

# arcade express

THE BI-WEEKLY ELECTRONIC GAMES NEWSLETTER

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ACTIVISION STAGES  
SPIDER FIGHTER  
\$10,000 COMPETITION

Little Miss Muffet and other spider-phobes visited the Fantasia Night Club located in Los Angeles' Bona-venture Hotel during February. That's where the supposed masters of Larry Miller's Activision release "Spider Fighter" tried to win a slew of prizes, topped by a six-day, five-night trip to Hawaii, and a complete library of Activision cartridges. The contest was held over a three-week period, three nights a week. The high scores from each round, supplemented by six under-21 contestants picked during a special Saturday afternoon session, were scheduled to meet in a final show-down on Saturday, February 26. (See the next issue for a list of winners.)

ATARI AMENDS  
COLECO SUIT

The legal hassles between Atari and Coleco took an unexpected turn when, on February 7, Atari revised its lawsuit and asked the Court to issue a preliminary injunction to prevent the Hartford, Ct., manufacturer from selling an adaptor that allows the Coleco-Vision to present cartridges developed for use on the Atari 2600. Atari took the action, says a company executive, because it believes that the adaptor which Coleco showed retailers from January to September 1982 was "actually a thinly disguised Atari VCS".

"We won't tolerate the copying of the proprietary circuitry in our VCS unit," says Raymond E. Kassar, Atari's chief executive officer. "Neither will we sit idly by when competitors seek to pass off our product as their own."

Q\*BERT GOES  
TABLETOP

That lovable little critter, Q\*Bert, is starting to branch out into the home market. Parker Brothers, under license from coin-op manufacturer D. Gottlieb, is producing a tabletop version for play in the home. Expected to carry a list price of approximately \$60, "Q\*Bert" features the same characters which are rapidly becoming favorites in the nation's family amusement centers, with two levels of play difficulty.

AVALON HILL  
TAKES WING

"Gypsy" is the name of the latest program from the Microcomputer Games Division of Avalon Hill Co. As the moth character of the title, the arcader must munch the leaves and drink the sap of the Qok tree while shunning such dangers as the flying ant of Tasmania, poisonous mushrooms, the fandango bee and the locknest spider. The joystick game comes as a 32K disk or 16K tape for the Atari 4-8-1200XL computers.

THE VECTREX  
SPEAKS UP

"Spike", part of the "Terrestrial Adventure" series of games General Consumer Electronics will shortly introduce for the Vectrex stand-alone programmable videogame machine, is the first talking home videogame cartridge that doesn't require a special module to operate. The Vectrex is able to pull off this neat trick because it has 64K of ROM, giving it enough memory power to handle such special effects.

The game itself chronicles the attempt by the hero Spike to rescue his girl Molly from the villain, Spud. Spike's trials and tribulations are said to make the quest challenging even for the upper crust of arcade aces.

**SEGA GETS MOVIE LINKS** Sega Games obtained movie licenses for the catalog of games slated for introduction this year. The first three Sega titles scheduled for April are "Star Trek II: The Wrath of Kahn", "Tac/Scan" and "Subterfuge". Games coming later in the year also draw inspiration from flicks: "Buck Rogers: Marathon of Zenda", "Dragon-slayer" and "War of the Worlds" will be released in the summer. Sega plans to follow up these titles with "Escape from Alcatraz", "Mission Impossible", "Friday the 13th", "Buck Rogers: Caverns of Zagreb", "Star Trek III: In Search of Spock", "Marathon Man", "Airplane" and "48 Hours". There is no word yet of how the play action of these games will correspond to the movies from which they take their titles.

**UMI TRIMS PRICE OF VIC-20 GAMES** Prices of UMI games for the VIC-20 are tumbling. United Microware Industries has repriced its \$49.95 and \$39.95 titles at \$39.95 and \$29.95 respectively. UMI hopes this change in strategy will widen the audience for VIC-20 software. "With VIC-20 sales now approaching the one-million mark," notes UMI president Russell Bedord, "there are probably more VIC-20's being used in homes around the world than any other personal computer. We believe these new price points represent a realistic value for both retailers and consumers."

**WORD GAME COMES WITH PVS** Buyers of the Palmtex PVS, a hand-held programmable electronic game with its own LCD screen, will also receive a cartridge called "Spellbound". This is a word game in which the object is to unscramble a jumbled word. A selection of four contests will be offered for separate sale at suggested list price of \$19.95 when the PVS enters actual distribution.

