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CLASSIC SYSTEMS & GAMES MONTHLY

Vol. 1 No. 9

AUGUST 1992

GAME OF THE MONTH:

GAME REVIEWS

2600:

Pressure Cooker

5200:

Cartridge List

7800:

Crack'ed

Dig Dug

Robotron: 2084

COLECOVISION:

Lady Bug

INTELLIVISION:

Cartridge List

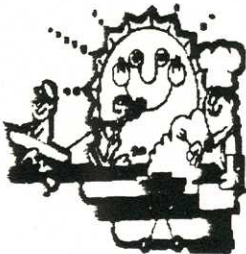
NINTENDO:

Solonons Key

Vectrex:

Pole Position

Hyperchase



Lady Bug™

by UNIVERSAL



COLECO VISION™

CLASSIC SYSTEMS & GAMES MONTHLY

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FROM OUR EDITOR

Well fellow vid-heads it had to happen sooner or later. The NES Notebook makes its debut this issue with a look at Solomon's Key by Techmo. Let's face it the NES can certainly be called a classic system. The Sega Master System is also a classic, so if anyone out there would possibly be interested in doing articles on the Master System send 'em in. An original arcade section is also being considered. So without further delay, enjoy the issue!

Jeff Adkins
Editor



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TOPIC 2600

PRESSURE COOKER

1983 Activision

Designed by Garry Kitchen

One or Two Players

Joysticks

By Jeff Adkins

It seems that I just can't get away from video games whose main characters name is Sam. So I have decided to continue the trend with Short-Order Sam, the burger flipping star of Pressure Cooker for the 2600. Another colorful game from the folks at Activision.

The object of the game is to fill different orders of hamburgers. Some might be plain, others need tomatoes, onion, or cheese, or even lettuce. Of course some people might even order one with everything.

There are two separate screens during gameplay. The first is the assembly room. At the top of the screen, hamburgers are cooked over an open flame, then dropped onto a conveyor belt. The burgers then fall onto buns and continue down the conveyor towards Sam. To the right of Sam are the four various condiments and the top bun of the hamburger. These are represented by different colored squares. At the bottom of the screen is the electronic order board. This shows Sam what condiments to add to each burger. Three orders appear at a time. A check mark under the tomato in any of the three columns calls for a burger with just that.

There are five increasingly difficult levels of play. Each level is made up of four mini-levels. During the first mini-level only one condiment is added to each burger, but on the fourth mini-level, three or even four condiments must be added to each burger coming down the line. As the levels increase the conveyor moves faster.

The second screen is the wrapping room. Here Sam drops the completed burgers into three different colored wrapping machines. The colors are red, green, and blue. Once Sam has finished an order correctly, that particular order will flash on the order board. This helps in placing it in the proper wrapping machine.

The condiments move left towards Sam one at a time. In order to reject an onion or tomato, simply hold in the fire button and bounce it back with Sam's stomach until you get the one you want. This can be an annoying part of the game. Sometimes you get what you need, but most of the time Sam will be bouncing back tomato after tomato in order to get an onion or vice versa. The fire button is also used to drop the burgers into the wrapping machines. If you don't want to hear the theme music constantly, put the left difficulty switch in the (A) position. By doing so it only plays between levels. More games certainly should have had this option.

Sam starts the game with 50 performance points. This stat appears left of the flaming oven under the score. Performance points can be increased or decreased depending on how well you can get out the orders.

- * Every 10,000 points scored = +10 perf pts.
- * Condiments not caught, smashed on Sam or conveyor = -1 perf pt.
- * Placing same condiment on a burger more than once = -1 perf pt.
- * Drop burger into wrong shoot = -5 perf pts.
- * Miss wrapping shoot while dropping burger = -5 perf pts.
- * Hamburger falls off conveyor = -10 perf pts.
- * Maximum number of perf pts. is 99.

Scoring is as follows:

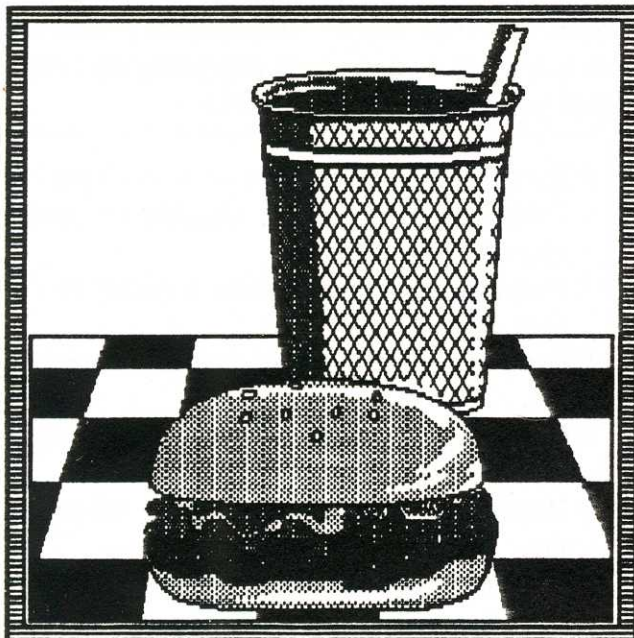
Each condiment caught	5 pts.
Each condiment placed on burger	10 pts.
Completed burger dropped in wrapping shoot	100 pts.
Burger bonus points	100 pts. each level 1
	200 pts. each level 2
	300 pts. each level 3
	400 pts. each level 4
	500 pts. each level 5

In order to achieve a high score, you will have to be quick on bouncing back unwanted condiments. During the higher levels, Sam is literally swamped with orders and everything moves at a frantic pace. With four levels to choose from players can start off on a slow speed, or begin right away on the fast level for experts.

Game Levels

One Player 1, 3, 5, 7
Two Player 2, 4, 6, 8

Pressure Cooker was one of the later Activision releases. It is also somewhat hard to find. It is colorful, challenging and fun. As with most Activision games, the designer came up with an excellent, original game.



SUMMARY

Graphics - The movement of the conveyor, the fire in the oven, tomatoes, onions, and other condiments flying, plus Sam's chef suit are all well done (no pun intended) considering the capabilities of the VCS. The colors and details are crisp and very appealing visually.

Sound - With the sound off/on option it can be played preferably with it off. The splatting of condiments, Sam's stomach bouncing them back, dropping the burgers into the wrapping machine, and the tallying of points scored provide a variety of noise.

