THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE

INCLUDES

Computer Entertainer

Volume 2, Number 9
$2.50

© DECEMBER, 1983

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

A Critical Newsletter for the Serious Gamesman

IN THIS ISSUE...

OVER 30 REVIEWS INCLUDING
Centipede
Slither
Quest for Tires
Wico Joystick
Roller Controller
for ColecoVision
Adventure Games
for Commodore 64
Burgertime
Q*Bert
Donkey Kong
for TI 99/4A
News on the Coleco ADAM
Details of the IBM PCjr
AND, THAT'S JUST FOR STARTERS!!

COMING NEXT MONTH...

REVIEWS OF:

Sorcerer's Apprentice
for Atari 2600
Atarisoft titles
SpectraVideo for Coleco
Sneak Preview of the CES
1983—The Year In Review
AND LOTS MORE!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

It's that time again and we want to wish everyone the best of the holiday season. It's been a busy and exciting year in the game and computer industry with change being the only constant. We've done our best to stay on top of the industry for you so you're aware of what's going on around you in this fast moving field.

It doesn't seem possible but when we compiled our Yearend Index (see page 134 in this issue) we counted up over 325 reviews which we have done this year!! Now, that's alot of playing!

While you're getting ready for the big day (we hope you get *everything* you want), we're compiling some great articles for the January issue. We are now working on a "Year In Review" which will feature, from month to month, what went on in 1983.

We have also made arrangements to speak with several of the companies regarding their top secret plans for the Winter C.E.S. coming to Las Vegas on January 8, 1984. As in the past, we will be bringing you news stories *AS* they are breaking at the Show. (Remember last June when we leaked the information about Coleco's ADAM!)

We continue with our commitment to do our very best to bring you the information first and the way it is! While we will be working with Press Releases as other publications do, that is only the beginning as we call the manufacturers to delve deeper than what is in print for the world to read.

And, on another note, you've asked for help with educational and home business programs. With this issue, we will begin looking at some of the programs which we feel are of interest to you as we bring you a review of a brand new, inexpensive, word processing program for the home. We will *Not* abandon our gamers, but simply help provide the information you need as *Your* interests expand!

We thank you for your support and kind words throughout the year. Peace and Goodwill to all.

The Staff of Video Game Update

ATARI AND COLECO RAISE PRICES!!

In a move which confuses and angers potential customers, Atari and Coleco have both announced price hikes effective January 1, 1984. First, to address the price hike at Atari, it will effect the 600 and 800XL computers which have been in extremely short supply to date (some insider reports indicate Atari has only shipped approximately 60% of available computers so most can be sold at the higher price!) Atari has indicated a price hike of approximately $40.00 per unit. In addition, indications are that they will also increase the prices of the 1027 printer, 1050 disc drive, and (this one baffles us) the 2600 and 5200 dedicated game units. Granted, there has been tremendous price cutting in the computer and game market which has, in fact, caused companies such as Texas Instruments to quit the industry; however, the competition is still there with new companies announcing computers and established companies such as Apple (see story in this issue) planning home computers. With the number of game units languishing on dealer's shelves, it's difficult to conceive that they will be successful in making a price hike in the game units stick.

Adam Price Hike

Meanwhile, over at Coleco, the planned January 1 price hike of ADAM is a steep one and has consumers grumbling already as most people haven't even had the opportunity to *find* an Adam to purchase (see related Adam story in this issue). The price hike on the "stand-alone ADAM will bring the retail price up around $750 (from around $600 now) and the ADAM module (for those who already own a ColecoVision) will retail around $550, as opposed to the current area of $425-$450. What happened to all the big announcements from Coleco that this would be an "under $600" fully bundled computer system for the family??

Sorry, guys, but folks are not going to be anxious to fork over additional dollars, at least until the computers have been "road-tested" for reliability. A "bug-free" computer is absolutely essential and the cost, at this point, seems a bit excessive, especially in light of all the press the companies involved have intiated themselves "touting" these affordable systems!

Exciting APPLE Plans??

As reported elsewhere, Apple is hard at work on their planned release of the "McIntosh" computer sometime in January or February. Although many other reports have indicated this will be Apple's answer to the IBM PC/JR, we feel, based on our sources, that this will be more of a "high-end" computer which may be compatible with the Apple LISA. We understand it may feature two built-in slimline disc drives and should have at least 256K which will put it more in competition with the currently available IBM PC. One of the most exciting features is what we've heard regarding the possible pricing of the unit which may retail in the vicinity of $1800 - $2000! If this is correct, the McIntosh could turn into a major factor in the personal computer market.

Home Computer Also Under Development?

Meanwhile, our spies tell us Apple is working on an "under $1000" home computer, code named "ELF", totally compatible with the current Apple II and II/E, which could be introduced as early as April or May. The details we have been made aware of make this a potentially very exciting computer and could really cut into the IBM PC/JR sales. This is an exciting package and we'll pass on details as soon as we can devulge them.

ATARI XL OWNERS REJOICE!

Atari has just told us they have developed "The Translator" to solve the problem of incompatbility of some third-party software with the Atari XL computers (600, 800, 1200XL). Planned for introduction in the first quarter of 1984, The Translator will be available in diskette or cassette format. By loading it prior to loading the third-party disk or cassette will translate the XL operating system to that of an Atari 800. Most games that you couldn't play on your XL computer due to incompatibility will now work! Available in two versions at approximately $10.00 each (price subject to change). The "A" version is said to work with about 95% of currently incompatible third-party software, and the "B" version will take care of the remaining 5%. Hats off to Atari for caring about owners of the XL computers!

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..ATARI 2600-COMPATIBLE

MOUNTAIN KING (★ ★ ★½ / ★ ★ ★ ★) is an incredibly good version of the fantasy-adventure game first designed for the Atari computers. CBS has put their new RAM PLUS™ chip to very good use in this one! The player assumes the role of the Explorer inside a diamond mine which contains the secret Temple Chamber of a forgotten civilization. If you can challenge the guardians of the Chamber, seize the crown within and escape with it to the top of the mountain, then you will become the Mountain King.

CBS Software

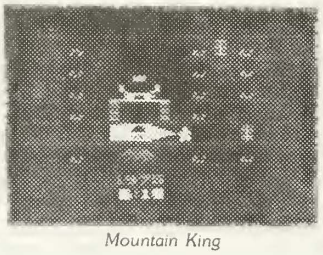
The Explorer moves along the ladders and horizontal ledges of the mine, collecting sparkling diamonds and points, and occasionally illuminating hidden treasure chests with the beam of his flashlight. Once enough points are earned, the nearly invisible Flame Spirit appears and must be captured before the Explorer will be allowed to enter the Temple Chamber. Musical clues are provided to help the Explorer find the Flame Spirit: the nearer the Spirit, the louder the theme, Grieg's "In the Hall of the Mountain King." Once the dancing flame is caught, the Explorer must offer it to the Skull Spirit which guards the Temple. Only then can he enter and take the crown. It's not over yet, though, because the Explorer must take the crown to the top of the mountain within the time limit. The sense of urgency is heightened by the frantic playing of the musical theme. Jumping and climbing his way up, he must avoid the gray bats that will steal the crown away. At the bottom level of the mine, a nasty, green spider will also steal the crown or the Flame Spirit from the Explorer. (The spider also loves to wrap your Explorer in his web anytime it runs into him.) If you succeed in getting your Explorer crowned Mountain King at the summit, you will receive bonus points and begin playing at the next highest level.

It's a Winner!

We were very impressed with the original version of MOUNTAIN KING for Atari computers (reviewed in the June, 1983 issue), and we doubted that the game could be translated well into the 2600 format. What a pleasant surprise when we played the version for the 2600—it's a winner! Graphics are very good, especially the effect of the flashlight beam in the darkness of the mine. And what wonderful music the designers have coaxed out of the 2600, even to the point of multi-note chords in the final theme! This is a delightful combination of fantasy-adventure and climbing game, a must for your collection. (Solo Play)
Recommended. (MSR $34.95)



Omega Race



Mountain King

OMEGA RACE (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) is similar to the version by Coleco for ColecoVision, reviewed elsewhere in this issue. The options available in that version (Fast Bounce, Tunnel, Astro Gates, Reflective Walls) are not present in this one for the Atari 2600, however. The game is packaged with a Booster-Grip adaptor which fits securely over the handle of a standard Atari joystick. This grip handle is necessary to play the game, because it provides a second firing button. The button on the top of the Booster-Grip (or the one on the base of your joystick) controls your ship's thrust, while the trigger button that falls underneath your index finger is used to fire your laser cannon. We really like the Booster-Grip, because it facilitates simple, one-handed control of three functions: steering, thrust, and firing. Graphics are quite simple, but they duplicate the coin-op game well. The game itself is abstract, with the odd sensation of floating through space as you maneuver your fighter. CBS has done a good job of translating the essence of the arcade game to the home screen—if you like the coin-op, you'll enjoy this adaptation. (Solo Play; 2-Player Alternating.)
MSR $34.95)

★ Sierra On-Line has just shipped several conversions including: (Commodore 64) Oil's Well (disk); Learning With Leeper (cartridge); Lunar Leeper (cartridge); and Threshold (disk). For Atari, Oil's Well (cartridge) has been shipped.

BUCK ROGERS PLANET OF ZOOM (★ ★ ★½ / ★ ★½) is essentially the same as the version for Atari computers. (See review in this month's *Computer Entertainer* section.) While the graphics are better than average for this system, gameplay is not particularly exciting, especially after several playing sessions. Try this one before deciding to purchase it. (Solo Play) (MSR $34.95)

SEGA® THE ARCADE EXPERTS

CONGO BONGO (★ ★ / ★ ★) is essentially the same two-screen game as the version for the Atari 5200, which is reviewed elsewhere in this issue. The game does not translate well to this system. The graphics are blocky, and the attempt at a three-dimensional effect in the first screen merely makes it difficult to know where you are directing your hunter with the joystick. The second screen uses a head-on perspective in crossing the river, rather than the three-dimensional effect of the versions for other systems. We could forgive the pictorial shortcomings if the gameplay were stronger, but we found it boring and repetitive. (Solo Play; 2-Player Alternating.) Not recommended. (MSR $34.95)

Shake-Ups Continue

The videogame industry continues to experience shake-ups and closures as the fourth quarter orders are not reaching the various companies' expectations. One of the major factors has been the "dumping" of old and over-produced product in bins around the country, with prices below $10.00. The discounted product is moving well in many areas; however, it is definitely hurting new sales. Several companies have already had to make adjustments or, in the case of a few, left the business altogether. The latest round of changes are hitting several companies. Among those suffering layoffs are Activision, Parker Bros., CBS, and Milton Bradley. All previously announced product by Activision and Parker Bros. are still planned, with the layoffs hitting "non-essential" areas. CBS "repositioned" their entire design staff to other divisions and will use outside designers in the future. CBS does not plan any changes in its releases but we have been told they are "re-evaluating" entry into the Intellivision-compatible arena. In other words, no games will be released in the fourth quarter and, in all likelihood, they will not be released at all. Milton Bradley has been hit by the decline in sales of Vectrex and the fact they will not be providing a voice system for the 2600 (see August issue), along with the TI announcement which puts their MBX system for the 99-4/A up in the air (they have produced some as of press time which TI will have to pay for under a prior agreement, but production has stopped).

Fox and Starpath Shut Down

Meanwhile, both Fox Games and Starpath are exiting the business altogether. As we reported last month, the entire design team at Starpath has moved to Epyx Computer Software.

QUICK STEP IS RECOMMENDED!

Due to an error in last month's edition, the last line of the review of Imagic's QUICK STEP was omitted. It was one of the most important parts as we recommended the game.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..INTELLIVISION-COMPATIBLE

INTELLIVISION SYSTEM CHANGER has just shipped from Mattel for all you Intellivision owners who want to play 2600 games on your game unit. It plugs into an Intellivision II with no modification; however, if you own an Intellivision I, you must return your master component, the System Changer, and $39.95 to Mattel Service Enter. You must allow up to six weeks for the alteration. After return of the unit, you can receive a free M Network VCS game. If you own a Sears Super Video Arcade, you must return it to Sears. (MSR approx. $65-70)

EXPLANATION OF RATING SYSTEM:
★★★★—EXCELLENT
★★★—GOOD
★★—FAIR
★—POOR
First set of stars—Quality of graphics
Second set of stars—Quality of play action

Any game for a given system is compared only to other games for that system. In other words, all Atari and Atari-compatible games are judged separate from Intellivision and Intellivision-compatible games, etc. The same system is used for computer software reviews.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..ATARI 2600-COMPATIBLE

BIG BIRD'S EGG CATCH (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★½) is a very well planned educational game for children ages three to seven. This is one of several games coming from the joint venture between Atari and the Chilren's Computer Workshop, a division of the company that created Sesame Street and the Electric Company for TV. There are ten game variations in which the child controls Big Bird as he moves back and forth under varying configurations of chutes under two or more hens. Using the Atari Kid's Controller with the overlay supplied, the child pushes a right or left arrow to move Big Bird. In the easier games, there are only two hens and two chutes, so it's a simple matter of pointing Big Bird in the right direction to catch the falling egg. In the more difficult variations, the chutes zig-zag and cross paths with each other. Some games have bonus golden eggs for extra points, some make the eggs invisible until they're about to drop out of the chute, and others have shrinking chutes. The games teach reading readiness and basic problem-solving skills while improving the child's hand-eye coordination.

Ideal For Young Children

BIG BIRD'S EGG CATCH is designed to appeal to young children, letting them play a game with a familiar character while absorbing the lessons the designers have in mind. Even the instruction booklet is well thought out. A read-aloud story, "Farmer Big Bird's Egg Catch," is included, so the parent can set the scene for the child. Hints to parents suggest ways to improve the child's experience with the game. The booklet even provides several drawing and coloring activities for the child to do, all of which are related to the characters in the game. Graphics are cute and colorful, and most games last a short time. (Endless games can lead to loss of attention among the pre-school age group.) This game would be an ideal purchase for the thoughtful parent of a young child. (Solo Play; 2-Player Alternating; Atari Kid's Controller Only.)
Recommended. (MSR $29.95)

SNOOPY & THE RED BARON (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★½) is a delightful children's game which stars Snoopy in one of his most famous fantasies. The child controls Snoopy, World War I flying ace, who is perched atop his Sopwith Camel. (Of course, it *looks* like a dog house, but we all know what a wonderful imagination Snoopy has!) Snoopy flies around, scarf flying in the breeze, until the Red Baron appears. The dog fight is on! The Red Baron's plane swoops and strikes, but Snoopy fires away. After a few hits on the red plane, a mug of root beer appears, and Snoopy grabs it for quick refreshment and a bonus for the player. (Popsicles, hamburgers, pizza, bones and other goodies appear, too—all of Snoopy's favorites.) When the Red Baron hits Snoopy's Sopwith Camel, bullet holes appear in the dog house roof. After several hits, poor Snoopy's plane is downed, and the Red Baron wags his plane's wings in victory. Points are awarded for planes shot down and for goodies consumed.

Charming Game

SNOOPY & THE RED BARON is a charming game for kids that most adults will enjoy, too. The familiar theme music from the *Peanuts* cartoon specials is used, and Snoopy is just as cute as he can be. In the long run, the game will be too easy for experienced game players, but it should be a big hit with the kids for whom it's designed. It's appropriate that the Walter Mitty of dogdom should finally have his own video game! (Solo Play)
Recommended. (MSR $29.95)

MARIO BROTHERS (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) is an adaptation of the Nintendo arcade game, the sequel to *Donkey Kong* and *Donkey Kong Jr.* Mario the carpenter from the first two games is joined by his brother, Luigi, in a battle against the crawly creatures that are infesting the pipes in their house. In the single-player game, you control Mario; in the two-player version, one person controls Mario while the other takes the role of Luigi. The crawling pests are deadly creatures that cannot be touched without losing a life unless they have beem stunned. One or both of the brothers must move below a pest, and then punch the floor directly beneath it to knock the creature onto its back. (Some pests have to be punched twice to flip them over.) Next, one of the brothers must jump up to the floor and kick the pest off before it recovers. Kicking the pest off the floor causes a bonus wafer to appear. (The easy way to eliminate all pests on the screen is to punch the POW switch, but this can only be done three times.) In some variations, Mario and Luigi must also avoid fireballs that move around between the floors. At higher levels of play, Slipice the evil iceman will appear and make things slippery for our heroes. He can also be punched from below and then kicked. Periodically, all the pests disappear, and a Coin Wave begins. During this wave, the object is to collect as many coins as possible in 15 seconds.

