the logical gamer

THE MONTHLY HOME VIDEO GAMES REVIEW

THE YEAR IN REVIEW -- PART 2!
OVER 100 GAME REVIEWS INSIDE!
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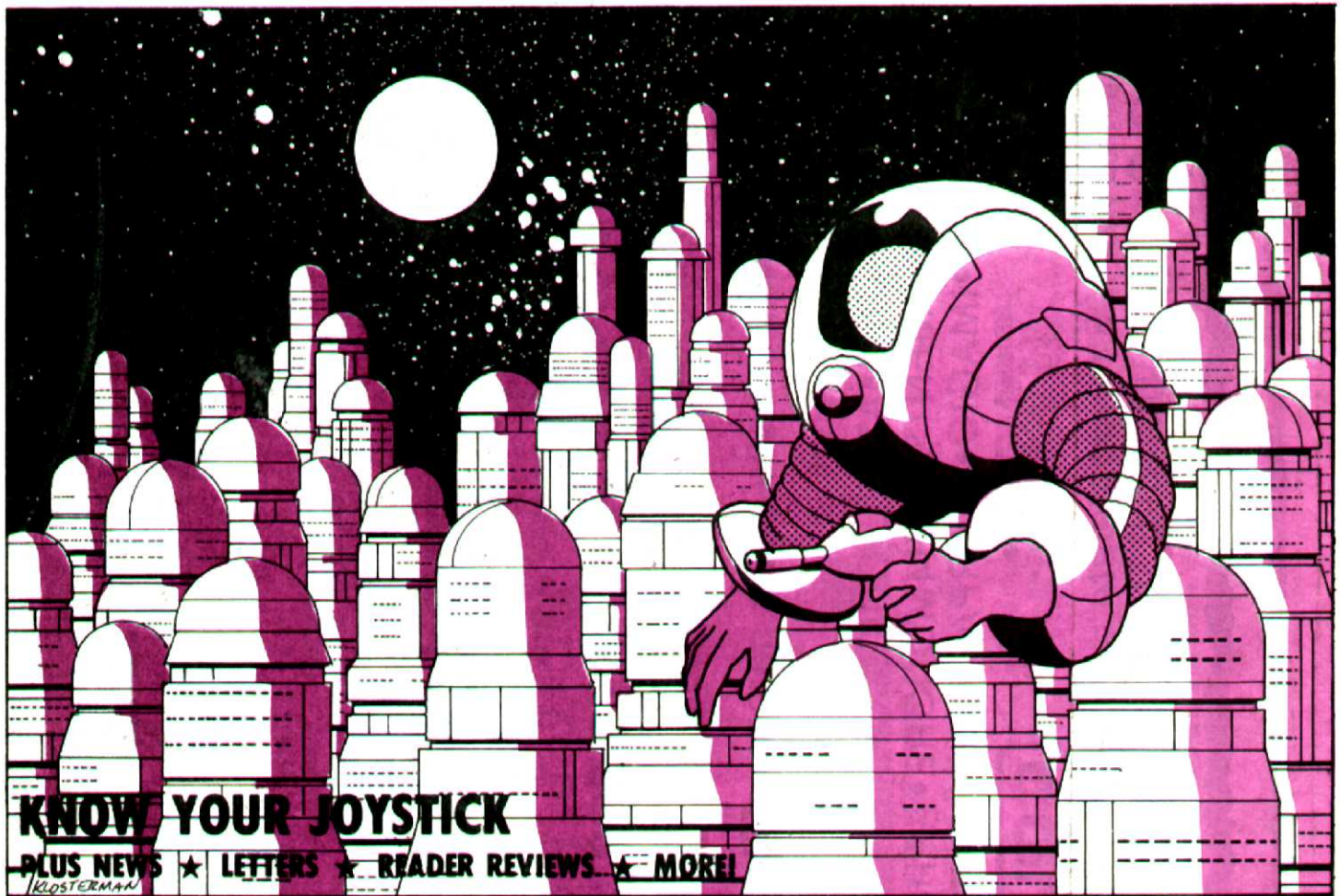
REVIEWED INSIDE :

* THE ACTIVISION DECATHALON * CRACKPOTS * MOONSWEEPER * SPIKE *
* SHOOTIN' GALLERY * NO ESCAPE * SOLAR FOX * VCS SMURF * TRUCKIN' *
* LADY BUG * VENTURE * THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK * BEDLAM * WEB WARS * MORE! *

Milton Bradley Sues Atari

Milton Bradley, the venerable board game manufacturer and video game manufacturer-come-lately, has filed suit in US District Court in Springfield, Massachusetts, August 2, alleging that Atari cancelled a deal, made April 6, to buy Milton Bradley voice recognition devices for the VCS. The cancelation was originally revealed in July, when Milton Bradley announced a six-month loss of $4.3 million.

The device, shown by Atari at this summer's Consumer Electronics Show, allowed VCS users to play games by speaking into the machine via a headset, instead of or in addition to manipulating the joystick controller. Milton Bradley still expects to begin shipping the product to Texas Instruments, for use with their TI-994A home computer, later this year.

Under the original contract, Milton Bradley claims in its suit, the company agreed to sell Atari up to 500,000 of the units, at a price of $46 to $48 each, and that an Atari executive gave the Bradley company a verbal order to build 128,000 of them, but then the company later changed its mind.

In a story appearing in the Boston GLOBE August 3, 1983, it was reported that Charles M. Perrotet, Milton Bradley vice president for corporate development, said the company's profits this year will be lower than anticipated because of Atari's pull-out, but that they didn't anticipate any write-offs as a result of the cancelled order, either. In a copyrighted AP story that appeared August 4, Atari spokesman Bruce Entin was reported to have said that Atari was served notice of the suit, but refused further comment.

CBS Releases BLUEPRINT

CBS Electronics announced the July release of BLUEPRINT, a unique memory and action game for the Atari 2600. The new game cartridge is based on the Bally Midway arcade hit.

The player's ultimate goal

CBS' new home translation of BLUEPRINT is already shipping.

is to save the fair Daisy Damsel from the clutches of the villain, Ollie Ogre, who is chasing her relentlessly all across the neighborhood. To accomplish this chivalrous deed, the player must put his or her memory to the test, to find the parts of a contraption that will stop Ollie in his tracks. The parts are hidden in the houses of the neighborhood and must be collected in the proper sequence. If the blueprint isn't followed exactly, the player loses precious time in this race to rescue the girl. Two other obstacles make the job tougher. A roving neighborhood meanie, played by Fuzzy Wuzzy, wants to stop the player from finding the scattered parts. Fuzzy's slightest touch will send the hero off to his heavenly reward. In addition, bombs await the player, in houses that have already been entered, and in houses where no machine part is hidden. If the player picks up a bomb, he or she must diffuse it in the bomb pit or sacrifice one life.

Once the contraption is built, the player moves on to the next level of challenge: Doing away with the fiendish Ollie, uncovering the secret code word in the process. Players who make it through all eight levels and spell

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

Tigervision Signs License Pact

Tigervision announced August 4 the signing of a major license agreement with Orca Corp. (Tokyo, Japan) for home video rights of their four most successful coin arcade games. Among the games licensed is Orca's current smash hit, ESPIAL, ranking number six in Japan arcades by GAME MACHINE's Top 25 survey.

Tiger's license covers worldwide rights for home video games, personal computers and hand size electronic games.

The four titles included in the agreement are:

ESPIAL: A "state-of-the-art high-resolution graphic space attack game. The player uses his or her full fire

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

Starpath Releases Two New SuperCharger Games

Starpath Corporation began shipping two new titles, FROGGER and RABBIT TRANSIT, for use on Atari VCS and similarly-compatible systems that are equipped with a Starpath SuperCharger memory-expansion system and a standard tape cassette player. Both new games should already be available at retail, in Starpath's low-cost cassette format.

FROGGER is being billed by Starpath's Vice President of Research, Development and Engineering, Dr. Robert Brown, as "one of the most sophisticated home video translations of the popular Sega coin-op game."

In its first licensing agreement, Starpath obtained rights from Sierra On-Line to translate FROGGER in tape format, for use with the SuperCharger system and the Atari 2600. Brown and the Starpath engineering staff designed the translation to

play and score like the arcade game.

Like the arcade game, the object of Starpath's FROGGER is to get frogs home safely. The player is a frog, with seven lives, who must negotiate his way across a dangerous freeway and river, either arriving safely at the frog base or losing lives to the perils of the traffic and water.

In RABBIT TRANSIT, which should also be available at retail in Starpath's cassette format, the player is in control of a rabbit family that must first brave the mysterious meadow and the land of ledges. Dangers in the deceptively-peaceful garden include sneaky snakes, bothersome butterflies and chattering chompers that threaten to take away the player's chances.
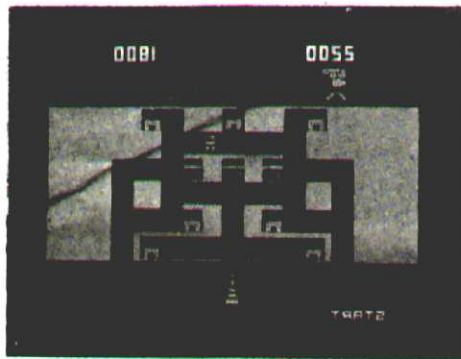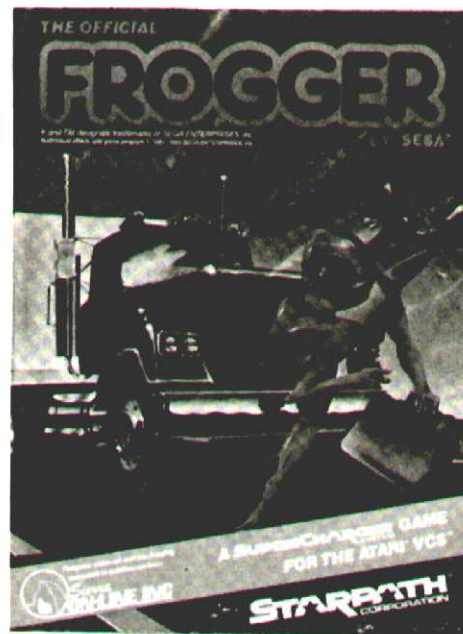
If the player can suc-

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Starpath original, RABBIT TRANSIT, and their SuperCharger translation of FROGGER, the phenomenal arcade classic, are both available now in retail outlets.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Gameviews

THE EDITOR SPEAKS

'DEM CHANGES . . .
by Alan R. Bechtold

Some folks in the video game world are speaking doom and gloom. Everywhere I turn, major manufacturers of video games hardware and software are showing profit losses. Those showing a profit act worried. Suddenly, the video game market isn't what it used to be. Some are trying to say it's dead -- or taking a complete turn to computers. I don't believe either of those explanations.

When you look at the figures, video game sales are actually better than ever. By the end of this year, more people will own a video game system than ever before. More new systems will likely be sold this year than have been sold so far. Good video games are still selling briskly, even though there are more new titles on the market than ever.

So -- what's the problem? Why are some giant companies losing money, and why are others worried about the future of video games? Many sources point to the burgeoning sales of computers, and computer software. They predict that most video gamers are switching to computers, rather than dedicated game systems, especially since the prices of home computers have dropped so drastically over the past six months.

If you ask me, I don't think there's a problem. I think that lower prices on computers are selling a lot more of them, but lower prices on video game consoles are selling a lot more of them, as well -- many to computer owners. If there is a problem, it's the fact that lower prices mean lower profit margins, and those lower profits are now split up between more competitors, plain and simple.

I don't think that computers are going to "take over" dedicated game machines, either. They might fracture the field for a while -- until the average consumer, lured into buying a computer for gaming, finds out just how much it costs to set up the average home computer system to play the really good games.

It's undeniable that more Americans than ever before are getting into computers. Many will stay there, because it's a fascinating hobby with many benefits, But I still think there will remain a strong following for the dedicated systems now in existence and yet to come -- because a lot of people simply have no interest in or desire to become involved with computers, and because many computer owners will use their computers for computing -- and play video games on a video game machine.

No -- the market isn't shifting. What we have, instead, is a rapidly-building split market: on the one side are dedicated system owners and, on the other side, are computer owners. Straddling the fence are the smart ones: those who own both -- if they can afford them, and if they are truly interested in computing for the sake of computing.

To illustrate this, consider the number of computer software manufacturers who announced, at this summer's Consumer Electronics Show, their entry into the dedicated video game market. As more companies realize the potential, and the fact that our third-generation systems are capable of handling anything sold for general computer use, more will offer their products in cartridge form in the near future.

And, so it will continue, with past video game manufacturers offering their wares to computer owners and computer software companies offering their games to dedicated game system owners. And so it should be. It broadens the selection for everyone and broadens the market for the manufacturers. In short, everyone should be happy.

But one major problem remains, and any producer of video game software, for any system, will have to deal with this one if they are to succeed in the current market: Quality. Pud games and rip-off themes just don't work anymore, and a lot of them still fill the stores. We video gamers want quality game-play, as well as graphics. We want a challenge that is appealing and original. We want games we can play for more than two weeks without getting bored. Manufacturers of video games would do well to heed our wishes, and stop running around on each other's heels. Unless it's been vastly improved, what sold well once won't necessarily sell well again.

So -- there are now two solid markets for video games, offering more for everyone. How can this spell the death of the hobby as we know it? It's just barely the beginning!

cessfully hop his or her rabbit on the back of the friendly turtle, it will carry the bunny down river to the next challenge: the land of ledges. Here, the player must hop his or her bunny from ledge to ledge, attempting to turn all the ledges to one magic color. But -- a heartless man drops rocks and tries to undo all the player's progress. Success entitles the player to head his or her rabbit off to the rabbit habitat, to reinforce their ranks. Failure results in catastrophe.

In addition to **RABBIT TRANSIT**, the Starpath family of video games currently includes: **PHASER PATROL, COMMUNIST MUTANTS FROM SPACE, SUICIDE MISSION, FIREBALL, DRAGONSTOMPER, ESCAPE FROM THE MINDMASTER,** and **KILLER SATELLITES.** Scheduled for fall release are: **SWEAT: THE DECATHALON GAME, SURVIVAL ISLAND, PARTY MIX,** and **SWORD OF SAROS.**

Starpath Corporation, 2005 De la Cruz Blvd., Santa Clara, CA 95050, (408)970-0200.

power to destroy the massive (scrolling) spy space station.

SUPER CRUSH: An auto demolition derby where the gamer must try to crash all the other cars, driving both aggressively and carefully at the same time.

SKY LANCER: Where the player is a 21st-century space warrior, alone in space with only an ultra-laser gun to kill off the continuous waves of attacking alien ships.

CHANGES: Tigervision president Randy Rissman describes this game as "the ultimate maze game, with multiple patterns, beautiful graphics and unique scrolling action that results in total involvement in the game play."

Tigervision: 909 Orchard, Mundelein, IL 60060, (312)949-8100.

SEND US YOUR NEWS!!!

The recently-opened Ottawa division of Vancouver's Sydney Development Corporation was central in an announcement July 28, made in New York, of a multi-million dollar licensing agreement. The agreement has been reached between Sydney and Sierra On-Line, Inc., of Coarsegold, California.

"We have scored a coup," said Michael Bate, Sydney's Director of Design/Graphics and head of his new Ottawa Video Games/Educational Software Division. "There's no question that this is the largest deal of its kind involving a Canadian software company."

The agreement is for a series of educational and entertainment programs for home computers, most notably the Coleco Adam, using the cartoon characters of "B.C." and the "Wizard of Id," created by award-winning cartoonist Johnny Hart. Sierra is America's leading independent publisher of home computer games, and the venture is the largest licensing agreement made by any North American software company to date.

The agreement includes world publishing and sub-licensing rights for all popular home computers. For Sydney, it means an initial $1 million in royalty advances, with the prospect of substantially more royalty revenues over the next three years.

Sydney will work with Sierra On-Line to develop at least eight educational and entertainment programs within the next year and a half. The games are QUEST FOR TIRES, WIZTYPE, WIZWORD, WIZLAB, WIZMATH, WIZSPELL, DOT TO DOT ZOT and BUNG JUGGLER. The games will be available for all major home computers, within that same time period. Coleco, Apple, Atari and Commodore 64 versions of QUEST FOR TIRES and WIZTYPE will be available for the Christmas season. Both the games and a state-of-the-art television commercial for initial promotion of the new products will utilize Sydney's unique computer graphics system.

Sydney Development Corp., 103 Fourth Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 2L1, (616)232-7168.

CBS... (Continued from Page 1)

out the word can send it to CBS Electronics for a free set of original game decals.

BLUEPRINT is billed as a non-violent, one- or two-player game that can be enjoyed by all members of the family. It should have reached retail outlets by the time you read this.

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

THE SHAKEUP CONTINUES

In the not-too-distant past, video gamers had to wait weeks -- and sometimes months -- for a new game to play on their units. Consequently, any new entry sold, and sold well. About two years ago, a couple of independent software producers realized the potential profits to be earned by producing more new games. They entered the market with their innovative products -- and made it big. Soon, others followed. Too many others, it seems.

Some didn't make the grade. As soon as video gamers had plenty of software to choose from, they got pickier. It wasn't long before a video game not only had to be new to sell; it also had to be good. Unfortunately, some really fine new games also got buried in the avalanche of new titles that followed. It wasn't long before it took a third and fourth element to make even a good new video game go over: publicity (lots of publicity), and dealer support.

Within the past year, a number of new video game companies have folded as a result of the current overload of new products. Names like U.S. Games, Data Age, and Games by Apollo spring to mind. Zimag, a new firm that announced entry into the home video game market last January, pulled out without ever releasing a title.

Now the problems have spread even to the two largest and, so it appeared at one time, most stable firms in the business: Atari and Mattel.

Within the past year, Atari's reported income has dropped from a $100.6 million profit during the first quarter of last year, to a loss of $45.6 million for the same quarter this year. A larger loss is expected for the second quarter, largely due to rising competition in the home computer market. The company that started it all has since been shuffling top executives and laying off employees at a rapid clip. Atari's now selling out their entire standard line of home computers, which is soon due to be replaced by all-new models. Atari 400's have been reported as selling at some retail outlets for as low as $69.95.

But the shake-up at Atari doesn't stop there. Apparently, their publicity departments for home video games and computers have been reorganized and consolidated. Repeated attempts to obtain comments have been refused. When contacted, anyone in a position to speak for the company has been either busy on another line, out of town, home sick or in a meeting. Our persistent telephone calls have not been returned and press releases and review samples of new products have stopped coming into THE LOGICAL GAMER's offices. Some of

Atari's public relations phones have even rung unanswered during regular business hours.