Gameplay - The hardest part of the game is getting down the bouncing of condiments off of Sam's stomach, and memorizing the orders while trying to stay calm. This is a cart with high replay value and will provide hours of challenge. I would highly recommend it for any cook's video game collection.

RATING

Graphics ***
Sound **
Gameplay ***

Review Score:

213, 225

TIPS:

- > Begin on the slow level. Try to build up your performance points to the maximum of 99. If you can do so and remain cool, high scores can be achieved.
- > During the higher levels you will have to let a burger fall off the conveyor every so often. Concentrate on the next burger behind it.
- > Make sure Sam is centered properly when dropping burgers into the wrapping machines. If he is off to the right or left, chances are the burger will splatter.

5200 FILE

5200 CARTRIDGE LIST

ATARI

1. Asteroids (NR ?)
2. Ballblazer
3. Battlezone
4. Berzerk
5. Centipede
6. Choplifter
7. Countermeasure
8. Crystal Castles
9. Defender
10. Diagnostic Cartridge
11. Dig-Dug
12. Final Legacy ?
13. Galaxian
14. Gremlins
15. Joust
16. Jungle Hunt
17. Kangaroo
18. Krull (NR)
19. Last Starfighter (P)
20. Looney Tunes Hotel (P)
21. Mario Bros.
22. Meebzoak (P)
23. Millipede
24. Miniature Golf (P)
25. Missile Command
26. Moon Patrol
27. Ms. Pac-Man
28. Pac-Man
29. Pac-Man Jr. (P)
30. Pengo
31. Phoenix (NR ?)
32. Pole Position
33. Qix
34. Real Sports Baseball
35. RS Basketball (P)
36. RS Football
37. RS Soccer
38. RS Tennis

39. Rescue on Fractalus
40. Road Runner (P)
41. Robotron 2084
42. Space Dungeon
43. Space Invaders
44. Spitfire (P)
45. Sport Goofy (P)
46. Stargate
47. Star Raiders
48. Super Breakout
49. Tempest ?
50. Track N Field (P)
51. Vanguard
52. Xevious (P)

ACTIVISION

53. Beamrider
54. Decathlon
55. Dreadnaught Factor
56. H.E.R.O.
57. Kaboom!
58. Keystone Kapers
59. Megamania
60. Pitfall!
61. Pitfall II
62. River Raid
63. Space Shuttle
64. Zenji
65. Zone Ranger

SEGA

66. Buck Rogers
67. Congo Bongo
68. Star Trek
69. Zaxxon

BIG FIVE SOFTWARE

70. Bounty Bob Strikes Back!
71. Miner 2049er

PARKER BROS.

72. Astrochase
73. Frogger
74. Frogger II: Three Deep
75. Gyruus

- 76. James Bond 007
- 77. Montezumas Revenge
- 78. Mr. Do's Castle
- 79. Popeye
- 80. Q*bert
- 81. Risk (NR ?)
- 82. Star Wars: Arcade Game
- 83. Star Wars: Death Star Battle
- 84. Star Wars: Empire Strikes Back
- 85. Super Cobra
- 86. Tutankham

CBS ELECTRONICS

- 87. Blueprint
- 88. Domino Man (NR ?)
- 89. GORF
- 90. Crazy Shoot-Out
- 91. Madden Football (NR ?)
- 92. Mountain King
- 93. Omega Race
- 94. Satan's Hollow (NR ?)
- 95. Solar Fox
- 96. Wings
- 97. Wizard of Wor

ELECTRA CONCEPTS

- 98. Meteorites

SUNRISE

- 99. Quest for Quintana Roo

BRODERBUND

- 100. Loderunner

COLECO

- 101. Pepper II (NR ?)
- 102. Rocky (NR ?)

KEY:

- NR - Never released
- P - Prototype

Best Electronics in California currently has a good selection of 5200 games including prototypes. Every game that I have purchased has arrived in excellent shape and pretty fast compared to other such businesses. Their address is:

Best Electronics
2021 The Alameda Suite 290
San Jose, CA 95126

20 YEARS OF ATARI

PART IV

By Jeff Adkins

In order for the VCS to become a major success Atari had to broaden its appeal. So it simply produced more games that would be played by adults along with younger people. During 1977 Atari released (in limited quantities) Stunt Cycle Home System. It has built-in handle bars just like the arcade game. The Canyon Bomber (Howie Decman) arcade machine was converted into a VCS cartridge, one of the original releases. With the slow sales of the video computer system during Christmas, Atari was once again beginning to get nervous.

In 1978 Ray Kassar became president of the consumer division. He took over for Joe Keenan. Nolan Bushnell was demoted from chairman to director at the start of 1978. The problem arose when the big-wigs at the head of Warner Communications began to worry about \$40 million worth of systems just laying about. At Warner's budget meeting later in the year the changes in power came about. Bushnell and Keenan had produced too many 2600's.

Some of the arcade games that Atari produced during 1978 included: Avalanche, which was done by Dennis Koble. This game gave Larry Kaplan (who would later leave Atari to join Activision) the idea for Kaboom! The first sports game from Atari was Football. This game introduced the Le Trak Ball. You would get a minute and a half for a quarter, or for \$10.00, players could go an hour. Super Breakout also debuted in 1978, along with the last of the mammoth pinball machines Atari was noted for, Hercules. (Superman was actually the last, but never made it out of the engineering department.)

The man who had started the company with practically nothing was just that as far as Warner was now concerned, nothing. But before Bushnell left along with Keenan, they bought back a pizza franchise that had video games in its restaurants. It is now known as Chuckie Cheeses Pizza Time Theater. In Part V of the series, I'll look at 1979, the start of Atari's rebuilding.

7800 PROSYSTEM

CRACK'ED

CX7836

By Delf Meek

You are a birdwatcher. You have to defend off birds and other creatures from stealing eggs out of the rare hornbills' nests. Sound dorky? You're right, it does sound stupid at first, but after you play the game for a while, you will see it is better than it sounds.

As a birdwatcher, you are horrified to see that the nests are being raided by other birds and creatures. Your weapon is a slingshot. The object is to shoot the enemies as they come on the screen. This is done by positioning the target sight on a creature and pressing the left fire button. The creature will then turn into something that gives the game a sense of humor such as the sewer rats changing to pieces of cheese. This just marks the tombstone of the creature. If a creature picks up an egg, shoot it quickly before it leaves the screen. After you shoot it, the egg will begin to fall, catch it before it hits the ground. Press your right fire button and position the target sight over the egg. You will then be able to carry the egg for a while, carry it over a nest and drop it. But remember, each nest can only hold five eggs.

