

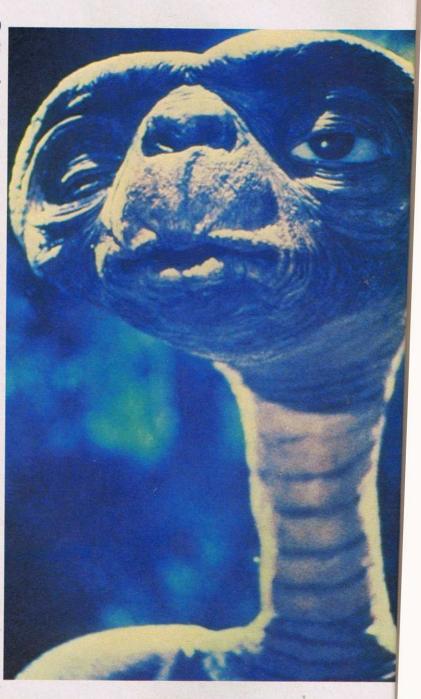


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PETER STRAUSS
The Lone Wolfe Of "Spacehunter".

#### JULY 1983 Number 72 THE MAGAZINE OF THE FUTURE



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# Toys & Games for 1983

Christmas is just a little early as video games and licensing brighten the playland horizon.

#### By ROBERT GREENBERGER

E.T. may be the most merchandised film of all time and this pull cord talking toy is just one of hundreds of licensed items.

t's a great year to be young.

There must be more toys being manufactured now than ever before—a fact demonstrated by a lengthy waiting list for exhibition space at last February's annual Toy Fair. In the Fair's opening notes, Toy Manufacturers of America chairman Richard Grey announced that 1982 saw roughly \$9 billion in retail sales. Growth was pegged at a healthy 13 percent and, despite the incredible power of video and electronic games, the industry's "traditional" segments were able to maintain their market shares.

Here, now, is a short survey, broken down into categories, of the latest toys and games of note to SF and fantasy fans.

#### **Video Games**

As expected, there will be literally dozens of new games for all video systems. Instead of popular arcade games, it's a legion of licensed characters who are spearheading new product lines. Atari recently announced a children's library of educational games featuring characters from Sesame Street, Peanuts, Walt Disney and Jim Henson's Muppets. Mattel has opted for a collection of Hanna-Barbera heroes (Scooby Doo, Flintstones, Quick Draw McGraw, et al.), plus their own Masters of the Universe and —just in case someone gets thirsty—the Kool-Aid Pitcher Man.

ColecoVision has captured Tarzan, just in time for the Christmas premiere of *Greystoke*. U.S. Games will be promoting its new game graphics with a Pink Panther entry this August, timed to coincide with *Curse of the Pink Panther's* release. Coleco has also snatched up the wonderful world of Dr. Seuss and will be working with author Theodore Geisel in developing games brimming with his creatures.

On the hardware side, Coleco has also introduced its third add-on feature. Dubbed Super Game, the attachment uses game "cartridges" the size of a small, thin wafer, providing better graphic resolution. An entire line of Super Games are under development for release late this summer, including arcade favorites like Zaxxon and Donkey Kong, Jr., plus Buck Rogers and the Planet of Zoom, Turbo and Smurf-Rescue from Gargamel's Castle.

U.S. Games has opted for the software technique known as overlaying to achieve increased memory and improved graphics in their VCS-compatible games. Meanwhile,

(continued on page 77)

Below: One of several new board games from Parker Brothers, based on this summer's genre films. Opposite, clockwise from top left: Advanced Dungeons & Dragons has a line of plastic figures for good and evil; CBS's Blackstar has finally received a line of action-figures; Parker has also created a line of playing card games based on most of this summer's biggest films; Western Publishing continues to provide the younger fans with four-color activities featuring their favorite superheroes: the Entex Piggyback Computer system is easily attached to the Atari 2600 video game system; and for Revell's Power Lords, an Attack Cruiser with more armaments than the U.S.S. Enterprise.





# SPACE AGE GAMES

## **Dragons and Wizards and Gorfs—Oh My!**

Ithough reader support for this column has been gratifyingly enthusiastic, there are some who wonder what exactly it is we're doing within the pages of STARLOG. "I dislike your bringing home-arcade game news into a magazine I believed was SF-media oriented," writes William Bueche of Auburndale, MA. "My argument is that, besides only appealing to readers who own or have access to those particular machines, many other magazines are solely devoted to describing and reviewing these games. I don't wish to see one of the best SF news magazines turn into another poorly done game magazine.'

