. Five squadrons (60 enemy tanks) earns the Cross of Excellence. Six squadrons (72 enemy tanks) earns the Star of Honor.

Gamers each start a game with one tank on-screen and four in reserve. The game is over when all the player's tanks are destroyed. Scoring is determined by the number of days the battle has continued and by how many enemy tanks the player has destroyed.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I had a lot of fun reviewing this game. Its similarities to **BATTLEZONE**, a current arcade hit about to be released by Atari for their 2600 and 5200 systems, might turn a few gamers off at first, but I would suggest that you give this one a try.

The action here is simple and straightforward shooting and dodging enemy fire. What throws a challenging kink in the works is the changing weather and light conditions. I was also pleased with the fact that one hit from the enemy didn't always wipe out your tank -- instead, it often only damaged it, making survival even tougher.

Being a strong fan of slower-paced strategy contests, it's almost always a bit harder to convince me

that an out-and-out shoot-em-up battle game is worth its price. This one is. The graphics, though not necessarily ground-breaking in their presentation, are as appealing as any of Activision's VCS offerings, the challenge is always present and there is enough variety to keep things interesting -- at least for as long as a game of this type can hold the average serious gamer's attention.

MIKE: This is a first-person tank battle game that should be very familiar to you arcade-goers out there. Activision's **ROBOTANK** isn't really in the same class as the arcade hit **BATTLEZONE**, but it does break some new ground for the VCS.

As you move from day to night and the weather is changing, it reminded me a lot of Larry Miller's **ENDURO** from Activision -- so much so, in fact, that I had to check to make sure the game wasn't from the same designer.

The radar screen is very useful in determining the positions of the enemy tanks, and it's absolutely essential at night.

The graphics here aren't spectacular, but they are very good, considering the action the game is giving you as well. Basically, the scenery in front of you changes very little, even when you are rotating a full 360 degrees, but one really can't be too picky about such things, as long as the game itself is as challenging as this one is.

ROBOTANK isn't destined to become a VCS classic, but it is a good solid game that will keep many a serious blaster up until the wee small hours of the morning. Though the action isn't for everyone, it most certainly deserves a serious look from anyone who enjoys a solid shoot-em-up.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Good
Difficulty: Student
Interest: Six Months

MASH

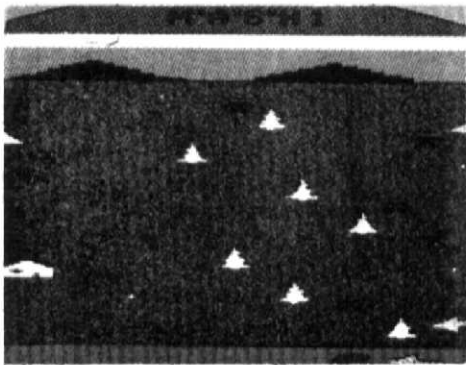
From 20th Century Fox Games of the Century, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games Video Arcade, Coleco's Gemini and other, similarly-compatible systems.

For one or two players using the joystick controllers, **M*A*S*H** for the VCS is a combination of arcade and skill test in one cartridge. The gamer is Hawkeye Pierce, and must guide a helicopter around the screen, picking up more wounded than his computer or human opponent, then pull more shrapnel from a patient than his or her opponent, in the second phase of play.

Game One is the main challenge of four basic variations featured on the cartridge. The player maneuvers

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his or her helicopter with the joystick, around a screen filled with trees, and mountains in the distance, and two M*A*S*H hospitals, located on the left-hand side of the screen. An enemy plane passes by overhead now and then, and an enemy tank passes by across the bottom. The injured men are on the screen as the game opens, and the player rescues them by touching them with the helicopter.

It's a race against Frank Burns, the pilot of the other helicopter, who, whether controlled by another human or the computer, is also trying to pick up more wounded than the player. The gamer must avoid the trees, and enemy fire from the tank below, which tries to knock down whichever helicopter has picked up the most men. Each helicopter only holds five wounded, which must be returned to the M*A*S*H hospital before more can be collected. Once a total of 30 wounded have been rescued, the game shifts into the second phase of play.

In the second phase, the display is a close-up of one of the wounded, with a piece of shrapnel located somewhere in his body. The player must use the joystick to maneuver an Extractor through one of several narrow openings, into the patient's body, then pull the piece of shrapnel out, without touching the patient in the process. Each second-phase round allows the player only 15 seconds to remove as many pieces of shrapnel as possible. If a piece touches the patient, the surgery round automatically ends, and the pick-up game starts again.

The game continues, back and forth, between the pick-up phase and surgery, until one player reaches a total of 999 points. The first to reach 999 points wins.

Game Two is just like Game One, for two players. In the third game, Colonel Potter and his sky-diving medics have jumped from their planes without parachutes -- and the player must rescue them with his or her helicopter before they reach the ground, then get them to surgery, for another round of shrapnel-removal. Game Four is Game Three for two players. Games Five and Six are just like Games One and Two, for one or two players, but the shooting has stopped and the enemy tank doesn't fire at the players while they perform their rescue missions. Game Seven's action takes place in the operating room only. Frank Burns receives six points for every second it takes to remove all the shrapnel. Different pieces

earn a different number of points. Game Eight is similar to Game Seven, for two players

The Left and Right difficulty switches affect the game's difficulty. The left Difficulty switch starts the left joystick player at 0 points in the "A" position, and at 99 points in the "B" position. The right Difficulty switch affects the right joystick player in the same way. In one-player games, the left Difficulty switch sets the game so that Frank Burns also receives eight points for every second of play in the surgery phase. Whenever the Difficulty switch is in the "A" position, the opponent receives points whenever the other player touches a patient with the shrapnel.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: Frankly, I thought this was a noble attempt at something original in a licensed video game, considering some of the others that have been released lately -- but it still didn't hold my interest for very long.

The graphics are not outstanding, but the helicopters and Extractor do respond to the controller nicely, thank goodness! You need exceptional controller action to succeed in the surgery phase.

I think, overall, Fox is to be congratulated on a new game that definitely takes an "A" for effort. Nothing in this game is really all that original, but the combination of all the elements are unique.

As a two-player game, M*A*S*H is a lot more fun than playing alone. The computer is almost too good, and there aren't any "easier" levels to play -- except for the "Cease Fire" mode. Forget the game where you pick up the parachuters -- Activision's **KABOOM!** already did it better.

In short, I can't really recommend this one. It's a near miss you might want to take a look at -- but only for two-player action.

MIKE: My first impression of this game was that the designer was kidding. I thought he or she was trying to give me a good copy of the old board game, "Operation," with some extra fluff thrown in. But fluff is really all you can call the first part of each of the games on this cartridge. I had little fun at all racing against ol' Frank Burns, trying to pick up the wounded. No matter how often I played this portion of the game it all seemed silly to me and I couldn't get into it.

I thought the graphics on Fox's M*A*S*H were dull and uninspiring. The sound effects, however, were good, and the controller responded well. After the first phase, the operating room portion of play, although very much like the old game "Operation," still isn't as difficult as the board game, and 15 seconds isn't long enough to make it worthwhile.

If you ask me, this is just another game that uses

the name to sell the cartridge. You get a free T-Shirt, but really there isn't a game in the box worth buying. It's too bad so many companies pay high licensing fees to get a name, then have to rush the thing to market to earn them back. For the most part, this practice winds up with a game neither you nor I can really enjoy, and this one is no exception to that rule.

RATINGS:

Concept: New
Graphics/Sound: Poor - Good
Difficulty: Novice
Interest: Yawn - 1 Week

SPACEMASTER X-7

From 20th Century Fox Games of the Century, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games Video Arcade, Coleco's Gemini and other, similarly-compatible systems. Designed by David Lubar.

SPACEMASTER X-7 is an arcade-style space action game for one player at a time, using the left joystick controller. The object of the game is to use the player's Assault Ship to destroy as many Alien Hyperion Military Bases as possible.

The screen display on this game is a simple one. In the center of the screen is the Enemy Hyperion Military Base, surrounded by its expanding and contracting force field. Below the base is an energy meter which registers the energy flow from the Hyperion Base (more about this in a moment). The current score is displayed across the top of the screen. A band across the bottom displays the number of ships remaining in the player's fleet and the number of Hyperion Bases destroyed.

