

THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE

12115 Magnolia Blvd., #126, No. Hollywood, CA 91607

A Critical Newsletter for the Serious Gamesman

Vol I, #9

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Two Dollars

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!

As the countdown begins for the big trade show in January (Winter C.E.S.), many of the game manufacturers have become very quiet about their 1983 plans. Traditionally, many new games, etc. are announced at the show and the manufacturers are very secretive in the weeks leading up to the show (we can't blame them - there is TREMENDOUS competition among the manufacturers). We at VIDEO GAME UPDATE look forward to this show with unbridled enthusiasm as we expect to see some incredible things from both the established companies and the up and comers (can it ONLY be a year ago that Imagic introduced their first games?!!) Some information is starting to leak out and, as usual, we are on top of it for you.

In addition, THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE has talked with several of the manufacturers regarding some of the announcements they will be making at the show. We have decided to hold up our January issue and mail it out to you on the first day of the show (January 6). Many of the manufacturers have agreed to give us some advance information so you will begin reading about the exciting new announcements AS THEY ARE BEING MADE AT THE SHOW!! We are very excited about this development. Of course, the February issue will be chock full of more detailed information, including game titles, general release plans, new companies, new systems - everything you want to know - ahead of the competition!

We can hardly wait for January and we're sure you feel the same. By the way, for our dealer/distributor readers who will be at the show, please come by and say hello. We will be in Booth P-39 in the Publication area - we'd love to meet you!

Before we get into the Manufacturer news, we would like to make a very special point to thank all of the game manufacturers who have been so cooperative throughout the year, providing us with prototype games so that our readers can read about the games AS they are hitting the dealer's shelves. Our wish to all of you is a very happy and prosperous 1983.

HATS OFF TO...

KY ENTERPRISES who has stepped in and developed a line of video game controllers for the physically handicapped! it goes without saying that the disabled individual could enjoy game playing if there were a way for him to use controllers. Obviously, for many disabled people, using standard controllers is an impossibility. The following special controllers have begun manufacture: MOUTH OPERATED CONTROLLER for quads with joystick, puff switch for firing, game select and reset (\$65) and HEAD SWITCH which includes 2 soft-touch buttons for right/left or up/down function. Also "fire" switch (\$30). If you wish further information, write to KY ENTERPRISES, 3039 East Second St., Long Beach, CA 90803 (213-433-5244)

INTELLIVISION Mattel is planning an entry into the TV-compatible, home computer field with a free-standing computer console under the AQUARIUS brand name. With a maximum memory capacity of 52K, the Aquarius console features CP/M capability, built-in Microsoft BASIC, 16-color graphics and the ability to display a total of 256 different characters on your TV screen. Peripheral products promised include a 40 column thermal printer, data recorder, and the Aquarius Mini Expander which accommodates a memory cartridge and game cartridge and provides 2 hand controllers for enhanced gameplay. Four primary categories of plug-in software will be available including Education, Home Management, Personal Improvement, and Entertainment. Retail pricing for the basic console is expected to be under \$200 with initial availability scheduled for early 1983.

The second product announcement is the INTELLIVISION ENTERTAINMENT COMPUTER SYSTEM featuring the fully-programmable Intellivision Computer Keyboard and Adaptor Modules which perform the functions of a home computer when used in combination with the Intellivision video game console. This is a redesigned component coming out of the test marketing of their earlier keyboard component which a few of you saw. Retail pricing should be under \$150 with initial distribution around mid-1983. When the Keyboard and Adaptor Modules are plugged into the master component's 16 bit microprocessor, the system utilizes built-in BASIC program language and a range of software including color coded graphics to teach children through gameplay, 3-dimensional graphics combined with music, a new generation of sports games and the opportunity for individual programming of home video games.



Atari has come to an agreement with Nintendo Company Ltd. of Japan and its U.S. subsidiary, Nintendo America Inc., of Seattle, whereby Atari has been granted an exclusive worldwide license for the development, manufacture and distribution of Nintendo's license DONKEY KONG and DONKEY KONG JUNIOR video games for the Atari Home Computers. The titles will be released at some point during 1983 for both the Atari 400 and 800 Personal Computers.

ACTIVISION Three new games have just been announced (Atari-2600 compatible). The first, RIVER RAID, designed by Carol Shaw, is scheduled for release right after Christmas. In this battle and strategy game, your mission is to destroy enemy bridges and fuel dumps along a narrow, heavily fortified river canyon. You're the pilot of a jet cruiser, boldly navigating through an ever-changing landscape, fighting off wave after wave of deadly enemy planes, ships and choppers. If you fly up the wrong channel and enemy fuel tank could leave you permanently grounded. The second game, SPIDER FIGHTER, designed by Larry Miller, is scheduled for release in January. It starts with a single egg...and before you know it, swarms of spiders hatch all over the screen, turning your peaceful orchard into a war zone. Attackers are trying to steal your fruit, so use your remote control bug blaster to get them before they get you. You better be quick and persistent, because the more you shoot, the more come at you. The third new entry is SEAQUEST, designed by Steve Cartwright, (February release) is an undersea adventure. Your command submarine dives deep to rescue divers returning with captured treasure. A fleet of enemy subs & schools of sharks will do everything they can to stop you. Just when you've got them where you want them, an alarm sounds...you're running out of oxygen! Speed to the surface to resupply and hope an enemy destroyer isn't lying in wait!

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS....

VECTREX will announce 6 new cartridges for their VECTREX system at the C.E.S. Show to begin shipping in January....U.S. GAMES will announce approximately 8 new Atari 2600-compatible cartridges at the show. Included will be EGGOMANIA (formerly Wierd Bird), GOPHER, and SQUEEZE BOX....Parker Bros. will announce new cartridges at the show with the first Intellivision-compatible games being shown. We have been told the title of one of these cartridges, tentatively set for April release. We should be able to leak the name of that cartridge to you in the January issue....CBS VIDEO GAMES plans to release WIZARD OF WOR and GORF for you Intellivision owners in February or March....INTERMAGNETICS, new to the game business, plans to introduce 8 new Atari 2600-compatible games at the Winter Show under the name of ZIMAG. They also plan games for the Atari and Commodore Computers. Watch our January issue for more information.



