

HOTLINE

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IT'S A MERRY CHRISTMAS FOR ATARI AS HARD- & SOFTWARE SALES BOOM

Here's some good news for industry-watchers! According to the analysts, sales of software are helping Atari get back to profitability. This, coupled with the boom in sales of Atari computers, is putting smiles on the faces of Warner Communications' execs. Seems the Atari 800 computer is virtually sold out all over the country, and the company has 40% more orders for the new 600XL and 800XL computers than they can provide before the end of the holiday buying season.

CONSUMER DEMAND SPARKS PRICE BOOSTS FOR COLECO & ATARI COMPUTER PRODUCTS

What goes down must go up again, and price wars don't last forever, especially when demand exceeds supply. Citing product shortages and customer demand, both Coleco and Atari announced plans to increase prices shortly after the first of the New Year. Atari raised the price for the 800XL and 600XL computers by about \$40 each, and also increased prices for its 1027 printer, 1050 disk drive, and for videogame players models 2600 and 5200.

In a separate move, Coleco announced 24% price increases for the Adam computer system and for the Adam console (which plugs into the ColecoVision game player).

"The insane price war has already taken a serious toll," said an Atari spokesman. "Atari is sending out a message--we don't intend to sell superior products at unrealistic prices."

PC JR. DEBUTS

The long-awaited IBM-PC JR. got its unveiling early in December at IBM computer dealers and IBM product centers, and deliveries of the newest member of the IBM family of computers are scheduled to begin early in 1984. The new \$669 system has 64K of user memory, a cordless infra-red keyboard, and uses cartridge programs. The machine has some compatibility with its big brother, the IBM-PC, but many programs require some alteration to run on the new computer, since Jr. works on a slightly different operating system from the PC. The 62-key cordless keyboard communicates with the system by an infra-red signal that allows line-of-sight use up to 20 feet away. Each key can be programmed individually, so that users can customize the keyboard for individual applications. The 16-bit microprocessor uses programs on cartridges, but an enhanced model sells for \$1269 and comes with a slim-line diskette drive.

Supplies of the new computer are expected to be limited during the first part of the year, but IBM plans to increase production rates throughout 1984.

NCMI COMES OUT AGAINST "GRAY AREA" GAMES

The National Coin Machine Institute (NCMI) is taking a firm stance against the illegal operation of any coin-operated equipment. The NCMI's Board of Directors just passed a resolution spelling out their opposition, and pledging to take action to deter such activities.

The resolution said adverse media and public relations resulting from the so-called "gray area" machines is damaging to the industry as a whole. "Gray area" games are machines which pay off in money, tokens & other merchandise of value. Though these games are legal in a few areas of the country, the NCMI strongly opposes operation of such machines in areas where gambling is prohibited.

**JW SOFTWARE SPECIALIZES
IN LOW-COST GAMES FOR TI**

Owners of the TI-99/4A computer have a new source for inexpensive games. J W Software, 814 W. Main St., Urbana, Ill. 61801, has five new titles on cassette, each retailing for \$11.95. "Cosmic Cruise" is a 10-level space-cleaning mission as you battle rebel outposts. "Run the Rapids" navigates a rubber raft through 10 levels of white-water river flumes, as you gather treasure and avoid obstacles. "Shuttle Commander" lets gamers skipper a NASA shuttlecraft from lift-off to touch-down, and "Submarine Warrior", a two-player contest, is an underwater battle and steering exercise as gamers avoid obstacles, fish, and depth charges. Finally, "Wild Woods" is a two-player game that lets each contestant choose his own skill level. A plane drops the on-screen hero on a deserted island, where he starts an over-land expedition to find treasure.

The J W Software products use the keyboard of the TI-99/4A instead of joysticks, and require no other peripheral except for the cassette player. Catalogs are available on request to the address given above.