The gamer maneuvers his or her Assault Ship by pushing the joystick in the desired direction, and fires its lasers by pressing on the red Fire button. Holding down the Fire button produces a steady stream of constant fire that gets faster when the player's Assault Ship nears the enemy Base.

There are two breaks in the force field that protects the Hyperion Base. They rotate around the field as it expands and contracts. At times, the Hyperion force field nearly fills the screen. At other times, it is very close to the Military Base it protects. The player must fire through the breaks to hit the Military Base or, being careful not to touch the force field, because touching it eliminates the Assault Ship, fly through one of the breaks when the field is expanding, to get close the Base and do it in quickly, before the field contracts again.

The energy meter at the bottom of the screen swings towards the "-" side whenever the player makes a direct hit on the Hyperion Base and swings toward the "+" side whenever the player's fire hits the force field. When the Energy meter's needle reaches the "-", the Hyperion

Military Base is destroyed.

The Hyperion Base also sends out five different types of defenders that can do the player's Assault Ship in. Fireballs shoot straight out of the Base in random directions, Heat Seekers try to ram the player's Assault Ship, Bouncers bounce randomly around the screen, Wanderers wander aimlessly through space and Homers home in on the gamer's Assault Ship and chase after it again and again. The player must destroy or avoid these alien defenses as they appear, to succeed in destroying the alien Military Base.

Gamers begin each game with five Assault Ships, and earn more reserve Ships after every 10,000 points. Play is for points, earned for each alien defense blasted, each time the Base is hit and for each Base destroyed. The game continues with a new Military Base and a higher level of difficulty, each time a Hyperion Military Base is destroyed. In the higher levels of play, the Base begins to construct extra shields that continue to grow as long as the Base's energy level is on the "+" side of the meter. The extra shields are reabsorbed by the base when its energy level drops to the "-" side. The game continues until all of a player's Assault Ships are gone.

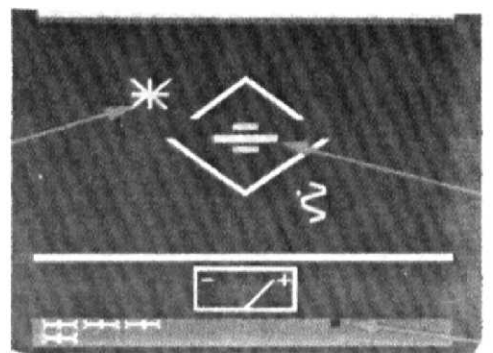
OPINIONS:

ALAN: This is a deceptively addictive game. It's deceptive because the graphics themselves are so unimpressive, and the initial play so simple that all of the complexity and challenge is totally masked until you've given it a serious try.

One of the most interesting aspects of the game, other than the play itself, are the sound effects. Resembling the sound of the light sabers in Parker Brothers' **JEDI ARENA**, the Hyperion force field hums electrically as it pulses, louder when it's larger and softer when it shrinks. It's almost hypnotic in its own sinister way and very appropriate to the game, though certainly not amazing or ground-breaking in and of itself.

I also liked the way the game starts off so simple and easy to master -- then escalates, at just the right pace, each time an enemy Base has been destroyed, into a lightning-fast all-out defense that is difficult enough to overcome to keep the best of you playing for hours on end.

Give this one a try. It ain't much to look at, but



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there's a very real serious arcade challenge to **SPACE-MASTER X-7** that shouldn't go unnoticed by lovers of a good shoot-em-up.

MIKE: In spite of the fact that I start wondering what's wrong when Alan and I agree too often in any single month, I have to agree with him on this one. Graphically, **SPACEMASTER X-7** doesn't even come close to the standards that have already been set for VCS games, but the lack of outstanding graphics isn't a drawback at all in this instance.

I don't think it's as easy to play right off as Alan said it is. Although I did so well the first time I tried it I thought for a moment there was some kind of joke being played on me, I was soon to learn that that first game was a solid example of beginner's luck that wasn't soon to be repeated.

The game is simple to learn. It's one of those fast-action video game challenges that you don't need to read the instruction book carefully and learn a lot of strategic plans before you start to play. But this fact and a dime won't buy you a cup of coffee as far as holding your own on this one is concerned. It's hard to see it at first, but quick movement and an overall goal that is planned in advance will go a long way toward producing successful results for you. Quick movement, in this case, doesn't necessarily mean blinding reflexes, either.

Come to think of it, I disagree with Alan on the sound effects, too. I think the game is seriously lacking in this area, and it was no great pleasure to listen to for any length of time, but nothing in this world is perfect. Overall, I'd have to say that **SPACEMASTER X-7** is far from perfect. It won't be a classic, but it will provide you with quite a few hours of good plain fun in a simple, uncluttered format. Give it a try.

RATINGS:

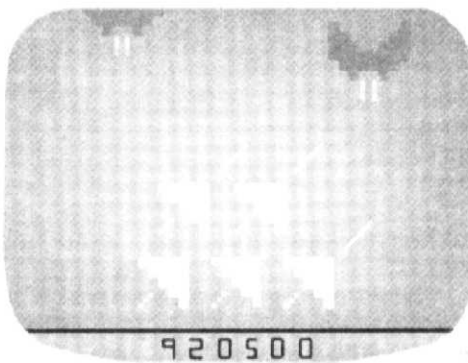
Concept: New
Graphics/Sound: Poor - Fair
Difficulty: Student - Graduate
Interest: Six Months

TAC SCAN

From Sega, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games, Coleco's Gemini and other, similarly-compatible systems.

TAC-SCAN is an arcade space game for one player at a time, using the paddle controllers. The player commands a squadron of five space ships, all of which are located at the bottom of the screen, and battles vast numbers of alien ships as they shoot through the vastness of space, with survival -- and points -- being the objective.

The player's squadron is made up of five ships, all present at the bottom of the screen at the opening of the



game. They remain stationary, with space appearing to shoot by beneath and all around them as they travel through space. All five of the ship's guns are fired at the same time when the paddle's red fire button is depressed.

The enemy ships fill the rest of the screen and come at the player's squadron from all sides. Different groupings of aliens appear, approach and swoop past the player's squadron as the controller knob is turned, firing their own deadly laser bolts. The player loses ships from his or her squadron when they are hit by enemy fire or when they collide with an alien vessel.

Every time a player hits ten enemy ships, a round ends. At the end of every round, the player earns one extra reserve ship, the game pauses and replacement ships slowly settle down to replace any ships the player has lost. As each replacement ship settles down, the player must move the empty spot in his or her squadron beneath it to add it to the fleet. If a replacement ship is missed, it passes off the bottom of the screen and goes into the gamer's reserve, to be used later. If no replacement ships are needed, they are accumulated in the player's reserve fleet.

The difficulty of the game automatically increases after every four rounds. The manufacturers claim there are 15 "theoretical" levels of difficulty in **TAC-SCAN** -- theoretical because they also claim no one at SEGA has ever survived beyond level seven.

Play is for points, which are earned for destroying enemy ships. Bonus points are awarded for completing each round, and for hitting more than one ship with one salvo from the player's fleet. A shimmering enemy ship appears from time to time, which also earns the player bonus points whenever he or she can hit it. The game ends when all of a player's on-screen ships are lost, whether there are any left in reserve or not.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: Many different video games have tried to change the basic concept of the slide and shoot and this one is really no different. **TAC-SCAN** is based on the arcade game of the same name and this VCS translation has been done faithfully, as far as the VCS can take it. Unlike the arcade version, however, this game really does not give you the feeling that you are shooting through space -- the one thing that made the arcade original truly unique. Instead, you get the feeling

that you're sitting in one position and that things are flying at you -- sort of like most slide-and-shoots.

One difference from most slide-and-shoots is that all of your cannons are on-screen at the same time, and you lose fire power as each ship is hit. Now -- I like to see new things tried on old themes, but I found that these improvements added little joy or excitement to an already-tired theme. It takes a lot to improve on what's already been done in slide-and-shoots. The best way to tell if you will like this game is to keep in mind that VCS **TAC-SCAN** is a lot like the arcade version. If you liked that, this one might provide the kind of action you are looking for. I didn't especially like either. There are better games out there.

