

arcade express

THE BI-WEEKLY ELECTRONIC GAMES NEWSLETTER

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DATASOFT FORMS GENTRY SOFTWARE FOR PROMOTIONALLY-PRICED GAMES

Datasoft has started a new division, Gentry Software, to develop promotionally-priced computer software. The company kicked off the line with 12 titles at the Summer

CES. "Datasoft has been approached frequently by authors who want us to manufacture... their programs. In many cases, we have been impressed with what we've seen, but felt they did not meet all the criteria we wanted in a product carrying the Datasoft name," said Patrick Ketchum, Datasoft's president and founder. He went on to explain, "We began to see the opportunity they presented..to develop a lower-priced line of quality software for..the mass merchandiser."

Gentry Software will be priced from \$15 to \$20. The initial product line is all recreational, but the company promises that educational and other types of programs will follow soon.

COMPUTER WEEKEND DRAWS 1000 PEOPLE TO CHICAGO

Arnie Katz, editor of Electronic Games, and Joyce Worley, editor of Arcade Express, were two of the major speakers at the Computer Weekend sponsored by the Chicago Hyatt Regency Wood-

field Hotel June 18 and 19. More than 1000 computerists from toddlers to septigenarians gathered to see demonstrations, hear speeches and look at exhibits which stressed the entertainment and educational aspects of home computing.

"All electronic games are educational to some degree," Joyce Worley asserted in her address on Sunday. She went on to explain that the mind and body challenges posed by even the most straightforward shooting game teach players habits of mind which prepare them better for subsequent learning experiences.

The future of gaming was the main focus of Katz' talk, which came during a panel that also featured Ms. Worley and animator Frank Sternberg. He predicted that continued increase in the memory size of home computers will lead within the next few years to games of a scope and complexity that would be almost unthinkable at the present time.

MICRO LAB FROMS MICRO FUN; ROLLS COLECOVISION GAMES

Stan Goldberg, president of Micro Lab, says the company's new entertainment division, Micro Fun, will be responsible for the game products already on the market as well as new

titles to follow from this Illinois software manufacturer.

The company unveiled four cartridges for ColecoVision at CES, all to be available at retail level by July. Among these is "Miner 2049er" in a unique 11-level version of the popular climbing game. "Miner" hero Bounty Bob is also the star of a new adventure, "Scraper Caper" that requires Bounty Bob to pursue his rival Yukon Yohan through a burning building. Additional games introduced for ColecoVision are "Dino Eggs", involving a time warp to save the dinosaurs and move them into the 21st Century; and "Globe Grabber", an outer-space pinball game.

Micro Fun is also scheduling early release of games for the Apple, IBM, Atari and Commodore computers.

WILLIAMS REVENUES UP

Williams Electronics reports revenues for the first half of fiscal 1983 totalled \$67,439,000, up from \$65,765,000 in the same period

in 1982, and net income increased to \$5,174,000 from \$2,640,000 last year, proving that the reports of coin-op arcading's demise were greatly exaggerated and highly premature.

BRITISH PIONEER DREAMS
OF ELECTRIC CARS

Nolan Bushnell is thinking about robots; Ralph Baer is heavy into voice synthesis, and Bill Von Meister likes tele-communications. Meanwhile, Sir Clive Sinclair, the English electronic wizard, is turning his attention to the Sinclair Vehicle Project, which may show a prototype electric car as early as 1985. Sir Clive obtained an option to purchase part of the DeLorean Motor Co. auto assembly plant in Northern Ireland, but insists no concrete plans have been made yet. Spokesmen for Sinclair Research Ltd., (manufacturer of digital watches, calculators and microcomputers) say that Sir Clive has been working on a small battery-powered car for "nearly a decade" but won't disclose technical details.

ATARI GETS WORLDWIDE LICENSE
FOR "MARIO BROTHERS"

Nintendo has granted Atari exclusive worldwide (except Japan) license for home videogames and computer games based on the "Mario Brothers" coin-op. Atari already owns rights for computer versions of "Donkey Kong" and "Donkey Kong Junior". These should be in the stores by the Fall of 1983. "Mario Brothers" will be available for Atari home videogames by Christmas, and the computer version will follow early in '84.