Two-Player Version Highly Entertaining:

Graphics are colorful, with detailed characters, and game play tends to get frantic in MARIO BROTHERS. We were not particularly impressed with the play action in the single-player game, but the two-player version is highly entertaining because the players have the option of cooperating or competing. With two human-controlled characters on the screen at once, the action can become really hilarious! (Solo Play; 2-Player Simultaneous.)
Recommended (2-Player version only). (MSR $37.95)

SMURFS™ SAVE THE DAY (★ ★ ★½/ ★ ★ ★ ★) is a totally delightful cartridge with three different games for pre-schoolers. This cartridge comes with the KID VID Voice Module and three story cassettes. Although the games can be played without the cassettes, they are lots more fun with the Voice Module. KID VID looks very much like a standard cassette tape recorder, and it can also be used that way, but there is a special cord that connects the module to the right controller port of an Atari 2600, Gemini, or ColecoVision Expansion Module #1. When properly connected, the content of the story cassette becomes part of the game being played. (Note to parents: KID VID requires four "C" cell alkaline batteries or Coleco's Perma Power Battery Eliminator/AC Adaptor. *Neither* is included.)

Three Different Games

The three games will delight any young child who likes the Smurfs™, and parents will appreciate the fact that their children can learn while having fun. The first game, *HARMONY SMURF™*, teaches musical relationships and allows the child to create or reproduce simple melodies. Harmony Smurf™ appears with his trumpet at the bottom of the screen while the characters on the cassette sing. Four to six notes are played and appear on the multi-colored staff above Harmony's head; the child's task is to replace the notes on the staff properly after they've fallen on the ground. Once the task is correctly completed, the child is rewarded with lavish, singing praise by the Smurfs™. (Without the cassette, the game can be used to create original melodies or reproduce familiar ones.) *GREEDY SMURF™* teaches color recognition and matching, using three primary colors (red, blue and yellow) plus white. The child controls Greedy Smurf™, who wants to drink a soda just like the one Clumsy Smurf™ has. Sometimes a primary color must be matched, but some of Clumsy's sodas are secondary colors. The child mixes the soda to the proper hue by drawing out colors from two of the four spigots. Again, the story cassette heaps singing praise on a correct match. *HANDY SMURF™* teaches a child to identify and sort objects according to shape, size and color. Handy works in a factory where objects are carried along conveyor belts. Gates must be opened with the firing button at the proper time to allow the objects to reach the bottom conveyor belt. The child must be sure that the hatch at the top of the correct sorting bin is open to receive the object. In all three games, the story cassettes provide delightful musical accompaniment and lessons sung by the Smurf™ characters.

Great Game for Pre-Schoolers

The KID VID with Smurf™ cartridge and three story cassettes is a *must* for any household with pre-schoolers and an Atari 2600 or equivalent. The interaction between voice module and game play is excellent. The kids will learn, but they'll have so much fun that they won't even notice that they're playing educational games. They'll feel as if the Smurfs™ have become their very own playmates! (Additional cartridges are planned, including ones featuring the Berenstain Bears and Dr. Seuss characters.) (Solo Play)
Recommended. (MSR under $70.00)

LASER TECHNOLOGY BLOSSOMS!

Laser technology at the arcades blossoms with the incredible success of Dragonslayer! In addition to a new game, CLIFFHANGER, which we saw on a recent journey into the Northeast part of the country, Atari has just announced the introduction of FIREFOX, based on the Clint Eastwood film. Atari went through hours of movie footage, some never seen by movie-goers, to pick the most dynamic sequences for this new arcade game. Can laser for the home market be far behind???

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..COLECOVISION-COMPATIBLE

ROLLER CONTROLLER with **SLITHER** (★★★★/★★★★) is the latest in special controllers for ColecoVision. The console features a roller ball at top center, four action buttons, and two wells for the hand controllers. There is also a mode switch, which is set for "Roller" or "Joystick," depending on whether or not the game you're playing is designed exclusively for use with the Roller Controller. The bottom of the console is equipped with two suction cups for table-top use, but many will prefer to put the console in their lap. Once you connect the console to your ColecoVision or Adam computer, there is no need to disconnect it to use your standard controllers—a definite plus.

A Great Team

SLITHER, based on the Century II arcade game, comes with the roller controller, and they're a great team! The player controls a triangular ship in a desert crawling with snakes. Although you can move the ship anywhere in the desert, firing upward or downward, boulders and bits of brush are obstacles in your way. The object is to annihilate the snakes bit by bit while avoiding and/or shooting at the bouncing Pterodactyl and the Winged Tyrannosaur that leaves a trail of new brush. Bonuses are awarded for eliminating all the snakes before time runs out in each wave, and the scene gradually turns to night as you progress from wave to wave. The graphics are very pretty, especially as the sun sets behind the rock formations on the horizon. Play action is somewhat reminiscent of the coin-op, *Centipede*, because you use the roller ball to move into position against the snakes that slither their way down the screen toward your ship. The Roller Controller works beautifully with SLITHER, allowing for smoother and faster movement than is possible with the standard controller. SLITHER is an excellent game for everyone in the family, providing for a variety of skill levels from beginning to advanced. (Solo Play; 2-Player Alternating; Pause; Roller Controller Only.)
Recommended.

VICTORY (★★/★½) is based on the arcade game from Exidy, a fight to save your planet from the alien force that has taken over. You control a round Battlestar with a revolving snout that represents your laser gun. As you skim the surface of the planet or fly through black space, you must watch the radar scanner at the bottom of your screen for enemies, plus keep an eye on your fuel and shield levels and number of doomsday devices left. (This game employs all four action buttons on the Roller Controller: one each for fire, thrust, shields and doomsday device.) The enemies you must deal with include Rockets launched from the planet's surface, Bombers, Interceptors, Shuttles and Starships.

Case of the Missing Quarks

If you never read instruction booklets for games, you may never encounter the frustration we found with this game. Our instruction booklet describes Paratroopers that fall out of Bombers and Shuttles. If not shot down, they turn into Scouts, which roam the surface of the planet, releasing deadly Quarks. All these things exist in the arcade game, and we kept seeing blips on the radar, but no Paratroopers, Scouts or Quarks ever appeared above the planet. We were *really* baffled when we cleared a wave of aliens and the screen message informed us that we had earned a big bonus for unreleased Quarks! Determined to solve the case of the missing Quarks, we talked to many people at Coleco. One person told us that the Paratroopers, Scouts and Quarks only appeared under a "very special set of conditions." When asked what these conditions might be, we were told, "that's the *Fun of Discovery*." (That's the phrase you'll find at the end of every Coleco instruction booklet.) One source hinted that something might have gone wrong in the duplication of the chips for the finished cartridges, leaving these elements out of the memory. Someone else told us that the cartridge was fine, but the instruction booklet is wrong! Coleco has now printed a new booklet for VICTORY that describes the "clever cloaking device" the enemy has that renders some ships invisible. Through some process that's never really explained satisfactorily, the end-of-wave bonus for "unreleased Quarks" is awarded to the player for dealing with the "invisible enemies" and "silent quarks." (If you have purchased a VICTORY cartridge with the "wrong" instruction booklet, Coleco will send you the new one if you call them at 800-842-1225.)

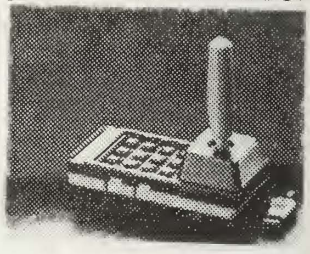
Whether or not the original instruction booklet is correct, the game as we played it is very dull. Graphics are fairly colorful, but not very interesting. Once you become accustomed to working four different action buttons—no problem at all for arcade aces—there just isn't enough action to keep players interested. Those Paratroopers, Scouts and Quarks would make all the difference. As the game is, it's an easy matter to accumulate huge scores, knocking off a few aliens here and there and occasionally refueling. This is the game that was released too early—about three weeks before the Roller Controller that is necessary to play it. Perhaps the errors would have been discovered if the game was held until the Roller Controller was on the market. (Solo Play; 2-Player Alternating; Pause; Roller Controller Only.)
Not recommended.

OMEGA RACE (★★★/★★★) is an abstract space game in which you participate in a training exercise with alien ships. The arena has a central island and outer walls against which your ship can bounce in various directions while firing at and avoiding the alien ships that fire on your fighter. Several options can be chosen to vary the game, including Fast Bounce (your fighter increases its speed each time it hits a wall), Tunnel through the middle of the island (good for sneaking up on the waiting alien fleet), and Astro Gates (openings in the upper and lower walls for teleportation). When two play at the same time, another interesting option is Reflective Walls, adding the challenge of ricochets from the laser blasts that strike the walls. As in most video games, the action and difficulty escalate as you move through successive waves of aliens.

An Interesting Game

The graphics in OMEGA RACE are quite spartan when compared to other games for this system, but they duplicate the arcade game well. One of the the appeals in this contest is the floating sensation that can be achieved with just the right combinations of thrust and turning while firing. Alien ships appear from around corners, firing away, and it can be a challenge to have your ship in just the right position to eliminate the enemy ship before it eliminates yours! While we found this an interesting game, we feel that it will not appeal to all game players. If you've played the coin-op OMEGA RACE and like it, you'll be very happy with this home version. If you're not familiar with the game, you may want to try it before adding it to your collection. (Solo Play—Roller Controller Only; 2-Player Alternating—Roller OR Standard Controllers; 2-Player Simultaneous—Standard Controllers; Pause.)

WICO COMMAND CONTROL Joystick/Keypad for ColecoVision has just shipped and it's a serious disappointment after the previous quality Wico products! The joystick is structurally well-made with a one-year limited warranty; however, the unit is just too hard to manipulate and will frustrate the most avid player. We used the joystick for long sessions with a couple of our personal favorites and found our scores almost half of what they normally are. The joystick is extremely stiff and difficult to direct. We found ourselves stuck several times in a corner trying to make a turn in MR. DO. In addition, the firing buttons on the side of the unit are also stiff and difficult to press. There is an additional firing button on top of the joystick shaft which we attempted to use in MR. DO to release his power ball. It only worked when Mr. Do was standing in place. We could not use the top button to fire if he was moving in any direction! As a result, we had to use the side buttons which worked, but were tough to use. All in all, once we finished our session, we were exhausted, our hands were red from forcing the joystick and buttons, and were embarrassed by the scores.
Not Recommended (MSR $24.95)



FROGGER (★★★★/★★★★) is an absolutely delightful adaptation of the classic arcade game by Sega. The object is to guide your frog from the grass, across a busy highway, and onto a sidewalk. Then the frog must cross a river by means of floating logs, turtles and alligators, and finally into the frog's home bay. You have a limited amount of time to navigate the course, and Frogger must avoid not only the moving traffic on the highway, but also snakes on the sidewalk at higher levels, snapping jawa of alligators in the river, and turtles when they're diving underwater. Hopping Frogger into the water,

riding off the edge of the screen, or colliding with a vehicle, snake or alligator causes him to go "splat" and be replaced by a skull-and-crossbones symbol. Bonus points can be earned by hopping your frog onto a "lady frog" and taking her to home bay. The player has a choice of slow or fast games, the fast one being closest to the coin-op original.

A Must for Your Library

Just when we thought that yet another FROGGER might be one too many, we were pleased to find a few minor changes designed into this version. The familiar FROGGER musical theme has been augmented by a few other tunes as you play the game. (The music can be turned off, if desired.) There's more variety in the highway traffic, including the addition of tanks to the cars and trucks of the other versions! The game is very easy to learn, and the controls work well. Despite having played *six* other versions of this game for various systems, this latest adaptation managed to capture our attention and entertain us thoroughly. Especially of you don't have another version of this classic, the FROGGER for ColecoVision is a must for your library. (Solo Play; 2-Player Alternating.)
Recommended. (MSR $36.95)

CENTIPEDE (★★★★/★★★★) is the first game from **ATARISOFT** for the ColecoVision system, and it's an adaptation of Atari's own arcade hit. Set in an enchanted forest ruled by an evil Centipede, the game equips you with magic shooting wands to turn Centipede segments into harmless mushrooms. The Centipede snakes its way down the screen, changing directions each time it runs into a mushroom. Other creatures in the forest include the Spider, which tries to distract you by bouncing around the lower portion of the screen. The Flea drops straight down, leaving more mushrooms in its path, whenever you clear an area of mushrooms. (It takes two shots to destroy the Flea.) The Scorpion appears later in the game, moving across the screen and poisoning mushrooms. If the Centipede hits one of the poisoned mushrooms, it goes crazy and plummets straight toward your position. As the waves progress, the Centipede becomes faster and meaner, separating into more and more independently moving heads.

A Must for ColecoVision Owners

Graphics are beautiful, detailed and brightly colored in this version of CENTIPEDE. We especially liked the blue Spider, which waves its legs crazily as it bounces around the screen. Play action is great, too, especially if you have the Roller Controller. With this controller CENTIPEDE comes *very* close to the feel of the coin-op original. In fact, this is one of the best arcade translations for this system. (The game is still playable with the standard controllers, but the player is not able to respond as quickly.) CENTIPEDE is a very challenging game in which the action escalates quickly, especially at the higher difficulty levels—a must for ColecoVision owners. (Solo Play; Two-Player Alternating; Pause; Joystick or Roller Controller.)
Recommended. (MSR approx. $40.00)

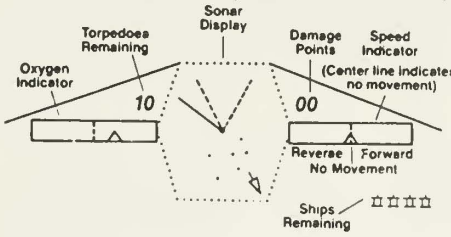
B.C.'S QUEST FOR TIRES (★★★★/★★★★) is a humorous game that brings the B.C. comic strip to life. The player is Thor, the caveman who tries to rescue Cute Chick from the dinosaur. Riding his stone tire, Thor starts out on a level plain strewn with holes and rocks that must be jumped. In the Petrified Forest, he must duck under tree limbs and jump over logs. His stringy hair flies in the breeze, and he wears a silly smile as long as all goes well. When he bumps into an obstacle, he falls over and his stone tire bounces away. The third scene is a challenge: he must cross a river on the backs of submerging turtles while Fat Broad taunts, "Jump, Sucker" from the opposite shore. Even if he makes it across the stream, he can be squashed by Fat Broad's club! Next Thor rolls up a hill, avoiding more holes and tumbling rocks. At the top, his jump across the flaming lava pit must be timed so that the prehistoric Dooky Bird will give him a ride. Success at this task makes Thor give the player a silly grin. Then it's downhill for a running jump across a cliff, and through a shower of volcanic rocks before reaching the second river and its turtle bridge. The grinning dinosaur on the far shore just waits for Thor to make the wrong move. If Thor eludes the dinosaur, he must navigate carefully through the stalagmites and stalactites in the dinosaur's cave to rescue Cute Chick. Throughout the game, the player has control over Thor's speed. The faster he goes, the more points are earned for avoiding obstacles.

