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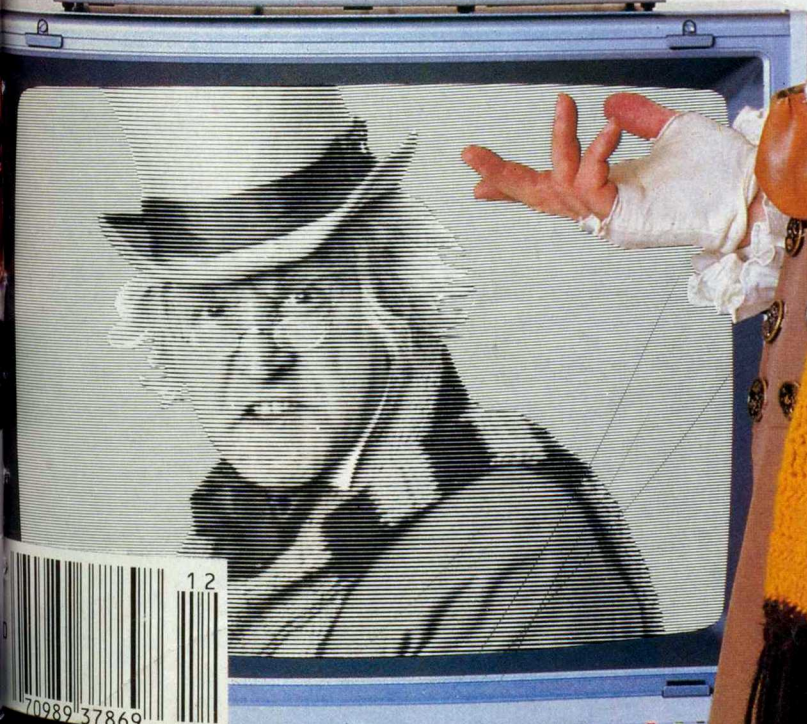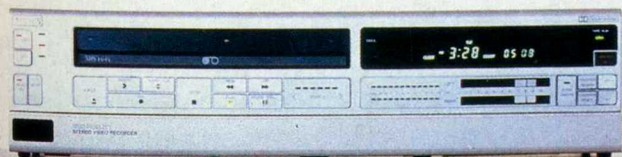The #1 Magazine of Home Video

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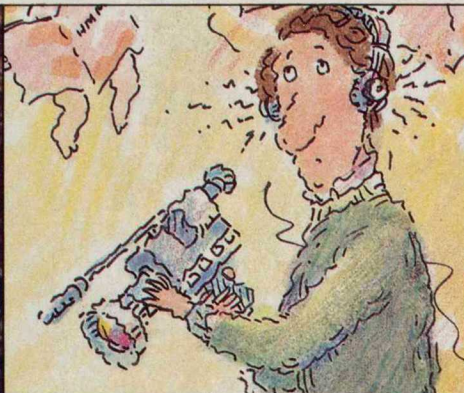## Latest Releases
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12

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Contents

94   **130**   **120**

About the Cover. 'Tis the season to watch, listen, and be merry—eh, Ebenezer? Photo by Tom Weihs.

Random Access

Personal Computers, News, and Games

One-on-One

Electronic Arts/
Apple II, Commodore
64, Atari

When Electronic Arts' superb simulation of half-court head-to-head roundball, *One-On-One*, debuted in Apple format over a year ago, it set the computer entertainment world on its ear. Designer Eric Hammond spent hour upon hour working with Larry Bird and Julius Erving, both of whom introduced tremendously valuable insights into the final product, and the result was a one- or two-player game in which a gamester can opt to play either Bird or the Doctor, with all their strengths—and alas their few weaknesses as well (Bird has a much better outside shot, for example). Added elements include slo-mo replays and the player's ability to smash the backboard occasionally, which brings out a crusty janitor to sweep up the mess.

Owners of other systems were salivating for compatible versions, and sure enough a Commodore-64 version turned up a few months later. But—no Atari? Incredibly, EA was committing nearly a year to developing a protection code capable of defeating the prolific copycat software on the market today. Supposedly sold to let users make "a single backup copy," these machines are clearly piracy devices. Between their users, modems, bulletin boards, and user groups the Atari computer has picked up a reputation as a system riddled with pirates. Just this past summer East Coast gamers were playing a game called *Behind Jaggi Lines*—a game from the software division of George Lucas' Lucasfilms

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that would eventually be named *Rescue on Fractalus*.

So one year later the excellent Atari version of *One-On-One* finally turns up. And despite its 12-month sojourn in copy-protection limbo, it is selling well. For now, the pirate disks can't dupe it. "Don't worry," a smug pirate recently assured me. "It's just a matter of getting out the new software."

—Bill Kunkel

What's Wrong with Educational Software

Despite the ongoing flood of educational diskettes, there is a drought of really good programs capable of teaching anyone besides preschoolers anything other than simple hand/eye coordination. One reason for the state of the current crop has to do with the adage about all work and no play. Most designers seem to have taken the play part to heart, almost to the utter exclusion of the work. There's nothing wrong

with combining entertainment and education—as long as as the subject warrants it. After all, it works well in such typing programs as Scarborough's *MasterType* and Sirius' *Type Attack*. The action of shooting scrolling letters and words forces the conscious mind to focus on something other than the keyboard, and so the typing becomes second nature. But when a program such as Atari's upcoming *Through the Starbridge* purports to teach science and then combines the laws of gravity with an encounter of the third kind, little teaching and learning goes on.