**COIN-OP USES ROADS AS A BATTLEGROUND** The threat of collision with other automobiles and a tricky obstacle course generates the excitement in "Bump 'N' Jump", a play-for-pay machine by Data East. Also available from Bally Midway as a dedicated game, "Bump 'N' Jump" is the 12th title issued for Data East's Interchangeable Game System.

The game's eight-way joystick controls both the direction and speed of movement for the player's on-screen car. The idea is to run a variety of rival vehicles off the road while negotiating the obstacle course at the fastest possible speed. The jump button, when pushed, has the ability to vault the arcader's car clear over an otherwise deadly barrier.

"Bump 'N' Jump" features 32 screens of action, and there is no discernable pattern to the play, according to a Data East spokesman. If a player, upon completing a round, puts a coin in the slot within 10 seconds, the score returns to zero, but the game commences at the exact point at which it had previously ended.

**ROKLAN GOES ROM CART FOR THREE GAMES** The trend toward putting game software for the Atari 4-8-1200 computers on ROM cartridges (as opposed to disk and tape) continues to grow. Latest to join the parade is Roklan Corp. "Deluxe Invaders", "Gorf" and "Wizard of WOR" will all be available in ROM cart format soon, with other titles to follow as they appear from Roklan.

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**KATZ SAYS VIDEOGAMES ARE NOT A FAD** Brian Gumbel played host to Atari's Steve Wright and Electronic Games' editor Arnie Katz in a January 31 segment covering videogames on the NBC "Today" morning program. The feature, which also included a filmed visit to Activision's headquarters, touched on a variety of subjects, including Atari's upcoming series of kideo cartridges done in cooperation with the Children's Computer Workshop division of the Children's Television Workshop, the question of whether designers should get credit for their programs, and the future of gaming. Editor Katz told the network audience that gaming is a dynamic process, and that electronic gaming was a hobby that can be expected to grow in all sorts of intriguing directions, not simply pass away like a momentary fad.

**PLAYBOY CLUBS FORM VIDEOGAME LEAGUE** The nation's first network of nationwide videogame leagues is in the process of formation by Playboy Clubs International. Phil Wiswell serves as the commissioner of the Playboy Video League and has crisscrossed the country showing bunnies the rudiments of play so that they, in turn, can conduct local league operations.

Playboy Clubs are forming teams of four to eight men and women, 21 years of age or older. Teams will play against similar aggregations each week at the local Playboy Club. A prize structure is under development. "Playboy Clubs are making a commitment to the home videogame market," says Dan Stone, senior vice president of PCI. "We've always considered our clubs to be entertainment entities, and we believe that video fits perfectly into that format."

**FLASH GORDON CHALLENGES BUCK ROGERS** Those two all-time great space heroes, Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon, will soon be vying for the attention of SF-minded game-lovers. Coleco plans several cartridges in its Buck Rogers series, and now Sirius Software's David Lubar has created a Flash Gordon program. According to Jerry Jewell, president of Sirius, the new game will be published in editions for the Atari 2600, Atari 5200, the Atari computer systems, the VIC-20, Commodore 64, TI 99/4A "and maybe some other versions".

**ULTRASOFT MOVES BASE** If it's true that any computer game company worth its salt moves into a bigger building at least once a year, then relative upstart UltraSoft is clearly on the right track. The publisher is apparently reaping the reward from its revolutionary illustrated adventure, "Mask of the Sun", and must now relocate to a site with more space. The new address: UltraSoft, Inc., 12503 Bell-Red Road, Suite 200, Bellevue, Wash. 98005. The telephone number is (206) 451-8104.

**'ARCADE MANIA' MELDS VIDEO, BOARD GAMES** Gamers eight years old and up can test their playing skill against two or three other like-minded individuals in "Arcade Mania", an electronic boardgame developed by Milton Bradley. Players move around the gameboard, landing on various arcade machine squares and testing their skill at a variety of contests against other competitors. "Arcade Mania" comes with a machine that, with the addition of one of the four overlays, can play any of four different programs. All four - "Rattler", "Alien Raiders", "Sneak Attack" and "Run Amuk" can be played at three different difficulty settings.

As players circle the board, they periodically must show their stuff on the various games. Other plays meanwhile have the opportunity to wager chips on the outcome of each of these head-to-head matches.

STAR RAIDERS REGAINS TOP POPULARITY SLOT You can't, it seems, keep a good computer game program down. The February 1983 edition of the monthly popularity poll conducted among its readers by Electronic Games shows that "Star Raiders" has bounced right back to the lead position among computer games after falling behind Atari's 4-8-1200 edition of "Pac-Man" during the previous month. January was, in fact, the first time some program other than "Star Raiders" topped the computer game standings as compiled by the leading consumer publication.