You have five nesting sites and different enemies that you must fight against. These are listed in the table below.

Nesting Site	Creatures
Tree	Bluebirds, owls, and snakes
Sewer	Dunglings, rats and dragonflies
Sea	Squid, anchovies, and bubbles
Dungeon	Ghost, skeletons, and bats
Moon	Aliens, meteors, and spaceships

Between each round, there is a bonus round. You journey to the Rooster Ranch, where you must throw eggs at a rooster that pokes his head up behind a series of windows. If you hit him, you get 200 points, if you miss or don't throw an egg, you lose 100 points. You have ten eggs. If you hit the rooster, it does not take away an egg, but if you miss, it will subtract one.

I've seen better games for the 7800. The graphics are not as good as I expected them to be and the sound is fair. Overall, Crack'ed is a fair game.

RATING

Graphics	***
Sound	**
Gameplay	***

TIPS:

- > When you catch an egg, release the button and catch it again for more points. But be careful, the egg will disappear if you do this too many times with the same egg.
- > Try to put all of the eggs in one nest. Especially the ones at the bottom. That way, you have to keep up with fewer nests and if an egg starts to fall, you will have time to catch it.

DIG DUG

CX7803

By Delf Meek

In this arcade hit, you are Dig Dug. Your job is to dig through the earth and destroy the two nasty monsters lurking below the surface--Pooka and Fygar. Pookas are red-balloon like monsters with legs. Pookas don't have any self protection. Fygars are dragons which periodically breath fire out. If he breaths fire on Dig Dug, kiss a

life good-bye!

If you want some extra points try dropping a rock on them. This is done by luring an enemy near a rock. Walk underneath it and the rock will start to jiggle. It will then drop and kill whatever is in its path. It will even kill you if you are not careful. I've gotten as much as 10,000 points on the higher levels.

The gameplay is very smooth and the graphics are excellent. On the Pookas, you can actually see the yellow goggles on them. On the Fygars, their wings show up very well. The enemies even run the same pattern as the arcade. You also have a continue mode. After the game is over and it returns to the title screen, press your fire button before the demonstration starts, you will start on the level you left off. This is a must have game for a 7800 collection.

RATING

Graphics	*****
Sound	***
Gameplay	***

TIPS:

- > Try "stunning" your enemy by giving him a couple of pumps to lure him to a rock.
- > The dragons can breath fire through the thin strips of earth.
- > If a dragon is chasing after you, go up or down. He will not breath fire on you.
- > Before a dragon breaths fire, he will start to flash for a second. This is a warning that you are about to become toast if you are in his path.
- > You are awarded more points if you attack an enemy from the side than below or above.

ROBOTRON: 2084

CX7808

By Delf Meek

It is the year 2084 and the humans have created a species of robots that has turned on them. The robots are determined to destroy humanity or turn them into mutants.

Your job is to destroy the robots with your

laser gun by shooting them. It is not as easy as it sounds though. There are people to rescue, which wander randomly around the board. You must rescue them before the robots destroy them.

There are several types of enemies to conquer. There are the Mindless Grunts, which won't hurt the humans, but will hurt you if you don't destroy them. Then, there are the Indestructible Hulks. These instantly kill humans when they touch them. They can't be killed, but you can slow them down with your weapon. There are Sinister Spheriods, which are red diamond-shaped objects that constantly go around the room. Let them set too long, and they will hatch out their Enforcer Embryos, which grow into Evil Enforcers. These will destroy you on the spot if you are not careful. Then there are the Giant Brains. These nasty looking monsters will reprogram humans and turn them against you. These enemies also fire cruise missiles that chase you, even when you turn. The last of the enemies are the Qubic Quarks. Qubic Quarks go around the rooms on some levels. If you don't destroy them, they will produce Torturing Tanks that shoot Bounce Bombs. Bounce Bombs continue to bounce around the room.

Overall, this is a great game. If you like fast action and shoot'em-ups, this is a game for you. It even offers a feature. You can plug in two controllers and use one to move the direction you are moving and one to choose the direction you want to shoot. This will allow you to shoot behind you even if you are moving forward. The arcade had this feature of having two controllers. So if you don't want to lose the feel of the arcade, have at it.

RATING

Graphics	*****
Sound	*****
Gameplay	*****

TIPS:

- > Giant Brains come every 5th wave, so be prepared!
- > The Sinister Spheriods (the red diamond-shaped enemies) like to stay on the border of the room.
- > Grab as many humans as you can!

COLECOVISION SKILL LEVEL

LADYBUG

Arcade Version 1981 by Universal

CV Version 1982

One or Two Players

Joysticks

By Jeff Adkins

Ah, the life of a ladybug. Moving from leaf to leaf soaking up the sun. No bills to worry about, no factory or any other type of slug job to get up to every day. Practically nothing to fear at all in life except other insects who would like nothing more than to make you their dinner. And in the ColecoVision Ladybug the predatory insects are out to do just that.

Ladybug was another one of the Pac-Man clones which used the maze game theme. But throw in some moving turnstiles, vegetable, hearts, and skulls, and the game takes on a personality of its own. Just like Pac-Man, you must guide the Ladybug around a maze eating dots while avoiding the enemy. But unlike Pac-Man's solid maze wall, turnstiles are located in various parts of the maze which can be used to escape from the insects.

Besides the other insects, skulls are placed around the maze and also must be avoided. Coming into contact with either will cost you a bug or life. Some of the insects are recognizable, but most are a video game species. Just like the ghosts in Pac-Man the predator insects appear in the middle of the screen. A timing border encompasses the outside of the maze. Each time that it changes color, one of the nasty critters enters the maze looking for a meal. After four insects have been let loose, a vegetable appears in the center. If the ladybug can consume a veggie, the other insects will stop for a few seconds giving her a chance to eat

more dots or find a safe position to rest.

