



Moroder on 'Metropolis'

What's New
VCRs, TVs, Gear

Video

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SEPTEMBER 1985

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Sony's Tiny 8mm
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Roger Ebert's
With His



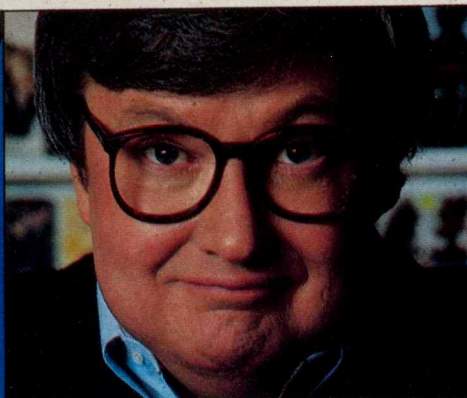
Growing Pains
8mm's 1st Year

BERGER-BRAITHWAITE VIDEOTESTS
Toshiba's VHS VCR • Panasonic VHS Hi-Fi VCR with MTS
RCA Auto-Focus Camera • Phoenix Ambience/Surround Decoder





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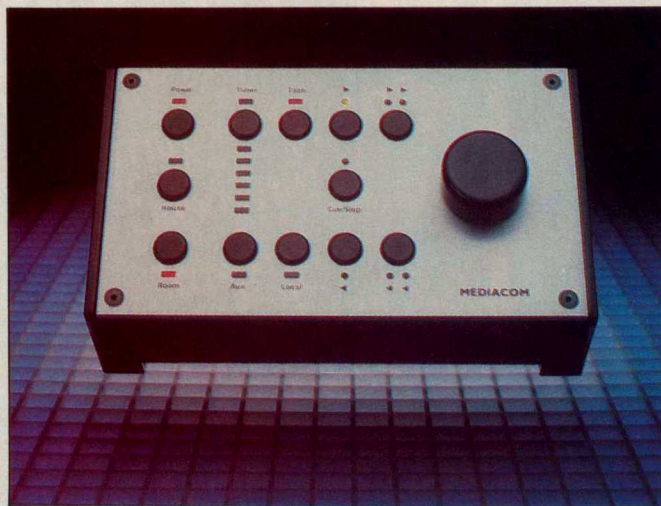
Audio/Video Shangri-La

If you have to ask about the price, you probably can't afford it—but for those who can, the ultimate audio/video master remote-control system is now available nationwide. For the last five years Audio Command Systems of Rockville Center (New York), Miami, and Los Angeles has designed and installed these truly high-end systems in the homes of luminaries like Robert DeNiro, Robert Stigwood, Diana Ross, Calvin Klein, and Ralph Lauren.

The technology, designed by company officials Robert Kaufman and Brian Haggerty, is microprocessor-based and requires extremely specialized technician/installers and a totally concept-oriented approach to home-electronics design. The system controls every audio and video signal in the house from any room at the touch of a button on a convenient "command terminal."

The Audio Command people have now formed Mediacom, an offshoot company which will sell its Mediacom CT9000 Command Terminal system nationwide at classy audio stores. Mediacom seems to be off to a good start. The CT9000 terminal was selected by the recent Consumer Electronics Show Design and Engineering Awards panel to receive its highest honor for the design and execution of the "universal multi-room remote control center for audio/video products. It allows different music and video programming to be played and controlled simultaneously throughout the home and has a wireless remote control interface."

"The Mediacom Command Terminal," Robert Kaufman says, "has been designed to



The remote control for the ultimate system.

make system obsolescence obsolete. It will handle the specific internal requirements of any machine, including VCRs, for which we customize the units and modify the VCR's remote system—so that all functions can be controlled from the remote keypad."

The command terminal is actually a digital controller which works as the "brain" for a network of remote control panels distributed around the house, explains Kaufman. The terminal has a modular internal design, featuring interchangeable "cards" that can interface with all makes of audio and video products.

Mediacom's system is not just the hardware. It's a total approach to wiring, interior design, and systems technology—usually installed in collaboration with an interior designer when a house is first being built, or during a total redesign. The system is guaranteed for two years.

OK, since you had to ask, Mediacom's system will run you anywhere from \$2000 to \$10,000 depending on how elaborate your home media Shangri-La wants to be.