Delightfully Original Game

QUEST FOR TIRES is a delightfully original game with very well animated, cartoon-like graphics and excellent play action. This game will appeal to all ages, and the difficulty levels allow for everyone from beginner to advanced player. You'll want to play this one for hours! (Solo Play; 2-Player Alternating.)
Recommended. (MSR $39.95)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..VECTREX

POLAR RESCUE (★★★½/★★★½) takes you on a journey below the North Pole in a submarine, complete with sonar beeps. With the help of your sonar screen, you must pilot your sub to the rescue of survivors of an ill-fated mission before you. You must avoid deadly mine fields, enemy submarines, and the terror of the maelstrom. And, don't forget to monitor your oxygen supply which can only be replenished by destroying an enemy sub. The sonar display at the bottom of the screen is used to locate the survivors, represented by an arrow; avoid obstacles represented by blips of light; and avoid or torpedo enemy subs, represented by a bright blip. Speed and direction are controlled by your controller buttons and your joystick controls right and left movement in addition to diving (push the joystick forward) or surfacing (pull joystick back). The mines are stationary; however, they are very sensitive as you draw near them. If you pass too closely, they blow up and destroy your sub. Ice chunks floating down should be avoided as they will damage your sub. The faster you are going, the more damage points you incur which can create the loss of one of your torpedo tubes, speed control, etc. depending on how many points you build up. Maelstroms—turbulent underwater whirlwinds—always throw you off course. They are infrequent, but unavoidable. Enemy subs have five torpedoes each. When you shoot and destroy a sub, you receive any of the sub's remaining torpedoes and additional oxygen. If an enemy sub becomes "aggressive" (if you travel through its sector too fast or if you shoot one or more torpedoes at it while it is in your sonar range), you will enter the "Battle Mode". During that mode, your speed is greatly reduced and the enemy may even fire at you while he's so far in front of you that you can't see him on your radar screen.



If You Make It This Far

Your quest is to save the survivors by reaching their pod. When the pod is in sight, you enter the "Docking Mode". A new sonar display comes up on your screen which shows a crosshair sight to help guide you through the docking manuever. You must line up exactly with the center of the crosshair, at a very slow speed, to accomplish the docking. If you're successful, you will see a special docking sequence on the screen during which the survivors will return to your ship.

Floating Sensation

This is a truly different game for Vectrex owners and will provide hours of strategic fun. Docking with the pod is extremely difficult and requires steady skill while still trying to ward off enemy subs, etc. There are several facets to this search and rescue adventure which make this a strong addition to your Vectrex library.
Recommended

Imagic Readies Software for IBM PC "JR"

Imagic wasted no time in announcing software for the upcoming IBM PC/JR (see separate story in this issue) for delivery at the beginning of the year. The first title announced is an enhanced version of their mega-hit DEMON ATTACK. This rendition will feature a double screen, greater depth, more dynamic gameplay and more impressive graphics than seen in earlier versions of this title. Additional games are in development for the first quarter. We should have more detailed information next month.

★ Activision will release its best-selling game, RIVER RAID, for Intellivision in January.

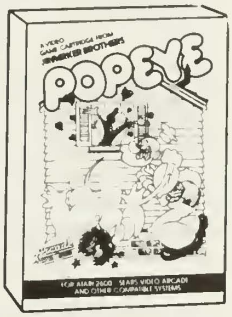
YEAR END INDEX

TITLE	SYSTEM	MFR	REVIEWED
Advs of Tron	VCS	MNTK	2/83
A E	ATCOMP	BRO	10/83
Air Raiders	VCS	MNTK	2/83
Alpiner	TI	TI	4/83
Arachnoid	VIC	UMI	7/83
Analog Joystick	5200	WICO	11/83
Apple Cider Spider	APPLE	SOL	9/83
Argos	APPLE	DM	11/83
Armor Ambush	VCS	MNTK	1/83
Armor Attack	VEC	VEC	1/83
Astro Chase	5200	PB	10/83
Astro Chase	ATCOMP	FS	9/83
Axis Assassin	APPLE	EA	10/83
Avenger Joystick	INT	GEM	5/83
Bank Heist	VCS	FOX	8/83
Battlezone	VCS	AT	9/83
Bermuda Triangle	VCS	DA	2/83
Bedlam	VEC	VEC	4/83
Big Bird	VCS	AT	12/83
Blackjack/Poker	COL	COL	7/83
Blade of Blackpoole	C64	SIR	12/83
Blitz!	VEC	VEC	1/83
Blockade Runner	INT	INT	10/83
Blue Max	ATCOMP	SYN	8/83
Blueprint	VCS	CBS	8/83
Boing!	VCS	FS	11/83
Boss Joystick	VCS	WICO	7/83
Boulders&Bombs	ATCOMP	CBS	6/83
Bristles	ATCOMP	FS	11/83
Buck Rogers	VCS	SEGA	12/83
Buck Rogers	5200	SEGA	12/83
Buck Rogers	ATCOMP	SEGA	12/83
Buck Rogers	VIC	SEGA	12/83
Burgertime	VCS	MNTK	10/83
Burgertime	INT	MAT	6/83
Burgertime	Ti	TI	12/83
Buzz Bombers	INT	MAT	6/83
Cakewalk	VCS	CV	6/83
Cannonball Blitz	VIC	SOL	9/83
Capture the Flag	ATCOMP	SIR	11/83
Carnival	COL	COL	1/83
Caterpiggle	ATCOMP	AT	5/83
Cat-Nap	ATCOMP	ZIM	4/83
Centipede	VCS	AT	2/83
Centipede	COL	AT	12/83
Chess	INT	MAT	4/83
Collision Course	ATCOMP	ZIM	4/83
Color Generator	VCS	VS	12/83
Computer War	VIC	THN	10/83
Congo Bongo	VCS	SEGA	12/83
Congo Bongo	5200	SEGA	12/83
Congo Bongo	ATCOMP	SEGA	12/83
Congo Bongo	VIC	SEGA	12/83
Cosmic Chasm	VEC	VEC	1/83
Cosmic Corridor	VCS	ZIM	2/83
Cosmic Raiders	AST	AST	10/83
Cosmic Tunnels	ATCOMP	DM	11/83
Countermeasure	5200	AT	2/83
Crackpots	VCS	ACTV	8/83
Crash Dive	VCS	FOX	10/83
Creepy Corridor	VIC	SOL	10/83
Crisis Mtn	ATCOMP	MF	12/83
Critical Mass	APPLE	SIR	4/83
Crossfire	VIC	SOL	8/83
Crypts of Chaos	VCS	FOX	2/83
Dark Crystal	ATCOMP	SOL	9/83
David's Midnight Magic	ATCOMP	BRO	6/83
Death Trap	VCS	AH	7/83
Decathlon	VCS	ACTV	8/83
Defender	APPLE	AT	12/83
Demolition Herby	VCS	TEL	4/83
Demon Attack	ODY	IMGC	4/83
Dig Dug	5200	AT	11/83
Dig Dug	ATCOMP	AT	7/83
Diggerbonk	ATCOMP	AT	5/83
Dishaster	VCS	ZIM	2/83
Dolphin	VCS	ACTV	5/83
Donald Duck	VCS	AT	11/83
Donkey Kong	ATCOMP	AT	7/83
Donkey Kong	TI	AT	12/83
Donkey Kong Jr	VCS	COL	9/83
Donkey Kong Jr	COL	COL	2/83
Dracula	INT	IMGC	2/83
Dragonfire	INT	IMGC	2/83
Dragonfire	VCS	IMGC	1/83
Dragonstomper	VCS	STP	1/83
Dreadnaught Factor	INT	ACTV	8/83
Drelbs	ATCOMP	SYN	10/83
Drol	ATCOMP	BRO	12/83
Earth Dies Screaming	VCS	FOX	7/83
Eggomania	VCS	USG	2/83
Empire Strikes Back	INT	PB	9/83
Enchanter	C64	INF	12/83
Enduro	VCS	ACTV	4/83
E T.Phone Home	ATCOMP	AT	6/83
Expansion Module 1	COL	COL	1/83
Fathom	VCS	IMGC	9/83
Fax	APPLE	EPYX	12/83
Final Orbit	ATCOMP	Sir	6/83
FireControl	VCS	DISC	4/83
Fireworld	VCS	AT	4/83
Flash Gordon	VCS	FOX	2/83
Flip & Flop	ATCOMP	FS	11/83
Fortress of Narzod	VEC	VEC	6/83
Fourth Encounter	VIC	THN	10/83
Frankenstein's Monster	VCS	DA	4/83
Frogger	INT	PA	6/83
Frogger	5200	PB	7/83
Frogger	COL	PB	12/83
Frogger	ATCOMP	PB	7/83
Fun With Art	ATCOMP	EPYX	12/83
Fun With Music	VIC	EPYX	10/83
Galaxian	VCS	AT	5/83
Gateway to Apshai	ATCOMP	EPYX	11/83
Getaway	ATCOMP	AT	5/83
Ghost Manor	VCS	XON	9/83
G I Joe	VCS	PB	4/83
Glib	VCS	S&R	10/83
Gold Fever	VIC	TRO	7/83
Gopher	VCS	USG	2/83
Gorf	COL	COL	5/83
Grand Master	VIC	UMI	7/83
Gypsy	ATCOMP	MICRO	4/83
Happy Trails	INT	ACTV	5/83
Hard Hat Mack	APPLE	EA	10/83
Homeword	APPLE	SOL	12/83
Ice Trek	INT	MAT	4/83
Infidel	C64	INF	12/83
Injoy-A-Sticks	COL		2/83
In The Chips	VIC	CS	12/83
I Want My Mommy	VCS	ZIM	2/83
Jawbreaker II	VIC	SOL	9/83
Journey/Escape	VCS	DA	1/83
Joust	VCS	AT	11/83
Joust	5200	AT	11/83
Joyboard	VCS	AMI	9/83
Joy Sensor	VCS	SUNC	11/83
Joystick	COL	WICO	12/83
Juice!	ATCOMP	TRO	8/83
Jumpman Jr	ATCOMP	EPYX	8/83
Jungle Hunt	VCS	AT	9/83
Jungle Hunt	5200	AT	9/83
Kaboom!	ATCOMP	ACTV	9/83
Kangaroo	VCS	AT	8/83
Kangaroo	5200	AT	6/83
Keystone Kapers	VCS	ACTV	5/83
Kidvid	VCS	COL	12/83
Killer Bees	ODY	ODY	4/83
Killer Satellites	VCS	STP	4/83
Koalapad	APPLE	KOALA	6/83
Koolaid Man	VCS	MNTK	10/83
Lady Bug	INT	COL	6/83
Laser Gates	VCS	IMGC	11/83
Learning w/Leeper	ATCOMP	SOL	12/83
Lifespan	ATCOMP	ROK	8/83
Light Pen	VEC	VEC	10/83
Loderunner	COMP	BRO	12/83
Lode Runner	APPLE	BRO	9/83
London Blitz	VCS	AH	7/83
Looping	COL	COL	5/83
Lunar Leeper	VIC	SOL	9/83
M.A.D.	VCS	USG	2/83
Maj League Hockey	ATCOMP	THN	10/83
Maniac Miner	ATCOMP	DS	9/83
M*A*S*H	VCS	FOX	6/83
Megamania	ATCOMP	ACTV	12/83
Miner 2049er	VCS	TIG	6/83
Miner 2049er	5200	BIG5	6/83
Miner 2049er	ATCOMP	AT	7/83
Mines of Minos	VCS	CV	1/83
Mission X	INT	MAT	6/83
Mogul Mania	VCS	AMI	9/83
Monster Smash	ATCOMP	DM	11/83
Moon Patrol	VCS	AT	11/83
Moon Patrol	5200	AT	11/83
Moon Shuttle	ATCOMP	DS	9/83
Moonsweeper	VCS	IMGC	8/83
Motocross	INT	MAT	11/83
Mountain King	ATCOMP	CBS	6/83
Mouse Trap	COL	COL	1/83
Mouse Trap	INT	COL	2/83
Mr Cool	ATCOMP	SOL	8/83
Mr Do	COL	COL	9/83
Mr Robot	ATCOMP	DM	12/83
Ms Pac-Man	VCS	AT	2/83
Ms Pac-Man	5200	AT	8/83
Name That Game	VCS	USG	2/83
Nightraiders	ATCOMP	DM	11/83
Nineball	ATCOMP	ZIM	4/83
No Escape	VCS	IMGC	4/83
Nova Blast	INT	IMGC	4/83
Oil Barons	APPLE	EPYX	9/83
Oil's Well	ATCOMP	SIERRA	11/83
Oink!	VCS	ACTV	4/83
Omega Race	COL	COL	12/83
Operation Whirlwind	ATCOMP	BRO	11/83
Orc Attack	ATCOMP	THN	10/83
O'Riley's Mine	ATCOMP	DS	9/83
Pac-Man	APPLE	AT	12/83
Party Mix	VGS	STP	11/83
Pepper II	COL	COL	5/83
Phoenix	VCS	AT	1/83
Picnic	VCS	USG	2/83
Pigs In Space	VCS	AT	11/83
Pinball	INT	MAT	11/83
Pinball Const	ATCOMP	EA	8/83
Pipes	VIC	CS	6/83
Pitstop	ATCOMP	EPYX	12/83
Planetfall	C64	INF	12/83
Plaque Attack	VCS	ACTV	5/83
Polaris	VCS	TIG	4/83
Polar Rescue	VEC	VEC	12/83
Pole Position	VCS	AT	8/83
Pole Position	5200	AT	8/83
Pole Position	ATCOMP	AT	12/83
Pole Position	VEC	VEC	12/83
Pooyan	ATCOMP	DS	10/83
Popeye	INT	PB	11/83
Popeye	5200	PB	12/83
Popeye	COL	PB	11/83
Popeye	ATCOMP	PB	11/83
Porky's	VCS	FOX	10/83
Power Grip	VCS	WICO	10/83
Power Stick	VCS	AMIGA	6/83
Pressure Cooker	VCS	ACTV	11/83
Prostick II	VCS	NEW	8/83
Prostick III	COL	NEW	8/83
Prostick Accelerator	VCS	NEW	10/83
Q*Bert	VCS	PB	8/83
Q*Bert	INT	PB	9/83
Q*Bert	5200	PB	10/83
Q*Bert	COL	PB	10/83
Q*Bert	ATCOMP	PB	10/83
Q*Bert	TI	PB	12/83
Quest For Tires	COL	SOL	12/83
Quest for Tires	ATCOMP	SIERRA	11/83
Quick Step	VCS	IMGC	11/83
Qix	5200	AT	2/83
Qix	ATCOMP	AT	4/83
Rabbit Transit	VCS	STP	9/83
Ram It	VCS	TEL	2/83
Reactor	VCS	PB	2/83
Realsports Baseball	5200	AT	11/83
Realsports Soccer	VCS	AT	4/83
Realsports Tennis	VCS	AT	4/83
Realsports Tennis	5200	AT	6/83
Repton	ATCOMP	Sir	6/83
Rescue Terra	VCS	VEN	1/83
Return of Jedi	VCS	PB	11/83
Revenge/Beefsteak	VCS	FOX	2/83
Rip Off	VEC	VEC	1/83
River City Gambler	TI	L&M	9/83
River Raid	VCS	ACTV	1/83
River Raid	ATCOMP	ACTV	9/83
River Rat	ATCOMP	ZIM	4/83
Robot Tank	VCS	ACTV	6/83
Rocky	COL	COL	11/83
Roller Controller	COL	COL	12/83
Rosen's Brigade	ATCOMP	DS	9/83
Roundabout	APPLE	DM	11/83
Safecracker	INT	IMGC	7/83
Sammy Lightfoot	APPLE	SOL	9/83
Seaquest	VCS	ACTV	2/83
Sewer Sam	INT	INT	10/83
Shark Shark	INT	MAT	2/83
Sharp Shot	INT	MAT	2/83
Shootin' Gallery	VCS	IMGC	4/83
Sid the Spellbinder	ODY	ODY	2/83
Sky Skipper	VCS	PB	5/83
Slither	COL	COL	12/83
Smithereens	ODY	ODY	1/83
Smurf Rescue	VCS	COL	5/83
Solar Conquerer	AST	AST	9/83
Solar Fox	VCS	CBS	8/83
Solar Storm	VCS	IMGC	8/83
Space Age Joystick	VCS	AT	9/83
Space Dungeon	5200	AT	6/83
Space Fury	COL	COL	4/83
Space Panic	COL	COL	5/83
Space Shuttle	VCS	ACTV	11/83
Spelunker	ATCOMP	MGI	11/83
Spider Fighter	VCS	ACTV	1/83
Spider Quake	ATCOMP	DS	8/83
Spike	VEC	VEC	10/83
Spike's Peak	VCS	XON	9/83
Spinball	VEC	VEC	8/83
Squeeze Box	VCS	USG	2/83
Starbase Fighter	ATCOMP	DS	8/83
Star Castle	VEC	VEC	10/83
Stargunner	VCS	TEL	2/83
Star League Baseball	ATCOMP	GAM	10/83
Star Raiders	5200	AT	1/83
Star Strike	VCS	MNTK	6/83
Star Trek	VCS	SEGA	10/83
Star Trek	5200	SEGA	10/83
Star Trek	VEC	VEC	1/83
Star Trek	ATCOMP	SEGA	10/83
Star Trek	VIC	SEGA	10/83
Star Wars:Jedi Arena	VCS	PB	2/83
St Nick	TI	FUN	9/83
Strawberry Shortcake	VCS	PB	5/83
Stun Trap	ATCOMP	AFFINE	4/83
Sub Roc	COL	COL	11/83
Sub Scan	VCS	SEGA	5/83
Super Actn Baseball	COL	COL	9/83
Super Cobra	VCS	PB	9/83
Super Cobra	ATCOMP	PB	9/83
Swords & Serpents	INT	IMGC	2/83
Tac Scan	VCS	SEGA	5/83
Tac 2	VCS	SUNC	11/83
Tail of Beta Lyrae	ATCOMP	DM	12/83
Tanks But No Tanks	VCS	ZIM	2/83
Target Practice	ATCOMP	DS	8/83
Thrax Lair	ATCOMP	RAN	4/83
3-Way Joystick	VCS	WICO	10/83
Threshold	VIC	SOL	9/83
Thunderground	VCS	SEGA	10/83
Time Pilot	VCS	COL	11/83
Time Pilot	COL	COL	9/83
Titan Empire	APPLE	MUSE	9/83
Trak Ball	VCS	AT	9/83