VECTREX GETS KEYBOARD,
3-D IMAGER & LIGHT PEN

General Consumer Electronics has introduced a keyboard to turn the Vectrex standalone unit into a home computer. The plug-in adds 16K ROM and 16K RAM to the system, and provides users with a 65-key typewriter-style keyboard. Software for the computer is on wafer-tapes that provide 128K bytes of storage. BASIC is built into the system, and GCE promises that the keyboard is the first step toward a word processor that will be introduced early in 1984.

There will be five cartridges for the computer in '83, including "The Sound Studio", a music composition aid; "Exploring the Solar System"; "Create-A-Game/Maze which teaches users to program their own entertainments; "Basic Animation" and "Basic Science" (which is a game that teaches physics.)

The Vectrex 3-D Imager plugs into the second controller slot, allowing gamers to play full-color games in three dimensions. A special fall promotion will give a free 3-D Imager to consumers buying a Vectrex console.

The Vectrex Light Pen lets gamers interact with the console, by creating graphic effects, composing music, or even animating their own cartoons right on screen. Four cartridges designed for use with the Light Pen are scheduled for release later this year. These are "Art Master", utilizing the graphic capabilities of Vectrex, "Melody Master", a music composition educational tool; "Animaction" which is for more advanced graphic work; and "Mail Plane", an educational game teaching world geography.

In addition, six new cartridges will be introduced for the Vectrex Videogame System, including arcade hits "Pole Position" and "Star Castle". Also scheduled are "Dark Tower", (based on the Milton Bradley board game); "Polar Rescue", an adventure under the polar ice, and "Batter-Up", a baseball game.

Finally, GCE signed Jackie Stewart, three-time World Champion race driver, as spokesman for Vectrex. Stewart will represent the videogame system in this year's ad campaigns.

EDITORIAL STAFF: Editor, Joyce Worley; Managing Editor, Lisa Honden
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IT'S THREE FOR THE MONEY WITH AMIGA MULTIPLAY CARTS Amiga takes the double-ended cart idea one step further with a 3-game cartridge for the Atari 2600. Called The Power-Play Arcade series, the new multiplay cartridges each contain three completely different videogames. The first Power-Play Arcade has three 3-D games, "3-D Ghost Attack", "3-D Havoc", and "3-D Genesis", and retails for \$30-\$40. Two additional triple-play carts are scheduled for pre-holiday delivery.

"HEADMASTER" CLEANS FLOPPY DISK DRIVES If you've been using your computer disk drive very long, this may be an idea whose time has come. "Headmaster" by SSK Enterprises, effectively cleans the read/write head(s) of floppy disk drives. It comes with two disks good for up to 16 cleanings each, and the necessary fluid. SSK says that periodic use of the "Headmaster" reduces disk errors and protects your disks from damage due to dirty heads. The suggested retail of these useful products is \$25-\$30, depending on the size of your drive.

EPYX PLANS TO GO ABROAD; LOOKS AT ARCADE-STRATEGY GAMES CBS has entered an agreement with Epyx to distribute and market that company's software internationally. The pact gives CBS exclusive marketing rights in all countries except the USA and Canada.

The software manufacturer unveiled nine new action-strategy games that Epyx' prexy Mike Katz says combine the excitement of arcade-style games with thought-provoking challenges. Katz predicts that strategy is going to become more important in future game design, and says the new Epyx titles help bridge the gap for the action gamer who's just beginning to get interested in contests requiring level-headed tactical planning.

UNITRONICS' SONIC COMPUTER FEATURES BUILT-IN WAFERDRIVE The new home computer from Unitronics, designated the Sonic, carries a retail price of \$349, and includes a built-in waferdrive unit that uses software programs on stringy floppies. The 80K Sonic comes packed with "Magic Window I" (word processing software), Microsoft, BASIC, "Frogger" and a blank wafer. Company spokesman Robert Kantor promises a wide range of games licensed from leading producers for Fall delivery.