ALAN: I thought this game was fun -- a lot better than Sega's first release, **SUB SCAN**, (already dropped from their lists). The problem with **TAC-SCAN** is that the game is so unimpressive graphically, and that the challenge, although present, simply isn't stimulating or varied enough to keep you playing for very long in one sitting.

I liked the fact that you started with five ships and had to earn your replacements, but I really think some more variety should have been thrown in -- like some alien ships that attack differently, utilize different weapons -- or something. A "sparkling" ghost ship now and then didn't get it for me.

I'd have to say buy this one very carefully. It's probably not what you were looking for and it appears that Sega has a lot better games coming soon.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Fair - Good
Difficulty: Student
Interest: One Week - One Month

CAKEWALK

From CommaVid, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games Video Arcade, Coleco's Gemini and other, similarly-compatible systems.

This is easily classified as a "cute" arcade game for one player at a time, using the joystick controller. The object of the game is to maneuver a baker between six horizontal conveyor belts full of cakes so that he catches as many of the pastries as possible, and places them on the belts behind him, with a limited number of "missed" pastries allowed.

The baker is moved up and down a break in the six conveyor belts when the joystick is pushed up or down. When the baker has touched a cake that has reached the end of a conveyor, he automatically grabs the cake, turns and places it on the conveyor behind him. Pressing the red fire button stops the conveyor belt nearest the baker for about four seconds, or

until another conveyor has been halted.

If a cake reaches the end of a conveyor before the baker has touched it, it will fall to the floor, to be swept up by a janitor who runs out from the side of the screen and sweeps up the mess. The number of reserve "cleanups" a player has left is shown in the upper left-hand corner of the screen. No more than four reserve cleanups can be held in reserve at any one time.

The conveyors carry more than cakes. Gingerbread men can also appear, dancing in erratic patterns, making themselves harder to catch. A knife and fork also travel the conveyors. These utensils will injure the baker, and the player will lose one reserve cleanup, if he touches them. If the player can keep his or her baker running long enough, a cup of coffee will eventually appear on one of the belts. The coffee won't fall off, so the player can take a breather then move the baker so that he touches the coffee, whenever he or she is ready to resume play, at a higher skill level.

16 different game variations are available on CommaVid's **CAKEWALK** cartridge, allowing selection of a variety of combinations of options that include a faster baker, the ability to speed up a conveyor by pushing the joystick to the right, a baker that must pause to box a cake and a game with all gingerbread men. The left Difficulty switch also controls the beginning skill level of the game. In the "B" position, the action starts at skill level one. In the "A" position, the game begins at the same skill level encountered after the fourth coffee break.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I was dubious about this one right from the start, mainly because I've come to expect some pretty serious game challenges from CommaVid, so I was a bit disappointed to see them produce a "cute" title. In spite of my reservations, I found myself playing this one over and over, and my five-year-old son had a good time with it, too.

CAKEWALK is not a game for the serious space gamer, or for the arcade ace. It is definitely for families who like a bit of high-spirited low-key fun for everyone in the household. The play is simple enough for any age, but escalates quickly enough, (especially if played in the "A" difficulty setting) to a level of difficulty that should challenge even serious gamers.

Although I wasn't that impressed with the sound effects on this game, the graphics are very good, with lots of color and smooth character movement, especially on the janitor when he runs out to sweep up.

I suppose the only drawback I can point out is the "cute" theme. I'm getting

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tired of them. I realize that "cute" is in for video games right now, but I know a lot of serious gamers out there who are still waiting for some solid challenging action. This game has the action and the challenge, but a number of you will never try it because it's just too -- cute.

Look into this one if you are a video gaming family with children who like to play, too.

MIKE: Some new games simply must be seen to be believed. They don't, however, have to be purchased. That's the case with this new entry from CommaVid.

Everyone has seen the classic comic routine involving the baker trying to box cakes that come rolling along on a conveyor belt. That's what this game is all about. If you still think that routine is funnier than King George III jokes, then **CAKE-WALK** just might be the game for you. I, on the other hand, am always on the lookout for something new and refreshing, and this one really isn't at all what I'm looking for.

The game is new enough in concept, as far as the video game industry goes, but it falls quickly from the fact that the concept doesn't play well anymore, in the sticks or the big city. It's really nothing more than a vertical slide and shoot with some of the elements of **KABOOM!** It could have been good but, as the concept was carried out, it leaves much to be desired.

The graphics are fair and the janitor at the bottom of the screen is very good -- but he serves no purpose in the game itself. It seems that amount of memory could have been put to better use in the game. Sound plays no part in the game, either, and the sound effects don't enhance the play.

Keep this one in mind when you go to the store. You'll most likely want to avoid it.

RATINGS:

Concept: New

Graphics/Sound: Fair - Good

Difficulty: Novice - Student

Interest: Yawn - One Month

KEN USTON

BLACK JACK/POKER

From Coleco, for their own ColecoVision video game system.

This cartridge is Blackjack and Five Card Stud Poker, for one to four players. The games are played casino-style and the score is based on the player's winnings. A special "help" button on the ColecoVision keypad gives the player helpful Blackjack tips, from Blackjack expert Ken Uston, during play.

The display on both games consists of Max the dealer at the top of the screen, the player's cards in the center and the players' winnings at the bottom.

In Blackjack, Max uses

four decks, and deals himself as many as seven cards to reach 21. There is a betting limit of \$499. Players may double, split, buy insurance and win with a "Five-Card Charlie." A natural 21 pays the player at 3:2 odds, rounded off to the nearest dollar figure. No one wins a tie with the dealer. All playing actions are made by the player with keypad buttons and a special button even gives the player an instant total of the cards in his or her hand.

Five-Card Stud Poker on this ColecoVision cartridge is the standard game in video format. Gamers all play against Max the dealer. The ante limit is \$1 - \$100 and each successive bet can't be more than twice the player's original ante. Players can check their down cards by pressing the "Hole" button when it is their turn, and bet with every new card. Different Poker hands pay at different ratios, from 1:1 for High Card and a winning Pair, to 250:1 for a Royal Flush. The dealer wins all ties.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I feel cheated! This was one of the biggest disappointments of the year for me. Coleco displayed a completely different version of this game at various CES shows and in countless press releases throughout the year. It included Five-Card Draw Poker and Seven-Card Stud, both of which weren't included here, and a display that showed all the players' winnings in stacks of chips, among other things. Even the readers are disappointed: we've already heard from one who pointed out that, in the Poker game, the dealer wins ties based on the hands held, not the cards in each hand. This means that a player holding a pair of aces still can't beat the dealer if he holds two twos! This is a serious flaw that shouldn't have been left in this game.

The display is only as good as Intellivision's own **BLACKJACK/POKER** cartridge and the game isn't nearly as good. The Blackjack game on this cartridge features serious and true-to-casino play, but pressing the "Help" button doesn't help much. I played several games straight through using only Ken Uston's "tips," and lost consistently every time.

Take my advice -- if you must play cards, play with a real deck until something better comes along. If you buy this one, don't count on Ken's helpful tips. I don't know what happened, but this isn't at all what I was expecting from Coleco's outstanding system.

MIKE: Coleco you have to be kidding! The graphics on this game are nothing like the ones that you previewed, as Alan has pointed out, and this is only the first let-down here.

Ken Uston is well-known as a authority on how to play Blackjack to win, but I wonder seriously if he really

had anything to do with this game, from the way it plays. I can see no improvement here over what's already been done for lesser systems. That wouldn't be a crime in and of itself, if it weren't for the fact that there is less here than what is available on other lesser systems' similar cartridges.

Alan's right. Stick with a deck of cards if you really want to play Blackjack and Poker -- at least until a better version for this system is made available.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar

Graphics/Sound: Fair

Difficulty: Novice - Student

Interest:

One Week - One Month

BURGER TIME

From Mattel Electronics, for their Intellivision I and II Master Component video game systems.

BURGER TIME is Mattel's Intellivision version of the new arcade hit of the same name. It's a combination of maze and climbing challenge, for one or two players at a time. Gamers must guide a chef along a number of planks and up and down ladders, staying away from the evil hot dogs, eggs and pickles that constantly chase him, trying to make as many hamburgers as possible.

