

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 HOME VIDEO GAMES REVIEW

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VIDEO GAMER'S
GIFT GUIDE

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PLUS:
THE LATEST NEWS
-- AND MORE!

PBS' NEW TECH TIMES COVERS HOME ELECTRONICS

The most dynamic, talked-about industry of the 80's, with \$20 billion a year in sales -- consumer electronics -- is the subject of a new prime-time television series, **THE NEW TECH TIMES**. This weekly PBS show, the first designed to help viewers cope with the fast-changing world of computers, video and other home electronics, premiered Thursday, October 20 at 9:30 p.m. (EST) on PBS stations (check your local listings for times and dates in your area). The production is underwritten in part by Wausau Insurance Companies.

Hosted by author, columnist, radio personality and former FCC commissioner Nicholas Johnson, the half-hour weekly series will explore home computers, satellite dishes, cordless telephones, robots, videodisc players, video games, the digital audio disc and other exciting new technologies.

In the first show, Peter McWilliams, author of the best-selling **THE PERSONAL COMPUTER BOOK**, offered down-to-earth advice on buying a home computer. Other segments included how one family learned to live with the computer; an inside look at how the first laser disc videogame, **DRAGON'S LAIR**, was made plus a sneak preview of what's coming next; possible harmful effects of exercise videocassettes; and a tongue-in-cheek commentary by NBC's Edwin Newman on "bits, bytes, RAM's and ROM's" and how they're changing the way we talk.

The second show helped viewers deal with the coming breakup of AT&T and showed them how to buy their own phones. It also reported on video piracy, what it's like to live in an electronic cottage, plus a review of one of the latest video games.

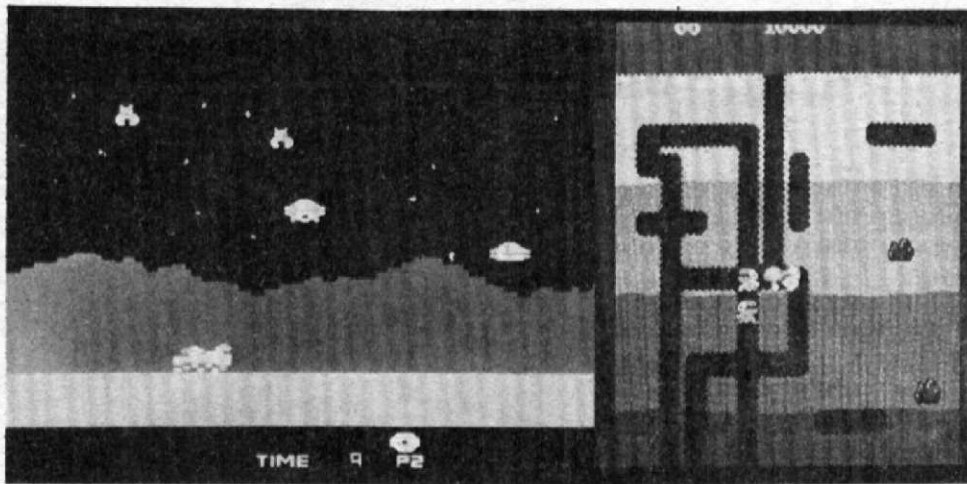
Following shows have aired segments with science fiction author Isaac Asimov, consumer advocate Ralph Nader, **MEGA-TRENDS** author John Naisbutt, and Stewart Brand, founder and publisher of **THE WHOLE EARTH SOFTWARE CATALOG**. Also covered or soon to be covered are such topics as the latest breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, interactive mystery videodiscs, computerized movie making, censorship of cable television, 3-D animated home video games, creating art electronically, how to use robots in your home, "electronic bulletin boards," a visit with a "high-tech farmer," and reports on electronic banking and home security systems.

Host Nicholas Johnson said **THE NEW TECH TIMES** is "in-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

THREE NEW ATARI TITLES RELEASED

Three new Atari games, in 2600 VCS and 5200 formats, have hit or will soon hit retail outlets everywhere. The much-awaited titles, **MOON PATROL**, **PENGO** and **DIG DUG**,



MOON PATROL (Left) and **DIG DUG** (Right), only two of three current arcade hits out from Atari for the 2600 and 5200.

tunneling underneath boulders, causing them to fall and crush his foes. Or, with his handy underground compressor, he can pump up the bad guys until they explode.

pear, if Dig Dug can munch them before they disappear.

Atari's **DIG DUG** features all the game play and strategy of the coin-op hit, with eight separate advancing screens, one- or two-player options and two skill levels. Suggested retail price for **DIG DUG** will be \$35.95 for the VCS version and \$40.95 for the 5200.

In Atari's **MOON PATROL**, the player cruises the uncharted surface of the moon as deep craters and gigantic boulders threaten to destroy his or her moon buggy. Overhead, alien ships try to thwart the gamer's mission, and the player must try to ward them off. The idea is to finish a mission within a given time period. Points are earned for jumping over the craters, blasting rocks into pieces before a collision takes place and for zapping

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

are all based on popular arcade games.

DIG DUG, the Atari arcade sensation, is now available for home play on the 2600 VCS and 5200 SuperSystem. It's a colorful maze game with a twist -- the player creates his or her own maze for Dig Dug, the dauntless miner, by digging through the earth. Caution must be used, for each shovelful may unearth "Pooka," a balloon-like creature with yellow goggles, or a bad-tempered, fire-spitting dragon named "Fygar." Contact with either meanie will cause Dig Dug to wither like an unwatered flower. Dig Dug can outsmart the bad guys by

Bonus points are also earned when various vegetables ap-

WICO 5200 ANALOG STICK NOW AVAILABLE

The new WICO Analog Joystick and Adaptor, designed exclusively for the Atari 5200, should now be available in retail outlets everywhere. According to WICO spokespersons, the WICO Command Control analog is the only arcade-size joystick currently available for the Atari 5200.

Features of the new WICO 5200 stick include: A self-centering mode which delivers arcade action and feel; a non-centering mode for a free-floating feel; two independently functional arcade fire buttons; external trim controls that provide precise on-screen centering and are easily adjustable by hand; and WICO's own Y-cord adaptor for easy connection and simultaneous use with the keypad portion of the original 5200 controller.

The new joystick comes with a one-year limited warranty and should retail for a suggested retail price of \$34.95.

VCS QUICK STEP, LASER GATES, OUT FROM IMAGIC

Imagic, Incorporated, has released two new titles for the Atari 2600 VCS; **QUICK STEP** and **LASER GATES**. Both games should already be available in retail stores everywhere.

In **QUICK STEP**, players race one another to claim possession of multi-colored trampolines before they scroll off the screen, always careful not to leave the screen with them. It's a non-violent jumping game that can be played by two players at the same time, or by one alone.

In **LASER GATES**, players must navigate the Dante Dart through the caverns of the Cryptic Computer, represented

by an uneven horizontally-scrolling channel. Radar Mortars, Rock Munchers, Homing Missiles and ByteBats must be blasted out of the way. The gamer must also blast his or her way through Densepack Columns, time his or her approach in order to surviving Flashing, Flexing and Fixed Forcefields and avoid colliding with the jagged walls of the Computer itself. The goal is to reach and destroy each of the four Failsafe Detonators inside the Computer, to keep the malfunctioning computer from obliterating the Universe.

Imagic, Incorporated, 981 University Avenue, Los Gatos, CA 95030, (408)399-2200.

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IMPORTANT NOTE: Our current bi-monthly condition is only temporary. Since all subscriptions are figured on a "number-of-issues" basis, the number of issues remaining in all subscriptions will remain unaffected. Monthly publication of **THE LOGICAL GAMER** is scheduled to return with the March, 1984 issue.

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Dealer inquiries welcomed.

CBS ANNOUNCES VCS OMEGA RACE, MOUNTAIN KING, 5200 INCREDIBLE WIZARD

CBS Electronics announced the October release of **OMEGA RACE** with their exclusive **RAM PLUS** Power Chip, for the Atari 2600. This frenetic space chase is based on the popular Bally Midway arcade game of the same name.

The Omegans, a superior alien life form, have spent countless eons perfecting their method of defense, code named **OMEGA RACE**. They have defeated all invaders in their own star system and now roam the galaxies looking for new challengers. Players entering this space race score points by wiping out increasingly deadly waves of Omegan Warrior Ships (seven at a time). The Omegan Fleet is composed of orbiting Droid Ships, laser-firing Command Ships and ominous Death Ships -- madly-spinning space assassins that fire laser blasts and leave a trail of explosive Photon Mines behind them.

The longer a player survives, the more difficult the race becomes. Photon and Vapor Mines appear throughout the arena and must be either blasted away or bashed into. To succeed in **OMEGA RACE** and beat the Omegans at their own game, a player must first master the art of ricocheting off the walls of the arena and using his or her thrust to fullest advantage.

OMEGA RACE is a game for one or two players and comes with a **free BOOSTER-GRIP** Joystick Adaptor for complete control.

Also slated for October release, but still not available for review at press time, was CBS' **MOUNTAIN KING** for the Atari 2600, also using their new **RAM PLUS** Power Chip.

MOUNTAIN KING is a mystical trek through diamond-laden mines that ultimately lead to the secret Temple Chamber and the Explorer's ultimate goal: the priceless Golden Crown.

With the help of the **RAM PLUS** Power Chip, CBS Electronics was able to bring the same unique features of **MOUNTAIN KING** for the Atari 400/800/1200XL and Atari 5200 (described in last issue's news) to this Atari 2600 cartridge. Those features include: The invisible Flame Spirit, hidden treasure chests, treacherous Cave Bats, the Giant Green Spider, multiple progressive difficulty levels, the Flashlight and, last but not least, the haunting theme music that tells the Explorer when he or she is near the Flame Spirit and when time is about to run out.

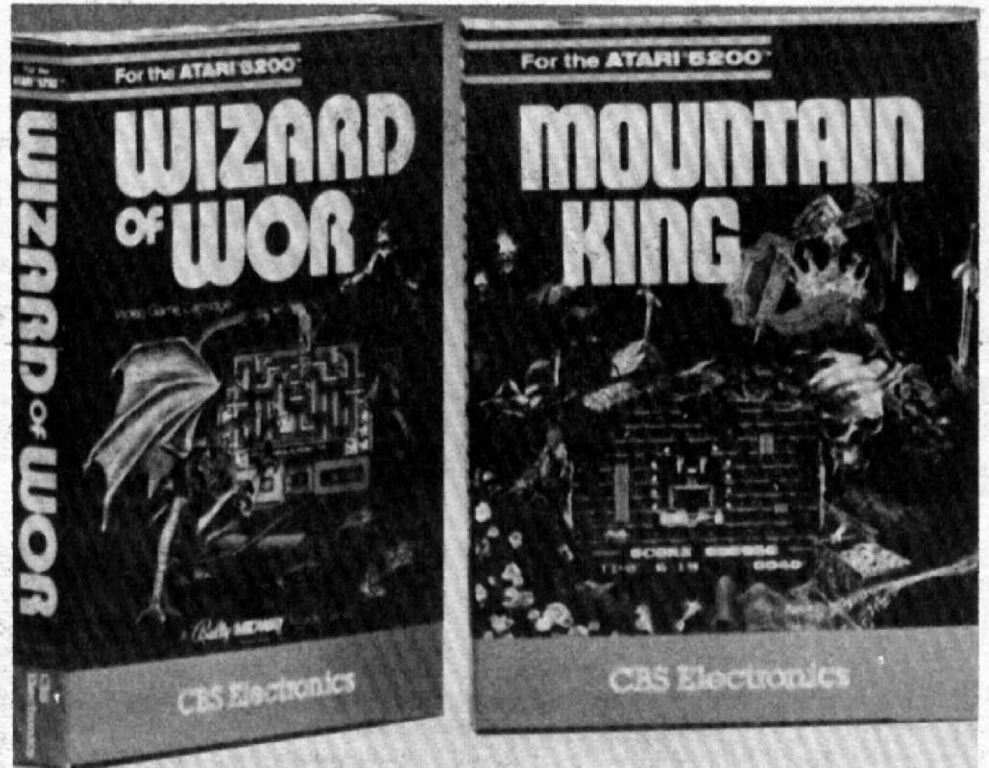
MOUNTAIN KING is a one-player game that is also now available for play on Atari's 400/800/1200XL home computers and for the Atari 5200 Super System.

CBS has also released, or soon will, a translation of **THE INCREDIBLE WIZARD**, for use with the Atari 5200 SuperSystem, hailed by the company as an exact graphic replica of the popular Bally Midway arcade game from which it is derived.

Players must enter the dungeons of the diabolical Wizard of Wor and become Warriors who accumulate points by doing away with the nasty inhabitants of the dungeons -- Garwors, Burwors and Thorwors. The only thing these creatures live for is to do the bidding of their master -- the sinister Wizard. Then there's the Wizard's emissary, Worluck, and the Wizard himself, who teleports himself at will to any spot in the dungeon maze. If the player can vanquish these foes and manage to stay alive, the status of Worlord is attained. Ultimately, gamers can become Worlord Supreme.

But -- even more frightening dungeon mazes await gamers the deeper into the depths of the Wizard's lair they travel. In the Pit, the most terrifying dungeon maze,

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)



Two of CBS Electronics' newest releases are their first for use with the Atari 5200 "SuperSystem."

FIRST STAR ANNOUNCES VCS BOING!, 5200 FLIP AND FLOP, BRISTLES

FIRST STAR software, already a notable producer in the realm of computer games, has announced the release of a new game for the Atari 2600 VCS, and two others for the Atari 5200 Super System.

At first glance, **BOING!** seems simple but this new VCS game, designed by Alex Leavens (**GOLF**, **CRAZY CLIMBER**) and Shirley Russell, is designed to be more challenging and exciting than it would at first appear.

In **BOING!** you are a bubble, bouncing delicately around a playfield of 36 multicolored squares. You must jump on each square to "turn it on." This may sound simple, but obstacles come in several different forms, such as The Pin and The Bubble Eater. The particular order in which you must turn on the squares in that particular level of play is also an obstacle. The popping of the bubble by The Pin and the zapping of The Bubble Eater is presented in animated sequences.

On some levels, jumping on a square will turn it on and leave it on. On other levels, each time you jump on a square it will change - so you can't jump on any square twice without undermining your own progress. On some levels, you must turn on a particular row or rows before turning on others.

BOING! has only the standard VCS 4K chip, but it features: 6 levels of 5 "waves" each; 6 musical themes (the first has 40 notes!), a self-playing attract mode and a game logo. This new VCS game should already be available for play on your 2600 VCS, at a suggested retail price of \$21.95.

FLIP AND FLOP is being billed as "an exhilarating, unique three-dimensional game," developed by James Nangano, one of First Star's outstanding talent discoveries.

Quick reflexes are in de-

mand in this one- or two-player game. First, you turn kangaroo and must hop onto and turn over certain tiles on a multi-screened, scrolling, stepped platform maze with ladders, sometimes with the zoo keeper in hot pursuit! This kangaroo has escaped from the zoo and is desperately trying to get back to his friends at the circus.

In alternate levels, the entire playfield turns upside down and then, as a monkey hanging from the underside of the maze, the gamer swings from square to square. The objective is again to turn on all indicated tiles, and the player's reward is his or her arrival at the circus, complete with one of First Star's famous animations de-

picating all the doings under the big top. At higher skill

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

NEW TECH TIMES...

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

tended to help us cope with the changes and the challenges of the electronic age -- not just computers and video, but a new communications environment. It's a show long past due."

THE NEW TECH TIMES is produced by Friends of WHA-TV, Inc. at the studios of WHA-TV in Madison, Wisconsin. WHA-TV was the first public television station to receive an **EMMY** in 1969 for outstanding overall community service.

ATARI GAMES...

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

enemy spaceships and tanks. The game offers different skill levels to keep things interesting. Once the beginner's course has been mastered, the player can try his or her skill at defending against rolling rocks, erupting volcanoes and low-flying UFO's to heighten the excitement in the championship course. The background includes lively lunar graphics and a bouncy beat to the musical soundtrack that adds to the game's personality. Players also have the choice of starting the game over when a cruiser is landed, or beginning where they left off. This game should already be available in 2600 and 5200, selling for a suggested retail price of \$35.95 and \$40.95 respectively.

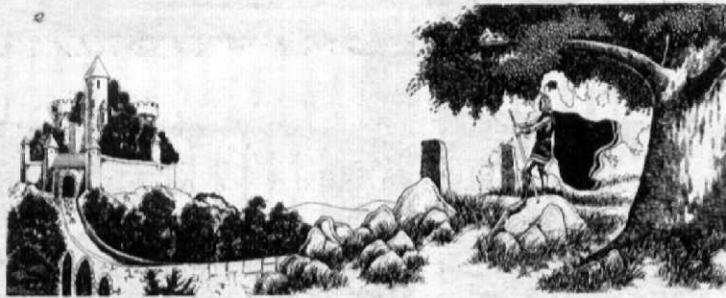
It's the survival of the fittest in the South Pole between a penguin and some angry sno-bees in **PENGO**, the arcade game soon to be available from Atari for their 2600 and 5200 video game systems. The player's mission is to help Pengo the penguin

out-manuever the cold hearted bees as quickly as he can, because bonus points are awarded on the basis of how quickly the sno-bees are squashed. When the player presses the fire button, Pengo kicks one of the numerous ice blocks that start out on the screen. Kicking an ice block into a sno-bee will smash it, but flashing ice blocks contain nesting bees that can hatch into full-grown foes. Flashing blocks can be smashed with the proper kick before they can hatch, and randomly-placed "diamond" ice blocks can't be smashed by Pengo or his foes, affording some protection and added strategic possibilities. It's another change-the-maze-as-you-play game with adjustable skill levels and one- or two-player options. The 5200 version of **PENGO** should reach retailers in December, retailing for a suggested price of \$40.45, and the 2600 version will follow during the first quarter of '84, retailing for a suggested price of \$35.95.

Atari, Inc., 1265 Borregas Ave., Sunnyvale, CA 94086, (408)745-2000.

GAMEVIEWS . . .

THE EDITOR SPEAKS



A CALL FOR STRATEGY

by Alan R. Bechtold

I'm in an enviable position. I get to play most every video game made for home play. It's a privilege I enjoy heartily but it's often a chore, too. Allow me to explain.