INFOCOM PLANS FANTASY TRILOGY Infocom will continue its award-winning line of prose adventures by creating a trilogy of fantasy games. The first title, co-authored by Marc Blank and Dave Lebling (the team that created "Zork"), will appear this Fall. Named "Enchanter", it promises an imaginative journey into a "world of magical powers and perilous predicaments" where gamers explore an abandoned castle filled with magical trappings, and learn to use spell scrolls in order to outwit an evil warlock. Blank says that the game was written in the "Zork" tradition, but while the emphasis in "Zork" is on treasure and fighting, "in 'Enchanter', the focus is clearly on magic."

"Enchanter" will retail for about \$50, and will be created in versions for virtually every popular microcomputer on the market, starting this September.

GAMES NETWORK DELAYS STARTUP The Games Network, originally scheduled to begin in September, is postponing the startup date until December. According to TGN spokesman Thom Keith, the company wants to improve the product for subscribers. "Now it will be far more than a sophisticated game-playing device. It's an impressive state-of-the-art 64K computer..with full alpha-numeric keypad, 10 game playing keys..and the subscriber doesn't have to purchase it."

TGN president Larry Dunlap went on to say that the new in-home unit "represents an opportunity for everyone to have access to computer technology in the home for an incredibly low price." The initial launch will be on Southern California cable services, and is scheduled for first airing in Orange County, California, to cable subscribers who opt for The Games Network service.

TG PRODUCTS PLANS FOR
JOYSTICK-FRIENDLY GAMES

TG PRODUCTS just formed a new division, TG Software, to develop and market programs for Atari computers. TG Products, well-known for joysticks, trackballs and game paddles for computers, wants to become a full-line supplier of Atari products with specific challenges especially designed to get the maximum play action out of TG's line of controllers. The company's initial game releases include "Droids", a fantasy space game; "Nightstrike", a tank-air battle for one or two players, "Ozzy's Orchard", an insect killing/fruit gathering game that goes through four seasons culminating in Harvest; and "Abracadabra", a two-player maze game. Find a key and unlock the door that leads to treasure, as you struggle against a wizard who conjures bombs, snakes and spiders for you to combat with a magic wand. The four games are currently available for the Atari 4-8-1200 computers.

BRODERBUND EXPANDS LINE
TO COMMODORE COMPUTERS

Broderbund Software is introducing versions of its software for the Commodore 64 and VIC-20 computers. The first releases for the VIC-20 include "A.E.", the multi-screened game that challenges computerists to rid the galaxy of automatons that threaten to clean the earth to death; "Sky Blazer, a shoot-'em-up, and "Sea Fox", a submarine game.

Broderbund also has four for the 64: "Choplifter!", the popular helicopter rescue; "Sea Fox"; "Serpentine" and "David's Midnight Magic".

CREATIVE SOFTWARE
SAVES NEW YORK

Creative Software will introduce four titles for the Commodore 64 by mid-summer. "Astroblitz" and "Trashman" are both translations of previously released VIC-20 games, and the remaining two are new. "Moondust" features beautiful flurries of colorful moonsand swirling around the player's on-screen counterpart, the Moon Baby, in a completely unique entertainment. "Save New York" challenges computerists to explore the subways and underground tunnels beneath the city, battling attackers who threaten the metropolis with destruction, in a game for city-lovers who'd like to help protect NYC from its foes. Keep up the battle, gamers! New York is counting on you!

ATARI'S "ARABIAN" BRINGS
DESERT DRAMA TO ARCADES

It's adventure in the sand with Atari's play-for-pay "Arabian". A beautiful princess confined in the castle tower awaits rescue by the arcader as he maneuvers an on-screen prince through four levels of play. The saga begins with the prince climbing a ship's rigging to reach the crow's nest. Once he gains that lofty spire, the prince sees shore, then crawls, climbs and swings on vines to get through an enemy-infested cave. Next the prince climbs a tree, and enters the castle by hitching rides on flying carpets by leaping from rug to rug to get over the prison walls. Only then can he see the princess perched high atop a parapet. Once the prince reaches her, the two fly off together into the sunset, riding on a magic carpet.

Throughout the adventure, the prince faces ROC birds trying to knock him down, Oscars and snowball-throwing Genies, as he struggles to reach the princess. Subsequent play is at ever-increasing speeds, which heighten the difficulty and challenge.