Players maneuver the chef with the controller disc, by pressing on the same side as the desired direction of movement. The different ingredients that the chef needs to make up three, four or more hamburgers are all on the video scaffolding, stacked one above the other, including the top and bottom buns, the hamburger patty, lettuce and, in some mazes, tomato slices. The player's chef assembles his hamburgers by walking across each of the parts of the sandwiches, which then drop through the scaffolding and to the bottom of the screen, landing one on top of the other.

As the chef runs about, making his sandwiches, he's chased by nasty hot dogs, eggs and pickles that will eliminate him if they can catch him. The chef must either dodge the nasties or eliminate them by dropping hamburger parts on them from above, or by dropping sandwich parts on which they are standing, which also eliminates the meanies. He can also stall them temporarily, if he gets in a tight situation, by shaking some pepper on them. He shakes pepper on the nasties, in the same direction he is headed, when

the player presses either side action button, but the number of shakes he is allowed is limited. Each chef starts out with four pinches of pepper.

Occasionally, french fries, coffee, ketchup or an ice cream cone will appear briefly on the scaffold. If the player can run his or her chef over to one of these so that he touches it before it disappears, the player earns extra points and the chef will be given another pinch of pepper.

The play is for points, scored for dropping each hamburger part, squashing the nasties, dropping nasties that are standing on hamburger parts and for gobbling the bonus foods. When all the hamburgers on the first maze have been completed, the play moves on to a new maze, more difficult than the last. There are a total of seven different mazes available for play. Gamers may select to start the game at four different skill levels. In two-player games, opponents take turns whenever one loses a chef. Each player starts out with five chefs, and earns a new one every time he or she earns 10,000 points. The game ends when all of a player's chefs have been eliminated by the meanies.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: This is the first true arcade translation from Mattel for their Intellivision systems. They've been giving it a really big push, and with good reason -- this one is really close to the original arcade challenge. I thought the game was really boring when I first played it in the arcades, until I really started to get the hang of it. The better I got the more engrossing it got -- and this home version is no different.

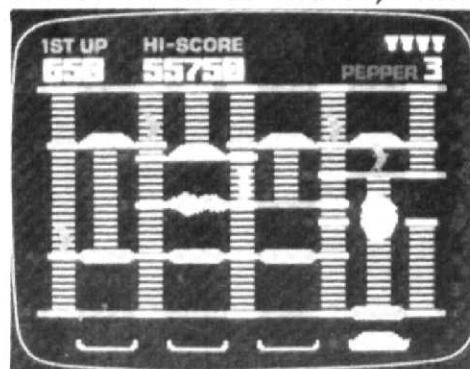
Graphically, I didn't think the Intellivision version was as sharp as some of the other new releases Mattel has brought out, but there really is a lot more than meets the eye here. It's obvious that a lot of available memory was put into the challenge itself. Each maze is different and presents its own unique challenge, and it builds quite slowly, allowing you plenty of opportunity to build up the pepper reserve you'll need in the higher, faster-moving levels.

This game isn't played at the blinding speed that is required in most space game challenges that are currently available, but the control is a lot smoother and easier than it is on a lot of other maze-type challenges I've played on the system.

BURGER TIME is also easy to learn and it will keep your interest peaked for a long time. I liked this one a lot. It's a solid translation that shows Mattel has it in them to "bring the arcade home," as they say. Thanks, Mattel, for a job well done.

ALAN: I agree all the way. And -- if Mike likes this one as much as he says he does, it's gotta be one of the best

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maze chases available for the system. Remember: he doesn't like maze games and neither of us are too excited about most "cute" themes, either. **BURGER TIME** is an exception worth a serious look from any gamer interested in a solid challenge that's different from most.

I disagree with Mike about the graphics, though. These are sharp, well-defined and colorful -- very close to arcade quality, if you ask me. But, then, I wasn't spoiled first by playing this one in the arcades.

The action is slow, by appearance, but things build at just the right pace. There's a lot of opportunity for strategic thinking in this game, as the nasties get smarter and smarter and more determined to catch the chef, and the mazes keep getting tougher. It's enough to keep the best gamer busy for hours trying to make it through all seven screens -- then it all starts over, at a higher skill level.

Take my word for it. Overlook the "cute" theme, if that turns you off, and try this one for a while. You'll get hooked. Buy **BURGER TIME** for hours of scaffold-climbing, burger-making fun.

RATINGS:

Concept: New
Graphics/Sound: Good - Very Good
Difficulty: Novice - Student
Interest: One Year

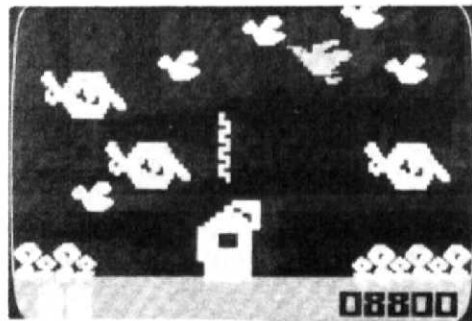
MISSION X

From Mattel, for their Intellivision I & II Master Component video game systems, Sears' Super Video Arcade and other, similarly-compatible systems.

MISSION X is an arcade-style bombing and strafing airplane run, for one player at a time. The players controls a World War II attack bomber, and must fly it over a variety of treacherous enemy terrain and targets, avoiding rockets from the ground and rapidly-approaching enemy planes, trying to blow up as many targets as he or she can, for as many points as possible.

As the game begins, the player's plane starts out rolling down a runway in the center of the screen. The gamer makes the bomber gain altitude by pressing on the bottom edge of the controller disc. It can be made to fly to the left or right by pressing on the left or right sides of the disc, and it loses altitude when the top edge of the controller disc is pressed. Always viewed from overhead, the player's bomber gets smaller as it drops toward the ground and larger when it rises.

Soon, enemy territory looms ahead. The player must fly over land and sea, in daylight and at night, blasting and bombing roads, train tracks, anti-aircraft guns, tanks, trucks, trains, ships,



bridges, and enemy missiles and planes. The ground scrolls by, from the top of the screen to the bottom, as the player flies by. Enemy missiles travel up toward the player's bomber, shot from anti-aircraft guns, tanks and ships on the ground below, and follow it in a slow arc before exploding. They must either be avoided, by flying over or under them, or to one side, or blasted. Enemy planes swing on-screen with lightning speed and blast away at the player without mercy. They must be hit by the player's guns or they keep coming back over and over. The player fires his or her guns with either bottom side controller button, and drops bombs by pressing either top side button.

Every now and then, the player's runway comes up on the screen. The player must land his or her plane on the runway and then take off again, to refuel and get ready for the next run, which will get tougher as the score climbs.

Points are earned for each target blasted, from 10 points for a section of road to 500 points for shooting down an enemy plane. Targets hit more than once score double. The intensity of enemy defense maneuvers increases as the score climbs. Bonus points are earned for every second the player flies at "0" altitude over his or her runways and for destroying both sections of a bridge. The player will lose a plane in the blast if he or she accidentally bombs the runway with his or her plane at "0" altitude. Bombing the runway from farther up deducts 1,000 points from the player's score.

Players may start **MISSION X** at any of four skill levels. Extra reserve bombers are earned by reaching a number of pre-set scores, from 10,000 to 81,920,000. The game ends when a player loses all of his or her bombers.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I had a lot of fun with this game. It's a good tension-reliever for people who like to take out their aggressions on a nameless, faceless enemy. I also liked the fact that this one isn't as tough to play as some similar shooting matches have been in the past, so I could make it last a lot longer than usual. But -- it could lose your interest sooner as a direct result of this.

In fact, that's the main problem with this new cartridge. The graphics are great, the sound effects are solidly supportive of the action and the targets are never-ending. What's missing are things that shoot back --

making the territory more treacherous and the challenge more enduring. Most serious video shooting-action gamers, the ones who will most likely be interested in this type of match, will be disappointed by the apparent easy-going pace. The enemy's rockets may chase the player's plane, but they are still too easy to avoid, overall.

So -- **MISSION X** is interesting, and worth a couple of hours of fun. But I don't think this game will hold the interest of its intended market long enough to make it worth the purchase price. Maybe when it's available in the cut-out bins...

If Mattel does a good job of bringing this game to the Atari VCS, in their M-Network line, it should be worth watching for.