Hearts and letters are also scattered about the maze. Eating hearts (when they are blue) can double, triple, or multiply certain items up to five times their regular value. There are three hearts per screen. Just like Mr. Do, letters can be collected to spell EXTRA, giving players a shot at extra lives. And by eating other letters and spelling the word SPECIAL, you can advance to the special harvest screen, and simply move about the maze munching on as many vegetables (18 different ones) before a certain amount of time expires. If you want to spell extra, the letters must be yellow when eaten. The letters must be red when collected in order to use them to spell SPECIAL. The SPECIAL bonus indicator, and EXTRA bonus indicator appear near the top of the screen to the right of the maze.

Scoring is as follows:

Small dot	10 pts
Blue heart	100 pts
Yellow heart	300 pts
Red heart	800 pts
Blue letter	100 pts
Yellow letter	300 pts
Red letter	800 pts
Spelling EXTRA	500 pts

The different vegetables and their point values are as follows:

LEVEL	VEGETABLE	PT VALUE
1	Cucumber	1,000
2	Egg plant	1,500
3	Carrot	2,000
4	Radish	2,500
5	Parsley	3,000
6	Tomato	3,500

LEVEL	VEGETABLE	PT VALUE
7	Pumpkin	4,000
8	Bamboo Shoot	4,500
9	Japanese Radish	5,000
10	Mushroom	5,500
11	Potato	6,000
12	Onion	6,500
13	Chinese Cabbage	7,000
14	Turnip	7,500
15	Red Pepper	8,000
16	Celery	8,500
17	Sweet Potato	9,000
18	Horse Radish	9,500

After Level 18 Horse Radish is repeated.

Compared to the arcade version, the CV game is a fine adaptation. I can remember going to my favorite arcade room on Saturdays (10 tokens for a dollar!) to play Ladybug and some of the other classic arcade machines. My favorite part of the game is trying to spell SPECIAL to get to the harvest screen. But one of its downfalls is that there isn't any pause feature. Of course, the arcade game didn't have a pause either now did it. Trying to get the last letter to spell SPECIAL can also take forever sometimes. These are but slight downfalls for an otherwise unique maze game.

SUMMARY

Graphics - There aren't any flashy graphics like today's systems. This was one of the early arcade originals. The lady bug itself looks real enough with its antennas wiggling as it moves about the maze. The predatory insects are different colors and most of them are strange looking critters. The vegetables were done well enough to distinguish each one. When the ladybug dies by bumping into another insect or skull, a halo and wings appear signifying the loss.

Sound - As with most of the early video games, sound didn't really have too much to do with the game. The eating of dots, the pulsating noise of the timing border, losing a

life, the insects entering the maze, and the medley that plays during the harvest screen provide the various sounds during gameplay. Gameplay - Ladybug is very much a pattern game. Coleco joysticks can be a pain, so an Atari or other compatible joystick is definitely recommended. From Level 9 on, the insects move very fast. Positioning the turnstiles so the insects will take a predictable path is a must strategy. I'm sure there are some of you who don't care for maze type games such as Ladybug, but if you enjoyed Pac-Man, Ladybug in my opinion is a better game by far. If you enjoyed the arcade version this is a must have.

RATING

Graphics **
 Sound **
 Gameplay ****

Review Score:

853,980 Level 38 - Skill 4
 (2 SPECIALS - 4 EXTRAS)

TIPS:

- > Try to eat all three hearts (when they are blue) right away if possible. By doing so you can earn five times the value of other items for the rest of the level.
- > Be sure to eat all the dots around the insect box at the start of each level.
- > If you have to choose between using the letters E, or A for EXTRA, or SPECIAL, eat them when they are red to spell SPECIAL.
- > Clear one half of the maze, eat the vegetable to freeze the insects, then clear the other half of the maze.
- > There are safe spots just above the insect box to the left or right of it. Position the turnstiles so the creepy critters follow a certain path. Once they have all gone down the path seal it off to obtain the veggie easily.
- > The predator insects can also be eliminated by luring them into skulls.

INTELLIVISION

INTELLIVISION CARTRIDGE LIST

By Ralph Linne

MATTEL/INTV

1. AD&D: Cloudy Mountain
2. AD&D: Treasure Of Tarmin
3. Alpine Skiing (US Ski Team Skiing)
4. Armor Battle
5. Astrosmash
6. Auto Racing
7. B-17 Bomber
8. Backgammon (ABPA Backgammon)
9. Basketball (NBA Basketball)
10. Big League Baseball (Major League)
11. Bomb Squad
12. Bowling (PBA Bowling)
13. Boxing
14. Bump 'n Jump
15. Burgertime
16. Buzz Bombers
17. Checkers
18. Chess (USCF Chess)
19. Football (NFL Football)
20. Frog Bog
21. Golf (PGA Golf)
22. Hockey (NHL Hockey)
23. Horse Racing
24. Jetsons Way With Words
25. Kool-Aid Pitcher Man
26. Las Vegas Poker & Blackjack
27. Las Vegas Roulette
28. Lock'N' Chase
29. Loco-Motion
30. Master Of The Universe: HE-MAN
31. Math Fun
32. Melody Blaster
33. Mind Strike
34. Mission X
35. Motocross
36. Mr. Basic Meets Bits'N'Bytes
37. Night Stalker

38. Pinball
39. Reversi
40. Royal Dealer
41. Scooby Doo's Maze Chase
42. Sea Battle
43. Shark! Shark!
44. Sharp Shot
45. Snafu
46. Soccer (NASL Soccer)
47. Space Armada
48. Sea Battle
49. Space Hawk
50. Space Spartans
51. Star Strike
52. Sub Hunt
53. Tennis
54. Triple Action
55. Tron: Solar Sailer
56. Tron: Deadly Disc
57. Tron: Maze-A-Tron
58. Utopia
59. Vectron
60. Word Fun
61. World Series Major League Baseball

INTV

62. Commando
63. Dig Dug
64. Diner
65. Hover Force
66. Learning Fun Album 1
67. Learning Fun Album 2
68. Pole Position
69. Stadium Mud Buggies
70. Super Pro Basketball - Slam Dunk
71. Super Pro Decathlon
72. Super Pro Football
73. Super Pro Golf - Chip Shot
74. Super Pro Hockey - Slap Shot
75. Super Pro Skiing - Mountain Madness
76. Super Pro Volleyball - Spiker!