REALSPORTS BASEBALL (★★★★/★★★½) is definitely *NOT* just a remake of Atari's earlier HOME RUN. With the advances made in game programming since that cartridge was first offered, it has become possible to create a more realistic video version of one of America's favorite sports. It's best that you not compare this game to the others available (HOME RUN, M Network's SUPER CHALLENGE BASEBALL or Intelli-vision's MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL, among others) because it is a different game. Knowing how to play the other video baseball games will not help you to learn this one more quickly, and it may just hinder your efforts. OK sports fans, it's time to "play ball!" Since this game has a single player (against the computer) option, your first temptation will be to sit down and play by yourself—don't! Although you'll find the single player option a lot of fun later on, it's much easier to master this game with a friend. The computer already knows how to play the game very well, and you won't feel like such an idiot when your friend is as fumble-fingered as you are! There are a wealth of options available. The pitcher can choose fastball, riser, sinker, or intentional ball (all a little complicated to program with your joystick at first, but you'll get the hang of it). The batter can bunt, hit fly balls or ground balls to right or left field, and, of course, hit a home run. Nuances in timing your swing allow pulling or slicing of the ball. At first we found it difficult getting used to throwing the ball between bases. For example, if your first baseman throws to third, the third baseman will *NOT* automatically catch the ball just because it was thrown in his vicinity—you must put your third baseman in the right spot to catch the ball. This is not the easiest video game to learn, but the effort will be worth it for video sports fans. Recommended. (retail \$26.95)

REALSPORTS FOOTBALL (★★★★/★★★½) is a far cry from the blinking squares in the much earlier Atari FOOTBALL game. As we cautioned you in the review of REALSPORTS BASEBALL, it's best not to compare this with any other video football game you might have played. This isn't quite "real" football (no time-outs, no fumbles, no penalties, no running out of bounds), but it's thoroughly enjoyable nonetheless. Frankly, there is no home video football game that gives you all the options that a well-qualified Monday Quarterback should have, but we have to hand it to Atari for coming up with a really good simulation. As with REALSPORTS BASEBALL, this one is tough to master by yourself against that smart computer. Try to find an enthusiastic friend or family member to feel dumb along with you—then you'll be ready to take on the computer! Once you figure out how to do the basics (such as reading the scoreboard, recognizing which color your team is, calling offensive and defensive plays, and the like) it starts to be fun. Each team has five members, and what choices you have! You can run right or left, throw long or short passes, program kicks (as punts or field goals), blocks, intercept passes, or even program a blitz! You can score touchdowns, field goals and safeties in this game, and the roar of the crowd can be heard in the background (not a welcome sound after a while). Video sports buffs should get many hours of enjoyment from this cartridge. Recommended. (retail \$26.95)

REALSPORTS VOLLEYBALL (★★★★/★★★½) is one of those games you can sit right down and play without even reading the instructions, though it's more fun when you know all the little details. This game puts you on the beach at Santa Monica on a sunny afternoon in Southern California, with the sound of the ocean in the background. To play the computer, you are actually two people on the left of the screen, volleying the ball back and forth with the two on the right. The two on the right seem to play *ALMOST* as poorly as you, but, of course they'll win the first one. That's when you sit down to read the instructions on how to hit the ball, stay within the correct spiking zone, etc. If you ever played volleyball in school, you'll remember the rules quickly. As far as we can remember, Atari sticks pretty close to the official rules on this one, even to the extent of requiring fifteen points with at least a two-point margin to win the game. Your joystick controls both players in unison while you run for the ball, and the firing button is used for serving, spiking, etc. You'll find that the shadow cast by the ball helps in placing your player—until the sun goes down! Atari really cooked up a good game in their lab this time—and without killing Martians or gobbling dots. Our only really negative reactions to the three REALSPORTS games are the sound effects. The fake crowd noises in BASEBALL and FOOTBALL and surf noises in VOLLEYBALL might either drive you up the wall after a while, or else cause you to turn the sound OFF! Recommended. (retail \$26.95)

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EXPLANATION OF RATING SYSTEM: ★★★★★ = EXCELLENT ☆
 First set of stars--quality of graphics ★★★★★ = GOOD ☆
 Second set of stars--quality of play action ★★ = FAIR ☆
 ★ = POOR ☆

Any game for a given system is compared only to other games for that system. In other words, all Atari & Atari-compatible games are judged separately from Intellivision & Intellivision-compatible games, etc. ☆

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK (★★★★/★★★★) is still another superb adventure game from Atari, coming at the point when most VCS adventurers are still deeply involved in the mysteries of SWORDQUEST EARTHWORD. There's hardly an adventure lover who won't want to leave (temporarily) the quest for the Sword of Ultimate Sorcery to travel with Indiana Jones to search for the fabled Lost Ark of the covenant in Egypt. The graphics are less dazzling in this game than in EARTHWORD, but they're quite good nonetheless. The figure representing Indiana Jones isn't exactly a Harrison Ford look-alike, but it's a definite improvement over moving a cursor through the game. The game opens with Indy perched atop a pedestal inside the Well of the Souls. An electronic rendition of the theme from the movie, RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, plays as the Ark of the covenant makes a brief appearance at the top of your TV screen. Take a good look, because that's the last you'll see of the Ark for some time! You'll need two joysticks for this game, one to control Indy's movements and his use of various objects, the other to select or drop objects from your inventory. (You can carry up to six objects at a time.) The game itself offers a wealth of locations and situations inhabited by all kinds of creatures. There are Sheiks in the Marketplace, Spiders and Tsetse Flies in the Spider Room, a black-cloaked Thief in the Valley of Poison, and a Raving Lunatic at the Black Market, among others. Objects Indy will find and use include a Whip, Revolver, Coins, a Magic Flute that plays the snake charmer's song to keep the snakes away, a Shovel, Key, Ankh, Chai, Hourglass, Parachute, Grenade, and more. To make things more interesting, Atari's designers have caused the location of the Ark (in the Well of Souls) to be placed randomly among the Mesas, so it won't always be found in the same location on repeated plays. There are also a few goodies hidden in the program, such as a special signature that will appear on the screen as a reward for especially high scorers. A few more hints than usual for adventure games are to be found in the instruction book, but they're set aside in a separate section—refer to them only if you wish. We like this one a lot. It's an involving game that will keep you busy for many hours of exciting adventuring. Recommended. (retail \$37.95)