**ENCHANTED VILLAGE IS NEW
COMPUTER RETAIL OUTLET**

Here's a nice way to shop for computer supplies! The first two Enchanted Villages opened in November, in Pittsburgh, Pa., and Fairfax, Va. The innovative retail stores, described as "a world before its time" by founder Bernard Tessler, sell educational and strategy games, toys, family and parenting books, and computer hardware and software, in an environment that resembles a prehistoric village in a futuristic 21st century setting. Each Enchanted Village has five separate sections: an "edutainment" center, a theatre housing a variety of live events, workshops and seminars; a computer resource center where kids and adults can get hands-on computer experience; the library, entered through a glass aviary with live birds; and a playroom supervised by a registered pre-school teacher, while parents use beepers to stay in constant communication with their kids while in the store.

"Our goal is to provide an..educational and entertainment..environment for the entire family," says Mr. Tessler. "We designed the Enchanted Village to be a unique family experience, giving family members the opportunity to spend time together in a stimulating environment."

**NEW PERIPHERAL IMPROVES
VIDEO GAME PICTURES**

Tri-Dimensional Television "is the first major enhancement to t.v. since the inception of color," according to Garry D. Silivanch, president of 3D Systems, Ltd. The device, which was invented in Germany, is scheduled for U.S. introduction in June, for under \$100 installed. According to Silivanch, when the Tri-Dimensional unit is switched on specially designed sunglasses allow viewers to see more detail, depth and an overall clearer picture. The product works on any color program on t.v., as well as on all video games and other peripheral t.v. devices.

GAMESTAR HAS GOODIES FOR GAMERS

Gamestar is offering gamers something extra this holiday. Purchase "Starbowl Football" or "Star League Baseball" prior to January 31, 1984, and receive (in specially marked package) a coupon good for a free mini-football, or a free baseball wristband.

EDITORIAL STAFF: Editor, Joyce Worley; Managing Editor, Vincent Puglia
Contributing Editors: Henry B. Cohen; Tracie Forman; Charlene Komar; Dave Lustig; Les Paul Robley

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF: Publisher, Jay Rosenfield; Co-Publisher, Arnie Katz; Editorial Director, Bill Kunkel;
Director of Retail Accounts, Joseph Muccigrosso; Subscription Manager, Rena Adler; Business Manager, Janette Evans

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KONAMI GETS A BIGGER PIECE OF CENTURI'S PIE

Konami, Inc. recently purchased 400,000 shares of Centuri stock, bringing it to a total of 500,000 shares owned.

The two coin-op companies explained that the stock purchase represented a solidification of the relationship between the two companies. Mr. Kagemasa Kozuki, president of Konami Industry, will be nominated for election to Centuri's Board of Directors at the company's next annual meeting.

The 500,000 shares represent about 4.9% of Centuri's stock outstanding. The price paid for the shares was not disclosed.

RACE J.R. THROUGH THE JUNGLE IN DALLASQUEST

DataSoft's high-res adventure, "DallasQuest", for the Commodore 64 and Atari computers, sends players from Southfork, the Ewing family's Texas ranch, to South America, in a search for Jock

Ewing's oil map, lost when the oil baron died on his ill-fated journey to the jungles. It's up to the gamer, playing the role of a detective hired by Sue Ellen Ewing, to locate the map before J.R. gets there first.

DataSoft obtained exclusive computer game rights for the hit t.v. series "Dallas" from Lorimar Corp., and "DallasQuest", programmed by James Garon, is the result. During the adventure, which author Garon promises is full of humor and puns, gamers encounter various members of the Ewing family, as well as a great many animals, both on the ranch and in the jungle. The quest is illustrated with over 70 high-res paintings, first created by a team of professional artists, then programmed using "MicroPainter".

OSHA RANKLED BY HARD HAT MACK

In "Hard Hat Mack", the construction-project game from Electronic Arts, a representative of the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) dogs Mack, and if he catches him, Mack dies. Accord-

ing to the game package, the OSHA representative lacks a sense of humor and is "living proof of the banality of evil". OSHA, responsible for enforcing workplace safety standards, didn't appreciate the joke.

OSHA official Thorne Auchter wrote to Electronic Arts, saying, "Let's be fair. Hard Hat Mack is a lot safer on the job with OSHA around." Another OSHA employee sent Electronic Arts some pamphlets explaining the purpose of the safety agency, saying the company didn't understand the function of OSHA. A state senator actually got involved by writing an angry letter to a department store chain, expressing his "dismay and disgust" over how the safety officials were represented.