Mattel has reported some staggering loses lately, too. They have already layed off 660 electronics division employees, and reported a $100 million loss for the first half of 1983. Attempts to enter the home computer market with their new Aquarius system are reportedly being blamed. In addition to tougher competition in the home video game market, the giant toymaker has had to deal with drastic price-cutting on older-model Atari, Commodore and Texas Instruments computers, and entirely new product lines from these competitors, already ready for market.

Reports have it that Mattel has decided the Aquarius

system simply won't stand up to the market pressure, especially with Coleco's new Adam due out any day and IBM's new Peanut already reportedly hitting some major markets. One report has insinuated that, as soon as Mattel can unload $150 million in retail computer inventory, the company intends to get out of the computer business altogether. Rumor has it that some industry analysts have speculated Mattel may soon go back to being a toys-only business.

Most likely, this means the video game boom is over -- but not the video game business. ColecoVision is still selling strong, and new close-out prices on Atari VCS and Mattel Intellivision ma-

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ADAM in Diners Club Christmas Catalog

Adam, Coleco's new all-in-one computer system, will join a $30,000 14-karat gold telephone and Hero, the Heath Company's new home robot, and a host of other useful, unusual products, in the Diners Choice 1983 Fall LIVING IN STYLE catalog. The catalog, announced August 12, will be mailed September 30, in plenty of time for Christmas shopping.

According to CitiCorp, owner of Diners Club, the catalog's sponsor, claims the Adam system was chosen to help shoppers who are confused about the Great Computer War now being waged in the marketplace. Instead of having to shop around, they said, Diners has weighted the

evidence and found that Coleco's Adam offers features of the next generation in home/personal computers at today's prices. Adam, which comes with all the hardware and software necessary for a complete family computer system, can be ordered by mail or by phone through the Diners Club for $699, a price that is competitive with retail stores.

The 32-page catalog will also feature cameras and office equipment, designer jewelry, apparel and luggage, fitness and sports products and a host of other hard-to-find gifts. Items in the catalog are available to Citicorp Diners Club members who receive the catalog by mail.

Adam, Coleco's new "complete home computer system," will be available by mail through the Diner's Club Christmas Catalog, which should come out by the end of this month.

ROMOX Set to Test Cartridge Reprogramming System

Romox, Incorporated announced August 18 that they will begin a pilot market test of its electronic software distribution system in September at 20 retail locations in Northern California, followed by an expanded test at 50 to 100 locations in October.

Romox will install ROMOX terminals in the retail locations, allowing shoppers to select from over 100 video game/computer recreational and educational software titles from participating publishers. Representative retail chains, including catalog showrooms and record,

The ROMOX console will reprogram game cartridges.

department, superdrug, discount, toy and convenience stores, will participate in the test. Newly-released titles in Atari 2600, Atari 400/800/1200, TI 99/4a, VIC-20 and Commodore 64 formats will be delivered from the Romox "library computer" in Campbell, California and stored in the in-store terminals. The ROMOX terminals, which have a capacity of 500 or more titles, are being installed and supported by major rack jobbers and distributors.

The ROMOX terminal uses Romox's patent-pending preprogrammed and blank "ECPC" (edge connector programmable cartridge) cartridges, which can be reprogrammed in the terminal, giving customers unlimited reuse of their cartridges to acquire new games.

According to Romox president Paul Terrell, results

from preliminary focus group sessions indicate that typical 13 to 18 year old teenagers in the market test area play games intensively for a week or two and then set them aside. Participants said they would be willing to buy three or four blank cartridges, priced at $15 to $25 (the Romox target retail price) and recycle them to acquire new games. The teenagers also liked the idea of getting blank cartridges for Christmas, which would allow them to select their own games on the terminal at their local store.

"The Romox electronic software distribution system is intended to supplement physical distribution as well as open up new distribution channels, such as convenience stores, record outlets, book stores, and photo driveups," said Terrell. "Most of these

types of stores wouldn't have considered selling computer and video game software, because of inventory costs, slow product turnover, and space problems. It will also protect publishers and retailers alike from the effects of software price wars. Publishers will profit because they will always have their entire catalog in stock and won't suffer losses from expensive stock balancing and ROM production costs; and retailers will have a guaranteed 30% margin and no risky investment in inventory."

Incorporated in July 1982, Romox has already sold tens of thousands of computer games in ECPC format, making available reusable cartridges to a large existing customer base.

Romox, Inc., 501 Vanell Way, Campbell, CA 95008, (408)374-7200.

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chines are bringing them home to an entirely new audience of perspective software buyers. Even if Atari and Mattel were to both get out of the business entirely, which is an unlikely prospect, there remain millions of video game system owners, all waiting for a new game release to catch their eye. Any major departures from the market will only open up possibilities for enterprising newcomers.

The biggest change will have to be in how video game companies operate. Currently, releasing a hit game for virtually all video game and computer systems is a popular way to garner larger sales. Price-cutting on new software, and close-out sales on older, slower-moving titles, has also become a common practice. A decrease in the quantity of new titles from existing manufacturers, and an overall rise the quality of those games that do see release, will have to follow. Regardless of whether a store sells computer software, video game cartridges or both, there is only so much room on their shelves.

On the home computer front, the shakeout may already be beginning there, too. Mattel is evidence of that. As more and more video game companies (and others) jump into the home computer market, the results can only be a repeat of what is now happening in the video game market.

Overall, the entire video games business is a bit confusing right now, but one thing is certain: It will survive. The prices and players may change, but the market is still there and it's thriving. It might take some time, but manufacturers will adjust their expectations and things will settle down -- eventually.

More New Joysticks

Four firms have announced new joystick lines, just in time for the coming Christmas season. The new sticks are geared to hit all price ranges and systems, including the Atari 2600 VCS, ColecoVision and most popular home computers.

From Comrex comes two new controllers, for use with the Atari VCS and a wide range of home and personal computer systems. Dubbed the ComMander CR-301 Standard and ComMander CR-401 Deluxe, the company's new joysticks are designed to give beginners and enthusiasts alike the ability to improve their scores and play longer with less fatigue.

Comrex's two new ComMander joysticks.

The ComMander Deluxe is shaped like a slim-line telephone, with a keypad and self-centering handle that allows players to select either free-floating or centered stick functions. The Deluxe also features four firing buttons with user-definable functions and recessed feet that allow both in-the-hand or table-top play. The ComMander Deluxe is set to retail for a suggested price of $44.95.

The ComMander Standard is square in shape, with smooth, rounded corners designed to fit large or small hands, and two fire buttons, located in the upper right and left corners. The stick itself is located in the center of the device, and incorporates four

microswitches. The ComMander Standard should retail for $19.95.

Comrex International, 3701 Skypark Dr., Torrence, CA 90505, (213)373-0280.

Four new video game controllers are coming from Suncom, three for use with either ColecoVision or Atari VCS video game systems and one, dubbed The Aerobics Joystick, for use with most stationary bicycles and an Atari VCS in combination.

Very interesting is their new ColecoVision-compatible Joy Sensor, a joystick-without-a-stick. This new controller features sensitive standard keyboard switches but, to direct the game action, the player must simply slide his or her thumb in any of eight possible directions, across an extra-sensitive direction sensor panel. The new controller, coming in October, also features two firing sensors and a diagonal lock-out switch. It should retail for about $36.95.

Most interesting is Suncom's new Aerobics Joystick, designed to be used with almost any stationary exercise bicycle, in conjunction with either an Atari VCS or home computer system. It's an interface installed between

Suncom's new Aerobics Joystick adds fun to excercise.

the exercise cycle and game system, and it should prove to be especially fun on road race and shooting games, enabling the player to activate the screen action by peddling the bicycle. This new device should retail for about $39.95. The VCS and exercise bike are, of course, extra.

Possibly very useful is Suncom's new Snapper -- a joystick extender for use with the ColecoVision video game system. These new extenders will sell for a suggested $5.95 per pair, and will come with two foam shock absorbers that should help protect the original disc from over-exertion.

Suncom, Inc., 650 E. Anthony Trail, Northbrook, IL 60062, (312)291-9780.

Roklan has introduced the UnRoller Controller, their first peripheral device. It looks like any trackball controler, but the company claims it features action that is completely different -- and the price, set to be a suggested $49.95 per pair -- is considerably lower. Designed to give all players a competitive edge, the UnRoller Controller is compatible with the Atari VCS, and a host of home computers.

Roklan Corp., 3335 N. Arlington Heights Rd., Arlington Heights, IL 60004, (312)392-2525.

Technidyne has introduced their new Champstick cordless game controller. The Champstick is a pistol-grip controllers with trigger firing. The control stick is located at the top. Each new controller comes supplied with a simple conversion kit that makes game reset and/or selection possible from the joystick. The Champstick requires a nine volt battery, for which a charging jack is also available.

Technidyne, 8550 Katy Freeway, Suite 216, Houston, Texas 77024, (713)468-0200.

One of the most important items for playing video games is the joystick. If you've ever tried to play an arcade-type game using keys on a computer keyboard, you already know this. That's why most games and computers use Atari or Atari-compatible joysticks (except Atari itself, on the 5200 Super System -- but that's another story).

The joystick is the way the game player tells the game what to do. Therefore, knowing how the joystick works is important to the gamer. The more you know how it works, the better you can use it. To understand joysticks more, let's examine a typical Atari joystick layout and how to make one useful for the ColecoVision.

WHAT'S THAT?

First, some nomenclature (a fancy word for the parts' names). The joystick plugs into a 9 pin D-subminiature jack. The plug on the end of the cord is a 9 pin D-subminiature plug. Amazing how that works, eh? You need to know these terms because, when you order a part, the typical sales outlet will not understand what a joystick plug is.

Most replacement plugs have no covering for the wires and require a hood. Most replacement jacks are soldered onto a printed circuit board (PCB) and are called right angled PCB jacks.

The reason for the "D" in "D-subminiature" is the fact that it is shaped like a "D." Five pins are on the long side of the D and four pins are on the short side. The standard numbering for a jack is shown in Figure 1.

(FIGURE 1)

Six of the nine pins are used in a single-fire button joystick, such as an Atari joystick. That's one pin for each of the four directions and one for the fire button. The last pin is a voltage line (gnd.). When a switch or switches are closed by moving the joystick or by pressing the fire button, a signal is sent to the video game. Which pins carry voltages tells the game how the joystick and fire button are positioned. Figure 2 is the joystick diagram.
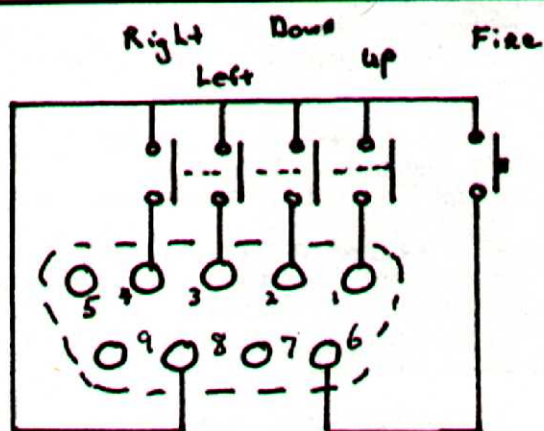
KNOW YOUR JOYSTICK
A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING THE STANDARD STICKS -- AND HOW TO MODIFY THEM SO THEY DO WHAT YOU WANT

by Charley McCue

Every joystick that can work on an Atari 2600 VCS uses this arrangement. The ground comes from the video game system and is fed through the switches. You could even make a joystick with four normally-open buttons. You would press the buttons, instead of moving the joystick. This would be simpler than building a joystick mechanism, but not as convenient to use.

COLECO STICKS

As many of you ColecoVision owners have learned, the Coleco joystick is not the arcade type that was at first advertised. It is a smaller version of an Atari joystick. You can enhance the 'feel' and control by adding a knob on the end of the joystick, but you cannot correct the internal construction.

Arcade joysticks use "leaf" or micro switches. The leaf switch is two long strips of springy metal. On one end is a set of contacts and the other end has the mounting assembly. The switch is mounted to the joystick or to the cabinet.

The micro switch is actually two switches in one sealed case. You can choose a normally open or normally closed switch. It is mounted the same way as the leaf switch.

The leaf switch, being unsealed, can be cleaned. Some even allow you to replace the contacts, instead of the entire switch. The micro switch, being sealed, is more difficult to clean and, when the switch goes bad, everything must be replaced.

The standard Atari and ColecoVision joysticks do not use leaf switches. They have small domes or bars of aluminum foil, attached to a printed circuit board (PCB). The joystick assembly presses on the aluminum. When pressed hard enough, the aluminum makes contact with the printed circuit.

Once the aluminum flattens too much, contact is never broken and the game tries to always go in that direction. When the aluminum separates from the PCB, it will never

go in that direction. The aluminum cannot be repaired or replaced; the entire PCB must be replaced. It's an easy job, but it's also more expensive than only replacing individual switches. It's even more expensive to replace the ColecoVision PCB, because it also includes the keypad.

The older Commodore joystick is an Atari joystick with different colors for the plastic shells. Intellivision controllers use printed circuits on plastic and must also be repaired by replacement.

THE GOOD ONES

The deep-base Wico joysticks are leaf switch equipped. These can be opened and the contacts cleaned, the same as with arcade joysticks. In fact, they are arcade joysticks, essentially, in plastic cases. Most arcade joysticks are also made by Wico.

The leaf switch and/or its contacts will wear out eventually. They can be replaced, one switch at a time, instead of replacing the entire assembly. They usually cost less than $2 apiece.

Slik Stick to the rescue. It uses metal-to-metal contact, but not leaf switches. A brass ball is located on the end of the handle, and it touches metal contacts as the handle is moved. It will take a long time for these to wear out. The contacts and the ball can be cleaned. If it does wear out after the warranty expires, the cost is about the same as an Atari replacement joystick.

Opening a Slik Stick can be a problem, if you try it with a standard screwdriver. The slots are not straight or cross-point. It seems as though these may be screws for automated assembly equipment. The #4 precision screwdriver from Radio Shack (3/32" straight blade) fits well, however, and is large enough for proper leverage. Once you have the right screwdriver, cleaning a Slik Stick will be no problem.

MODIFYING

Overlooking the need for an extra fire button, any Atari-compatible joystick can be used with the ColecoVision console. The Atari joystick, rather than the Coleco keypad controller, can be plugged into the Player One jack, then the Coleco keypad controller is plugged into the Player Two jack, and can be used for choosing the game level.

But, here's the rub: What if you want to play a two-player game?

Then you must either haphazardly switch a joystick

for the Coleco controller after the game selection has been made, or get a joystick y-connector. A joystick y-connector has two jacks going to one plug. This allows the gamer to plug a Coleco keypad and an Atari-compatible joystick into the same jack.

You can build your own y-connector. Solder a wire to each of the seven pins listed in Figure 3. Do this on each connector (two jacks/male and one plug/female). Then twist the wires on pin one together and solder them. Repeat this procedure for each set of three wires and wrap each connection with electrical tape.

For ColecoVision Controller

Pin	Wire Color	Function
#1	Brown	Up
#2	Red	Down
#3	Orange	Left
#4	Yellow	Right
#5	Green	Arm
#6	Blue	Fire
#7	Violet	
#8	Gray	Common
#9	White	

(FIGURE 3)

The end result won't win you any beauty contests, but the cost should be under seven dollars a y-connector. If not, you aren't buying your parts from the right place. You can also buy premade cables. These have the connector on one end and bare wires on the other. This saves work and gives you six to twelve extra feet of joystick cable in the process.

ONE MORE SWITCH

There are generally two types of Atari-compatible joysticks, with either a single switch or two switches. Most two-switch/fire button types have one on the base and the other built into the stick. You choose which is active as the fire button.

Several ColecoVision games need two fire buttons. One is the fire button and the other drops bombs, or a similar arrangement. They are labeled "bomb" and "arm" on the PCB. Another button is needed, to make a single-fire-button joystick useful for these games.

The most useful requirement, to make this alteration, is enough room inside the base for an additional switch. The next requirement is that the switch be in a good location. The third is a wire to Pin 5 on the plug.

Any SPST (single pole, single throw) momentary, normally open switch will work for the modification. Choose one for size, small enough to fit inside, but with a button large enough to use easily. Drill a hole large enough to install the switch. Usually, it can be installed above the joystick and to the right of the fire button.

One solder lug on the new switch is jumpered by a 1N914 diode to the fire button wire (the wire or printed circuit trace connected to pin six). The other solder lug is connected to pin five by a jump-

(FIGURE 2)

THE FIRST YEAR IN REVIEW -- Part 2
All the Games We've Covered So Far -- In Brief Review

AS ALWAYS, WE RAN OUT OF SPACE LAST MONTH, SO HERE'S A CONTINUATION OF OUR WRAP-UP OF ALL THE GAMES WE REVIEWED DURING OUR FIRST YEAR. FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THE GAMES BELOW, CHECK OUT OUR BACK-ISSUES AD.

PLEASE NOTE: The following reviews are extremely shortened, and assume that you already know of the game and are familiar with the way it plays. Keep in mind that our comments on each game that follows are paraphrased from the reviews that were written at the time the games were released, and are based upon the games that were available for each system at the time. Following this month's wrap-up is a ballot. Vote for your favorites!

FOR THE ATARI VCS. . .

FEBRUARY, 1983

ESCAPE FROM THE MINDMASTER (Starpath)
(For the Starpath SuperCharger)
MIKE: This is a game that is easy to grasp quickly and hard to master. Check it out.
ALAN: I think MINDMASTER is just possibly one of the best "puzzle" games ever developed for VCS play, and it could well make the entire SuperCharger unit worth the price.

GORF (CBS)
MIKE: GORF can provide several hours of fast-moving fun for just about any gamer, but the crude display on this version will always hamper the effect.
ALAN: I don't think the game will hold up for very long, Therefore, I don't think I would buy it, nor could I advise you to.

TAPEWORM (SpectraVision)
ALAN: Don't buy TAPEWORM to impress anybody. It won't. Get it for the smiles and fun it will produce every time it's played.
MIKE: I can't recommend TAPEWORM, overall. It's too simple and uncomplicated to keep the more sophisticated gamers happy for long.

COSMIC CREEPS (Telesys)
ALAN: I like COSMIC CREEPS a lot. It's a deceptively simple action game with far more strategy required than meets the eye.
MIKE: I really like this one, too. After all, saving some helpless kids from genuine Cosmic Creeps can't be all bad.

MARCH, 1983

VANGUARD (Atari)
MIKE: Some of the sections are a lot of fun to try and make it through and some of them, I think, are real duds.
ALAN: I really liked VANGUARD and think it's one of Atari's strongest new space-game entries in a long time.

MS. PAC-MAN (Atari)
ALAN: A sure winner and a must for any lover of maze games.
MIKE: If you liked it in the arcades, there is no reason I can find why you won't like this one at home.

REALSPORTS BASEBALL (Atari)
ALAN: It's up to you. I liked REALSPORTS BASEBALL just fine -- for a sports game.
MIKE: If you want a good video baseball game, this one's as good as any of the new ones.

