

THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE

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A Critical Newsletter for the Serious Gamesman

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 2

MAY, 1983

Two Dollars

Believe it or not, it's just about time for another Consumers Electronic Show (SUMMER C.E.S.). The location of this summer show is Chicago and will take place during the first part of June. As we get closer to that show, once again, the manufacturers start to get VERY quiet about their plans as there will be several new products—both hardware and software introduced, as well as new companies. Those of you who were subscribers in January remember that we held up the issue a few days so that some of the manufacturers could reveal some of their show plans early for coverage in our newsletter. Once again, we will be holding up the release of a June issue by a few days and will mail it to you from Chicago the first day of the show. In that way, manufacturers can divulge some of their show "secrets" to us so YOU CAN READ ABOUT THEM AS THE TRADE PEOPLE ARE FIRST SEEING THEM AT THE SHOW!! We know you'll find the wait worth it! We do know for a fact that Coleco will be showing their long awaited keyboard (release date is unknown at this point); Atari will show some of their new titles such as JOUST, ROBOTRON, KANGAROO, and more. We will be talking with all the manufacturers within the next two or three weeks and will bring you all the news AS IT'S BREAKING!

With the Summer show just around the corner, you're probably beginning to seriously wonder what happened to the seemingly hundreds of titles that were announced at the January show from the various manufacturers. Well, as we pointed out in February and March, marketing, production, and distribution cost the manufacturers a staggering amount of money and they have begun to feel the sting of discriminating buyers. We've been saying it for months, but YOU WON'T BE FOOLED by fancy advertising, packaging and the like. The gameplay and graphics have to be good. As a result, several cartridges have gone back to the drawing board for additional work—either in gameplay or graphics. In addition, there are many cartridges that will NEVER be released due to competitor's superior games. Unfortunately, except in a rare instance, the manufacturers do not notify dealers, distributors, customers, or us when a title is quietly dropped. We are aware of several titles on "HOLD" by various companies, but we hesitate to publish these titles at this point as some of them will still make it to your dealer's shelves eventually.

We can give you an "interim report" on what's happening at several companies with their plans, so here we go:

ACTIVISION

One of a very small handful of companies which not only give us the month of release, but an actual SHIPPING DATE! To date, they have shipped all the games they projected in January virtually on time and it appears that ALL games they showed in January will be on dealer's shelves by the time the Summer show rolls around. Activision has also gone aggressively into contests with the introduction of a puzzle contest for HAPPY TRAILS (see review in this issue), and a "Scratch Card" contest on KEYSTONE KAPERS at your favorite Activision dealer for contest entry details.

ATARI

After several months of inferior games for the 2600, Atari has done a major turnaround in game quality and titles coming for the more popular VCS. They have seemed to stay very much on schedule based on their projected plans in January, and they are releasing one to two new games per month. They have also remained true to schedule for their 5200 games. Unfortunately, that schedule has been only one new game per month. As a result, (coupled with the fact that, to date, there has been no Third Party software available), 5200 owners have a definite software shortage problem (With the new ColecoVision releases, the 5200 now holds the dubious honor of the smallest software library.)

ATARI'S VIDEO GAMES

Atari had planned several new 2600-compatible and Atari 4/800-compatible games for spring delivery, including SOLAR FOX, WARRIORS AND BOMBS, etc. From what we can see, there has been nothing new in the last couple of months and no new product planned for release before June, at the earliest.