Trip Hawkins, president of EA, says it's a tempest in a teapot and the controversy has been overblown. He says the game is meant to satirize what can happen when constructing a building.

At least some OSHA officials took the whole thing with a grain of salt. As one federal OSHA spokesman said, "People have called OSHA a lot worse."

BRODERBUND OFFERS BONUS TO APPLE PICKERS

Computerists who pick an Apple during the Christmas Season will get a bonus from Broderbund--a \$7.50 rebate certificate redeemable after purchase of any two Broderbund programs. The

Apple Bonus Package including the rebate certificate will be given to everyone who buys an Apple computer between November 1 and January 15, and the rebate certificates are valid through July 31, 1984.

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDES HELP COMPUTERISTS

John Wiley & Sons, Inc. has announced three new Quick Reference Guides, for the VIC-20, Commodore 64, and the Timex Sinclair 1000. The guides sell for \$2.95 each. They list and

define programming symbols and statements, commands and controls, and give instant access to the information the user needs to have at hand. Each guide is 6 x 12 in., and opens to four panels.

Wiley also publishes guides for the IBM-PC, Apple II and Atari 800 computers.

COLECO SIGHS AGREEMENT WITH
AUTHOR RICHARD SCARRY

Coleco has signed a licensing agreement with author Richard Scarry, giving Coleco the exclusive worldwide rights to market videogame and home computer software based on characters from Scarry's children's stories. The agreement also specifically covers the transmission of Scarry properties into the home via telephone lines, broadcast and pay cable services.

Mr. Scarry is the author of over 200 children's books. Over 100 million copies of his books have been sold, including translations in 26 languages. The books continue to sell at a rate of approximately 8 million per year.

In commenting on the agreement, Scarry remarked, "I'm delighted that my work will be made available to millions of children, right on their television screens. It's a marvelous new way for my material to reach the home."

POLL SHOWS ELECTRONIC GAMES TO BE
A PERMANENT FIXTURE AS TEEN SPENDING
CONTINUES TO INCREASE ON COIN-OPS

The total teen-age spending for 1983, as of the mid-year calculations, have hit a yearly rate of \$44.6 billion, up from \$44.0 billion in 1982, according to the Rand Youth Poll. Figures compiled by the firm, which has monitored youth trends for 30 years, show teen-age spending on coin-operated videogames continuing to rise briskly, although there has been a slow-down in the rate of increase. Lester Rand, president of the firm, explains, "The past two year's surge in coin-operated videogame spending could not expectedly be sustained. At the rate they were going, teen boys would soon be spending most of their money on this pastime, which was an unreasonable assumption. An adjustment had to occur." Rand maintains his confidence that electronic games are a permanent fixture and will occupy a leading role for years to come, as teens continue to spend large sums in the arcades, acquire more games for the home, and urge their parents to buy more videogames and computers.

"Videogames are exciting and adventurous, and this fits right into the teen mould," says Rand. "They are a form of entertainment similar to movies, and not a fad with a limited duration. There are always different games."

RENTAL CLUB LETS GAMERS
TRY OUT PROGRAMS FIRST

Softrent, a California software store, has a new way to market game programs. A lifetime membership fee of \$75 lets gamers test software packages before purchasing them. Club members pay 20% of the list price for the privilege of using the software for three weeks. After the rental period, the member can buy the program for 1/3 off the list price, and the rental fee applies toward the purchase. For information, write Softrent, 341 South Cedros Avenue, Solana Beach, Calif. 92075.

PLAY PC PROGRAMS
ON APPLE II

Apple's newest disk drive is just the thing for owners of the Apple II series of computers who'd like to play programs designed for the IBM-PC. For \$2000, the package includes twin 360K disk drives and a microprocessor which enables users to run programs designed for IBM's MS-DOS operating system.

TESTING & INSPECTION SERVICES
AVAILABLE FROM U.S. TESTING CO.