KEEP YOUR POWER UP
WITH STANDBY SYSTEM

SAFT America has a cure for power failures, at least so far as small computers are concerned. If the electric company lets you down, SAFT's Standby Power System provides emergency electrical power to take over during blackouts, so you can finish the game in progress, or save the great American novel that might otherwise be lost from your word processor. SPS units, starting from \$519, help prevent damage when a power failure could cause permanent memory loss, and also contain a surge suppressor to eliminate spikes in current during normal use.

FUTURE COMPUTING SEES HEALTHY MARKET

Future Computing, Inc. forecasts sales of over 2 million home computers in '83, up from 2.2 million in 1982. FCI predicts the home computer market will continue its healthy growth.

COMING EVENTS

Upcoming Tournaments and Meetings

- ELECTRONIC & COMPUTER GAMES & TOYS EXHIBITION, August 18-21, Sydney, Australia, at the Sydney Entertainment Centre, Haymarket. Write Lorna Miller, Industrial Presentations, 4/389 Victoria Avenue, Chatswood, Australia. This is for both public and trade.
- NORTH CAROLINA COIN OPERATORS ASSN., September 8-11, Hyatt House, Winston-Salem, NC. Contact Bobby Earp (919) 229-5826. Probably just for the trade.
- TWIN CITIES COMPUTER SHOW & SOFTWARE EXPOSITION, September 15-18, Minneapolis Auditorium, Minneapolis, Mn. Telephone 800-841-7000 or (in Mass.) 617-739-2000. For the public.
- COMPUFAIR SEATTLE, September 16-18, Seattle Center Exhibition Hall, Seattle, Washington. Contact Tom Ikeda, Compufair, Box 45218, Seattle, Wa. 98105, or call 206-633-FAIR.
- ROCKY MOUNTAIN COMPUTER SHOW & SOFTWARE EXPOSITION, September 22-24, Denver Merchandise Mart, Denver, Colorado. Call 800-841-7000 or (in Mass.) 617-739-2000. Public Show.
- CP/M'83 EAST, September 29-October 1, Boston Hynes Auditorium, Boston, Mass. Write Northeast Expositions, 822 Boylston St., Chestnut Hill, Ma. 02167, or call 800-841-7000.
- EUROPEAN HOME VIDEO SEMINAR & VIDCOM EXHIBITION, October 2 & 3, New Palais des Festivals, Cannes, France. Contact Karen Dove, ITA, 10 Columbus Circle, New York, NY 10019, or call 212-956-7110.
- NJ BUSINESS COMPUTER SHOW, October 6-8, Holiday Inn North, Exit 14 NJ Turnpike. This public show is for Micro-Portable-Desktop-Mini. Contact Kengore Corp. 201-297-2526.
- PC'83 BOSTON, October 8-10, Boston Bayside Exposition Center. Write Northeast Expositions, 822 Boylston St., Chestnut Hill, Ma. 02167, or call 617-739-2000 or 800-841-7000.
- NJ MICROCOMPUTER SHOW & FLEAMARKET, October 15-16, Meadowlands Hilton, New Jersey. For public; fleamarketers welcome. Contact Kengore Corp. (201) 297-2526.
- COMDEX EUROPE, October 24-27, RAI International Congress & Exhibition Centre, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Contact Interface Group, 617-449-6600 or 800-325-3330. For trade.
- APPLEFEST/SAN FRANCISCO, October 28-30, Moscone Center, San Francisco, Ca. Write Northeast Expositions (address above) or call 800-841-7000. An Apple show for the public.
- NATIONAL HOME ELECTRONICS SHOW, November 3-6, Arlington Park Race Track Exposition Center, Arlington Heights, Ill. (suburban Chicago). Contact Lincoln Merchandising, 1417 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, Il. 60622, or call Elliot Sheck, 312-276-2819. For the public.
- NORTHEAST COMPUTER SHOW & SOFTWARE EXPOSITION, Boston Hynes Auditorium, Boston, Mass. Write Northeast Expositions (address above) or call 617-739-2000 or 800-841-7000.
- NY BUSINESS COMPUTER SHOW, December 8-10, NY Statler Hotel, New York, NY. For Micro-Portables, Desktop-Mini. Contact Kengore Corp. (201) 2972526. For the public.
- LEISURETRONICS, February 19-26, 1984, Monte-Carlo, Monaco. Call (401) 884-9500.