Sometimes, it seems like I'm playing the same games over and over again. Since most of us love video games because we thrive on the truly new and different, paying up to \$40 for the privilege to play a new game that's very much like others we've already mastered, this can be tragic. And I'm not talking about versions of the same game for different systems: I enjoy comparing the differences between systems by playing the same game on all of them. What I'm talking about is playing the same, repetitive themes and formulas over and over, in supposedly "original" games. Let's face it -- few new video games released lately are truly "original."

I don't mind playing a game that is new twist on a familiar theme, either. After all, there are only so many themes available, even to the most sophisticated of systems. Actually, there are only a few themes available to all of the arts. But it does seem that more could be done with the various themes available to video game designers today. Writers have been working with the same limited themes in fiction for hundreds of years, and new twists and treatments are still popping up all the time. Of course, there is also a lot of trite and overworked fiction written today, and I suppose it will always be that way, with all forms of art but I can't be totally convinced that all the possible video game themes and ideas have been done, and all that's left is reworkings. The art form's still too new, too untested. Besides, I've seen the possibilities, as yet not fully tapped.

Take, for example, some of Intellivision's fantastic strategy contests of the recent past, like **UTOPIA** and **SEA BATTLE**. I thought N.A.P.'s **QUEST FOR THE RINGS**, for their *Odyssey-2*, was a good start in the right direction, too. I think few video games today can beat these for replayability, because the games are different each time you play.

Now -- I enjoy a good high-action shoot-em-up or arcade challenge as much as the next guy, but what's wrong with a good high-action shoot-em-up arcade challenge that requires a lot of strategy, too? I haven't seen many of those lately. And there's no excuse for that -- not with the newer, advanced video game systems now on the market. Just think what **QUEST FOR THE RINGS** would be like for ColecoVision!

So -- this editorial is something of an open letter to the industry. We love arcade action, if it's original, stimulating and challenging, but give us some real strategy contests, too, huh? Soon? I know some promising games for the advanced systems are due for release soon, like Coleco's **TUNNELS AND TROLLS** and N.A.P.'s **CAVERN**, both for ColecoVision. But I haven't seen them yet. Creativity is the key, and profit is the motivation. You'll profit from motivating us to buy some truly creative, challenging concepts. The market is still there and it's still growing. It's just waiting for some more really unique games to buy.

READERS: Let the companies know, in your letters and phone calls, that you want more challenge and originality in your video games. They know **THE LOGICAL GAMER's** readers are the most articulate and dedicated gamers around and they'll listen. 'Nuff said.

FIRST STAR... (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

levels, a notorious flying net chases the monkey.

If the gamer jumps or swings in the wrong direction and falls off the maze, the air whistles by as the kangaroo falls, bounces off the scoreboard and then off the screen. The player can also lure the pursuing net or zookeeper onto flashing "sticky" squares to buy some time -- but watch out -- the kangaroo can get stuck there, too!

FLIP AND FLOP has thirty-six levels of play, an ever-expanding, scrolling playfield and a total of six animations.

Not all playfields are selectable, and gamers can compete to see levels their friends haven't reached. However, the clock's display at the top of the screen is a steady reminder of the player's remaining time.

FLIP AND FLOP also features a self-playing attract mode and a musical soundtrack by award-winning designer Jerry White, incorporated in the title sequence.

FLIP AND FLOP should be available in stores by now, in an Atari 5200-compatible cartridge, retailing for a suggested price of \$39.95. The game is already available in disk, cassette and cartridge formats for Atari 400/800/1200XL computers, and is soon to be available in disk, cassette and cartridge formats for the Commodore 64.

First Star has also introduced their first unisex, four-player game, **BRISTLES**, designed by Fernando Herrera.

In this game, players can choose to be one of eight characters (four boys and four girls) for any combination of one-to-four players. The painter(s)/player(s) has been commissioned to paint eight different dwellings.

With the computer remembering each player's previous screen and score, the painter begins each round in the basement supply room, where he/she picks up his/her brushes and goes upstairs to begin the task.

As each painter runs around frantically, riding elevators and painting rooms

in spectacular colors, he/she encounters a variety of obstacles: he/she must duck, jump, climb and ride the elevators in an attempt to paint the rooms -- all the while avoiding the Smart Bucket, Dumb Buckets and Flying Half-Pints. To make matters even more hectic, the hero/heroine must contend with the building superintendent's daughter, who occasionally puts her handprint on the wet paint while the gamer tries to survive all 48 levels.

Each character in **BRISTLES** has their own theme music, which designer Fernando has blended into a lively symphony using Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker Suite."

After winning the first Atari Star Award for his program, "MY FIRST ALPHABET," Herrera has become head of Design and Engineering for First Star, which marketed his highly-acclaimed **ASTRO CHASE** (soon available for game systems from Parker Brothers) last year.

BRISTLES, which also features a self-playing attract mode, should just now be available for the Atari 5200, selling for a suggested retail price of \$39.95, and in cartridge, cassette and disk formats for the Commodore 64. It is already available in disk, cartridge and cassette formats for the Atari 400/800/1200XL home computers.

First Star Software, Inc., 22 East 41st Street, New York, NY 10017, (212)889-1073.

CBS ELECTRONICS... (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

there is no place for the player to hide.

One or two players can enter the dungeon to do combat as either allies or enemies. Gamers may also choose to enter the dungeon with either three, five or seven Warriors to begin the campaign.

WIZARD OF WOR is also already available from CBS for the Atari 2600 VCS.

CBS Electronics, 41 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10010, (212)481-6400.

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SO WE CAN BE SURE YOU DON'T MISS AN ISSUE!

the logical gamer

THE MONTHLY HOME VIDEO GAMES REVIEW

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IN BRIEF

BRODERBUND SIGNS WITH GAMES NETWORK

The Games Network, Incorporated, announced last month that Broderbund, Incorporated, has granted cable rights to their original game software. The premium cable service will include Broderbund games in its programming mix when it begins service in Orange County, California.

According to Jim Summers, Vice President of Program Acquisitions for The Games Network, "Broderbund's games, which already hold sales records on Softsel's best selling software list and which have won Game-of-the-Year awards from *SOFTALK MAGAZINE* and other prominent industry

publications and associations, will be played by a new and diverse audience of gamers. Our subscribers will be able to try out games in their homes before they buy. We can introduce new games as well to help create new hits."

Katherine Carlston, Director of Marketing for Broderbund, feels that this is a positive step for her company to take. "We want to stay in the forefront of our industry and we feel that our relationship with The Games Network will be something that will keep us there. Their teledelivery system appeals to us as a new way to reach potential retail customers. We intend to take full advantage of the on-line exposure which The Games network provides."

Summers further added, "Among the games we are bringing into homes via cable TV are seven of Broderbund's most popular: **CHOPLIFTER, DAVID'S MIDNIGHT MAGIC, SEAFOX, SERPENTINE, APPLE PANIC, LOAD RUNNER, and A.E.** The Games Network programming mix will change each month and will include adventure, educational, and card and board games as well as Broderbund's award-winning arcade-type games."

STARCADE STARTS WITH 4.1 NATIONAL RATING

STARCADE, the only video arcade gameshow of its kind ever broadcast on national television, received a 4.1 national rating average (NTI Special Report on STARCADE) for the week ending October 9, as reported by Turner Program Services (TPS) President Sidney Pike. STARCADE is marketed by TPS, the syndication arm of Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. (TBS).

The report, which is based on STARCADE visibility in 64% of the U.S. in 43 markets, reflects the program's early strength primarily during Saturday morning children's programming hours, Pike indicated. "The bulk of our STARCADE stations are programming the show on Saturday morning when the child viewer level is at a peak," Pike said. "However, there are some stations that carry STARCADE on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, and two stations that strip the show weekday afternoons." The show placed Los Angeles TV station KTLA in the number three position in the L.A. market for the time period, outrating the local CBS affiliate by 1.3 points.

"STARCADE is the kind of show that develops an increasingly stronger viewing audience with time," Pike said. "Our experience with STARCADE has shown that with steady exposure, it would continue to attract more viewers and keep them as part of its regular audience. It's not a gimmick or 'fad' show. It represents one of America's most popular pastimes and presents it in an action-packed format."

STARCADE, a first-run television program, is in its first season of national syndication.

SUPERVISION'S VCS GAME BRAIN WORKS WITH COLECOVISION'S VCS ADAPTOR, TOO!

Last month, THE LOGICAL GAMER introduced The Game Brain, a unique new product from SuperVision, Incorporated. The Game Brain is an add-on for the Atari 2600 VCS. It is a machine that is used along with the 2600 and a standard cassette tape recorder, allowing the video game system owner to transfer his or her Atari 2600 and other compatible games from cartridge form to ordinary cassette tape, thus providing a backup copy of the game, for archival purposes only.

Now, it has been discovered that the Game Brain can also be used by ColecoVision system owners too, if they own the ColecoVision expansion module which allows the user to play Atari 2600-compatible games.

For more details, contact: SuperVision, P.O. Box 111, Bristol, CT 06010, (203) 223-5693.

SORRY FOR THE DELAY -- BUT WE'RE BUILDING A NEW LOGICAL GAMER!

The temporary "Bi-monthly" status of THE LOGICAL GAMER is only temporary, while we gear up for complete coverage of computer games, which will begin in our January/February issue. Monthly publication will resume in March, with a BIGGER and BETTER GAMER than ever! Meanwhile, please keep in mind that all subscriptions are computed on the number of issues received -- not by the year. All subscriptions will be unaffected during this brief transition period. We apologize for any inconvenience.

***Delays in the introduction of Coleco's Adam home computer system have ended -- but only partially. Although the computer system has finally begun to hit some selected retailers, the quantities shipped in 1983 will be only a fourth or less of what the company had earlier predicted they could ship. So far, the only unit to hit the stores has been the complete Adam system. Coleco has announced that the add-on computer system, for existing ColecoVision video game consoles won't hit retail shelves until early in 1984. In light of the current situation, Coleco officials announced recently they will be cutting their proposed \$20-25 million advertising budget for the new system by roughly \$4 million, to be spent instead in the first quarter of '84.

***A group of stockholders have filed a class action suit against Coleco. Disgruntled by falling Coleco stock prices and delays in the introduction of the Adam home computer system. Their suit accuses Coleco of concealing problems the company was experiencing with perfecting the system and getting it out, and that certain Coleco officials, fully aware of Adam's engineering problems, sold a total of 183,000 shares in June, in violation of Securities and Exchange regulations. Since the Adam home computer system was announced, Coleco stock dropped from a high of \$60 per share, when the Adam was first announced, to under \$30, delays in shipping the Adam began.

***GameLine's president, Bill von Meister, has announced that their service will be expanding, offering GameLine module-equipped VCS owners StockLine and SportsLine in December, and the delivery of electronic mail in January. Stockline will allow users to get the latest Dow-Jones stock market information and SportsLine will provide the latest sports data on-screen. Electronic mail service will let VCS owners across the country communicate with each other.

***Activision will be hitting the Atari 5200 SuperSystem game market with their first two releases, KABOOM! and RIVER RAID. Both games were million-sellers on the Atari 2600 VCS, and have just been released for play on Atari's 400/800 home computers as well.

***N.A.P. Consumer Electronics' new Probe 2000 series of video games for ColecoVision play has been partially delayed by a reported shortage of the chips required to produce the games. News has it that N.A.P. will be able to continue production and shipment of WAR ROOM, their first announced release for the system, but that LORD OF THE DUNGEON, POWER LORDS and PINK PANTHER will have to wait until after the first of the year, until a reliable source of the necessary microchips can be secured.

***Imagic, Incorporated is yet another noted video game company reported to have cut its staff, laying off over 50 of its 170 employees this September. Slack sales and distribution problems have been blamed for the cutbacks, and the company is now reportedly trimming its operating costs so they will be more in line with projected sales.

***Recent reports have it that order cancellations have been pouring into Coleco, one an order for over \$1 million in product and other smaller ones, all due to delays in shipments of their Adam home computer, and because of recent announcements indicating that reduced quantities of the system will be available. One report has it that several major chain store buyers are saying they won't believe Coleco until they see the system out and in working order. Most are previously-committed Coleco buyers, and some say they aren't even sure they'll buy it when they do see it.

***Coleco, meanwhile, has kept the ball rolling, conducting business as usual and signing more licensing agreements for game titles and properties. The most recent Coleco addition is MGM's WAR GAMES, which Coleco has bought rights to and will turn into a new game or games soon, scheduled to hit the market in the fourth quarter (right away) of this year.

***As if things aren't bad enough for Coleco, a recent report showed a sharp drop in earnings for the quarter ended September 30. Coleco earned \$2.3 million in its fourth quarter, compared to \$17.6 million in the same quarter of last year. Total sales for the quarter were \$114.5 million, down from \$165.6 million the year before.

***Warner Communications reported another loss of \$122 million for the quarter ended this September, \$180 million of which is directly attributable to their consumer electronics/Atari division. In a recent announcement the company revealed that it will be laying off another 250 employees, mostly from their New York offices. More layoffs are expected when the company consolidates into new headquarters in San Jose. In contrast, Warner's music publishing, TV and movie production and consumer products divisions showed a 32% increase in income during the same quarter.

***Ending the month's news on a good note: Coleco's Adam has indeed finally arrived, although only in selected stores and in very limited quantities. The most recent quotes obtained from major retailers show a renewed optimism among them.

THE LOGICAL GAMER'S FIRST ANNUAL CHRITMAS GIFT GUIDE

THE GAMES NETWORK has announced that teledelivery of electronic games over existing TV cable systems will begin with its first installations in December, 1983, and will become available in other markets during the first quarter of 1984.

The TGN staff (guided by Waldo, the mythical "Wizard of Games," whose likeness you see here) has been hard at work preparing the system for launch. Each TGN subscriber will be provided with a specially-designed 64K microcomputer. Subscribers can select and play any of twenty different games at any time, twenty-four hours a day. The programming mix will include games for all ages: arcade style, educational, card, adventure, and traditional. Five new games will be rotated into the line-up each month.



The system, with its pirate-proof method of providing top software, enjoyed a resounding success in Orange County, California, where it was initially tested.

To receive a full color poster of Waldo, send your name and address and \$2.00, to cover postage and handling, to: The Games Network, 4401 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90010.

MYTHICON, INCORPORATED, offers something unusual for your Atari 2600 VCS -- brand new multi-screen high action games for a low \$9.95 suggested retail price. Their first three releases, **STAR FOX**, **FIRE FLY** and **SORCERER**, should be available in retail stores as you read this.



In **STAR FOX**, for one or two players, gamers must recover as many trimetalisium energy crystals as they can, while destroying enemy fighter drones which get smarter and more maneuverable as the score climbs. **FIRE FLY**, a multi-screen game also for one or two players, puts gamers in the cockpit of a giant fighter-bug, dubbed the Fire Fly, fighting evil creature-machines that have been sent to destroy the cities of the gamers' host aliens. **SORCERER** is a multi-screen game for one or two players using either joysticks or a trackball controller. As the bravest of the good Sorcerers, the gamer must battle evil wizards who have decided to use their powers to conquer the countryside and enslave its people. As the skill of

the player increases, new screens open up to reveal increasingly difficult enemies. Look for these in your local games stores, or write for more details to: Mythicon, Incorporated, P.O. Box 1347, Cupertino, CA 95015.

VIDEOGAME PRODUCTS offers some of the best regular prices you can find -- such as: Intellivision II with **BURGERTIME** & Intellivoice for only \$97, **TRON MAZATRON**, \$19, **SPACE SPARTANS** (Voice) \$25, **SHARP SHOT** \$12, **INTELLIVOICE** \$43 -- Most ColecoVision carts \$26, **SA BASEBALL/ROLLER CONTROLLER** \$65, Atari Adaptor/**TURBO** \$57, **MINER 2049er** \$40, **Q*BERT** \$35, Adam Expansion \$439, Adam System \$600 -- 5200: **SUPER BREAKOUT/MISSILE COMMAND** \$25, **TRACKBALL** \$55, 2600 ADAPTOR \$69, **MINER 2049er** \$30, **Q*BERT** \$35 -- Vectrex carts \$25/\$28, **WEB WARS** \$33 -- Astrocade carts \$5-8, **INCREDIBLE WIZARD** \$10 -- Arcadia 2001: **MISSILE WAR** \$4, **BASEBALL** \$6 -- Spectravideo's SV-328 (80k computer) \$439, ColecoVision adaptor (soon) \$89 -- Trak D-Density Disk Drive for Atari \$329, Axiom AT-100 printer (needs no interface) \$249 -- Transtar 315 color printer \$469 -- Dust covers \$8. They also carry slightly used items, and rent items (mostly at

\$3/10 days). Call them for availability and exact details and prices. Also, see their ad in this issue for a more complete, updated listing. If ordering directly from this listing, tell them -- they will pay the postage on your order. VIDEOGAME PRODUCTS, Box 959L, Woodside, NY 11377, (212) 429-7903 or (212) 335-7770.

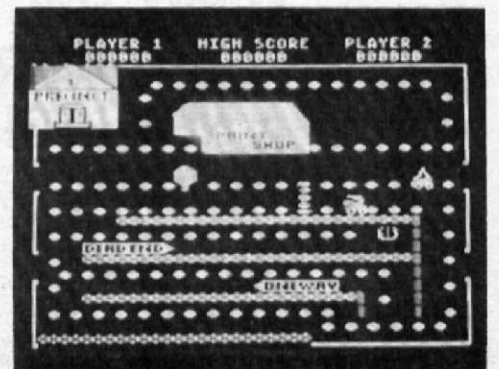
INTRODUCING THE VECTREX 3D IMAGER -- a fantastic technological breakthrough, it's a new High Performance add-on that transports Vectrex game play into the third dimension. It's real 3-D -- in color! The quest for a realistic, yet affordable method of bringing true three dimensional visual effects to video game play has ended! General Consumer Electronics introduces the amazing Vectrex 3-D Imager -- the Vectrex Graphic Computer System add-on that provides Vectrex owners with real 3-D effects that are more vivid and realistic than any other home video game system, and even more advanced than any coin-operated machine currently available. And -- the 3-D Imager adds color to Vectrex game play. The 3-D Imager plugs directly into the Vectrex console - no special connector is required. The sleek, high tech 3-D Imager goggles are specially designed to be worn by anyone - even people who wear prescription glasses. It's the easy, affordable way for Vectrex owners to enter a completely new world of video game play. The action surrounds the player like no other video game can -- home or arcade! Look for the 3-D Imager in your local games outlet, or write for more details to: General Consumer Electronics, Incorporated, 233 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 220, Santa Monica, CA 90401.