Meanwhile, "Pitfall" continued to hold onto its lead as the most popular videogame cartridge, while "Donkey Kong" did the same in the coin-op division. Each title has topped its list for the last several months. The month's hottest new game appears to be "River Raid", Carol Shaw's relentless shoot-em-up for Activision, which emerged as the fifth most popular home videogame in its first full month of eligibility.

POSITION		GAME	SYSTEM	MANUFACTURER
THIS MONTH	LAST MONTH			
<u>MOST POPULAR VIDEOGAME CARTRIDGE:</u>				
# 1	# 1	Pitfall	Atari 2600	Activision
2	2	Donkey Kong	ColecoVision	Coleco
3	3	Lady Bug	ColecoVision	Coleco
4	7	Zaxxon	ColecoVision	Coleco
5	--	River Raid	Atari 2600	Activision
6	4	Venture	ColecoVision	Coleco
7	--	Pac-Man	Atari 5200	Atari
8	--	Star Raiders	Atari 2600	Atari
9	14	Turbo	ColecoVision	Coleco
10	--	Wizard of Wor	Atari 2600	CBS Videogames
11	6	Donkey Kong	Atari 2600	Coleco
12	--	Galaxian	Atari 5200	Atari
13	--	Vanguard	Atari 2600	Atari
14	--	Star Raiders	Atari 5200	Atari
15	9	Megamania	Atari 2600	Activision

<u>MOST POPULAR COMPUTER GAME:</u>				
# 1	# 2	GAME	SYSTEM	MANUFACTURER
# 1	# 2	Star Raiders	Atari 4-8-1200	Atari
2	1	Pac-Man	Atari 4-8-1200	Atari
3	3	Centipede	Atari 4-8-1200	Atari
4	4	Castle Wolfenstein	Atari 4-8-1200	
5	--	Preppie	Apple II	Muse
6	--	Omega Race	All Systems	Scott Adams
7	--	Defender	VIC-20	Commodore
8	9	Jawbreaker	Atari 4-8-1200	Atari
9	8	Missile Command	Atari 4-8-1200	Sierra On-Line
10	--	Wizardry	Atari 4-8-1200	Atari
			Apple II	Sir-Tech

<u>MOST POPULAR COIN-OP VIDEOGAME:</u>				
# 1	# 1	GAME	SYSTEM	MANUFACTURER
# 1	# 1	Donkey Kong		Nintendo
2	9	Joust		Williams
3	3	Zaxxon		Sega
4	4	Dig-Dug		Atari
5	6	Ms. Pac-Man		Bally/Midway

MOST POPULAR COIN-OP VIDEOGAME (continued):

<u>THIS</u> <u>MONTH</u>	<u>LAST</u> <u>MONTH</u>	<u>GAME</u>	<u>MANUFACTURER</u>
# 6	# 2	Tron	Bally/Midway
7	5	Donkey Kong Junior	Nintendo
8	--	Galaga	Bally/Midway
9	8	Tempest	Atari
10	7	Robotron	Williams

SOFTSYNC EXPANDS LINE  
FOR TIMEX/SINCLAIR

Softsync has a line of games for the Timex/Sinclair 1000 that should put a smile on the faces of everyone who owns this bargain computer. The first company to develop software for the TS1000, Softsync currently has over 20 programs. New this season are "Superchess", called the most comprehensive chess game available for the TS1000, and "Nightgunner", an arcade-style game in which players man a bomber's tailgun to defend against enemy aircraft. Softsync has also introduced several educational packages for pre-teens to "make learning fun and rewarding", according to the company. Finally, a "Double Feature" adventure package has two text games. "Quest for the Holy Grail" is a tropical island adventure with hungry cannibals, a Nazi sympathizer, and other hazards to pass in order to find the Grail. "The Elusive Mr. Big", the second text adventure in "Double Feature", casts the player as a detective seeking a notorious criminal who has to be subdued by force and brought to justice.

DATAMOST GOES  
MULTI-COMPUTER

Datamost is converting its entire catalog of existing games and business programs to every major home computer. This includes the Atari computers, Commodore, TI, IBM and NEC. To support the catalog of titles, the company promises a 7-figure ad budget for the year.

Datamost has a new line of four-color set-up boxes designed for maximum customer appeal. Director of Marketing Dean Marion promises a variety of creative merchandising techniques in the 1983 push, similar to those used in the record industry. Datamost president Dave Gordon says, "The home computer is rapidly becoming an essential appliance in every home, and we're going to make sure consumers have the practical tools to use it."