Continued on Page 144

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..ATARI 5200-COMPATIBLE

POPEYE (★★★½/★★★★) is based on the Nintendo arcade game. It will make you laugh at the antics of Popeye the sailor and Brutus (better known as Bluto to fans of the cartoons), Popeye's arch-rival for the affections of Olive Oyl. There are three challenging screens in which Popeye must catch the hearts, notes and cries for H-E-L-P tossed by Olive Oyl, who paces near the top. Each screen offers a different scene overlaid with a structure of horizontal platforms, ladders, stairways and other means of moving from level to level. Throughout the game, Brutus is a constant pest, following Popeye around and trying to eliminate him. Brutus sometimes throws bottles when he's on the same level as Popeye, but he's dangerous even when he's above or below our hero. On occasion, Brutus jumps up or reaches down to eliminate Popeye when the player least expects it! In addition to Brutus' pursuit, Popeye must watch for the sneaky appearances of the Sea Hag at the edges of the screen—she throws bottles, too. On the third screen, vultures can appear suddenly, swooping down to get rid of Popeye.



The Perils of Popeye

Popeye's defenses against all these perils are his quick feet, his fists, and one can of spinach per screen. Most dangers can be avoided if the player can move Popeye quickly enough, but sometimes he must stand and fight. Bottles thrown by Brutus or the Sea Hag and vultures can be punched for points and to save Popeye's life. On the first screen, Popeye can hit a punching bag that releases a barrel. The idea is to make the barrel fall on top of Brutus, stunning him temporarily. Punching the spinach can is the most fun of all: for a few moments while his musical theme plays, Popeye gains super strength and can wallop Brutus for lots of points. (Striking Brutus when Popeye is not fortified by spinach power will cost him a life.) Progression from one screen to the next occurs as soon as Popeye has captured all of Olive Oyl's love tokens.

Superb Game Play

Parker Brothers should have yet another hit with this excellent adaptation of a very popular arcade game. Graphics are very bright, colorful, and full of detail, with the background scenes of the three screens particularly well drawn. A very few minor details kept us from giving this one four stars for graphics. While Brutus is beautifully depicted, complete with some great head movements as he looks around for Popeye, Olive Oyl is not as well defined. Popeye himself is quite recognizable, but not quite as detailed as Brutus. We were especially impressed with gameplay—it's superb! The game is tough and challenging from the outset. It takes plenty of planning and some shrewd moves to outwit Brutus and the Sea Hag to capture all the hearts in the first screen. Most players will have to work hard to reach the second screen, and it's even more difficult to achieve the third. Especially if you like climbing games, this one is a must for your collection. (Solo Play; 2-Player Alternating.)
Recommended. (MSR $49.95)

BUCK ROGERS PLANET OF ZOOM (★★★½★★½) is programmed identically to the version for Atari computers. (See review in this month's *Computer Entertainer* section.) (Solo Play; Pause) (MSR $39.95)

CONGO BONGO (★★★½/★★½) is a two-screen climbing game with three-quarter perspective that gives the game a three-dimensional appearance. Based on Sega's own coin-op, this version begins with your hunter's assault on Jungle Mountain, a structure of stairs, bridges and rivers. From the top of the mountain, Congo Bongo, the ape, tosses green coconuts in an attempt to eliminate your hunter. If your hunter makes it past the coconuts, he'll reach the Monkey Plateau. Here the monkeys become troublesome only after the first level. At the second level, one can jump on your hunter's back, stopping his progress. From the third level on, two monkeys on the hunter's back can even throw him over the cliff. From the Monkey Plateau, your hunter must jump across the river and avoid more coconuts during the final climb to reach Congo Bongo on the mountain top. On the second screen (again rendered in three-quarter perspective), the hunter must cross the Great River, using a combination of lily pads, islands, hippos and fishes. The final barrier to reaching Congo Bongo is a group of charging rhinos on the far bank. If your hunter can slip past the rhinos to reach the sleeping Congo Bongo and give him the hot foot, you will return to the first screen at the next difficulty level.

Looks Better Than It Plays

CONGO BONGO is an interesting variation on the popular climbing game theme because of its use of three-dimensional graphics. However, this is a case of a game that looks better than it plays. We have the feeling that a large chunk of available memory was devoted to getting the right "look" at the expense of gameplay. With only two screens, the action becomes quite repetitive after a while. Particularly for experienced players, the challenge is not as great as it could be. This is another one to try before deciding to buy. (Solo Play; 2-Player Alternating; Pause)
(MSR $39.95)

RIVER RAID (★★★★/★★★★) and **KABOOM! (★★★/★★★½)** are the first two Atari 5200-compatible games from Activision. Both games are identical to the versions for the Atari computers, which were reviewed in the *Computer Entertainer* section of our September, 1983 issue. The first is a classic airborne combat game in which you control a plane in a daring raid over a constantly changing river course. Action galore, teamed with superb graphics! KABOOM pits the player against the Mad Bomber in an ever-escalating test of skill and reflexes. Two can also play simultaneously, one taking the role of the Mad Bomber, while the other tries to catch the bombs in buckets of water. Both are recommended. (MSR $34.95 each)

NEW SURGICAL PROCEDURE FOR THE 5200 CONTROLLER

by Mark D. Stitham, M.D.

A recent breakthrough by Ken Chong of Daiei Electronics here in Honolulu offers new hope to thousands of terminally ill 5200 controllers. As you may be aware, long before total body failure, the organ system that usually deteriorates first is the firing buttons especially those of the lower extermity. (I myself have had 3 expire on me). Although it may invalidate your health insurance policy (also known as the warranty), this experimental new procedure may reduce the high morbidity and mortality associated with this controller. Do not attempt this unless you are reasonably adroit and are "bored-certified" (that is, bored by returning the controllers all the time!)

The Operation

On a clean field unscrew the back 3 screws. You will have to pull out the circuit switch strip from under the start-pause-reset buttons (s-p-r) and you may have to use some force (it won't break). Remove the fire buttons and glue (*not* paste) a small thin square of aluminum foil on the underside with a sparing amount of Elmer's or somesuch. (I've only repaired the bottom buttons because foil can make the uppers too sensitive e.g. it's too easy to blow all your smart bombs in DEFENDER). Push the button down to mold the foil to the button.

Now to Reassemble

Reassembly is a bit tricky. The 2 potentiometers for the joystick have to be arranged so that the bottom one is a 6 o'clock and the top at 9 o'clock position. You'll have to remove the frame piece around the s-r-p buttons to pull the strip through again. Use a thin blade inserted above the pause button so as not to snap it. Hold the top portion upside down so the slides around the joystick won't fall out and to make sure the keypad is in place. Hold the 2 halves lightly apart while you thread the s-p-r strip back in place. Close up making sure everything is seated in place including the stick in the socket on the bottom half. If everything's o.k. the joystick will feel "right." (You *still* can't play Pac-Man, though). Test the buttons before re-screwing.

The prognosis for easy and extended firing life is excellent. My fee can be paid be check or charge card (no stamps or coconuts, please).

SPECTRAVIDEO PRODUCES FOR COLECO!

Spectravideo, manufacturers of earlier 2600 titles such as Cross Force and Nexar, have released three games for ColecoVision. In speaking with a representative, we've been told the cartridges are available only in very "limited" areas of the country with no immediate plans for national distribution. The three titles are FRANTIC FREDDIE, SPECTRON, and SUPER CROSS FORCE. We expect to have our review copies in within the next several days with reviews in the January issue.

ADAM, ADAM, WHO'S GOT AN ADAM??

We've been on the phones all over the country trying to find the cache of Coleco Adams. Although we've found a few, the major retailers are in the embarrassing position of having the unit advertised in their Christmas catalogs and are unable to deliver. Among those who have either received no Adams or too few to mention, include J.C. Penny, Gimbels (which recently indicated they had received 3% of what they had ordered), and Caldor (a discount department store which recently said they had received 42 units for their 95 outlets). We are aware of a few of our readers who have been able to purchase the unit, but the vast majority are still looking. Coleco has announced that they will ship a total of 125,000 to 140,000 units by the end of the year, as opposed to the original 450,000 to 500,000 units promised.

We're Still Waiting Too!

Coleco has not released any ADAMS to the press so any reviews you read are under the controlled atmosphere of a reporter going into the Coleco headquarters in Hartford. There have been several speculations as to why Coleco has not allocated any computers for the reviewers, from giving each and every unit to stores for sale, to Coleco not wanting reviews in print until the early problems disappear. We do not know what the situation is; however, we do wonder why some of the big "slick" magazines have seemingly not received anything yet. We understand that even the man whose phone number is listed in the owner's manual as the person to call regarding technical questions does not have an ADAM! That seems almost too remarkable to believe!

All Sorts of Reports

Meanwhile, you cannot pick-up a newspaper without reading about the stores and their supply problems and a few indications of defectives. There have been several complaints about the memory drive system. Coleco has indicated the problem is because the novice owner does not understand the system and the manual is not clear enough. We do understand Coleco is adding information for the manual for those who are having problems understanding their system. Meanwhile, other problems such as the printer printing unevenly, etc. have been reported. (It should be noted here that it is typical for any new system to encounter problems and adjustments—the key is the rate of return. It appears to be within a tolerable level of 10-15% based on retailers we have spoken with). It does appear that the data paks are particularly sensitive to erasure. Don't lay your data paks near or on the printer or Memory Drive System as there have been reports of total erasure.

Demonstration in New York

We were unable to arrange a mutually agreeable time to go into Hartford ourselves (as we still do not have a target date for our own ADAM arriving), so we travelled to New York where Coleco was showing the system at an electronic show geared toward the public. We were unable to get "hands-on", but watched a Coleco representative manipulate the word processing program for quite some time to get an indication of its ease of operation, and completeness as a word processor. First, a few general notes. The ADAM is the first and only 80K computer at its price, although 32K is used up by the BASIC tape (making the computer really 48K—a fact that should be weighed carefully). The keyboard features more keys than any home computer now available, other than the IBM PC. The sprites, extremely important for game playing graphics, are a strong 32 vs. 8 for the Commodore 64. One serious drawback which will, hopefully, be rectified *very soon* is the fact that you cannot, as yet, purchase blank data paks. The computer comes packaged with one (to save any word processing files) which, depending on your usage, may be enough to hold you for awhile. And, a question which surfaces over and over from our readers regarding compatibility with Apple programs—first and obviously, Apple program disks will not fit physically in the ADAM. Also, most Apple programs will need to go through a certain amount of translation. In other words, you cannot, in most instances, simply sit down and type in an Apple program on an ADAM data pak and expect it to work flawlessly.

Word Processor Has Good Features

We asked for demos of several of the features they are touting. and found the word processing program appeared to be very user-friendly (easy to use) with pictures along the bottom screen of the various functions, such as "print," "file," "edit," etc. The screen shows a 40-column width (Coleco promises a 80-column expansion card to be available at a later date★) with an 80-column indicator at the top of the screen. On the screen, you can see a total of 24 lines of text with a highlighted area of 3 lines near the bottom where you are working. Some of the features, typical of a word processing program which this program has are a search capability, allowing you to look for a word or phrase and then change or delete it; printing the entire file or just a highlighted part you indicate; tabbing; etc. During the demo, one disturbing thing happened. With the demonstrator nowhere near the computer, the entire screen went dark and she had to start everything up again. Anyone who has worked with a computer can imagine the frustration if that happened after entering pages of text or pages of a program! The demonstrator apologized and said she had hit a wrong key—but she was not close enough to have done that. It's possible, due to the convention environment, there was a power surge which also could have caused the computer to "go down". We will, of course, get into an in-depth review when we are able to spend the time necessary to do justice to the system *and* with us at the controls!

★ *80 column is normal page width; however, many computers, due to graphic or memory limitations, opt for 40 column which means that the second half of a line is placed on the next line on the monitor. So, you can only view half of a page, at most, at one time. 80 column, by the way, does take memory in most computer systems.*



IBM FINALLY UNVEILS "PEANUT"

IBM, in a press conference in New York, finally unveiled what everyone has been talking about for months—but IBM wouldn't confirm—the release of the "Peanut," officially called the PCjr. There had been so much speculation about the computer that we had heard all sorts of things about it. For those of you who haven't heard the details, there are two basic systems to be made available in January. Both systems use programs contained in cigarette-pack-size cartridges which fit into a slot in the front of the machine. With a $30 adaptor, you can store data permanently by plugging in a data cassette recorder. Adaptors for connection to the family TV can be purchased. IBM will offer a $175 thermal dot-matrix printer that hooks up to the PCjr without an adaptor. The first system, retailing around $669, consists of the basis system unit and cordless infrared keyboard which uses cartridge programs and has 64KB of user memory. The second package, retailing at $1269, adds a disk with 128KB to the above package. The PCjr has features such as a 16-bit microprocessor; microchip technology which eliminates the need of some adapter cards such as game controller, serial port, light pen interface, and color graphics capabilities; a 62-key cordless (usable up to 20 feet away from the unit) keyboard which has programmable keys so you can "customize" your keyboard; power-on self test diagnostics; and an optional, internal device to communicate by telephone with other computers (modem).

Now, What That Really Means

Sounds great, right?? Well, in some aspects it is. IBM is a highly respected name in personal computers with their highly successful IBM PC. However, in no way is this the IBM PC! First, there are

not many programs available for the PC which can be handled by the PCjr. Secondly, when we took a look at the keyboard we were highly concerned about its "feel". The keys are little square buttons (having been likened to "chicklets" in other articles) resting on almost a membrane-type board. You must hit the keys squarely in the middle and with a fair amount of force for the letter to register. Therefore, we must have serious reservations about the entire system as one of the most critical applications of a home computer system is the ability to use word processors (letter writing, etc.). Anyone who can type faster than 15 wpm will have one tough time with this keyboard. We were frankly surprised that a company such as IBM would release it with this keyboard (perhaps an adjustment will be made prior to release???). The keyboard also has 21 fewer keys than the PC.

