

**'CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND'**

**FANTASTIC COLOR PHOTOS!**

# STARLOG

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January



**'THE PRISONER'**  
**COMPUTER GAMES**  
**THE SUPERMAN MOVIE**  
**'INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN'**  
**SF COMICS**

INTERVIEWS:

**THE MAKEUP MEN**  
Creators Of  
Chewbacca, 'Star Wars' Aliens,  
'2001' Apes, King Kong, Dr. Moreau's  
Humanimals . . . And More.



# STARLOG

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE FUTURE

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**About the Cover:** Rick Baker displays his handiwork for A.I.P.'s *The Incredible Melting Man* due for release in February, 1978. Dick Smith, the dean of American makeup artists says of Rick: "... this kid is the genius. He has more talent and natural gifts than I have. The only thing I have over Rick is my experience. Certainly he's the tops in Hollywood as far as I'm concerned." Rick is featured in this month's SFX installment.

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**FROM THE BRIDGE** \_\_\_\_\_ 4

## COMMUNICATIONS

Letters From Our Readers \_\_\_\_\_ 5

## LOG ENTRIES

Latest News From The Worlds Of Science Fiction \_\_\_\_\_ 8

## MAGIC LANTERN

A New Animation Enterprise \_\_\_\_\_ 18

## THE PRISONER

TV's Most Controversial SF Series Examined  
Plus: A Complete 17-Episode Guide \_\_\_\_\_ 24

## QUARK

Yes, This "Space Oddity" Will Be Back On The  
Tube in 78 \_\_\_\_\_ 31

## THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN

The Remarkable Fifties Classic That Combined Action,  
Philosophy & . . . The Infinite \_\_\_\_\_ 32

## CONVENTIONS

Reporting on the 1977 Hugo Award Con & The Star  
Trek America Con \_\_\_\_\_ 36

**FUTURE CONVENTIONS** \_\_\_\_\_ 37

## STAR TREK REPORT

A Fan News Column By Susan Sackett \_\_\_\_\_ 38

## THE COMPUTER'S GAME

How To Travel Through Space in the Safety & Comfort  
Of Your Own Home \_\_\_\_\_ 40

## CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND

It Won't Be Another "Star Wars," But the SFX Will  
Still Knock Your Socks Off \_\_\_\_\_ 46

## TV UPDATE

New Developments With "Logan's Run," "Man From  
Atlantis" And Now . . . "Buck Rogers" \_\_\_\_\_ 50

## STATE OF THE ART

A Column Of Opinion By David Gerrold \_\_\_\_\_ 54

## SUPERMAN

Ilya Salkind Talks About His Super-Spectacular,  
\$50 Million Production \_\_\_\_\_ 56

## SPECIAL EFFECTS—PART VI

The Makeup Men: True Artists of SF & Fantasy  
Film \_\_\_\_\_ 62


## SF COMICS

SF and Fantasy Abound in Comics but Only a Handful  
Are Done Well . . . Here's Where to Look \_\_\_\_\_ 71

**CLASSIFIED INFORMATION** \_\_\_\_\_ 74

## VISIONS

The Reality Behind the Arcane Equipment Found  
In the "Mad Labs" of Evil Scientists Everywhere \_\_\_\_\_ 76



Ground Control has cleared you for take-off; all systems are GO. Your entry into Earth orbit is smooth as silk, nothing to do but sit back and relax.

Wait! There's an alien ship on the screen, three parsecs away and closing fast. Bring your phaser banks up to full power, activate the defense shields . . . FIRE! You missed . . . too late for another shot. The invader has won its way past you — the Earth is doomed.

Oh well, don't take it so hard. Just run back the program cartridge and try it again. It's easy, when you're in the safety and comfort of your own home, involved with playing and winning . . .

# THE COMPUTER'S GAME

Art: John Butterfield



By RICHARD ROBINSON

**M**onday, July 21st, 1969, I went to the Moon in my bedroom. Sitting on the edge of the bed, half a foot from my Sony's matrix, I stared in awe at the barren rocks and wondered at the fact that I was part of a giant breath held as Armstrong and Aldrin touched down.

The same NASA technology that got me to the Moon, now lets me cruise in deep space with a fully-charged laser defense system so I can blast enemy ships into the void—again without getting out of bed. It makes me wonder if the trip to the Moon was really held on a giant TV set outside of Houston, Walter Cronkite's sincerity notwithstanding.

In the course of our space exploration NASA has contributed the electric brain to our culture. Right now the brain is small, a little weak in the frontal lobes, measuring only a couple of inches across. Sometimes referred to in Halsian slang as the 8080, the little brain is as smart as a ten-year-old kid and at present is sneaking into homes all over the country cleverly disguised as Pong games.

Pong games are computers, controlled by microprocessors right out of the space program. Not the pea-brained computers that run digital watches and pocket calculators,

but the real computer brains that talk to me through my TV set.