Three new releases bring the Datamost catalog to a total of 20 Apple-compatible games. "Spectre" is a 16-level maze action game that puts arcaders at mouse-eye level while simultaneously providing an overview of the maze on screen. "Nightraiders" is a jet-spacefighter bombing mission; and "Missing Ring" is a dungeon adventurer's search for the wizard's ring.

COLECO PLANS MORE  
VCS, INTELLIVISION CARTS

Coleco has expanded the cartridge lineup for the Atari VCS and Intellivision this year, with the addition of new titles for both systems. In addition to the seven VCS titles introduced in January, Coleco will offer "Wild Western", "Time Pilot" and "Pepper II", all newly licensed from arcade machines. "Tarzan" and "Papa Smurf's Treasure Hunt" brings the VCS line to 12 releases scheduled for this year.

For Intellivision owners, Coleco will introduce "Time Pilot", "Frenzy" and "Tarzan" in addition to the eleven new titles already promised for 1983, for a total of 14 games on the drawing board.

The company indicates that many additional titles will be released for both Intellivision and the VCS later in the year.

# THE HOTSEAT

## Reviews of New Products

RATINGS: 10 - Pure gold and about as good as a game could be. A rare rating.  
 9 - An outstanding, state-of-the-art game.  
 8 - A very good to excellent game.  
 7 - A good game.  
 6 - Better than average, but maybe not for everyone.  
 5 - An average game that does what it promises.  
 1-4 - The item has serious flaws.

KEY: The information which heads each review follows the same simple format. First comes the name of the item, then its classification, and, if it is a home arcade software program, the system/s with which it is compatible. Finally, the manufacturer's name.

CRITICS: AK - Arnie Katz; CK - Charlene Komar; TF - Tracie Forman

### BURGERTIME/Coin-Op Game/Bally-Midway

Humorous animation, excellent play-action, and the potential for intricate strategies combine to make this one of the best games to hit the arcades since Pac-Man. The object is to stack hamburger fixings on plates at the bottom of the playscreen, a goal accomplished by running your on-screen persona, Peter Pepper, over the various burger ingredients. To make Peter's job a little more challenging, he must also avoid pursuing hot dogs, eggs, and pickle slices, but can "pepper" them into submission if he's cornered. You've got to play this one to believe it! Rating: 10 (TF)

### DOMINO-MAN/Coin-Op Game/Bally-Midway

Nobody appreciates modern art anymore. Just ask the poor Domino-Man, a balding, bespeckled artist trying to set up huge dominoes on a busy urban treet. He not only has to set up all the dominoes in their appointed places, but he also has to guard the work from being bumped by careless pedestrians or the town bully. The whole ordeal is worth it, though, just for the thrill of watching the dominoes fall when Domino-Man decides the time is right. And don't forget to check out the poem that flashes on-screen to evaluate your performance after each game. Rating: 8 (TF)

### VIC AVENGER/Computer Game (for VIC-20)/Commodore

If you want to play Space Invaders on your VIC-20, search no further. This is the classic with a few variations: the aliens line up in ten rows across, each five deep. There are four bunkers to hide behind, and points vary for hitting the saucer. Topping 1500 points earns a fourth cannon, and the aliens move faster as they get closer. Only the lack of originality lowers this game's rating. Rating: 8 (CK)

### THE COUNT/Computer Game (for VIC-20)/Commodore

Another of the five Scott Adams Adventure Games for the VIC-20, this opens up in a castle located in an area that bears a strange resemblance to Transylvania. The player can explore both the castle and the outside area. As in most text adventures, it pays to examine thoroughly just about everything you come across. Adams' sense of humor pops up from time to time, adding a lift to the rather serious proceedings - after all, finding and killing

a vampire before three days pass is no laughing matter. The game is a good introduction to text adventures for novices, and should entertain more experienced players for at least one or two run-throughs. Rating: 7 (CK)

MINER 2049ER/Computer Game (for Atari 4-8-1200)/Big Five

This 16K cartridge for the Atari computer systems embodies Bill Hogue's original design for the multi-scenario climbing game that will soon be available for just about every home videogame and computer system in creation. You must guide prospector-of-the-future Bounty Bob through the mining stations, defeating mutants, and figuring out how to cover all the territory on the screen fast enough to assure the maximum possible bonus. (See issue #12 for previous review of "Miner 2049er" with a fuller description of the play-routine.) Hogue did an outstanding job in this, reportedly his first, program for the Atari. Apart from a slight scarcity of sonic accompaniment, this edition makes good use of the Atari's graphic and object movement capabilities. Rating: 10 (AK)