Software Should be a Plus

One major attribute of the system is that, in spite of the lack of compatibility with most PC software, several companies are immediately planning software for the system (many more than have indicated an interest in Adam). We understand that Software Publishing Corp. will design their PFS programs for the PCjr; Information Unlimited will design EasyWriter, a word processing program; and several others are making plans for the system. We recall that one of the reasons IBM was so successful with the PC was their open courtship with software companies to produce for their system. It goes back to the basic principle that any system, be it computer or dedicated game, is only as good as the software available for it. By the way, IBM controls its distribution and you will only be able to look at and purchase the PCjr at an authorized IBM dealer.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..TI 99/4A

RETURN TO PIRATE'S ISLE (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) is the graphic adventure sequel to Adventure #2, Pirate's Adventure. Here your mission is to locate thirteen hidden treasures. You must find and deposit the treasures in a secret place while avoiding dangers throughout. You begin on a ship and quickly move to the isle where you must break the secrets of the adventure in order to succeed. As is typical of adventures, you must use common sense. Chart your travels by drawing a map and carefully examine the items you find during your adventure. If you are faced with losing the game on your next move, save the game before entering the command. In that way, you can reload the game later and try another move.

Hours of Deductive Fun

This is a good adventure game with the promise of hours of fun and frustration as you try and unlock the keys to the treasures. We spent several hours with it and still found many "doors to unlock". The graphics are good with vibrant colors depicting the various scenes. Adventure fans will enjoy the challenge of looking for pirate's treasure. Recommended

BURGERTIME (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★) is, by now, a well-known and well-loved arcade title. TI owners should be thrilled to be able to add this fine rendition to their library. As in the arcade version, Chef Peter Pepper tries to build burgers while avoiding various food items running amok. The six kitchens are actually various arrangments of platforms and ladders, with burger ingredients stacked separately, one above the other, on the platforms. Each time thee player runs Peter Pepper over a burger ingredient, it falls down a level, displacing any ingredient directly below it. Once all the burgers are assembled on the bottom of the screen, the chef moves to the next kitchen. A crazy group of villains—Mr. Hot Dog, Mr Pickle, and Mr. Egg, chase Peter Pepper around the screen. The chef's defenses against these nasties include dropping burger ingredients on top of them, lure them onto an ingredient as it drops (for even more points), or toss a pinch of pepper at one to stun them temporarily. Pinches of pepper are limited; however, occasionally ice cream cones and coffee cups appear. Run over them and pick up additional pepper.

Great Animation

TI has done an outstanding job on this version. Gameplay is as fine as any version out there for other systems. Unlike some other versions, all the nasties appear from the first screen on. Graphics are outstanding with bright, vibrant colors. All the burger ingredients are very recognizable as what they are. From the whimsical Peter Pepper, to the spinning Mr. Pickle, the animation is a true delight. Even the burger ingredients, as they fall, have an animated feel to them. This game is one we highly recommend as an addition to anyone's library! (Solo Play; Joystick or Keyboard; Pause.) (Cartridge) Recommended (MSR $39.95)

SLYMOIDS (★ ★ / ★ ★) pits you as the cowboy against creatures such as Slymoids, Jelliods, Spores, and Spiders. As the game begins, you are located in one of three battlefields: a grassy slope, a castle, or a cave. You must use your laser gun to shoot the creatures as they come at you from the side and above. Some creatures can be killed with a single shot while others need repeated hitting. When you eliminate1 all the creatures from one location, the screen goes black and a new location appears where you will receive an additional reserve cowboy.

Nothing New

The graphics are nothing special in this game. The cowboy is very blocky, typical of human figures on the TI994/A. The landscape does scroll horizontally to give you approximately one and a half screens. Gameplay is a typical shoot-'em-up where you just aim and shoot as fast as you can to destroy the creatures before they get you and offers absolutely nothing in the way of originality. We'd advise that you pass on this one! (Solo Play; Pause)
Not Recommended

DONKEY KONG (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★) is the first game from **ATARISOFT** for the T.I. 99/4A computer, and it's based on the tremendously popular arcade game by Nintendo. In this climbing game, the player takes the role of Mario, the carpenter, as he attempts to save his girl from the clutches of the brutish ape, Donkey Kong. Fans of the coin-op will be thrilled to learn that this adaptation contains *all 4 screens* of the original game! In each of the screens, Mario must scale a different structure built of girders while avoiding the barrels the ape rolls at him, firefoxes that chase him, or buckets of sand on conveyor belts. Timing is critical as Mario climbs ladders and ramps, removes rivets, nabs prizes, and hops onto elevators in the attempt to rescue his girl at the top of each structure. When Mario reaches his girl, her screams for help are replaced by a red heart above the sweethearts' heads. Happiness is fleeting, however, since Mario's heart breaks as the ape whisks the girl away to the top of the next structure.

Gamer's Heaven

Owners of the 99/4A should be in gamer's heaven this month with the sudden rush of superb titles for their system. Excellent graphics, delightful music, and varied, challenging play action characterize the first Atarisoft release for this system. All the characters are beautifully detailed, and very little is missing from the coin-op original. DONKEY KONG is the climbing game that inspired so many others, and this version would be a worthwhile addition to your collection. (Solo Play; 2-Player Alternating; Pause.)(Cartridge)
Recommended. (MSR $44.95)

Q*BERT (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★) should provide a very pleasant surprise for owners of the T.I. 99/4A computer—a "real" arcade game for their system! As everyone must know by now, this is based on the hugely successful coin-op by Mylstar (formerly Gottlieb) in which the nozzle-nosed Q*bert must be guided to hop diagonally around a pyramid of cubes, changing the colors of the cube tops. A full complement of nasties attempts to thwart Q*bert's progress: the Red Ball, the Purple Ball that hatches Coily the Snake, and Ugg, the creepy creature that crabs along the vertical surfaces of the cubes. As cute as Q*bert is, he's prone to profanity, "swearing" whenever he runs into an enemy or hops off the edge of the pyramid. On these occasions, a cartoon bubble full of assorted punctuation marks appears above his orange head. The bad guys can be escaped by hopping Q*bert onto a Flying Disc that transports him to the top of the pyramid. If Coily is close enough, he'll try to follow Q*bert, only to fall off the edge. Other characters found hopping around the pyramid at higher levels are Slick, who changes the colors of the cubes back to their original hue, and the Green Ball. Slick can be stopped by running Q*bert into him, and catching the Green Ball causes everything but Q*bert to freeze for a few moments. There are nine levels in the game, each comprising four rounds (four pyramids).

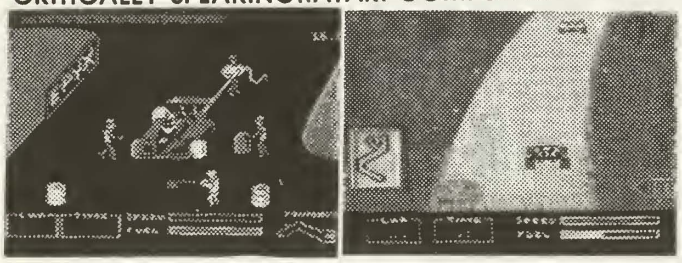


Game Play Is Superb

After reviewing so many versions of this one game, we're counting Q*berts instead of sheep on sleepless nights! This adaptation for the T.I. 99/4A is one of the best: it's bright and colorful, and game play is superb once you become accustomed to the correct

way to hold the joystick for diagonal movement. Graphically, it is most similar to the version for ColecoVision. (This is to be expected, since the T.I. 99/4A and ColecoVision use the same graphics chip.) But the best news is that T.I. owners can now play versions of arcade games designed for their system for the very first time—cause for celebration, indeed! This latest incarnation of Q*bert should encourage long-time owners of the 99/4A to get more use from their system, and it would be the perfect Christmas gift for any of the multitude of brand-new 99/4A owners. (Solo Play; 2-Player Alternating; Joystick Only) (Cartridge)
Recommended. (MSR $49.95)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..ATARI COMPUTERS



PITSTOP (★ ★½/ ★ ★½) challenges you to master famed race tracks in the world: from Monaco, Le Mans, Kyalami, Albi, to St Jovite. You can choose your course, number of laps, and type of race including a single race, Mini-Circuit (with a random selection of three of the six race tracks), or Grand Circuit (6 races). Once on the track, use your radar map to determine your position on the course and distance to the pit. You must pay close attention to both your fuel supply and tire wear. Every time you bump into another car or hit the side of the road, you wear down your tires. They begin as a deep blue, becoming lighter and lighter as you hit more cars. Finally, when they turn red, even the slightest bump can cause a blowout and end the race. If your fuel gets low or any one of your tires shows wear, it's time to get into your pit and have your crew go to work. As you race against the clock (watching the competition speed past you on the track), your crew grab the worn tire and get a new one from the stack. Move your gas attendant to the rear of the car and refuel the car. To leave the pits, you must move your cursor down to the flagman who will flag you back on the track.

EPYX COMPUTER SOFTWARE

Race is Nothing Special

We've seen several racing games for various systems and found the racing portion of this one nothing special. It is a very typical racing game as far as the feel of the driving, avoiding other cars and the sides, etc. Graphically, the tracks are rather ordinary (no change of scenery, etc). Racing enthusiasts will enjoy the ability to race on various tracks, however. The feature which sets Pitstop apart from the competition is the action in the pit. Graphically, the detail on this screen is very good and some skill and practice will be needed to get through this segment quickly. For those who love driving games, this one is worth taking a look at because of the added dimension of the pitstop. We also feel that having the various race courses and circuit options give the game additional depth. If you already own a driving game which you are happy with, you may want to pass on this one; if not, take a look first to get a feel if this one will hold your interest over long periods of time. (cartridge; Solo Play; 2,3, or 4-player alternating; joystick only)(coming for Commodore 64) (MSR $40.00)

FUN WITH ART is a joystick-controlled art program that allows anyone, from novice to expert, to create and save full-color artwork with their computer. The program offers a picture-menu with lots of choices, all of which are well explained in the accompanying instruction booklet. However, it's quite possible to insert the cartridge and start experimenting without ever opening the booklet. We went the experimental route, and within minutes we were creating gorgeous, multi-colored works of art. (Well, we thought they were gorgeous works of art!)

The basics are all here, including narrow, medium and wide strokes, plus shapes such as circles, squares and outlines. The budding computer artist can work with all 128 colors possible with the Atari computer. In addition, it's possible to duplicate entire portions of your artwork, moving them around the screen at will, or create mirror images. For finely detailed work, you can zoom in on any area of your drawing, magnifying it eight times. Anyone who owns a disk drive or program recorder can save any drawing, retrieving all or part of it at a later time. It's even possible to retrieve part of a drawing and incorporate it into a new drawing. Epyx has even been thoughtful enough to include instructions for using the drawings you've saved in your own BASIC programs.

This program is suggested for ages 6 and up, and it would be an excellent purchase for families with children showing any artistic talent. It's actually suitable for all ages, and would be especially welcome to anyone who enjoys programming with graphic elements. Having worked with graphics tablets and associated software, we had some initial doubts about drawing with a joystick. However, the joystick worked beautifully with this program, and the picture-menu made the learning process very easy.
(Solo play) (Cartridge; requires 32K.)
Recommended. (MSR $40.00)

POLE POSITION (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★½) brings one of the most popular arcade titles to the Atari computer and will be a hit among all you race car drivers out there. You'll begin in the qualifying round where you must achieve a lap time of 73 seconds or better to qualify for a race. Start out in low gear, and shift into high with your joystick as you manuever around the track and other cars. You must avoid the other cars and the road signs along the side. No matter how many times you crash, you will receive another car, but lose precious time. Also, try to keep your car on the track as you lose time and points for driving off (not that easy when some of those comers come on fast). As you become more proficient, you'll learn to downshift ahead of the turns, and move back into high gear as you come out of the turns (as all us sports car drivers in real life do).

A Must for Driving Fans

This game gives you a true driving challenge and is a fine adaptation of the arcade version. The course is tough, but you'll find yourself coming back for more and more. It's the perfect answer for anyone who loves racing but doesn't have a available racetrack near their home (or the car you can afford to wreck!)(Solo Play; Pause)
Recommended (MSR $49.95)

CRISIS MOUNTAIN (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) from *MicroFun*, is billed as a strategic, arcade style action game. The object is to advance from level one through the other levels by deactivating the bombs in a scene before they explode. You must walk and crawl through the caverns digging up and defusing the bombs while avoiding flying rocks, debris, molten lava, and Bertrum, the crazed, radioactive bat with a deadly bite. For the most success, pick up the shovel to help with the digging. While in the caverns, you can gain points by recovering loot, gun caches, boxes, etc. which have been left behind by terrorists. Your joystick allows you to stand up and run, and kneel down and crawl through the narrow passageways. Avoid being hit by rocks as they will deplete your strength and you'll have a difficult time standing up. As you dig up each bomb, the time remaining on the bomb clock at the moment you defuse it is added to the Bonus Time. Your Bonus Run begins when you clear all the bombs in the scene. In that Run, you are free to collect supplies and loot. If you clear the scene of all the secret supplies at any time during play or the Bonus Run, you enter the Nova Mode where you have the opportunity to destroy Novae, worth at least 1000 points each.

Not Easy!

Making your way through the caverns can be extremely difficult and you'll find certain areas of the caverns very tough to reach. A good deal of strategy is necessary to pick up the various goodies and defuse the bombs in the time alloted. The ability the crawl and run through the caverns and up and down the cliffs adds to the dimension of the game. The graphics are very pretty with stalactites jutting out of the roof of the caves, making for some small passageways. The molten lava gurgles up through two funnels in a brilliant orange. All in all, this is a good strategy, action game.
(40K Disk; coming for Commodore 64)(Solo Play)
Recommended (MSR $35.00)

NEW COMMODORE COMPUTER??

Rumblings are surfacing from within Commodore that they are preparing a new computer for release in 1984. We understand the machine will have 128K memory and a 16-bit microprocessor. There are also stories going around that the Commodore 64 will be discontinued. Regardless, our main hope is that Commodore will not make the mistake they did when releasing the 64 in that it is not compatible with the VIC-20, and the 128 will be compatible with the 64 software which is finally hitting the market in good quantities.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..ATARI COMPUTERS

DROL (★ ★ ★½/ ★ ★ ★½) is a whimsical game where your mission is to enter a dream world and rescue a little girl, a boy, their pet lizard and crocodile, and their mother and bring them back to reality. You're wearing your trance-resistant, anti-gravity rescue suit (which looks like a space suit) and you run into perils such as flying turkeys, scorpions, witch doctors, honking vacuum cleaners, and more. With the help of a wide-screen radar-scope at the top of the screen, you will locate and shoot to disintegrate monsters and other enemy phantoms while looking for, and rescuing those lured into this strange world. You walk back and forth on levels, beginning on the top. To reach lower levels, you move through trap doors and to move up a level, you use the rocket power of your backpack. Beginning with five lives, you gain an extra life for each round of three missions completed.

Cute Characters

This is one of those games which has no point other than to enjoy the cute and whimsical characters you encounter. The graphics are very good with touches such as the flying turkey turning to roast turkey on a platter when you successfully shoot it down. It's a fairly easy game to master in the early rounds, becoming more and more difficult in the later rounds with flying weapons, magnets, and such. The waves also come quicker and quicker with less trap doors to reach the various levels. This is a cute game for the family! (48K disk; also available for Commodore 64)(Solo Play; Pause) Recommended (MSR $34.95)

LEARNING WITH LEEPER (★ ★ ★½/ ★ ★ ★) contains four separate learning games for children from the ages of three to six. "Dog Count" presents an array of dogs with empty bowls on the left, and groupings of bones numbered one to ten on the right. The child's task is to choose the correct number of bones to feed the dogs. If the child chooses too many or too few bones, the correct number will flash. All of this is accompanied by charming music, and the dogs wag their tails when fed. "Balloon Pop" teaches shape recognition and matching skills. From a group of four shapes or letters, the child chooses the one that matches one on a ledge to the right. The shape is picked up with a balloon, and a correct match sends the balloon sailing off for the next round. A mis-match causes the balloon to drop the incorrect shape. "Leap Frog" is a simple maze game for eye-hand coordination. The frog is led through the maze, chased by a brightly colored centipede. The object is to get through the maze with a minimum of collisions with the walls. (The task is not timed, nor are any points awarded.) "Screen Painting" lets the child color areas in a pre-drawn scene or draw his or her own picture on a blank screen.