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 item that does what it promises.

1-4 - The game has serious flaws.

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

CRITICS THIS ISSUE: SD-Steve Davidson; TF-Tracie Forman; AK-Arnie Katz; Dean McCallum; JW-Joyce Worley.

REALSPORTS VOLLEYBALL/Videogame Cartridge (for Atari 2600)/Atari

Atari really seems to be on a software roll these days, and this latest addition to the rapidly growing "RealSports" library of sports videogames definitely rates as an artistic success. Set against a background of lapping waves and pounding surf, "RealSports Volleyball" pits two-man teams against each other in a battle for net supremacy. Unlike some video volleyball contests, this one really does play like the sport we all remember from innumerable gym classes and sunny summer afternoons. For one thing, it is rare that an on-screen athlete will be able to return a shot directly over the net without first passing it to the teammate for a set-up. It's features like this which endow "RealSports Volleyball" with its unique character. A triumph. (SD) Rating: 8

THE WITNESS/Computer Game (all systems)/Infocom

If you enjoyed "deadline", Infocom's first mystery text adventure, this belongs at the top of your shopping list. This time, the computerist assumes the role of a 1930's style tough-guy detective who has 12 hours to solve a murder to which he has actually been a witness. The dossier case supplied with the disk includes an instruction book decked out to look like a pulp magazine and a clutch of clues to help the investigator unravel the mystery. "The Witness" is fully as good as other recent Infocom interactive prose adventures from Infocom, and that should be enough recommendation for anyone. "The Witness" is brain-gaming at its finest. (AK) Rating: 9

M.U.L.E./Computer Game (Atari 4-8-1200)/Electronic Arts

One to four players compete to be named First Founder of the space colony in this multi-faceted strategy/action game. Left on a barren planet by a Federation transport, the four colonists (with the computer filling in for any missing players) vie for the highest production of ore, food and energy (accomplished by installing a Multiple Uses Labor Element - which can be as stubborn as a MULE), then proceed to the action phase where surplus is traded for cash. The idea is to buy low, sell high, and let the other guy starve to death if it'll drive the price of food over \$250 a unit! Besides its action element (installing the MULE can be a tricky undertaking), it's property manipulation, commodity dealing, and just plain fun! The music and animation are hilarious, and enough random events happen in each game to make it different every time ranging from fires in the store, to pest attacks, to meteor strikes. "M.U.L.E." is a perfect choice for the thinking gamer who likes a combination of strategy and action! (TF) Rating: 9

GORF/Videogame Cartridge (for ColecoVision)/Coleco

Four screens of action - everything from the coin-op except the so-called "Galaxian" phase - enliven this home edition of the Bally Midway favorite for the ColecoVision. Even without that fifth scenario, this is perhaps the best-done cartridge version of the popular quarter-snatcher. The player moves a cannon back and forth across the bottom of the screen, firing upward toward a variety of menaces. The first phase involves defeating a horde of marching aliens; the second is a duel against a laser ship guarded by kamikaze fighters, the third pits the arcader against a force of Gorfian invaders erupting from a hyperspace warp, and the last phase is a final showdown against the flagship of the enemy armada. Sound is fair, graphics are excellent, and the whole package is first-rate. (AK) Rating: 9

JUNGLE HUNT/Videogame Cartridge (for Atari 2600)/Atari

The home version of Taito's currently popular coin-op, which began life with slightly different graphics as "Jungle King", is faithful to both the good and bad points of the coin-op. On the positive side, it's a nicely executed multi-phase action adventure with a pleasing variety of activities. Negative points include the use of washed-out colors for the visuals and a set of goals which are too easy for the gamer to achieve to make "Jungle Hunt" as challenging as most players would probably like. The vine-swinging scenario, for example, is virtually a cinch once the home arcader masters the timing - and that's not particularly hard to do. Likely to generate the most interest is the second phase, in which the on-screen hero must swim a crocodile-infested river with no protection beyond the dagger in his hand. Unfortunately, the rest of the game is somewhat less exciting than this portion. (SD) Rating: 7