E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL (★★★/★★★★) makes it an absolute bonanza for lovers of adventure games who own an Atari 2600--three brand new adventure games in such a short period of time! In this game, you must help E.T. find the 3 pieces of his interplanetary telephone, call his ship, and guide him to the landing pad in time to be rescued. In the easiest of the 3 game variations, the only human present is Elliott, rendered in blue jeans and striped T-shirt. The most difficult variation adds an FBI agent and a scientist. The game begins with a picture of E.T. and the musical theme from the movie--push the joystick button, and E.T. arrives in his space ship. You control E.T. as he wanders over the surface of the planet, picking up Reese's Pieces for extra energy, avoiding the FBI agent and scientist (if present in the variation you're playing), and searching for pieces of his phone. Periodically, E.T. falls into a well, and he must use his powers of levitation to get out. Throughout the game, a special information strip at the top of the screen keeps you informed of how many phone pieces have been found and the nature of the special areas E.T. enters. For example, E.T. must be in special zones to call Elliott, call his ship, eat candy pieces, and several other functions. This is not nearly as involved as adventure games such as RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK or SWORDQUEST EARTHWORD, but it's an enjoyable quest nonetheless. The presence of a simple game variation makes it suitable even for small children. Recommended (retail \$39.95)



CARNIVAL (★★★½/★★★★) is a home version of the Sega arcade game for the Atari 2600. This is a classic, old-fashioned shooting gallery, complete with very realistic sound effects of bullets that "ping" as they hit their targets. Groups of targets march across the screen--owls, rabbits, ducks and extra-bullet boxes. There is also a revolving rack of clay pipes at top center of your TV screen. A "Plus-Minus" target at the upper left portion of the screen registers numbers of points or bullets that will be add or subtracted from your score or bullet supply when hit. The tricky twist in this game is that ducks in the bottom row don't just swim off the screen when you don't knock them off. Sitting ducks rapidly become flying ducks in that row, and they fly straight to your bullet supply to eat ten of your bullets. Those are some mean ducks! Watch that you don't become mesmerized while casually picking off animal targets. If you leave the clay pipes until late in your game, more and more and more ducks will appear. Conserving your supply of bullets then becomes nearly impossible. This is an enjoyable game with very good graphics, especially in the use of bright colors. The bonus bear screen, spelling exercises, and musical background of the I/C version are not present here, but the game is still good without them. Recommended.



MARAUDER (★★★/★★★★½) is a game with simple but very clean graphics

that's a lot of fun to play. The idea is that you've landed on an alien planet, and you're about to penetrate the enemy base which is defended by armed attack robots. Your character, the Marauder, must find his way to the heart of the base where he'll find the power center of the enemy's weapon system. It's a race against time as the Marauder searches the six rooms of the enemy base. Each room is guarded by four, five or six robots (more robots the longer you stay in the game). Each room is something of a maze, with obstacles scattered in the Marauder's way. What makes the game intriguing is that the attack robots are invisible to you whenever there is a wall between the Marauder and the robots. You learn to be very wary about turning corners suddenly, because the robots are likely to be so close that your Marauder is a goner before you have time to react. Some rooms contain a flashing suit of Magic Armor. If you see the Armor, quickly touch it to gain its magical powers. As long as your Marauder is flashing, he's invincible: the robots can't shoot the Marauder, and he can even destroy robots by crashing into them. The game can be played with robots that are slow, medium, fast or extra fast, and the pace will pick up as you play. It worked better for us when we started out slowly. We tried it at "extra fast," and the robots just about scared us to death! This is a thoroughly enjoyable game. Recommended. (retail \$29.95)

JAWBREAKER (★★★½/★★★★½) is based on the popular computer game from On-Line Systems, and it's a winner! You control a set of chomping teeth let loose in a candy factory where white dashes represent candy bars. This is most definitely *NOT* a typical maze. There are horizontal "tracks" on which you can travel from right to left or left to right, and vertical movement can be accomplished at either the right or left edge of the screen. There are also sliding doors which appear in the floors and ceilings of the tracks, allowing you to slip through and travel to the track immediately above or below. Watch out for the Smiling Faces—they'll munch you if you don't stay out of their way! Three times per maze, a special "Vitamin Pill" will appear in the center of the maze. If you move your set of jaws over the Vitamin, you'll gain a few moments of extra energy, allowing you to munch the Smiling Faces. Clear the maze of candy bars, and you receive bonus points while you get your teeth brushed. (Your teeth certainly would need brushing after gobbling 135 candy bars!) The more mazes you manage to clear, the faster the Smiling Faces move, so the pace can get quite frantic. Despite the fact that the theme of this game sounds familiar, the horizontal arrangement of the maze with its sliding doors makes the game play differently from others with similar themes. We found this one delightful and quite addictive. Recommended. (retail \$34.95)



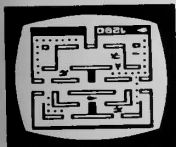
ALIEN (★★/★★½), sorry to say, is one more rehash of the eat-the-dot maze in which your

character is pursued by some kind of monsters which can occasionally be destroyed if your character eats a special dot. In this one, your character is human, and his job is to run through the hallways of a space ship, crushing

Alien Eggs. The monsters are adult Aliens, and your human can destroy them after capturing a Pulsar. As in other games of the type, there is a passage allowing temporary escape from pursuing Aliens, The "Hyperwarp Tunnel."

This game also offers the opportunity to capture two "prizes" per maze, which are good for extra points. Your human also carries a flame thrower with four seconds worth of flames that can be used to make an Alien turn

away or become immobilized for a very short period of time. If you clear the maze of all Alien Eggs, you'll have a chance to earn extra points in a bonus round, in which you get eight seconds to travel straight up the screen to nab a prize before you're engulfed by groups of Aliens moving horizontally across the screen. We found the graphics only fair, and game play is just too much like other games already available to create much interest on the part of gamers look for a new challenge. Not recommended. (retail \$34.95)