MIKE: My first reaction to this game was that it looked a lot like **B-52 BOMBER** when it started out. I really liked **B-52 BOMBER** and still consider it one of the best games made for the Intellivision system yet. **AIR RAIDERS** was another, similar-but-simpler Mattel game for the VCS that I was quite impressed with. Everything that I considered great about Mattel's earlier two releases was missing in this one.

MISSION X is really just a glorified slide-and-shoot that allows you to drop bombs, too. The graphics are very well done, good enough to be called excellent, in fact, but I was disappointed in the sound effects. When attacking aircraft are coming at you, it doesn't sound anything like the firing of machine guns. In fact, other than letting you know a plane is coming, the audio on this portion of the game is more a distraction than an enhancement. I'm sure the system was capable of better.

The play action is very limited, too, and the game requires little or no strategy from the player. In fact, I don't think **MISSION X** makes good use of the Intellivision system at all.

Not all is lost, however, because, despite all of my objections, I found myself hitting the reset button and trying again -- more often than I thought I would. This was most likely due in large part to the really fine graphics, which do a fine job of giving you the sensation of flying, though they are nothing like those that were used in **B-52 BOMBER**.

I suppose it depends on your tastes and what you already have. Take a look at **MISSION X** in the store or at a friend's before buying it. Really try it out. It's not destined for greatness, but some of you might have some fun with it for a while.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Excellent
Difficulty: Novice
Interest: Two Weeks - One Month

BUZZ BOMBERS

From Mattel Electronics, for their Intellivision and Intellivision II Master Component video game systems, Sears' Super Video Arcade and other, similarly-compatible systems.

BUZZ BOMBERS is an arcade shooting-gallery-style game, for one player at a time. The object of the game is to stop a bunch of bees by spraying them with a can of insecticide, before they pollinate the flowers that will eventually restrict the movement of the player's spray can and end the game.

The player's spray can is moved back and forth across the bottom of the screen by pushing on the left or right-hand side of the controller disc. Blasts of insecticide are sprayed up at the approaching bees when any side action button is pressed.

Gamers start with three spray cans, one on-screen and two in reserve, with a total of 56 sprays in each. Every time a player has used eight sprays from a can, a spray can displayed on-screen shows a lower level of spray remaining, until it's all gone. A new can replaces one that's been emptied, if there are any left in reserve.

Bees come in at the top of the screen and work their way toward the bottom, in a number of horizontal sweeps. There are two types of bees: Workers and Killers. Most of the bees are Workers, which move slowly. Killer bees move swiftly toward the bottom of the screen. As the game continues and the skill level climbs, more Killer bees enter the screen.

The player must try to shoot all the bees with his or her spray can, or they will pollinate the flowers at the bottom of the screen and make them grow, thus restricting the movement of the player's spray can. Bees that are shot with spray or, occasionally, trapped by other on-screen objects, turn into valuable honeycombs. Honeycombs, also, can be eliminated by the player's spray. Once in a while, a trapped bee will build a beehive which, if left on-screen at the end of a round of play, is worth valuable bonus points for the player. Killer Bees turn into red honeycombs when hit, and they are worth more points than the others. When the player's spray can is completely hemmed in by flowers, the player loses that sprayer. If no more spray cans are left in reserve, the game is over.

The player's on-screen ally is the hummingbird. The hummingbird flies randomly



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around the screen, drinking honey from any honeycombs that remain onscreen and adding points to the player's score as it does. The hummingbird can't be shot, but it will turn green if sprayed often enough, and then will have to leave the screen for a while, for a breath of fresh air, before it can return.

Play is for points, earned by hitting the Worker and Killer Bees, and whenever the Hummingbird eats yellow and red honeycombs. Bonus points are earned for each beehive left on the screen after each wave of insects has passed. Players can earn bonus spray cans at 20,000, 40,000, 80,000 and at every 80,000 points thereafter. The play gets more difficult, with more and faster-moving bees, each time the player survives a new wave of insects.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: It's always amazed me the fascinations with which humans consider the animal world, especially when it gets to the point of making video games about them. First we were given frogs that ate large numbers of insects and now we have bees that need to be killed with the use of a sprayer. The funny thing is, you only thought the frogs were dull!

The graphics on this one are up to Mattel's usual high standards, with a little additional variety provided by the sound effects and music. But, as complicated as the instructions try to make this one sound, all you do is slide back and forth and shoot the bees (sound familiar?) before they hem your spray can in. Period. That's all there is to it.

Most video gamers will find this one to be too slow for their money, and not really worth all the effort in the long run. The designers must have had young children in mind when this game was developed, since that's really the only market I can see **BUZZ BOMBERS** fitting into, and my own kids even thought it was dull overall. Really, there are a lot of games out there that are so much better that this one should be left well enough alone. Save your money.

ALAN: Hmm. I guess I'm getting soft -- or going soft, I don't know which. I had fun playing this one. I thought the graphics were possibly even a bit better than Mattel's usual efforts, a testament to the quality of their new "Super Graphics."

I was disappointed at the overall simplicity of the play, however. After the first couple of hours, the theme's charm and the pretty graphics wear off, and you realize that it isn't anything more than another slide-and-shoot. But the designers did manage to add a bit of strategy to the play that I think helped redeem the final effort. Saving those much-needed point-scoring honeycombs when you are

in the heat of battle gets pretty hard -- forcing you to decide which will go and which will stay and, although things do start out a bit too slow and boring, they pick up rather quickly, until things get to be pretty much of a blur.

The fact that this cartridge lacks Mattel's usual number of starting skill levels for the player's selection might have been its downfall with Mike, and, most likely, with other serious gamers. No matter how good you get, you have to start at the slow, easy-going beginning and work your way up to the real action. The "cute" theme doesn't help it, either. Still, I have to give this one a "yes," but only for family play. Dedicated gamers will tire of it all pretty quickly.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Good - Excellent
Difficulty: Novice
Interest: One Day - One Month

WHITE WATER

From Imagic, for Mattel's Intellivision I and II Master Component video game systems, Sears' Super Video Arcade, and other, similarly-compatible systems. Designed by Douglas A. Fults.

WHITE WATER is a rafting simulation game, for one player at a time. It's a race against the clock, and two gamers can play by taking turns trying for a better time. There are two objectives on the seven game variations that are available on this cartridge. The first objective is to make it as far down the river as possible in the shortest amount of time. The second objective is to beach the raft, disembark, enter the forest and partake in a ritual game with a native there, to try and capture the treasure he is guarding.

Players control the men and raft by pushing on the controller disc. The man runs in the direction the disc is pressed. The raft moves forward when the top of the disc is pressed, and is paddled backwards when the bottom of the disc is pressed. It is turned right or left by pressing on the matching side of the disc.

The game begins with the lead oarsman in the forest. He must be run to the right side of the screen, to the river, then down to the beach, where his raft and two buddies are waiting. Once inside the raft, pressing on the disc controls the boat.

The raft is launched by pushing on the top of the



disc controller. As it enters the water, it starts drifting with the current, indicated by a number of white lines that follow the flow. The player must use the disc to point the raft in a direction that will best take advantage of the flow of the river, to avoid rocks, shoals, whirlpools that set the raft to spinning, the banks of the river and an occasional barrel that comes down from behind. Barrels bump the raft around, often in an undesired direction, whenever they collide with it. Paddling backward very slowly moves the raft back up the river, or stops it when it's in the rapids (indicated by the current lines).

In some games, bumping into rocks throws one raftsman out of the boat. Fallen raftsmen can be saved if the player can get the raft over to them before they travel off-screen. When the last boatman falls out of the raft, the raft can't be controlled by the player.

The first four games are straight-out raft races, with players trying to reach the flags at the end of the river in the shortest time possible. Each game is a bit more difficult than the last. In games Four and Five, players lose a man overboard whenever the raft collides with a rock.

In games Five, and Six, players try to collect a treasure and get back to the boat in as short a time as possible. Treasures are located in the forest, just off the screen, wherever a beach is located. The gamer must land his or her raft on the beach, then get out of the boat and enter the forest.