RIVER RAID (Activision)
MIKE: RIVER RAID is a fine home arcade game that provides quality graphics, sound and action.
ALAN: This is a lavish video game that is simple to learn, but will still hold an arcader's attention for play after play.

SKY JINKS (Activision)
MIKE: If it really recreates all the excitement of the old barnstorming days, then those days must have been a very dull period in American history.
ALAN: Even my four-year-old son soon tired of the monotonous play mechanics and uninspired graphics.

MEGAMANIA (Activision)
MIKE: This is nothing more than a minor variation on the slide-and-shoot and I really don't think it adds enough to the genre to warrant serious attention.
ALAN: MEGAMANIA is an interestingly funny entry into the slide-and-shoot genre. Take a look at it.

DRAGON FIRE (Imagic)
ALAN: Perhaps your tastes are a bit simpler than mine, but I would advise you to approach this one with care.
MIKE: Sorry, Imagic, DRAGONFIRE simply doesn't hold up.

NEXAR (SpectraVision)
ALAN: I thought this one was a uniquely challenging contest, with loads of action to keep it from getting boring.
MIKE: If you like your video game action hot, there could hardly be many new entries hotter than this one.

WIZARD OF WOR (CBS)
ALAN: CBS's WIZARD OF WOR is a VCS treat.
MIKE: This two-player game from CBS offers single players a lot of good solid action and challenge, too.

GOPHER (U.S. Games)
MIKE: If you have or know of a child with the reflexes of a fighter pilot, this just might be the game he or she has been looking for.
ALAN: Mom and Dad won't be able to fake their interest in this game too long. Get GOPHER for your kids. They'll have a good time with it.

SNEAK 'N' PEEK (U.S. Games)
MIKE: Take a good look at this one for your youngsters.
ALAN: I recommend it -- but only if you have some young kids that you like to please.

SPIDER-MAN (Parker Brothers)
MIKE: SPIDER-MAN'S climbing action will keep you interested long after the overall appeal of the game itself is gone.
ALAN: There are a lot of hours of challenging play in SPIDER-MAN. I give Parker's designers an "A" for originality on this one.

APRIL, 1983

PHOENIX (Atari)
MIKE: I would have to say that PHOENIX is an above-average slide-and-shoot.
ALAN: PHOENIX is a worthy effort I think a lot of home arcaders will enjoy immensely.

REALSPORTS FOOTBALL (Atari)
MIKE: Get this one if you like to play sports on TV.
ALAN: All I can say is that this is a lot more life-like than Atari's first effort at football.

SWORDQUEST:
EARTHWORLD (Atari)/**FIREWORLD** (Atari)
ALAN: Although well worth the price to serious adventure game fans, the total cost for all four cartridges will amount to quite a bit. Think it over carefully.
MIKE: I think both of these games represent a noble attempt in the adventure game arena.

ENDURO (Activision)
ALAN: ENDURO is a smooth, fast challenge all the way.
MIKE: ENDURO is really an excellent driving game that plays well with only the joystick controller.

SEAQUEST (Activision)
ALAN: It's enough to keep a hard-core arcader blasting away for hours.
MIKE: This game might provide you with a nice change of pace, if you like arcade action with an unusual twist.

SPIDER FIGHTER (Activision)
MIKE: I thought this one was kind of dull, and only for the slide-and-shoot addict.
ALAN: Anyone who's played a few other slide-and-shoots won't be impressed.

M.A.D. (U.S. Games)
MIKE: I can't recommend this one.
ALAN: This game is simply uninspired.

EGGOMANIA (U.S. Games)
MIKE: If you weren't fond of Activision's KABOOM!, you won't like EGGOMANIA for a minute.
ALAN: this one's only for the die-hard simple hand-eye coordination game fanatic.

SQUEEZE BOX (U.S. Games)
ALAN: This is a one-player game billed as "family entertainment." It's boring. I guess you could say I didn't care

for it.

MIKE: SQUEEZE BOX is a family game that nobody in the family will find of particular interest.

PICNIC (U.S. Games)

MIKE: This game will certainly gather a lot of dust on my shelf!

ALAN: Adults will lose interest in this one quickly, but the kids will pull it out now and then and play happily, if they're young enough.

DRAGONSTOMPER (Starpath)
(For Use With the SuperCharger)

MIKE: The overall play of this game is simply great. It's a good one for your SuperCharger.

ALAN: DRAGONSTOMPER reminds me a lot of some of the better computer adventure games I've played. You will find yourself playing this one over and over, long into the night.

JAWBREAKER (Tigervision)

ALAN: There simply isn't enough variety or sense of accomplishment in this one to keep you playing it long.

MIKE: JAWBREAKER is not the kind of action you're looking for in a video game.

COSMIC SWARM (CommaVid)

ALAN: Get this one if you're looking for a shooting match with something extra.

MIKE: I felt the graphics left something to be desired and the play was dull, if not altogether boring.

MINES OF MINOS (CommaVid)

ALAN: This was the first scrolling maze game I ever saw and it remains one of the best.

MIKE: I thought the overall play will leave most of you tired and wanting a greater challenge.

AIRLOCK (Data Age)

ALAN: AIRLOCK is interesting, but not engrossing enough to own.

MIKE: Don't bother. There simply isn't enough here to make it worthwhile.

ENCOUNTER AT L-5 (Data Age)

MIKE: This is just another slide-and-shoot that we probably could have done well enough without.

ALAN: I also have to vote for passing this one by. There are a lot of better VCS games available.

CARNIVAL (Coleco)

MIKE: CARNIVAL is a refreshing change of pace, but I doubt that many serious gamers will find themselves reaching for it with regularity for very long.

ALAN: It's safer than darts and about as much fun.

MAY, 1983

TRON:DEADLY DISCS (Mattel)

ALAN: This game moves faster and is a bit easier to control than the Intellivision game it was patterned after. I recommend it.

MIKE: Mattel is to be congratulated for a superb translation from one system to the other, despite how I feel about the concept of this game as a whole.

AIR RAIDERS (Mattel)

MIKE: AIR RAIDERS is not one of those action-packed games we see so often, but it really does offer a unique sort of laid-back action that can get to you. It's another worthwhile VCS effort from Mattel.

ALAN: If you like target games, this one is different enough to try it out in the stores and decide for yourself. I didn't care for it all that much.

AMIDAR (Parker Brothers)

MIKE: AMIDAR should be left on the store shelf, especially if you like to take your quarters to the local arcade and play the real thing often.

ALAN: This is a good game for parties and younger children. I give it an unqualified "maybe."

REACTOR (Parker Brothers)

ALAN: I wonder if REACTOR was worth the effort. I don't think it'll prove to be worth your money.

MIKE: I didn't think this game was worth it, either, given the other better games that are currently on the market.

JEDI ARENA (Parker Brothers)

ALAN: Buy JEDI ARENA -- I mean it! It's an original effort well worth owning.

MIKE: This is a really good game that I must recommend highly.

OINK! (Activision)

ALAN: OINK! is probably of limited appeal age-wise, but, overall, I'm afraid it won't hold up for long.

MIKE: OINK's main problem is the lack of any long-term play potential. If I were you, I would avoid this game for some of Activision's newer ones. They're more exciting.

KEYSTONE KAPERS (Activision)

MIKE: The graphics are good enough to make this game a classic, but I doubt that the overall game play will keep it there.

ALAN: Although there is some good solid fun to be had here, it isn't nearly as challenging as PITFALL! You'll enjoy KEYSTONE KAPERS if you don't already have a lot of climbing games laying around.

POLARIS (Tigervision)

ALAN: I enjoyed the time I spent with this one and look forward to future releases from Tigervision.

MIKE: This is a fun game to start with -- but it doesn't have the staying power to hold the interest of a serious or experienced gamer very long.

FLASH GORDON (Fox Video Games)

ALAN: I don't think you will be playing this one for years to come, but you'll get several months of solid fun out of it anyway.

MIKE: This game won't keep you coming back forever, but you'll definitely play it long enough to get your money's worth.

JOURNEY: ESCAPE (Data Age)

ALAN: There is really too little substance to this game. Someone who liked Activision's KABOOM! might enjoy it for a while, but that's it.

MIKE: Although I have to say I think JOURNEY: ESCAPE should be left alone, the graphics and sound do represent a vast improvement for Data Age.

BERMUDA TRIANGLE (Data Age)

MIKE: Overall the theme here is nothing new, but BERMUDA TRIANGLE is a good video game challenge well worth considering.

ALAN: I think there are plenty of worthwhile differences from other similar games to make this one a good addition to your library.

RAMIT! (Telesys)

ALAN: RAMIT is a graphic improvement on a tired theme I never liked when it was an original.

MIKE: I thought we were past this stage of video game development a long time ago. I think you need to pass on this one.

STARGUNNER (Telesys)

MIKE: There have already been a lot of similar games done better for the VCS. I'd overlook this one if I were you.

ALAN: This game gives you unlimited levels of difficulty and action that build slowly enough to keep your interest. Look into it.

JUNE, 1983

CENTIPEDE (Atari)

ALAN: This is just as much fun as in the arcades. Get CENTIPEDE for your VCS. You'll be glad you did.

MIKE: A lot of people were mostly attracted to the graphics in the arcade original. If you are one of those people, this one might leave you cold.

REALSPORTS TENNIS (Atari)

ALAN: You might like the ability to put your name on the scoreboard and the prettier display that this version of tennis offers. I had fun playing it.

MIKE: Get this version if you've been wanting a good game of video tennis for your VCS. Avoid it if you hate all sports. Period.

JUNGLE HUNT (Atari)

MIKE: The game itself simply isn't that challenging. I always thought the whole concept was weak, even in the arcades.

ALAN: JUNGLE HUNT is a job well done that deserves a place in some video gamers' libraries -- but not all. Check it out first.

GALAXIAN (Atari)

MIKE: This version of GALAXIAN has good potential. Atari has done an excellent job of bringing it to the VCS screen, but get it only if you absolutely have to have it.

ALAN: Personally, I wouldn't buy this one. Not after some of the other VCS games I've played.

DOLPHIN (Activision)

MIKE: Anyone who is serious about video games will find this one to be rather dull from the second day of play.

ALAN: Although DOLPHIN is noteworthy as the first video game depending so completely on audible clues, I can't recommend it for serious play.

PLAQUE ATTACK (Activision

MIKE: Now we are forced to protect our teeth from decay. I use the word "forced" because that's really what is seemed like to me.

ALAN: Look elsewhere for your video game fun. A lot better games are out there to be had, believe me.

KILLER SATELLITES (Starpath)
(For use with the Starpath SuperCharger)
ALAN: I don't think **KILLER SATELLITES** is a game for the die-hard video gamer. It might not hold their interest for long.
MIKE: This one isn't a barn-burner that you have to rush right out and buy, but it really is worth playing.

G.I. JOE COBRA STRIKE (Parker Brothers)
MIKE: The graphics are about the only good thing about this game. The rest is left to poor movement and, really, very little excitement.
ALAN: The overall concept is ridiculous by real-life or imaginary standards. The name of the game is play and this one doesn't really have much.

SKY SKIPPER (Parker Brothers)
ALAN: The play is tough and I defy anyone to sit right down and master **SKY SKIPPER** quickly, but I doubt that many serious gamers will enjoy it.
MIKE: I'd say **SKY SKIPPER** is a definite "no go." If you must have it, wait a while. It's bound to get cheaper soon.

MASTER BUILDER (Spectravision)
MIKE: I have to say this is a near miss. The concept and the graphics are good, but the problem I had with the controllers made it a struggle to enjoy. Still, this is a refreshing concept.
ALAN: I wish the game had worked better, because this one really is different. Don't buy it until you've tried it a while.

SUB SCAN (Sega)
ALAN: The overall play lacks the kind of challenge I've come to expect. If they had just improved the overall playability, **SUB SCAN** would have been a game. It's not.
MIKE: Sega has done a good job of bringing a game this simple to the screen with a little extra flair, but I can't recommend that you buy it.

JULY, 1983

ADVENTURES OF TRON (Mattel)
ALAN: Those who enjoy adventure games -- and space action -- should forget this one altogether. Maze and climbing gamers might want to take a look. I'm hoping the TRON theme has been put to rest.
MIKE: This TRON game tries to throw a lot of things at you and pass them off as video game excitement, but **ADVENTURES OF TRON** still failed to move me.

DEMOLITION HERBY (Telesys)
MIKE: **DEMOLITION HERBY** is obviously a motorized version of **AMIDAR**. If you like that kind of challenge, and are looking for something different, **DEMOLITION HERBY** is probably the game for you.
ALAN: This game is simple to learn and your friends will love trying to bash your car while you fill in the squares. Just remember to return the favor!

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE MUSICAL MATCH-UPS
(Parker Brothers)
MIKE: There isn't enough here to get your money's worth back out of it. Educational cartridges should be fun or they won't earn their keep. The kids won't play this one that much.
ALAN: For kids of any age, I doubt there is much more here to offer than a pretty picture and some cute music.

REVENGE OF THE BEEFSTEAK TOMATOES
(Fox Video Games)
ALAN: There are a lot of prettier-looking games on the market, but few that are as unique. Check this one out.
MIKE: This game doesn't move at a blinding pace, but it's far from slow. The graphics aren't outstanding by today's standards, but it's obvious that a lot of VCS memory went into the play itself.

VCS ZAXXON (Coleco)
ALAN: If you are looking for **ZAXXON** on your VCS, this isn't it. As a slide-and-shoot, it's better than some I've played.
MIKE: This game lacks the kind of fast and furious action that is available in so many other VCS games. It never really catches the reader up in the overall action.

FOR THE ATARI 5200. . .

--- CORRECTION FROM LAST ISSUE ---
We aren't sure how it happened -- just a stupid slip-up, most likely -- but our review of 5200 **CENTIPEDE**, in last issue's round-up of the past years' games, wound up with the opinions for 5200 **SOCCER**. Here are those two reviews, again, as they should have appeared:

JANUARY, 1983

CENTIPEDE (Atari)
MIKE: I enjoyed playing this one for long periods of

time and think you will, too.
ALAN: I think 5200 owners should add this one to their libraries. It's well worth the price.

5200 SOCCER (Atari)
MIKE: This is a sports cartridge for the true soccer lover, and for those of you who still think soccer is some dumb European sport, too!
ALAN: I can safely say that if you like sports action and have the 5200, Atari's **SOCCER** for the 5200 is one to get. It will make you yell and rant and jump up and down while you play.

APRIL, 1983

COUNTERMEASURE (Atari)
ALAN: Atari hasn't produced anything better -- for either of their home game systems.
MIKE: If you like tank games and are looking for some solid solitaire action, **COUNTERMEASURE** is the one for your 5200.

MAY, 1983

5200 FOOTBALL (Atari)
MIKE: If anyone else produces football for the 5200 they will have to work pretty hard to come up with something substantially better than this one.
ALAN: I was impressed with the movement of the on-screen characters and overall graphic display.

MISSILE COMMAND (Atari)
ALAN: Few games that have been out as long as **MISSILE COMMAND** still make my heart race and sweat pop out on my forehead every time I play them, and this is one of the best home versions of the game available.
MIKE: If you like **MISSILE COMMAND** then you should own this game. You can't get simpler than that.

JUNE, 1983

KANGAROO (Atari)
ALAN: I found **KANGAROO** to be an unmitigated delight the whole family should enjoy.
MIKE: If you liked the arcade version of this game, you will most likely enjoy this one, too.

VANGUARD (Atari)
ALAN: The graphics here are rich and varied -- some of the best I've seen on my TV yet, and the action is non-stop and engrossing.
MIKE: This is a really respectable shoot-em-up that adds variety to the usual space battle that we've seen all too often.

JULY, 1983

SPACE DUNGEON (Atari)
MIKE: I'm not usually prone to raving about a cartridge, but this is one of the finest video games that I've ever played.
ALAN: **SPACE DUNGEON** is definitely a purist's game and not for the weak at heart. The constant action sometimes got too overwhelming for me.

FOR INTELLIVISION. . .

FEBRUARY, 1983

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (Imagic)
ALAN: I think **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST** is good fun presented in a state-of-the-art format.
MIKE: Imagic's **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST** is the best climbing game available for Intellivision play so far.

MARCH, 1983

MICROSURGEON (Imagic)
MIKE: I had a lot of fun with **MICROSURGEON**, but it's a game, not an accurate learning tool.
ALAN: **MICROSURGEON** is a complex and graphically-appealing blasting match between man and disease that just didn't make itself exciting enough for me.

ATLANTIS (Imagic)
ALAN: This one will dazzle your friends and keep them busy for hours trying to catch up with you.
MIKE: Besides the fantastic display, there is little else to this one.

APRIL, 1983

TRON MAZE-A-TRON (Mattel)
ALAN: Just possibly one of the best Intellivision Tron games I've played so far.
MIKE: Lack of quick response and control of your man reduced this game to a simple and very frustrating level for me.

CARNIVAL (Coleco)

MIKE: CARNIVAL is a refreshing change of pace, but I doubt that many serious gamers will find themselves reaching for it with regularity for very long.

ALAN: It's safer than darts and about as much fun.

MAY, 1983

TRON: SOLAR SAILER (Mattel)

MIKE: I would look elsewhere for quick action. There are definitely better Intellivoice games.

ALAN: SOLAR SAILER is one of the best Intellivision Tron games yet. The maze is huge and the battle gets furious.

SHARK! SHARK! (Mattel)

ALAN: At first it looked a little silly, but after I gave it a good hard try, I was hopelessly hooked.

MIKE: If you have children 5 - 10, it's almost a must. Enjoy SHARK! SHARK!

SHARP SHOT (Mattel)

MIKE: Don't waste your money on lame practice rounds that don't live up to the original games they were based on -- and that's all that's here.

ALAN: I'm afraid I have to put my thumbs down on this one, too.

SWORDS AND SERPENTS (Imagic)

MIKE: I don't dish out accolades easily, but Imagic has produced a video adventure here that really shines.

ALAN: Get this one. You haven't played anything like it on your Intellivision yet. SWORDS AND SERPENTS is truly one of the finest maze/adventure games I've ever played.

ROYAL DEALER (Mattel)

ALAN: If you like any of the card games on this cartridge, I'd say buy it. It's just one more example of how video games can make life a little easier and a lot more fun.

MIKE: Take a good look at this one but don't expect a serious card challenge.

JUNE, 1983

HAPPY TRAILS (Activision)

ALAN: Few new video games utilize a new concept that is both fun and challenging. Carol Shaw's HAPPY TRAILS does just exactly that. I love it!

MIKE: My greatest pleasure is that moment when I discover something totally new and refreshing -- like when I discovered HAPPY TRAILS.