POLE POSITION/Videogame Cartridge (for Atari 5200)/Atari

What separates "Pole Position" from other electronic racing games is that there's a definite goal beyond just staying on the road and piling up the miles. In this one, you've got to weave your way through a field of cars to win the competition by screaming across the finish line ahead of the other autos. Like the coin-op, the 5200 cartridge for "Pole Position" has beautiful graphics and thrill-a-second action. In fact, the only serious complaint is that the perspective of the car's front wheels gets comically distorted whenever it switches lanes to pass or avoid a collision. This is, however, a minor defect in an otherwise outstanding one-player contest. (AK) Rating: 8

SHAMUS, CASE II/Computer Game (for Atari 4-8-1200)/Synapse Software

The mysterious fighter-against-evil is on the warpath against his arch-nemesis the Shadow once again! Things are trickier than ever in "Case II", in which the Shamus must navigate a warren of passageways and monster-filled chambers enroute to confronting the Shadow in the heart of his lair. The ion-shivs from the first "Shamus" disk are gone, replaced by a weapon that shoots destructive spheres which bounce off all inanimate objects and keep eliminating attackers as long as its bouncing remains visible on the screen. The Shamus can only have two such death-balls in play at a time, so knowing when to remove an existing sphere by launching a new one is a key strategic point. Another pleasing touch: a bird-like creature metamorphisizes into a friendly - and destructive - salamander that helps the Shamus wipe up the nasties, if the Shamus first scores three hits with his weapon against the creature. This disk is extremely challenging and should provide uncounted hours of mental and physical exercise. (DM) Rating: 9

BURGERTIME/Handheld Game/Mattel Electronics

Sometimes you really need a game you can slip into a pocket and take along with you for those odd moments when such a diversion is just perfect. Mattel's "Burgertime" is one of the best offerings of this summer in handheld size. Direct a chef as he assembles burgers by leaping on top of them and forcing the sandwich ingredients together! This tiny thriller has most of the elements of the coin-op. A lot of fun! (JW) Rating: 8

GAMERS GET HIGH SCORES
ON CANADIAN PACIFIC AIR

Canadian Pacific Airlines is taking videogaming to the skies with the first-ever in-flight games for passenger rental. CP offered video game sets for rent for a one-month trial period during June, for \$3.50 for the 9-hour flight between Vancouver and Amsterdam. General Manager Dave Hewitt promises, "If the concept proves to be popular with passengers, permanent sets built into the seat trays would eventually become more sophisticated, offering not only games but also flight and safety information, and perhaps even computer capabilities."

CP Air currently is experimenting with two products, "Airplay" by Altus Corp., and "Air Video" by Thorek, Scott & Partners. The portable game sets fit over the dinner trays that fold out from seat backs. Currently passengers can attain the highest scores in the world playing Black Jack, baseball, boxing, Donkey Kong, Snoopy Tennis and Mickey Mouse.

GIVE AN APPLE
TO YOUR IBM

Now owners of the IBM Personal Computer can run programs written for the Apple II using "Quadlink", from Quadram Corp., Norcross, Georgia. This \$680 plug-in circuit is described by the manufacturer as "The equivalent of an Apple II computer" when attached to the IBM, and makes the entire library of Apple-compatible software available to PC users.

MICROSOFT JOINS SPECTRAVISION,
JAPANESE COMPUTER MAKERS, IN
STEP TOWARD STANDARDIZATION

Microsoft Corp. has devised a standard for a group of manufacturers to use in their home computers. Fourteen cooperating companies in Japan, plus one company in the USA, Spectravision, will produce home computers that share certain basic specifications. The result will be program compatibility. Companies using the Microsoft standard, called MSX, will pay Microsoft a licensing fee plus royalty on each machine produced. According to Microsoft's spokesman Alan Boyd, standardization will be especially helpful to manufacturers just now starting to develop the home computer industry in the island nation, by reducing costs and encouraging software production.

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