- 77. Super Pro Wrestling - Body Slam!
- 78. Thin Ice
- 79. Thunder Castle (Mystic Castle)
- 80. Tower Of Doom
- 81. Triple Challenge
- 82. World Champion Baseball

IMAGIC

- 83. Atlantis
- 84. Beauty & The Beast
- 85. Demon Attack
- 86. Dracula
- 87. Dragonfire
- 88. Fathom
- 89. Ice Trek
- 90. Microsurgeon
- 91. Nova Blast
- 92. Safecraker
- 93. Swords & Serpents
- 94. Tropical Trouble
- 95. Truckin'
- 96. White Water!

ACTIVISION

- 97. Beamrider
- 98. Dreadnaught Factor
- 99. Happy Trails
- 100. Pitfall
- 101. River Raid
- 102. Stampede
- 103. Worm Whomper

COLECO

- 104. Carnival
- 105. Donkey Kong
- 106. Donkey Kong Jr.
- 107. Lady Bug
- 108. Mousetrap
- 109. Turbo
- 110. Venture
- 111. Zaxxon

ATARI

- 112. Centipede
- 113. Defender

NICE IDEAS

- 114. Championship Tennis
- 115. World Cup Soccer

SEGA

- 116. Congo Bongo

PARKER BROS.

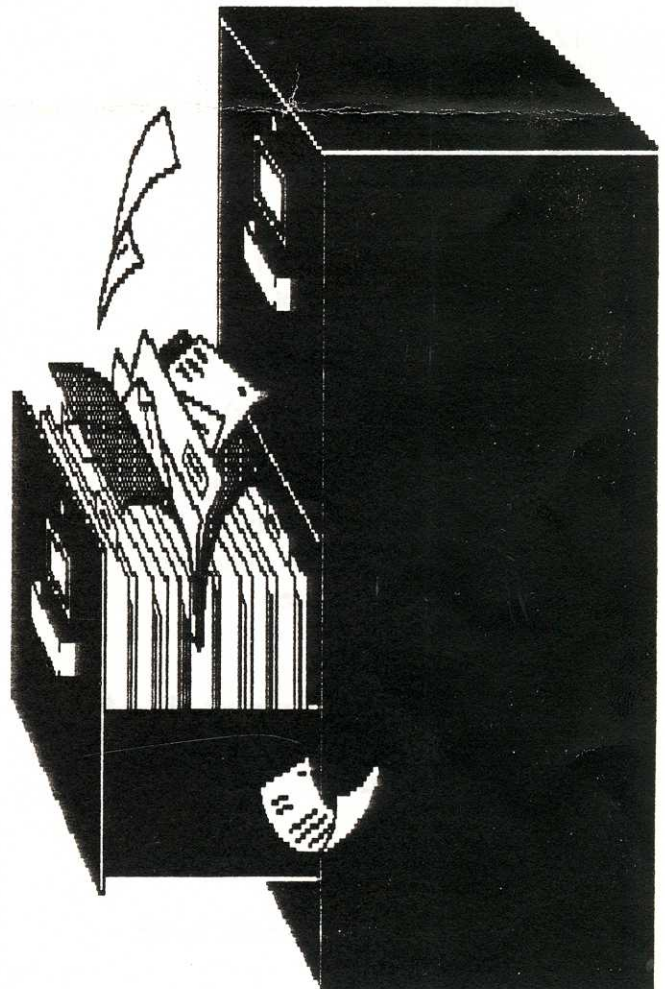
- 117. Frogger
- 118. Popeye
- 119. Q*Bert
- 120. Star Wars: Empire Strikes Back
- 121. Super Cobra
- 122. Tutankham

ATARI/INTV

- 123. Pac-Man

INTERPHASE

- 124. Blockade Runner
- 125. Sewer Sam



NES NOTEBOOK

SOLOMONS KEY

By Techmo 1987

One Player

By Jeff Adkins

In the classic confrontation of good versus evil, the wizard Dana must venture through fifty rooms of the constellation sign, in search of Solomon's Key, a book which can seal away evil demons into the constellation sign. The game has a strategy, arcade theme for would be wizards.

The fifty rooms are connected through doors. In order to proceed to the other rooms, Dana must get a key in each, in order to escape through doors. The constellation is divided up into the twelve signs. Each sign consists of four rooms, plus a bonus room that can be entered by collecting a sign seal in the fourth room of each. All the rooms consist of various demons, treasures, magic items, fairies, plus brown and white stones and keys. The brown stones can be broken with Dana's wand, or by getting underneath of them and head-butting them twice. Just about all of the white stones cannot be broken with a few exceptions.

It may take a while to get used to the various functions of the crosspad, and the A & B buttons. The following shows the different commands:

UP - Allows Dana to jump.

LEFT or RIGHT - Dana can run in either direction.

DOWN - Allows Dana to crouch.

UP RIGHT or UP LEFT - Enables Dana to jump diagonally.

DOWN RIGHT or DOWN LEFT - Dana can walk while crouched.

(A)Button - Dana can make stones appear or disappear.

(B)Button - Shoots fireballs if Dana has any.

Every room is sort of a puzzle of its own. The early rooms are simple enough to figure out. But the higher ones require lots of practice and strategy in order to progress to the next. By building stones into stairways to reach the key or a treasure, etc., Dana can avoid the demons and make his escape through the door. Not only must he beware of the demons, but he must also try to get out of each room before the life timer runs out. The life timer starts at 10,000 and gradually dwindles down to zero.

To destroy any of the demons, Dana can use a fireball. A scroll at the top right of the screen shows how many fireballs Dana currently has. At the start of the game he can have up to three. But as you progress through the rooms mini-scrolls can be found which can extend the length of the scroll so Dana can hold more in reserve. There are two types of fireballs. The regular ones can eliminate one enemy, but by shooting a super fireball, it will continue on moving, wiping out a number of demons in its path. The demons that Dana has to contend with are:

Mirror of Camirror - Drops demons heads, and saramandors one at a time.

Demons Heads - An evil head that will go the opposite way after hitting a stone. They will eventually disappear.

Goblins - Goblins can break stones with their fists. If Dana is on the same level as a goblin, the goblin will run fast in order to destroy Dana. Goblins can be dropped to their death by breaking stones they walk on.

Saramandors - A fire breathing creature. Only fireballs can destroy them.

Dragons - Dana must be careful while on the same level as a dragon. If he gets too close the dragon will sense him and turn around blowing flames. Dragons can also be destroyed by dropping them. After dropping certain dragons, a fairy will appear.

Gargoyles - These nasties can also shoot fireballs, which can break brown stones. Drop these creeps to get rid of them.