DISCWASHER's PointMaster competition joystick is a replacement joystick for people who take their games seriously. PointMaster offers both rugged design and high-speed performance. Its top-mounted fire button allows left/right hand compatibility. The unique hand grip design is taken from aircraft controller technology, insuring a comfortable hand fit and increased firing accuracy. And, because of its spring loaded pivot point, PointMaster always returns to the center of its base, allowing consistent range of motion and firing accuracy. It also comes with a five foot cord for additional room to move and maneuver. PointMaster is compatible with Atari 2600, Sears Tele-Games, Commodore VIC-20 and other game systems. Discwasher's PointMaster can be found in fine retail stores everywhere, or write for more information: Discwasher, 1407 North Providence Road, P.O. Box 6021, Columbia, MO 65205.

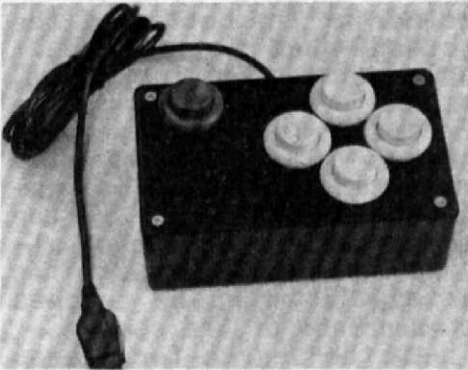


DA' FUZZ is the latest game from the folks at Roklan Software -- the same people who brought **WIZARD OF WOR** and **GOLF** home from the arcades. Described as one of the wackiest, wildest car chase games ever, the player drives through the city, keeping his or her eyes peeled for Da' Fuzz. They're looking for lawbreakers, but, if the player is able to get his or her car painted before Da' Fuzz catches up, he or she can turn on them! When the driver eliminates all the dots in the streets, he or she appears in a new section of the city...but Da' Fuzz are sure to follow. In this arcade game, licensed from Techstar, Incorporated, a tow truck will haul the driver's



wrecked car away from the scene of an accident...but even then, the fun's just beginning. Suggested retail price for **DA'FUZZ** in cartridge form is \$24.95, and it's available for Atari and Commodore 64 computers. A full-color, illustrated game catalog is available from Roklan, at no charge, by writing: Roklan Corporation, 3335 N. Arlington Heights Rd., Arlington Heights, IL 60004.

THE FINGERTIP CONTROLLER, from KY Enterprises, features arcade-style buttons for pinpoint accuracy and 8-way directional action. It works like a joystick with Atari video games and computers, Commodore's VIC-20, Sears' Video Arcade and NEC PC 6000. VIDEO Magazine rates it a best buy in

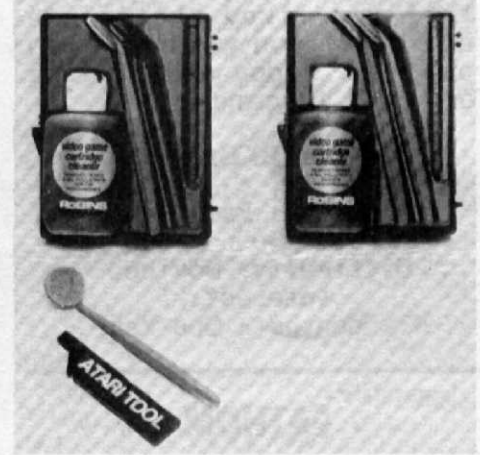


the console category, saying "it beat out all the others for sheer speed and reaction time, with its light-touch buttons offering an excellent springy feel." FingerTip Controllers are available for the Coleco systems as well, and for handicapped people (muscular dystrophy, quadriplegia, cerebral palsy) featuring the same high standards of quality and durability. Custom video game units,

featuring TV, video game and controllers in one lightweight unit for easy mobility are also assembled by KY. A line of accessories and parts are available as well, including Apple II and TI adaptors and Atari-type cables. Write for KY's catalog of (1) FingerTip Controllers (2) controllers for the handicapped (3) parts and accessories, to: KY Enterprises, 195 Claremont Ave., #288, Long Beach, CA 90803.

The ROBINS VIDEO GAME CARTRIDGE CLEANER, from Benjamin Electroproducts, Incorporated, is a complete kit for the maintenance for your video game fun. It can be used with virtually all video game systems, including Atari, Coleco, Intellivision, Odyssey and etc..

The Robins Video Game Cleaner contains a special chemical formulation developed to loosen and dissolve all contaminants on your video game cartridges' contacts without harming the electronic parts or plastic housings of the computer circuitry in the game cartridge itself, a special tool to clean Atari-type covered contacts, special applicators and complete instructions. Look for the Robins Benjamin Video Game Cartridge Cleaner in your local video game outlet, or write for more details to: Benjamin Electroproducts, Incorporated, 75 Austin Blvd., Commack, NY 11752.



SOUTHERN CASE, INCORPORATED, and ATARI are pleased to announce the introduction of the Atari 2600 and model ACC 5200 Carrying Cases. Both provide gamers with a convenient way to carry, store and travel.

The Atari 2600 case holds 12 game cartridges, two paddle controllers, an AC power supply, an instruction manual and the TV/Game switch box, and features lightweight, double-walled construction, protecting the VCS unit with a shock absorbing air space between each wall while holding all parts firmly in place when the lid is closed.

The 5200 case holds the Atari 5200 Console, nine game cartridges, AC adapter and TV switch box, and is designed to match the 5200 console,

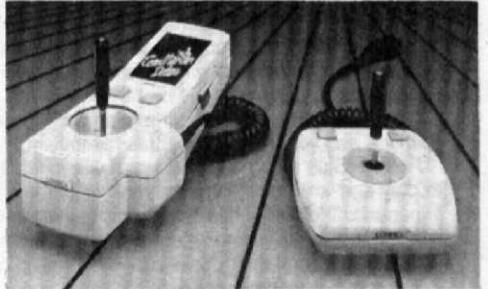
featuring double-walled construction, stress-free hinge, metal latches and luggage-style handle. Southern Case is the exclusive licensed manufacturer of the Atari 2600 and 5200 cases. Both are packaged in boxes using the current Atari packaging design. The 2600 case retails for \$19.95, and the suggested retail price of the 5200 case is \$29.95. Look for them at your local retailer, or write for more details to: Southern Case, Incorporated, 2315 Laurelbrook Street, P.O. Box 28147, Raleigh, NC 27611.

GAME XCHANGE: Exchange the Atari and Intellivision cartridges you are tired of for other different titles through GameXchange, Department G, P.O. Box 686, Elm Grove, WI 53122. For the reasonable exchange fee of only \$2.95 each, you can select from an Exchange List including over 100 Atari titles and 40 Intellivision titles. The Exchange List and complete instructions telling how to exchange your

cartridges are printed in the GameXchange catalog. About 50-60 Used Cartridges are also available for only \$2.95 to \$9.95 each. These, too, are listed in the catalog. GameXchange is an exchange service as opposed to a club and as such, NO membership dues are required. Started in 1982, the GameXchange customer list presently counts over 1000 customers using the service. The popularity of the service can be attributed to the extremely low prices and the fast service. The newest GameXchange Catalog can be obtained by sending 50 cents to: GameXchange, Dept. G., P.O. Box 686, Elm Grove, WI 53122.

Two uniquely contoured joysticks offered by Comrex International, Inc., provide the precision controls, quick response, and ease of operation needed to achieve new levels of performance in computer and video game systems.

The new joysticks are the Model CR-301 standard controller and Model CR-401 deluxe controller. Both are compatible with the Atari 2600 VCS, Atari 400 and 800 computers, Commodore VIC-20 and 64 computers, Sears Video Arcade, and, with an optional "Y" adapter, the ColecoVision system.



In addition, the top-of-the-line CR-401 ComMander is compatible with Apple and Franklin computers, and will be compatible with the IBM Personal Computer, Radio Shack TRS 80, and Epson QX-10 computers in the near future. This deluxe joystick is the first to provide precision analog control for the Atari 2600, and is also the first to be compatible with both high performance computers and the Atari 2600.

The CR-401 is a true analog joystick featuring precision control. Joystick action is a single gimbal that actuates dual 120K potentiometers, one in each axis. Trimmable X and Y axes allow fine tuning of response from computer to computer and from player to player. A player can select either free-floating or centered stick movements with the self-centering handle. Four discrete firing buttons have user-definable functions that permit personalized control. Snap-action microswitch buttons provide fast response and reliability. A coiled cord prevents wire tangle, and is easy to store. This deluxe model sells for a suggested \$44.95 retail.

The CR-301 is contoured in a square shape with rounded, smooth corners to fit large and small hands or to play on a table top. Firing buttons are located near the upper left and upper right-hand corners. The handle is mounted on the center of the unit and incorporates four microswitches that provide fast response and reliability. The joystick offers light, positive control for either fingertip or thumb control. A coiled cord offers convenient, non-tangled use and storage. The Comrex CR-301 sells for a suggested retail price of \$19.95.

Look for Comrex joysticks in your favorite retail stores, or contact Comrex International, Incorporated, 3701 Skypark Drive, Torrance, CA 90505 (213)373-0280, for more details.

Mattel Electronics has two brand new video game titles to add to your Christmas list, and several games from their current list as warrant your attention as well.

In **ADVANCED DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS TREASURE OF TARMIN**, the player has found the secret map to the underground lair of the dreaded Minotaur. The gamer can go in, but will never come out unless the Minotaur is slain and his Great Treasure is claimed. Monsters wield their conventional or spiritual weapons as the player makes his or her way through the hallways and chambers, collecting the proper defenses along the way. (Currently available in Intellivision version only.)

In **KOOL-AID MAN**, the object of the game is to get all the Kool-Aid ingredients over to the sink. The kids must gather all the Kool-Aid, sugar and a pitcher and bring them to the sink, while avoiding the dangerous Thirsties. The game is timed for fun, and moves to another phase of play after all the ingredients have been assembled. Recommended for children, this new game will be available in Intellivision and Atari 2600 VCS formats.

Mattel also suggests **BURGERTIME**, **MISSION X**, **NIGHT STALKER** and **LOCK 'N' CHASE** for your Christmas shopping list.

In **BURGERTIME**, the player must help the busy chef make hamburgers from ingredients that are scattered around the screen, avoiding Mr. Hot Dog, Mr. Egg and Mr. Pickle, who are all out to ruin the meal. Available in Intellivision, IBM and 2600 formats.

Gamers fly a top secret bombing raid over enemy territory in **MISSION X**, trying to wipe out enemy battleships, tanks, artillery guns and bridges that come into view while dodging enemy flak and gunfire. The action takes place during daytime and night. Available for Intellivision.

Relentless robots have the gamer on the run in **NIGHT STALKER**. If one is destroyed, it's replaced by even faster and smarter ones. Spiders and bats can also give the player a stunning sting. The player's only hope is a cache of weapons hidden in different locations on the screen, and a

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 22)

binaryvisions

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!

KANGAROO

From Atari, for their Atari 2600 VCS, Sears' Tele-Games, Coleco's Gemini and other, similarly-compatible systems.

This is the VCS translation of the popular arcade game of the same name, already available for play on Atari's 5200 Super System video game console. It's a multi-screen running-jumping-climbing game for one or two players (taking turns), using the standard joystick controllers. The player is a mother kangaroo, out to save her baby who is being held captive by a bunch of mean monkeys.

The graphics are sparser than in the 5200 game or arcade version, but the play is basically the same. Momma kangaroo hops along ledges and climbs or descends ladders when the joystick is pushed in the desired direction and punches with a large boxing glove when the red action button is pressed.

As momma kangaroo tries to reach her baby, the monkeys run all over, throwing rocks and trying to knock her off. If a monkey or rock hits the kangaroo, she's lost, but she can punch the monkeys and eliminate them, if she can get close enough and the player is fast enough.

As mama climbs, she can also touch a number of fruits that hang along the path, adding valuable bonus points to the player's score for each. A bell, near the top of the screen, replaces all fruit that's been picked with new fruit, worth more points than the last, when mama kangaroo touches it. This means that momma (the player) must always choose between going straight for her baby and going back down to eat valuable fruit, for a higher score.

The play is for points and the game ends when all of a player's kangaroos have been eliminated. If mama can make it through all the screens

and save her baby in every one, the game begins again at the first screen, at a higher skill level.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I'm impressed with this game, simply because it plays so much like the 5200 version. It doesn't look at all the same, however, and the sparse graphics will disappoint many of you who were fascinated by the arcade game and want it for your VCS. Play it a while. Give it a chance to grow on you and you'll see what I mean. The game is well worth the money for the right person.

Otherwise, I must warn most of you that this isn't the kind of fast-action or strategic challenge serious gamers like. It's light-hearted climbing fun, plain and simple. If you're looking for more than that, you'd best look elsewhere. If you don't mind the easy-going climbing fun this game offers, however, this is a good one to look into. It's not the best Atari's ever produced, but it's far from the worst.

MIKE: Who wouldn't like the idea of a mother trying to save her baby? I mean it. This game's basic premise is a classic idea that no one should have any complaints about. I thought the whole idea of the arcade game was a classic, too. This is not the 5200 version of the game, so the graphics aren't as crisp and sharp, but I thought they were very well-done and quite satisfactory for the system.

The play is smooth, too, and all the screens that were available for play in the 5200 version have been brought to this translation as well. The main problem with this game, if there is one, is whether you will like it for what it is, and not buy it expecting more than what you saw in the arcades. Personally, I've always thought the game was too

slow-moving and the challenge not serious enough to hold my attention for long, but both of my kids loved the game in both home versions. This is most likely due to the basic simplicity of the play itself and to the graphics that make the overall action cute and fun to watch.

For young kids (and I'm speaking of ages 6 to 12 when I say that) a game must have simple-yet-challenging play and top-quality interesting VCS graphics to hold their interest. This game provides that, though the graphics really aren't the best I've seen done for the system. At least the mother kangaroo looks like a kangaroo, instead of just a pile blocks.

Don't buy this one expecting a challenging adult game with a cute theme. That isn't what the arcade version was and neither is this one. Get it if you liked the arcade game or if you want to keep your kids happy and playing for hours to come.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Good
Difficulty: Novice
Interest:
Six Months - One Year

FATHOM

From Imagic, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games, Coleco's Gemini, and other similarly-compatible video game systems. Designed by Rob Fulop.

Neptune's daughter has been captured and is being held in a cage at the bottom of the sea. Players must search, as a dolphin and as a seagull, to find the parts of the trident that can free her. It's a one-player "quest" game, using the standard joystick controller.

Gamers begin as a dolphin, and dive deep into the sea by pressing the red fire button to swim, while pushing the joystick in the desired direction. As the dolphin swims downward toward the captive Neptina, he must avoid collisions with seaweed and octopuses, which deduct points, and try to catch as many sea horses as possible. Sea Horses are worth extra points when touched. If the dolphin touches all the seahorses in one section, before swimming on toward the bottom of the sea, a starfish might appear. If the dolphin can touch the starfish, a piece or pieces of the Trident the player needs to free Neptune's daughter will appear at the bottom of the screen. The player must have all three pieces of the Trident, to-

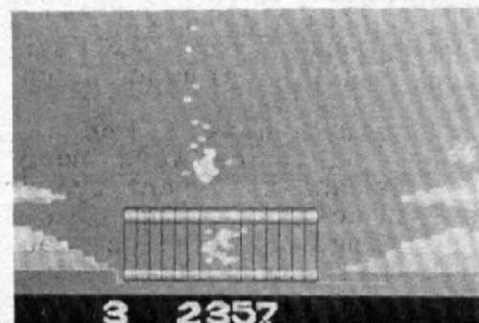
gether at the bottom of the screen, when his or her Dolphin reaches Neptina's cage, or the royal mermaid won't be freed. Touching the right number of sea horses will also make a bird symbol appear at the bottom of the screen. The bird symbol allows the dolphin to turn into a seagull, when he reaches the surface of the sea.

As the search for pieces of the trident continues, the player's dolphin takes to the air as a seagull when it surfaces, and flies with a flap of its wings. The bird flaps its wings when the player presses the red fire button and floats a moment with each flap. The joystick itself is used to point the bird in the desired direction.

The seagull can fly off-screen in either direction, then up, to continue searching for pieces of the trident. In the air, the bird must avoid flocks of black birds. Collisions with them will deduct points from the player's score. As the bird flies, the player must try to touch pink clouds that float by, to earn points. If the seagull touches all the pink clouds in a section of sky, a star may appear. Touching the star will make one or more pieces of the trident appear at the bottom of the screen. Touching the right number of clouds may make a fish symbol appear at the bottom of the screen, allowing the seagull to turn back into a dolphin when it returns to the surface of the sea. The pink clouds will occasionally turn grey. Touching grey clouds may still make the star or fish appear, but they deduct points from the player's score whenever touched.

Each time the mermaid maiden is saved a new quest begins, with the total playing area expanded by one section to either side and above, at a higher skill level. In each successive challenge, the bird must fly farther and faster, with more obstacles to avoid and stars that are fewer and farther between, to find all the pieces of the trident and continue play.

Players start each game with 50 points. Points earned during each rescue mission



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are saved, and the player starts the next mission with 50 more points. Gamers are urged to save the mermaid seven times for a special surprise.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: Here we have a multiple screen game that has as its basic premise the rescue of a fair mermaid (forget the fact that the hero is a dolphin). I can just hear the rising expectations out there, but don't hold your breath waiting for this one. The graphics are good, though they really aren't anything that hasn't been done before, sometimes with games that were a lot more fun to play, and that's about all I really liked about it.

The play isn't as hard as it seems at first, but by the time you've mastered the control of the dolphin and seagull, you'll be too bored with the overall challenge to enjoy the rest. I've never liked the idea of sliding through moving objects that resemble nothing I am familiar with in real life, as you must do in this game. It leaves me with an uneasy memory of the kind of play offered in Data Age's ill-fated **JOURNEY: ESCAPE**.