The United States Testing Co., Inc. does laboratory and in-plant testing of electronic appliances and toys. Manufacturers interested in details about product testing and services can obtain a descriptive brochure by writing Allen Maxfield, VP of Consumer Products Division, U.S. Testing Co., 1415 Park Ave., Hoboken, N.J. 07030.

MORE APPLE BOARDS
FOR SPRITE MOVEMENTS

Synetix has two more sprite animation peripheral cards for Apple computers. Sprite I, \$149 with software, lets users define, assemble and move sprites (large programmable objects). Sprite II, \$249, adds a sound generator, speaker and software for realistic sound effects synchronized to the sprite action. Both derive from SuperSprite, which has actual speech, combined with realistic sound generation and sprite animation.

COMING EVENTS

Upcoming Tournaments and Meetings

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS SHOW-WINTER, January 7-10, 1984, Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, Nevada. This is the big show for the trade only. For info, call 202-457-4919.

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL TOY FAIR, February 13-22, 1984, New York City. A trade show for toy manufacturers and reps; no public allowed. Write to the Toy Manufacturers of America, Inc., 200 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, for information and details.

NEW YORK MINIATURES SHOW, February 16-18, New York Hilton, New York City. Part of the Toy Fair (see above) for the trade. Write Miniatures Industry Assoc., 1133 15th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005, or call 202-429-9440.

AMUSEMENT SHOWCASE INTERNATIONAL, Expocenter/Chicago, Illinois, February 17-19. For the coin-op trade only. Write ASI, 4300-L Lincoln Ave., Rolling Meadows, Ill. 60008.

LEISURETRONICS, February 19-26, Monte Carlo, Monaco. This trade show is the first international congress of electronic gaming. Call 401-884-9500 for information.

1984 SOFTCON, February 21-23, Louisiana Superdome, New Orleans, La. Write Northeast Expositions, 822 Boylston St., Chestnut Hill, Mass. 02167, or call 800-343-2222. This is a trade-only event, with over 500 different software companies scheduled to participate.

AMUSEMENT OPERATORS EXPO, March 9-11, Hyatt Regency O'Hare, O'Hare Expo Center, Chicago. Contact Dan Capozziello, Conference Management Corp., Box 4990, Norwalk, Connecticut 06856, or call 203-852-0500. This is a trade show for the coin-op industry; no public admitted.

INTERNATIONAL GAMING BUSINESS EXPO, March 28-29, Bally's Park Place Hotel, Atlantic City, New Jersey. This trade show will bring together all segments of the gaming, wagering and lottery industry. For information, write Shahira Khalifa, Internat'l Gaming Business Expo, % Conference Management, 17 Washington St., P. O. Box 4990, Norwalk, Conn. 06856, or call 203-852-0500. No public admitted.

NY PERSONAL COMPUTER SHOW, March 30-April 1, Madison Square Garden, New York, NY. This is the fourth year for this show, formerly known as the Eighty/Apple/PC Show. Contact the Kengore Group, Box 13, Franklin Park, NJ, or call 201-297-2526. This is for the public.

COMDEX/WINTER, April 5-7, Los Angeles Convention Center, Los Angeles, California. This is a new Comdex conference. The Interface Group feels Comdex/Fall and Comdex/Spring are no longer sufficient, so this new one is needed. This hardware-software showcase is for the trade only. Write Interface Group, 300 First Ave., Needham, Ma. 02194, or call them at 617-449-6600, or (outside Massachusetts) 800-325-3330.

VA/CAROLINAS COMPUTER SHOW & OFFICE EQUIPMENT EXPO, May 3-6, Virginia Beach, Virginia, at the Pavilion. This is for the public. Write Computer Expositions, Inc., P.O. Box 3315, Annapolis, Md. 21403, or call 800-368-2066.

MARYLAND COMPUTER SHOW & BUSINESS OFFICE EQUIPMENT EXPO, May 10-13, Convention Center, in Baltimore, Md. A public show. Write Computer Expositions, Box 3315, Annapolis, Md. 21403.