COLECO

Some of the earlier complaints had been all the heavy introductions with virtually no product being delivered. As you can see from the previous reviews in this issue, this is the biggest month yet for software releases—something we, as well as you, are thrilled to see! Now where we sit, it appears that some of the initial in-house turmoil has settled into a dull roar (after all, they still have a VERY HOT product). By the way, they have just produced their one millionth ColecoVision!! In any event, Coleco appears to be putting their focus just into ColecoVision cartridges, with some Atari and Intellivision-compatibles shipping. They remain behind their projected schedule as it was given us in January; however, even at that time, we felt it was a schedule too tough to keep EVEN IF NOTHING went wrong anywhere in the system—and we all know that every company hits snags with production, programming, etc. (see our front page article in the March issue—we've had several manufacturers tell us we were right on the mark with some of the things that have happened in the life of a new cartridge). The item that has everyone on the edge of their seats is, of course, the Expansion Module. There is also a GREAT DEAL of confusion about the shipping date of that item. Our readers who call the Coleco Customer Service line have been told it will release in May while the national advertising and Coleco itself has been telling us August or September. We can now give you an up-to-the-minute update, thanks to our main contact at Coleco. They HOPE to BEGIN shipment of the Expansion Module in JUNE (you should expect EXTREME shortages at that point). It was originally scheduled for the Fall and, in fact, it could very well be the Fall before you see the unit in quantities. However, public demand has made it obvious to Coleco that the sooner they can get the unit off the production line, the happier their customers will be. Remember, though, that if there are any production problems, the unit will probably not make a June delivery. One of the most asked questions (and Coleco confirmed that they are asked this question ALL the time too) is "Where is TUNNELS AND TROLLS?" Although we don't know what the delay is attributed to, do NOT look for the game until September or October, AT THE EARLIEST! Meanwhile, we'll keep you up-to-date on the latest scheduled releases in our Availability Update.

COMMAVID

There have been no new games in a while from this company, in spite of announcements of new games such as MISSION OMEGA. We have found that finding the product in the stores has become more difficult in the past month or two. Some of our readers who own existing CommaVid games like them very much, so we hope there will be more product soon.

FOX GAMES

Atari's ambitious plans announced in January have only partially been met. Cartridges such as EARTH DIES SCREAMING, SURFING, and TOWN DOWN, FALL GUY, and several other movie titles (they are licensing and announcing a very large number of Fox films) are here to be seen. In fact, Fox announced several of the titles for ColecoVision, Intellivision, etc. and we're waiting to see product. The entire thrust of Fox games right now appears to be their new 2600-compatible release, M*A*S*H. They have indicated that the delay on some of the games have been bumped is the "incredible" demand for the M*A*S*H game. We'll have to wait and see if they can get back on schedule, or if some of the titles "disappear" before ever making it to cartridge.

IMAGIC

Imagic is another one of a handful of companies which virtually makes all its release dates. There was a large delay at the beginning of the year with SWORDS AND SERPENTS, but with their more recent releases, the games have been on time. It would appear, from current projections, they will have released all their new games prior to the June Show. At that point, they will unveil their new software for the second half of the year. They did pull one title out of projected shipments, AERIAL ACE (see April issue), but were good enough to notify everyone so we knew what happened!

INTELLIVISION/M NETWORK

Not too many Intellivision cartridges were announced at the January show and, as most were for the second half of the year, we can't speak on their timeliness. However, they did release VECTRON on schedule and plan BURGERTIME for both the Intellivision and 2600 for release concurrently in June. At the beginning of the year, they were late with CHESS and TRON SOLAR SAILER (from original projected release dates). As you know from our earlier issues, M NETWORK is not planning many releases, but they appear to be on schedule for STAR STRIKE in the early summer. The Intellivision II Keyboard hasn't shipped yet; however, it is not planned until early Summer. They do plan an "on-time" delivery of their 2600 adaptor for the Intellivision II in May or June. Their new computer, AQUARIUS, has begun shipment, with initial units going to Chicago and Los Angeles—again, this matches their plans for January.

ODYSSEY

With plans for only two new cartridges in January, we have been very disappointed so far—neither KILLER BEES or TURTLES have yet to ship at the time this is being written, although the Odyssey owners are starved for new games. We have expected the games any moment for some time now, especially in light of the fact that we received an advance copy of KILLER BEES for an April review. Meanwhile, we understand that the "third" generation Odyssey³ is still planned for the third quarter.

PARKER BROS.

In January, Parker Bros. announced most of their plans for the entire year. In some aspects they have been on or ahead of schedule while other games are late. TUTANKAM could be considered one of the late games; however, it was about ready to go when it was pulled back to "enhance". They expect to have that game out this summer. SUPER COBRA and JAMES BOND 007 are among others that are way behind the schedule announced at the beginning of the year. On the other hand, they surprised everyone with the announcement of the shipment of Q*BERT in June for the 2600, August for Intellivision, and September for the 5200 and ColecoVision. They continue to have ambitious plans for the various systems, including Intellivision, ColecoVision and the 5200. Because many of the games are planned for later release, it's impossible to say if they will make it with all the releases they plan. By the way, we should have a pretty full rundown of Parker Bros.' computer software plans next month, but look for several good titles to be made available for the Atari 4/800, VIC 20, TI 99/4A and IBM PC!