—Noë Goldwasser

Electronic Oenophile

OK, you know the scene. You've been there before. You're out on a first date with a terrific young woman: attractive, intelligent, etc. You want to impress her so you take her to that little French bistro. You order dinner for her, remembering your high-school French accent. Everything is going well until the wine steward wonders what spirits you had in mind with your snails and pheasant. You panic. Wine? What wine?

You wouldn't panic if you had Sommelier



L'Electronique—right, the pocket wine calculator, only \$129 in most gadget catalogues. The calculator contains more than 300 wines, and there are two models, French and California. It will even give you the best choice based on region. Real oenophiles will want to query it for details such as taste, color, appearance, and bouquet. Now you'll *really* impress your date—and perhaps even the wine steward.

Interactive Art

Dirk the Daring has hung up his sword. Space Ace has given up video arcades for television. It's been more than a year since the *MysteryDisc* dick, Stew Cavanaugh, had a case to crack.

Interactive videodisc games are in stasis, waiting as the disc-player population slowly grows. Yet not everyone is content to rest on their lasers. San Francisco video artist Lynn Herschman, for one, is saying the hell with mass appeal. She has concocted *Lorna*, a Level 1 interactive video-art disc. It's a first—and as a \$250 limited edition it may turn out to be an only.

The "game" in this would-be museum piece involves the agoraphobic Lorna (Joanna Moss). A middle-aged divorcee living alone in Lubbock, Texas, she's spent the last few years too afraid to leave her apartment. The viewer/player explores various interactive branches relating to objects in her self-contained universe, getting her to eventually leave on a jet, stay where she is or—ahem—commit suicide.

Lorna has some structural problems—it's far more artsy than artful—but it's a fascinating first. Like Vidmax's acclaimed *MysteryDiscs*, it's a

Level 1 disc requiring a disc-player with a built-in micro-processor. (This includes all current home models except Pioneer's \$299 LD-660.) Yet unlike the *MysteryDiscs* or any other narrative interactive-disc games, *Lorna* is a stream-of-consciousness collage that not only requires an interactive left brain (to deduce and to make logical choices) but an interactive right-brain (to feel what the character's feeling and to understand her life).

Whatever *Lorna's* and *Lorna's* fates, Lynn Hershman's scored one for the history books. Or perhaps the historydiscs. —Frank Lovece

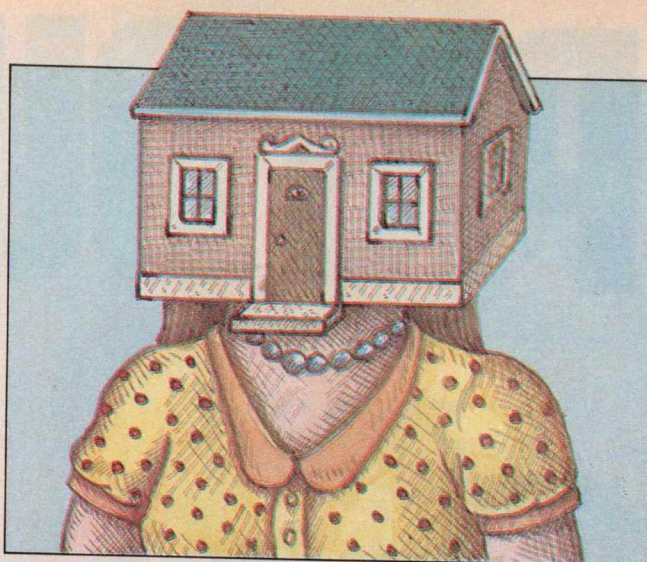
More Electro Boxes

A few months ago we reported that GE had introduced the Homeminder, an electronic security and appliance-control system that plugs into conventional AC outlets. The box hooks up with TV sets and features icon graphics that show whether the stereo in your bedroom is on or the lights in the family room are off. It sells for about \$400.

Now the company that made the product is selling a similar one that interfaces with the Apple IIe and c series computers and the Commodore 64. It's \$120 list, and consists simply of a micro-processor (it's really a peripheral, in computer parlance) that can accommodate 72 lights and appliances in your house.