Ghosts - Ghosts fly left or right through the air. They can also break brown stones.

Neuls - Fly up and down while watching Dana's every move.

Panel Monsters - These permanent wall fixture demons spit out fireballs.

Sparkling Balls - These move around the borders or stones of rooms. By creating stones or destroying stones their paths can be altered.

Burns - These flames simply burn away on certain stones. One type can be dropped to destroy it. The other cannot be eliminated.

Witches - These appear in the later rooms beginning with room 23. They pace back and forth horizontally. Upon sensing Dana, they too move faster.

Skull Heads - Same as demons heads, they also appear in the upper rooms.

Here is a brief rundown of some of the magic items that can help Dana in his journey.

Jar of Manda - This gives Dana a regular fireball.

Jar of Magadora - Super fireball.

Mini-Scroll - Extends the scroll so more fireballs can be stocked.

Crystal of Rad - A blue crystal enables a fireball to travel a half stone further. A red one, two stones further.

Medicine of Meltona - As soon as Dana gets this item, any demons heads, saramandors, or skull heads on the screen are destroyed instantly.

Hour Glasses - The red hour glass can add 5,000 back to the life meter. The green hour

glass adds 10,000 to the life meter.

Medicine of Edlem - A grey medicine that can also increase Dana's life. A half bottle doubles it. While a full bottle can increase it by five times.

Bell of Lyrac - Every bell that Dana collects allows a fairy to appear. An extra Dana is rewarded for every ten fairies collected. Dropping certain demons can also cause fairies to appear.

Medicine of Mapros - Extra Danas can also be obtained by finding these medicine vases. Sometimes by dropping a dragon, one might appear. Some are visible and others could be hidden in brown stones.

Dana must get a key in each room in order for the door to allow him entry into the next. If he can find warp wings that are located in some rooms, he can warp ahead six rooms. These can really help you in reaching the upper rooms of the game quickly. The challenge of the next room makes this early Techno release worth playing. While there is more than one correct path that can be taken to exit rooms, finding just one can be frustrating at times. It will take many, many hours of play in order to find the book and seal away the demons.

Yes, there is also a princess to be found, but there aren't any eye-popping graphics, or level ending bosses to destroy. Its originality and challenge will keep you occupied for quite awhile. With a little bit of determination and patience, the evil can be overcome.

SUMMARY

Graphics - The graphics of Solomon's Key can be compared to some of the early VCS games. The original VCS games were very plain and designers weren't able to produce games like later releases such as Road Runner, Solaris, etc. The same can be said for some of the early NES games like Solomon's Key. It certainly can't be compared to the graphics of Battle Toads or Blaster Master for example.

While it is archaic graphically, it does have some nice touches. The making or breaking of stones, the fluttering of the fairies, and the different movements of each demon. If too many moving objects appear on screen at once in certain rooms, (room 26 for example) there can be flickering.

Sound - The theme medley plays throughout the game, there isn't any option to play with it off. But by concentrating on gameplay, you don't really hear it anyway. Breaking stones, shooting fireballs, collecting objects or treasures all have their individual sounds.

Gameplay - Of all the NES games that I have played in the last five years, Solomon's Key is my favorite. The challenge of getting to the next room and searching for hidden items kept me occupied for weeks. This game cannot be beat in a day, or a week. I have put many, many hours of play, and took notes while searching each room for anything I might have missed in a prior game. It doesn't have flashy graphics or sound, yet it presents a challenge and can be very addicting. A great game that has been vastly underrated.

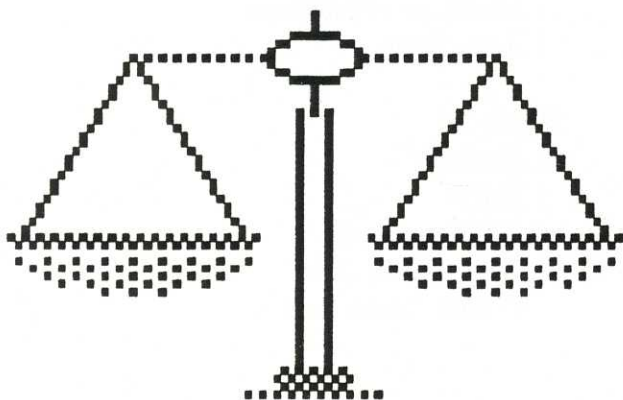
RATING

Graphics **
 Sound **
 Gameplay ****

Review Score:

16,020,480

*Current US record registered with Nintendo, Gamepro, and EGM Monthly:
 17,095,550 J. Adkins 10-14-89



STRATEGY SESSION

Solomon's Key

As an added bonus I'm going to share my notes you fellow vid-heads. There is actually more than 50 rooms that can be entered during play. The final two rooms are shrines. The first one holds the princess (that is how it's spelled on screen). The second is Solomon's shrine. The book of Solomon can finally be opened here. But in order to get to the princess, Dana must find all of Solomon's seals (they look like the Star of David) that are hidden in different rooms of the constellation sign. There is also two missing pages from Solomon's book that must be found. By finding the first four seals, the room holding the first missing page can be entered. The next two seals allow Dana entry into the room holding the second page. The final two seals (that's eight seals in total if you've been counting) allow entry to the princess' shrine. If you don't find all of the seals you can still finish the game, but only a few words of praise appear on the final screen. Upon collecting all of the seals and freeing the princess, Dana is shown exiting the constellation, and lots of fairies are also shown leaving the evil dwelling. The demons are then shown being sucked into the doorway, and it is then sealed. The following is a room by room run down that shows what is in each. I'll leave it to you to find out where in each room.