SEGA

They had their first product (unfinished) at the January show and have just released their first two games (see reviews in this issue); however, they have announced several other titles including MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE, AIRPLANE, MARATHON MAN, among others. No potential release dates have been made available.

STARPATH

There was only one new game at the January show, KILLER SATELLITES, which has shipped. We understand they plan to show two to three new games at the June show. We would hope that they would start releasing more games to compliment the Supercharger unit that cost you anywhere from \$45-\$70.

TELESYS

Three new games were introduced in January: RAM IT!, STARGUNNER, and DEMOLITION HERBY. All have shipped and they are now working on new product for the Summer show.

TIGERVISION

Although only one or two new games were shown in January, Tigervision announced several new titles for the first half of the year including SPRINGER, INTUITION, POLARIS, among others. They also indicated that some of the titles would be available for the Atari 5200. They have just shipped POLARIS and the long awaited MINER 2049ER for the VCS is expected within the next 30-45 days. The other titles have no definite release dates announced as yet.

ULTRAVISION

Although we have seen several trade ads for the Ultravision master computer/game unit, we are not aware of its availability anywhere. Meanwhile, the 2600-compatible games that were scheduled for the first quarter (CHIPS and QUEST FOR THE IDC) have not surfaced either.

U.S. GAMES

As we indicated last month, Quaker Oats (the U.S. GAMES parent company) has decided to exit the games business. We have heard that their current catalog such as EGGOMANIA, M.A.D., SQUEEZE BOX, in addition to games in development (the Pink Panther license, etc.) have been put on sale. It is possible that another company will pick up the catalog and repackage them. If there is further word, we will pass it along.

VECTREX

Although six new games were announced in January, not ONE has shipped! The latest "bump" takes the release of these games until June. It's a fun system and we can only hope that the new release situation will ease up—and the 5200 and ColecoVision folks or THOUGHT they had problems!

ZIMAG

The first group of games has shipped; however, we have not been able to confirm which titles are actually out and available or whether their second batch of games is close to shipment. In checking several stores, it would appear that the Zimag games are very tough to find.

MINER 2049ER COMING IN SEVERAL FORMATS

BIG 5 SOFTWARE will release MINER 2049ER for the Atari 5200 sometime this month. MICROFUN plans to release MINER 2049ER for the ColecoVision system, Apple and IBM computers this summer. By the way, also planned for later in the year are three other games for ColecoVision—namely, SCRAPER CAPER (another game with Bounty Bob), TIME RUNNER, and GLOBE GRABBER!

TIGERVISION

The 2600-compatible version of MINER 2049ER is scheduled for release mid-May (see our review in the June issue) with three different playing screens by use of an expanded ROM memory cartridge. The three screens included will be "THE SLIDES", "THE TRANSPORTERS", and "THE CANNON".

CRITICALLY SPEAKING. . . ATARI 2600-COMPATIBLE

GALAXIAN (★★★★★★★★) is an excellent translation of the Bally Midway coin-op, which is one of the two all-time classic slide-and-shoot invasion games, the other being *SPACE INVADERS*. Atari has done a superb job of converting the classic arcade game into a home version for one player. There are nine skill levels available, and you begin with three horizontally mobile laser bases capable of shooting at a fleet of aliens moving back and forth across the screen. However, instead of gradually descending *en masse* as they do in *SPACE INVADERS*, individual members of the fleet will peel off and fly at your base, dropping bombs and attempting to ram you. Destroying any member of the *GALAXIAN* fleet while it is in flight earns you twice the points you would get for merely picking it off while in formation. (This is because the *GALAXIANS* are a lot more dangerous in flight than they are in formation.) The top row of aliens (Flagships) and next to the top row (Escorts) are the most critical fleet members of all. The Flagships and their Escorts are good for bonus points when flying together, especially if you can pick off two Escorts in flight before destroying their Flagship in flight. Unfortunately, you don't always have a lot of choice when the action gets frantic, as it does in the higher skill levels. Often it's a matter of destroying whichever alien looks as if it is most likely to destroy you! The graphics of this version are just as colorful and crisp as you could possibly want them to be, and the game play is remarkably faithful to the original arcade game. This is one more example to remind the gamer that the little Atari 2600 is capable of great things in the hands of a really good programmer. *GALAXIAN* is a classic, and it is definitely a worthwhile addition to your game library.