The control of the game's on-screen characters is good, and the multiple screen displays do add an extra dimension to the play that is much needed, but it just doesn't come through with the impact that is needed to compete in the video game market today.

My advice here is to stay away from this game. I wouldn't even put this one on my Christmas list. I simply didn't think it was that fun to play.

ALAN: Bah! Humbug! I'd like to find this game in my Christmas stocking any time -- but I sometimes don't have the average video gamer's tastes.

I can see why Mike didn't like this one. It isn't his type of game, and it won't be for a lot of you, either. That's because **FATHOM** is a quest, an adventure game, if you will, and Mike rarely appreciates those, unless there is a lot of arcade-style shoot-em-up action involved as well.

The bad news is that **FATHOM** doesn't feature any high-level rapid-fire shooting, blasting or other typical attack-style arcade action. The main action involved in the play is searching for the pieces of the trident -- and avoiding collisions with sea weed, octopi and black birds. The good news is that it's a really pretty multi-screen quest for the VCS that keeps getting tougher each time you solve it.

I would have liked it better if there were more screens and different types of obstacles, but the ever-expanding playfield as you save the mermaid makes up for this lack. Actually, I'm surprised so much play and display was crammed into one VCS cartridge. If you like this

type of action, you'll be surprised, too.

In short, this is truly an original adventure-type challenge. There aren't any dragons to slay and there is never an alien in sight, but video questers should enjoy it for the variety, originality of concept, and challenge. Look into it.

RATINGS:

Concept: New
Graphics/Sound: Fair - Good
Difficulty: Student
Interest:
One Day - Six Months

DONKEY KONG JUNIOR

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

This is the VCS translation of the popular arcade game of the same name, already available for play on Coleco's own ColecoVision video game system, and reviewed in this issue for Mattel's Intellivision. It's a running/jumping/climbing sequel to the now world-famous arcade and home video game hit, **DONKEY KONG**, for one or two players at a time, using the standard joystick controllers.

This is virtually the same game as the one described in this issue for Intellivision play, but for the Atari VCS. All three screens are available for play, and the play and rules of the game itself are also virtually identical.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: This is yet another example of Coleco's continuing problem with adapting for other systems the arcade games they do so well with for their own, at least as far as the graphics go. This, however, isn't really a solid indication as to the way the game plays, and shouldn't always be used as the sole reason for deciding whether it's a good buy or not.

There are already a lot of really good climbing games for the VCS. Coleco's **DONKEY KONG JUNIOR** isn't the best, but it does rank right up there as one of Coleco's best VCS efforts to date. Anyone who has seen this game in the arcades will be very disappointed with the overall graphic display and, in some respects, with the way it plays in the home. In fact, if you already have the ColecoVision system, there isn't any need to buy this game. It will only be a disappointment in comparison. But, for those of you with the VCS and no other system, it isn't as bad as it at first might seem.

The play is a bit slow, but the action is fairly true to the original. You must, however, want to have this version, and to have thoroughly enjoyed it in the arcades, if you expect to enjoy it at home.

ALAN: This one plays ok, I guess. I didn't like it as much as I did the Intellivi-

sion version, but I suppose that's because this one seems to work better for disk (or short, stubby ColecoVision) controllers -- at least for me.

Actually, I didn't think the graphics were all that disappointing, considering the fact that all three of the screens from the ColecoVision game are present and accounted for. It just didn't feel as close to the arcade original as the Intellivision and ColecoVision translations did, graphics aside.

Still, VCS **DONKEY KONG JUNIOR** is better than Coleco's VCS **DONKEY KONG** was and, if you really must have the game for your VCS, it will provide you with a reasonable challenge. I just don't think it was worth paying the full retail price for. Keep trying, Coleco, you keep getting closer and closer to the mark with games for this system.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Poor
Difficulty: Novice
Interest:
Two Weeks - Six Months

POPEYE

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

This home version of **POPEYE** is essentially the same game as the one for ColecoVision play, described in more detail elsewhere in this issue. All three screens are available for play, for one or two gamers (taking turns). The graphics, though less detailed, are also very similar, as is the overall game play.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: This game is an excellent example of the way Parker Brothers is mastering quality arcade translations for all systems, always making the graphics the very best possible for each. They never skimp when they work with the lesser systems, and that's always a commendable attitude for game designers and manufacturers to exhibit.

I liked the graphics on this version of the game. They aren't even as nice as some I've seen produced on the VCS, but they still look good and work well on every level. Then Parker Brothers very wisely took what memory they didn't use for graphics and put it into some game play that is very similar to what's available in the arcade version.

Most of the major elements of the arcade game are present in this VCS video challenge -- even the overall feel (and that's unusual, believe me!). In some respects, this version might even be better than those done for the other more advanced video game systems, because the play isn't quite as finely tuned. This means you must be even more on your

toes all the time or the action will quickly get the best of you. This is a commendable VCS translation of a worthy arcade challenge. All VCS owners who liked the arcade version, or who simply like a good climbing game, should enjoy it thoroughly. After all, anyone who eats spinach can't be all bad.

ALAN: What else can I say? Mike's right on every point when it comes to this game. I've already explained my basic lack of interest in the arcade game in my review of the ColecoVision version (elsewhere in this issue), and this was the first home translation of the game I ever played, so it goes without saying that I wasn't too enthusiastic when I first plugged **POPEYE** into my VCS. After about fifteen minutes of glancing through the instructions and fiddling with the joystick, I was hooked into a play session that lasted two hours -- and seemed like another fifteen minutes. I've played it a lot more since.

Parker Brothers has done a superb job of bringing this game to the VCS. Their 2600 **POPEYE** is a testament to good programming for the system that others in the field should study and follow. If you're looking for some solid arcade-style climbing action, get this game for your VCS.

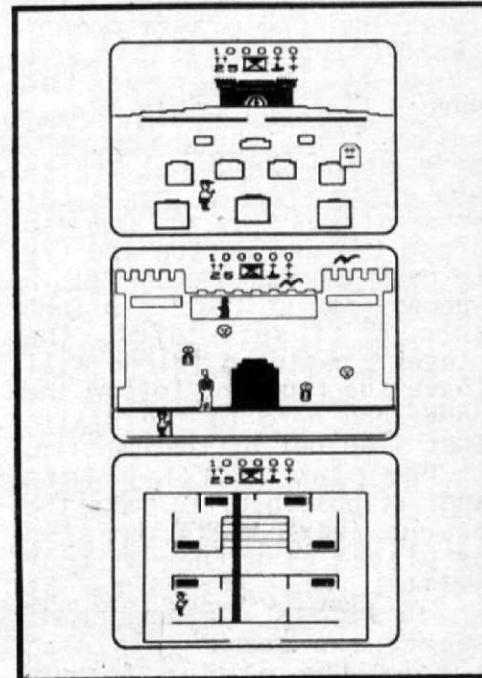
RATINGS:

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

GHOST MANOR/ SPIKE'S PEAK

From Xonox, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games, Coleco's Gemini, and other similarly-compatible video game systems. Both games were designed by BECK-TECH.

This cartridge is the first of Xonox's new "double-ender" games, with an original and completely different game program on each end. **GHOST MANOR** is a multi-screen maze/adventure. **SPIKE'S PEAK** is a multi-screen climbing/adventure challenge. Both games are for one player at a



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time using the standard joystick controllers.

In **GHOST MANOR**, the player may select to control either a boy or a girl. The object of the game is to save a friend of the opposite sex, who has been captured and is being held prisoner in a ghastly haunted mansion. The on-screen boy or girl is moved in the desired direction by pushing the joystick.

In the first screen, the gamer must chase a ghost around a cemetery. Each time the ghost is tagged, one spear is added to an arsenal the gamer can use in the second screen.

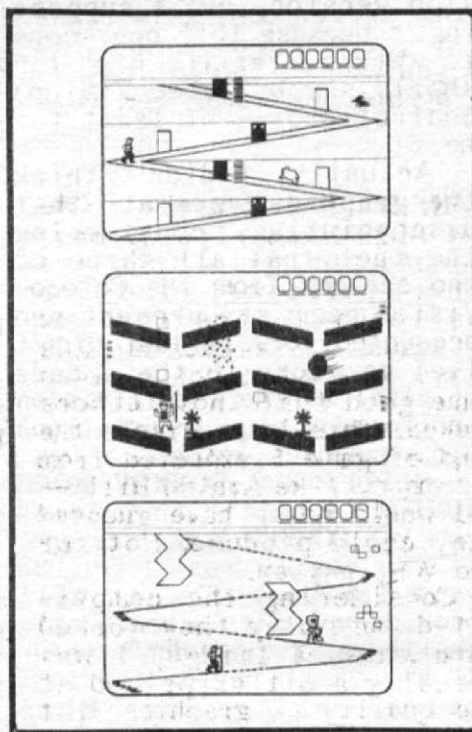
The second screen is a view of the front of the haunted mansion. A variety of spooks and a horrid axe-chopping mummy are guarding the entrance. The player must shoot them all out of the way, slide-and-shoot style, to enter. Pressing the red fire button releases one spear from the player's limited supply.

In the third screen the player is inside, on the first floor of the mansion. The floor is a simple maze of four rooms, two stairways, and some corridors. Each room also contains a coffin. The player must run from coffin to coffin, trying to find the wooden stakes he or she will need to battle the vampire later in the game. Touching each coffin will either produce a stake or nothing -- but there's at least one on each floor. Meanwhile, a ghostly wall constantly slides back and forth across the entire floor. If the wall touches the player's on-screen character, that boy or girl is lost. When the stake has been found, the player can then go up the stairs, to the fourth screen.

The fourth screen is a view of the second floor of the mansion. The second floor looks much like the first, with four more rooms, corridors, stairs and coffins, in a tougher configuration, and another deadly sliding wall to avoid. Again, the player can look for another stake before moving on to the stairs which lead to the fifth screen.

The fifth screen is a view of the top floor of the mansion. This is the vampire's lair, and the player's captured friend is visible in a room at the top of the screen. As soon as the player enters this floor, the vampire drops down and starts the chase. If the gamer has some stakes, he or she can press the red button and try to push the vampire up into a second room at the top of the screen. If successful, the player's captured friend will leave the room and follow the on-screen hero to the stairs that lead out of the mansion.

The play is for points and, if possible, to make the rescue. **GHOST MANOR** can also be played at either of four skill levels, the higher of which limits the number of spears the gamer gets, and forces the player to run through the mansion with only occasional lightning to see



by.

In **SPIKE'S PEAK**, the player must maneuver a mountain climber to the top of the mountain before he freezes, collecting enough points during the climb to win the game.

Each gamer starts with three lives. The first screen shows the mountain in the distance, with the Spike winding his way up a path as the player pushes the joystick, to start the climb. When he reaches the flags, the display switches to screen two and the climb begins.

In screen two, the player must walk up a series of zig-zagging paths that lead from the bottom of the screen to the top. These paths wind through the meadows, and they are dotted with black and brown squares, representing canyons and caves into which the climber can duck for safety when attacked by swift eagles and deadly bears. If an eagle or bear touches the climber, one life is lost. The joystick must be pushed up or down, when the climber is in front of a cave or canyon, to make him duck inside. The trouble is, a bear can also duck into a cave. If the climber jumps into a cave with a bear, or if a bear joins him later, he's a goner.

In the third screen, the player must jump his or her climber over rocky ledges, represented on-screen by three slightly-askew broken horizontal lines, to climb to the top. As he climbs, the mountain adventurer must avoid rock slides, several giant boulders and cactus, all of which will eliminate him with a touch.

The fourth screen is at the mountain's ice cap. Again the climber must ascend a zig-zag trail to the top of the screen. This time, however, he must constantly watch out for the icy path, snow avalanches and an abominable snowman that will always try to kill him. Ice axes can occasionally be picked up along the way, to help him battle the snowman, and ice diamonds that add points to the player's score.

If the climber can make it to the top of the fourth screen, the gamer gets to watch him go on to plant a

flag in the mountain's peak in the fifth and final screen of the game.

The play is for points and, if possible, to make it to the top of the mountain. An added time element -- the dropping temperature -- is thrown in, for extra measure. **SPIKE'S PEAK** can also be played at any of four different skill levels, which affect Spike's jumping, his speed of movement, the eagles' warnings and the deadliness of the falling boulders.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: Sometimes it seems that the more things change the more they stay the same. Here we have a new concept in video games: two cartridges that are piggy-backed into one, so that you're essentially purchasing two games for the price of one. That's a novel idea and Xonox should be commended for taking such a bold move. Unfortunately, neither of the games on their first double-ender is worth the price of a single cartridge, and two bad video games don't make one good one, I don't care how you put them together.

Most first releases from new video game companies seem to be very weak graphically, and these two are no exception. The second problem a lot of new producers have is also present in both of these games -- there isn't enough game here to even remotely consider playing, next to the better ones that are currently available for the system. The play and movement on the screen reminded me a lot of Data Age's early releases, and we all know where those games got that company. I just hope Xonox can pull its act together and do something better next time around, or they may follow the same corporate path.

I wish more game companies would work on giving us a game first and gimmicks, if any, as an afterthought, later. Too many start with the gimmick and I would venture a guess that's the case here.

In the end, I must advise you to avoid this cartridge, despite the fact that it appears at first to be a bargain. Neither game is even good for a laugh.

ALAN: I notice Mike just sort of lumped these two games together into one review, so I'm going to try it a little differently. There are two games here, and they each deserve their own comments, so I'll cover each one separately. Then I'll wrap it up with a brief overview.

SPIKE'S PEAK is a disaster. At least, it was for me. Maybe it's just been designed to be so hard that no one will ever beat it without hours and hours and hours of heavy practice, but I simply couldn't get anywhere on this one, no matter how hard or on what skill level I tried. The control of my on-screen climber was so haphazard and imprecise that I simply couldn't master it and gave up in frustration after an hour. Period.

GHOST MANOR was more interesting. Here there was a challenge I could sink my teeth into. The slide-and-shoot battle at the mansion's entrance was a worthy one, especially with that infernal mummy constantly hacking and chopping at you, and, once inside, the quest seems impossible, especially at the higher skill levels, where you must make your way in the dark. But -- at least it is possible. After a couple of hours, I had rescued the girl on the easiest level and was working my way through the mansion without lights, at the higher skill levels.

But this game is marred by some serious flaws, too. The ghost chase at the beginning is a total waste of time and VCS memory and, after going through it all, the battle with the vampire is disappointing. If you ask me, the climax of a supposed "adventure"-type game like this one should be satisfying, making you feel like all the effort was worth it in the end and challenging you even more than the quest itself. The climax in **GHOST MANOR** was a let-down.

Overall, both games utilize graphics that are far too simplistic to make it in today's market. I would have been much happier if Xonox's designers had used only two or three screens in each game, and made them look and play better. Personally, I think they've simply tried to accomplish too much all at once and this is where the cartridge, as a whole, fails.

In the end, I have to agree with Mike. Stay away from this one. There are too many better games to spend your money on. **GHOST MANOR/SPIKE'S PEAK** is no bargain.

OPINIONS:

Concept: Original
Graphics/Sound: Poor
Difficulty: Student
Interest: Yawn - One Week

LONDON BLITZ

From the Avalon Hill Video Game Company, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games, Coleco's Gemini, and other, similarly-compatible video game systems. Designed by William J. Sheppard.

LONDON BLITZ is a one-player "seek and disarm" video game, using one standard joystick controller. The object of the game is to locate a number of bombs that have been placed all over London, and disarm as many of them as possible before they explode.

The game is played in three basic phases; the map phase, the movement phase and the bomb phase. First, the player looks at a large map of the streets of London. The map can be scrolled vertically with the joystick controller, as it's about three times larger than the TV screen. The streets are twisted and many. Enemy bombs, each looking like tiny glittering lights start appearing on the map, one at a

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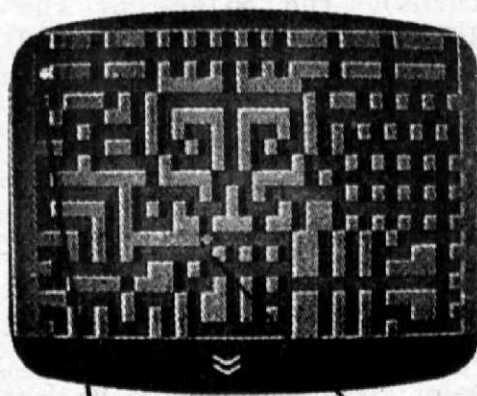
time, as soon as the game begins. More appear as the game progresses. A dot representing the player's current position also appears on this first screen.

While the main map is displayed, the player picks the bomb he or she wishes to disarm, makes a mental note of the path he or she must make to get to it, then presses the red fire button, to switch to the "movement" phase of play. Here, the screen displays a first-person view of the streets, looking like endless halls with intersections scattered liberally along the way and occasional dead-ends. A white arrow acts as a compass, showing the direction, on the first map, in which the player is presently moving. In this phase of play, the gamer can move down any of the halls by pushing forward on the joystick, or back up by pulling it down. Left/right movement is also possible, at any intersection, by pushing the joystick to move in the desired direction, then up, to move forward down the chosen avenue. As he or she moves along the various streets, the player can check his or her position in relation to the chosen bomb by pressing the red fire button at any time, to return to the overall map view.

When found, the bombs will appear on the road ahead. Approaching the bomb will then change the view to a close-up display of the explosive charge's inner workings. This is something like an x-ray, showing the outline of the bomb and three slides, a row of three indicators, and a timer, inside.

Each type of bomb must be disarmed differently, but the player disarms all of them by positioning each of the three slides in their right places before the timer counts down and it blows up. Pushing the joystick up or down selects which slide will be moved, and pushing the stick right or left moves it. To test a combination, the player must push the joystick up or down until all three slides are green, then to the left or right, until a "beep" is heard. When the beep sounds, the three indicators below the slides will change color. Each indicator represents one of the slides above. If an indicator is black, it means the slide represented is in the correct position. If the indicator is red, it means the slide should be moved farther to the left. If the indicator is green, it means the slide should be moved farther to the right. When all the slides are positioned correctly, a high-pitched tone will sound, and the player will instantly reappear in the main map phase, ready to find another bomb to diffuse. This is how the Basic Bomb works.