Room 1

- 3 Fireballs
- 2 Fairies
- 1 500 pt jewel

Room 2

- 1 Fireball
- 1 Fairy
- 1 Medicine of Meltona

Room 3

- 1 Fireball

1 Fairy
1 5,000 pt jewel
1 Up (Medicine of Mapros)

Room 4
1 Fireball
3 Fairies
Hidden Room Seal

First Hidden Room
Bonus Room

Room 5
2 Fireballs
2 Fairies
1 10,000 pt gold coin

Room 6
1 Fireball
1 Super Fireball
3 Fairies

Room 7
2 Fairies
1 Mini-Scroll
1 Red Hour Glass
1 10,000 pt gold coin
1 Warp Wings

Room 8
2 Fairies
2 Fireballs
4 500 pt jewels
6 2,000 pt coins
Hidden Room Seal

Second Hidden Room
Bonus Room

Room 9
1 Fairy
2 1,000 pt coins
1st Seal of Solomon

Room 10
3 Fairies
2 Fireballs
1 Mini-Scroll

1 5,000 pt jewel

Room 11
2 Fairies
1 Medicine of Edlem (1/2 full)
1 10,000 pt gold coin

Room 12
1 Fireball
1 Super Fireball
2 Fairies
1 10,000 pt gold coin
1 5,000 pt jewel
Hidden Room Seal

Third Hidden Room
Bonus Room

Room 13
2 Medicines of Meltona
2 Fairies
3 2,000 pt coins
2 Fireballs
1 50,000 pt jewel
1 Red Hour Glass
2 10,000 pt gold coins
2nd Solomon's Seal

Room 14
1 Fairy
2 Green Hour Glasses
1 Up

Room 15
2 Fairies
1 Fireball
1 Green Hour Glass
1 Medicine of Meltona
1 Warp Wings

Room 16
2 Fireballs
1 Fairy
4 5,000 pt jewels
1 Green Hour Glass
Hidden Room Seal

Fourth Hidden Room
Bonus Room

Room 17
3 1,000 pt coins
3rd Seal of Solomon
1 Medicine of Edlem (full)
1 Fairy
1 Mighty Bomb Jack = 14 fairies

Room 18
3 Fairies
2 5,000 pt jewels

Room 19
2 Fairies
1 Up
1 Green Hour Glass
4th Seal of Solomon
1 Medicine of Meltona
1 200,000 pt face

Room 20
1 Fairy
1 Green Hour Glass
1 500,000 pt & 1 Up Rabbit Face
Hidden Room Seal

Fifth Hidden Room
If the first four Seals of Solomon have been found, instead of a bonus room Dana can find the first missing page and a 5,000 pt jewel here.

Room 21
1 Fairy
5th Seal of Solomon
1 Red Hour Glass
1 20,000 pt gold coin
5 500 pt jewels
1 Fireball

Room 22
3 Fairies
1 Medicine of Edlem
1 100,000 pt gold goose

Room 23
3 Fairies
1 100,000 pt gold goose
1 10,000 pt gold coin
1 2,000 pt jewel
1 warp wings

Room 24
3 Fairies
1 Red Hour Glass
1 Medicine of Edlem (full)
5 1,000 pt coins
Hidden Room Seal

Sixth Hidden Room
Bonus Room

Room 25
2 Fairies
6 500 pt jewels
1 Medicine of Edlem (half)

Room 26
4 Fairies
1 Red Hour Glass
1 Medicine of Edlem (half)
1 Super Fireball
1 100,000 pt goose
4 1,000 pt coins

Room 27
1 Fairy
1 Medicine of Edlem (full)
1 50,000 pt jewel
1 10,000 pt gold coin
2 2,000 pt coins
1 Up

Room 28
1 20,000 pt gold coin
1 Fairy
1 Medicine of Edlem (half)
Hidden Room Seal

Seventh Hidden Room
Bonus Room

Room 29
2 Fairies
2 10,000 pt gold coins
6th Seal of Solomon

Room 30
1 Fairy
1 Up
1 Medicine of Meltona
1 200,000 pt face
1 Red Hour Glass

Room 31
1 500,000 pt gold lion
1 Medicine of Edlem (full)
1 Fairy
1 Warp Wings

Room 32
1 Fairy
4 500 pt jewels
1 100,000 pt gold goose
1 Red Hour Glass
Hidden Room Seal

Eighth Hidden Room
Bonus Room

Room 33
2 Fairies
1 Medicine of Edlem (full)
1 50,000 pt jewel
1 100,000 pt goose
1 20,000 pt gold coin

Room 34
2 Fairies
1 Red Hour Glass
1 Medicine of Edlem

Room 35
1 Up
6 1,000 pt coins
1 Green Hour Glass
2 20,000 pt gold coins

Room 36
1 Fairy

1 Red Hour Glass
Hidden Room Seal

Ninth Hidden Room
Bonus Room

Room 37
2 Fairies
1 Medicine of Edlem (half)

Room 38
2 Fairies
2 Fireballs
1 Super Fireball
1 Green Hour Glass
1 500,000 pts & 1 Up Rabbit Face

Room 39
2 Fairies
1 Green Hour Glass
1 Super Fireball
1 Warp Wings

Room 40
2 Fairies
1 Up
1 50,000 pt jewel
Hidden Room Seal

Tenth Hidden Room
Bonus Room

Room 41
1 200,000 pt face
1 10,000 pt gold coin
1 Medicine of Meltona
1 Medicine of Edlem (full)

Room 42
1 Fairy
1 Green Hour Glass
2 50,000 pt jewels
1 200,000 pt face

Room 43
2 Fairies
1 50,000 pt jewel
1 500,000 pt gold lion

1 Medicine of Edlem (full)

Room 44

1 Fairy
1 100,000 pt gold goose
Hidden Room Seal

Eleventh Hidden Room

2nd Missing Page

1 5,000 pt jewel

Room 45

2 Fairies
3 10,000 pt gold coins
1 50,000 pt jewel
1 100,000 pt gold goose

Room 46

2 Fairies
1 500,000 pt & 1 Up lamp
1 100,000 pt gold goose
1 Medicine of Edlem (full)
1 Red Hour Glass
1 Green Hour Glass
7th Seal of Solomon

Room 47

2 Fairies
1 1,000,000 pt gold head
1 Up
8th Seal of Solomon

Room 48

1 Fairy
1 10,000 pt gold coin
1 100,000 pt gold goose
1 200,000 pt face
1 Up
Hidden Room Seal

Twelfth & Final Hidden Room

Bonus Room

Princess Shrine

All eight Seals of Solomon must have been found in order to reach this room. Also in this room are two burns on stones at the bottom of the screen on both sides of the

princess. The princess is encircled with white stones. In order to free her Dana must first fan down both burns and then break the stones they are on. He can then free her by going to the left side of the stones breaking the middle one.

Solomon's Shrine

The Book of Solomon is also surrounded by white stones. In order to reach the book, Dana must strike the Mirror of Camirror that is to the right of the book with his wand. In doing so he can break the white stone to the right of the book to enter the chamber.