On the other hand, all work and no play isn't the answer either. Consider the *Science of Learning* series by Eduware. Although the tutorials, which cover mathematics and English, are excellent teaching tools, they are about as interesting as a pebble on a gritty beach. Most people will not use the

software unless they must, as they would a dull textbook.

Only one type of current software is both educational and entertaining: simulations. But even within that group problems arise. The educational material tends to be inaccurate, underused by the designer, or ignored by the user.

Take Electronic Arts' *Seven Cities of Gold*, a game in which the player explores the New World (which can be either the Americas or one created by the computer). Although a wealth of geological, historical, and anthropological information is built into the game, virtually none of it is accessible to the user. Even when the player learns that trade is preferable to conquest, he usually opts for the latter because the graphics and sound are more exciting.

Then there is Tom Snyder's *Agent USA*, published by Scholastic. While it is an excellent arcade game, its educational value is limited. The game invites a knowledge of the overall geography of the United States and the various state capitals. However, the player is not required to know these things to complete the game successfully; in other words, it can be played in sheer ignorance.

Is there any good educational software? The AtariLab series has gotten good marks. So has *Logo*, the turtle-graphic languages, and *Bank Street Writer*, the word processor for kids. Many of the educational construction sets such as HES's *Space Station* can also teach teenagers and adults. The text adventures, especially Infocom's, are more rigorous than many of the so-called educational programs.

These programs succeed because they don't condescend and insult the user's intelligence. The only concessions are forced upon them by the computer's limits. They also provide an open environment which allows users to explore on their own. They challenge the user, requiring logic and every appropriate bit of accumulated knowledge to be used.

Will we ever see a wealth of good educational software for teenagers and adults? Probably not more so than now. It's as easy for the manufacturers to churn out clones as it is for filmmakers to produce washed-out sequels. —Vincent Puglia

Murder on The Zinderneuf

Electronic Arts/Commodore 64, Atari/Disk

Sixteen people board the luxury dirigible Zinderneuf for a one-day pleasure cruise; only fifteen will survive the trip. It's up to the world-famous detective aboard the craft to investigate the murder and bring the killer to justice before the airship docks and somebody literally gets away with murder.

Murder on the Zinderneuf has all the elements of classic mystery: an exotic locale; sophisticated motives; plots, subplots, a few red herrings; and suspects ranging from the haughty film star and her lover to the frumpy schoolmarm. The most intriguing part of *MOTZ* is that it actually lets mystery buffs play the roles of their favorite detectives. There are eight famous flatfoots to choose from, including the bumbling Chief Inspector Klutzeau; Miss Agatha Marbles, a sweet old lady with a penchant for crime; and macho, strongarming Harry Hacksaw. Each detective has an individual style that reflects what he or she can do and how suspects react to questioning.

As soon as the game begins the clock starts ticking down to 12:00, when the Zinderneuf docks. The player has 12 hours of game time, or about 40 minutes of real time, to find the killer. He uses the joystick to move the

detective up and down the halls of the airship, stopping and questioning suspects and searching various rooms for clues like hair, cigarette butts, or other tipoffs to the killer's identity. Suspects can be asked only one question: "Tell me about [whoever]." But what matters is the way the question is asked. Each detective has an individually tailored group of choices: Klutzeau might choose "bumbling" as his questioning style, while the sexy Charity Flaire might elicit a good response by acting "helpless." Ask the wrong way and the suspect responds with a flippant, "Bug off!" When he's gathered enough evidence, the detective must find and accuse the suspect.

Thousands of scenarios are on the disk and the computer recognizes those already played, so you're guaranteed to get a fresh case at least the first 1500 times you play the game. Graphics and sound are only adequate, making it difficult for first-time players to recognize different suspects at a glance. But practice helps and this is the sort of game you'll want to play again. Despite its use of a joystick, *Murder on the Zinderneuf* is not a kid's action game. It's a sophisticated, entertaining treat for the armchair detective in all of us. —Tracie Forman

A Modern Leonardo?

Macintosh

When a software designer says he puts "everything" into a new program, he is rarely taken seriously. Yet anything is possible in this industry and Imagebank Soft-

ware has literally put the kitchen sink in the Macintosh. In fact, the *da Vinci Graphics Series* places whole interiors, exteriors, landscapes, and buildings within easy reach of a click 'n' drag of the mouse.

The software is packaged in three units: interiors, landscapes and buildings. Each of these separate disks contains several hundred images, easily controlled with MacPaint commands. They can be inverted, rescaled, stretched, retextured, and saved in an electronic notebook for future manipulation. The ambitious amateur or professional architect can then brain-

storm, test new ideas, and create with a freedom that rapidograph and drawing board cannot provide. The user can stylize any image, tailoring it with the ease of electronic brush and eraser. You can replace the shrubs in your garden, add a pool, an annex, or build from the ground up. Design furniture, invent more work-effective space, reorganize the living-room instead of hefting the sofa. Create the dream house you've been wanting to build on that piece of land in the country. And its all based on the MacPaint system of cut and paste.

Yet this graphic system is limited because it's entirely dependent on the MacPaint operating program. As such, these professional drawings exist only as a series of integrated images and not as the powerful architectural and design tool that this program clearly has the potential to become. It would be nice to set about designing the various planes and elevations, unite them all in one document, and generate a three-dimensional image using Logo or a similar program designed for special use. —Robert Norden