The Automatic Bomb's slides change positions constantly, and the player must check for the correct combination until all three indicators are black. The Random Indicator Bomb is basically



the same as the Basic and Automatic Bombs, except that the three indicators may indicate any of the slides above, and not necessarily in the same order that they do on the first two.

The play is for rank, not points. Players may select their beginning rank at the start of the game, but this will affect the number of tries allowed for diffusing each bomb, and the amount of time before each bomb explodes. The gamer's rank will climb as more bombs are disarmed, and can drop as bombs explode on the map. Each gamer's performance is rated by the ending rank displayed at the game's end. The game ends whenever a player reaches the highest possible rank, is "busted" below the lowest possible rank, or is blown up by a bomb while defusing it.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: I like to run around saving things, rather than just blowing things up for the sheer fun of it, and this game provides you precisely the first kind of action. It's not your usual fast-action game that will burn out your reflexes and cause your adrenaline to pour into your blood stream at a feverish pace, but it will make you move and think at the same time.

Speed and brains are what it takes to succeed at playing Avalon Hill's **LONDON BLITZ**, and those are the two things I appreciate most in a good video game. By speed, I'm not talking about sheer reflexive movement, either. I'm talking about not hanging around in one place too long, if you intend to score high.

Graphically, this game really isn't much to look at, but, still, everything is well-defined on the screen so there is no confusion. The sound isn't much help in the play, but it doesn't make you want to pull your hair out, either. Play-wise, I think **LONDON BLITZ** is so much just the kind of game every system needs that you won't have to depend on stupendous graphics to make you like it. It's just plain fun to play.

LONDON BLITZ isn't a good arcade-style game, and this might keep a lot of people from liking it, but there are always a lot of us out there who like good games that don't require blinding reflexes. That's probably because some of us don't have those reflexes anyway.

In short, take a good hard look at this game in the stores, or on a friend's VCS.

It might not be just the thing you're looking for, but that doesn't mean that a lot of you won't find it just as enjoyable as I did, either.

ALAN: I agree, I agree! **LONDON BLITZ** has already been "bombed" by more than one other reviewer, and I'm heartened to see that my esteemed colleague has the sense of what makes a video game good that those others lacked. This is precisely the kind of game I expected from a company like Avalon Hill -- and would never have guessed they could produce. Not for the VCS, anyway.

Considering the complicated game play they worked into this cartridge, I was actually a bit surprised at the quality of graphics that designer William J. Sheppard was able to work out, with the remaining memory. Consider: the overall map display is more complex than the scrolling maze on CommaVid's excellent **MINES OF MINOS**, and the first-person "movement" phase looks every bit as good as Starpath's incredible **ESCAPE FROM THE MINDMASTER**. Really -- how could anyone expect more than this, on the VCS?

As for the play itself, it sounds like it could get to be a bit repetitious, and it is to a certain degree, but it all moves so fast you never have time to get bored with it. I think the action builds to enough of an adrenaline-producing frenzy, as the map fills with bombs and time starts running out, to keep most any arcade game fan happy, too.

Get this game, even if you usually only like rapid-fire blast-em-ups. **LONDON BLITZ** is one of the best new combinations of strategy and skill produced for the VCS in years.

RATINGS:

Concept: New
Graphics/Sound: Fair - Very Good
Difficulty: Graduate
Interest: One Year

POLE POSITION

From Atari, for their Atari 5200 "Super System" video game console.

This is the home translation of the popular arcade game of the same name, already available for play on the VCS 2600 system, for one player at a time, using the standard joystick/keypad controller. The object of the game is to drive a high-performance race car, first in a qualifying heat, then, if the player's time is good enough, in the Grand Prix itself.

The game is essentially the same as for the 2600, with improved graphics and additional play options. Gamers may choose from four different race courses, all of which are basically identical. Each progressively tougher track, however, includes increasing numbers of other racers on the course, all driving more erratically,

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making collisions harder to avoid.

Players steer their cars by pushing the joystick left or right, and shift into high and low gear by pushing it up or down. The side action buttons act as the accelerator and brakes. The gamer's qualifying time during the first heat determines his or her place in the eight-car line-up for the main event, if it was good enough to qualify for the race at all. Then, as the race is run, the number of cars passed and overall time will determine if the player can continue for all the laps of the race. Players may also select a race, on each of the tracks, that is one to eight laps in length.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: This version of **POLE POSITION** lacks only one thing that the arcade game had -- and, personally, I'm glad to see it go. In the arcade version, there seems to be a built-in loss factor that only got tougher the more I played, no matter how good I eventually got, so it continuously ate my quarters at a very rapid clip. This home version is still tough as nails to beat, but at least it doesn't cost you a quarter a try. The famous **CENTIPEDE** sign that I always used to smash my car into isn't on the home version, either -- but don't get your hopes up. There are still plenty of road signs to smash into -- they just don't say "**CENTIPEDE**."

The graphics on this version are excellent. It gives you the feel of a genuine road race. This feeling leaves you the first time you try it with the 5200 joystick, but all things can be overcome with the right amount of determination. After a few practice runs through the course, you will begin to get the feel of the controllers. And, since you don't have to put a quarter in each time you want to play, there's no sense making it too easy, right?

The opening sound effects on this version are also every bit as good as those in the arcade game. This always helped get me in the mood for another race and is another plus for Atari's programmers. The other obvious plus to this game is the fact that you don't have to buy any additional hardware to play it.

I still don't care for the time-limit factor that is present in each round of play because it makes me wonder about the long-term playability of the match. After several hours of play, how-

ever, boredom still hasn't set in for me, but those hours were not consecutive. Still, I kept coming back to it for more, so I guess it can't be that bad, now can it?

Overall the play is really close to the arcade version. I still don't think this one has any really long-term play potential, but it's still a very worthy effort that you might do well to consider buying.

ALAN: I am impressed. After Activision's **ENDURO** and Coleco's **TURBO**, I must admit I at first wondered how well this one could fare, especially when Atari brought it out for the 2600. But I liked it there and it's even better for play on the 5200.

I'll tell you what I like most about this game: the same time-limit factor that Mike didn't like. The other two home racing games I mentioned had this as well, but they were just a bit less severe about cutting you off mid-race. As Mike has already pointed out, however, there's nothing wrong with making a tough video game for home play, just as long as the challenge and playability hold your interest enough to keep you popping that "reset" button and trying again. The other racing games I mentioned were all very good, but they tended to wear me out. When I was done with a couple of tough races I quit. Not so with **POLE POSITION**. First, I didn't even qualify the first eight or so times I tried this one. Then I got occupied with trying to qualify for a better place in the race. Then I concerned myself with driving the race to the end of four laps -- which I still haven't succeeded at. This is not to mention the fact that I have been racing on the easiest level, for the most part, all along! There's still three other tougher courses to try -- and four more laps I can add to the challenge when I've mastered that.

So, I think this is definitely one of the most playable racing games currently available for home play -- for the 2600 or 5200. The 5200's superb graphics, and extended opportunities for altering the challenge makes it even better. If you have the system you should have this game. Period. End of race -- er -- I mean -- review.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Excellent
Difficulty: Novice - Graduate
Interest: Six months.

BERZERK

From Atari, for their Atari 5200 "Super System" video game console.

This is the 5200 translation of the famous and popular arcade original of the same name, already available for play on the VCS 2600. For one or two players (taking

turns), the object of the game is to move from maze to maze, blasting at the enemy robots. The player must also avoid the bouncing Evil Otto, who always enters the battle, if it rages on in any one room for too long, and earn the highest score possible before all of the gamer's on-screen men are blasted.

This game plays very much like the arcade original. The rules are the same as for the 2600 game and the graphics aren't that much different from the earlier home version, but Atari has added a taunting, mechanical-sounding robot voice that constantly taunts the player, calling out, "Chicken! Fight like a robot!" and "Got the Chicken. Got the humanoid.", and other similar phrases.

The play is for points, earned for eliminating enemy robots and as bonuses, for clearing an entire room of all the robots. Each room starts out full of marching and shooting enemy robots, scattered or in bunches. The gamer moves his or her on-screen man around the screen by pushing the joystick in the desired direction, and fires his lasers in the direction the joystick is pointed by pushing the side action buttons. The gamer can step out of any maze and enter a new one at any time. If a player stays in a room too long, Evil Otto, the mad scientist who created the mazes and robots, will enter the room and finish the job his robots couldn't complete. Otto moves quickly in a bouncing path, heading directly towards the player's on-screen man. He will eliminate the player's man if he catches up before the gamer can move him out the door and into a new maze.

Each successive maze is a bit tougher than the last. In the first maze, the robots are unarmed, but they get armed and deadly as the game progresses. The game is over when all of a player's reserve on-screen men are lost.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: 5200 **BERZERK** is the closest thing to the arcade version so far, if you don't mind using the 5200 controllers. The game isn't easy, to say the least, and that's why I like it so much. The arcade, VCS and 5200 versions are all a sheer joy to play, and the good fun just keeps coming at you in all of them. **BERZERK** seems to be to be a scaled-down predecessor to **SPACE DUNGEON**, without being so nerve wracking.

The graphics of the game are nothing to rave about but, then again, even the arcade version didn't have

the best graphics. Graphics, however, shouldn't make or break a great game. The key to **BERZERK**'s success so far is the fact that it's really simple to understand and start playing right away, but it's very hard to master.

The game calls for quick thinking and reflexes, but you don't have to be a fighter pilot with the right stuff to be successful playing it (although it wouldn't hurt your score to play it like a fighter pilot flies a jet).

But -- what puts this version above the others is the sound effects. Without having to buy another piece of hardware, you can be called a chicken just for showing the common sense to leave a maze before Otto gets you. The sound on the voices isn't as clear as it is in other voice games (like Mattel's Intellivoice) that I've heard but, considering the fact that you don't have to pay extra for a voice module, it's really impressive. This is the best home version of the arcade game so far, and should be a welcome addition to your 5200 library.

ALAN: This is, as Mike said, an impressive version of **BERZERK** -- probably the best so far. And, the addition of voices without the requirement of extra peripheral hardware is a pleasant and welcome surprise that works well, adding an element of fun to the game that wasn't present in the 2600 translation. But -- I don't know -- it just seems to me that this version came out too late. I know Mike loves **BERZERK**, and I'm sure a lot of you do, too, but I've already been exposed to some newer games for the 5200 that, quite honestly, put this one to shame.

I thought the graphics were fine. As Mike mentioned, there wasn't any great detail to the graphics in the arcade version, either. And this one plays smoothly -- very nearly identical to the way the arcade original played. I just got tired of playing it a long time ago. I enjoyed a chance to play the game again, while writing this review, but I seriously doubt that I'll pull it out for an extended session later. Maybe I've just been spoiled.

In short, **BERZERK** fans will relish this 5200 version because it's the best so far. For the rest of us, it's a solid translation of a game that's already seen its day.

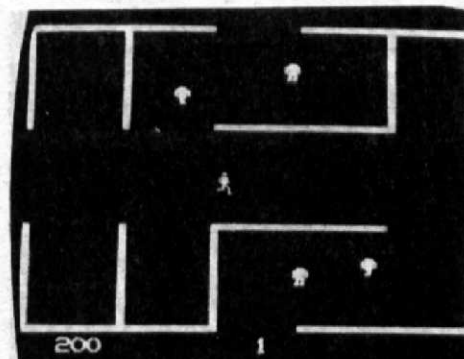
RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Good - Very Good
Difficulty: Student
Interest: One Week - One Year

JOUST

From Atari, for their Atari 5200 "Super System" video game system.

JOUST is the home translation of the popular arcade game of the same name, for



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one or two players using the standard joystick/keypad controllers. The player has landed on a bizarre planet filled with alien gladiators riding giant armored birds. Astride his or her own armored flying mount, the player must do battle with the gladiators to survive.

The screen is filled with a number of ledges, each with a grey "regeneration pad," from which the alien gladiators and players appear. As soon as the game begins, the first gladiators appear and begin flying around the screen, challenging the player to battle. The player's own on-screen figure and mount appear at the bottom to start, then re-appear anywhere, after a life has been lost in battle.

The bird flaps its wings when the gamer presses either lower side button. It sails up into the air a little each time the wings are flapped, and settles slowly back to the ground when its wings aren't flapped for a moment. The joystick controls the direction of the bird's flight, and also makes it run along any ledge upon which it has landed. The gamer's bird can run in either direction, then stop, skidding briefly, turn and run in the other direction, at the player's discretion. It also may run off the edge of a ledge and drop to the next one or take flight.

When the player confronts an alien gladiator, the outcome of the battle is determined by which on-screen character is higher at the time they collide. If both gladiators are the same height upon collision, the joust is a draw and both bounce away from one another unharmed. When an alien gladiator has been eliminated, it turns into an egg which falls to the nearest ledge. The player must touch this egg, for extra points, or it will eventually hatch into an even tougher gladiator.

There are three types of alien Buzzard Riders: the Bounders (wearing red), the Hunters (wearing gray) and the Shadow Lords (wearing blue). Each is tougher than the last.

The player must also contend with a lava pit and the Lava Troll, both at the bottom of the screen, and the Pterodactyl, which flies all over the screen at various times during the game. After the first round of play, the lava pit opens up. If the player falls into the pit, one life is lost. If he or she flies too close to the pit, the Lava Troll may reach up with his awful hand and grab the mount right out of the sky. With effort, a player can free his or her mount from the Troll's grip, but he holds on tighter as the game progresses. The Pterodactyl flies from side to side, at various heights and during different portions of the game. This giant prehistoric bird can be eliminated, but it takes a direct hit on the beak to do him in. Otherwise, any contact with him will

lose the player one life.

Each time all the Buzzard Riders have been eliminated, a new wave begins. The longer the player or players survive, the harder the challenge becomes, with fewer ledges and more Buzzard Riders that fight a tougher battle. Certain special waves also provide the player with opportunities to earn bonus points. In the Survival Wave (one-player), the gamer earns 3000 points if he or she can stay on the mount for the entire round. Both players must try to stay seated for the entire wave to earn 3000 points each in the Team Wave (two-player). In the Gladiator Wave (two-player), the first player to unseat the other earns 3000 bonus points. In the Egg Wave (both modes), all the Buzzard Riders start as eggs which the player or players must collect quickly, before they hatch. The Pterodactyl Wave starts right out with the flying prehistoric beastie on-screen.

The play is for points, earned for unseating the Buzzard Riders, collecting eggs, losing a life, and earning the bonus points described above. In the two-player mode, both players are on the screen at the same time, and can also battle each other. The game is over when all of a player's or both players' gladiators are lost.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: If I was to rate a game entirely on its originality, I would have to give Atari's **JOUST** one of the highest ratings I could. In the arcades and at home, this is one of the most innovative new game concepts I've seen in a long long time. And, although I thought the graphics were just a little on the sparse side in both versions, and somewhat sharper and better-defined in the arcade than in this home translation, they are both very close, completely functional and a pleasure to look at. The sound effects, too, are really nice. They clearly indicate a joust that is a draw, failure or success, and when a player is re-entering the screen, collecting an egg, running, skidding or whatever, with different sounds that are effective and easy to distinguish from one another. A triumph in presentation all around!

When it comes to the play, I have to mention that some of you will get frustrated learning to fly your gladiator, but the effort to master the play will be well rewarded with one of the most interesting and challenging games to come along in years. I mean that! Besides, the arcade version was no simple matter to learn to play, either. I love **JOUST**! And -- the more I play it the more I love it.

Buy this game for your 5200. It's original and a delight to play. On top of that, the increasing challenge is enough to keep you playing for many months to

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come. It's a best-buy all around that you really shouldn't live without.

MIKE: I have always longed for the return of the days of knights in shining armor, riding off to save a fair damsel or to battle a dragon, and this game brings those days to your home screen. But -- wait a minute -- these guys are riding what looks like giant ostriches. The graphics aren't bad at all and I can see clearly they are ostriches! It's really true! I suppose it would take a true knight in shining armor to make these big birds fly, but fly they do. These are the thoughts I ran through when I was first exposed to this game in the arcades a few months ago.

The home version arrived much sooner than I ever thought it would, but the end result is no rush job. As I already said, the graphics are very well-done, giving you the same feel as you got in the arcades while you are playing, and this is one of the cartridge's strong points.

The only drawback to this home version that I can find is that it is almost too easy to play for those of us that had some solid practice in the arcades first -- but that's only on the first couple of levels, and is no reason whatsoever to hold off buying this one for your 5200. It's about as good a job as can be done with today's technology. And, even though the single-player mode may be a bit slow for some of you, the two-player version is as much fun as always, and, most of the time, even more fun than the one-player version. In short, if you liked **JOUST** in the arcades, this is the one for you. If you didn't like it in the arcades, or never gave it a try, check this home translation out anyway. You'll be glad you did, and I would wager you will buy it once you've played it just a little while.

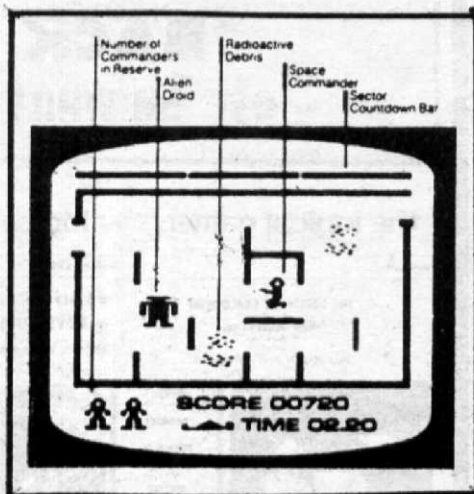
RATINGS:

Concept: Original
Graphics/Sound: Excellent
Difficulty: Student
Interest: One Year

K-RAZY SHOOT-OUT

From CBS Electronics, for the Atari 5200 "Super System" video game console. Created by Dr. Keith Dreyer and Torre Meeder, programmed for CBS by Kay Enterprises Co.