Well, William, it's opinions that make our world go round, but before you jump to conclusions, consider this question: what is SF media, and where exactly do you draw an arbitrary line? For better or worse, the video game revolution is upon us, and there is little doubt that it's bringing a future consciousness to many fans who never cracked open anything remotely related to science fiction. We feel that we provide a unique and necessary perspective on the gaming field -one grounded not only in the pluses and minuses of joysticks, but also in the entire history of "scientifiction," as Hugo Gernsback originally termed it.

After all, it hasn't been that many years since science-fiction magazines themselves scorned what passed for futuristic movies. Similarly, the distinction between "pure" SF and popular mainstream culture has never seemed as blurry, given the grand successes of E.T. and Star Wars. Perhaps, with the introduction of the mass microcomputer, the future is already at hand. What once seemed like science fiction now becomes our potential reality.

"Definitions define limit," said Mayo of the Red Crayola, and as the '80s progress, an open mind is our only hope for keeping up with the present. As to your contention that this column appeals solely to those who own the machines themselves, it might be pointed out that very little escapes the eternal pricetag-movies or books themselves are only available to those who pay admission.

Besides, we're not limiting ourselves to home arcade games, though obviously they comprise-at least at this point-the majority of our coverage. In future months, I'll be visiting the arcades to see what's available "on the street;" going behind-the-scenes at a design factory; keeping up with a technological explosion which goes far beyond gaming; and, in general, trying to see how the denizens of the 21st Century might while away their

off-hours in man's oldest form of relaxation and learning: play. Here's hoping you stick with us long enough to share our good time.

Ratings are given in three categories on a scale from one to 10. The ACTION rating refers to the elements of coordination and skill required to master a given game; the STRATEGY rating refers to the amount of planning required in order to score respectably; and the SUSTAINED CHALLENGE rating describes the game's ability to keep a player's interest after repeated play. All ratings reflect one player's opinion.

#### **CBScapades**

Gorf (by CBS for Atari 2600) Action: 6. Strategy: 5. Sustained Challenge: 6.

Wizard of Wor (by CBS for Atari 2600) Action: 7. Strategy: 8. Sustained Challenge: 7.

Everyone knows that most of the profit margin in video games lies in software, and the recent upsurge of game-only manufacturers has meant a spurt of healthy competition throughout a once-monopolized field. Although this phenomenon might ultimately unleash a flood of bizarre cartridges vying for player attention, it also implies that games must get better and better if they want to survive in the pac-man eat pac-man jungle.

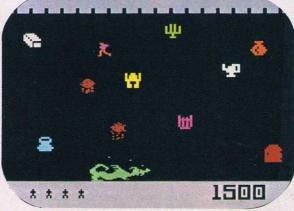
CBS joins such gaming stalwarts as Parker Brothers in pursuing the software market and, as befits a large corporation, its first releases aim straight for the heartland of electronic gaming: the Atari 2600 (as well as several K-Byte-developed computer games for Atari's 400/800 format), with Intellivision versions to follow.

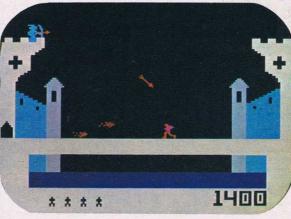
Both Gorf and Wizard of Wor are translations from popular Bally-Midway arcade games and, like most reductions, it's wise not to compare them directly with their inspirations. Simply, there is no way a 4K cartridge can provide the graphic stimulation of a large machine costing close to 12,000 quarters. One innovation CBS promises is an internal chip which will triple the capacity of the VCS, boosting it to 12K. Of such things are future technological marvels made. Yet standing on their own, each of these debut games is quite entrancing, trumpeting CBS' arrival in no uncertain terms.

Gorf takes up where Space Invaders leaves off, with your interstellar star fighters sparring with four separate waves of invaders from the Gorfian empire. The first and fourth are the easier screens; the opening test is a marching column of advancing Gorfs and Droids. Unlike the arcade game, your fighter is unable to move up and down, only side-toside: otherwise, it's the same old target practice. The fourth wave places you against the Gorfian flagship, where you must score a direct hit in the ship's fuel vent. The second



Ods bodkins! The gallant prince has crept past the ferocious dragonavoiding the fireslings and arrows to steal an outrageous fortune. This is Imagic's version, New Dragonfire, designed for Intellivision.





challenges. In the second, a laser attack supported by three diving Kamikaze Invaders and a Flying Gorf requires real dexterity, while the third-Space Warp-has you shooting at killer aliens rotating in a spiral pattern. With nine levels of mission sequence, Gorf will keep you gritting your teeth, while the four screens keep game interest flowing.