TIPS:

> In room 17 you can make a character from another Techmo game, Mighty Bomb Jack, appear by head butting the top right white stone (from underneath) 11 times. The mighty man will begin to float up and down moving left. If you can catch him before he disappears all of the burns and demons in the room will turn into fairies.

> To continue in any room that you lost your last life in press UP, A, and B buttons all at the same time. This will only work up to room 40.

> The key to room 42 is in the upper right hand corner. Make a stone here then break it.

> As with any game that has a pause feature, use it to study the rooms!

> Save and use fireballs only when needed most. Just about all of the rooms can be conquered without shooting any.

> Try to find as many fairies as possible. Every ten found is worth a 1 Up. Some fairies will appear by dropping certain demons in certain rooms.



THE VECTREX VECTOR

POLE POSITION

By Al Backiel

Based upon the hit arcade game, this vector graphics adaptation plays very well. The action takes place on the Fuji Speedway in Japan with Mt. Fujiyama looming in the background. The game is true to Grand Prix auto racing. That is, you must first pass a qualifying lap. If one does well in the qualifying heat, the reward is the strategic pole position of the title. Once this is done the actual race begins. You must then complete three more laps within their time limits or the race is over. Fortunately, time left over from one lap is added to the next. The buttons are used for 1st gear, and 2nd gear respectively. Buttons 3 and 4 are both gas pedals. It is possible to go from 2nd to 1st. The only time this might help is to get rolling again after a collision.

The qualifying lap has a 120 second time limit. The next lap a 90 second limit. Each successive lap must be done in 60 seconds.

SCORING:

Passing a car	50
Complete lap	12,000
1st position	4,000
2nd position	2,000
3rd position	1,000
4th position	500
Each sec. left	200

The one thing I didn't like was that you never actually cross the finish line. You know you have completed the race by the lap count, but you stop just in front of a lap marker. You can also tell you are done by the time left on the center clock. Since this is

not that easy to complete, some kind of checkered flag would have been nice.

RATING

Graphics	***
Sound	**
Gameplay	****

Reviewer's Best Score:

77,100 (finished course)

TIPS:

- > Avoid the time wasters: collisions, running off course, shifting too slow, etc.
- > Do not swing too wide during the sequence where the road cuts sharply left. This area can be identified by the series of road signs on the right shoulder.
- > If you do not make one of the 2 forward positions in the qualifier. I would suggest resetting and starting over.
- > Be very careful when passing cars. It is easy to drift into them. Especially when turning. Make sure your wheels clear easily.
- > Generally, it is best to ride the white line or the right side of the road.
- > Anymore than 2 or 3 collisions and it may be impossible to finish the race. I would reset and start over.



HYPERCHASE

By Al Backiel

The racers here are not as well-defined as in Pole Position. This is compensated by the very diverse scenery in this cart. There are city streets, a tunnel, canyons, pine trees, wide open stretches, etc. The buttons are used for upshifting, downshifting, brakes and the gas pedal. Flooring it causes the racer to ride 1/3 of the way up the screen. Game 1 is a race against the clock, the fewer collisions, the better the time. I recommend recording your personal best. This will give you something to strive for. Game 2 will award points for distance and speed and ends after the fifth collision. The only extra lives are in Game 2 after 15,000.

Scoring:

Game 1 = time in seconds

Game 2 = points/miles & speed

The major criticism I have, is that the bends in the road are too sharp. The course is actually straight and the road is angled sharply to represent bends or curves. This is so sudden sometimes you seem to be thrown off the road. The game could have been improved by making the turns more natural. Quick reflexes will save you most of the time.

RATING

Graphics ****

Sound **

Gameplay ***

Reviewer's Best Score:

Game 1 - 119.8 seconds

Game 2 - 6,035 points

TIPS:

> If you start and shift quickly you should be able to go straight up the middle slipping between two sets of side by side cars. This is tricky to do, but is a great time saver.

> Hug the left curb when crossing the bridge or going thru the tunnel.

> Memorize as much of the course as you can. You will be less likely to repeat your mistakes.

> I don't see where braking or downshifting will help matters much. After a collision the book recommends downshifting back to 1st.

> Generally when a car is coming at you head on, sidestep at the last minute. Also when a car gets closer it seems that a little more room opens up to pass on the sides.

IN CONCLUSION

It is not my intention to advocate one cart over the other, collectors will want both. If I need to be pinned down, I would say that Pole Position has the better gameplay while Hyperchase would have the edge in graphics. As far as availability goes, Pole Position appears to be a little more rarer. Both carts have high score memory which is a nice feature.



VECTREX TRIVIA

By Al Backiel

Several years ago one of my user friends reported seeing a Vectrex being used as a monitor for a coin operated stress tester. This must have been some kind of blood pressure machine. It was seen at a Dart Drugs in Virginia.

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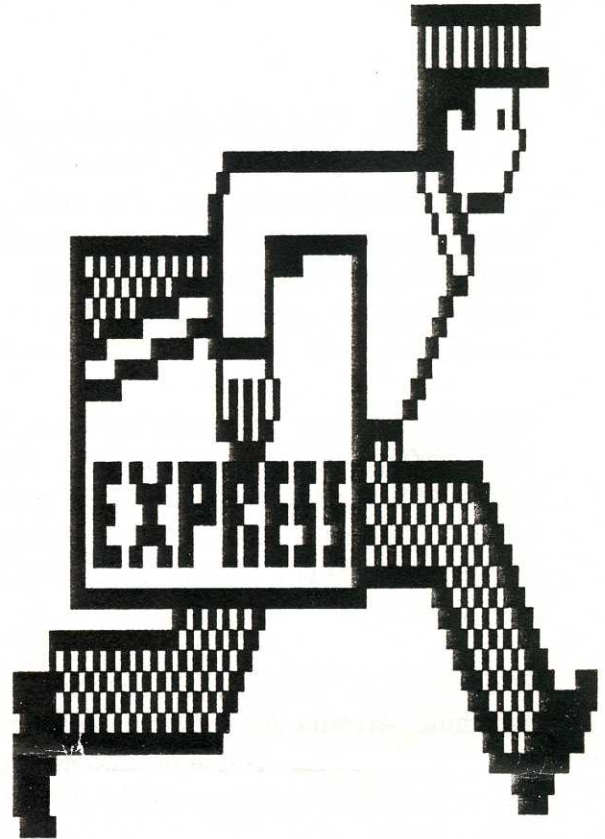
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