The most spectacular TV computer sold as a 'toy' is the Fairchild Video Entertainment System. It deals black jack, plays a mean game of tic-tac-toe (and if the computer wins the screen lights up with the immortal words, 'You lose, turkey'), doodles an ever-increasing three-color mosaic on the screen, competes with the human brain in a series of sophisticated binary number games, and offers an endless series of search-and-destroy games like Shooting Gallery, Drag Race, Spit Fire, and Space War.

The Fairchild and all other computers have four basic elements: the actual computer brain in a box, TV screen to display what the computer has to say, a keyboard so you can talk to the computer, and a storage system that allows the computer to remember what its supposed to know. Home computer games use any TV set as the display terminal and combine the other three elements into one box. For \$169.95 Fairchild supplies the brain in a box which connects directly to any TV set—you can switch between regular TV and the computer display although most people who turn their TV sets into displays soon stop watching regular TV. The Fairchild box has a small keyboard to let the user tell the computer what game is to be played. It also

*John Butterfield '97*

has a slot for tape cassettes which contain the various programs—to play Space Wars you slip in the tape cassette program for that game. Each cassette program costs \$19.95.

The initial novelty of playing computer games is that the user can alter the image on the TV screen. Fairchild supplies two joy stick controls which rotate 360° and slide up and down. By manipulating them, the joy stick images move across the screen at your command, rockets are fired, cars race each other, and suddenly you're a TV freak on a much more complex and intriguing level than just lying there and watching Kojak gun down the bad guys. Now you're holding the gun and deciding who the bad guys are.

Another major programmable TV computer comes from Atari, the company who invented the Pong game. Atari's Video Computer System sells for \$189.95 and comes with a 27-game Game Program cartridge including a combat package of Tank, Bi-planes, and Jet Fighter with steerable and non-steerable missiles, cloud formations, and multiple fighter-versus-bomber games. Additional tape programs are also sold: Indy 500, Video Olympics, Air-Sea Battle, Space Mission, and Street Racer. Atari seems to take a more violent and destructive view than Fairchild of what keeps us happy at home in the way of TV games. Reports from first users of both the Fairchild and Atari systems indicate that the Fairchild wins hands down as the more complex and interesting system.

Besides the programmable system, Atari also manufactures a series of computer games that are pre-programmed to play only one set of games. There's Video Pinball, Stunt Cycle, and Tank II. Stunt Cycle has two handlebar controls so you feel like Evel Knievel as you try to jump your cycle over 32 buses on your TV screen.

While computer games are fun, they have certain limitations as computer

Atari's Video Pinball takes the game out of the "penny arcade" and into your home.



Radio Shack's complete TRS-80 Microcomputer System consists of a 53-key alphanumeric keyboard and microcomputer, 12" video monitor and cassette storage.

systems. First, they don't have full typewriter keyboards to allow you to type in commands and completely alter their behavior. The pre-programmed cassettes that run computer games cannot be erased or rewritten. Second, there is no memory storage system such as a cassette machine or floppy disc so you can write your own games or type in other information. But, if you're willing to make the jump from \$150 to \$600, you can own a complete home computer—a computer so sophisticated that ten years ago it would have cost \$50,000.

Major electronics companies now make home computers. Radio Shack has just introduced one for \$599.95 including the complete computer, a 12" TV display screen, and a cassette recorder to remember information. The complete computer is \$399.95, with the TV and tape recorder making up the difference in price for the system.

These computers do everything the Fairchild and Atari games do, the problem being that the cassette programs are not as yet compatible. If you want to play Space Wars on the Radio Shack computer you have to sit down at the typewriter keyboard and, using the special computer language, tell the computer how the game is played.

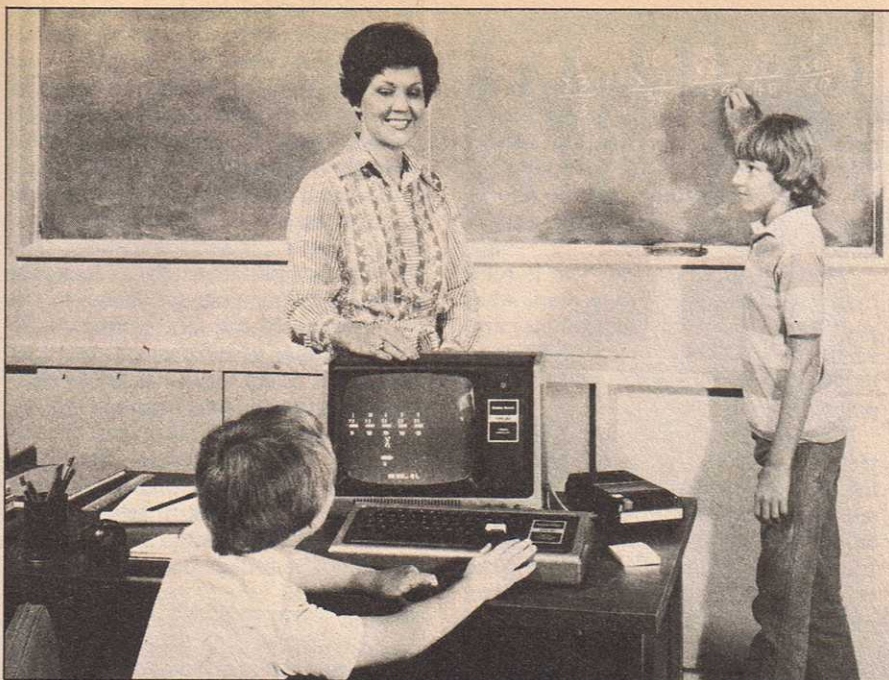
Most home computers are built for the computer hobbyist. This means that you have to be pretty well informed on how computers work to be able to manipulate the home computer to its fullest advantage. You have to be able to talk to the computer in computer language such as BASIC in ROM\*. But