I was hooked on Wizard of Wor from the start, perhaps because it contained a sense of personal suspense-drama heightened by an imaginative rhythm soundtrack. "In the mystical kingdom of Wor," you are given three Worriors whose object is to shoot deadly Worlings while scurrying about a dungeonlike maze. Some Worlings, like the blue Burwors, are pieces of pot-shot cake; others, like the yellow Garwors and red Thorwors, move faster, and sometimes disappear entirely, only remaining trackable on a radar screen beneath the maze. If you survive all these dangers, you confront the Wizard of Wor himself, who can teleport from one position to another with no prior worning...uh, I mean warning. In a two-player game, you not only work together to wipe out the Worlings, but against each other. Now that's something to worty about!

#### St. Georgeous

Dragonfire (by Imagic for Atari 2600 and Intellivision) Action: 7. Strategy: 6. Sustained Challenge: 7.

Princes are bred for gallantry. The noble heir to royalty of Imagic's Dragonfire is no exception. Although the entire court has been driven from the castle by nefarious Dragons, the royal hero has decided to brave their fiery wrath in order to gain entrance to the castle and wrench the kingdom's many treasures from a hidden storeroom.

Like all Imagic games, a combination of colorful graphics and captivating drama makes Dragonfire a good addition to your game library. The first screen features the Prince ducking and leaping over tossed fireballs-a medieval Donkey Kong-and later, in the Intellivision version, dodging arrows. Once he enters the treasure room, he must gather a variety of point-laden articles by avoiding the locomotive breath of a Dragon pacing relentlessly to-and-fro at the screen's bottom. Once he succeeds, it's back to the drawbridge and a stepped-up pace of dragonly danger.

The Dragons are bred in differing colors of pedigree for Atari (the orange one is enough to make grown knights weep) and in 16 different shades for Intellivision. The 11th Dragon is some tough lizard, since he's invisible. As for the drawbridge and its oft-times close-moving fireballs, it's a neat trick to crouch and jump the Prince simultaneously, using a combination downward push on the joystick while thumbing the fire button. As for me, I'm still singeing....

#### Blow-Up

Countermeasure (by Atari for Atari 5200)

and third waves are likely to provide the most Action: 8. Strategy: 8. Sustained Challenge: 7.

Atari's long-awaited debut of its deluxe 5200 game system succeeded handily on the hardware front, but its initial software offerings might have proved something of a comparative letdown. Mostly transfers from the coin-op world (Pac-Man, Galaxian, Super Breakout), the predictability of the games was almost-but not quite-redeemed by their superb playability. Centipede, in fact, was virtually indistinguishable from its arcade version, and if you missed the trackball style console, Atari was right there to promise a "Trackball Super Arcade-Style Controller" in the near future.

Virtue rewards patience, however, and since the 2600 gained its broad-based reputation through a vast-more than 50 titleslibrary, it seems likely that the 5200 is destined for a similar software boom. Countermeasure is one of the first original concept games designed for the 5200 and its bewitching graphics, seven (!) different screens, and hypnotic playability augur grand things in the

The game itself is a variation on ye olde Tank. Terrorists have seized a missile silo complex and are threatening to turn Washington D.C. into a vast wasteland. With one Supertank at your command, your job is to destroy all the silos on each screen as they unscroll before you within the space of 10 minutes. Defending the silos are pillboxes, and—as you progress through the levels—a battalion of tanks, jeeps, and lovable Cruise missiles. Wiping them out with your tank gains you points, but sometimes slows you up as well. You're also working against a limited

fuel supply, which can be remedied by docking at a supply depot helpfully provided with each screen.

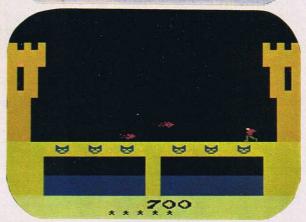
If the timer runs out before you destroy all the silos, you are immediately transferred to the War Room, where you must guess the fail-safe code within 15 seconds. With the keypad controller and its overlay, you punch out various combinatins of the letters L. E. and O. If you happen on the correct sequence, the Earth is saved. If not, a magnificent explosion occurs, complete with a flashing death's-head: a truly awe-inspiring symbol of destruction.

Docking at a supply depot gives a clue to one of the letters in its correct position, but when you're madly pushing buttons to prevent Armaggedon, it's easy to forget proper placement. You can also go directly to the War Room by docking at a missile silo; since each successful salvation is worth 10,000 points, it's a good way to quickly build up your score...if you dare.