K-RAZY SHOOT-OUT is a 5200 adaptation of the long-popular computer game of the same name, for play by one player at a time using the standard joystick/keypad controller or optional track-ball. The player's on-screen commander is trapped in a never-ending series of Alien Control Sectors, filled with deadly Droids. The object of the game is to eliminate all the Droids in each sector and



progress as far as possible, earning as many points as possible, before all the player's commanders are destroyed in battle.

The player's commander is moved by pushing the joystick in the desired direction. Pressing either lower action button fires the commander's gun. While the fire button is depressed, moving the joystick aims the laser gun in all eight directions as it fires.

Each Alien Sector starts out with some of the deadly Droids already on-screen. More appear as the player eliminates the ones that are already there. Each Sector is a different maze, and each Sector is different every time the game is played.

Droids move in on the player's on-screen commander immediately, and return his or her laser fire from the second maze on. All the Droids in a Sector must be eliminated before the countdown bar runs out, or the game is over. Bonus points are awarded, based upon how much of the countdown bar is left, for eliminating all the Droids before time runs out. The player can always choose to chicken out and leave a Sector before all the Droids have been eliminated, but he or she will then be forced to re-play up to two previous Sectors for no points, each different than they were the first time, before continuing the quest. Droids progress in each successive Sector, changing into fast-moving killers with deadly aim in the fifth Sector.

The play is for points, earned for blasting the enemy Droids and for eliminating all Droids in each Sector before moving on to the next. The player's overall performance is also ranked at the end of the game, as "Goon," "Rookie," "Novice," "Gunner," "Blaster," and "Marksman," and is further divided into five numbered classifications, with "Goon 1" being the lowest and "Marksman 5" being the highest.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: This was an impressive computer game, when **BERZERK** was still hot in the arcades and new for home play, and it caught on quite well, mostly because the only way to get good **BERZERK**-like play on computers other than Atari's own was to buy **K-RAZY SHOOT-OUT**. CBS Electronics should be proud of their impressive job of reproducing the game for 5200 play.

K-RAZY SHOOT-OUT is even

better, in many respects, than the original after which it was patterned. The graphics are simple and straightforward, but the movement of the Droids and the player's commander, and the endless variety of mazes, combine with the overall challenge to make to keep things pretty interesting. Better than the original **BERZERK** is the fact that you are penalized for leaving a Sector before you've blasted all the Droids, by having to go back through the last Sector or two without earning any points. This makes leaving the heat of battle a tougher decision to make.

The only drawback is that I've grown tired of the **BERZERK**-style battle, and none of the improvements on the original that are presented here made it any more interesting for me. I don't know how you feel about it, but I couldn't play this game seriously for more than a couple of hours without putting it away, and would most likely only pull it out every few weeks for another try. If that seems worth it to you, you might want to look into buying **K-RAZY SHOOT-OUT**. If you've already been playing **BERZERK** a while on the VCS or the 5200, then this one is too repetitive to be a "must-buy" that venerable classic.

I congratulate CBS on an excellent job of translating a computer game to the 5200 format. Although I'm really not too excited about this game, I look forward to more computer game conversions from CBS in the near future.

MIKE: It's true. This is just a mild variation on the arcade and home game classic, **BERZERK** but it has been designed very well for the 5200 and should be a worth a good long look. The graphics are pretty, contrary to what Alan said. I like the firing position that the man on-screen takes when blasting away with the lasers, and I thought the way your man walks out at the bottom of the screen and falls dead when you get shot was realistically depicted, adding a touch of humor to an otherwise bloodthirsty battle.

I also appreciated the fact that, unlike **BERZERK**, where you can pretty much always tell where your enemies will appear in each room, in this game you are never sure. This variation puts more excitement into the game.

I also enjoyed the complete read-out of your ranking and high score at the end of the game. After playing Atari's 5200 version of **BERZERK**, I did miss the voice, but this lack was made up by the added feeling that you always had to stay on your toes, since you never knew where the Droids were going to appear next.

The control of your man in this game seemed to be a bit rougher than in Atari's **BERZERK**, but the lack of control went away with time, and I quickly learned not to run into dead droids, which linger on the screen far longer than seemed necessary, allow-

ing them plenty of opportunity to get their revenge. Take a good look at this game. I'm not sure you're going to need this one and **BERZERK**, since there really isn't that much difference between the two, but you can safely take your choice of either of them, if you haven't bought either yet. I think this kind of action is a lot of fun. Alan doesn't know what he's missing.

RATINGS:

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

ASTRO CHASE

From Parker Brothers, for the Atari 5200 "Super System" video game console.

ASTRO CHASE is a popular home computer space chase/battle game, translated for play by one gamer at a time using the standard joystick/keypad controller. Eight mega mines are slowly drifting toward Earth, and it's the player's duty to save the world by blasting them away before they reach it. Enemy saucers and rockets attack the player's saucer while he or she tries to save the day.

After an elaborate and detailed opening scene in which a spaceman boards the player's saucer, then blasts off into space, the scene changes to a graphic depiction of the planet Earth, surrounded by a galaxy of other planets, asteroids, "hot" stars and space debris. The player can fly to all corners of the galaxy, which is about twice the size of the TV screen, by pushing the joystick in the desired direction. The ship will continue travelling in the same direction until it collides with something, reaches the end of the galaxy or the player pushes the joystick in another direction. The saucer's lasers fire when the player presses either side fire button. Moving the joystick while holding the fire button down will make the lasers fire in any direction in which the stick is pushed.

The player's ship starts out with 1000 units of energy and uses it up when it collides with planetary objects, hot stars or the end of the galaxy, as well as whenever it fires its lasers. More energy can be picked up by flying the saucer back and forth over one of several energy generators, also randomly located throughout the galaxy. The more often the player passes his or her saucer over a depot, the more fuel it adds to the ship's reserves. Several shield depots are also scattered around the galaxy. The player's ship is surrounded by an impenetrable shield for about ten seconds whenever it touches one of these, and can then ram the attacking enemy and survive direct hits from

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their deadly laser guns.

A variety of alien ships attack, and each group of ships is different and more deadly than the last. Some can only ram the player's ship, others can pass through planetary objects, and still others can shoot laser blasts and pass through planets. The game progresses to a higher level of play whenever the gamer eliminates all eight mega mines before they reach the planet Earth. Two bonus ships and 1,000 points are awarded the player for each round successfully completed.

The play is for points, earned for blasting enemy ships and mega mines, and for completing each round. The player can select to start the game at almost any level. Pushing the "*" button will abort any mission, then the player can restart at the same level or select a new level to begin at, and continue play. The "Pause" feature is also functional, and 34 different "chases," or skill levels, are available for play. The game ends when all of a player's reserve saucers are destroyed.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: As of this date, I've never seen a display more beautiful than the opening scene in this game. The background, movement of the spaceman, depiction of the saucer and the saucer's blast-off are simply gorgeous, with some really fine animation, too. The actual game screen is also richly detailed and colorful. As far as I can tell, the display is very close to the computer game original.

The movement of your saucer can throw you at first, but I found that just a little practice put me right in touch with going where I needed to go, and I was soon off into the surrounding galaxy, defending planet Earth and only occasionally bumping into a stray hot star.

The challenge starts out mercifully easy in the first couple of levels, then escalates into some solid arcade-style space action around level five. I've yet to imagine what the highest levels could possibly be like, because you have to work your way up to the last few. I've never survived that far and I seriously doubt that I ever will. But I kept on punching the reset button and trying again, because the play is so smooth and space-like, and extremely alluring to an addicted gamer like myself. I just wanted to keep playing and playing, to get a little higher score the next time around. **ASTRO CHASE** is a pleasurable challenge, indeed.

This one's got fantastic graphics, addictive playability and an increasing challenge that simply won't quit. What more could any self-respecting space gamer ask for? Parker Brothers has again proven outstanding capabilities with the ColecoVision console with this one. Get it.

MIKE: My all-time favorite home video game is still Atari's **SPACE DUNGEON** for their 5200, regardless of how Alan feels about **ASTRO CHASE**. He played this one first and told me it might just change my mind about my all-time favorite, but, as usual, he was wrong. **ASTRO CHASE** is only my second favorite home video game.

The graphics aren't only excellent, they are superb in every way. Now we have a two-dimensional game that really feels like three. The action in Parker Brother's **ASTRO CHASE** isn't as hectic as it is the action in **SPACE DUNGEON**, but things don't exactly move at a snail's pace, either. Still, this cartridge's largest strong point is the graphics. I just can't say enough good things about them. They literally have to be seen to be believed. The sound effects are, basically, of little use in the actual play of the game. One of the toughest problems is that you can occasionally overlook an incoming mega mine because the screen is always so full of glittering, realistically depicted outer space objects, so you always have to be on the look-out.

The action picks up as soon as the very fine opening scene is completed and the increasing challenge that follows it is almost never-ending. It's one of those space challenges where you don't have to fire at everything that moves, but do have to always be ready to fire on a moment's notice, because you may only get one shot, in the upper levels of play, before an approaching alien blasts you out of existence. Give yourself some time and practice to get the feel of the controls, since you are flying a very sensitive piece of machinery that tends to hit the surrounding planets, hot stars and other energy-draining space clutter while it attracts countless enemy attackers that are almost always in hot pursuit. Always keep an eye on the fuel gauge, too. It's the only way you will ever survive long enough to get home.

Saving the Earth is fun, but there's no sense dying too soon while you're playing.

ASTRO CHASE is simply a super game. One of the best space action games I've ever seen for any home video game system.

RATINGS:

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

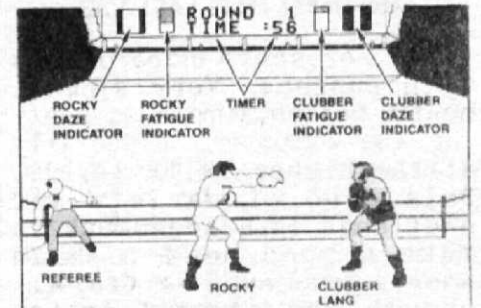
ROCKY BATTLES THE CHAMP

From Coleco, for their ColecoVision video game system and Adam home computer, equipped with their new Super Action Controllers.

ROCKY BATTLES THE CHAMP is a one- or two-player boxing game, based on the "Rocky" movies, for ColecoVision play. Gamers can fight as either Rocky or Clubber, against the computer or against one another. The object of the game is to win the match by scoring points during each round, or by a knock-out decision.

The game opens, after the player has selected the desired play option, with a detailed depiction of Sylvester Stallone as Rocky, gloved and ready for action. The theme from "Rocky" plays loudly. Available options include play against the computer, as either Rocky or as Clubber, at any of four skill levels, or head-to-head boxing with another opponent. Then the scene switches to a display of the ring, with Rocky, Clubber and the referee, ready for action.

The gamer moves his or her fighter around the ring with the joystick controller. The four buttons make him punch to the head, punch to the torso, bring his gloves up for a block, or duck. Both fighters always stay on the same side of one another and always punch with their right gloves.



Gauges at the top of the screen show how tired and dazed each fighter is getting as the fight progresses. As each fighter gets more tired, his punches don't deliver quite the blow they used to, blows from his opponent do more damage, and he doesn't move as fast. As the fighters get more dazed, they come closer and closer to falling the next time they are hit. When a fighter's "dazed" gauge closes up completely, falling in with black, he will most likely fall after the next punch or two from his opponent, unless he can avoid punches until his head clears, or until the end of the round.

The boxers each score two points for a successful blow to the head or body, and one point for each hit to the opponent's gloves. The fighter with the most points at the end of each round wins that round. A cumulative score for the entire fight is also displayed at the end of each round. The fighter with the points at the end of the fight wins, unless there has been a knock-out decision.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I had a lot of fun reviewing this game. Not only is it one of the most beautifully-depicted video sports games I've ever seen, the overall play presents the gamer with an incredibly realistic depiction of the live action sport it emulates. I also appreciated the fact that you can play the computer as either fighter, at different levels, or play against a friend.

The action is simple and straightforward. You try to knock the other guy out

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first, or score more points with punches. Very simple. What's not so simple is beating the computer, especially at the higher skill levels. This kind of variety and challenge is a necessity to make a good head-to-head sports game even better. Although the overall action might seem to be a little too simplistic for some gamers, I would urge everyone to at least give this one a try. There's more subtle strategy, especially with the tiredness and dazedness indicators at work, involved in the play than one would at first assume.

In short, get this one for your Super Action Controller-equipped ColecoVision. Your parties will never be the same if you do.

MIKE: Watching the graphic display on this new ColecoVision game is almost like watching the Saturday morning cartoons. It's truly the best I've ever seen. And, with the theme from Rocky playing in the background, you almost feel like you're at the movies as you play. Actually, the audio portion of this game isn't that good, but at least you can tell what song is playing, and that's something.

So much for my discussion of the graphic beauty of this game. Now let's get down to how it plays, since that's what we all buy them for in the first place. The Super Action Controllers are perfect for this game since you can easily block and throw punches, just by changing the fingers you use. I'd like to compare this game to other video boxing challenges, for other systems, but I can't. ColecoVision's **ROCKY** stands in a field all by itself. It does everything but let you hit with both gloved hands. Unfortunately, the ability to work combinations on your opponent would be a welcome addition to this game, so the main objective while playing would be more than just being the man nearest to the top of the screen, so your punches make better contact. This might seem like a petty complaint about a game that is otherwise so fine, but one must keep in mind that even the very best can be made better.

Now, the main question is whether you will like the game or not. Personally, I didn't find it all that exciting. In the end, it all boiled down to simply trading punches until your hands got tired from pressing the buttons or until one of the fighters was knocked down. This isn't my idea of fun and games, as a rule. I also got beat a lot, and that tended to cloud my judgement.

At the lower levels, the computer is fairly easy to handle, with practice, and the action is good practice, when a gamer is preparing him or herself for a live opponent. If a friend or acquaintance is that live opponent, however, there can be some problems if he or she hasn't practiced thoroughly

as well. You might want to spot him or her a lot of points before the action ever begins. It's only fair.

So, despite how I felt about the overall action, if you like video boxing this is the best there is. There's no question about that. You should find this one to be worth the price of the controllers you have to buy to play it.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Excellent
Difficulty: Novice - Student
Interest: One Year

OMEGA RACE

From Coleco, for their ColecoVision home video game console and Adam home computer system. Recommended for use with the new ColecoVision Roller Controller.

OMEGA RACE is the home translation of the arcade game of the same name, for play on the ColecoVision console or Adam home computer, by one or two players (taking turns or playing simultaneously) using the standard joystick/keypad controllers. The object of the game is to pilot a ship inside an arena of limited space, avoiding and blasting as many enemy ships and mines as possible.

The entire game is played in a rectangular box that fills the screen. Another rectangular box inside, makes the playfield resemble a race track. At the beginning of the game, players may choose to open up a channel in the box in the middle, through which they may pilot their ships and fire on the enemy. "Astro Gates," openings at the top and bottom of the playfield, can also be added to the fun, so the player's ship or ships can leave through one and enter the other, or fire through one and hit enemy ships near the other.

The player's ship is piloted like the in a fashion in a manner that is similar to the now-famous **ASTEROIDS**. It is rotated by pushing the joystick in the desired direction. Pressing either top action button activates the ship's thrust. Pushing the stick forward moves the player's ship in the direction it is pointed. Pushing either lower side action button fires the ship's lasers. On the ColecoVision Roller Controller, spinning the roller ball to the left or right rotates the ship to the left or right, either top action button activates the ship's thrusters and either lower action button fires its lasers. The standard joystick/keypad controllers must be used for head-to-head two-player games.

The player's ship or ships continue travelling in the direction they are thrust, until pushed in a new direction, and they bounce off the walls of the arena like a pinball bounces off of bumpers. An additional game-option allows for the selection of "fast-bounce" games,

where the ships seem to travel faster every time they bounce off of a wall.

In all options but head-to-head play, the game begins with the player's ship and the alien droid fleet on-screen. Most of the ships start out as enemy droids. Droids travel around the screen and will eliminate a player's ship if they collide with it, but they don't fire. One or two of the enemy ships is a command ship, which fires on the player's ship as it travels. The longer the player takes to eliminate all the ships, the more deadly they become. Eventually, command ships will turn into death ships, which track the player's vessel and leave deadly photon mines and vapor mines in their wake.

Each player receives five Omega fighters to start each game, and earn one bonus fighter at 40,000 points, then another at 150,000 points, and a third at 250,000 points. When all the enemy on the screen have been cleared, more enter. A complete droid fleet is cleared every four screens, but then a new and even deadlier fleet takes up the battle and the action begins again. One- and two-player (taking turns) games may also be started in any of four progressively more-difficult skill levels.

The play is for points, earned for destroying enemy mines and ships. A 5,000 point bonus is awarded to players for wiping out each complete droid force. The game ends when all of the players' ships are gone. Highest scorer is the winner.

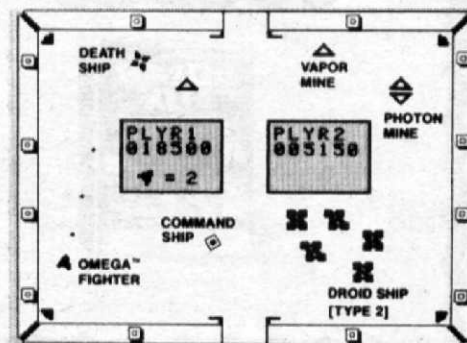
In the head-to-head mode, the play is almost the same as in the others, but the main object becomes eliminating the other player's on-screen ship first. Laser blasts can eliminate the other player, death ships and mines, but not the enemy droid fleet.

The same three play-field options are also available in head-to-head play, and two new ones: reflective walls and long game. Reflective walls will rebound both players' laser fire. The standard head-to-head is two minutes in length. The long game option makes each game four minutes long.

Each gamer has an unlimited supply of Omega fighters in head-to-head combat. The play is for points, earned for blasting enemy ships and the opponent's fighters. The game ends when time is up.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I was disappointed when I first saw this game but, as soon as I was involved in the play, the sparse graphics just didn't seem to matter



any more.

At first, I thought the play seemed simple, reminiscent of **ASTEROIDS**. You will too, but the bouncing walls make all the difference here. While no one will enjoy playing this one until he or she has mastered piloting that frustrating bouncing ship, but the effort to master it will repay the gamer many times over. **OMEGA RACE** is a solid challenge that will keep you trying again and again.