These games are designed for the child who has not yet learned to read. The basic skills taught—number concepts, shape recognition and eye-hand coordination—are necessary pre-reading skills. The question with any such learning games is whether the games themselves are appealing enough to "bribe" the child to learn by playing. We feel that the Dog Count, Leap Frog and Screen Painting games will appeal to most youngsters. However, we found Balloon Pop rather slow and not nearly as cute as the others. (Solo play) (Cartridge)
(MSR $37.95)

DEFECTIVE COMMODORES?

More and more reports are surfacing about abnormally large numbers of defective Commodore 64s. Normal return rate runs between 5 to 7 percent and reports, differing widely, put the return rate anywhere from 20 to 40 percent! Even if that is exaggerated, it is cause for concern for any potential purchaser. The problem seems to coincide with the price reduction a few months ago to the $200 level. We have spoken with several retailers who have had a definite problem with the machine and have had even more problem in getting replacements due to the lack of Comm 64s available. The two major defective areas appear to be the power supply (nothing happening when you turn the computer on) and a faulty keyboard.

Test It Out!

Undoubtedly, there will be several 64s put under Christmas trees this season. We must *strongly* urge you to, if possible, check the computer out in the store before taking it home. If that's not possible, you should open the package before putting it under the tree to avoid disappointment on Christmas morning.

ZOMBIES (★ ★½/ ★ ★½) combines elements of medieval adventure gaming, such as dungeons and spells, with extremely fast action. The player's goal is to recapture the seven magical crowns of the middle kingdoms. The crowns were stolen by the evil cleric, Wistrik, and placed in seven dungeons under the protection of Zombies, poisonous snakes, giant spiders and Wistrik's deadly "Orbs of Evil." The player starts with 50 hit points (60 in the two-player mode) and the 32 Talismans of Rhadamanthus for protection. Entering any of the seven dungeons, the player must direct his on-screen character to move as quickly as possible through the chambers, avoiding contact with any of the evil creatures which cause the deducton of hit points. (Death results when the total of hit points reaches zero.) The Talismans (crosses) can be dropped to protect the protagonist temporarily from evil creatures. (After their magic wears off, they are available for re-use.) Most chambers in the dungeon contain scrolls, which should be picked up. They award added hit points or a magic spell to be used against the evil creatures when the hero is in a tight spot. Spells include "Freeze" (bad guys can't move), "Confuse" (bad guys can't chase the hero) and "Protect" (bad guys can't hurt the hero). Once a crown is retrieved from the depths of a dungeon, the hero must make his way back through the dungeon's chambers, again avoiding all the nasty creatures, to finally claim the crown and move on to the next dungeon.

Good Two-Player Game

The best part of the graphic display in ZOMBIES is the layout of the various dungeons in three-quarter perspective, which imparts a three-dimensional feeling to the game. The player's on-screen character and the Zombies are white stick-figures, often indistinguishable from each other in the heat of especially tense moments of play. The game moves *very* fast, which will appeal to some players. It moves so fast, in fact, that we had some difficulty managing to cast spells. When you're literally running for your life, it takes excellent timing to stop your character, press the firing button for the "ready to cast" buzzer, and then remember which direction to move the joystick for the specific spell desired—all this while the bad guys are speeding toward your character like crazed vultures smelling the potential kill! As a single-player game, we were not thrilled with ZOMBIES, but it does offer an interesting two-player option for cooperative play. Magic spells are shared, and a dead partner can be resurrected by touch. The players *must* work together, being careful of where the Talismans are dropped and always leaving a dungeon chamber together. If you're looking for a good game to play with a friend, this one may be just the thing. However, there are better solo games available with a sorcery theme. In the single-player mode, we found that ZOMBIES became somewhat boring, despite the challenge of extreme speed. (Solo Play; 2-Player Cooperative; Pause Control.) (48K Disk)

SUNRISE SOFTWARE TO DEBUT SOON

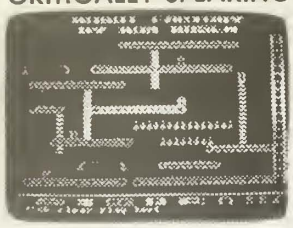
Sunrise Software has told us they are on the verge of releasing their first product within the next two months (see Availability Update) for Colecovision and Atari computers. They plan to print actual game screens on the packaging so potential customers will not be deceived by fancy artwork which is currently used by several companies.

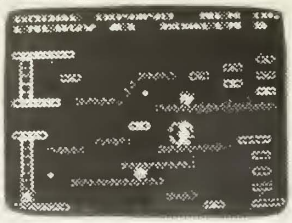
Colecovision Titles

Titles coming for ColecoVision include QUEST FOR QUINTANA ROO, a Mayan mystery where you must make your way through hundreds of chambers which create the Mystical Temple of Quintana Roo. In ROLLOVERTURE, you must help the concert maestro scurry about the orchestra pit, placing music balls in the proper slot so the proper note is made. CAMPAIGN 84 is an educational game where you must raise additional campaign funds, strengthen your issues, and plot your campaign trail. Finally, GUST BUSTER allows you to navigate through a colorful amusement park. You must avoid hazards such as rides, fireworks, and elephants while attempting to land in the most crowded areas in the park to sell your balloons.

Atari Computer Titles

Two titles are planned for the Atari computer including MATHERCISE, a math tutor for beginners and advanced students, and BIG LEAGUE NOSTALGIA BASEBALL. This trivia quiz is played using the same rules as baseball. You field trivia questions from the past and present and play either another opponent or the computer. Additional diskettes of trivia questions will also be available.





MR. ROBOT AND HIS ROBOT FACTORY DATAMOST (★ ★ ★ ½/ ★ ★ ★ ★) allows you to start at any of 22 levels *OR* program your own screen! In the preset game, Mr. Robot must avoid obstacles, move throughout the level using various moving treadmills, ladders, escalators, poles, etc., and collect all the power pills before being able to move to the next level. You must watch out for the alienfire—jump over it or touch an energizer to be able to kill it. The force field only lasts a short time before reverting to a normal state. Every screen is quite different as far as the mode you move around. In addition to the treadmills, ladders, etc., you also will encounter trampolines, bombs you walk over and ignite, magnets to help you jump further, etc. You lose lives by midjudging your position and falling or jumping too far or running out of energy.

Design Your Own

By pressing the OPTION key, you'll enter the factory and find a panel at the bottom of the screen which contains the various parts that make up the game. With a cursor you'll move the parts you wish to use into the playing surface in any position you desire. You can continue to paint ★ with the object you've chosen until you move the cursor back to the bottom of the screen to "grab" another item. You also have the ability to test, edit, and save any screen you design.

Lots of Fun!

With the ability to start at any screen, we found ourselves flipping through the various screens available to try them all out. It's a nice feature which allows the player to avoid boredom (you don't *have* to start back at the same screen every time you lose!). The main plus is, of course, the ability to design your own screens. This is a feature which we've begun to see on a few games (see LodeRunner reviews this issue) which adds a tremendous dimension. Graphics are quite good, with a lot of moving items on most screens. This is a game which can provide hours of enjoyment for any game player. (48K disk; also available for Apple and Commodore 64) (Solo Play)
Recommended (MSR $34.95)

★ *Paint is an expression used for computers where you have the ability to continue to lay down the same item over and over simply by moving your joystick throughout the field.*

THE TAIL OF BETA LYRAE (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) is a space game where you are a Galactic Wing Commander in charge of destructing the alien war machine and returning control of the planetoids of a star's spiral tail to the colonists who mined the tail of its precious metals. Your mission will take you over mountainous terrain, through caverns, and over city settlements. Ultimately, as your skills increase, you will locate and direct your ship to the caverns housing the alien power generators. After you take over those caverns, you will break orbit and your computer will plot a course to the nearest alien presence. You then reach the area of the tail itself and all the small debris around it. You'll have to navigate carefully to be successful in your mission. Of course, all along the way you run into several obstacles such as alien vessels, cannons, lasers, backbiter missiles, and more. Shoot them down for points, or avoid them to continue your mission.

You're In Control

You are truly in control of your spaceship and you push forward on your joystick for additional thrust and fire power and pull back to slow down. The graphics of the spaceship are very good, as are the various obstacles encountered along the way. It's no easy task to make it through to free space as you must pass through several sectors of peril. At first we thought this was too similar to Defender, but quickly found this was not strictly a space shoot-'em-up. It took strategy and careful flying to reach our destination. You may want to take a look at this prior to purchase just to make certain it doesn't too closely resemble anything currently in your library. (48K disk) (Solo Play; 1-4 Players; Pause) (MSR $34.95)

BUCK ROGERS PLANET OF ZOOM (★ ★ ★ ½★ ★ ½) is based on Sega's own three-dimensional arcade game, although several elements of the coin-op have been left out of this adaptation. The game consists of two basic screens: traveling above the surface of the Planet Zoom (three rounds per level) and traveling through space to destroy the Mother Ship (one round per level). Controlling a sleek fightership, the player first skims the planet's surface, steering between electron posts while avoiding or firing at Alien Saucers and Space Hoppers. During this segment of gameplay, it pays to make your ship travel as fast as you can without losing control. Bonus points are awarded for speed, and your ship actually consumes less fuel at faster speeds than it does moving slowly. Once three rounds have been flown successfully over the planet, your fightership moves to black space for an encounter with Alien Saucers and the Mother Ship. The Mother Ship must be hit dead-center to be destroyed. Once it has been eliminated, your ship is returned to the Planet of Zoom for a more difficult battle. There are five levels of play, each consisting of four rounds.

SEGA THE ARCADE EXPERTS

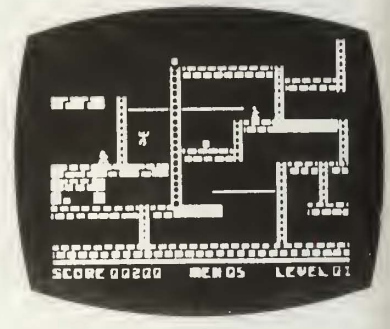
Uncomplicated Shoot-Em-Up

The graphics are very nicely done in this game. Colors are clean and bright, and the three-dimensional look of the planet is very effective. Game play is enjoyable, but it left us feeling that the game just isn't substantial enough to sustain long-term interest. It's an uncomplicated shoot-em-up that does deliver excitement when played at breakneck speeds, but it seemed repetitious after lomg playing sessions. If you're fond of space shoot-outs, you may want to try this one before deciding to buy it. (Solo Play; Pause; Joystick or Keyboard Control) (Cartridge)
(MSR $39.95)

CONGO BONGO (★ ★ ★ ½/ ★ ★ ½) is exactly like the version for the Atari 5200, which is reviewed elsewhere in this issue. (Solo Play; 2-Player Alternating; Pause; Joystick or Keyboard Control.) (Cartridge)
(MSR $39.95)

LODE RUNNER (★ ★ ½/ ★ ★ ★ ★) is an arcade-style climbing game with a twist. In addition to the 150 screens included with the game, you can create and play your own screens. You have discovered the secret treasury of the Bungeling Empire and your goal is to take all of the gold on each screen and escape to the next one. The treasury is guarded, and if the guards catch you, you must start the screen over again, minus one turn. Your only weapon is a laser drill which makesholes in the floor that the guards can fall into. Unlike most climbing games, falling doesn't kill you. The only way to die is contact with a guard or falling into a hole when it closes. One problem is that the guards carry gold with them and you must have all the gold to advance to the next screen. The guards drop any gold they are carrying whenever they fall into a hole. Also, when a guard is in a hole, you can run over him to the other side of the hole. Once all the gold has been collected, a ladder appears which leads you to the next screen. Some areas of the screen can only be reached by using your laser drill to make holes, which adds a strategy element to the game. Each screen is completely different from the others, and with 150 screens to choose from, you won't be bored soon. However, if you do get bored, you can use the editor to create your own screens.

Broderbund Software



We took a look at both the Commodore 64 version and the Atari computer version and the graphics are good, but only a total of three colors. They are not as vibrant as on the Apple version we reviewed in the September, 1983 issue. Gameplay is smooth and exciting, and there are several nice options which add to your enjoyment. These include the ability to start at any screen, change the number of men, or to speed up or slow down gameplay. More games should give you the option to make your own screens, as this adds considerably to the enjoyment level. (available on Commodore 64, Atari, Apple computers; disk)
Recommended (MSR $34.95)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..ATARI COMPUTERS

MEGAMANIA (★★★★/★★★★) is an adaptation by Glyn Anderson of the game originally designed for the Atari 2600 over a year ago by Steve Cartwright. It offers a humorous twist on the classic invasion game, as the player controls a horizontally mobile ship firing at such unlikely objects as hamburgers, spinning radial tires, rotating sandwich cookies and irons that puff spurts of steam! Each wave of invaders has its own formation and pattern of movement, some of them very erratic and tricky to deal with. There's added challenge in the fuel/time limit imposed for disposing of each wave. If you don't eliminate the entire wave before fuel runs out, your ship will "die."



A Real Gamer's Game

We liked the original MEGAMANIA for the Atari 2600, and we like this one even better. Gameplay is highly challenging, with relentless, fast-moving, ever-changing action—a real gamer's game. Sound effects are other-worldly: a sizzling, electronic hum occurs whenever an invader or its fire strikes your ship. The graphics are punchy and colorful with a touch of humor. Details are so well defined that you can even see the tread design on the radial tires as they spin. Variations on the invasion game are many, but few have the graphic excellence and superb challenge of MEGAMANIA. Available soon for the Atari 5200. (Solo Play; 2-Player Alternating.) (Cartridge)
Recommended. (MSR $34.95)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..COMMODORE 64

PLANETFALL (NA/★★★★) from *INFOCOM*, is a humorous text adventure which begins aboard the Stellar Patrol Starship Feinstein. You joined the Patrol to find adventure, and you've found it—your duties consist of scrubbing floors and getting demoted. Things get better though as your ship is destroyed and you escape just in time to crash land on a deserted planet. Actually, the planet does have one inhabitant of a sort—Floyd, an enthusiastic but not-too-bright robot that you find in an empty laboratory building. With Floyd's help, you must set about unravelling the mysteries concerning the planet. Specifically, where are the people and what happened to them? Floyd doesn't prove to be much help since he prefers playing hide-and-seek over helping you explore, but he is occasionally useful. Almost everything requires an access card to be used, and each access card is different. As a result, a lot of your time is spent tracking down access cards to various devices.

A Fine Adventure

Unlike most adventure games, you must have food, water, and sleep in order to survive, so these become your first priorities. Like all other Infocom games, Planetfall accepts complete sentences as input, making gameplay more realistic. While the game is billed as being humorous (and rightly so), the events which transpire have a serious side as well. This game is not as hard as other Infocom adventures, but it is every bit as intriguing as far as the puzzles and situations are concerned. If you've never tried a text adventure before, this is a good one to start with. (also available for Apple, Atari; disk)
Recommended (MSR $49.95)

ENCHANTER (NA/★★★★) is a magical text adventure set in a desolate land dominated by the evil warlock Krill. You have been chosen to confront Krill because you are the least experience enchanter the circle could find and, therefore, the least likely to attract his attention. You must journey to Krill's castle along and discover his secrets. Along the way, you find scrolls containing magic spells which you can learn and use in various ways. You only learn fou spells at a time. One spell allows you to turn things (including yourself) into newts, while another spell will open any locked object. Some spells are too powerful to be used, since they will attract attention to you. Once you get into Krill's castle, you must watch your step, as there are many ways to die, most very unpleasant! Hopefully, by the time you find Krill, you will be powerful and experienced enough to defeat him.