many computer manufacturers realize that people who want computers at home don't want to have to spend six months at computer training institutes, so pre-written programs are becoming increasingly available. Within the next few years we'll probably be able to buy computer programs on standard audio cassettes the way we buy records today.

One interesting home computer is the Bally Library Computer which sells for \$299.95 plus programs. By next year the system will be available with dual tape decks for memory storage and a typewriter keyboard. Right now it uses only pre-programmed cassettes but even at that here's what it will do: it's a printing calculator with ten separate memories; it teaches math with the computer automatically adjusting to your math level; it has a game called Math Bingo which adjusts to each player's ability so that a five-year-old can play with a math teacher and still win; it has programs for TV Bingo, Baseball, Sea Wolf, Red Baron, and Panzer Attack. And plans now call for a device to let you draw directly on your TV screen with an electric wand that paints in 32 different colors; compose and playback music on your TV sound system electronically; dial phone numbers and let you play chess on the phone with another player as you both watch the game progress on your TV sets.

When Lt. Uhura punches up her memory banks to get a display of how many Romulan ships are approaching at what velocity, she is playing out a computer fantasy that is probably the reason why we'd all like to have our own computers. To command it as Mr. Spock does and get an immediate answer to the most improbable questions is the

\* "Basic" is a standard computer language. ROM, or Read Only Memory, is a form of information storage.



dream. But as Uhura or Spock point out from time to time, the information has to be in the computer's memory banks or it doesn't have any answer at all.

These memory banks, or computer programs as they're more rightly called, are what everything the computer 'thinks' is based on. And it is these programs that make the difference between a "smart" and "stupid" computer. Fairchild, Atari, RCA, and other computer game manufacturers are really in the business of writing interesting computer programs and if you were to get a home computer you'd have to learn how to talk to it in its own language; not as tough as learning Vulcan, but not easy.

Although one southwestern manufacturer has promised a \$500 version of R2-D2 that would follow computer commands as it swept up the house and took out the garbage, this final step in the computer is still years away. Computer games, home computers, and the other computer products that are flooding the market are all purely electronic; none of them promises to be anything more than a brain without a body. R2-D2 is a computer-controlled robot and as such is more complicated, though no more sophisticated than today's computers. If your dream is not to play space wars on your TV set, but rather to have your own menagerie of robots, you've still got a while to wait. But if you've got an active imagination and enjoy testing your reflexes and instincts against a variety of projected obstacles, your time has arrived. ★

Personal microcomputers are helping TV-oriented kids in school (upper), their parents at home with personal finance management, storing recipes (at left), or to play an ever-increasing number of games such as Atari's "Ultra Pong"

## HOME COMPUTERS

**Radio Shack**—\$5999.95. For info on their TRS-80 micro-computer write Radio Shack, Dept. TRS-80, 205 N.W. 7th St. Ft. Worth, Texas 76101.

**Heathkit**—Build your own computer system from kits introduced in their new catalog. Write Heath Company, Benton Harbor, Michigan, 49022.

**MITS**—These people started it all with their first home computer kit. Now they've got a full line of Altair computers. Mits, 2450 Alamo S.E., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87106.

**Bally Library Computer**—Available from JS&A National Sales Group, One JS&A Plaza, Northbrook, Illinois 60062.

**SWTPC**—Southwest Technical Products Corp., at 219 West Rhapsody, San Antonio, Texas 78216 has a super computer system including kit systems with prices starting at \$395 for a basic computer.

Most major cities now have computer hobby stores. Check your yellow pages.

## COMPUTER MANUFACTURERS TV GAME COMPUTERS

**Fairchild**—The Fairchild Video System is available throughout the U.S. at major department stores.

**Magnavox**—The people who started it all with their Odyssey Game have units available at department stores.

**Atari**—The Atari Video System is available at department stores, electronics stores and some appliance stores.

**RCA**—The RCA Video System is available at department stores.

**Radio Shack**—Radio Shack has a number of the less expensive video games in their catalog, including the many systems that were introduced before the interchangeable cassettes used by Fairchild and Atari came along. Check their catalog.