Although the box says this game is recommended for Roller Controller play, I don't think it would affect the overall action one way or another. I didn't have the Roller Controller at my disposal when I reviewed this game, but the only thing it does is rotate the ship with a flip of the ball, so I can't see how it could be that great an improvement.

Then there's the head-to-head mode. I've always said that more video games should offer players head-to-head on-screen action, and Coleco is giving us some excellent head-to-head play here, with impressive play against the computer available as well. Congratulations, Coleco! **OMEGA RACE** is an innovative winner.

MIKE: Alan's right when he says the graphics aren't that good on this game. Experience has shown that it's still nearly impossible to faithfully reproduce vector graphics on home television sets, however, so I wasn't expecting that much from the graphics in the first place. Still, the display here is good and crisp, so you can easily tell your friend's ship from your own, so they aren't all that bad, either.

What makes this game as good as it is, however, are all the variations! They add challenge that even the arcade version was lacking, and that's unusual in any home translation. By adding fast bounce, or playing head-to-head or any of the other available options, the game is simply guaranteed to hold your interest for many hours, days, and weeks to come.

OMEGA RACE is a simple game to decide on. If you liked it in the arcades, this one's even better than what you played there. If you hate this type of action, however, all the options and variations won't help a bit. Give it a try. I think it's a winner.

RATINGS:

Concept: New
Graphics/Sound: Fair
Difficulty: Student
Interest: One Year

TIME PILOT

From Coleco, for their ColecoVision home video game system and Adam home computer.

TIME PILOT for ColecoVision is the first home adaptation of the arcade original of the same name, for one or

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two players using the standard ColecoVision keypad controllers. **TIME PILOT** is an all-out dogfight through four time periods. The object of the game is to destroy a number of enemy planes in each time period, to earn the chance to battle a larger craft and go on to the next period in history, building the highest score possible along the way.

The action starts in 1910 with the player's airplane already high in the sky and ready for combat. The plane flies in the direction the joystick is pushed, and fires straight ahead from its nose when the fire button is pressed.

Soon, the sky is filled with enemy biplanes. The player must fly his or her plane, dodging the enemy's bullets and blasting their craft from the sky, until a set number of them, as indicated at the bottom of the screen, have been eliminated. Then, and only then, a large yellow dirigible, the enemy's flying fortress, appears, ready for battle. The dirigible can be shot, just as the still-swarming enemy biplanes can be, but it takes more hits to do it in and it fires a lot of bullets, from all sides, at the player's plane while he or she is trying to do it in.

If the player can eliminate the dirigible in the first time segment, his or her airplane is automatically transported into 1945, the second time period, to do battle with stealthier fighter planes from that era. If all the fighter planes can be eliminated, the player must come up against and defeat a large red bomber, to go on and do battle in 1975, against super copters and a large transport chopper. In 1985, the player must fight swift supersonic jets to get a chance to defeat yet another enemy fortress in the air and start all over, back in 1910 and at a higher skill level.

In higher skill levels, the enemy planes fly faster, react more quickly, and add deadly red heat-seeking bombs that track the player's plane to their available weapons. Gamers each start with five time ships, and earn an extra reserve ship at 20,000 points. The game ends when all of a player's planes are shot down in the heat of battle.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I had fun playing this one, and so did my friends. I'll admit that, graphically, it's not the most stunning game produced for ColecoVision, but the game wasn't a graphic beauty in the arcades, either.

The overall play action is simple, too, but I never found it boring. Those enemy planes are worthy of some serious battle, and they give it every time you play. The combined goals kept my interest up all the time I was playing. A simple game that's very hard to master.

TIME PILOT won't be for everybody, but a lot of you shoot-em-up lovers will have a good time with it for many moons to come, and your friends will thank you endlessly for buying a game they can pick right up and enjoy -- even if they don't survive long playing it. **TIME PILOT** is a good party game that you will also enjoy in private. Look into it.

MIKE: I disagree, but Alan was right when he said this one lacked the graphic appeal of most of Coleco's offerings for their ColecoVision system, and that it lacked the same graphic appeal in the arcades. In reply I say, what's wrong with **improving** on an arcade game's graphics for home play, when the system is capable of doing so? I'm not saying the display looked bad, it just wasn't as dazzling as I think the folks at Coleco could have made it. Thus, they add very little to the overall play.

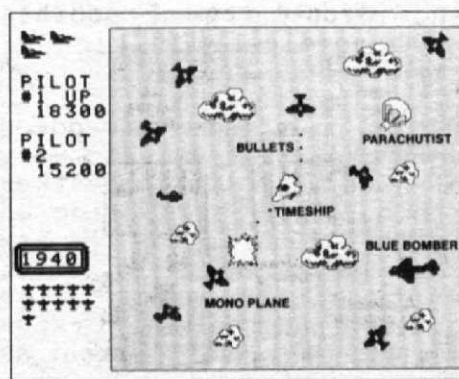
My first impression was the exact opposite of Alan's. I didn't like it. The play is really pretty slow and there isn't that much action going on, despite what my esteemed colleague says, at any one time. Naturally, I assumed there must be some subtle strategy involved, to keep the gamer's interest up. However, strategy never seemed to come into play, no matter how hard I tried to make the action more interesting.

Consequently, there isn't much difference between this game and the earlier air combat games that were made for the VCS, when there were fewer games for that system to pick from. This game does add a few more airplanes, however, and a couple of other twists that tend to make it better than those earlier contests, but not enough better to make me want to rush right out and buy it. To like this game, you're going to have to be addicted to the arcade game of the same name which, if I'm not wrong, didn't wind up with that many fans in the first place.

Coleco has some really dynamite games for their system, but this just doesn't happen to be one of them. If you ask me, I'd say avoid it. It might be good for a few hours of fun and the kids might like it a little better than some of the tougher games now coming out, but even their excitement will be short-lived.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Good



Difficulty: Novice - Student
Interest:
One Week - Three Months

SUBROC

From Coleco, for their ColecoVision video game console and Adam home computer.

This is the home translation of the arcade game of the same name. The player must pilot a ship and destroy all the enemy craft possible, including submarines, ships, floating mines, alien saucers of all types, air mines and more. For one or two players using the standard joystick/keypad controller.

The game display is a view out the cockpit of the player's ship. The ship is guided by pushing the joystick in the desired direction. When the stick is pushed left, the view shifts to the right, and vice-versa. Pushing the joystick up raises the craft out of the water and into the air, to battle alien craft and flying mines with laser fire. Pushing the joystick down allows the player to launch torpedoes at all approaching enemy in the sea.

The enemy attacks in waves, with ships and saucers of all kinds. Saucers shoots roaring fireballs of death that the player must avoid, by using the joystick or by blasting them out of the way with laser fire. Sea-faring enemy craft launch torpedoes

at the player's craft. Again, the torpedoes must be avoided or blasted out of the water with the player's own return fire. Each new wave of enemy craft travel faster and fire more often.

The play is for points, earned for blasting the enemy craft. Play options allow for play by one gamer or two (taking turns), at four different skill levels.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: Unfortunately, Coleco had to bring you this 3-D arcade classic in 2-D format, which makes the game not nearly as much fun as it was in the arcades. The graphics are still good, but they aren't up to the standards that were set by the arcade original, and it was the superb 3-D graphics and feel that made this game the arcade hit that it was.

The problem is there's really no game at all, unless you can call simply holding down the fire button and moving side to side or up and down a game. Without the same outstanding graphics that carried the simple action in the arcades, it's a game that gives you no reason to stay at it because you don't really feel challenged. Don't get me wrong -- there are plenty of on-screen enemies willing to shorten your meager life, but there simply isn't the

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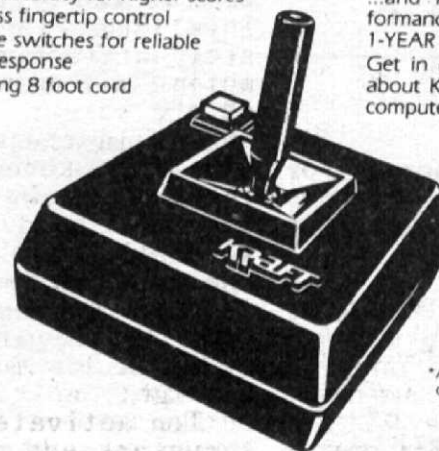
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feeling of urgency that I need to keep the action exciting.

Technically, the game is sound. All the right things happen at about the right time, and, with ships and spaceships constantly trying to work you over in a variety of ways, but Coleco still managed to miss it this time. **SUB ROC**, in 2-D, is just a simple variation over the usual space attack game I'm already tired of, so I can't give it a better rating.

I did give this one a "good" in graphics and sound, and I'll have to admit that it keeps your mind on what you're doing, but you need to look at this one very carefully before you shell out your hard-earned money to buy it. The fun just wasn't there for me.

ALAN: I agree wholeheartedly. I never played this game in the arcades, but I saw it and watched it played. Coleco's apparent inability to faithfully reproduce the arcade original's feel and 3-D display (not necessarily their own fault) ruined it for me right from the start. Then, when I played it, I quickly got bored with the simplistic action. It's just a fancy slide-and-shoot without the graphics that made it at least interesting in its original format.

Coleco's **SUB ROC** might have been better if their designers had managed to make the game's movement smoother and more real-to-life. I noticed a choppiness in the play that was reminiscent of the worst of computer games I've seen, and detracted from the little bit of play value the game had to offer.

I have to give this one a no-go. There are too many better games coming out for this system for you to waste your time or money on **SUB ROC**

RATINGS:

Concept: Too Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Good
Difficulty:
Student - Graduate
Interest:
One Day - One Month

POPEYE

From Parker Brothers, for Coleco's ColecoVision video game console and Adam home computer system.

This version of **POPEYE** is the Parker Brothers home translation of the popular arcade game of the same name, for ColecoVision play. It's a climbing challenge for one or two players (taking turns), using the standard ColecoVision keypad controllers. The object of the game is to save Olive Oyle from the evil Brutus and his ally, the old Sea Hag.

POPEYE is a multi-screen video challenge. In each screen, the player maneuvers Popeye by pushing the joystick in the desired direction to make him run right or left, or to climb or descend ladders and stairs. The

trusty, crusty cartoon sailor punches with his fist when the player presses either fire button.

In each screen, Popeye must catch all of Olive Oyle's hearts, notes or cries for help, which float gently down towards the bottom of the screen, before they reach the water below. If a note, heart or cry for help reaches the bottom of the screen, it will slowly sink into the water. If Popeye can't pick it up before it goes completely under, that Popeye is lost.

Brutus is always around somewhere, too, trying to punch Popeye and eliminate him from the chase. Brutus will eliminate Popeye if he can grab him or punch him, and he can punch through the floors as well, either above or below. The Sea Hag constantly appears at either side of the screen, to toss bottles at Popeye. If a bottle hits our hero, he's out of the game -- but a well-placed punch can always eliminate the bottles before they can do any harm.

For the most part, Popeye can only avoid Brutus while he chases Olive's offerings. Occasionally, however, a can of spinach appears at either side of the screen. If Popeye can approach this and punch it before it disappears, he'll become charged with the strength to bop Brutus and send him off-screen for a short while. Popeye also earns bonus points for any tokens he catches while operating under "spinach power."

In the first screen, Popeye must catch 24 hearts before they sink into the water. The screen features "through" ledges (where Popeye can leave one side of the screen and enter from the other), stairs, a ladder he can only descend, a bucket and a punching bag. If Popeye can hit the punching bag at just the right moment, the bucket will drop on Brutus' head and stop him in his tracks.

In the second screen, the action takes place on the ledges of a building, with more through ledges and ladders he can climb or descend. This time Popeye's chasing after sixteen musical notes, which float down from the top of the screen, just as the hearts in the first screen did. This screen also features a see-saw, at the bottom left-hand side of the screen. Popeye can jump on the see-saw from the ledge above, and bounce up to either the second or top ledge -- but Brutus can jump on the see-saw, too.

The action in the third screen takes place on a large sailing ship. Olive is at the top of the main mast and Popeye must run across the sails and the ship's deck, using ladders and a sliding platform to help him catch all 24 letters that spell out Olive Oyle's cries for "Help!" Vultures also swoop down at our trusty sailor as he clamors about the ship. He can punch them out for extra points, but they will knock him overboard and out of the game if they can hit him.

Each time Popeye catches a letter, another rung is added to a ladder that reaches up to Olive. When he catches the last letter, the action automatically switches back to the first screen, at the next highest skill level.

The play is for points, scored for catching the hearts, notes and letters, and as bonuses for punching vultures, dropping the bucket on Brutus, catching Sweet Pea on the see-saw and punching Brutus, among other special actions. Each gamer starts out with four Popeyes, and two players take turns whenever an opponent loses one. The game can be started at either of three different skill levels, for one or two players. The game ends when a player loses all of his or her Popeyes.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I didn't play this one in the arcades, but I saw it often and heard a lot about it, too. I always wondered what all the commotion was about. It looked like another "cute" **DONKEY KONG** knock-off to me. I wasn't that interested. Then I played it at home for this review.

POPEYE is a **DONKEY KONG** knock-off, but it's one worth playing. The theme is cute enough to keep even some of the younger gamers among us interested, and the challenge is tough enough to keep die-hard "professionals" trying long after they would have quit playing most average games of a similar nature.

I was especially pleased with Parker Brother's graphics on this one. They are downright beautiful. This always adds to the enjoyment of a solid video game challenge, and the work they've done on this one gives me undying hope for the third-party ColecoVision software that's yet to come from this well-respected game giant.

As for the play itself, Brutus is an especially tough customer because he can punch up or down through either floor in any of the screens. This means Popeye can never remain above or below him for long, and the ugly Brutus is always following your poor sailor man around very closely. All this, added to the fact that you have to catch all of Olive's offerings before they sink into the water, and you have a challenge that's tougher than most, believe me.

Seriously -- compliments to Parker Brothers all around on this one. When it comes to solid arcade translations for every system, this is the company to watch! **POPEYE** isn't for lovers of hot blast-'em-up action, but maze and climbing game addicts will rejoice with glee as soon as they see it.

MIKE: This game is indeed very pretty. I, too, am very pleased with the job Parker Brothers has been doing of faithfully bringing the arcade games home. In fact, every effort seems to be better than the last. Graphically, this game is about as good as you can get, though I

did think the can of spinach was a weak point -- nothing's ever perfect.

The game play is incredibly similar to that in the arcade version. If you're familiar with it, you'll know not to expect a lot of real fast action, but all the subtleties of the arcade version that made it so good are here. **POPEYE** isn't a classic in the arcade game field as far as climbing games go, but the playability of this game still ranks right up there with the king, **DONKEY KONG**.

The first level is slow, but in the higher levels you really have to think about what you're doing to last more than a round or two. It might get a bit dull for those who have really mastered the arcade version, but the rest of us will have some real fun with Parker Brothers' **POPEYE**. It's a game designed for anyone who likes climbing games in the arcades or at home.

RATINGS:

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

MINER 2049ER

From Micro Fun, for Coleco's ColecoVision video game system and Adam home computer. Designed by Bill Hogue.

This is the ColecoVision version of the popular computer game of the same name, now also available for play on the Atari VCS and 5200. A detailed discussion of all the screens has appeared in our earlier reviews of the above-mentioned versions, so the following description will present just the basics, as they apply to this configuration.

MINER 2049er is a running/jumping/climbing game for one or two players at a time, using the standard ColecoVision joystick controllers. The player is Bounty Bob the miner, who must be guided through eleven different sections of a giant old uranium mine. Bob must change the color of all the floors in each section to move on to the next.

Some or all of the sections feature ladders, platforms, moving platforms, widely-scattered floor sections, slides, lifts, a giant cannon, elevators and other helpful implements. All of the sections feature a bunch of mean radioactive beasts that Bounty Bob must avoid. Abandoned miners' tools are also scattered throughout most of the mine sections. Bounty Bob can touch these and, for a short time, go after the radioactive meanies and eliminate them before they eliminate him.

The play is for points, earned for walking over the cavern's floors, jumping over the radioactive monsters, grabbing the miners' implements, eliminating the monsters, and as a bonus for completing each mine section.

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A timer counts down as the game progresses. Time left on the clock when each section is completed is added as points to the player's score. If the timer runs out before a section has been completed, the gamer loses a Bounty Bob. The game is over when all a player's Bounty Bob's are gone.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I was as impressed with this version of the game as I was with the one for the 5200. Both are superb translations of what has turned out to be the hottest video game to come along in years -- the first ever to be translated into so many formats and sell so well in all of them.

And with good reason. This game is a climbing/running/jumping enthusiast's dream come true, with more challenge, variety and all around playability than has ever been crammed into a single cartridge before. For any system. I love it.

Even better, this version of the game has eleven different screens, rather than the usual tenth, and you don't have to play it clear to the end to see the added screen, either. They stuck it right in the middle of the game. My only complaint is that the timer -- and Bob -- both run faster than on any of the other versions I've played. This increases the challenge, but it also means it will be several more months before you see level seven, let alone level ten!

Seriously -- get this game for your ColecoVision. If you liked **DONKEY KONG** (and I did), and thought **DONKEY KONG JUNIOR** was even better (and I thought it was), you'll think this one is ten times the fun (it is!).

MIKE: Personally, I thought the 5200 version of **MINER 2049er** was hard to control, but this one takes first prize. Otherwise, everything about this game is quicker than any version to date and that really was a plus for me. The only problem with this is the fact that you tend to run off the edges more quickly than you do in the other **MINER** translations, and the style with which you play the game must be changed a lot, in order to compensate for this small problem. But that's only if you've played it on other systems before.

This version is graphically well-done -- as good as the 5200 version -- but on a smaller scale. There is an eleventh level that wasn't on the others, but I can't play it well enough to get there yet.

Contrary to what Alan says, I don't think this is the best game ever made for ColecoVision play. But it is the best climbing game for ColecoVision. After you get where you can easily control Bounty Bob, it becomes an exciting and entertaining challenge that will hold your interest for many hours. My only regret is that there are

levels on this game that some of you will never see and that is too bad -- they are just beautiful and it would be a shame if you were to miss seeing them. If you enjoy climbing games, this one is a must. There simply aren't any out there that are better.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Excellent
Difficulty: Graduate - Master
Interest: Infinite

BEAMRIDER

For Mattel's Intellivision I and II Master Components, Sears' Super Video Arcade, TandyVision I, and other, similarly-compatible video game systems. Designed by Dave Rolfe.