Totally Involving

At times, it's easy to forget that you're playing a game—we found ourselves cringing whenever there were approaching footsteps. The tension builds as your search continues, wondering what lies around the next corner to challenge your slowly building powers. The gameplay is totally involving, and the situations encountered are challenging, to say the least. This is definitely one game you can't put down. One hint—use the save feature whenever you encounter a potentially dangerous situation. That way, if you get killed, you can restore the game rather than having to start over. (also available for Apple and Atari; disk)
Recommended (MSR $49.95)

INFIDEL (NA/★★★★) is an archeological text adventure set in and below the Egyptian desert. You are an unscrupulous and ambitious explorer searching for the lost tomb of an ancient queen hidden beneath the scorching sands of the desert. Your only guide is a sixty-five year old map markign the approximate location of the entrance to the tomb. One problem is that your nasty temper has resulted in your hired hand sleaving you all alone in the desert. Another problem is that the only way to determine location in the desert is to use a sophisticated navigational box—yours is broken. All is not lost, however. A plane soon flies overhead and drops another box, which enables you to find and enter the tomb. Once inside, you are confronted with various challenges, including deadly booby traps on your path to the gold-covered coffin of the queen. Along the way, you'll find messages written in hieroglyphics which give you direction to find the queen and also avoid the booby traps. The closer you get to the queen, the nastier the traps get.

Archeologist's Delight

This game is *highly* addictive. We were unable to leave it alone when faced with the real puzzle until we had solved it. As you get farther into the tomb, the challenges and rewards get greater. If you've ever wanted to be an archeologist, you should try this game. If you are careful and observant, you should be able to avoid most of the pitfalls awaiting you. As usual for Infocom, the gameplay is of the highest quality. (also available for Apple and Atari; disk)
Recommended (MSR $49.95)

BLADE OF BLACKPOOLE (★★★½/★★★½) is a mythological graphic-text adventure in which you are an intrepid explorer in search of the mythical Blade of Blackpoole, rumored to be hidden under Blackpoole. Your journey leads you through quicksand, over mountains, through valleys, and down cliffs. Along the way you meet a maneating plant, a recluse, and a sea monster to name a few. Each creature requires some soft of gift or service from you before they will aid you in your quest. The solutions to some of the problems are straightforward, but some are rather obscure, and require some thought. The adventurers you meet are not much help, except to tell you that of the many who have tried, none have returned. There are rumors of a mysterious island which is the key to finding the sword, called Myraglym.

Engrossing

The graphics are good compared to other text adventures, but not as good as some games for the system. The game recognizes multiple word commands, but two-word commands bring the best results. Also, some things have to worded in precisely the right way in order to work. Once you get used to these minor drawbacks, the gameplay is as engrossing as any on the market, and more challenging than most. This is a good, solid adventure game (disk)
Recommended (MSR $39.95)

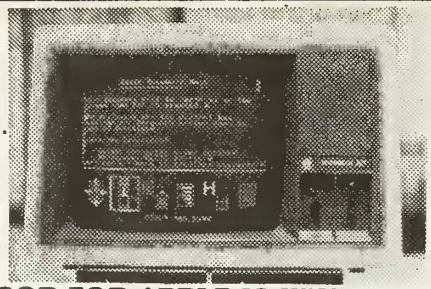
ELECTRONIC SOFTWARE DISTRIBUTION

As we first reported a few months ago, Romox has now begun its test marketing of its system for distributing video games and educational software for home computers electronically to retailers. Among the first software companies to make software available are Epyx, Mattel, Fox, HES, Sierra-On-Line, UMI, Creative Software, Navarone, Vidtec, Telesys, and Funware.

After purchasing an initial reuseable cartridge, the buyer can go back in time after time and reprogram the cartridge with other games. Suggested retail prices of the games each time you go in are $7.95 to $19.95. Blank cartridges are priced at $15 to $25, depending on memory capacity. The terminals in the stores will carry games for the VCS 2600, Atari 400/800/1200 computers, TI 99/4A, VIC 20, and Commodore 64. The Video Game Centers are planned for a national rollout in January.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING.

APPLE-COMPATIBLE



WORD PROCESSOR FOR APPLE IS WINNER

Sierra On-Line has just released HOMEWORD, a $49.95 word processing package for Apple computers (conversions for Atari and Commodore 64 computers are planned). This is the first word processing program which features symbols to guide the user easily through the program.

Easy to Use

We've spent a good deal of time working with the program. We've worked with several word processing programs in the past, all requiring a significant amount of time going over the documentation (directions) to make the program work properly. We decided to simply put this program in the disk drive, boot it up, and try to work the program without opening the instruction booklet. We made our way through the program remarkably well which bodes well for you to be able to work it well. Sierra has not put anything to chance, however. First, they have included an audio cassette instructional tape, along with a printed transcript of that tape which will step you through the program. This cassette is a major help to get you through not only the basics, but also the nuances of the more advanced aspects of the program. Secondly, there is well written and clear set of instructions and, finally, a "cheat sheet," a reference card with all the functions which can lay right above your keyboard while using the program (this reference card is an item becoming more and more popular with home management and educational programs.)

Functions Made Simple

The initial menu which appears on the screen displays six pictures (icons) which represent the following: filing (filing cabinet); editing (a page of print); printing (a printer); format design (an unorganized page with an arrow pointing to an organized page); customizing (a question mark); and disk utilities (a floppy disk). Within each category represented by the original six pictures, there is another menu offering various specific functions (again using pictures).

You'll find out it's very easy to work within the various menus with all the most popular functions of word processing at your fingertips. One drawback which should be pointed out (a function that does not appear in many word processing programs). If you wish to use your word processing program to write text and then send over a phone line via modem to friend or another computer, this program will NOT work for you. You need a program that can save files in an "unformatted mode". All in all, however, this is a great word processor for the home, both in ease and cost (MSR $49.95).

PAC-MAN (★ ★ ★ ½ / ★ ★ ★) from **ATARISOFT** brings the very familiar Bally/Midway arcade game home in the first authorized version for Apple computer owners. This is the quintessential maze game, starring the yellow gobbler and four ghosts, each with his own characteristics. Unlike other home versions of this classic, the maze is not rendered horizontally to fit the TV screen in this translation. The maze is vertical with tunnels on the sides, just as in the arcade original, which may appeal to PAC-MAN purists. While the game looks great and plays very much like the coin-op, PAC-MAN fans will immediately notice the lack of music. There is a brief musical theme just before Pac-Man begins eating dots, but it is *not* the music from the arcade original. We don't understand why the musical theme was left out, because it is part of the charm of the original. Granted that the Apple is a less musical computer than some others, but it's certainly capable of reproducing the PAC-MAN theme music. Somehow the game seems a little flat without that theme. Graphics are very clean and sharp, and we like the vertical maze. While the game is still fun to play without the music, we feel it would have been much better with the theme. By the way, you'll want a joystick for this game if you don't already have one. Keyboard control is much slower and more difficult. (Solo Play; 2 to 5-Player Alternating; Pause; Joystick or Keyboard Control.) (Disk)
(MSR $34.95)

EVOLUTION (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ½) from *Sydney Software* is a fascinating journey through the stages of man, beginning with the Amoeba, a one-cell creature trying to eat the immobile DNA cells on the screen. You must move around the field, almost with a floating effect, eating the DNA, while avoiding the ever-increasing spores, microbes, and antibodies, which will attempt to catch you. If you eat all the DNA, you will advance to the next level, the Tadpole. Here, as a tadpole, you must try to eat the elusive water flies, while avoiding the fish trying to eat you. Catching the flies, which seem always to be just out of reach, is very difficult, and you must catch three before moving to the next level. In that next level, you are a rodent who likes cheese. You must burrow around in a network of caves looking for the pieces of cheese which appear randomly. You will be pursued relentlessly by a number of snakes which are trying to kill you. Eat five cheeses and move on to level four where you are a beaver That loves to build dams. All you have to do is swim across the river, retrieve a total of five sticks to build your dam, and you can move on. However, there are alligators who would love to eat you, so look out! In the next level, you are a rare orange gorilla protecting your five oranges from the thieving monkeys. Hurl coconuts at the monkeys and attempt to dislodge them from the vines overhead. Five hits and it's on to the final level where you are a human. In this highest form of evolution you must kill genetic mutants who have revolted.

Widely Varied Play

With the vastly different levels, Evolution becomes several games in one. Even at the easiest levels, it will provide a tough challenge to advance. We found the game much easier to control with a joystick, rather than the keyboard. Graphically, the levels provide various colorful scenarios which add dimension to this interesting game, including intermissions. Coming for other formats. (keyboard or joystick; Solo Play; Pause) Recommended (MSR $39.95)

FAX (N/A / ★ ★ ★ ★) is the home adaptation of the question and answer arcade quiz. You can play against the computer or an opponent in a race to answer the question first. There are four categories with a total of over 3700 questions, and three levels—novice, expert, and genius. Try your best in Entertainment, History, Sports, or a little of everything in Grab Bag. A question comes up on the screen and you have approximately 3-4 seconds to read and give it quick thought before multiple choice answers appear. Quickly pick the correct answer for the highest points. Your time is limited too. Some questions almost fall into a "trick question" category, so you'll have to stay on your toes!

Learning Made Fun!

Not only did we have alot of fun moving through categories we were good at, we found ourselves learning a great deal in the categories we weren't as proficient at. You will find yourself truly challenged in all categories! Entertainment includes questions about the movies, television, rock and roll, and art/literature. In History, try your skills out in The Space Age, Great Wars, World History, and Ancient History. Sports will cover facts and figures in football, soccer, baseball, basketball, and the Olympics. In Grab Bag, you'll have to answer questions about world records, science, geography, and humor/trivia. Not only is this a great game for solo sessions, it is a super "ice breaker" for parties as teams pit themselves against each other. And, whenever you want to brush up on your skills, just pop it in for a session against the computer! (Solo Play; Two-Player Simultaneous) Recommended (MSR $40.00)

DEFENDER (★ ★ ★ ½ / ★ ★ ★ ½) from **ATARISOFT** is a very good adaptation of the classic Williams arcade game. All the elements are here, from enemy spacecraft to mutants, from lasers to smart bombs. The player controls a spaceship with joystick or keyboard, and keys are used to activate smart bombs or move the ship into hyperspace. The game scrolls horizontally as you patrol the surface of a planet. The enemy sends out Landers, Bombers, Baiters, Pods and Swarmers to foil your defense of the planet and its humanoids. The object is to evade and destroy the enemy craft while keeping the Landers from kidnapping humanoids and turning them into deadly mutants. The action is fast and furious, covering multiple screens. A Radar Scanner at the top of the screen allows you to keep an eye on the action beyond the immediate arena. Graphics are simple, but very well drawn, and play action is challenging. DEFENDER is a great classic that Apple owners can finally play on their own system. (Solo Play; 2-Player Alternating; Pause; Joystick and/or Keyboard Control.) (Disk)
Recommended. (MSR $34.95)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..VIC-20

IN THE CHIPS (★ ★ ★½/ ★ ★ ★ ★) from *Creative Software* is a business and marketing game which puts you in charge of your own Silicon Valley business where you must make all the decisions about research and marketing (R&D), manufacturing, and selling software in the expanding computer market. Now *YOU* have the chance to make it big, or go bust in this volatile business. You have to gauge how "hot" each of your products will be, then set the prices and production levels. Don't overproduce, though or you will be sitting on unsold product! Then set your advertising budget. You begin by investing $100,000 in the company. If you play against an opponent, you will each have your own company. Each player takes their turn administering the business on a quarterly basis. You must keep your eye on the cash level so you don't run out of capitol.

Can You Do Better than Data Age?

Development costs for your new software are $5000 for each product: ZURN, CHIPS, PIPES, ASTRO, and XATAR. You do not have to develop all your products at once; however, once you develop a product and the quarter ends, you cannot go back and 'undevelop" it. You then walk over to manufacturing, set the production levels and check the Warehouse graph for an up-to-date readout of how much of each product you have. Your next stop is the Sales Office where you set the retail price. This could be the most critical part of the process as setting the cost too high could mean your competition will undercut you or the public demand could be too low. If you set the price too low, it may not cover R&D and advertising costs, which you must also set.

Monopolize the Market?

In the option phase of the game, you may choose the Monopoly option which allows you to set the prices as low as you want and attempt to monopolize the market by selling below cost. This can be very risky if you don't know what you're doing. In the "No Monopoly" option, the computer will not allow the sales price to go below $10.00. At the beginning and end of each quarter you will receive a Financial Summary which will give you a readout of 'cost of goods sold," "advertising," "new development," and the all-important Net Profit.

Terrific Learning Tool!

It's this type of "game" which is such a plus for having a computer in the home. We believe it is an ideal tool to teach the entire family something about running a company and making it profitable. Every session will unveil new strategies and more finese in making yourself profitable at the end of each quarter. Graphics are really secondary in this type of game; however, they work well on the VIC-20 with a scrolling screen where you can walk to the various departments such as R&D, Sales, Manufacturing, etc. Creative Software has done a good job in putting a good deal of detail in the VIC-20 version. We highly recommend this one for its educational value for all those budding business geniuses out there, regardless of age! (Solo Play; Two-Player Alternating; Joystick)
Recommended (MSR $29.95)

BUCK ROGERS PLANET OF ZOOM (★ ★ ★½/ ★ ★½) is essentially the same as the version for Atari computers. (See review in this month's *Computer Entertainer* section.) Graphics are more dazzling than we're accustomed to seeing on this system, but gameplay is a simple repetition of the same two screens over and over in three levels of four rounds each. This is definitely not a bad game, particularly for those who like fast-moving space shoot-outs. However, we recommend taking a look before purchasing this game, especially if you're looking for a replica of the coin-op. (Solo Play; Pause; Joystick or Keyboard Control) (Cartridge)
(MSR $39.95)

SEGA® THE ARCADE EXPERTS

CONGO BONGO (★ ★ / ★ ★) is essentially the same two-screen game as the version for the Atari 5200, which is reviewed elsewhere in this issue. Unfortunately, this game does not translate well for the VIC-20: graphics are very blocky, and the movements of the characters are jerky in this version. The attempt has been made to portray three-dimensional graphics, but the system simply doesn't handle the effect well. We found the play action boring after a few rounds. (Solo Play; 2-Player Alternating; Joystick or Keyboard Control.) (Cartridge)
Not recommended. (MSR $39.95)

WHAT'S GOING ON AT MATTEL?

There are all sorts of reports coming out of the Hawthorne headquarters of Mattel. There is some software being shipped for the Intellivision; however, it takes a super sleuth to locate it. Many distributors have already dropped the line and new games are going into areas in extremely small amounts. The ECS Keyboard and System Changer (2600 adaptor) have shipped, but only into a very few markets. Meanwhile, there is little or no software for the ECS available anywhere. The rumors abound that Mattel will totally leave the business after the Christmas selling season. One unconfirmed source has told us that all research and development people have been let go. Since that is where the new games are "hatched," that could be a strong indication of their posture. However, Mattel has indicated they still have a large designer staff on tap so we will simply have to wait and see. In looking back, it appears that Mattel has suffered more from poor management than some companies. They had the ideas, but did not act on them quickly enough—other companies came in and "stole their thunder". Witness the big advance news of the Intellivision III and "super enhanced baseball". While we waited for something to come from them, Coleco moved in with its ColecoVision and later blew Mattel out of the water with their Super Action Baseball. And, how about that computer keyboard that was tested in one or two markets as long as two years ago. If they could have put that on the market, they would have beat out the ADAM by at least a year!

Aquarius Never To Go National

Meanwhile, the Aquarius computer, which is not compatible with anything on the market, appears to be slowly disappearing into the sunset. Originally, the unit was rolled out in Chicago and Los Angeles with promises of a national spread soon thereafter. Instead, dealers in those two markets have been dumping the system out for virtually nothing—it's tough to use a unit that has virtually no software—and Mattel appears to be quietly backing away from the system.