In the forest, a treasure is waiting, next to an ancient native statue, which stands guard over the prize. A native is waiting, too. The gamer must grab either one or two of a number of flags that are scattered about the screen. Then the native will grab either one or two -- until all the flags are gone. When all the flags have been grabbed, the native races the player to the treasure. If a player grabs the treasure without playing out the ritual, the god represented by the statue will be offended, and will hurl deadly axes at the player. If the player cheats and gets away unharmed, the river will be cursed, rougher than usual and very hard to maneuver, until the next beach is reached.

In game Seven, players go for as many treasures as they can get before losing all three men to the rapids.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I like **WHITE WATER**. It will most likely never be a classic, but Imagic designer Douglas Fults deserves a round of healthy kudos for turning out a new concept well-executed.

The graphics are beautiful in every detail, the movement of the raft is realistic to the point of frustration (without practice) and the game itself, especially the

treasure hunt, is charming.

Control of the raft is where a lot of you will have the most trouble, but give it time. Practice on controlling the river raft, and learning to use the current to your benefit, is all it takes to soon be off and sailing downstream to your heart's content.

Interestingly enough, I enjoyed the treasure hunt game the most, and I thought the little ritual you had to play with the native to get the treasure made things even more interesting. As simple as the ritual sounds, it gets really tricky in the actual play.

Give this one some serious consideration. **WHITE WATER** isn't your usual type of game, and it isn't for everyone, but it might just be for you, if you've been looking for something really different for your Intellivision. It's like nothing available so far!

MIKE: A long time ago I was told that beauty is only skin deep. I don't think my mother had video games in mind when she said that, but it sure is the case with this new Imagic cartridge. I said "cartridge," not "game," for good reason. I didn't think there was much game to this cartridge.

The graphics are really very good, probably as good as anything Imagic has turned out so far. The visual appeal of the water and the raft, as it moves downstream, banging into the rocks, and those poor people falling out of the boat, add up to a really nice effect, though the forest scenes are a little lacking. The sound effects are good, too, though really nothing outstanding.

All the good things are now out of the way. The graphics shouldn't be downplayed, because they are indeed outstanding and Imagic is to be congratulated on such a fine job, but there's really no game here! I realize it's noble to keep three men in their raft and then to try and take treasure from the natives as long as you play fair (although it's sort of like paying for Manhattan with beads), but nobility is not the reason I play video games. I will settle for almost anything that is in a video game -- action, the use of intellect (most preferably both) or even something as simple as watching the computer play chess against itself. However, I really don't like it when a cartridge doesn't even provide a minimum of excitement or action. Forget this one. I don't think it contains any of the above reasons to play it, so it can't possibly be worth the money.

RATINGS:

Concept: New
Graphics/Sound: Excellent
Difficulty: Novice - Graduate
Interest: Yawn - Six Months

NOVA BLAST

From Imagic, for Mattel's Intellivision and Intellivision II Master Component video game systems, Sears Super Video Arcade, and for other, similarly-compatible systems. Designed by Wendell Brown.

NOVA BLAST is a space action arcade game for one player. The player must use his or her Nova 1 fighter ship to protect four domed cities from an all-out alien attack.

The Nova 1 fighter ship is controlled with the Intellivision disc. The fighter fires its lasers when the left or right top side button is pressed, drops bombs when the right bottom button is pressed and replaces the dome-shaped shield or refuels the fighter ship when the bottom left side button is pressed.

The screen scrolls horizontally, so that no more than one city can be seen at a time. Most of the player's planet is water, with a fuel tank located between each city. The enemy ships swing in from the sky above, anywhere on or off-screen, and try to blow up all four of the gamer's cities. The first enemy hit destroys a city's shield, and the second direct hit blows up the city itself.

A radar at the bottom of the screen shows all four cities, and the different alien ships swinging in to destroy them. The player's score, a Damage Indicator and an Energy Level Indicator are also located at the bottom of the screen.

When the energy indicator gets too low, the player must locate his or her Nova 1 Fighter directly over a fuel tank, then press the "Beam" button, the lower-left side button, until the tanks again register as "full." The capsules over each city can also be replaced in much the same manner, using the same lower side button, but replacing them uses up three-fourths of the Nova's entire fuel supply.

Gamers use the "Bomb" button on the lower right-hand side of the controller to eliminate the enemy's Water Walkers, which can surface during a game and destroy a city from the ground. As many as three Water Walkers may surface in each wave. Water Walkers also fire rockets up at the player's Nova Fighter.

Players begin each game with the Damage Indicator set at "10." Each time the Nova 1 Fighter collides with an alien, or is hit by enemy fire, the Indicator decreases by one. When the Damage Indicator reaches "0," the player loses the fighter and the game is over.

Play is for points, scored for hitting enemy rockets and Water Walkers. Bonus points are earned for every city remaining after each attack wave. Enemy attack waves can consist of any of eight different kinds of ships, some more difficult to overcome than others. The game progresses to a more difficult level of play with each wave

completed.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: What we have here is really a poor man's version of DEFENDER, for Intellivision play. But -- that's not necessarily bad. If you have to compare this one to the extremely popular Atari release, then NOVA BLAST would have to take a back seat. For the Intellivision, however, this is one of the better arcade action games currently available.

The game comes complete with a radar and horizontally-scrolling screen, and there are also cities that have to be defended. But NOVA BLAST is harder to play, with the action of the controllers and the way the game-speed accelerates so quickly, so you will have to exhibit a lot of patience and control to master it. Quick reflexes are definitely a must to play this one well.

Graphically, the game really leaves a lot to be desired. The worst are the aliens, since they look more like little blocks than space ships. The key word here is "little" and they are very hard to hit. You do have to refuel at times, though this becomes unnecessary in the later stages, since, at the higher levels, there really isn't that much time to accomplish a complete refueling before you've lost all your cities.

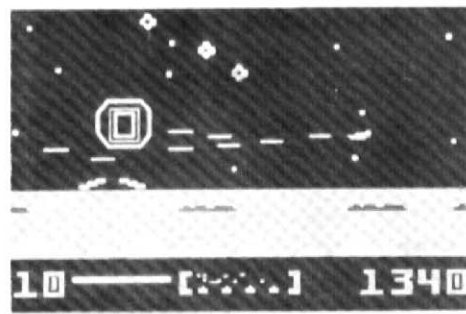
NOVA BLAST is a good game for the Intellivision system -- probably one of the best space action games made so far. Check it out. You might really like it, too.

ALAN: I can't agree with Mike on this one. I think Imagic could have done better -- but Designer Wendell Brown just got too caught up with DEFENDER and other similar games when he programmed this one. It didn't appeal to me.

The graphics aren't at all up to Imagic's usual quality, and the game itself wasn't complex enough to make up for it.

True -- the aliens are tough little buggers, and the game keeps you huffing and puffing to keep those cities alive, but it escalates too quickly into a lightning-fast duel that only the hardest-core space gamers among you will enjoy.

Consequently, I can't recommend this one for the average gamer. Addicted space gamers might want to give it a try, but I can't imagine too many Intellivision gamers playing this one for very long. Imagic is to be congratulated for taking a departure from their usual Intellivision fare, but I'd wait for better. Some of the



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games they have coming for this system later this year definitely top this one.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Fair
Difficulty: Graduate
Interest: One - Six Months

DEMON ATTACK

From Imagic, for the Odyssey-2 video game system. Designed by Dave Johnson.

This is the Odyssey-2 version of Imagic's earlier giant hit slide-and-shoot, currently available for the Atari VCS and Intellivision. Offering play for one or two gamers, the object of the game is to survive as many waves of alien attackers as possible, racking up points for each alien destroyed.

The player moves a cannon back and forth across the bottom of the screen by pushing the joystick controller to the right or left. The cannon fires upwards whenever the player presses the red fire button.

Aliens swing on-screen in waves, each different -- and tougher -- than the last, with the ones nearer the the bottom of the screen dropping their deadly bombs down toward the player's cannon. The alien arsenal includes creatures that split into two smaller-and-faster extraterrestrials when hit, and some that dive toward the player's cannon, hell-bent on a kamikazi take-out, if nothing else will work, as well as an array of others. The aliens nearer the bottom of the screen are replaced immediately when hit, and those near the top stay gone until the other top-most creature is also eliminated.

Gamers each start with three reserve cannons and one on-screen, and earn an extra reserve cannon for each wave of aliens they survive unscathed. The play is for points.