For one to four players, using the standard Intellivision disk controllers, **BEAMRIDER** is an arcade-style space invasion game. The scenario: A hostile empire has cast a mysterious light force restrictor shield, 99 sectors deep, around the player's planet. This shield keeps the gamer from flying his or ship anywhere but on the beams themselves, where the enemy's ships also travel. The object: to clear all the sectors of alien vessels and open the doors to space once again.

The gamer's ship is located at the bottom of the screen, where the beams of the enemy's restrictor shield stretch outward, toward the top. The ship can be moved back and forth, from beam to beam, by pressing on either side of the disk. The ship can only fire its blasts of laser fire down the vertical light beams, when the player presses the side action button. The gamer's ship is also armed with three "solar torpedoes," to be used against only the toughest of foes in each sector.

Gamers must first eliminate fifteen alien craft in each sector, and only a few can be eliminated with a blast of the lasers. Most can only be avoided. Most can also fire their own laser blasts at the player's ship. Enemies the player must battle include blobs of "space debris," yellow "chirper" ships, green "blockers" and "bounce craft," blue "chargers," orange "trackers" and red "streakers." Occasionally, a bright yellow energy form will slide down a beam toward the gamer's ship. If the Beamrider allows this energy form to melt into his or her lightcraft, it will generate another "life," in the form of a reserve ship.



Once a player has eliminated all fifteen aliens in a sector, a giant ship, dubbed the "sector sentinel," travels slowly across the top of the screen. The gamer must try to blast this giant alien craft with one of his or her solar torpedoes before it gets across the screen, to earn valuable bonus points before moving on to the next sector. But -- a number of green blocker ships will travel down the beams as the sector sentinel passes overhead, playing havoc with the gamer's plans to demolish the largest alien vessel.

As the player progresses through as many of the 99 sectors as possible, the number and type of enemies increases. The play is for points, earned for blasting the various extraterrestrial sector guards, for blasting the sector sentinel, and as bonuses for clearing each sector.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I was disappointed in this game right from the start. I didn't play it when I first saw it at last summer's CES show (even though I tried to play them all and thought I had), and was dazzled with the beautiful graphic display -- so I was left expecting big things of the game itself.

Sorry, folks, but this is just another slide and shoot and little more. Sure, it looks good. Sure, it's tough to play. But, in the long

run, I think the overall action of the game will leave you wanting more after a while. It's simply mindless shoot, shoot, shooting, over and over and over again, with little else to worry about or accomplish. This sort of play might keep some of you happy, because I know there haven't been too many simple arcade blast-em-ups made for Intellivision, but I personally like the need for at least a little strategic thinking in the video games I play. I think most Intellivision owners have come to expect it from their games, too.

So -- take a look at this one in the stores. It's worth looking at, if nothing more than just to admire the colorful display. Buy it only if you want something simple for parties and kids. It simply won't keep you playing that long.

MIKE: Alan's right when he says this is just another simple slide and shoot -- but he's wrong when he berates it for being that. As usual, the game is graphically very well done, and the sound effects are up to par with the best that Activision has produced to date. It's also simple to play, but so what? There aren't many good slide and shoots for this system and this is one of the better ones I've seen.

And -- even though I said this game is simple to play, that doesn't mean that it's

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also easy to beat. It's actually a difficult challenge that is very hard to master. The game works well with the Intellivision disk controllers, too, since all the movement is from side to side, and even though the player's on-screen ship isn't as responsive to the controls as I would have liked. In comparison to some Intellivision games I've played, you will overcome the relatively small response problem with ease.

BEAMRIDER will never be a classic Intellivision game, and it's definitely not in the same class with the likes of **THE DREADNAUGHT FACTOR**, but the game does have the potential to provide you with a good solid space attack challenge. Activision designer Dave Rolfe has done an excellent job of creating a very simple game, with all the right elements to make it enjoyable for anyone to play, while keeping it an interesting - a respectable enough challenge to keep even the best gamers happy.

Don't look for something that is outstanding, but give **BEAMRIDER** a good long look. It might just be the type of game you've been looking for for your Intellivision. It's great for a few hours of fun whenever the mood strikes you.

RATINGS:

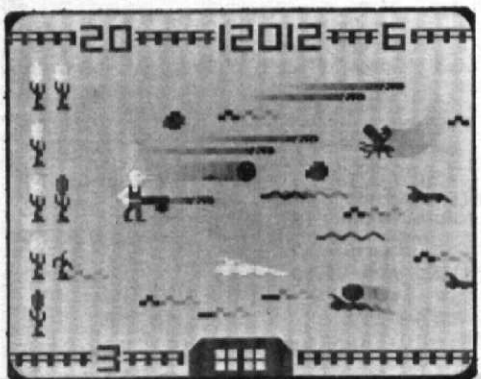
Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Excellent
Difficulty: Novice - Student
Interest:
One Week - Six Months

WORM WHOMPER

From Activision, for Mattel's Intellivision I and II Master Components, Sears' Super Video Arcade, TandyVision, and other, similarly-compatible video game systems. Designed by Tom Loughry.

WORM WHOMPER is a horizontal slide-'n'-shoot, for one or two players, using the standard Intellivision disk controllers. The gamer is Felton the farmer, trying to protect his corn crop from an awful invasion of insects of all kinds. Armed with only an insecticide sprayer, but with unlimited spray, the object of the game is to stop the literally hundreds of insects before they make a meal out of all the farmer's corn, ending the game.

Players start with ten corn plants along the left-hand side of the screen, and farmer Felton directly in front of them, armed with his



sprayer. Felton can be moved virtually anywhere on the screen by pressing the corresponding side of the disk controller.

The insects attack in waves, always from the right-hand side of the screen, working their way to the corn on the other side. Felton sprays a blast from his sprayer every time either top side action button is pressed. Spray from the sprayer only eliminates the invading insect at the head of the attack. If an insect touches Felton's sprayer, it disappears, and he has to run to the tool shed, at the bottom of the screen, to pick up another. When desperate, Felton can also roll a limited number of plough balls, eliminating everything in their path, when the player presses either lower side action button.

The insects attack in waves, and come in several different types. Some move faster than others, do more damage to each corn plant they touch, and require more shots of insecticide before they die. Snails can leave their shells, which can only be destroyed with a ploughball, behind them when they are eliminated. Moths don't destroy the corn, but they can lay eggs, which can't be destroyed at all, close enough to the corn that the hatching caterpillars can get to it before the farmer can stop them. Each more-difficult insect is worth more points when hit.

Each attacking wave is comprised of more insects, moving faster across the screen. As the farmer's corn is destroyed, it is replaced by reserve plants, if any. Each gamer starts with three reserve corn plants and earns additional reserves for every four waves of insects survived. The game ends when all of the farmer's corn plants have been destroyed.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: Aaaaaarggggh! ANOTHER simple slide-'n'-shoot! I'm getting sick of them and, I must admit, I looked at this new game with a jaundiced eye, after realizing what it was. I wasn't that happy with what I saw.

It's obvious to me that **WORM WHOMPER** is aimed at a younger audience -- maybe about age eight, maximum, but this should have been loudly proclaimed on the box. A lot of families and older singles might buy it by accident, and won't be too pleased with their purchase. Even the younger set will grow bored with this one quickly, I suspect, because the ones that are old enough to play it well will have long ago started looking for more advanced challenges to their video game skills.

This is a slide-and-shoot, plain and simple, and it's a good one, as far as it goes. The graphics are pretty, the insects are all well-defined, and the challenge is difficult, to say the least. Keeping up with the massive numbers of various insect invaders that designer Loughry

has chosen to throw at us is a mind-boggling, trigger finger-cramping task, but -- since stopping the bugs is all there is to do, it's easy to tire of this one quickly. After you get good, it just gets harder; not, necessarily, more fun.

I'd have to advise you to stay away from this one. It's just too simplistic in a market that has grown cluttered with mindless challenges. Activision has produced better and will again. Considering the fact that it is from the same designer who gave us **THE DREADNAUGHT FACTOR**, **WORM WHOMPER** was a disappointment -- plain and simple.

MIKE: Spiders and rabbits and worms, spiders and rabbits and worms! It almost makes me wonder what ever happened to lions and tigers and bears. Oh my! All I can say is the author of *The Wizard of Oz* must have thought that lions, tigers and bears were more exciting than spiders, rabbits and worms. I have to agree, and I agree with Alan about this game.

WORM WHOMPER is beautiful to look at, as are most of the games that come from Activision, but the graphics give us a lot of promise that the game play simply fails to fulfill. In fact, the game play here shows a definite lack of creativity, and I'm afraid that nothing will save it from eventual obscurity. Like Alan, I thought the play was too simple and hard to do well. In some cases, this can make for a good game, but in this case all it does is throw enough things at you to make it hard -- but nothing to make it exciting.

It reminds me a lot of Activision's earlier VCS game, **PLAQUE ATTACK**, without the very cute and graphically well-done pieces of candy attacking your teeth. Here, the worms crawling across the screen look like worms (aren't you thrilled?), though I don't remember ever seeing anyone trying to kill worms with a spray gun. It's also hard to aim the gun at anything in particular, which makes enjoying the challenge about as impossible as anything can get with me. Even though other games I've liked were difficult, this kind of difficulty has no real purpose. Hence, who really cares about saving this garden from a bunch of worms? I say let 'em have it! You would do well to leave this game for the worms, too. There are much better games for Intellivision, and Activision has been responsible for a good share of them. Look into those.

RATINGS:

Concept: Too familiar
Graphics/Sound: Good
Difficulty:
Student - Graduate
Interest: One Day - One Week

ART MASTER

From General Consumer Electronics, for their Vectrex Graphic Computer video game system.

ART MASTER is the cartridge that comes with G.C.E.'s new Light Pen, for use with their Vectrex Graphic Computer System video game console. The Light Pen is about the size of a standard felt-tip marker. It plugs directly into the Vectrex's second joystick console port, to be used in conjunction with the first controller console and the **ART MASTER** cartridge.

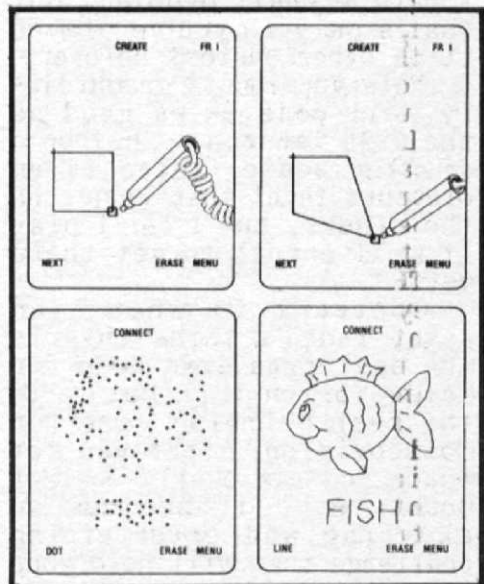
With everything plugged in, turned on and in place, the Vectrex artist can choose to "Draw," "Connect," or "Animate," simply by pointing the Light Pen to the desired option and pushing a button.

Vectrex artists can draw with the lightpen when in Draw mode, or make dot drawings, to later be connected by lines at the press of a button, in the Connect mode. In the Animate mode, the video artist can make illustrations on a series of "panels," (as few as two), then animate them, again at the press of a button. The movement of the animated drawing can also be sped up or slowed down, just by tapping the fourth button on the controller console while the picture is in motion.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I was impressed with this new addition to the Vectrex family of video wonders, especially the Animate mode. In fact, if it wasn't for the ability to animate your drawings, this would be nothing more than an expensive Etch-a-Sketch. As it is, the Vectrex Light Pen and **ART MASTER** cartridge still serves no useful purpose, other than supplying you with an interesting diversion for a few hours at a time.

And it's fascinating to watch the video drawings you can create with this little wonder take shape, then, if you wish, come alive before your eyes. It's also great for keeping the kids happy for hours on end, just drawing and sketching and making their own little "mini-cartoons," one after another. Unfortunately, the very young won't easily master the com-



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plexities of drawing and editing lines on the screen. That is the Light Pen's only major drawback.

I think G.C.E.'s new Light Pen is yet another step toward proving once and for all that their Vectrex system is one of the most underrated little video game units on the market today. I still wish I could think of something useful to do with the ART MASTER cartridge, but, then again, what's so useful about whittling (and, by that remark, I mean the kind you do just to pass the time away, just shaving one chunk off a stick after another).

If you like to "whittle" away the hours playing with new technological wonders, you might want to pick up the Light Pen and ART MASTER cartridge for your Vectrex. I have a feeling you'll be even more glad that you bought it when you see some of the other cartridges they have coming for use with it.

MIKE: As Alan said, this isn't a game. If that's what you're looking for, it isn't at all for you. The Vectrex Light Pen and ART MASTER cartridge is, however, a lot of fun. My daughter enjoyed it a lot. It's a creative tool, an innovation in the home video game field that was a long time in coming. You won't create genuine works of art with this cartridge, but that's not the reason for getting involved with the Light Pen. Like Alan, it reminds me a lot of the Etch-a-Sketch that has been so popular for so many years, and the ability to animate your drawings does indeed add to the total concept.

As with all new innovations, this isn't a cheap piece of equipment, and there is only one thing you can do with it at this time, but there are more new uses for the Light Pen coming, also in cartridge form, and they should make your investment even more worthwhile. My son, who is older than my daughter and was less enthralled with the ART MASTER cartridge, is waiting for the music cartridge that is now in the works. But he's always been more interested in music than he is in art.

The cartridge is designed for kids, and there is really very little here that will hold an adult's interest for long, unless you're like Alan, and enjoy controlled doodling. It's not an easy device to work with, and the pictures printed on the box the Light Pen comes in aren't as easy to duplicate as the instructions would lead one to believe.

Still, I think the ART MASTER cartridge is worth the money now, though some of you might want to wait and see the new carts that will be coming for use with the Light Pen soon. At least, we're told these cartridges will be coming out soon. Still, the Light Pen and ART MASTER cartridge will provide the kids with a decent change of pace, making it worth taking a good hard look at.

RATINGS:

Concept: New
Graphics/Sound: Good
Difficulty: Novice
Interest:
Three Months - One Year

ZAXXON

From Coleco, for Mattel's Intellivision I and II master component video game systems, Sears' Super Video Arcade and other, similarly-compatible systems.

This is the Intellivision home translation of the arcade game of the same name, for one or two players at a time. It plays and looks much the same as the VCS version (described in an earlier issue) does.

The player controls his or her ship by pressing on the disk controller. Pressing on the top of the disk makes the ship fly higher, pressing on the bottom of the disk makes the ship fly lower. Pressing the left or right side of the disk makes the ship fly to the left or right. Either side action button fires the ship's lasers.

For the uninitiated, the object in ZAXXON is to fly over a heavily-fortified asteroid first, while dodging enemy fire and walls, and flying low enough to blast away the alien defenses and avoid heat-seeking missiles that attack as soon as the player flies too far at too high an altitude.

If the first asteroid is successfully passed, the gamer's ship enters space, to do battle with a fleet of the robot Zaxxon's own fighting ships, before coming upon a second asteroid -- the central base of Zaxxon, the deadly alien robot that is the player's ultimate target. On the second asteroid, the player must do battle with moving Mobots and more jets, among other defenses, to reach Zaxxon himself. The player's ship stops all forward movement when Zaxxon enters the screen, and must instead fly back and forth, trying to blast the rocket Zaxxon holds on his deadly

person, and blow the alien to smithereens before he blasts the player's ship instead. If the player succeeds in eliminating Zaxxon, the action moves on to a new defensive asteroid, then to a new Zaxxon base, and so on, until all of the gamer's ships are eliminated.

The play is for points, scored for blasting enemy targets. Blowing up Zaxxon earns a huge bonus.

MIKE: For the most part, Coleco has so far only been able to bring a good translation of this arcade classic to their own ColecoVision system. This version proves that point again. I know that the Intellivision system is capable of a better display than the one used for this version, because I have too many games for Intellivision that look better, even with more complex play. In fact,

OPINIONS:

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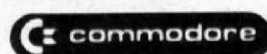
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the graphics on this version are no better than they were on the VCS version -- and those weren't even that good for that system!

With this in mind, we'll move on to a discussion of the play itself, which is what really matters in the long run. To begin, let's clarify one thing right from the start: if you like a very simple slide-and-shoot with two screens, then this just might be your cup of tea. Unfortunately, there are an awful lot of us who won't be satisfied with this sort of simplistic play any more. Nothing new has been added to the theme, either, other than the fact that you can fly up and down as well as from side to side. In this respect, Intellivision **ZAXXON** is probably a bit better than the usual **SPACE INVADERS** clone, but it's still not enough of an improvement to warrant your attention.

My personal advice is that this game should be left alone so that it can die a peaceful death, rather than being thrown through the television screen.

ALAN: I couldn't agree more, Mike! I'm getting really tired of seeing Coleco produce VCS displays and game play for Intellivision. It's an insult. The system is capable of better than this and the designers who produced it were only satisfied with doing their jobs and

nothing more. There is never any excuse for that.

The game play is simplistic to the extreme, to match the graphics. As Mike has pointed out, it's just a slide-and-shoot with a couple of minor differences, and not a very good one at that.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Poor
Difficulty: Novice
Interest: One Day

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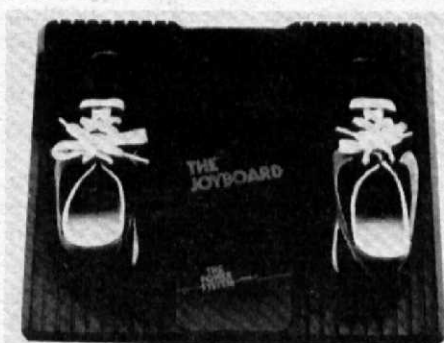
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As the Joyboard replaces the joystick it can also be used with virtually all other games. It adds a unique twist to games like **MS. PACMAN**, **DEMON ATTACK** and **FROGGER**. At the same time, it turns Activision's new **DECATHALON** game into a real workout.

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