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'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; AK-Arnie Katz; JW-Joyce Worley

TAIL OF BETA LYRAE/Computer Game (for Atari Computers)/Data Most

This is a second edition, reissuing an action program first distributed to a limited extent under the Paradise Software banner. Data Most's version retains the superb on-screen animation and original soundtrack of the earlier one, but adds even more variety of challenge to this exciting mono-directional scrolling shoot-out. Hopefully, "Beta Lyrae" will now get the exposure in the market which it has always deserved. (AK) Rating: 9

COMPUTER STATIS PRO BASEBALL/Computer Game (for Apple)/Avalon Hill

Arcade action fans can look elsewhere, but those who'd like to test their managerial abilities with facsimiles of real-life major leaguers are going to enjoy "Statis Pro Baseball". Similar in overall concept to SSI's "Computer Baseball", Avalon Hill's entry plays a little faster but doesn't materially advance state-of-the-art in either graphics or ease of operation. Like nonelectronic statistical replay sports simulations (one of which, "Statis Pro Baseball", published by AH, served as the model for this electronic effort), "CSPB" is a nominal two-player contest which converts easily to solitaire play for those who prefer their gaming solo. This is a good game in most respects, but some tweaking by a programmer with a more sensitive eye to the way things look on the screen might not have hurt. (SD) Rating: 7

M.U.L.E./Computer Game (for Commodore 64)/Electronic Arts

This isn't quite as good-looking as EA's original Atari version of this outstanding strategy game. Some of the graphics aren't up to that first edition, but this may well be limitations imposed by the characteristics of the hardware system. Despite the fact that a full complement of four human players must use the two available joysticks (the Atari 800, remember, has four controller ports), the gameplay is all there as it should be. "M.U.L.E." should prove just as popular for the C-64 as it has for the Atari family of microcomputers. (SD) Rating: 8

ZOMBIES/Computer Game (for Atari Computers)/Bram

The evil cleric Wistrik has hidden seven magical crowns in as many different labyrinths in this intriguing and strikingly innovative action adventure game from a relatively new publisher. Mike Edwards has created seven special environments, each with a distinctive feel, with a total of 74 thrill-packed rooms. And unlike

many other programs of this type, "Zombies" puts a great emphasis on maneuvering, rather than fighting. Instead of energizing a laser gun, pushing the joystick button allows the animated on-screen hero to drop a little cross that can delay pursuit by the zombies and other manaces that infest the various dungeons. "Zombies" is both fast-paced and fun -- and utterly different from anything else on home gaming screens right now. (AK) Rating: 9

COHEN'S TOWERS/Computer Game (for Atari Computers)/Data Most

It's do-or-die time for Allen, hero of designer Frank Cohen's climbing contest. He's given Allen the job of picking up and delivering packages, which would be lots easier if Fear the dog didn't constantly try to bite Allen and if the computerist didn't have to jump the character onto -- and off of -- so many moving platforms to get the job done. Ever noticed how flowerpots are always falling in climbing games? They're falling here, too. Pleasant music and attractive cartoon illustrations make "Cohen's Towers" entertaining, but little avoidable flaws become apparent after some time at the stick. For instance, the program forgives many collisions between flowerpots and Allen's cranium, but it sends the mailboy plunging to his death if he leaps for a perch even a millisecond too late. Also, many legal and executable moves are fatal every time, meaning that memorization plays a significant role in mastering the game. This may not be to all players' tastes. (AK) Rating: 7

THE LAST GLADIATOR/Computer Game (for Apple)/Electronic Arts

John Field, who gave us "Axis Assassin" about eight months ago, is back with a contest of single combat against beasts animated by the computer. The player begins the game by deciding what weapons his or her on-screen champion will wield. Then the scene switches to an arena where the creatures that have conquered Earth sit waiting to watch the death of our race's last fighter -- you. An assortment of monsters and other nasties issue from three large doors on the North wall of the arena, and the home arcader must defeat them one after another. Of course, if the hero is still tangling with a robot or octopoid when it's time for the next creature to appear, then the player will have to battle against two foes simultaneously. This game's difficulty varies wildly depending on which weapon is chosen for the hero. It's easy to clear out the arena if your fighter has a loaded revolver, but it's a lot harder to win when the only weapon is a boomerang. (AK) Rating: 7