TRON DEADLY DISCS/Videogame Cartridge (for Intellivision)/Mattel

This ultra-complicated form of frisbe catch is based on one of the most exciting scenes in the Walt Disney Studios' movie "Tron". Three computer-controlled warriors enter the arena at a time, and Tron must use a combination of defensive blocks and dodges and pinpoint aim with his own tosses to de-rezz the trio of attackers before moving on to the next group. Tron starts the game able to absorb three hits from each wave of attackers, and this increases slightly as the arcader attains various point-total milestones. Some of the robots can also stand a couple of whacks with the discs, and there are special Leaders and Guards which pose extra difficulties. Dispatching the Recognizer which appears to fix doors to the arena when they become jammed, is worth 10 times more than eliminating the warriors in the same wave, but this monstrosity is correspondingly harder to kill. Rating: 8 (AK)

P.T. BARNUM'S ACROBATS/Videogame Cartridge (for Odyssey<sup>2</sup>)/Odyssey

This cartridge, designed to operate in enhanced form on systems which include the Voice of Odyssey speech synthesis peripheral, is a well-implemented version of the contest in which a pair of characters jump up and down on a teeter-board, alternately leaping high in the air to burst the balloons ranged in horizontal rows near the top of the screen. The Odyssey edition permits solitaire and two-types of two-player action. The participants can either alternate control each time an acrobat misses the seesaw and crashes to earth, or else after every single jump. One unique feature is that each game is limited to 10 jumps on behalf of each gamer. This puts a much greater premium on arranging to break several balloons on each leap, than in some other carts which capitalize on the same basic play-routine. Rating: 8 (AK)

DRAGONSTOMPER/Videogame Cart (for Atari 2600 with Supercharger)/Starpath

This fantasy adventure is one of the new multi-load games on cassette from Starpath for use in conjunction with that company's Supercharger unit. As hero of the title, you must journey through the enchanted countryside, aid the oppressed village and eventually meet the dragon in its lair in the quest to find and retrieve a long-lost druidic amulet. Enter all orders using the joystick in response to on-screen prompts, allowing "Dragonstomper" to offer many more possible activities for the player than in most other videogame adventures. Rating: 8 (AK)

**SYNAPSE SAVES THE UNIVERSE** Gamers will have their hands full defending the universe with Synapse Software titles this year. "Shadow World" is a one- or two-player adventure, pitting the gamers' strike force against Rigillian space ships and mutoid lifeforms. "Necromancer" casts the arcader as the sole defender against black magic spells, halflings and the Prince of Darkness. "Drelbs" is a cute contest for survival for hippety-hoppity peace-loving Drelbs who've been threatened by evil gnomes. Finally, "Slam Ball" is a new look at pinball, from an unexpected angle. (The gamer plays the part of the ball!)

Synapse Software will initially be available on disk and cassette for the Atari 4-8-1200 computers, and the company plans to release the games later this year on ROM carts.

**THREE GAMES DEBUT FOR IBM PC** Mirror Images may have earned the distinction of being the first software publisher to create games expressly for play on the IBM Personal Computer. "Spyder", "Tachyon" and "Hide and Sink" are scheduled as the first releases for the new outfit headquartered in Troy, NY. All require use of the system's keyboard, 64K of memory and IBM DOS 1.1. A color graphics adapter is necessary, and the company also strongly recommends a color monitor. "Tachyon", in addition, can only run on a double-sided disk drive.

In "Spyder", the player must halt the advance of a bunch of web-spinners which gradually make their way down the screen. The player can either cut down descending spiders with a laser sword or use the foot control to squash any arachnids that reach the ground.

Color, multiple screens, riveting sound effects and increasing difficulty are among the features of "Tachyon", a first-person piloting and shooting contest. As commander of the starcruiser Avenger, the player roams the galaxy destroying hostile forces with lasers and torpedoes.

"Hide and Sink" is a solitaire strategy test with a nautical motif. Two fleets, one controlled by the computer, slug it out on a 10 x 10 seagrid.

"Tachyon" and "Spyder" will carry suggested pricetags of \$39.95. "Hide and Sink" will cost \$10 less.

**GAME PARLOR GROUP FORMED** Operators of family amusement centers now have their own divisions within the National Coin Machine Institute (NCMI). The group, formed by representatives of leading arcade companies in a Chicago meeting, will be known as the Family Amusement Center Division. Among its goals will be to establish a uniform set of operating standards for game parlors in the United States.

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