I was impressed by the game's realistic feel, with the tank moving faster in open surroundings, but more slowly through woods and shrubbery, crawling crabwise in a true manifestation of battle in the rough. The tank is a little hard to control, as befits a lumbering machine, and you must study the opposing pillboxes and how their turrets point before moving in for the kill. In addition, you'll have to make certain the tank's turret is pointed correctly, else you might find yourself frantically shooting-in the wrong direction.

There is great satisfaction here when you score a direct hit. As they say on SCTV: "Blows 'em up real good!"







Meanwhile, in a not quite identical kingdom. another prince dodges Atari 2600 Dragonfire to pick out his small fortune. Note the differences in color and graphic details between the two versions of the same game.

#### Toys & Games

Mattel has introduced Intellivision II with a sleeker design and still even better graphics. It's merely a intermediate step-later this year, there's Intellivision III. That new system will surpass either previously released Intellivision system, with improved hand controls and superior graphic capability. Mattel has also introduced an add-on feature which allows all VCS games to be played on Intellivision, making for the greatest number of games playable on any one system.

The only new game system introduced is Milton-Bradley's self-contained Vectrex. Players can choose from an original selection of more than a dozen games and an easy-to-use controller providing for full 360-degree maneuverability.

#### Computers

Avalon Hill has joined the growing number of computer software manufacturers with a game line based on its own strategy and role playing games. Included are items such as Bomber Attack, Conflict 2500 and Planet Miners, all designed for the Atari 400 and 800, Apple II, TRS-80, and Pet Computers. Mattel's M Network has begun marketing computer software for the IBM and Atari systems, including the popular Burger Time and five other games. Atari will have Superman III out this month designed for its 400 and 800 computers, but with no corresponding game in video.

Atari also introduced My First Computer, a snap-on computer for the 2600 video game. An attempt to keep the thousands of 2600s in homes across the country as technologically current as possible, it's primarily intended for children and as an introductory computer for adults. It uses BASIC, with a mixture of fun and educational software.

Mattel has introduced its easy-use Aquarius home computer system, with 52K memory using the BASIC and LOGO languages. Some Hanna-Barbera characters will pop up in educational games such as Flintstones Keyboard Fun, designed to teach typing.

#### **Electronic Games**

Arcade hits like Ms. Pac-Man, Zaxxon and Donkey Kong Jr. are available as tabletop games from Coleco. Parker Bros. is jumping aboard the Return of the Jedi starfleet with Ewok Adventure, involving the cuddly new creatures introduced in the third Lucasfilm epic.

Nintendo has reaped accolades and quarters galore with its Popeye arcade game and now, it has come up with a hand-held game which includes a watch. Mattel offers up Masters of the Universe and Burger Time in a similar format.

"Tie-in" is the key phrase which applies

manufacturers, Parker Bros. and Milton-Bradley. Parker boasts games based on Superman III, Krull, Return of the Jedi ("Battle at Sarlac's Pit") and E. T. as well as corresponding card games. Milton-Bradley offers up board versions of the arcade classics Ms. Pac-Man, Zaxxon and Turbo. Parker has only a variation on Nintendo's Popeye game. Television buffs can ride with Knight Rider, but the only new and original game will be the occult-oriented Shadowlord. Avalon Hill, masters of role-playing games, will be releasing three new genre entries: Wizards (no relation to the Bakshi movie), Mystic Wood and Powers & Perils.

Waddington has an odd item, Super Quiz. Authorized by the prolific science and SF author Isaac Asimov, the game contains some 5400 questions broken into six colorcoded categories (geography, history, movies, science, sports and words) each worth varying points. Asimov supervised and approved all questions and answers, dividing play into three levels of knowledge: freshman, graduate and Ph.D. The object: rack up a total of 35 points. In keeping with the game's spirit, Waddington assigned code number 411 (the phone number for local information) to Super Quiz.

**Action Figures** 

"War is Sell!" proclaimed trade advertisements just prior to the Toy Fair. To that end, manufacturers have benefitted from a renewed interest in male-oriented action figures. The introduction of a redesigned G.I. Joe last year set the scene for massive sales of military-type men and material. Later in the year, the G.I. Joe team was joined in combat by the veterans of DC Comics' Easy Co., led by the indomitable Sgt. Rock. And now you can battle in several different fantasy worlds, with or without hand grenades.

Blackstar, hero of the CBS Saturday morning series, has received full-scale treatment from Galoob, which unleashed more than a dozen figures based on the series. If you want a little more fantasy than Trobits. LJN has a new legion of figures based on Advanced Dungeons & Dragons. There's even a nifty Fortress of Fangs where most of the action and evil can take place.