HIGH RISE/Computer Game (for Apple)/Micro Learn

Help Barnaby, the on-screen hero, select blocks to build a tower to, if not the sky, the next level. This skill contest will remind you most of computerised building blocks, but with a punch to make this a real challenge regardless of your age. The player must position Barnaby under one of the five block-delivery chutes, then the space bar drops the block to the ground. Barnaby pushes the block to the loading dock, a springboard that catapults it to the tower he's trying to build. If it balances, Barnaby must choose another block and continue his construction. But the blocks aren't all the same size and shape, and any wrong choice makes the entire structure come tumbling down. If Barnaby succeeds in erecting a tower to the top of the screen, he scrambles up to the next level, where the blocks become even more erratic in shape, and it gets increasingly difficult to build a stable structure. It takes a lot of judgement and a keen eye to survive this contest, and almost no hand-eye coordination. This strategy game is so much fun it will keep gamers coming back to try over and over to get Barnaby to the top of the tower. (JW) Rating: 8

SPECIAL HOLIDAY GREETINGS

The entire staff of Electronic Games Hotline would like to take this time to wish all of you a great holiday season, and the very happiest of New Years. May your stockings all be stuffed with games! Season's Greetings to you all, from Joyce and the rest of the Hotline gang!

ACTIVISION PREXY HAS
FAITH IN SOFTWARE FUTURE

James Levy, President of Activision, says he has unshaken confidence in the future of the electronic gaming industry. "We have absolute faith in the long-term importance of home computer software," he said in a recent interview. "There's a mistaken notion that people don't play games on their computers anymore," he continued. "People still use their computers to play games 75% of the time."

Activision recently announced that it would cut its 375-person staff by about 25% because of soft sales of videogames, and Levy expects Activision products to move slowly in the marketplace for the next few months. However, the company, which lost \$3.9 million in its fiscal first half, is retrenching at present to improve the profitability picture in the fourth quarter, ending March 31.

RESEARCHER SAYS COMPUTER
BUYERS ARE FAST TRACKERS

In a study recently released by Doyle Bane Bernbach/West, computer purchasers were described as coming in two basic styles: the impulse buyer, who the DDB researchers predict will shelve their computers after only a little use; and "fast-trackers" who are highly motivated in careers and influenced by the benefit-oriented ads that show how computers can help them succeed. DDB says these two categories represent very large segments of the buying public, and suggest that the market will continue to be divided for some time.

In the same study, DDB cautions that parents aren't actually great prospects to buy computers, despite the ads stressing educational benefits that come from owning one. The report indicates that many parents fear the computer might "stifle traditional family interactions", and that this apprehension must be overcome in order to make the parents feel comfortable about bringing a computer into the home.

MERRY-GO-ROUND:
THE SAME FACES
IN NEW PLACES

Frank Mullin is the Director of Software Development for MONOGRAM, the home management software division of TRONIX. Mullin was formerly with TRW, as a project manager with the Defense & Space Systems Group...ATARI appointed David Ruckert as Senior V.P. of Atari Products Management, the marketing arm for home computers and videogames. Before joining Atari, where he recently served as Sr. VP of entertainment software marketing, he was with Bristol-Meyers...Fred Simon is the new Sr. V.P. of Computer Marketing for ATARI. He was formerly with Walt Disney Products...Philip Restaino is ATARI's VP of games marketing. He was formerly with Bristol-Meyers...Bruce L. Davis is the new President and Chief Executive Officer of IMAGIC, succeeding founder Bill Grubb who will serve as Chairman of the Board. Davis formerly served IMAGIC as General Counsel and VP of Corporate Development...Avram Miller has been promoted to the post of President of FRANKLIN COMPUTER CORP. He was formerly with Digital Equipment Corporation...Joel Shusterman, one of the founders of FRANKLIN COMPUTER, has been appointed to serve as Vice Chairman. He had served as president of the company since its inception...

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