TROPICAL TROUBLE (Imagic)

ALAN: I don't think TROPICAL TROUBLE will be an all-time best-selling classic, but you should definitely give it a look.

MIKE: I'd leave this game alone, maybe somewhere on that far away island that it so graphically depicts.

DRACULA (Imagic)

MIKE: Don't let the blood rush to your head on this one. It's not really worth too much trouble or money.

ALAN: I didn't get bored playing this game -- I got claustrophobic! Although the graphics should be hanging in an art gallery, Imagic has definitely created better games.

ICE TREK (Imagic)

ALAN: Not everyone is going to enjoy this game, because it does seem to move a bit slow, until you get to the Ice Palace. Here the action is as fast and furious as any of the best slide-and-shoots.

MIKE: The graphics here are definitely up to Imagic's usual high standards, but the play doesn't live up to the display.

JULY, 1983

MOUSE TRAP (Coleco)

ALAN: MOUSE TRAP is only a mildly-entertaining "cute" maze game at its best and repetitive to the point of boredom at its worst.

MIKE: Intellivision MOUSE TRAP has to be the worst version of the arcade game that I've seen yet. Personally, I'd avoid this cartridge. It's not worth the hassle or aggravation.

FOR COLECOVISION. . .

MARCH, 1983

ZAXXON (Coleco)

ALAN: If you like your space-battle action fast, hard and dazzling, this cartridge could just be the one for you.

MIKE: ZAXXON isn't one of your cheaper games, and it just might not be worth the price you'll have to pay to own it.

APRIL, 1983

CARNIVAL (Coleco)

MIKE: CARNIVAL is a refreshing change of pace, but I doubt that many serious gamers will find themselves reaching for it with regularity for very long.

ALAN: It's safer than darts and about as much fun.

MAY, 1983

DONKEY KONG JR. (Coleco)

MIKE: If this game only had all the screens of the arcade original it would be a true classic for all time. I'm not so sure it isn't anyway.

ALAN: I can't recommend this one for serious video game buffs. It will be fun for parties, but you'll only pull it out for company after the first month or so.

JUNE, 1983

SPACE PANIC (Coleco)

MIKE: All the people I've played this one with are as excited about it as I am. SPACE PANIC looks like a sure winner to me.

ALAN: I predict this game will pick up a lot of enthusiastic fans as word about it spreads. Hop on the bandwagon. SPACE PANIC is a riot.

GORF (Coleco)

MIKE: The excitement simply doesn't seem to be there for me on this game. It's definitely not the type of challenge you will want to rush right out and buy.

ALAN: As a slide-and-shoot with something different, this is probably the best you can find for ColecoVision play. But there are a lot better games already available or coming soon. You might want to save your money.

PEPPER II (Coleco)

MIKE: If you like maze games at all, then this is going to be a cartridge you will cherish for a long long time.

ALAN: PEPPER II is a maze chase that's well worth the price. If you like mazes like I do, I doubt that you'll ever tire of this one.

SPACE FURY (Coleco)

MIKE: If you like ASTEROIDS-type video game play, SPACE FURY will be a good one for you.

ALAN: I must say that you'll like this game if you like ASTEROIDS. I tired of it quickly.

LOOPING (Coleco)

MIKE: I really tried playing this game in the arcades, but it still gives me nothing back for all the effort.

ALAN: The action on the first section gets pretty furious, but the entire game isn't really worth the price.

FOR THE ODYSSEY - 2 . . .

APRIL, 1983

ATTACK OF THE TIMELORD! (N.A.P.)

ALAN: Look into this one if you want something better than ALIEN INVADERS - PLUS!, but don't expect another UFO! or FREEDOM FIGHTERS!.

MIKE: This isn't as good a game as N.A.P. has proved they can produce for the system.

P.T. BARNUM'S ACROBATS! (N.A.P.)

ALAN: Kids might like ACROBATS!, but only if they are very young.

MIKE: This game has some problems, but the play did put a little excitement in my blood.

SMITHEREENS! (N.A.P.)

MIKE: The game really didn't end fast enough for me.

ALAN: I'd pass on this one, too, unless you are simply desperate for something new.

MAY, 1983

S.I.D. THE SPELLBINDER (N.A.P.)

ALAN: This is an excellent game that utilizes the Voice of Odyssey and full keyboard well. It's strictly for kids, but the kids will really like it.

MIKE: This game also gets a good rating from me, for the market for which it is intended.

JUNE, 1983

KILLER BEES (N.A.P.)

ALAN: I found myself punching the reset button again and again, eager for another try at a higher score.

MIKE: I want to congratulate Odyssey's designers for producing a very fine game. KILLER BEES is a credit to the Odyssey library of games and will put some new life into that system.

It's Your Turn to Vote for the Best...

Now that you've read what Mike and Alan thought of this past year's games -- it's time for you to tell us what you thought.

Just fill out the following ballot with your choices and take part in THE LOGICAL GAMER's first annual video game awards. Winners of each category will receive the coveted NOLAN, awarded for achieving the top vote in each division. Fill out the few questions on the reverse side of this ballot and include a 3" X 5" card with your name, address and phone number on it, and we'll drop it into a drawing for free cartridges and subscriptions to THE LOGIC-AL GAMER. Be sure to include your favorite system and the three games for it you'd most like to get next on the 3" X 5" card and we'll try to get you a game you've been wanting if your name is drawn.

Only ballots, surveys and 3" X 5" cards postmarked no later than November 10, 1983, will be counted and entered in the drawing, which will be held November 20, 1983. Results of the voting, and winners of the drawing, will be announced in our January, 1984 issue. Xeroxes are all right -- just send them in now!

THE BALLOT:

VOTE FOR GAMES REVIEWED IN OUR FIRST TWELVE ISSUES. Unless otherwise specified, fill in all blanks with the name of the game that you think best fits the brief category description before it. If you know of no title that fits, or just have no opinion, put an "X" on the "NO VOTE" line when provided. Use the following abbreviations to denote the game system for which each game you are choosing has been designed:

```
ATARI VCS: VCS
ATARI 5200: 52
INTELLIVISION: IN
COLECOVISION: COL
VECTREX: VX
ODYSSEY-2: O-2
```

BEST GAME OF THE YEAR:

_____

SYSTEM:_____ NO VOTE____

MOST INNOVATIVE CONCEPT:

_____

SYSTEM:_____ NO VOTE____

BEST ARCADE TRANSLATION:

_____

SYSTEM:_____ NO VOTE____

MOST CHALLENGING PLAY:

_____

SYSTEM:_____ NO VOTE____

BEST GRAPHIC DISPLAY:

_____

SYSTEM:_____ NO VOTE____

BEST SOUND EFFECTS:

_____

NO VOTE____

SPECIAL AWARDS:

MOST INNOVATIVE PRODUCER
(Name of Company)

_____

NO VOTE____

GAME DESIGNER OF THE YEAR
(Name of Game Designer)

_____

FOR: (Game)_____

SYSTEM:_____ NO VOTE____

ALL-TIME CLASSIC HALL OF FAME:
(Any game, recent or from any past year)

_____

SYSTEM:_____ NO VOTE____

THE SURVEY:

Answer every question you can as briefly as possible, printing or typing your answers legibly. When this form is filled out as completely as you can, just send it in with your NOLAN ballot -- and don't forget to add your 3" X 5" card for the drawing. Put your name, address and phone number on the card, as well as the name of your favorite system, and the next three games you would most like to own.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

UNDER $10,000.00 ____

$10,000.00 - $20,000.00 ____

OVER $20,000.00 ____

HOW MUCH DO YOU SPEND PER WEEK ON VIDEO GAMES?

LESS THAN $5.00 ____

$5.00 - $10.00 ____

$10.00 - $15.00 ____

OVER $15.00 ____

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE VIDEO GAME SYSTEM?

_____

DO YOU OWN ANY OTHER VIDEO GAME SYSTEMS?

YES ____ NO ____

IF "YES" TO THE ABOVE, LIST THEM BELOW:

_____

_____

WHAT KIND OF VIDEO GAMER ARE YOU?

CASUAL ____

FREQUENT ____

DEDICATED ____

AVID ____

DO YOU PLAN TO OR ARE YOU ALREADY COLLECTING VIDEO GAME CARTRIDGES?

YES ____ NO ____

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE TYPE OF VIDEO GAME?
(Maze, Space Action, Arcade Translation, Etc.)

_____

WHAT IS CURRENTLY YOUR ALL-TIME FAVORITE VIDEO GAME?

_____

WHAT VIDEO GAME DO YOU PLAN TO PURCHASE NEXT?

_____

HOW MANY VIDEO GAME CARTRIDGES DO YOU NOW OWN?

_____

DO YOU EVER BUY VIDEO GAMES BY MAIL?

YES ____ NO ____

WRAP-UP...

JULY, 1983

TURTLES (N.A.P.)

MIKE: Everything about this game seems to be based on old maze game themes. This, quite frankly, is getting a bit tiresome.

ALAN: I like the way this game plays, and was overjoyed to see a new Odyssey release that doesn't use a single standard O-2 robot.

JOYSTICK...
er wire.

The wire or printed circuit between the old fire button and pin six is broken. Another diode reconnects the old fire button and pin six. The cathodes of both diodes go to the wire on pin six. The diodes prevent interference between the two switches.

There is no pin five on a standard Atari cable. so drill a small hole through the joystick case. The wire from the new fire button can then go through that hole to the y connector. Solder that wire to the pin five wire of the y-connector.

Carefully put the joystick case back together. The new switch, the diodes and the added wiring should not be pinched or crushed by the case.

If you plan on having two modified joysticks, both can be connected to the one y-connector's joint. You don't need to make two y-connectors (unless you play games requiring overlays).

You can avoid some of the wiring problems by using a Coleco cable. Use the cable out of one of the joysticks, or buy a replacement cable. The original Coleco cable has all nine wires (7 and 9 for the once-planned speed roller). The replacement cables have the needed seven wires. Or use a joystick extension cord for the cable.

WRAP-UP

This is a lot of work, but it allows ColecoVision owners to use the joystick they think is best. Adding the extra button is the most difficult part, and is only needed for two-button games.

So, you can use one modified or unmodified joystick alone. The y-connector allows for two joysticks and the Coleco controller/keypad. Finally, two y-connectors allow a full choice, with Coleco controllers and non-Coleco joysticks plugged into the game unit constantly.

The ultimate is modifying your console, by installing an arcade joystick assembly, two arcade fire buttons and a built-in keypad. But -- we'll leave that for another article.

PARTS:

ORA Electronics
18215 Parthenia St.
Northridge, CA 91325

($25 minimum order)

$2.50 per Coleco replacement cable

Radio Shack

9 pin D sub-mini connectors and jacks

Village Vidiot
215 W. 5th
Hutchinson, KS 67501

$3.50 per Coleco replacement cable

G.A.M.E.S., Inc.
6626 Valjean Ave.
Van Nuys, CA 91406

Y-connector - $9.95

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!

THE ABSENCE OF ANY NEW GAMES FROM ATARI ISN'T COINCIDENTAL -- THEY HAVEN'T BEEN SENDING ANY FOR REVIEW. THEY HAVE APOLOGIZED FOR THE DELAY, AND PROMISE TO PRIVIDE ALL THEIR NEWEST RELEASES SOON./

THE ACTIVISION DECATHALON

From Activision, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games, Coleco's Gemini and other similarly-compatible systems. Designed by David Crane.

THE ACTIVISION DECATHALON is an Olympic sports game, for one to four players at a time, using the joystick controllers. Gamers take turns going through each of all ten decathalon events, scoring points based on their performance. The player with the highest score wins.

The game begins with the torch-bearer running on-screen. Gamers must then take turns wiggling the joystick to make their on-screen participants run the 100, 400 and 1500-meter races, and the 110-meter hurdles. The red fire button must be pressed to make the runner jump each hurdle in the latter race, and in all of the jumping events. The faster the stick is moved, the faster the runner runs.

Players must also wiggle the joystick to move their participants up to the line in all the jumping events, including the high jump, long jump and pole vault. In the pole vault, the player presses the fire button to place

the pole and swing up, then pulls down on the joystick to release it and travel over the bar. Pressing the red button releases the projectiles in the throwing events: the shot, the javelin and the discus.

Only one on-screen participant is visible at a time, but up to four player's scores will be displayed on-screen. A guage at the bottom of the screen rates each gamer's performance according to a scale that is based on the maximum possible potential. Times, distances and points are also automatically tallied on a scoreboard.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: This game is really very simple to learn to play and there isn't that much action on the screen at all. However, this doesn't mean that the game is easy to play. -- or that you'll get bored with it in a short period of time.

The graphics are clear and crisp, but there isn't anything about them that could be considered outstanding. If anything, they are rather sparse. The Olympic music at the start and again at the finish is good, but the only sound in the middle -- during the actual play -- is the sound of pounding feet, and even that is usually drowned out by the sound of the player's joystick jerking back and forth.

This may, at first, sound a bit negative, but it's the play of this game that will get to you. In fact, although you might not tire of this

game for a long time, playing it for very long might just wear you out. That is the longest 1500 meters I've ever had to run in my life!

For the most part, I found THE ACTIVISION DECATHALON to be not that good a game for solitary play -- unless you want to brush up on some of the various events. Where this one really shines is for party fun, where a lot of people are trying to beat their own and others' high scores.

This game is also only for the sports-minded -- and for those with a lot of strength in their arms, because it takes a lot of strength to do well. It's a good game to pull out on those people who think playing video games isn't good physical activity, too (not that I really have anything to prove to folks who don't like video games, anyway). In short, if you like sports games and have guests over to play them, this is the new sports game of the year. You need to get it.

ALAN: After **PITFALL!**, I had to ask myself, "What can David Crane do to top **this**?" For the average gamer, he probably still hasn't topped that earlier hit game, but I think THE ACTIVISION DECATHALON represents yet another milestone in video game action.

For the first time ever, we now have a sports video game that forces you to work to win. It took me quite a while to review this one, because I actually had to rest up between games! That's how realistic the action -- and the physical demand on the players -- is.

To top it off, this isn't just a simple footrace or jumping competition. Instead, this game features all ten events of the modern decathalon and allows up to four players to participate! What true sports nut could ask for more?

I thought the graphics were at least appropriate, and the movement of the runner is very realistic, despite the apparent lack of Activision's usual background beauty. But it's variety that the VCS memory was spent on in this one, and variety is the key to a game that will keep you playing time and time again.

I don't usually like sports games, but take it from me -- THE ACTIVISION DECATHALON is a winner, especially for group play. Get it for your next party, but be sure to have the guests dress for sweat.

RATINGS:

Concept: New

Graphics/Sound: Good
Difficulty: Novice - Student
Interest: Infinite

CRACKPOTS

From Activision, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games, Coleco's Gemini and other similarly-compatible systems. Designed by Dan Kitchen.

CRACKPOTS is a backwards slide-and-shoot with a comical bent, for one player at a time, using the joystick controller. The object of the game is to stop an invasion of sewer-bugs from invading an apartment building.

Players move Potsy, the on-screen building's tenant, back and forth across the top of the screen. Potsy can knock a continuously-renewed row of flower pots off of the roof, one at a time, when the red fire button is pressed. If a falling pot collides with an insect, the bug is dead. Every time six bugs climb into the row of windows just below Potsy, a Super Bug chomps its way across the bottom of the building and the apartment drops one notch closer to the sidewalk.

The insects attack in waves. Each wave comes up the wall in a different swarm pattern; some crawl straight up, some sidle sideways, some crab back and forth and some zig-zag. The shorter the building gets, the harder it becomes for Potsy to drop the right pot and bonk the bugs.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: Please! No! I have a lot of respect for Activision and rank many of their games at the top of my list of favorites, but I'm starting to get tired of this type of simplistic action -- even when it's done at its best.

CRACKPOTS is well-done. Although Potsy doesn't exhibit much movement, the overall display is crisp and pleasant -- a credit to VCS graphics programming. But I just didn't have much fun running back and forth, pushing flower pots off the top of the building.

I guess it was because the attacking sewer bugs didn't scare me. They failed to make
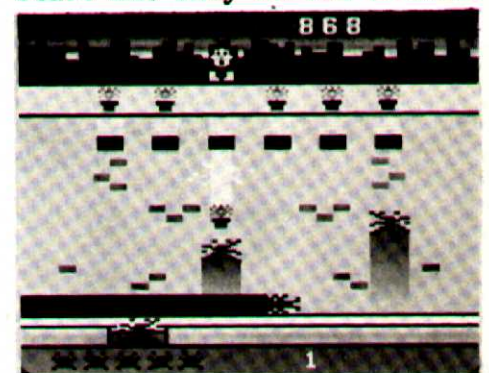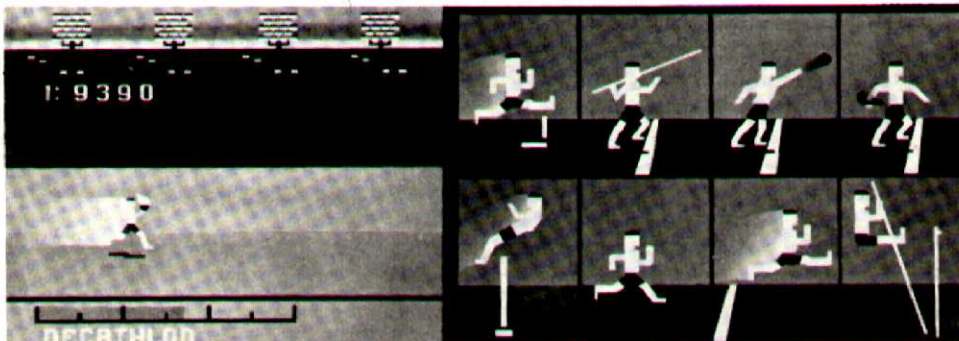
(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

me feel threatened enough to care what happened to the poor sap on the roof. The waves of bugs attacked in standard patterns that were far too predictable, and there was no real substance to the overall challenge. I got the biggest kick out of hearing the building drop nosily, one step closer to the sidewalk, so I often let the bugs go in the windows on purpose, for another glimpse of the only real fun this game has to offer. This one gets an all-out "no" from me.

MIKE: Let's begin by saying that I hate "cute" games. This fact tends to color my opinions on this type of offering. Consequently, I try to compensate for this by looking extra hard for the redeeming qualities of such releases. In this case, I found this very hard to do.

The game is graphically superior to many of the cute games that have entered the market lately, but quality game play is virtually non-existent. The first time I played **CRACKPOTS** is the first time I've ever thought of dropping flower pots on attacking insects. Personally, I would have used an exterminator to rub out the intruders. I felt like I needed one to get rid of the game!

CRACKPOTS isn't that simple to play and it does afford you the opportunity to practice your speed and agility with a flower pot, but I just couldn't get excited about developing this talent.