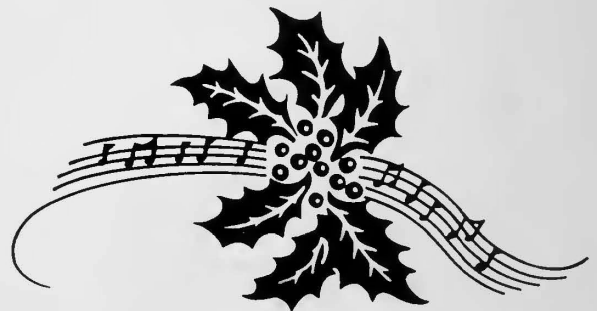
Games of the Century™

FANTASTIC VOYAGE (★★/★★), based on the movie of the same name, has you piloting a miniaturized submarine through the bloodstream of a critically ill patient. Equipped with a medical laser ray, you must work your way through several phases of treatment to reach a life-threatening blood clot. Time counts, and you can keep track with the time clock in the lower left portion of your TV screen. Also in the lower portion of the screen, you'll find a heart monitor which indicates the strength of the patient's heartbeat, and a record of the number of patients saved. As you move through the bloodstream, you must learn to distinguish between enzymes (shoot these to release their healing properties); antibodies (destroy because they sap your patient's strength); immune defense cells (destroy for points, although passing them will not hurt the patient); blood cells (do not shoot or touch); bacteria (shoot three times to destroy); and clotlets (steer around these since they're indestructible). In the final phase, right after the clotlets, you must fire fifteen shots into the blood clot. You must fire quickly, because running into the clot is fatal to your submarine and your patient! Fox is to be commended for an attempt to a game with something beyond the typical "shoot-em-up" scenario, but the game gets just plain boring once you've played it a few times. Even the graphics are ho-hum. Not recommended. (retail \$34.95)

MEGA FORCE (★★★½/★★½) is a graphically well-rendered, horizontally scrolling shootout based on the movie of the same name. As a member of the MEGA FORCE, you've been sent to defend Sardoun, a strategically important democratic nation, and destroy the enemy headquarters. Your Moto-Fighter, an advanced fighting machine, has wheels and fires at a downward angle when on the ground, while it fires straight ahead and sprouts wings when it takes to the air. Other than the exotic mode of transportation, action in this game is pretty straight-forward. You have a limited fuel supply and must engage enemy aircraft on bombing raids to Sardoun and avoid ground rockets



which can easily seek you out once launched. If you're really quick, you may be able to knockout the ground rockets before they're launched, avoiding the whole problem of evading them. Fuel is replenished by demolishing fuel depots (not so easy, since they're guarded by ground rockets). For beginners and practice rounds, there's a version of the game in which enemy aircraft do not shoot at you, but that's really too easy. Since the goal, after all, is to destroy the enemy headquarters, we found that you can do it with a minimum of hassle by pretty much ignoring everything in your path and flying like crazy until you reach the enemy's black towers. Demolish them quickly, and the round is over, without the finer details of dealing with ground rockets. Of course, your fuel will disappear pretty quickly if you choose to play this way! While we found this the best of the latest trio from 20th Century Fox, game play is only of average interest. (retail \$34.95)



In the months ahead THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE will expand to include home computer hardware and software.

M Network has announced a promotion where you can buy any 2 M Network cartridges and mail in for a 3rd cartridge ABSOLUTELY FREE! This promotion is set to run through the first week in January and should be available through your dealer.

CBS VIDEO GAMES



GORF™



WIZARD OF WOR™

GORF (★★★/★★★), the popular Bally Midway arcade game, is now available to owners of the Atari 2600. To their credit, CBS Video Games states on the box, "Due to game machine limitations, this special home version may not contain all sections of the coin operated game." They also picture all four missions contained in the A/C version: Astro Battles, Laser Attack, Space Warp, and Flag Ship. Let's hear it for truth in advertising! This version of GORF equips the Space Cadet with five Interstellar Space Fighters in the battle to save Earth from the attack of the evil Gorfian Empire. In Astro Battles, you defend Earth from the advancing columns of Droids and Gorf--six columns of three invaders each that descend with increasing speed, dropping anti-matter bombs. In the Laser Attack Mission, you must deal with a Laser Ship guarded by a Flying Gorf and 3 Kamikaze Invaders which keep diving at your Space Fighter. The contest becomes more difficult in the Space Warp Mission. The enemy Flag Ship has generated a space web which releases spiralling Gorfian Attackers firing Subquark Torpedoes. (Have you noticed that video games--especially space games--are establishing a whole new language?) If you can destroy all five of the Attackers, your final mission is to face the Gorfian Flag Ship itself. Only a perfect shot to the ship's internal power reactor vent will work, but your good aim will be rewarded by a colorful display as the ship disintegrates. Incidentally, you'll have to stay clear of the Flag Ship's Tracking Missiles while setting up your shots. Once the Flag Ship has been demolished, you earn the rank of Space Captain and go on to repeat the sequence of missions against progressively faster and nastier enemies. There are 9 levels of mission sequences, each one tougher than the last. CBS Video Games has done a good job of translating a fairly complex arcade game for the Atari 2600. It was not possible to include all the details of the original, such as the moving shields, but the game plays very well. Recommended (retail approx. \$30.00)

WIZARD OF WOR (★★★/★★★), the A/C version of the Bally Midway coin-op hit, is an exciting and challenging game sure to appeal to all lovers of maze chases. The dungeons of the mystical Kingdom of Wor are inhabited by terrible Worlings whose only purpose in life is to shoot or devour your 3 Warriors. The species of Worling are Burwors (6 blue creatures that appear at the beginning of each dungeon); Garwors (invisible yellow beasties materializing for a few seconds at a time); Thorwors (extra fast and tricky Worlings, invisible most of the time); the Worluk (the Wizard's winged beast, appearing from the second dungeon on, after the last Worling is shot); and the Wizard of Wor himself. All creatures, even the invisible ones, appear on a radar scanner at the bottom of your screen--an invaluable tool in your quest to survive. The Wizard proves to be the most difficult of all adversaries, however, because he cannot be readily tracked on radar. He travels through the dungeon by teleporting crazily from place to place within the maze, hurling lightning bolts at your Warrior as he goes. This is no contest for the faint of heart! As a single-player game, this one is good for hours of fun, and it takes on a whole new aspect as a two-player contest. Both players have Warriors in the maze at the same time, and they may cooperate in hunting Worlings or work against each other, gaining points for destroying their opponents. The graphics are good, despite the fact that there is some blinking when several Worlings are in the maze at once. Game play should prove challenging to even the most accomplished gamers. Recommended (retail approx. \$30.00)