Recommended. (MSR \$29.95)

MURF RESCUE IN GARGAMEL'S CASTLE (★★★½/★★★)

★½) brings the familiar Smurf and Smurfette characters of Saturday morning TV to a children's video game for the Atari 2600. While this version is somewhat less elegant than the ColecoVision game on which it is based, Coleco has done an amazingly good job of translating it to this format. One or two (alternating turns) may participate in the adventures of Smurf as he attempts to rescue Smurfette from the treacherous Gargamel. Four skill levels make the game suitable for most fans of the little blue characters. Smurf embarks from his house on the path to Gargamel's Castle as the music from the cartoon show plays. He must jump over fences, up rock ledges, across streams and through spider-fested caverns until he reaches Gargamel's laboratory. There he must complete a series of jumps to reach the fair Smurfette on the ledge where Gargamel has left her. He rescues her with a kiss, a red heart floats above their heads, and then it's off for another rescue mission! The higher the skill level chosen, and/or the more rescues Smurf has completed, the longer and more arduous the journey to Gargamel's Castle. Hawks, snakes and bats may attack, and they may even turn around and chase Smurf if he eludes them at first. It's all good fun in the tradition of Saturday morning cartoons, and it's bound to appeal to Smurf's young fans. Graphic rendering of the countryside scenery is simple but pleasant. Some parts of the graphics are especially well done, including Smurf himself, who is nearly as well animated as the cartoons from which he is drawn. The hawks fly with convincing wing action, and the summer sky in the stream scene has a puffy, white cloud that skitters by. (Incidentally, we had seen an earlier version of this game well ahead of release, and the final version is a much-improved one. The game screen artwork we had from Coleco was drawn from the earlier version, and we have not included it because it would be misleading.) This is not a game for teens or adults, but the kids should love it. Recommended.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

We understand from one of our readers that the game company, *ADVENTUREVISION* is currently running an ad in at least one major game magazine which offers you the "chance to make money selling video games". We have also learned that a portion of a review we wrote on *RESCUE TERRA I* is included in the sales packet that is sent out to prospective clients. While we do not have any comment regarding this "opportunity", we did not give permission for the reprint of that review. *THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE* is a copyrighted work and while we do allow reprints or quotes to be used, it is on the basis of "solely by written permission of The Video Game Update." It is not our policy to endorse *AV* products

ZAXXON (★½/★★) is an adaptation of the Sega arcade game, which has been very popular because of its exciting play action and three-dimensional visual effects achieved through the use of three-quarter perspective. However, if you expect this Atari 2600-compatible version to look or play like either the arcade or the ColecoVision version of *ZAXXON*, you're in for a very big disappointment. As you can see in the game screen illustration accompanying this review,

COLECO



the perspective has been "straightened out" so that you fly your spaceship directly up the screen, rather than diagonally across it. You start the game in black space with an altitude indicator bar on the left side of the screen. The familiar trick of firing at the wall to find your way to the opening you must fly through works in this version, too, as you enter the first portion of the asteroid base. This asteroid has a pretty barren landscape, with just a few items to shoot at—only the radar towers are recognizable. Some objects will fire at you, while others just sit there waiting to be demolished. (Fuel tanks must be hit occasionally to keep your supply of fuel up.) Despite altitude clues provided by the altitude indicator bar and the size of the shadow under your ship, it is very nearly impossible to tell whether or not you're at the same level as your intended target on the asteroid. Worse yet, you can think you're flying at a safe altitude as something fires at you, only to lose another ship because you were unknowingly in its sights. It takes repeated play and memorizing the relative altitudes of the various enemy objects to get past this problem. If you make it past *ZAXXON*'s first group of ground forces, you meet enemy ships in space. Because of the head-on perspective of this version, the outer space portion is reminiscent of a typical invasion game with enemy forces attacking from above. However, it is again difficult to tell which ships are on your level in space and therefore likely to eliminate your ship, so you just shoot at everything. There is no cross-hair target appearing at the nose of your ship to let you know when the enemy is at your altitude, as in the arcade and ColecoVision versions. After the outer space screen, you enter a second asteroid screen. If you're playing at any but the easiest skill level, electronic barriers begin appearing on some of the walls. At the end of this asteroid, you will encounter the deadly robot *ZAXXON*, which looks like a small child's drawing of the Frankenstein monster. You must hit the cross-shaped missile under *ZAXXON*'s left arm repeatedly to eliminate the robot and move on to the next asteroid. A few elements of the original game are here, but they will not be enough for the gamer wanting to play "the official *ZAXXON*," as the packaging proclaims this to be. The graphics are primitive, with only an occasional shadow hinting that this is supposed to be a game with three-dimensional effects. The shame of it is that this game might have been accepted on its own merits as a fairly decent shoot-em-up if it did not carry the name "*ZAXXON*." Since it is called *ZAXXON*, game buyers will expect it to be a reasonable facsimile of the coin-op hit, which it definitely is not. Coleco would have been better off not attempting an Atari 2600-compatible version of this complex game if this is the best that could be done within the limitations of the system. Not recommended.