The game is too hard for the younger kids, and the entire concept is really too stupid for any gamer interested in something original. I wish Activision would say "enough with shoot-the-spiders" and work on something better. Forget this one.

RATINGS:

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

MOONSWEEPER

From Imagic, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games, Coleco's Gemini and other, similarly-compatible systems. Designed by Bob Smith, with Graphics assisted by Michael Becker and Wilfredo Aguiler.

MOONSWEEPER is an arcade-style outer space game, for one or two players at a time, using the joystick controller. The object of the game is to pick up six miners from as many moons as possible,

scoring the highest number of points.

The game is played on two separate screens. The opening display is dominated by a large sun, located near the top of the screen. Aurora flares shoot outward from the sun. Space bullets, photon torches and moons orbit the sun, and travel in an arc across the bottom half of the screen.

The player moves his or her Moonsweeper back and forth across the bottom of the screen by pushing the joystick controller to the left or right. The Moonsweeper always stays on the same horizontal level. The objective, during this portion of the game, is to touch one of the moons as they swing by the Moonsweeper. The Aurora flares, Photon torches and Space bullets must be avoided, or blasted out of the sky with the Moonsweeper's lasers. The lasers are activated by pressing the red fire button. The player can also activate a protective shield around the Moonsweeper ship, by pressing the red fire button while pulling down on the joystick, but using the shield costs the player points for every minute it is activated. If the Moonsweeper ship collides with anything but a moon, it is destroyed.

When a player's Moonsweeper touches a moon, the screen changes to a close-up display of that moon's surface. On the surface of a moon, the Moonsweeper moves back and forth when the joystick is pushed left or right, speeds up when the stick is pushed forward and slows down when the stick is pulled back. Essentially, the ship stays in one place in this mode, too, but the surface whips by, slower or faster when the stick is pushed up or down.

On the surface of each moon, towers and miners appear on the horizon, small at first, then closer and larger as they near, until they pass by at the bottom of the screen. The player can either blast each tower he or she sees or avoid them, as he or she tries to touch each miner, to pick them up one-by-one. A collision with a tower destroys the Moonsweeper. Miners that are accidentally blasted, or picked up by an alien ship, are eliminated.

When six miners have been picked up, a series of Accelerator Rings appears on the surface. The player must pilot the Moonsweeper through two or three of these rings, to gain enough speed to leave the moon and get back into space.

As the player picks up miners and blasts or avoids towers, Launcher Ships descend to the horizon, from time to time, and release Surface Destroyers. Surface Destroyers are fast-moving alien defense ships that zigzag across the surface of the moon, firing away at the player's Moonsweeper and picking up all the miners they can. The player has to avoid a collision with these ships or their laser fire, while trying to blast them out of the way. The Launcher

Ships, and harmless Satellites that also cross the screen above the horizon, can be blasted out of the sky by pressing the red fire button with the joystick pulled back, to send the resulting laser blast off the moon and straight toward the top of the screen.

Each time six miners have been picked up off of a moon's surface, the difficulty level steps up, and more moons of different colors appear in the first screen. On some moons, the miners will be spread farther apart, there will be more towers and more Surface Destroyers are released, often at the same time. The latter can move faster and fire more often, too. Accelerator Rings also can be spaced farther apart, in a zig-zag pattern, on the more-difficult moons. More-difficult moons are indicated by their color.

The play is for points, earned for blasting Space Bullets, Aurora Flares, Photon Torches, Towers, Surface Destroyers, Lander Ships, and Satellites. Bonus points are earned for blasting off from each moon and for rescuing miners. Points are deducted from the player's total score for using the force field. On the more-difficult moons, more points are earned for each action.

Gamers can choose from one or two-player action, starting at either of four different skill levels. Each player starts with one Moonsweeper on-screen and three in reserve, and earn extra reserve ships for every increase of 10,000 points. In two-player games, each gamer takes a turn whenever his or her opponent has lost a ship. The game is over when all the Moonsweepers have been destroyed.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I'm not certain that this game will hold your interest indefinitely, but I have to say that Imagic's **MOONSWEEPER** is one of the most innovative new slide-and-shoots to come along since -- since -- since Imagic's **NO ESCAPE!** And -- the best news is the fact that, most of the time, this game doesn't play like a slide-and-shoot at all.

There's a lot of fast-and-furious back-and-forth activity here, and plenty of blast-'em-dead-type challenge, too, but there are other goals as well, including picking up the miners you came down for in the first place, and hitting all those accelerator rings to get to another moon after the job is done. I don't usually like simple hand-eye-coordination games, but this one is good.

The graphics are nice, as well. The colors are bright and each character is neat and clearly-defined.

As I said at the opening of this review, I doubt that this game will keep most gamers playing for months and months on end. It will, however, keep the best of you at it long enough to get your money's worth back -- in spades.

MIKE: The word "sweeper" should really give you a good idea of how this game is played. That's right -- it's yet another slide-and-shoot from Imagic, and it sometimes seems this is the only type of game for VCS play that Imagic is capable of producing, ever since **DEMON ATTACK** was such a hit. To be quite honest, I am getting so tired of standard slide-and-shoots that I told Alan to just pull out one of my old slide-and-shoot reviews out of the files and rearrange it a bit, for my comments on this one, and that would be just fine with me. Alan promptly told me it wouldn't be fine with him, and, if that's what I wanted to do, I could do it myself. I decided I might as well play the game and write a new review, since anything I've written before might not be hard enough on what at first appeared to be just another "one of those games." I found that I was pleasantly surprised with the way this one played.

The two-screen format helped increase the overall playability of this game, although the first screen seemed to be more of a waste of time, because it really didn't seem to have a solid effect on the rest of the play. This was where I tended to lose most of my Moonsweepers, too, and I always hate any portion of any game that does that.

The graphics are nice, but they aren't really anything to write home to mother about. The play is simple, too, but extremely challenging at the same time. This is the game that Imagic's **ATLANTIS** follow-up, **COSMIC ARK**, should have been.

Take a good look at **MOONSWEEPER** for your VCS. You probably won't see many games that require the kind of quick moves this one does, while giving you the genuine feeling that you are really flying along. Imagic: you really don't have a long-term all-out hit on your hands here, but you should be congratulated for giving the gamer his or her money's worth on this one.

RATINGS:

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

SHOOTIN' GALLERY

From Imagic, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games, Coleco's Gemini and other similarly-compatible systems. Designed by Dennis Koble, with screen graphics assisted by Michael Becker and Wendy Szeto.

Designed especially for younger children, aged nine and under, Imagic's **SHOOTIN' GALLERY** is a carnival-style arcade slide-and-shoot, for one player at a time, using
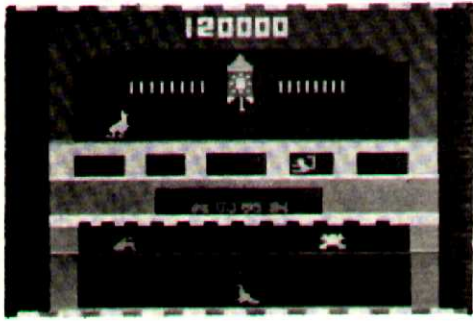
the joystick controllers. The object of the game is to rack up as many points as possible by shooting all of the targets on the screen in the proper order.

The gamer's gun is moved back and forth across the bottom of the screen when the joystick is pushed to the left or right. It fires its bullets up, at the targets above, when the red fire button is pressed.

The targets are varied. A clock, at the uppermost center of the screen, remains stationary. An assortment of rabbits, snails, kangaroos, seals, penguins, squirrels, monkeys, frogs, gullywhompers, gumdrops, rats and a train run across several horizontal paths beneath the clock. Points are scored for hitting each target, and some are worth more than others. The train's caboose and other cars are worth more points if they are shot before the engine. Hitting the swinging monkey brings on new waves of the other animals, each worth more points than the last.

Play continues in timed rounds. Gamers each start out with 64 shots, and earn more, awarded at the end of each timed round, for each animal on the bottom row shot during play. There are three other game variations on the cartridge. In game two, the player must hit the monkey twice to bring on the animals, and the targets speed up as higher scores are reached. In game three, the monkey must be hit three times to bring on the animals and the clock must be hit before all the spots on its face disappear or it takes away four bullets. In game four, the monkey has to be hit four times, the clock has to be hit before its spots disappear, the monkey must be hit to bring on a new train and the targets all speed up at pre-determined scores.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I know Mike hated this one. I knew it as soon as I played it. The game is simpler than Coleco's **CARNIVAL** for home play, a similar game Mike still likes, and it moves at a much easier-going pace, two attributes Mike rarely appreciates. Personally, I was bored with **SHOOT-IN' GALLERY** after a short time, too, but this game is specifically aimed at the below-nine age group and, for them, it might be ok.

The graphics are excellent, and the music is nice, too. Dennis Koble was as kind as Coleco's designers were, also, in allowing you to turn the music off from time to time, to keep it from getting too monotonous.

Actually, I thought this was an admirable effort, for the market for which it was intended. The only problem I see is the fact that most kids seven to nine years old would rather blast some aliens and, below seven, they don't seem to care which target they shoot first. Perhaps it doesn't matter. In short, I'd have to qualify this game as a near miss.

MIKE: Some games, once they've already been done for a system, should be left well enough alone. It takes a lot of time and effort to develop a new game, not to mention money, and it seems that such creative and financial investments could be better put to use on new ideas and concepts, rather than on rehashes like this game. The shooting gallery is a very limited theme, anyway. Even with the minor changes that can be made, it just can't be made to be that much different.

Now -- I liked **CARNIVAL** when it was first introduced on the market and, as Alan has said, I still do. **SHOOT-IN' GALLERY** takes the same theme and, although it does add a few new twists, it just doesn't come across that well in the final result. The graphics are at least as good as in Coleco's version, but I didn't think the sound was anywhere near as nice.

In short, if you don't have a shooting gallery game, you should compare both before making a decision. In my opinion, however, **CARNIVAL** is by far the better buy. If you already own **CARNIVAL**, you don't even have to look at this one.

RATINGS:

Concept: Too Familiar
Graphics/Sound:
Good - Very Good
Difficulty: Novice
Interest: One - Three Weeks

NO ESCAPE

From Imagic, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-games Video Arcade, Coleco's Gemini and other, similarly-compatible video game systems. Designed by Michael Greene, with screen graphics assisted by Michael Becker and Wilfredo Aguilar.

NO ESCAPE is an arcade-style slide-and-shoot, for one or two players, using the joystick controller. The object of the game is to ricochet rocks off the ceiling of the temple, trying to eliminate all the Furies that swish back and forth, in a variety of patterns, across the screen.

Gamers move Jason back and forth across the bottom of the screen by pushing the joystick to the left and right. Jason throws a stone whenever the red fire button is pressed. The stones travel out and up from Jason when they are thrown. The degree of arc is dependent on Jason's speed and direction at the time the stone is released. If one of Jason's stones hits a Fury on the way

to the ceiling, that Fury multiplies into two.

The Furies are located in the temple, just above Jason's head. They appear in waves and run across the middle of the screen, one above the other. Each wave moves in a different pattern and, sometimes, at a different speed. As many as six Furies can be on-screen at a time. Sometimes, the bottom Fury, nearest to Jason's head, drops bombs the short distance to the Temple's floor. Jason is eliminated if he is hit by the Furies' bombs. Some waves of Furies sense Jason's position whenever he throws a stone, others can even sense the stone's direction, and follow it in their attempts to multiply.

Each time Jason knocks a brick from the temple's ceiling, it remains gone. eventually, a hole can be worn through the roof, and the stones won't release a brick when they hit that area again. If the entire roof is eliminated before the Furies are gone, the player has nothing else with which to battle them, and loses.

Players each start out with four reserve lives and one on-screen. Reserve lives are indicated by an on-screen Life-line guage. The cartridge offers a choice of four different starting skill levels, for one or two players. Two players take turns whenever an opponent loses a Jason.

Points are earned for each Fury eliminated, and for every ceiling brick remaining, whenever an entire wave of Furies is beaten. Using the Difficulty switches, each player may choose between earning an extra Bonus Jason for every wave completed, or earning an extra Bonus Jason for every wave completed without getting hit by the Furies.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: There seem to be a lot of Imagic games to review this month -- and a lot of them are slide-and-shoots. This game, however, is not an ordinary, tiring, run-of-the-mill slide-and-shoot. It's not a totally new idea in such games, either, but the basic challenge is refreshing.

Sometimes this makes me think I'm getting soft in my old age, since I haven't liked a lot of Imagic's other offerings all that much lately. Then again, I'm sure it's because this one plays a bit differently, and because it called for the development of some new play techniques. I always appreciate that.

Graphically, **NO ESCAPE** really doesn't offer that
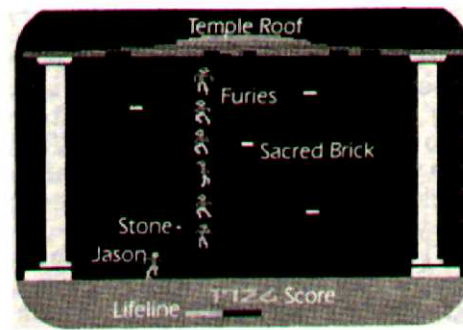
much, but there's nothing at all wrong with the overall display, either. The funny thing is, this one doesn't seem to have the kind of long-term play potential I'm usually looking for, either, but, if you're looking for something that is different in this type of challenge, it might be worth the price to you. Just don't expect a lot of meat mixed in with the action. I liked it.

ALAN: I liked **NO ESCAPE**, too. I don't usually care all that much for slide-and-shoots, as our regular readers already know, so it takes something really different within the genre to move me into a recommendation. I can recommend this game -- but only for strictly-action players who are dying for a real change from run-of-the-mill re-hashes of the slide-and-shoot theme, with enough difficulty to keep things interesting for a while, too.

The graphics are good -- though I'd have to agree with Mike that they aren't anything outstanding, either. But it's the challenge that keeps you coming back for more on this one. **NO ESCAPE** is interesting arcade action, plain and simple. You'll have a lot of fun with it at parties. You won't improve your strategic skills or overall mental performance by playing it, but it's fun anyway.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Good
Difficulty:
Student - Graduate
Interest:
Three - Nine Months

SOLAR FOX

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

Developed with a science fiction theme, this game is actually more of a maze/chase, with the player trying to collect valuable solar cells with his or her spaceship, and deadly fireballs doing the chasing. For use with the joystick controllers, **SOLAR FOX** can be played by one or two players.

The scenario is that of a dying earth, embattled with constant skirmishes for what few energy sources remain. The player's mission is to fly his or her Solar Fox starship over various clusters of intricate formations of solar energy cells, located in a far corner of the galaxy, and, dodging fireballs from the sentinels that guard them, collect as many as possible.

The player's joystick controls the Starship's direction. The ship travels at a constant rate of speed, determined by the Difficulty Switch setting. If set for fast play, the red fire button slows the ship down. The red button speeds the ship up in the slow play mode. The

Solar Fox starship has no defensive or offensive weapons.

The solar cells are arranged in twenty different matrixes, each varied in shape, composition, complexity, and, in some cases, color. The gamer must fly his or her ship over each solar cell in each rack to collect them. All of the cells in each rack must be cleared to move on to the next one. In racks seven through twenty, each solar cell must be passed over twice to be collected.

Each rack is also guarded by two sentinels. The sentinels are giant fireball-shooting cannons. One sentinel is located at the top of the screen and the other is at the bottom. Both guardian cannons constantly slide back and forth across the screen, firing a continuous stream of fireballs at the player's ship as it tries to clear each matrix. All the player can do is try to avoid the fireballs because there are no weapons with which to blast them out of the way, and a collision with one will wipe out that starship.

A Skip-A-Rack Timer stays on-screen for various periods of time, depending on the complexity of the rack being cleared. If the gamer can clear an entire matrix before the timer has disappeared, he or she will be able to skip the next rack, collecting all the points for the one cleared and automatically moving on to the next one.

The Solar Fox can also be flown through a special Challenge Rack every time five regular matrixes have been cleared. Challenge Racks are made up of special arrangements of solar cells, with no sentinels guarding them. If the player can clear a Challenge Rack within the limited timespan allowed, a mystery letter will appear briefly on the screen before the action moves on to a new set of regular matrixes. There is no penalty for not clearing a Challenge Rack before time runs out, but clearing all of the Challenge Racks will reveal a special code which will entitle the player to a prize from CBS.

Each gamer starts out with three Solar Fox starships, and loses one every time it is hit by a fireball. Extra starships are awarded every time ten matrixes have been cleared. In the two-player versions, gamers alternate turns and the high score wins. A "Parent-Play" version, for one or two players, is also available, offering only the first six solar cell matrixes, no Challenge Racks

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or Skip-A-Rack Timer and fireballs that come less often and travel more slowly.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I wasn't too impressed with this game the first time I played it. So -- I played it again and again and again. I'm still not impressed with the graphics or sound effects, but the game-play is extremely addictive! I'll most likely be playing this one a lot more.

This might be because there's a lot more to **SOLAR FOX** than meets the eye. What at first appears to be a very simplistic hand-eye coordination test turns into a hand/eye coordination and strategy contest after just a few tries. You have to learn some patterns if you are ever to clear the more complex matrixes, but, without a quick wrist and steady eye, all the patterns in the world won't help you.

I like the fact that CBS managed to include so many different matrixes, and I thought the overall challenge was enhanced by the Skip-A-Rack Timer and, especially, by the Challenge Racks, with their one-letter clues to a coded message I will be a long time solving.

I'd have to say you probably won't be playing this game as long or as often as CBS's **WIZARD OF WOR**, but **SOLAR FOX** is an addictive and challenging contest that should prove to be well worth your money.

MIKE: I waited a long time for this game to reach the home arcade, and I wasn't at all disappointed with the end result. When I first saw **SOLAR FOX** in the arcades, I knew it was a natural for home translation, and CBS has proven me right by staying so faithfully true to the original.

As Alan has pointed out, the graphics aren't at all spectacular, but they weren't on the arcade version, either. What we have here is a lot of VCS memory devoted to game-play, and what a game it is!

The game itself is extremely fast-paced and I found myself constantly reaching for the reset button, possibly because my mistakes always seemed to be the fault of pure stupidity, rather than the speed of the game itself. Although, at times, the game moved a bit faster than I would have liked, I liked the fact that you could control it a bit with the fire button, and the joystick was very responsive to my every command. I also appreciated the fact that you had to clear the screen in a specific amount of time to get to skip the next matrix. This gave the overall action an added element of timing that helped hold my interest.

SOLAR FOX is hard to find in most arcades by now, but if you are at all in doubt look for it and give it a try there. CBS's **SOLAR FOX** is the arcade game for home play, plain and simple, and if you like it in the arcade you will want to own it for your

VCS. I feel confident that you'll like this one, even if you've never seen the original. Have fun with **SOLAR FOX.** I still am.