Read About Atari's Interesting Past

Meanwhile, if you want to read an amazing story about "what went wrong at Atari," we strongly urge that you pick up the current issue of INFOWORLD. There is a fascinating story in there which explains a good deal about how *not* to run a company!

NEW FROM SPINNAKER

TRAINS, which introduces players to the principles of running a business, is coming for the Atari computers and Commodore 64 (disk). The objective is to service the industries of the Old West with ore, lumber, etc., while paying bills, keeping the train on track, etc. The game is played on a detailed model train railroad-style map, with a whistle you can 'toot' when you're in the mood.

Get Fit!

The first physical fitness computer software program, AEROBICS, will be introduced by Spinnaker for Atari and Commodore 64 computers. With the program, exercisers can custom-tailor their own fitness program selecting from 18 pre-set exercise segments which vary from a half hour to an hour and a half. You can work on overall conditioning or concentrate on specific body parts graded for beginner, intermediate, and advances with two speeds. The animated aerobics instructor guides your movements with captioned instructions and each segment has four parts: warm-up, aerobics, body parts conditioning, and cool-down. Nine different tracks of computer-synthesized music provide background. The program will retail for $44.95.

SUBSCRIBE TO THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE
FOR ONLY $19.00

(12 issues—mailed to your each month via First Class)
Foreign Airmail—$32.00 Foreign Seamail—$24.00

____check or money order ____ Visa ____MasterCard ____American Express

Card No. (all digits, please)

Expiration Date (Visa/Mastercard) Valid from____to____ (American Express)

Signature (required if using credit card)

Please Print
Name _____

Address _____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State_____ Zip_____

AVAILABILITY UPDATE

ATARI 2600

NOVEMBER
x-Alpha Beam (AT)
Berenstein's Bear(Voice)(COL)
x-Big Bird Egg Catch (AT)
Boing! (FS)
x-Buck Rogers (SEGA)
Bump N Jump (MNTK)
x-Chuck Norris Karate (XON)
x-Cookie Monster Munch (AT)
Ewok Adventure (PB)
x-Krull (AT)
Master of Universe (MNTK)
Pigs In Space (AT)
Power Play 1 (AM)
Power Play 2 (AM)
Power Play 3 (AM)
River Patrol (TGV)
x-Snoopy & Red Baron (AT)
x-Space Shuttle (ACT)
x-Voice Module w/Smurf (COL)
DECEMBER
x-Congo Bongo (SEGA)
Front Line (COL)
Glacier Patrol (SUN)
Mario Bros. (AT)
x-Mountain King (CBS)
x-Omega Race (CBS)
Snowplow (SUN)
x-Sorcerer's Apprentice (AT)
Tunnel Runner (CBS)
JANUARY
Kick Man (CBS)
Targ (CBS)
Treasure of Tarmin (MNTK)
FIRST QUARTER
James Bond 007 (PB)
Oscar's Trash Race (AT)
Wings (CBS)

INTELLIVISION

NOVEMBER
x-Bump 'n Jump (MAT)
Joystick w/Keypad (WICO)
x-Kool Aid Pitcher Man (MAT)
x-Master of Universe (MAT)
Pac-Man (AT)
Power Sticks (AM)
Turbo (COL)
DECEMBER
x-2600 Adaptor (MAT)
Centipede (AT)
x-Congo Bongo (SEGA)
Defender (AT)
x-ECS Keyboard (MAT)
Locomotion (MAT)
FIRST QUARTER
James Bond 007 (PB)

COLECOVISION

NOVEMBER
x-Centipede (AT)
Defender (AT)
Destructor (COL) ★ ★ ★ ★
x-Frantic Freddie (SPE)
Frontline (COL) ★ ★
x-Joystick w/keypad (WICO)
x-Pitstop (EPYX)
x-Quest for Tires (SOL)
x-Spectron (SPE)
x-Super Cross Fire (SPE)
DECEMBER
Astrochase (PB)
Campaign 84 (SUN)

Dino Eggs (MIF)
Domino Man (CBS)
Galaxian (AT)
Globe Grabber (MIC)
Gust Buster (SUN)
Joyboard (AM)
Joy Sensor (SUN)
Madden Football (CBS)
Mountain King (CBS)
Quest for Quintana Roo (SUN)
Rolloverture (SUN)
Super Action Football (COL) ★ ★
Super Cobra (PB)
Super Donkey Kong (COL) ★
Super Donkey Kong Jr (COL) ★
Super Smurf (COL) ★
Super Sub Roc (COL) ★
Super Time Pilot (COL) ★
Super Zaxxon (COL) ★
Tutankham (PB)
Wargames (COL)
JANUARY
Apple Cider Spider (SOL)
Buck Rogers (COL)
Dukes of Hazzard (COL) ★ ★ ★ ★
Lunar Leeper (SOL)
Oil's Well (SOL)
Quest for Tires (SOL)
Threshold (SOL)
FIRST QUARTER
Scraper Caper (MIF)
Wings (CBS)

★ indicates data-pak for use in ADAM ONLY
★ ★ for use with Super Action Controllers
★ ★ ★ for use with Roller Controller
★ ★ ★ ★ for use with Expansion Module 2

ATARI 5200

NOVEMBER
Berzerk (Voice) (AT)
Bristles (FS)
x-Buck Rogers (SEGA)
Flip and Flop (FS)
Jawbreaker (SOL)
x-Kaboom (ACTV)
Mario Bros. (AT)
x-Megamania (ACTV)
Polaris (TGV)
x-Popeye (PB)
x-River Raid (ACTV)
Super Cobra (PB)
DECEMBER
x-Battlezone (AT)
Congo Bongo (SEGA)
Madden Football (CBS)
x-Moon Patrol (AT)
Omega Race (CBS)
Solar Fox (CBS)

ATARI 5200

NOVEMBER
Berzerk (Voice) (AT)
Bristles (FS)
x-Buck Rogers (SEGA)
Flip and Flop (FS)
Jawbreaker (SOL)
x-Kaboom (ACTV)
Mario Bros. (AT)
x-Megamania (ACTV)
Polaris (TGV)
x-Popeye (PB)
x-River Raid (ACTV)
X Super Cobra (PB)
DECEMBER
x-Battlezone (AT)
Congo Bongo (SEGA)
Madden Football (CBS)
x-Moon Patrol (AT)
Omega Race (CBS)
Solar Fox (CBS)
JANUARY
Robotron (AT)
Xevious (AT)
FIRST QUARTER
Domino Man (CBS)
Pengo (AT)
Road Runner (AT)
Satan's Hollow (CBS)
Scraper Caper (BIG5)
Sport Goofy (AT)
Wings (CBS)

VECTREX

NOVEMBER
x-Polar Rescue
x-Pole Position
3-D Imager
FIRST QUARTER
Batter Up
Dark Tower

ATARI COMPUTERS

NOVEMBER
x-Archon (EA)
Axis Assassin (EA)
Bilestoad (DM)
x-Buck Rogers (SEGA)
Carrier Force (STRSIM)
Chess (PB)
x-Cohen's Towers (DM)
Da Fuzz (ROK)
Diamond Mine (ROK)
x-Drol (BRO)
Gunfight/Seawolf (EPYX)
x-Hard Hat Mack (EA)
x-Infidel (INF)
Journey to the Planets (ROK)
Mathercise (SUN)
x-Mr. Robot (DM)
Mr TNT (HES)
x-Ms. Pac-Man (AT)
x-M.U.L.E. (EA)
New York City (SYN)
x-NATO Commander (MICP)
x-Pinball Construction Set (EA)
x-Pitstop (EPYX)
x-Pole Position (AT)
Quasimodo (SYN)
Rack Em Up (ROK)
Rainbow Walker (SYN)
Risk (PB)
Rockball (ROK)
Rootin' Tootin' (HES)
x-Roundabout (DM)
Space Journey (ROK)
x-Spare Change (BRO)
x-Tail of Beta Lyrae (DM)
x-Trains (SPN)
x-Ultima I (SOL)
DECEMBER
Ardy the Aardvark (DM)
Dimension X (SYN)
Domino Man (CBS)
Flight Simulator II (SUB)
Joyboard (AM)
Jungle Hunt (AT)
Oil's Well (SOL)
Quest for Tires (SOL)
Silicon Warrior (EPYX)
Starfire/Fire 1 (EPYX)
Super Bunny (DM)
JANUARY
Aerobics (SPN)
Dragonriders of Pern (EPYX)
Football (AT)
Joust (AT)
Megamania (ACTV)
Robotron (AT)
Snokie (SOL)
Xevious (AT)
FEBRUARY
Campaign 84 (SUN)
Donkey Kong Jr (AT)
Gust Buster (SON)
Mario Bros (AT)
Moon Patrol (AT)
Quest for Quintana Roo (SUN)
Rolloverture (SUN)
Scraper Caper (BIG5)

VIC-20

NOVEMBER
x-Buck Rogers (SEGA)
Centipede (AT)
Donkey Kong (AT)
x-Lode Runner (BRO)
PacMan (AT)
Popeye (PB)
Robotron (AT)
Sammy Lightfoot (SOL)
Springer (TIG)
Stargate (AT)
Super Cobra (PB)
Tutankham (PB)
DECEMBER
Congo Bongo (SEGA)
Frogger (SOL)

COMMODORE 64

NOVEMBER
x-Axis Assasin (EA)
Bank St Writer (BRO)
Battle of Normandy (STRSIM)
Bilestoad (DM)
x-Blue Max (SYN)
Bristles (D/Cass)(FS)
x-Cannonball Blitz (SOL)
Castle Hassle (ROK)
x-Centipede (AT)
Cosmic Tunnels (DM)
x-Creepy Corridors (SOL)
x-Critical Mass (SIR)
Da Fuzz (ROK)
Death in Caribbean (MIF)
Diamond Mine (ROK)
Donkey Kong (AT)
Dragonrider of Pern (EPYX)
Drelbs (SYN)
x-Drol (BRO)
x-Eagles (STRSIM)
Flip and Flop (D/Cass)(FS)
Floyd of the Jungle (MICP)
Gateway to Apshai (EPYX)
Hellcat Ace (MICP)
x-Infidel (INF)
Journey to the Planets (ROK)
x-Lunar Leeper (SOL)
Monster Smash (DM)
Morgul (SYN)
Mr TNT (HES)
Necromancer (SYN)
Nightraiders (DM)
PacMan (AT)
Paintbrush (HES)
Pharoah's Curse (SYN)
Picnic Paranoia (SYN)
x-Pitstop (EPYX)
x-Q*Bert (PB)
Rack Em Up (ROK)
Rockball (ROK)
x-Rootin' Tootin' (HES)
Roundabout (DM)
x-Sammy Lightfoot (SOL)
Scraper Caper (MIF)
Sentinel (SYN)
x-Spare Change (BRO)
Starfire/Fire 1 (EPYX)
Stargate (AT)
x-Threshhold (SOL)
x-Trains (SPN)
DECEMBER
All Oops (ART)
Ardy the Aardvark (DM)
x-Congo Bongo (SEGA)
Flight Simulator II (STRSIM)
Homeword (SOL)
Mission Asteroid (SOL)
x-Oils Well (SOL)
Phoenix Lair (MMG)
Super Bunny (CM)
JANUARY
Aerobics (SPN)
Aquatron (SOL)
Dragonriders of Pern (EPYX)
Quest for Tires (SOL)
Zaxxon (SYN)
FEBRUARY
Campaign 84 (SUN)
Gust Buster (SUN)
Quest for Quintana (SUN)
Rolloverture (SUN)

TI 99/4A

NOVEMBER
Buck Rogers (TI)
x-Burgertime (TI)
x-Centipede (AT)
x-Defender (AT)
x-Donkey Kong (AT)
x-Pac Man (AT)
Protector (AT)
Shamus (AT)
DECEMBER
Congo Bongo (TI)
David's Midnight Magic (TI)
Dig Dug (AT)
X M*A*S*H (TI)
Moonmine (TI)
Sneggit (TI)

IBM PCjr

January
Demon Attack (IMGC)

(x = indicates shipped to retailers by our press date (may not be in national distribution, however.)

(Editor's Note: We feel, in some cases, the dates given us by the manufacturers are simply not realistic. However, we feel it is our responsibility to give you the projected dates as they are given to us, without any alteration.)

COMPANY NAME CODES:

ACTV - Activision
AH - Avalon Hill
AM - Amiga
ART - Artwork
AT - Atari
BRO - Broderbund
CBS - CBS Electronics
COL - Coleco
COMM- Commodore
CS - Creative Software
CVD - CommaVid
CM - Computer Magic
DM - DataMost
DS - DataSoft
EA - Electronic Arts
EPYX - Epyx
FIR - First Star
FUN - Funware
IMGC - Imagic
INF - Infocom
MAT - Mattel
MB - Milton Bradley
MIC - Microfun
MICP - Microprose
MMG - MMG Micro Software
MNTK - M Network
PB - Parker Bros
PDI - Program Design Inc
ROK - Roklan
ROM - Romox
SIR - Sirius
SOL - Sierra On-Line
SPE - Spectravideo
SPN - Spinnaker
STP - Starpath
STRSIM - Strategic Simulations
SUB - SubLogic
SUN - Sunrise
SYN - Synapse
TG - TG Products
TGV - Tigervision
TRO - Tronix
VEC - Vectrex
XON - Xonox

VIDEO TAKE-OUT'S TOP 10

1. *JOUST (AT/5200)*
2. *DIG DUG (AT/5200)*
3. *SLITHER (COL/COL)*
4. *POPEYE (PB/COL)*
5. *QUEST FOR TIRES (SOL/COL)*
6. *SPACE SHUTTLE (ACTV/2600)*
7. *BASEBALL (COL/COL)*
8. *ROCKY (COL/COL)*
9. *MINER 2049ER (MICF/COL)*
10. *Q*BERT (PB/5200)*

YEAR END INDEX

Continued from Page 134

Treasure Cove	AST	SPEC	5/83
Treasure of Tarmin	INT	MAT	11/83
TrigaCommand	VCS	ELECT	4/83
Tron Solar Sailer	INT	MAT	2/83
Tropical Trouble	INT	MAT	4/83
Truckin'	INT	IMGC	4/83
Turbo	COL	COL	1/83
Turtles	ODY	ODY	5/83
Tutankham	VCS	PB	8/83
1200XL	ATCOMP	AT	4/83
Vanguard	VCS	AT	1/83
Vanguard	5200	AT	6/83
Vectron	INT	MAT	6/83
Venture	INT	COL	4/83
Victory	COL	COL	12/83
Videoplexer		COMPRO	4/83
Wall Ball	VCS	AH	8/83
War Room	COL	ODY	11/83
Web Wars	VEC	VEC	6/83
White Water	INT	IMGC	7/83
Worm Whomper	INT	ACTV	11/83
Zaxxon	VCS	COL	5/83
Zaxxon	INT	COL	9/83
Zeppelin	ATCOMP	SYN	10/83
Zombies	ATCOMP	BRAM	12/83

© 1983 Video Game Update $24 annually in U.S. funds for 12 issues, published monthly, distributed by first class mail. Foreign $32 Airmail; $24 Seamail. Send payment to: Video Game Update, 12115 Magnolia Blvd., #126, North Hollywood, CA 91607. (213) 761-1516. "The Video Game Update" accepts no advertising from any game manufacturer. The philosophy of this newsletter is to provide the reader with honest evaluations of game products on the market. It is our intention to act as an independent watchdog, providing critical commentary and analysis. The opinions are solely those of Video Game Update and are not influenced by the manufacturers. To describe a game, we may use existing literature from the manufacturer, but that will have no bearing on the rating system.
Any reproduction, duplication, or re-publication of this copyrighted work without written consent of Video Game Update is strictly prohibited. Any violation of applicable copyright laws will be vigorously prosecuted and subject to civil and criminal penalties. This work may not be changed or altered in any manner.