Ten game variations on this Odyssey cartridge allow for basic play, play with tracer shots that move with the player's cannon, advanced play, and an advanced tracer-shot version, for one or two players, and two special co-op two-player games, where each gamer takes turns battling the same wave of aliens, with and without tracer shots. The game ends when a player loses all of his or her cannons.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: DEMON ATTACK was a game neither Mike nor I were really too impressed with when it first appeared for the VCS. We've since eaten our words

because it turned out to be so popular, but I still think it was an unimaginative game, considering all the slide-and-shoots that were already available for that system at the time it was first released, and despite the break-through Imagic made with their exceptional graphics and sound effects. But DEMON ATTACK for the Odyssey-2 is an exceptional game for the system, regardless of the fact that slide-and-shoots are by now a tired theme.

There aren't too many good games of this type for the Odyssey, and this one is a fine rendition of the VCS original, including most all of that award-winning version's attributes except for the super-sharp graphics and sound effects. I was disappointed that there were fewer aliens on-screen at the same time, but all the challenge of the VCS hit is there, along with all of the variations, including the one I liked most -- the two-player co-op version.

If you like fast-action shoot-em-up challenges and the Odyssey-2 is your game system of choice, you'll like DEMON ATTACK. Get it.

MIKE: I know that most Odyssey-2 owners were looking forward to the first independent software to be produced for their system, and I must say that I'm really impressed with this entry. The graphics don't compare to those on the VCS version, but they are far superior to anything that has been made for the Odyssey system so far. Since I was expecting something a little more elaborate on the screen, I was a bit disappointed in the display, at first, but this soon passed.

I thought the sound effects were about the same as those for the original VCS version, and the play action is fast, compared to other games for Odyssey play. Alan has already pointed out the main drawback: the fact that you only have to tackle two rows of aliens rather than three. This keeps the excitement down a bit, unfortunately.

I was never a big fan of this game in any format, so this type of action won't ever interest me for long but -- looking at it from the viewpoint that so little new hard-and-fast action games have been made available for Odyssey play recently, it's really a superior game. It's unfortunate that so little is currently being produced for the system that almost anything is good news. I'm just glad to see that this one is far better than just any old thing that might have come along.

RATINGS:

Concept: To Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Good
Difficulty: Novice - Student
Interest: Three Months - One Year

ATLANTIS

From Imagic, for North American Phillip's Odyssey-2 video game console. Designed by Jeff Ronne, with screen graphics assisted by Michael Becker.

ATLANTIS is Imagic's Odyssey-2 version of their popular underwater city alien defense arcade shoot-em-up, currently available for Atari VCS and Intellivision play. For one player, the object of the game is to defend the watery city of Atlantis from an all-out alien attack and score the highest number of points possible.

The player mans Atlantis' guns. One large laser is located on each side of the city, and a giant Blitz Bomb launcher is situated in the center. The six sections of the city stretch out below the water, across the bottom of the screen.

The alien attackers' ships come in waves, starting at the top of the screen and getting closer to Atlantis with every pass. On their last pass across the bottom of the screen, they blast Atlantis with their deadly rays, eliminating one section of the undersea city with every pass. First, however, the aliens must destroy the Domed Palace, in the center of the city. The Domed Palace emits a protective force field that protects the other sections of the city. A new Domed Palace will replace one that has been destroyed at every 10,000 points, up to 100,000, then at every 100,000 points up to 1,000,000.

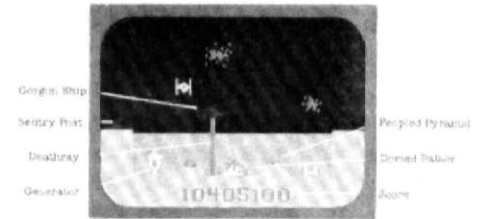
The player blasts the enemy attackers with the guns on either side of the city by pressing on the fire button and moving the joystick in the direction of the gun he or she wishes to fire. The Blitz Bomb, activated when the player pushes the joystick straight up, eliminates all the alien ships on the screen -- but it can only be used once in each wave.

The gamer goes for points, earned whenever an alien Gorgon vessel is destroyed. Bonus points are also earned for each section of the city remaining at the end of each wave. No points are earned for Gorgon ships destroyed with the Blitz Bomb. Gamers can select the starting difficulty level of each game, and the level of difficulty also increases with each wave of aliens. The game ends when all of the sections of Atlantis have been destroyed.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: This is a really rare issue! Two independently-produced cartridges for the Odyssey-2 reviewed in the same month! And, personally, I'm glad to see them appear. This one is another O-2 version of a popular Imagic game and, basically, it's the same as the one originally released for the VCS -- with some minor differences.

The graphics lack the clear crisp colors of the



original versions, but, like Imagic's DEMON ATTACK for Odyssey, also reviewed this month, they are far superior to anything else produced for the system so far. The game itself plays like the original and the tactics involved are basically the same, except that you can't fire your center cannon repeatedly until the aliens have taken it out of commission. Also, a tiny ship doesn't take off for the sky at the end of the game, so it looks like Odyssey owners will be spared the COSMIC ARK game that followed ATLANTIS' release originally. This is good.

So -- ATLANTIS is a good game for the Odyssey. If that's your system, this is a solid game for you.

ALAN: I agree with Mike on this one, and I like the game a lot better than I do DEMON ATTACK, too. Imagic designers Ronne and Becker have done an excellent job of translating this one for Odyssey play, retaining all of the original VCS game's flavor and intensity.

I am not ordinarily a big fan of straight-out fast-action shoot-em-ups, but I've always been fond of the concept of ATLANTIS, and I think you should buy this one for your O-2 if that is your system and you like this type of high-speed shooting action. It's a doozy!

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Excellent
Difficulty: Student - Graduate
Interest: Six Months - One Year

SPINBALL

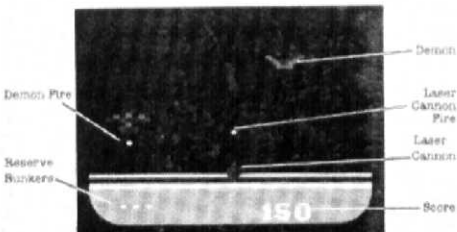
From General Consumer Electronics, for their own Vectrex Graphic Computer System video game console.

SPIN BALL is electronic pinball for one or two players. The play is for points, as it is with all pinball machines.

The display is a vector-screen image of what looks like a full-fledged pinball machine table, complete with spinners, center chutes, drop targets, bumpers and a couple of surprises.

Four sets of flippers are located at the bottom center of the screen and on either side, farther up the board. The player activates all the left-hand flippers with button two on the Vectrex control panel, and the right-hand flippers with button three. The joystick sets the tension on the plunger spring. The ball is then set into play when the player presses button four on the controller panel.

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As is usual with all pinball machines, the idea is to keep the ball in motion as long as possible, racking up as many points as the player can. Five sets of four drop targets, on either side of the table, four diamond-shaped bumpers at the top center and four spinners all help add to the player's score.

Once the ball is in play, the player can also use the joystick to "juke" the ball, jiggling the table and actually making the video pinball move to one side or the other, when just the right amount of jiggle might help. If the ball is juke too often or too hard, however, a tilt occurs, causing the player to lose the ball currently in play. "Glassies," when the ball hits a bumper hard enough to actually jump over it, are also possible. In this video version of pinball, this looks like the ball is just passing through a bumper or other obstacle, and it doesn't otherwise affect the play in any way.

There are also two Ball Savers which, when activated, put a lost ball back in front of the plunger. These are located on either side of the bottom of the board.

Unique to this game is a Ball Splitter, right in the center of the table, located just above the bottom flippers. This splitter actually turns one ball into two, which are then both immediately put into play. The Ball Splitter is activated for a short time whenever the player hits any row of four drop targets in order, indefinitely if the drop targets are hit and the ball passes through a spinner directly after.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I enjoyed playing this game, and I must admit that I was more than a bit surprised. GCE has turned out a pretty decent pinball game for their Vectrex system, when I thought it couldn't be done at all well without a full-color raster-screen display.

I especially liked the realism added by being able to "juke" the ball, and by

the addition of "glassies," something no other video pinball game I've seen can do.