RATINGS:
Concept: New
Graphics/Sound: Fair - Good
Difficulty:
Student - Graduate
Interest
Six Months - One Year

TRUCKIN'

From Imagic, for Mattel's Intellivision and Intellivision II Master Component video game systems. Designed by Richard S. Levine.

For one or two players at a time, **TRUCKIN'** is a cargo-hauling or truck racing simulation, using the standard Mattel video game equipment. Offering two different game challenges, Imagic's new **TRUCKIN'** cartridge allows players to haul cargo over a number of different routes that can include any of 68 different cities, or to simply race from one end of a pre-chosen route to the other.

Players drive a truck in this game, and the view is through the windshield as it rolls down the highway. The screen display offers a split view from two separate trucks, and two gamers can take each other on or one can play alone against the computer. Once the game has begun, each truck accelerates and brakes when the appropriate side action button is pressed, and the scenery outside the windshield moves and changes accordingly. One player can even see the other player's truck on the road ahead or in the rear-view mirror behind. The game screen also displays each player's speedometer, fuel guage, city-of-destination and the highway on which each truck is travelling. Arrows under each highway indicator sign show the direction in which each truck is currently moving.

The game continues over a pre-set number of days. A clock in the "status" display keeps players posted of the time remaining.

Each player can take a different route, from the 59 that are available, and can tell where they are travelling by the surrounding landscape. All the various routes are also clearly outlined on a map of the U.S. that is also provided.

Gray roadsides mean the player's truck is driving through a city. The speed limit's 35 MPH when driving through towns, and this is where a player can make turns, when intersections come up, and fill up the truck's gas tank if it's running low.

Light green roadsides mean the gamer's truck is out in the country, where free rest stops are allowed. Generally, the speed limit in the country is 55. If deer are also present, this means the player is in a park, where the
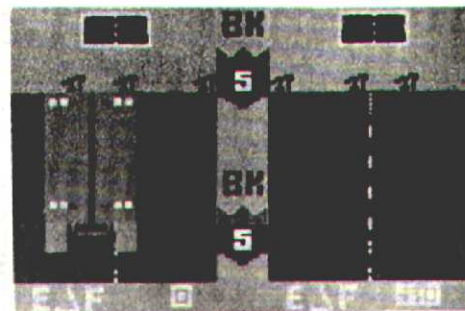
speed limit drops to 25.

Brown roadsides appear in industrial areas, where a player can also buy gas. The variety of the road also includes white, blue, and other colors.

Watching the horizon helps tip a player to what type of road is coming up. Tall buildings indicate an approaching city, windmills indicate farm areas, mountain peaks and deer indicate an approaching park and oil wells mean an industrial area is near.

As the players' trucks roll along, the drivers get weary. Soon, they can become tired enough to affect the maximum speed of the trucks. This is when players must pull over and rest up, either in a park for free, or in a rest stop for a fee. If a player exceeds the speed limit in any area for too long a time, the police will come up from behind and exact a fine from the player's travel expenses. Other hazards to watch for include other trucks on the road or the opposing player's, either of which can swerve and collide with a gamer's truck. Careful maneuvering with the disk controller, which allows side-to-side movement on the highway, or a quick blast on the horn, can save a player. If a collision occurs, the player's windshield cracks and the truck is stalled for a long moment before it can get back on the road and rolling again. The gas guage must also always be watched. If a truck runs out of gas where a player can't refuel it, it's stuck where it is until midnight, which can be a long lonely wait.
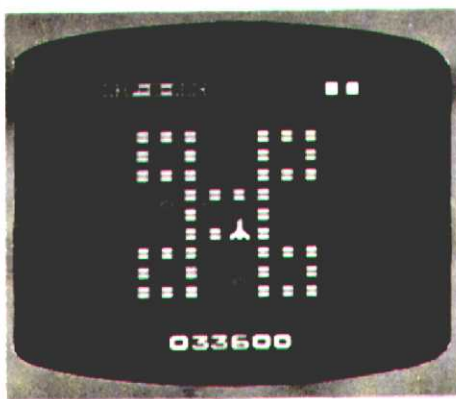
The first game on this cartridge is a simple race. Both trucks must visit eight selected cities in the shortest time by taking the best Interstate routes and driving safely.

Game two is a strategy contest, where both players try to make as much money as possible within a pre-determined time limit, by delivering loads to various cities. Gamers can use a keypad button to find out what loads are available in each city along their chosen routes. Each type of cargo is rated with a different weight and cash value, and must be juggled accordingly. Often, one load must be left in a city to pick up another more profitable load. Two light loads can be picked up at the same time. Heavier loads must be carried by themselves.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I must say, first of all, that the graphics on this new Imagic offering are

simply fantastic. They're colorful and varied like few displays I've ever seen on Intellivision. Considering the complexity of the game itself, I was completely surprised by the amount of detail that designer Richard Levine was able to work into the scenery, the rear-view mirrors, the "cracked" windshields -- everything. It's worth taking a look at for this alone.

As for the game, it certainly suits the system! I have always felt that Intellivision was best suited for more detailed and complex strategy-oriented games, rather than for out-and-out arcade play, and **TRUCKIN'** is one of the most complex and richly detailed strategy challenges I've seen produced for the system yet. A lot of careful planning, thought and skillful driving is required to play. The action is never fast-and-furious, but there is always enough work to be done, avoiding on-coming trucks and making your turns before the last chance has gone by, to keep things interesting.

Still, the only drawback I can see to this game is that it is almost too complex for the average gamer. The rule book alone is enough to turn off any casual gamer. It's well-written and clear enough in its instructions, but there is so much to remember, and so little of it makes a lot of sense until one has driven experimentally on the roads a while first, that many of you will give up in disgust before really giving the game a serious try. And I'm not so sure all of you will be that thrilled with the opportunity to drive a big rig for pay.

Still, I think **TRUCKIN'** takes Intellivision play to new heights. I liked the second game best, because it's a lot more than simple reflex action, but I think Levine was smart to include the simple race presented in Game 1, as well as the "computer-driven" beginner's course. These two versions will get those serious enough to give this one a real try enough experience and practice to go ahead and graduate into the second game.

I got frustrated a number of times, getting used to driving my truck and planning my routes, as well as learning to tell where I was going and how to turn around and correct my mistakes, but I caught on after a while. Now I can highly recommend this one for those of you who have been waiting a long time for a new Intellivision game with the kind of complexity the system is capable of offering, a new concept and a challenge that you won't tire of easily.

Stay away from **TRUCKIN'** if mindless shoot-em-ups are your forte. Buy it if you like a game that really makes you think.

MIKE: Personally, I didn't think the graphics on this game were as great as Alan makes them out to be, but the

reason for this became obvious to me as soon as I started to play. All the memory has been put to work in the complexity of the game itself. There is a lot going on all the time and, although you don't need lightning reflexes to play this one well, you certainly can't let you mind wander for a minute.

I liked the fact that **TRUCKIN'** is so complex. It keeps your mind sharp, as well as you other video gaming skills. At times, however, I found myself wondering if it was all worth the effort it took to learn to play. I just never had a hankerin' to be an over-the-road trucker, I guess. I don't even own a C.B.! Consequently, I'd have to say that the single weakness I can find in this game is the concept itself. It's definitely an original, but it won't appeal to everyone.

I would have to suggest that you play the game first, as well as possible without reading and fully understanding all the rules, and get it if you have been looking for something really complex in a completely new vein. The concept didn't really appeal to me, but **TRUCKIN'** is definitely a worthwhile effort.

RATINGS:

Concept: Original
Graphics/Sound:
Fair - Excellent
Difficulty:
Graduate - Master
Interest:
One Month - One Year

LADY BUG

From Coleco, for Mattel's Intellivision and Intellivision II Master Component video game systems.

LADY BUG is Coleco's Intellivision home version of the arcade game of the same name, already available in a popular ColecoVision cartridge. The object of the game is to run a Lady Bug around the maze, avoiding the deadly insects and eating as many flowers, hearts and letters as possible. For one or two players, the game is played with the standard Intellivision and Intellivision II controllers.

The player's lady bug is guided around the maze by pressing on the appropriate side of the controller disc. The floor of the maze is littered with a large number of "x"'s, hearts, letters and skulls. Lady Bugs eat the "x"'s, hearts and letters by passing over them. Each heart adds to the player's score. The first blue "x" eaten

doubles any points the player earns during the rest of that maze, the next one triples the score and the third one multiplies it by five. Two of the letters in the word "extra" appear in each maze. These light up the corresponding letter in the large "EXTRA" in the upper right-hand corner of the screen. If the entire word "EXTRA" is lit up, the player earns a large bonus and an extra Lady Bug with which to continue playing. If a player runs his or her Lady Bug into a skull, it and the skull are eliminated.

When a timer band around the outside of the maze has completely changed color, the first predatory insect, which has been waiting in the center compartment, enters the maze and chases the Lady Bug. As the game progresses, the timer keeps on changing color and more deadly insects keep joining in the chase. Finally, when all the predatory insects have left the box and entered the maze, a vegetable takes their place. If the player can maneuver his or her Lady Bug into the box and eat the vegetable, bonus points will be added to his or her score. But -- predatory insects automatically reappear in the box if they run into a skull, and they always eliminate a Lady Bug if they touch it.

Gamers can avoid the predatory bugs by running their Lady Bugs through the numerous turnstiles that make up much of the maze. These turnstiles swing when a Lady Bug enters, closing behind her and cutting off a predatory insects' chase, constantly changing the maze as she goes.

When all the letters, hearts and flowers have been cleared from a maze, the action moves on to a new one, filled with more edibles. Each successive maze features faster-moving predators that enter the maze more often and a different vegetable, worth more points than the one in the last maze.

Gamers may select from four different skill levels in this version of **LADY BUG**, for one or two players. Each player starts with five Lady Bugs in skill level one, and three in the others. In the two-player mode, players take turns whenever an opponent has lost a Lady Bug in the two-player mode.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: **LADY BUG** for ColecoVision is one of my favorite games on that system, so I really had to keep the basic differences between systems clearly in mind when reviewing this version of the game. Consequently, I came to Coleco's Intellivision **LADY BUG** with a very critical mind, having put in more hours on their ColecoVision version than on probably any other game for any system this year. Because of this, I probably found more objections to this one than I would have if I had seen it first.

To begin with, I thought the maze itself was too small

to play the game as well as it could have played on one that was at least a bit larger and, making all those tight turns through the turnstiles seemed a bit harder and more awkward with the Intellivision controllers, but, then again, the game felt awkward on ColecoVision when I first played it, too, so this type of objection can be overcome with a little practice. Still, I didn't like it -- until I quit comparing it to the original.

After being away from the original for a while, this one played better. It is a good version for Intellivision owners, if they aren't familiar with the original home version. You'll be disappointed if you expect it to be close. You won't like it much if you don't like maze games, either. You'll probably have a lot of fun with it if you've been looking for something different in a maze challenge.

ALAN: I, too, love **LADY BUG**. If, by some weird chance, you aren't already familiar with it, it probably sounds like just another **PAC-MAN** rip-off from the description above -- until you get to those turnstiles and the "EXTRA" feature -- and the vegetables -- and on and on. In short, a **PAC-MAN** rip-off it ain't. A completely new twist on the maze game it is. One that is very addictive and challenging all the way.

Intellivision owners should be able to rejoice that such a fine game has finally been brought to their system. Unfortunately, this is another one that doesn't seem to translate well to other systems.

Mike already mentioned the problems with the controllers. I think this is a first indicator that a system's limits don't allow for true translation of a game. Another problem is the absence of the Vegetable Harvest, the one Main Feature of the ColecoVision original that always kept me playing - for just one more shot at another harvest. And the size of the maze and overall graphics just don't do this one justice, either.

The sound effects were pretty good, and this one certainly plays better than **MOUSE TRAP** for Intellivision did, but I was still disappointed. There are a lot of better games for this system. Get it only if you must have **LADY BUG**.
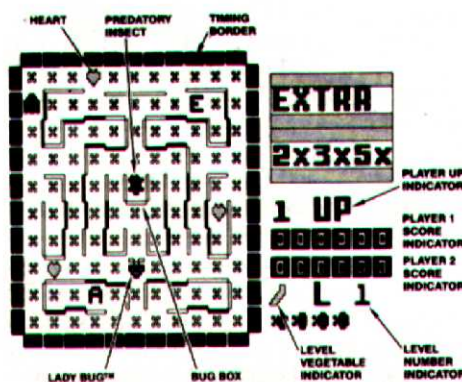
RATINGS:

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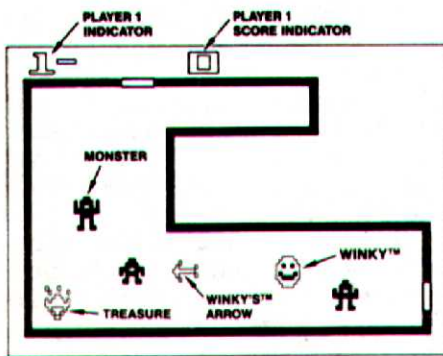**Interest:** One - Six Months

VENTURE

From Coleco, for Mattel's Intellivision video game system. (NOT for Intellivision II).

VENTURE is the Intellivision-compatible version of

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the popular arcade classic, already brought to Atari and ColecoVision home systems by Coleco earlier this year. For one or two players, the basic play of the game is the same as for the previous two versions.

The player is "Winky," deep within a dungeon that is full of valuable treasures and perilous dangers. Winky is moved when the player presses on the sides of the disc controller. He shoots arrows -- his only defense besides running -- when any side button is pressed. Arrows travel in the same direction Winky was last travelling.

The action begins on the first of four levels of the dungeon. Four rooms are outlined in each opening screen, and the player must dodge a number of "hallmonsters" to reach one of the four rooms and go for the treasure within. Touching a hallmonster will eliminate a Winky, and Winky's arrows don't work during the opening phase of the game.

The display changes to that of the interior of the chamber Winky has entered once he touches a door. Besides a treasure, each chamber also contains more monsters and/or obstacles to overcome. Winky must be maneuvered over to the treasure so that he can touch it, then back out through the chamber door, before that particular treasure can be claimed. Chamber monsters may either be avoided or shot, for extra points, but their touch will eliminate a Winky.

When Winky leaves a chamber, he's back into the hall mode, and must again dodge the hallmonsters to enter another chamber. If Winky spends too much time in any one chamber, a hallmonster will enter and pursue him at a high speed. Hallmonsters cannot be killed by Winky's arrows, whether in a chamber or in the halls. When the treasure has been claimed from a room, that chamber is then closed and cannot be entered again. When all the treasures on a dungeon level have been claimed, the action moves on to a deeper level of the dungeon, with new rooms, new monsters and more treasure to collect.

Dungeon chambers include the Dragon room, the Troll room, Skeleton room, Serpent room and others, each filled with the appropriate monsters to be avoided, and the Wall room, where the treasure is surrounded by four moving walls. The treasure in the Wall room disappears when the hallmonster enters, and monsters in other rooms can often appear and disappear at

will. Every dungeon chamber and monster, on each dungeon level, is different.

Players each start the game with five Winkies and earn extra bonus Winkies at every multiple of 20,000 points. The treasure screen shows the number of treasures collected and the number of Winkies each player has remaining. The game is over when a player has lost all of his or her Winkies. Play switches from one gamer to the other, whenever a Winky is lost, in the two-player variation.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: I really enjoyed the ColecoVision version of this game. My only objections to the VCS version was that the game, at the higher levels of play, might be a bit too difficult for the average gamer. My major complaint about the Intellivision version, however, surprised even me.

This version of the game is so simple that it is really very boring. At the fourth skill level, I finally had to give up playing the game because I just kept going on and on without any real difficulty.

The graphics on this one are very good, not just a rehashing of the VCS version in the Intellivision format. This was a pleasant surprise, since some of Coleco's earlier releases for Mattel play were very weak graphically. Frankly, I wasn't expecting to see anything as good as what was delivered here. The sound effects are also very good. They made the game as enjoyable to listen to as to watch, something lacking in the VCS version and a necessity to true-to-the-arcades reproduction of VENTURE.

Still, the difficulty of play (or lack of it), is where this version really falls down. I will give Coleco the benefit of the doubt, since I have already played all the versions a lot. This gives me possibly some edge over someone who has never yet played VENTURE on any system, and allows me to give this one a bit higher rating than I would otherwise. Still, if you have this game in any other format, stick with the one you have. Otherwise, this one might be good for Intellivision gamers who aren't too serious about their play. It certainly plays well with the disc controllers.

ALAN: I have to agree with Mike all the way on this one. I, too, was surprised at the ease with which almost anyone can play this game and win. I was so surprised that I, too, thought it might have roots in the fact that I've played the other versions so much. So I had some of my friends try it, people who have not played VENTURE and those who have. All found this one too easy to beat. They all said it was still fun to play, but also agreed that winning so often and so easily would quickly become boring.

Coleco's Intellivision graphics have improved im-

mensely, and the sound effects here are very good -- but the lack of play challenge makes this one a positive loser for me. I'd suggest you shy away from it altogether.

RATINGS:

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

STAR WARS:
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

From Parker Brothers, for Mattel's Intellivision I and II Master Components and other, similarly-compatible systems.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK is an arcade-style space action game for one or two players, based on the movie of the same name. The object of the game is to stop the a line of Imperial Walkers before they reach the Rebel Base and blow up its power generators, ending the game.

The action takes place on the Ice Planet Hoth, with its frozen mountains displayed in the background, and its craggy surface zipping by below. The player maneuvers a Snow-speeder with the Mattel disc controller, pressing on its left or right side to make the vehicle travel left or right across the horizontally-scrolling landscape. The ship gains and loses altitude when the top or bottom of the disc is pressed. It fires its lasers when either top side button is pressed.

The portion of the planet over which the action takes place is about five times the size of the TV screen, and is represented in its entirety on a small "wrap-around" radar screen at the bottom of the display. As the player's snowspeeder takes off from the left-hand side of the screen, five Imperial Walkers can be seen slowly marching in a single line from the right on the radar below. The Walkers appear on the main
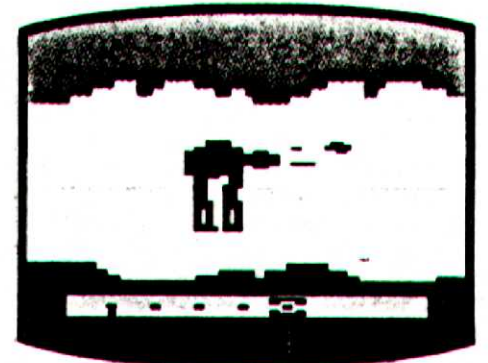
screen, above, when the player's snowspeeder approaches them. They are so large, only one is on-screen at a time.

