

22 Super A/V Systems

# Video

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AUGUST 1986

The #1 Magazine of Home Video

Nightmare 2,  
Jewel Of The Nile & More

## Take A Video Vacation

- *See The World For \$24.95*
- *Break The Language Barrier*
- *Tape Your Adventures*

**Scuba-Cam Diving**  
*8mm Takes A Dip*

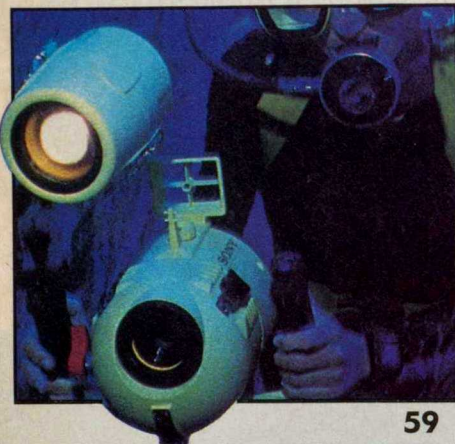
**Captain Midnight**  
**Unscrambled**



**BERGER-BRAITHWAITE VIDEOTESTS**  
Panasonic VHS Camcorder  
Sony 8mm VCR • Vidicraft SEG  
Panasonic HQ HI-FI VCR



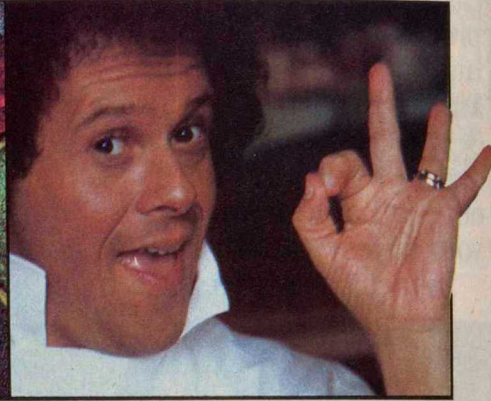




59



66



71

## Features

### Video Vacation Special

#### How I Shot My Summer Vacation

Are friends tired of your travel slides? Tips to record your adventures on video. Great sights can make great tapes.

By Murray Slovick ..... 47

#### See the World for \$24.95

The latest trend in tourism: tapes of exotic locales. Use them to plan a trip or travel by armchair.

By Julia Lisella ..... 50

#### Ich Bin Ein Berlitzer

How-to tapes promise an easy route to language fluency. Can they really help you *sprechen Sie deutsch*?

By Lindsay Van Gelder ..... 55

### Lights! Camera! Bubbles!

New marine housings let you shoot 8mm videos underwater. Our intrepid diver lights up the lower depths.

By Anne Flinn ..... 59

### Super Systems

All-in-one audio/visual entertainment centers: a primer and guide to 22 models that dazzle the senses.

By Martin Porter ..... 62

### Et Tu, Shakespeare?

Clashing swords, stellar casts, and vivid styles mark the Bard's works on tape. A crash course in Shakespearean video.

By M. George Stevenson ..... 66

## Program Guide

### News & Views

By Mark Fleischmann ..... 71

### Top 10

Tape & Disc Sales & Rentals ..... 73

### Reviews

*Jewel of the Nile,*

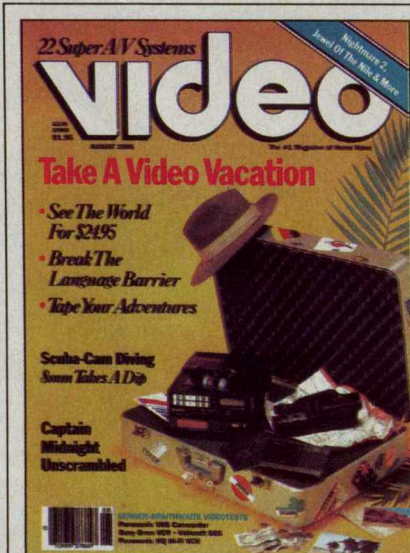
*Nightmare 2*, more ..... 74

### Directory

New Releases on Tape & Disc ..... 84

## Videotests

Panasonic PV-300 VHS HQ Camcorder  
Sony EV-2700U 8mm Table Model VCR  
Panasonic PV-1742 VHS HQ VCR  
Vidicraft Special Effects Generator  
By Berger-Braithwaite Labs ..... 94



**About the Cover.** Before you finish packing for that big trip, we've got a suitcase full of useful video ideas. Photograph by Robert Lewis.