PARKER BROTHERS AMIDAR (★★½/★★½) is a home video version of the arcade game by Konami. Like the coin-op game, this rendition offers a pair of mazes, and the object is to fill in as much of each maze as possible, one block at a time, by outlining the perimeter of each block. In the first maze, your character is a gorilla being chased by wild warriors, and in the second you're a paint roller being pursued by pink pigs. If this doesn't make a lot of sense to you, don't worry--the connection between all these characters is never really explained in either the coin-op or home versions. In either maze, you'll soon learn that the chasers are faster than your character, though they do move in a predictable manner. This gives you the chance to outsmart your pursuers, even when you can't outrun them. Four times per gorilla (or paint roller), you can press your joystick button to turn the warriors (or pigs) into shadows that you can pass right through for just a moment. Bonus points can be scored by coloring the four corner blocks: the warriors (pigs) will turn into chickens that can be caught by your gorilla (paint roller). For a maze-chase game, this one moves more slowly than you might expect, and we found it just too much of the same thing, over and over again. Not recommended. (retail \$39.95)

COSMIC CREEPS (★★★½/★★★) is the latest from a company bent on establishing itself with a reputation for fun, originality and a little downright

zaniess. The game is played in two stages: first, you attempt to maneuver your Orbinaut, who looks a bit like Charlie Brown (of the Peanuts comic strip) in a space helmet, upward to your space station. Of course, there are obstacles in space, the most troublesome of which are the Space Skeeters. They have a nasty habit of appearing out of nowhere, just when your Orbinaut is about to reach his goal, and they'll bump him unceremoniously into outer space oblivion if you're not careful. You can start again with a new Orbinaut, but this is a timed contest, marked by the passage of the Earth through the sky, so every lost Orbinaut will decrease your chances of scoring lots of points in the next stage of the contest. Once your Orbinaut safely reaches the space station, a Cosmic Kid will emerge at the lower left corner of your TV screen, followed very closely by Cosmic Creeps. This grouping of cosmic creatures will skid left to right, then right to left, gradually making its way to the top right corner of your screen while following horizontal tracks across the screen. The object is to bonk the Creeps with projectiles dropped from your horizontally mobile space station before they can reach top right. This is not always easy to do, because you're not supposed to bonk the Cosmic Kid immediately next to the Creep. But if you do accidentally bonk one of the Kids, you can dispatch another (along with a new cluster of Creeps) and try again. We found this one a lot of fun, and the graphics are very good. It should definitely appeal to children, and more than a few adults will get a kick out of the whimsical approach to space games. Recommended. (retail \$31.95)

SUICIDE MISSION (★★★/★★½) in cassette tape format for the Starpath Supercharger pits your miniaturized submarine against the onslaught of deadly viral colonies within the human body. Your submarine is a triangular vessel equipped with a penicillin torpedo capable of dividing and eventually destroying the viral colony after 3 hits. Occasionally a "Deadly Little Virus" homes in on your submarine, a bit like a guided missile. Once you've played this game for a few minutes, you'll have the feeling you're shooting at asteroids in inner space--it's a lot like the outer space variety. The graphics are interesting to watch at first--the amoeba-like movement of the viral colonies is quite convincing. However, game play is not sufficiently exciting or original to make this one a must for your collection. Not recommended (retail \$14.95)

ESCAPE FROM THE MINDMASTER (★★★★/★★★★) in cassette tape format for the Starpath Supercharger is the most unusual maze game yet made for the Atari 2600. Unlike previous games for the Supercharger, this is a multi-load cassette: four separate sections containing six mazes plus your final evaluation by the MindMaster. In this maze game, you're no outsider because the maze is 3-dimensional, giving you a feeling of actually travelling through it yourself instead of merely controlling an on-screen character. The MindMaster's mazes are full of tests of agility, memory and logical reasoning, and there is an Alien Stalker you must avoid bumping into. Because it is so easy to become disoriented once you've been in the maze for a few minutes, it is necessary to refer to the Maze Map at the bottom of the screen, along with the Direction Finder, so that you won't become hopelessly lost. As you check out all the doorways, passages and alcoves, you'll discover differently shaped pegs--then you must find the corresponding holes for these pegs and match pegs to holes. From Maze Two on, you'll encounter sliding force fields, which are large, square panels that come slicing across passageways to make your movement through the maze more difficult. From Maze Fur on, some doors are one-way only. If you pass through and turn around, they will seem to have disappeared! Some alcoves contain special tests of intellect and coordination. Do your best--the MindMaster is watching. To make all of this even more challenging, you lose more points the longer you're in each maze. Once you've lost all your chances and gone as far as you can go, you'll be given your final score--plus the MindMaster's impression of your performance. (The MindMaster found our first attempt "quaint"). We found this, by far, the most impressive entry so far from Starpath. It will be good for hours of stimulating play. Recommended (retail \$16.95)



THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE is *FIRST* with the information *YOU* need!!

CRITICALLY SPEAKING... ACCESSORIES

The Game Mate 2 remote control joystick system from Cynex Manufacturing is still another approach for your Atari 2600 game system, and Atari or Commodore VIC-20 computers. The system comprises a receiver unit with antenna, designed to be plugged into an AC outlet and your game or computer plus two cordless joysticks equipped with rubberized, flexible antennas. Each joystick requires a nine-volt battery (not included). Once you connect everything according to the instructions, you can move twenty feet (or even farther, if necessary) from your game unit, and the joysticks will work beautifully. Do pay attention to the note in the instruction folder regarding the necessity of having BOTH joysticks turned on to make all functions operative in some games. We overlooked this admonition and had problems with two games (Atari's SwordQuest Earth-world and Apollo's Space Cavern), un-

til we read the instructions more carefully. The joysticks are essentially identical to the Atari model, with the exception of an extra-thick base (2¾ inches) to accommodate the necessary electronics. The thick base is a lot to hold onto, and those with small hands may find it uncomfortable or tiring. If you have made or purchased a holder of some kind that fits a standard Atari joystick for tabletop use, it should work with this remote joystick as well. This system is at its best with games that can be reset by means of the firing button, but its primary benefit with all games is the absence of controller cords strung across the living room. (retail \$99.95)