The player must fly by the Walkers and blast them with his or her snow speeder's laser guns. Each Walker must be hit a number of times before it is destroyed. As each Walker is weakened, it changes color and slows its pace. Occasionally, a brightly-colored square will appear somewhere on each Walker. If the player can hit this square with one solid laser blast, it will destroy the Walker. A new Walker replaces each one that is destroyed, joining the march at the end of the line.

As the player flies the snowspeeder back and forth on the screen, repeatedly blasting the Walkers, they return his or her fire with fairly slow-moving but nonetheless deadly blasts of their own. In the higher skill levels, they can also fire a heat-seeking missile that will follow the snowspeeder around the screen until it hits its mark or is blasted out of the sky by the player's fire. It takes more than one hit from a Walker to destroy the snow-speeder, which changes color to indicate it's damaged condition. Each snowspeeder can be landed twice for repairs, in any crevice on the land-scape below. When it's destroyed, the snowspeeder crash-lands. Destroyed snow-speeders are replaced by a reserve craft, if any are left, and begin again at the far right-hand side of the radar.

Gamers each start with five snowspeeders, one on-screen and four in reserve. The cartridge offers play at

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four skill levels, for one or two players. In two-player games, each gamer takes a turn when his or her opponent has lost a snowspeeder. The game ends when all the player's snowspeeders are lost.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: This is version number two of the Parker Brothers game already released for VCS play. The graphics here are better than they were in the first version, but they aren't all that good by current Intellivision standards. The sound effects are up to par with those already set for the VCS -- but, again, they aren't anything outstanding for Intellivision. The theme was recognizeable and the blasts were blasts.

The game play in this version is the same, too, though it is a bit easier to hit the Walker's bomb port. I still didn't like the game play. To be blunt, the entire concept still really bores me and nothing I do with it seems to help this very real problem. So much more could have been added to this game -- especially in this version! A few additional challenges to the gamer, or additional goals, might have made it a true classic in every sense of the word. Unfortunately, it wasn't even attempted.

When Parker makes this game for the third-generation game machines, I hope they do consider adding a few elements -- perhaps some more weapons on both sides, maybe some other goal or strategy, in addition to the simple-minded blasting, blasting, blasting that's required -- because the movie really gives them so many other possibilities that this concept has much potential as yet untapped. For what it is right now, I have to recommend that you leave this one alone. Go find something more exciting. Watching the grass grow might be a good starting point.

ALAN: There isn't a whole lot else I can say about this game. I feel the same way Mike does. I didn't like it when I played it on the VCS and the new Intellivision version is no real improvement. If anything, there are a few more problems with this game than in the first release.

I agree, too, that the concept is just too thin, and the action too repetitive, to hold my interest for very long. The game is challenging, but I never liked the fact that it can't be beaten. Period. Those Walkers just keep on coming, no matter how many of them you blast out of the way. You simply can't save the day. After a while, you don't care whether you can or not.

The other problem was fact that the control of the snowspeeder on this version is choppier and less reliable than it was for the VCS. So -- in addition to being boring, it's frustrating at times, too. Pass it by. Par-

ker's got better coming for Intellivision play. So do a lot of others.

RATINGS:

Concept: New
Graphics/Sound: Fair
Difficulty:
Student - Graduate
Interest: One Day - One Week

VCS SMURF RESCUE IN GARGAMEL'S CASTLE

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

SMURF RESCUE IN GARGAMEL'S CASTLE is a running, jumping and ducking chase game, for one or two players using the joystick controller. Gargamel has captured poor helpless Smurfette and is holding her captive in his castle. The player must run Smurf through the woods, and a variety of other terrain, avoiding a number of obstacles as he leaps over fences, a river, rocks, tall grass and hills, to reach the castle and save her.

Smurf starts out standing in front of his mushroom home. He runs in the same direction as the joystick is pressed, jumps when the stick is pushed up and ducks when it is pulled down. If he's standing still, Smurf jumps straight up the first time the joystick is pushed. He makes a long leap forward when the joystick is pushed up while he is running. To make the longest leap possible, the player must push the joystick up twice, quickly.

It's a long trek to the castle, and many of Gargamel's evil creatures guard the path. He must travel through the woods, jumping over fences that disappear and reappear occasionally, then cross a river and jump a series of bluffs, in two more sections of play. Finally, he encounters the treacherous caverns, where he must leap down into a pit, dodge a deadly spider, and hop up the other side to make it to the castle. In the castle, Smurf finds Smurfette, tucked away high up on a shelf. The only way to reach her and save the day is to jump high up onto Gargamel's chair, then to the table and, in one more precarious leap, to the shelf. If Smurf can reach the shelf and touch Smurfette, she is saved and the game begins again, with the player using the remaining Smurfs to try and make another rescue.

Along the way, Gargamel's hawks swoop and attack, in

WHERE DID SMURFETTE™ GO?

ENERGY LEVEL INDICATOR
SCORE INDICATOR
SMURF'S™ HOUSE
SMURF™
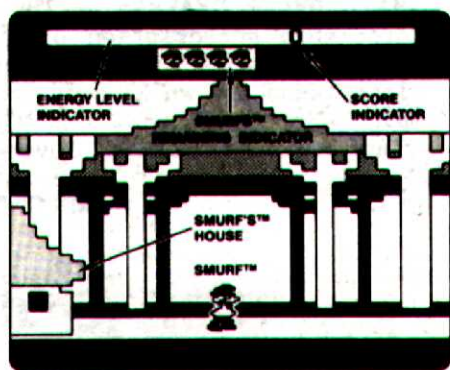
Smurf™ be nimble! Smurf™ be quick!

the woods and over the bluffs. A snake wiggles its way back and forth across the screen at the river and a bat dives at Smurf in the cavern and guards Smurfette in Gargamel's laboratory. With the gamer's help, Smurf must jump, duck or run to avoid these perils, if he's to succeed in his mission. When played in the higher skill levels, the dangerous animals move faster, and can follow Smurf, who can always head back toward his house to safety when the going gets too tough.

Each player starts out with five Smurfs. One Smurf is lost whenever he's hit by one of the animals, falls or runs out of energy (as indicated by the on-screen guage) before entering a new screen.

The play is for points, earned whenever Smurf jumps an obstacle and frees Smurfette. Extra Smurfs are awarded every time 10,000 points are earned. The cartridge offers four different skill levels, for one or two players. Gamers take turns whenever an opponent loses a Smurf in two-player games.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: If you've been reading our reviews for a while, you already know I didn't like the ColecoVision version of this game at all. I thought it was graphically outstanding, but I also felt it lacked any real challenge, regardless of the age group for which it was intended. Maybe Coleco's designers read my complaints -- I don't know. Whatever happened, this version turned out to be a really good children's game. I thought it was kind of fun myself (late at night, of course, when the kids wouldn't see me practicing up).

Graphically, **SMURF RESCUE** is as good as anything currently available for the VCS, and the musical soundtrack is as cute as it was in the ColecoVision original. But, where the VCS game really shines is in the fact that there is a game to it, too. It's not one of those high-speed fast-action challenges that will keep hard-core arcaders interested more than a minute or two, but this game wasn't designed for that audience. It's primarily for children, and for family play. For Saturday morning cartoon freaks, too.

In short, **VCS SMURF RESCUE** really hits the market it was aimed at: little kids. Even though little kids aren't apt to be the ones who buy most video game cartridges, there are enough of them looking for a game that will give them some fun with a figure they are familiar with, and this one will provide all that and more. What's most interesting is the fact that even parents will be able to sit down and play this game without getting bored in five minutes. It's a good buy for the kids and you parents won't feel like you got took getting it.

ALAN: I must say I am really surprised that Mike liked

this game! I liked it a lot -- but, **Mike**? Dedicated hardcore action freak Mike? Take it from me -- if Mike likes this game enough to give it a good rating, it must be one of the best new "cute" games for the VCS this year. If you ask me, it is. I agree with him whole-heartedly.

But -- what's the deal here? A VCS game that's **better** than the ColecoVision original? Can it be? Yes! Why? As Mike has already so astutely pointed out -- game play, pure and simple.

Somehow, Coleco's designers have managed to produce a VCS game with truly beautiful graphics, an on-screen Smurf that looks and moves like a real Smurf, added an opening tune not on the original -- and a new river and snake sequence, stepped it all up and made it even more challenging than they did the first time around -- with less memory! I don't know how they did it, but my hat's off to them for accomplishing the feat.

VCS SMURF is the perfect family game that can indeed keep even you parents playing a lot longer than you have on most kid's games. I think it's the first Coleco VCS game I've ever seen that was better than it was on the ColecoVision console. Check it out.

RATINGS:

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

BEDLAM

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

BEDLAM is a one- or two-player space action arcade game, using the single control panel supplied with the Vectrex console. The player's ship is located in the center of the screen, and must battle an onslaught of alien vessels that come in from all sides.

The player's ship stays in the center of the screen at all times, but it can be rotated by pushing the joystick to the left or right. Button four fires the ship's lasers. Button three increases the speed of the cannon's rotation while the joystick is being pushed. Button two fires the Zap -- eliminating all the aliens on-screen. Only one Zap can be used per space sector.

The game is played on a variety of screens, with each screen representing a new sector of space. Sectors are all roughly star-shaped, with three, four, five or even more legs to each. In higher skill levels, the sectors rotate, shrink and pulsate.

Alien vessels always enter from the outermost points of each sector of space, coming in toward the player's cannon at the center. They will
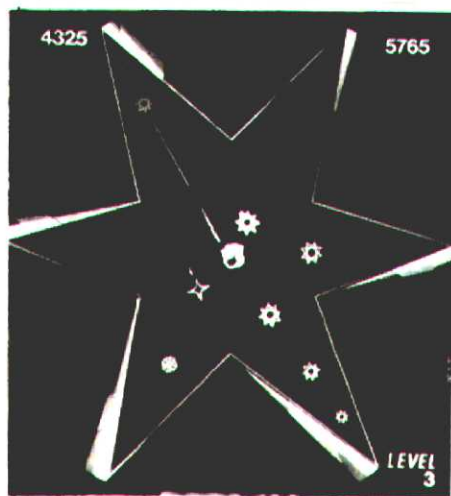
destroy a player's ship if they can touch it.

There are four different kinds of alien ships: Escort Ships, Astral Defenders, Droids and Colonist Transports. Escort Ships are present in every sector and approach the player's cannon directly without pausing. Astral Defenders approach the center only when the player's cannon is pointed in another direction. Droids are deadly unmanned star ships that will circle the player's ship and wait to destroy it at its most vulnerable moment. Colonist Transports can never be blasted out of the galaxy. Hitting them sends them back to the far reaches of the sector, but they always return, remaining in each sector until all the other alien ships have been eliminated. When all the aliens in a sector have been destroyed, the play advances to the next sector.

Points are scored for each alien vessel destroyed. Gamers take turns in two-player games by passing the standard control panel, whenever losing a ship. The game can also be started out at any of three different skill levels.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: BEDLAM is an interesting name for a game that really fails to add a whole lot to the definition of the word. The game is difficult, to say the least, but it's really not that interesting to play. The movement of your ship is too restricted and I thought it was very hard to control the rotation. Rotation of your ship is vitally important in this game.

As the enemy approaches from the ends of each space sector, it is absolutely essential to rotate the ship quickly before they get too close. Granted, you can always blow them all away at once with the Zap, but that's not a weapon that can be used lightly.

And control isn't the only thing that's wrong with this game. The graphics are extremely sparse and simple, and the overall play is simple, too, for that matter. It all led be to believe that I would be simple, too, to put out hard-earned currency for this one.

Leave this one alone. It's really not in the same league as most of GCE's other games for the Vectrex system. I didn't care for it.

ALAN: I didn't care for BED-

LAM, either. **MINE STORM**, the game that comes built into the Vectrex system, is already one of the best **ASTER-OIDS**-type games I've ever played at home. The Vectrex system is excellent for this type of game, and GCE's earlier release, **SOLAR QUEST**, showed me it could be done again, with some interesting twists. As Mike already pointed out, however, **BEDLAM** doesn't add anything significant to the genre. If anything, there is less to this one than the others have to offer.

I, too, have to vote for passing this one by. There are a lot of great games already available for the Vectrex system, and more on the way soon. Save your money for them.

RATINGS:

Concept: Too Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Fair
Difficulty: Graduate
Interest: One Week

FORTRESS OF NARZOD

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

FORTRESS OF NARZOD is an arcade action game for one or two players at a time, using the standard Vectrex control panel. The player must penetrate three different mountain passes, to reach the Fortress of Narzod and battle the deadly Hurler, to destroy the evil wizard who resides within.

The player controls a hovercraft with the joystick controller, moving it back and forth and up and down each mountain pass, firing the craft's guns straight ahead by pressing button four.

Each of the zig-zagging roads that lead to the Fortress are guarded by the evil wizard's guardians and ends in a gate that leads to the next path. On the lower roadway, the player is met by the DoomGrabbers. Like all the other guardians, these enter the roadway from the gate at the far end and advance on the gamer's hovercraft, hurling deadly Spikers that will eliminate the player's craft if they touch it. DoomGrab-

bers and their Spikers can be eliminated with the player's fire, but -- and this is important -- the player's own fire can easily ricochet off the walls of the passageway and eliminate the hovercraft, if great care isn't exercized when firing. Once all the DoomGrabbers are gone, in come the Tarantulas, then the Ghouls. The player must eliminate all the various waves of Guardians before being allowed passage onto the next path.

Each of the Guardians moves and acts pretty much like the last. On the second path, the player must again face the three Guardians, but this time the Spikers they hurl split into two when hit by the player's fire. The Guardians are also joined by Warbirds on the second path. Warbirds stop where they are when hit by the player's fire, and block further shots from either side until they eventually disappear. They will eliminate a gamer's hovercraft if they touch it.

In the upper roadway, the player must again battle all three types of Guardians, but more of them enter the game and they move and fire faster. The Warbirds can fire on the player's hovercraft in this final passageway, and all the Spikers split in two when blasted.

If all three roadways are passed successfully, the player enters the Fortress itself, and must do battle with the horrible Hurler. This magic beast tosses uncountable Spikers at the player's craft, and can only be overcome if hit six times by the gamer's fire. If the player can destroy the Hurler, the entire Fortress of Narzod will disintegrate before his or her eyes and the game starts again, at a higher skill level.

Each player starts out with six hovercraft and earns an extra hovercraft each time the Hurler is destroyed. Games may be started at any of the three available skill levels. In two-player games, players take turns with the same controller whenever the other loses a hovercraft. The game ends when all a player's hovercraft are lost.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: FORTRESS OF NARZOD isn't the type of game Vectrex owners dreamed about when they bought the system. The game is cruel in its simplicity: all you have to do is shoot up a corridor and around a couple of corners. That's really all there is to it and, believe it or not, it's more than enough to keep you busy for hours. With each progressive level, the skill of the Guardians increases and their return fire is more accurate, building to a fever pitch.

During the entire game, you have to worry about your own bullets, too, and this may be where a lot of the challenge of this game lies. Dodging your own bouncing bullets can really keep you hopping, and, as simple as

the game seems, the Guardians are really enough to have to worry about already.

The graphics on this one are crisp, though there really isn't anything outstanding about them, going by the standards GCE has already set. I must admit that I really wasn't at all impressed by this game when I first started to play. I didn't care all that much for it the second time, either. It was when I sat down to give it one more chance -- and stopped three hours later to check the time -- that I wound up able to praise this one highly.

FORTRESS OF NARZOD will grow on you if you give it half a chance. It might not appear to be what you thought you were looking for, but it's one you'll enjoy playing a lot more than you thought. It suits the system well.

ALAN: C'mon, Mike! You mean you didn't even notice that this one, too, is just another variation on the slide-and-shoot? It is, you know. But it's no less fun for the fact that it utilizes such an "ancient" video game play mechanic.

FORTRESS OF NARZOD does indeed appear simple at first. But the play is very challenging and engrossing as you constantly try to make it to the Fortress itself. I've given it six hours of play and have only reached the Hurler once -- and he blasted me right off the bat!

I liked the graphics better than Mike did, I guess. I was particularly impressed with the 3-D effect achieved by making the door appear small and distant at the end of each road, and by the way the player's ship gets smaller as it heads up toward the door, once the Guardians have been cleared away. A nice touch.

There isn't a lot of variety of play here, but what there is is worthwhile. I don't think it will have the staying power that Mike seems to think it will, but the action is non-stop and I think FORTRESS OF NARZOD will please any serious shoot-em-up fan. Check it out.

RATINGS:

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

HEADS UP ACTION SOCCER

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

HEADS UP ACTION SOCCER is vector-screen sports action, for one player against the Vectrex computer. If played with an additional optional Vectrex control console, the game can also be played by two players head-to-head.

The display is of a horizontally-scrolling soccer

field, with three players and a goalie on each team. One team's players are lighter than the other and a dot is displayed over the head of the soccer player currently under control by either side.

Both gamers move their on-screen players with the joystick on the controller console. The offensive player controls the on-screen character that is in possession of the ball and the defensive player can switch the controlled player by pressing Button Four. The kick-off, and passes, are also made when the offensive player presses Button Four, and the ball travels in the direction the joystick is pressed. Button Three kicks or shoots the ball in the direction the joystick is pressed. The defensive player can control his or her goalie with the joystick when Button Three is pressed.

Each game consists of two consecutive three-minute halves, and the action includes throw-ins and out-of-bounds, as well as sudden-death tie-breakers. Gamers taking on the computer can start at any of three different skill levels.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: Video sports games are great fun if you like that sort of action, and the Vectrex is a really hard system to put a sports game on. I was impressed with the job G.C.E did with BLITZ, their football game for the Vectrex, but I'm afraid I'm not really enthusiastic about HEADS UP ACTION SOCCER.

The graphics are pretty and I can only give G.C.E. credit for some nice sound effects, but the overall action is limited and not much better than what can be found in some of the earliest games that were released for the VCS. When it comes to play-action, the Vectrex is capable of much more.

The game itself is just no good at all in the single-player mode, though it does have some merit in the two-player game. The latter version provides the one-on-one challenge that is needed to make a good video sports challenge, but better examples of this kind of two-player action is already available on some of G.C.E.'s newer Vectrex games.

If you are a soccer nut, absolutely must have a video version of your favorite sport and the Vectrex is your game console, this cartridge is your only choice. Personally, I'd still wait for

something better to come along.

ALAN: I've said it so many times I sound like a broken record -- but I don't want any of our countless new readers to misunderstand my leanings. I don't get into sports and don't particularly enjoy sports games on my TV, although I have to play them from time to time, in the course of reviewing a given month's offerings.

Of all the video sports games I've ever played, I think I've enjoyed soccer the most. But it was Atari's SOCCER, for their 5200 -- not G.C.E.'s HEADS UP ACTION SOCCER.