## Columns

### Channel One

Ed Meese, Peeping Tom ..... 6

### Fast Forward

Doubled Decker Dilemma ..... 8

### Feedback

Letters from Readers ..... 10

### New Products

The Latest Gear ..... 16

### Fine Tuning

Video Questions & Answers ..... 28

### Videogram

The Electronic Intelligencer  
Edited by Ben Templin ..... 30

### TV Den

Taping in the Cable Jungle  
By Roderick Woodcock ..... 32

### The Third Format

Mini Video Potpourri  
By Roderick Woodcock ..... 36

### Random Access

Computers, News, and Games  
By Onosko/Kesten/Miller ..... 40

### Audio Input

Videodisc Sing-Along  
By Ivan Berger ..... 42

### Video Bookshelf

Oscars and Turkeys  
By Louis Kesten ..... 138

### Off the Air

Captain Midnight Unscrambled  
By Bob Brewin ..... 142



# Random Access

## Personal Computers, News, and Games

### The MIDI Revolution

Computers first made music in the 1950s when programmers discovered novel ways to produce sounds. One amusing method used a transistor radio on top of a computer to pick up the machine's natural radio-frequency beeps and buzzes. Today video games and personal computers like the Commodore 64 (which has a sophisticated three-voice sound chip) make computer music commonplace. But a link between computers and powerful digital keyboards takes electronic music one step further.

The hardware and software standard responsible is known as MIDI, for Musical Instrument Digital Interface. The first programs to harness MIDI were simple record/playback schemes that mimicked multi-track tape recorders. One voice could be played on a synthesizer keyboard while another was captured by the computer's memory.

The brilliance of MIDI is that no sounds are recorded. Notes, octaves, durations, and other information about



sounds are stored as "musical events." When a MIDI score is played back, the computer issues commands to synthesizers that recreate the actions of the original player.

Apple's Macintosh has become a showplace for MIDI development, thanks to a number of new software releases. MusicWorks in Boston, Mass. has created Megatrack XL (\$150), an elaborate MIDI sequencer that transposes keys and visually edits notes, durations, and voices. Up to 32 different synthesizers and drum

machines can be controlled at one time with the company's MacMIDI 32 interface.

Another ambitious program comes from Great Wave Software in Menlo Park, Calif. ConcertWare + MIDI (\$85) offers a staggering number of options. Music is composed by arranging notes on a video screen, and orchestrated with sounds produced by the Macintosh itself (from a library of sounds by synth programmer Joe West). The composition can also be sent to MIDI synthesizers.

Ties, beams, and slurs

(which contrast notes) are added to the score and printed out as sheet music. As an alternative to entering notes on a staff, ConcertWare + MIDI lets you play directly into the program from any MIDI keyboard. The music is displayed in standard notation.

Song Producer (\$395) plugs into the cartridge port of a Commodore 64 to help you control MIDI keyboards and instruments, and non-MIDI drum machines. It comes from one of the pioneers of electronic music, Moog Electronics in Buffalo, N.Y. Songstepper software, which comes with Song Producer, is a music composition system that works in real-time or step-time for layering up to 24 MIDI sounds.

The Atari 520 ST and 1040 ST computers use the same fast microprocessor as the Mac and have even greater video screen resolution, making them ideal for music applications. The ST series even has MIDI interfaces so the connection is easier. It could be that the ST series will one day rival the Mac and most other computers for sound work.

—Timothy Onosko

### Disk Doppelgangers

*Alter Ego* (Activision, \$49.95 for the Apple II, IBM, and Commodore 64; \$59.95 for the Macintosh) allows you to relive—or prelive, if you have yet to reach some of the later stages of life—certain events common to most twentieth century Americans. By assuming someone else's personality you learn how certain events might have turned out if you'd been more careful, confident, or charming. You

begin in the womb, where you can stubbornly hang out for a while, come out peacefully, or emerge kicking and screaming.