But there are problems, too. I didn't like the lack of bumpers in the lower center, above the main flippers. I seemed to spend a lot of time hitting the ball over and over and over when it got to this point, with little but sheer luck to help me get it back up to the bumpers and scoring again. I never liked real arcade pinball machines that were like that and I didn't like it here. And the large arched bumper just above the Ball Splitter just kept the ball down there doing nothing a lot of the time. I would have preferred more bumpers and, consequently, more scoring action.

I love four-flipper games, which this one is, but I thought the ball moved too fast overall. You rarely have much time to think any kind of strategy through as a result of the speed of the play, and I found that disappointing.

Still -- the action is very realistic, the sound effects are very good and the graphics, though a bit weak as a real pinball game, were very good for a vector display. If you love pinball and Vectrex is your system of choice, you might want to consider this one. There's a lot to like about it, too.

MIKE: If you just read the press reports, it seems the days of the pinball are numbered. Almost everyone in the video game business, however, is trying to keep it alive. Vectrex's entry into the video pinball field is a good solid game for that system, but it's also one that doesn't equal those that are already out for other video game systems. Those of you who own the Astrocade pinball cartridge know what I'm talking about. The redeeming factor about this game is the fact that it's the only pinball game for the system.

Personally, I didn't appreciate the "glassies" as much as Alan did. It just looked to me like the ball was going right through the bumpers and didn't impress me with its intended addition to the overall realism at all. I agree that there isn't too much to the game itself, and it's a little hard to play

well.

The graphics are simple but very workable and do show a good facsimile of a pinball game. The sound effects are also good and fit the game very well. I didn't like this one as pinball, however, because it really provided very little challenge. The game seemed to depend too much on luck. My daughter did like it a lot, since it is one of the few games that she can play well on the Vectrex, and she was really impressed by the fact that you could tilt the machine. I would recommend that those of you who are looking for a fast-action game that puts your nerves on edge to stay away from this one. If, on the other hand, you are buying for the kids, or want something laid back and different for your Vectrex, you might want to give **SPIN BALL** a look.

RATINGS:

- Concept:** Familiar
- Graphics/Sound:** Good
- Difficulty:** Novice
- Interest:** Three Months

THE BOSS

A premium joystick from WICO, for use with the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games and other, similarly-compatible systems.

The Boss joystick is Wico's first popularly-priced precision-engineered game controller. It features professional-style components, including a high-quality PC board with five built-in leaf switches. Drawing upon its experience in the design and manufacture of commercial joystick controls, Wico developed THE BOSS "to accommodate the growing demand for popularly-priced home video game controls," Gordon Goranson, Wico president, has



(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

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said. Carrying a suggested retail price of \$19.95, THE BOSS is already in production and should be reaching retail outlets now. THE BOSS is backed by an extended, one year limited warranty.

THE BOSS features a grip handle with a thumb-action

fire button, four non-skid rubber feet and a five-foot cord. With available Wico adaptors, THE BOSS can also be used with the Odyssey-2 video game system.

Wico plans to expand their THE BOSS line to include other professional-quality game controllers at popular prices. Wico also manufac-

tures and distributes the deluxe COMMAND CONTROL line of arcade-quality game controllers and accessories for personal computers and home video games.

MIKE: I've compared this new Wico controller with the original Atari equipment, and with Wico's original COMMAND CONTROL joystick, and have come up with a mixed opinion of the new cheaper THE BOSS. In comparison to their original release, I would prefer to spend a little extra money for the heavier, more-responsive COMMAND CONTROL joystick. But, then, I'm still not accustomed to using a finger-grip joystick.

Challenging the original Atari joystick that comes packed with the VCS, THE BOSS performed much better for most games, though it is just sensitive enough to give you a few minor problems until you get used to it. If your standard VCS controller is wearing out, or you just want something better without spending a lot of money, this might just be the joystick for you. If you already have one of Wico's COMMAND CONTROL sticks, you might be a bit disappointed. Then again, you get what you pay for.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: For the price, this is a really nice controller. The grip handle was comfortable and the styling is sleek and handsome. I have always appreciated having the fire button right under my thumb, but I do wish there had been a button on the stand, as well, for those games that require a lot of fast joystick action, making it hard to move and fire at the same time.

In short, I doubt that this controller will dramatically increase or improve your scores, but it will decrease your game-playing fatigue over the long run. It's a good buy, and one of the better sticks I've seen in its price range.

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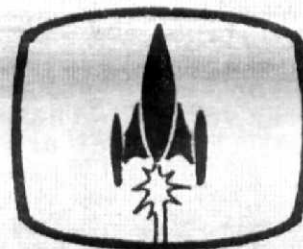
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-- HOW THEY ALL STACKED UP --

The following is a list of all the games reviewed this issue, grouped according to our reviewers' combined opinions. Mike and Alan both liked the games next to the shooting rocket. Games with a horizontal rocket were only liked by one of our reviewers. Games with the crashed rocket didn't appeal to either of our reviewers.

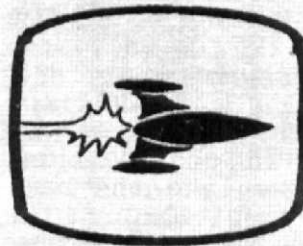
IT'S A PERPETUAL PROBLEM... but we try to catch up when we can. Last issue, we didn't have room for our "How they stacked up" chart, so games from that issue have been included in this month's chart.



— ALAN AND MIKE BOTH LIKED —

JULY: SPACE DUNGEON ** DEMOLITION HERBY REVENGE OF THE BEEFSTEAK TOMATOES

AUGUST: MINER 2049ER ** ROBOTANK SPACEMASTER X-7 ** BURGER TIME ** DEMON ATTACK ** ATLANTIS



— ALAN LIKED - MIKE DIDN'T —

JULY: ADVENTURES OF TRON ** VCS ZAXXON TURTLES

AUGUST: CAKEWALK ** M*A*S*H ** BUZZ BOMBERS WHITE WATER ** SPIN BALL

— MIKE LIKED - ALAN DIDN'T —

AUGUST: MISSION X ** NOVA BLAST



— ALAN AND MIKE DIDN'T LIKE —

JULY: STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE MUSICAL MATCH-UPS MOUSETRAP

AUGUST: TAC-SCAN KEN USTON BLACKJACK/POKER

— WE'RE SORRY! WE'RE SORRY! WE'RE SORRY! —

It seems like there's never enough room in an issue for everything we'd like to run, and this issue was no exception. To make room for our run-down of our first six months and give you sixteen new game reviews, as well as all the news and features, something had to go. Unfortunately, it was our letters and MicroQuips columns that made way for the rest this month. BUT -- PLEASE BEAR WITH US! BOTH columns will return next issue and, we hope, they will stay for a long time to come. AND KEEP THOSE CARDS, LETTERS and MINI-REVIEWS COMING! We still pay \$10 for the best mini-review run in our MicroQuips column, and read every letter we get, though we can't always answer them personally.

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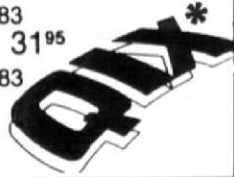
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- SHARP SHOT - 15⁹⁵
- VECTRON - 25⁹⁵
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- DUNGEONS & DRAGONS - 27⁹⁵

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E.T. - 19⁹⁵
GALAXIAN - 23⁹⁵
FIREWORLD - 25⁹⁵
CENTIPEDE - 25⁹⁵



(FOR INTELLIVISION)

- DEMON ATTACK
- ATLANTIS
- BEAUTY & BEAST
- SWORDS & SERPENTS
- NOVA BLAST
- ICE TREK
- DRACULA
- WHITE WATER

25⁹⁵



(FOR ATARI)

22⁹⁵

- ATLANTIS - 21⁹⁵
- DEMON ATTACK - 21⁹⁵
- SHOOTUM GALLERY - 18⁹⁵

- ESCAPE FROM ARGOS - 22⁹⁵
- SKY PATROL - 22⁹⁵

ACTIVISION (FOR ATARI)



RIVER RAID
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- DOLPHIN - 23⁵⁰
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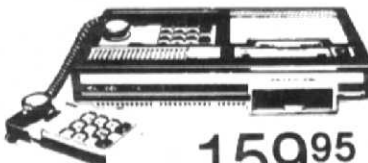
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