Marvel Comics' newest creation, Crystar, was licensed to Remco for action figures before the first issue was even published. A complete collection of Crystar-related characters and play sets will storm toy stores by fall. Not playing favorites, Remco also invites you to "Enter the Lost World of the Warlord." This toy set is primarily based on DC Comics' Warlord with figures including Warlord, Hercules and Arak, Son of Thunder. Oddly enough, also included are two Marvel heroes, Ka-Zar and American

Kenner launches their Jedi action figures this fall. Seventeen new figures will be released including: Luke as a Jedi Knight; Lando Calrissian in a new Skiff Guard disguise; General Madine; Admiral Ackbar; (previously available in a promotional camto 1983's new board games from the major paign); a Biker Scout; Logray; a Gamorrean guard; Klaatu, the Emperor's Royal Guard; Chief Chirpa; Bib Fortuna; Ree-Yees; Weequay; and Nein Nunb. Who are they? Kenner says see the movie.

Other Jedi material from Kenner includes a Chewbacca Bandolier Strap, a C-3PO Gold Case, shaped like the droid and designed to contain 40 action figures, and two new mini-rigs: an Armored Sentinel Transport and the Imperial Shuttle Pod. A speeder bike, Y-wing and micro vehicles will also be introduced.

Not to be left out, fans of Raiders of the Lost Ark can look forward to four new figures: Indy dressed as a German officer with a bazooka, a fighting German carrying a monkey wrench, Belloq in full excavation gear and Sallah with a torch. A streets of Cairo play set will be added, as well as Indy's Arabian horse and the famous truck where some of the film's greatest moments occurred.

Revell is also entering the action-figure fray, specifically targeting Mattel's Masters of the Universe as its prey. Revell's Power Lords are a set of action figures from another galaxy, led by Adam Power, with a big promotional push behind it. You'll see more of these guys.

And Monogram is reissuing the famous Aurora monster model kits from the early '60s beginning with Frankenstein, Wolfman, Dracula and the Mummy.

#### Licensing

As you might expect, almost every toy imaginable will bear the likeness of some established character. Increasing numbers of companies have turned to licensing for immediate recognition—and there are far too many licensed items to list here. Nevertheless, here are a few of the most noteworthy items

American Publishing Company has a series of activity books for younger readers, utlizing its "Prestomagix" or rub-on techniques. Among them are E.T., G.I. Joe and the gang from Jedi. A Jabba the Hutt palace scene and the Ewoks' village serve as suitable settings for prestomagix.

There will also be Krull and Crystar puzzles from American Publishing.

Henry Gordy Inc. has made an art out of the puffy sticker with a complete line ranging from Annie to ColecoVision game screens with Cracker Jacks, Burger King and Masters of the Universe falling somewhere in between. Diamond Toy Makers is also issuing a set of E.T. stickers and a fragrant item called Sniff-ums.

Gordy promises a line of water pistols and similar items bearing the likenesses of Marvel's Kid Colt and Sgt. Fury and the cancelled TV series Bring 'Em Back Alive.

And as always, Viewmaster offers its 3-D slide reels, this year featuring Superman III, Jaws 3-D (a natural), E.T. and Masters of the Universe (they certainly do get around, don't they?).

The media blitz for the newer toys begins over the summer, leaving plenty of time for those letters to Santa to reach the North Pole whether by postal service or starship.



# ZERO HOUR APPROACHING! SKILLED REBEL PILOT MEEDED TO BATTLE DEATH STAR

SITUATION DESPERATE! POWERFUL NEW
DEATH STAR REPORTED UNDER CONSTRUCTION. MUST BE DESTROYED BEFORE ITS
DEADLY COMPLETION OR ALL WILL BE LOST.
MISSION INVOLVES SPLIT-SECOND
SKILL. MUST FLY MILLENNIUM FALCON
THROUGH ENEMY FORCE FIELD...PENETRATE DEATH STAR DEFENSES...AND

NEUTRALIZE CENTER CORE.



WARNING! EXPECT HEAVY RESISTANCE FROM EMPIRE'S TIE INTERCEPTORS. ALSO NOTE...BE ON ALERT FOR TRACK-ING DEATH RAY.

TIME RUNNING OUT. ALL REBEL
PILOTS REPORT IMMEDIATELY FOR
RETURN OF THE JEDI DEATH STAR
BATTLE. THE THRILLING HOME VIDEO
GAME FROM PARKER BROTHERS.

For the Atari 2600™ and soon available for Intellivision.

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