From there, you get to live it all, from the time you discovered matches and tried to burn down your parents' house to retirement in a Miami condo. Watch out for the child molesters, don't take too many drugs, go for a good college and a satisfying career, and you'll last to a

ripe old age. The incidents are familiar, lightheartedly related, and enlivened by the wit of author Peter Favaro. His voice is your conscience, and can be a nagging or sarcastic reminder that you're something of a screw-up.

The female version of *Alter Ego* is not, its creators stress, radically different. It repeats incidents from the male version, adjusted for a feminine perspective, and it seems accurate.

There are many different ways to play *Alter Ego* since

you can choose which episodes to play and avoid, but the choices within episodes are limited. There is no way to really "win." You're judged on 12 qualities, like "social" and "intellectual." If you score over 60 out of 100 on each, you've done very well. My male counterpart tended to be smart but unhappy. As a female, I did well on everything except physical status. If she could only have quit smoking she might have qualified for sainthood.

—Louis Kesten



## Sailing From Disk Under

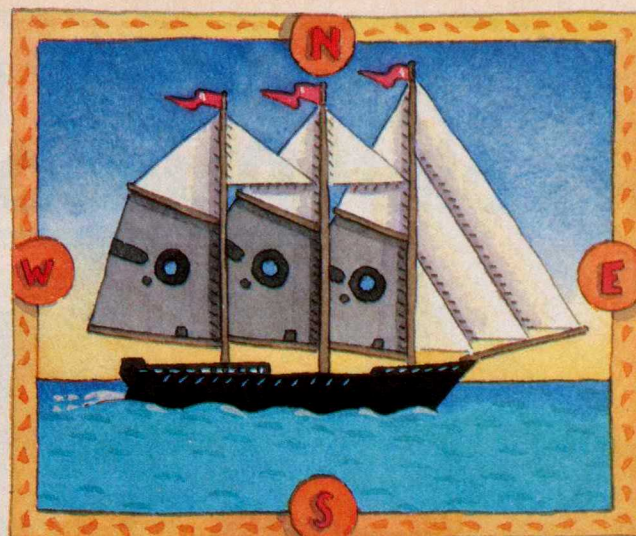
The way some folks see it, things started to go to pot back in 1983, when a sailing yacht from Australia had the audacity to win the America's Cup. After all, the prize had been in Yankee hands for 132 years. Now you can help reclaim our national honor—thanks to a nifty new disk called *The American Challenge: A Sailing Simulation* (Mindscape, Apple II, IBM PC, \$39.95).

In *American Challenge*, you're the skipper. Name your boat, choose your course, hit "return" and you're off. Controlling the mainsail and the rudder, with an eye on the compass and the wind speed, you guide

your vessel to the finish buoys racing against the computer or a friend at the other end of a modem.

Get through seven trial races and you're ready for the America's Cup. That's where national honor comes in. Send your best Cup time to Mindscape to vie for a "top eight" spot. Winners get a modem and will compete for a trip to Australia to cheer for our team in the real life 1987 America's Cup Race.

*American Challenge* won't let you design your own secret hull, but the 3-D graphics give armchair Ted Turners a strong sense of the open sea. You may miss the



sun glinting off the water or the cool spray as your boat slices through the foam. But look at it this way: you can't

capsize, you won't get sunburned, and you can still top the race off with a nice cold beer.

—R.D. Miller

## Wills and Won'ts

As a practicing New York State attorney, I was both skeptical and intrigued when *DiskWill* (Self-Help Legal Services, P.O. Box 10694, Minneapolis, Minn. 55440) crossed my desk. At home, the packaging claimed, you can "prepare and print a comprehensive will appropriate to your specific needs." Wills are generally standard documents that can become very complicated. At \$39.95 *DiskWill* is cheaper than a

lawyer, but not as inventive.