Another gizmo, Butler in a Box, does similar home chores for lazy folks. The Butler is a voice-actuated microprocessor, and it too will turn on your stereo or lights or desk fan or any other appliance, even if you don't ask it nicely. It sells for \$995, and its 32-year-old inventor, Gus Searcy, says proudly, "This product doesn't come from the labs at Texas Instruments. I did the algorithm for it and a friend of mine did the programming." Who needs such a toy? Searcy says, "There are over five million handicapped people in this country. That's a pretty big market."

Butler in a Box should have an obvious appeal to those who like to give orders.



Video Chip

Word from the RCA Lab in Princeton, New Jersey is of research on a home computer with a next-generation display processor chip that will be "super in video," according to John Clemmens, head of R&D on the project. Clemmens says the chip will produce images at a higher resolution and manipulation rate than anything now sold, and the result won't be blocky pixels. "It'll be much more like a real video shot," Clemmens says.

Will the television giant's home computer go the route of its ill-fated videodisc and die because of a lack of compatibility? Clemmens says RCA is still in the "thinking stages" on software standards, though he wants a machine that is "user lovable." He speculates that while the computer will have the standard entertainment, educational, and business applications, it may also be integrated with RCA's plans to enter the videotex market.

With an operating target price in the \$500-\$1000 range, Clemmens says RCA has not fully defined the needs of the customers it's after, though it's getting "closer and closer to product definition." He says, "the chips are so complex that to build a breadboard is quite difficult." So don't rush out to the store yet, although Clemmens adds "that doesn't mean [RCA] won't do something more mun-

dane first." —Ben Templin

Amiga News

Commodore's long-awaited Amiga computer should make other personal computers pale when it comes to video applications. The Amiga, Spanish for "girlfriend," promises to be the best creative device available for linking up live video with computer-generated animation. Shown at trade shows for two years, the Amiga displayed a bounc-

ing beachball which cast a shadow on the wall—an effect seen on many main-frame computers, but never on a home microcomputer.

The Amiga is a speed demon which uses three custom chips nicknamed Daphne (graphics), Agnes (animation), and Portica (sound). Optional peripherals will allow a "frame grabber" to capture video images in full color to be stored on disk. Computer-generated graphics and text can be overlaid onto videotape using a "gen-lock" box.

All this should give artists, designers, and videophiles an affordable tool that was previously available only on computers costing thousands of dollars. Amiga will begin at \$1295 list, plus the usual extras for peripherals. The machine will likely be competitive pricewise with other micro systems, but don't expect Commodore to give it away.

A preliminary review of the Amiga will appear in this space next month.

—Ben Templin

BEST SELLERS/HOME

1. **Print Shop.** AP, C64, AT. Broderbund.
2. **Print Shop Graphics Library.** AP, C64, AT. Broderbund.
3. **Newsroom.** AP. Springboard.
4. **Video Works.** MAC. Hayden Software.
5. **Dollars & Sense.** AP, APc, IBM, MAC, TP. Monogram.
6. **Bank Street Writer.** AP, APc, IBM, C64, AT. Broderbund.
7. **ClickArt Effects.** MAC. T/Maker.
8. **Micro Cookbook.** AP, APc, APe, IBM. Virtual Combinatics.
9. **Original Boston Computer Diet.** AP, IBM. Scarborough.
10. **Print Master.** IBM, PCjr. Advanced Product Solutions.

BEST SELLERS/RECREATION

1. **Gato.** AP, IBM, MAC, PCjr. Spectrum Holobyte.
2. **Flight Simulator II.** AP, C64, AT, DG. Sublogic.
3. **Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.** AP, IBM, MAC, C64, AT. Infocom.
4. **Microsoft Flight Simulator.** IBM. Microsoft.
5. **Sargon III.** AP, IBM, MAC, C64. Hayden Software.
6. **Zork I.** AP, IBM, MAC, AT, CP/M, DEC, TIP. Infocom.
7. **Lode Runner.** AP, IBM, MAC, C64, AT. Broderbund.
8. **F-15 Strike Eagle.** AP, IBM, C64, AT. Microprose.
9. **Ultima III.** AP, IBM, C64, AT. Origin Systems.
10. **Summer Games II.** C64. Epyx.

LEGEND: AP=Apple, APc=Apple IIc, APe=Apple IIe, AT=Atari, C64=Commodore 64, COM=Commodore Pet/CBM, CP/M=5¼" and 8" formats, DG=Data General One, DEC=DEC Rainbow, 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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