GAME MATE



SPECTRAVISION™

recently put its QuickShot joystick controller on the market. It is compatible with Atari 2600 and Sears Video Arcade game systems, plus Atari 400/800 computers and the Commodore VIC-20 computer. The packaging states that it is compatible with the Atari 5200 game systems, but this is not true, due to a different pin configuration on the connector for this system. The joystick itself has a good, contoured hand grip and two firing buttons—one on the base, one atop the stick. As the joystick comes out of the box, the base has the standard four rubber skid pads on the bottom. Hand-held, the joystick works well, with tight action and short "throw" requiring a minimum of wrist action for a standard-sized joystick. A major problem with this unit is that its advertised and pictured on the box as having "rubber suction cups for one-hand operation." It has suction cups all right—packaged separately in a little plastic bag, with instructions to remove the rubber skid pads and twist the suction cups into place on the four corners of the bottom. We did this, with some difficulty, and then looked for a sufficiently smooth surface to stick the thing down. It stuck well at first, but as soon as we became the least but enthusiastic in maneuvering the joystick, up it came in our hand—leaving the four suction cups stuck to the table! Forget the suction cups, folks—we tried again, and got the same results every time. This is a perfectly good hand-held unit, but don't buy it for the suction cup feature. (90-day manufacturer's warranty)

The FingerTip Controller from KY Enterprises is another of the button-type controllers meant as an alternative to the standard Atari-compatible joystick. This is an economical, well-made console controller with a cluster of four buttons in a diamond-shaped configuration on the right, and a large, comfortable firing button on the left. The positioning of the four directional buttons even allows for diagonal on-screen movement by simultaneously pressing two buttons. This doesn't usually work well on button-type controllers because of the distance between buttons, but it is quite a satisfactory arrangement on this unit.



We found the buttons large enough to be extremely comfortable in use, and all functions are very sensitive. Lefties haven't been forgotten, either, because there's a version of the console with the positions of the firing button and directional cluster reversed. The unit has a two-year manufacturer's warranty. Recommended. (retail \$19.95)

Suncom

A pair of new Atari-compatible joysticks from Suncom Industries can best be described as "cute" when you first see them. The Slik Stik and StarFighter both have a base slightly smaller than the standard Atari joystick, with smooth, rounded corners. The cords are extra-long, and the sticks themselves are extra-short. The principle here is to minimize wrist movement to lessen the fatigue factor in game-playing sessions. The Slik Stik has a slim shaft topped with a small red ball (90 day warranty, retail \$9.95), and the



StarFighter has a thicker, smooth shaft (2 year warranty, retail \$16.95). Both joysticks are designed to be gripped by the fingers, rather than the whole hand, and we found them to operate very responsively. They are, of course, ideal for children with small hands, but most adults will find them very comfortable to use as well. Recommended.



ATTACK OF THE TIMELORD! (★★★½/★★★½) is the latest entertainment cartridge for the Voice of Odyssey2. This is a multi-screen space game in which you do battle with the forces of Spyrus the Deathless, Timelord of Chaos. In level one, the Timelord's fleet of Time Ships spiral and swoop out of the Time Warp, firing missiles at your ground-based Time Machine, which is equipped with a laser cannon. If you can knock out all six Time Ships, you will move on to level two, in which the ships fire Antimatter Mines. In level three, the tricky Annihilators join the fray, and the dreaded Nucleonic Time Killers become part of the Timelord's arsenal in level four. Altogether, there are 256 game levels with increasingly faster Time Ships and gradually greater fire power. This is a good game even without the Voice, but the Timelord's remarks make it even more fun. The first time you reach a level high enough to earn the Timelord's respect, he will remark "A commendable defense." Nothing like a pat on the back to spur the gamer on to greater heights. Recommended. (retail \$34.95)



DATA AGE™ In the first tie-in with a recording group, Data Age will be releasing an Atari 2600-compatible cartridge in January entitled **JOURNEY ESCAPE**. Using Journey-simulated music as background, your mission will be to get the group members out of their escape vehicle, a scarab, after a concert, trying to avoid fans chasing them across the stage, chasing them in and out of exits, little lips trying to kiss them, etc.

YEAR-END INDEX

GAME MANUFACTURERS

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ZAXXON	COLECO	COLECO	11/82

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Last month, THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE mentioned an upcoming promotion for our subscribers. We originally told you a contest would be announced in this issue. As you may or may not be aware, the months of December through February are the most competitive for gaining subscribers. Thus, we felt it would be improper to unveil a contest for our annual subscribers at this time, as they will still be subscribers in March and be eligible for the contest at that time. It is not our intention to use contests and frills to sell THE UPDATE as we feel the work speaks for itself. Ed.
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CRITICALLY SPEAKING...

INTELLIVISION-COMPATIBLE

COLECO CARNIVAL (★★★★/★★★★½) is a very faithful adaptation of the Sega arcade game, complete with the musical accompaniment of "Loveliest Night of the Year," a tune very much associated with carnivals and circuses. One or two players can participate in this video shooting gallery featuring the usual complement of ducks, clay pipes, rabbits, owls, and various bonus items which parade from opposing directions in three rows above the player's gun. The player starts with fifty bullets, and hitting certain targets will add or subtract bullets from the total. There are letters to be aimed at as well—if you hit them in the correct order to spell "bonus", they're worth extra points. The yellow ducks are the dangerous rascals in this game—if you miss one in the lowest row, it's likely to take wing and flutter over to your reserve bullet supply, where it will cheerfully munch ten of your bullets while you watch helplessly. The wheel of clay pipes at the top of the screen poses a few problems, too. If you wait until you've cleared most of the gallery to go after the pipes, you'll find your screen filling up with more ducks than a duck pond right before hunting season. Knock off the pipes early, and you'll have a better chance of clearing the entire gallery of targets, which will earn you a chance at the "Bear Rack", a second screen with a single bear as your target. You earn extra points for each hit, but the bear moves faster every time he is hit. Like most avid video game players, we're enticed by the promise of any kind of bonus screen, and we worked awfully hard to reach that Bear Rack for what turned out to be a few potshots at a very unexciting brown bear. With the exception of the Bear Rack, we found the game charming and ideally suited to the Intellivision system. The graphics are simply gorgeous, with particularly excellent use of color. Recommended.

IF YOU WISH A COPY OF A BACK ISSUE, PLEASE SEND \$2.00 PER ISSUE TO COVER THE COST OF COPYING AND POSTAGE.