Forget about scattering your ashes to the winds or throwing a party for friends at the local pub after you die. Customizing with *DiskWill* is out. Even such basic provisions as disinheriting your children in such a way as to prevent them from contesting it is impossible. So are setting up trust funds and making gifts that depend on a future event like a high school graduation.

The program is easy to use and allows revisions. Only two wills—presumably for

husband and wife—can be used with one disk. The authors carefully explain the procedures for signing and witnessing. *DiskWill* claims to be legal in every state except Louisiana.

If you have the money, go to a lawyer—you'll probably need one. If you don't, try *DiskWill*. If nothing else, it will teach you the basics of wills and estates.

—David Kogelman

## Shrinkthink

Human Edge's *Mindprober*, with its instant personality analyses, proved that for less than the cost of an hour with a good shrink, you can find out what he would probably say after six months, minus the anxiety of hearing it in person. It also showed there are plenty of diskophiles ready to analyze themselves with the same brio others lavish on custom cars or, well, video systems.

*The Luscher Profile* by Mindscape (\$39.95 for the Macintosh, Apple II, and IBM versions and \$29.95 for the Commodore 64) should give them another tool—a home version of Dr. Max Luscher's 1947 correlation of colors and shapes to universal human qualities: lust, fear, anger, anxiety, and the

like. We are what we tint, says the test, which is widely used as a diagnostic aid.

To take it, you mouseclick through a series of 33 choices keyed to an accompanying booklet of colors, shapes, and shades. In less time than even Dr. Ruth requires, Dr. Max explains the path to inner peace with a three-page analysis of your answers. However, the mix-and-match sentences of my own report seemed wildly off base as frequently as on, and uncannily like the profiles of five other test takers. It may not be wise to take it any more seriously than computerized versions of the *I Ching*. However valid the test itself, *The Luscher Profile* is little more than a parlor game. Color it puce.

—Stan Pinkwas

## BEST SELLERS/HOME

1. **Print Shop.** AP, C64, AT. Broderbund.
2. **Newsroom.** AP, IBM, C64. Springboard.
3. **Print Shop Graphics Library 1.** AP, C64, AT, IBM. Broderbund.
4. **Typing Tutor III.** AP, IBM, MAC, PCjr, C64. Simon & Schuster.
5. **Print Shop Companion.** AP, C64. Broderbund.
6. **Mastertype.** AP, IBM, MAC, C64, AT. Scarborough.
7. **Bank Street Writer.** AP, APC, IBM, C64, AT. Broderbund.
8. **Math Blaster!** AP, IBM, MAC, C64, AT. Davidson & Assoc.
9. **Dollars & Sense.** AP, APC, IBM, MAC, PCjr. Monogram.
10. **Study Program for the S.A.T.** AP, IBM, PCjr, C64. Barron's.

## BEST SELLERS/RECREATION

1. **Microsoft Flight Simulator.** IBM, PCjr. Microsoft.
2. **Scenery Disks 1-6.** IBM, C64. Sublogic.
3. **King's Quest II.** AP, IBM. Sierra On-Line.
4. **Jet.** IBM, C64. Sublogic.
5. **Black Cauldron.** AP, IBM. Sierra On-Line.
6. **Ballyhoo.** AP, IBM, MAC, C64. Infocom.
7. **Sargon III.** AP, IBM, MAC, C64, AT. Hayden Software.
8. **Gato.** AP, IBM, MAC, PCjr, C64. Spectrum Holobyte.
9. **Silent Service.** AP, IBM, C64. Microprose.
10. **Ultima IV.** AP, IBM, MAC, C64, AT. Origin Systems.

LEGEND: AP = Apple, APC = Apple IIc, APe = Apple IIe, AT = Atari, C64 = Commodore 64, COM = Commodore Pet/CBM, CP/M = 5¼" and 8" formats, DEC = DEC Rainbow, DG = Data General, EPS = Epson QX-10, IBM = IBM-PC, MAC = Apple Macintosh, PCjr = IBM PCjr, TIP = Texas Instruments Professional, TRS = TRS-80, VIC = Commodore Vic-20, VTR = Victor 9000, WNG = Wang Personal Computer, ZEN = Zenith 100.

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