There are similarities between the two. They both utilize a horizontally-scrolling playfield, but G.C.E.'s screen seemed too small and cramped. They both present the player with some pretty nice on-screen character movement and control, but G.C.E.'s characters were a bit too stick-figurish and chunky to take completely seriously. They both feature some very nice ball movement, but because of the restricted playfield and funny-looking players, the ball-movement is all but overlooked on the Vectrex game.

Overall, I have to say that HEADS UP ACTION SOCCER is a very good sports game for the Vectrex system. I also think the system wasn't built to present any sports game well. Maybe I'm just a stick-in-the-mud, but I'd have to give this one a "no-go."

RATINGS:

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

SPIKE

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

SPIKE is an arcade-style climbing/jumping chase game, for one or two players. Spud the bully has captured Spike's girlfriend and taken her to his hideout. Spike has to run or jump along and climb three moving horizontal catwalks, to get to the top of the screen where Spud is holding Molly in a cage, then touch the cage to free her.

The game opens with Spud carrying Molly off, through the door to his hideout. Molly screams, "Eeek! Help! Spike!" and Spike, controlled by the player, follows. He enters the catwalk screen as soon as he steps through the door after her.

The player maneuvers Spike on the moving catwalks with the joystick on the Vectrex control panel. He can use a moveable ladder to get from one level to another. The ladder changes positions around the screen whenever Button One on the control
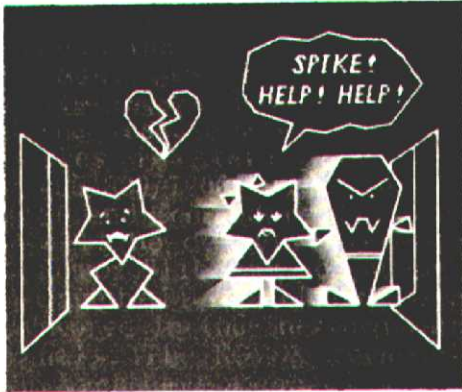
panel is pushed. To rescue his girlfriend, Spike has to find a key, randomly-placed on each screen, and pick it up, then run to the cage at the top and jump to touch it. Each time Molly is saved, the game continues with a new set of catwalks and a tougher challenge.

After the first successful rescue, Spud's Bouncers start jumping around the screen, adding some obstacles to Spike's quest. If they touch Spike, he's a goner. The player can use Button Four to jump over the Bouncers at just the right moment, or use Buttons Two and Three to make Spike kick out with his foot, to the left or right respectively, eliminating the bouncers as they approach. On the third and successive rounds, Birds join the Bouncers. In higher levels, the catwalks start changing directions whenever Spike kicks a Bird or Bouncer. Molly also occasionally drops the bow from her cage. If Spike can catch it, the Birds and Bouncers will be momentarily frozen.

The play is for points, scored for kicking the bouncers and birds, collecting each key and opening Molly's cell. Players start each game with four lives, and earn extra ones at every 10,000 points. In two-player games, the play continues until both players have lost all four Spikes -- and the highest score wins.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I like climbing games and, although the theme is starting to wear out a bit, **SPIKE** is a thoroughly enjoyable climbing challenge for Vectrex owners. It's also the first. But -- the genre isn't the only first that's present in this cartridge from G.C.E.: it's also the first home video game ever to utilize full voice synthesis without the need of additional modules or equipment.

I thought the graphics on this game were captivating. Spike and Molly were well-depicted as the cartoon characters they are, and they moved well, with Spike reacting smoothly and instantly to every controller command. The voices were a bit rough, and don't play any part in the game itself, but they do add an element of interest at no extra cost to the buyer.

When it comes to playing the game, **SPIKE** is no chump challenge! Those moving catwalks, bouncing Bouncers and flying Birds make getting the key and saving Molly a challenge that only gets tougher -- and more addictive -- at

each successive level of play. It's obvious there was plenty of memory left, after adding the voices, because G.C.E. didn't have to give up anything in the complexity and variety of play to throw them in.

Get **SPIKE** for your Vectrex if you like this type of game. It's a good one by any system's standards. The kids will love it, too, but they might find it too difficult to play well.

MIKE: I wasn't really that impressed with G.C.E.'s first climbing game for their Vectrex system. Yes, they broke ground with the addition of voice synthesis without the need of extra add-on equipment, but we aren't talking about high-quality sound here. In fact, the voice portion of this game can be really irritating if the sound is turned up too much.

Graphically, the game just didn't grab me, either. The display didn't give me the feeling of climbing and Spike didn't look like any kind of hero I've ever seen before. Even as cartoon characters, I didn't think the vector graphics did Spike or any of the other characters justice. The size of the Vectrex screen, which has never been a problem before, also seemed to detract from the overall play of the game. It compacted things down to a point that made me feel a bit claustrophobic.

Unlike Alan, I didn't think the movement was all that great, either. I know he likes this type of game more than I do, but this one felt awkward to me.

You might want to take a look at this one in the stores, but I don't think **SPIKE** is a good choice for your Vectrex system. It was a nice try, but I don't think the system was intended for this type of game.

RATINGS:

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

WEB WARS

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

WEB WARS is a high-action arcade game for one or two players. The object of the game is to fly a mighty Hawk King down a fantasy web, trying to catch twenty different creatures that reside within.

The player maneuvers the Hawk King down the spiraling web with the control panel's joystick controller. Pushing it to the right or left causes the Hawk King to swing to the right or left, up the sides of the web, or down to the center. Pushing forward on the stick makes the Hawk King speed up. Pulling back makes it slow down. The Hawk King's speed is displayed in

the lower left-hand corner of the screen.

Each of the twenty different creatures in the web is protected by a number of guardians. These creatures come streaking out of the web's core, straight at the Hawk King, and will destroy it if they touch it. The player can destroy the guardians by pressing on button four, which fires the Hawk King's guns, or avoid them by quick joystick action, but avoided guardians will come back from behind and stay just ahead of the player's on-screen character until the player either slows down to let them get in front for a clear shot, or speeds up to leave them behind once and for all.

When a web creature approaches, the player must swing the Hawk King over to meet it, then press button three, activating the Hawk King's capture rod at just the right moment, to capture it. Once a web creature is captured, a portal will appear in the web and travel toward the Hawk King. The player must maneuver his or her Hawk King so that it touches the portal, to enter the Trophy Room and collect extra bonus points. The Hawk King is safe while in the Trophy Room, but can only stay a maximum of thirty seconds or so until being thrust back out into the web, for more action that is faster and more deadly than before.

If the player misses two
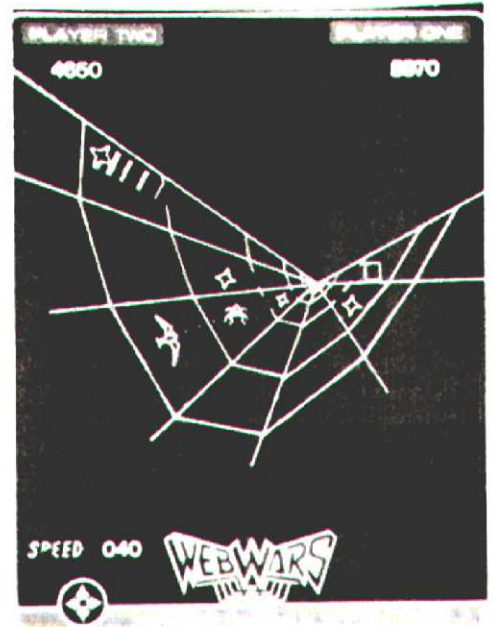
tries at capturing any type of web creature, or misses touching a portal twice, the deadly Cosmic Dragon will appear at the end of the web, looking like a giant bird with flapping wings, and advancing forward quickly. The player can't shoot the Cosmic Dragon and it will hurl deadly fireballs at the Hawk King once it is overhead, so it must be avoided if at all possible.

Points are awarded for shooting the guardians, capturing each web creature, and for entering each portal. More points are earned for shooting a guardian if the player is flying faster at the time of the shooting.

Gamers each start with

five Hawk Kings and earn an extra one at 25,000 points, 50,000 points, 90,000 points, 250,000 points and 999,000 points. The game ends when all of a player's Hawk Kings are lost. GCE claims nobody has ever captured the twentieth creature. Two players take turns whenever one loses a Hawk King, using the single control panel provided with the original Vectrex equipment.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: This is an interesting, good-looking game for Vectrex play. At first, it seemed exciting and the graphics are very good, with an excellent 3-D effect as the objects fly out at you from deep inside the web's core, but it didn't really live up to its original promise for me.

The object of the game is really to collect all the trophies, rather than to simply score points. I found the challenge of trying to get all the web creatures a good one, but I had a problem with this game when it quickly proved to provide very little excitement, once the initial fascination with the graphics had passed. The basic play is grasped quickly, but once you've mastered the basic mechanics, it dulls quickly, and it never gets easy.

This is one of those games where the difficulty of play alone doesn't carry the whole load. As far as I'm concerned, the joy of the game itself should be an important factor in a new entry's worth, graphics and overall difficulty notwithstanding. If you ask me, I think **WEB WARS** lacked that joy.

ALAN: I have to disagree heartily. I really like **WEB WARS**. The funny thing is, I like it for all of the reasons Mike has listed above.

The graphics are stupendous, with the movement of the web and the 3-D effect combining to create a very real sensation of faster-than-light movement, keeping the adrenaline high on the basis of visuals alone.

Then comes the challenge of trying to capture all those web creatures. It's no easy feat, believe me! I've worked at it for about nine hours, and have taken as many as eleven of them to the Trophy Room, but the more I play the more firmly convinced I am that no one ever has captured the twentieth. Still, I wanted to keep trying -- and will. Going for points only intensifies the action, too, since you earn more the faster you travel, and this really puts on the pressure.

Mike and I disagree a lot, but rarely this far in opposite directions. I recommend this one highly. It's easy to learn and hard to put down. Get it.

RATINGS:

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

micro quips

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$10.00 WINNER!!!

FOR COLECOVISION...
KEN USTON'S BLACK JACK/POKER: After a week of play, I feel more disappointed than I did after the first five minutes. Problem #1: The Dealer doesn't announce he has blackjack if he has the ace in the hole. Problem #2: In Poker, the dealer wins all ties. This in itself wouldn't be so bad, if it wasn't for the fact that if the dealer and player both hold two pair, three of a kind, etc., he considers it a tie no matter what cards they both hold (example: Dealer has two pair, threes and twos - player has two pair, aces and threes - the dealer still considers it a tie and wins). But the dealer himself is probably the best part of the game. He gives you a wide grinning smile if you win, and a frown if he wins. Overall, the only thing I have to say is, stick with Atari's **CASINO**.

---Clayton L. Gerow
New York, NY

FOR INTELLIVISION...
High expectations for the long-awaited Imagic cartridge, **SWORDS AND SERPENTS**, for Intellivision, made me eager to purchase this cartridge the first day of issue. My expectations were whetted by the description of game play, which included spells, scrolls and secrets. While I was disappointed in the one-player version, the two-player version built to a high pitch as I and my Wizard gradually gained enough knowledge and skill to penetrate the dragon's lair on the 4th level of the dungeon. The eagerly-awaited secret materialized, but we thought it too insignificant to be the real or total "secret" to the game. After several more tries to produce something else, I called Imagic and found, to my disappointment, that I had indeed found the only secret there was to find. I won't reveal it here, but take my word for it -- my disappointment, and the slow, difficult process of gathering points (the only goal in the one-player version and a secondary goal when playing with two) makes the total length of interest for this game only equal to the time it takes to reach the end.

---Pat Elder
Oklahoma City, OK

FOR THE VCS:
KEYSTONE KAPERS: I beg to differ with you guys on this one -- it's better than **PITFALL**. In **PITFALL**, the basic skills of jumping and timing are constant -- once you get 'em down, it's only a question of figuring out where the treasures are. **KAPERS** gets tougher -- you have to learn new skills in the higher levels, AND the strategy of the elevator changes as you get better.
ENDURO: This is not just a game, it's an EXPERIENCE! After 20 minutes, I needed motion sickness pills! Four stars, hands down!
DOLPHIN: Once you figure out the sound effects, this one is boring. And the "waves" are among the crudest graphics ever seen.
NO ESCAPE: Maddening, frustrating, difficult -- and excellent. I'm glad Imagic is still making TOUGH games.
SPIDER FIGHTER: Great graphically, but way too easy. I was scoring 80,000 in less than an hour.

---Bob Gale
Los Angeles, CA

FOR COLECOVISION:
CARNIVAL: Every bit as good as the quarter-snatcher at the arcades, only less expensive.
DONKEY KONG, JR.: Another great job, except I think it would have been a lot more fun if Junior's eyes would bug out when he dies...sick but funny...love the way Junior falls in slow motion to his death, with that pathetic look on his face.
LOOPING: Not a bad game...try going after the red balloons! Also fun, but very nerve-wracking, is trying to stay in the pipe maze to rack up points.
SMURF: The best thing about this cart, besides the backgrounds and music, is watching Smurf expire with that same stupid grin on his face, especially when offed by a blade of killer grass.
SPACE PANIC: Hilarious! Easily the best version of this classic I've seen yet! I love the whole idea of burying a "boss," and wish it was my boss...

---Jeff Silva
Tacoma, WA

FOR THE VCS...
Here's two slide-and-shoots that I think have enough variety and challenge to warrant purchase for the VCS: U.S. Games' **NAME THIS GAME** and Atari's 2600 **CENTIPEDE**. While **CENTIPEDE** does have limited vertical movement, it's still basically a slide and shoot. **NAME THIS GAME** is pure slide-and-shoot, but with enough difference from most to make it a good contest.

CENTIPEDE is more for those who favor the strategy contest, while **NAME THIS GAME** should appeal to those who like fast action. Both are fine games, although **CENTIPEDE** is a little sparse in the graphics department.

---Larry Miles
Independence, MO

-- HOW THEY ALL STACKED UP --
The following is a list of all the games reiewed this issue, grouped according to our reviewers' combined opinions. Mike and Alan both liked the games next to the shooting rocket. Games with a horozontal rocket were only liked by one of our reviewers. Games with the crashed rocket didn't appeal to either of our reviwers.

— GAMES ALAN AND MIKE BOTH LIKED —

FORTRESS OF NARZOD ** TRUCKIN'
VCS SMURF RESCUE IN GARGAMEL'S CASTLE
SOLAR FOX ** NO ESCAPE
MOONSWEEPER
THE ACTIVISION DECATHALON

— ALAN LIKED, MIKE DIDN'T —

SPIKE ** WEB WARS

— MIKE LIKED, ALAN DIDN'T —

VENTURE ** LADY BUG

— GAMES MIKE AND ALAN DIDN'T LIKE —

CRACKPOTS ** SHOOTIN' GALLERY
STAR WARS: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK
BEDLAM ** HEADS UP ACTION SOCCER

logical inquirer

Dear Mike and Alan,

A feature I'd like to see in your publication is high scores from the readers. The Mattel games are quite challenging and I, for one, would like to know how I stack up. Either way, thanks for a fine

THE TRADING POST

mag and keep up the good work.

---Ron Simpson
Roachdale, IN

((Hmmm. We tossed the idea of a readers' scoreboard a long time ago, and rejected it because it's already being done in other mags -- but so are reviews. You might have a good idea there, Ron. Starting right now, I'd like to invite all our readers to send us their high scores -- validated with a photo of the screen when at all possible. If we get enough response, we'll run a regular list of the top scores we get. Thanks for mentioning it! ---ARB))

Guys:

I'd like to suggest that when you criticize a game by mentioning that "the whole thing's been done for the system already," like you did with REACTOR, you should mention the specific other games you have in mind. This would give the reader a better idea of what you have in mind and what your own tastes are. In general, I would like to know what a reviewer's favorite cartridges are from all those available.

Now that I've started, I would like to mention something that's been bothering me. I have purchased three Atari games this year -- VANGUARD, MS PAC-MAN and CENTIPEDE -- and, while each is very nicely done, each is also much too easy. A typical game of VANGUARD, after two weeks of play, lasted over 20 minutes (150,000+). In CENTIPEDE, my first game was 100,000 -- now I can crack 200,000. I beat my arcade high in MS. PAC-MAN in my third play of the home version.

I wish Atari would allow for play at higher levels, a la ASTEROIDS, MISSILE COMMAND, and other earlier re-

leases. Are they making the games easier so they will become boring? Display modes are a waste of ROM. I wish they would get back to multiple skill levels.

---Alan Bednarski
State College, PA

((As for the first matter, Alan, we've already taken your advice. In the future, Mike and I will try harder to mention the games we're thinking of when we say there are other similar ones that were better. That's a good tip for two critics who are always trying to do a better job. *** As for the second problem, I'm afraid it may be harder to solve. As gamers get more sophisticated, they demand better graphics. Any game machine has a limited memory, and graphics eat it up at a drastic rate. As designers try harder and harder to make their games look better, they find themselves constantly left with less and less memory for game play. That's one reason why you have stopped seeing any games with 88 variations, like the ones Atari used to produce. I do agree with you, however, that many games would be better if the memory devoted to display modes and flashy title screens was used, instead, for more complex and challenging play. Perhaps airing these views here will get the word across. We can only do what we can do. It's a serious problem. I hope the designers reading this will listen, because it's a highly competitive field, and boring games simply won't make it in today's market. ---ARB))

Dear Gamer,

I hope you will expand your scope to computer games as well as video game cartridges. There are hundreds

of spectacular computer games out and they deserve to be reviewed. I own an Atari 400 with a cassette drive and some of my favorite games are RICOCHOCET (Epyx), CROSSFIRE (On-Line), KID GRID (Tronix) and the absolutely marvelous SEA DRAGON (Adventure International). While I realize that a much smaller percentage of people own computers, I hope you can manage to at least dedicate a column to computer gaming.

---William A. White
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

((We've agonized over this for a long time now, William. We started out dedicated to giving the best coverage to home video game cartridges anywhere, and we intend to stay there. The problem has been how to start including all those computer games, when so many other magazines already cover them, and do it as well as we do the cartridges, without compromising any of the quality coverage we already offer. But -- all is not lost. Indeed, a computer gaming column is in the works and shouldn't be too far off. Rest assured, however, that we'll do it with added space, not with space already devoted to the game systems we currently cover. ---ARB)

Dear Logical Gamer,

My congratulations on a fine publication. Some other magazines which review games seem fearful of offending their advertisers with unfavorable reviews of poor games. THE LOGICAL GAMER's candidness is refreshing.

I do feel that a different method or terminology should be used for guaging "Interest Level" in your reviews, as trying to tie such a subjective measurement into a specific number of days, weeks or months simply does not work!

Keep up the good work!

---Jim Melehan
Scotts Valley, CA

((I can see your point, Jim (and we'd appreciate your specific suggestions for improving any aspect of our reviews), but isn't all criticism subjective? --- ARB))

LET US BE YOUR CO-PILOT!