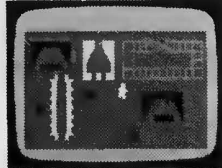
CRITICALLY SPEAKING... INTELLIVISION-COMPATIBLE

INTELLIVISION

ROYAL DEALER (★★★½/★★★½) is a great cartridge for the avid card player who doesn't always have a friend or two handy when he or she wants to play a few games of Crazy Eights, Rummy, Gin Rummy or Hearts. This is also a good way to learn these games without putting your friends through the agony of waiting for you to make each carefully considered move. Without explaining all the specific rules for each card game, to which Mattel adheres, we can say that playing against one to three computer-controlled opponents can be a lot of fun. Each game starts with the sound of cards being shuffled, and then the hands are dealt to you and your poker-faced female opponent(s). You have the expected abilities to draw and discard, and you can also rearrange your hand at any time (with no one to complain that you're holding up the game). Graphics are quite good, although it might be nice if your opponents would occasionally move a little—or change their expressions—or something! But if you enjoy or want to learn any of the card games offered on this cartridge, it would be a worthwhile addition to your collection. Recommended.



Royal Dealer™



Tron™ Maze-A-Tron™

TRON MAZE-A-THON (★★★★/★★★★) is another of the type of game Mattel does so well, a complexly satisfying mental and physical challenge. This is the second game in the series of three inspired by the Disney movie, TRON, and it's far better than the first release, TRON DEADLY DISCS. A warning: this is not one of those games that you can play without becoming thoroughly familiar with the instructions. Your task as Flynn, the daring young programmer, is to find and disable the Master Control Program (the MCP) before it can gain what it seeks—control of the human race. The game is played in rounds of two phases each. Phase One is the scrolling Circuit Maze in which you store up energy and zeroes as you move Flynn through the Maze. You must find the computer RAM (random access memory) Chips and clear them to zero as quickly as possible while avoiding Recognizers (guards of the MCP), Force Fields between ROM (ready-only memory) Chips, Zaps (electric impulses in the circuit wiring that drain energy if you touch them), and Bus (circuit wiring that forms the maze). Phase Two is the MCP, a very nasty character indeed. You must find pairs of numbers (Bit Pairs) in the two center columns that match the Bit Pair at the top of the two outer columns that enclose the MCP. All the while, the MCP will fire laser blasts to discourage you. If a Bit Pair in the central column Bit Stream makes it to the top without being matched, you'll "pop the stack". For those who like to know how far they can go, there are twelve levels (two phases per level), and each moves faster than the one before. The computer will keep score up to 9,999,999 points, which should be sufficient for the most masterful of MCP dismantlers. Recommended.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING...

ATARI 5200-COMPATIBLE

SPACE INVADERS (★★★★/★★★½) is, of course, one of THE all-time classic video games, and this latest version is just gorgeous. We like it even better than the original Taito America coin-op game! We hardly need to describe the game itself, with its columns of marching Invaders, because everyone has seen this game in one incarnation or another. The Atari 5200 version has more colorful and better drawn Invaders than any we've seen, and the sound effects add just the right sense of urgency as the Invaders get closer to your Laser Cannon. Once you reach Wave Four, the Invaders begin to mutate before your eyes, even going through a Crystalline Stage. If you hit a Crystalline Invader, you don't get any points, so you have to be more careful with your shots. Nearly everyone who owns an Atari 2600 has this classic in his or her collection, and we think most owners of the new Atari 5200 will want its version. Recommended (retail \$39.95)



MISSILE COMMAND (★★★★/★★★★) is a simply dazzling version of the game already familiar to arcaders and owners of the Atari 2600. In fact, we've found a new favorite in the Atari 5200 library! Your job is to defend the six cities on the planet Zardon from the Krytolian invasion by firing antiballistic missiles (ABM's) from your central Missile Base. The enemy attacks your cities and missile base with interplanetary ballistic missiles (IPBM's) multiple independent re-entry vehicles (MIRV's), smart missiles, killer satellites, and bombers. This game can get very tough very quickly as incoming missiles branch out if you don't hit them soon enough. Bombers and killer satellites also drop missiles if they're not destroyed early, and it can get pretty frantic with all that enemy firepower branching and multiplying all over the screen! You'll probably be fascinated, as we were, by the look and sound of the realistic explosions of the missiles the first few times you play the game. Just don't get so carried away that you lose cities to the enemy! Recommended (retail \$39.95)

PAC-MAN (★★★★/★★★★) has all the musical and visual charm of the arcade game by Bally Midway that has captured the fancy of millions. No more flashing ghosts, folks, and all the little "fruit" prizes you expect to find are here in this version. There are even intermission cartoons scattered here and there. With all this good news, why didn't we give this version of PAC-MAN a higher game-play rating? The analog joystick that we like so well on most of the games can be a drawback in this one. Because this joystick does not snap back to a centered position when released, it can be tough to turn corners exactly when you want to. In the heat of the chase, you can think you're pushing straight up on the joystick, and find out that you're actually pushing the upward right diagonal. This you find out after the ghost demolishes your PAC-MAN, and you look down at the joystick in your hand to see where it's REALLY pointing. While we feel that a real PAC-MAN fanatic will gradually overcome this problem with a lot of practice, it may be discouraging to the casual player. This criticism aside, the game is totally charming and lots of fun to play. One feature that's very helpful to the player who really wants to study his game is the "Pause" button on the hand controller. When you can see that your demise is eminent, you can hit "Pause", freeze the game action, and study your options—something you certainly cannot do on the arcade game. Recommended (retail \$39.95)

A WORD ABOUT CUSTOMER SERVICE DEPARTMENTS...

As we hear from our readers, one fact surfaces over and over again...the Game Manufacturer's Customer Service Departments which many of you call on a regular basis for game news DO NOT, AS A RULE, HAVE THE CORRECT INFORMATION ON WHEN GAMES ARE SHIPPING! These folks are there to help you with problems that you may be encountering with your master unit, cartridges, etc. and they are not kept up-to-date on release schedules (which can and DO change constantly). Some of you have told us how you have called every week to find yourself being given totally different information (a cartridge HAS shipped, a cartridge has NOT shipped, it's on your dealer's shelves, etc.). Case in point...without naming the manufacturer, one reader called 2 weeks ago asking if a particular cartridge had shipped (one that was due out around November 1). He was told, "yes, it's in the stores now". With total frustration, he called retailers all over unable to find the cartridge. The next week he called the company back and was told "it's shipping next week". He called us to see if we knew anything. As it happened, we had spoken with the company that same day (a marketing rep we speak with all the time) and we were given a fairly firm release date of "the first week in December". MORAL...the folks in Customer Service MEAN well, but they simply do NOT have the up-to-the-minute information. Continue to call if you wish but understand that it's difficult at times for even the Sales and Marketing departments to have the dates and, obviously, getting the word to the Customer Service department is one of the lower priorities of the company.

AVAILABILITY UPDATE

(based on projected release dates by mfrs. May change without notice)

ATARI 2600-COMPATIBLE

NOVEMBER

- X ALIEN (Fox)
- X AMIDAR (PB)
- X CARNIVAL (Col)
- X CONDOR ATTACK (UltraV)
- COSMIC CREEP (Tel)
- DARK CAVERN (M Ntwk)
- X ENHANCED VOLLEYBALL (At)
- X E.T.
- INTL SOCCER (M Ntwk)
- X KARATE (UltraV)
- X MEGAFORCE (Fox)
- RAIDERS OF LOST ARK (At)
- X SKY JINKS (ActV)
- SPIDERMAN (PB)
- X TURMOIL (Fox)

DECEMBER

- CHIPS (UltraV)
- ENHANCED FOOTBALL (At)
- FANTASTIC VOYAGE (Fox)
- GORF (CBS)
- QUEST for the IDOL (UltraV)
- RIVER PATROL (TigerV)
- RIVER RAID (Actv)
- SMURF RESCUE (Col)
- SPIDER KONG (UltraV)
- TURBO (Col)
- WIZARD OF WOR (CBS)
- ZAXXON (Col)

JANUARY

- CRYPTS OF CHAOS (Fox)
- ENTITY (Fox)
- GOPHER (USG)
- GUARDIANS of TREASURE (USG)
- HIGH SEAS (M Ntwk)
- MAZE CHASE (USG)
- MISSION OMEGA (CoVd)
- SAVE THE WHALES (Fox)
- SPIDER FIGHTER (Actv)
- SQUEEZE BOX (USG)
- SUPER COBRA (PB)
- SURFING (Fox)
- TRON DEADLY DISCS (M Ntwk)

FEBRUARY

- SEAQUEST (ActV)

ATARI 5200-COMPATIBLE

NOVEMBER

- X PAC-MAN
- X.SOCCER

DECEMBER

- DEFENDER
- FOOTBALL

JANUARY

- CENTIPEDE

INTELLIVISION-COMPATIBLE

NOVEMBER

- X.PITFALL (ActV)
- X.STAMPEDE (ActV)
- X TRON MAZE-A-TRON (Mat)

DECEMBER

- MOUSETRAP (Col)
- ROYAL DEALER (Mat)
- VENTURE (Col)

JANUARY

- SWORDS & SERPENTS (Imgc)
- TRON SOLAR SAILER (Mat)
- U.S.C.F. CHESS (Mat)

**ODYSSEY
NOVEMBER**
S.I.D. THE SPELLBINDER
SMITHEREENS

DECEMBER
ATTACK OF THE TIMELORD

**COLECO
NOVEMBER**
CONVERSION MODULE/ATARI (ships
wk of 11/29-extremely limited supply)
X TURBO (just started EXTREMELY
small shipments as we went to print)

DECEMBER
BLACKJACK
SPACE FURY
SPACE PANIC

X--has shipped by the time we have gone
to print. May not be in natl distribution
yet.

Company Name Codes:

- ActV - Activision
- Ap - Apollo
- At - Atari
- CBS - CBS Video Games
- Col - Coleco
- CoVd - CommaVid
- DA - Data Age
- Fox - 20th Century Fox
- Imgc - Imagic
- Mat - Mattel
- MNtwk - M Network
- Ody - Odyssey
- PB - Parker Bros
- SpecV - Spectravision
- Tel - Telesys
- TigV - Tigervision
- UltraV - Ultravision
- USG - U.S. Games
- Vec - Vectrex

VIDEO TAKE-OUT'S TOP 10 SELLERS

This month	Last month	AC/=Atari-comp. I/C=Intellivision-comp.
1	—	Demon Attack (Imgc I/C)
2	—	Atlantis (Imgc I/C)
3	—	Microsurgeon (Imgc I/C)
4	—	SwordQuest Earthworld (Atari)
5	—	Zaxxon (ColecoVision)
6	—	Tron Maze-A-Tron (Mat I/C)
7	—	Mouse Trap (Coleco A/C)
8	—	Pitfall (Activision I/C)
9	—	RealSports Baseball (Atari)
10	1	Pitfall (Activision A/C)

IN THIS ISSUE...



- Realsports Series
- E.T.(Atari)
- Raiders of Lost Ark
- Carnival (Col A/C)
- Amidar (PB)
- PacMan (At 5200)
- Attack/Timelord (Od)
- Remote joysticks
- Gorf (CBS A/C)
- Wizard of Wor (CBS)
- Tron MazeTron (Mat)
- Year-end Index
- Year-end Top 10

We are unable to review TURBO as promised as Coleco is running behind schedule on the release

TODAY A VIDEOGAME, TOMORROW A COMPUTER??

When you bought your first videogame, you were really buying your first taste of a computer which brings us to the point of A) the expansion of THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE to include home computer hardware and software and B) what do you want from us as we start adding this new dimension over the next several months? We are now working on a comparison chart covering such units as the Atari 5200 Videogame, Atari 400 and 800 computers, ColecoVision, VIC 20 computer and more. We need your help. What questions do you want addressed? And, as we move into home computers, what systems do you want software reviewed for? Write to us now and let us know what YOU need in the way of information.

And, as always, our mailbox is open for your ideas and comments. It's YOUR newsletter after all!



COMING NEXT MONTH...

- Vectrex cartridges
- LOTS A SURPRISES!!

YEAR-END TOP 10

1. PITFALL (ActV A/C)
2. PAC-MAN (At)
3. DEMON ATTACK (Imgc A/C)
4. STARMASER (ActV A/C)
5. DONKEY KONG (Col A/C)
6. CHOPPER COMMAND (ActV A/C)
7. DEFENDER (At)
8. STAR VOYAGER (Imgc A/C)
9. DEMON ATTACK (Imgc I/C)
10. STAR STRIKE (Mat I/C)

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