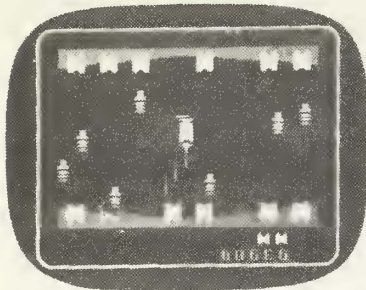
BILLBOARD 1ST ANNUAL VIDEO GAME AWARDS

Billboard, a well-respected magazine geared toward retailers and distributors, has just concluded their First Annual Video Game Conference. We thought you might like to know who won the awards. In addition to our own Editor, Celeste Dolan, other judges included Tim Baskerville and Brian Chin of the industry newsletter, *Video Marketing Game Letter*; Martin R. Feely, Billboard's Director of Research, Mike Harrison of Goodphone Communications, editor Russell Sipe of *Computer Gaming World*; and Market Comstock Tommervik, editor-in-chief of *Soft-talk Magazine*. Based on sales research from Billboard, Coleco's *DONKEY KONG* won as video game of the year and Atari won as video game company of the year. The Awards Selection Committee voted on the remaining awards which included Rob Fulop as Designer of the year for *DEMON ATTACK (IMAGIC)*; *CHOPLIFTER (BRODERBUND)* as Computer Game of the year; *PITFALL (ACTIVISION)* for best video game marketing (an award based on things like advertising, posters, and all the things used to draw your attention to a game); and Arnold C. Greenberg, President of Coleco was named Video Game Superstar of the Year.

ATARI 2600-COMPATIBLE

PLAQUE ATTACK (★★★★★★½) is an invasion game with a message: the invaders are "junk food" items, and they're out to destroy your teeth if you don't destroy their effects with your trusty toothpaste tube! One or two (alternating turns) can play at either the beginning or advanced level of the game. Regardless of difficulty level chosen, the game starts with a set of four upper and four lower teeth occupying the top and bottom of the screen, respectively. Your

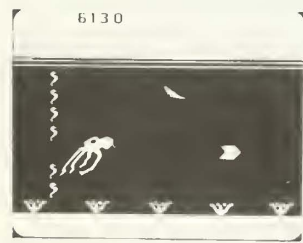
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joystick-controlled toothpaste tube is free to roam the area between the sets of teeth, and toothpaste can be squirted up or down. The targets for your toothpaste are waves of cheeseburgers, hot dogs, french fries, strawberry candies, cherry gumdrops, glazed donuts, candy canes and ice cream cones. The object is to eliminate these dental disasters before they contact any of the teeth. (You have 35 seconds to eliminate each wave, and your toothpaste tube gradually shrivels so you can keep track of the time elapsed.) If a food item touches a tooth, the invisible film of plaque quickly turns the tooth yellow, followed immediately by rotting of the tooth (yuck!). If you're very quick, sometimes you can halt the decay even after the food has touched the tooth, provided you can hit the tooth with a spurt of toothpaste right away. Points are awarded for each food item zapped, plus bonus points at the end of each wave for time not used and teeth remaining. With each 2000 points, you receive a bonus tooth. The upper and lower jaws can accommodate up to eight teeth each, so the better you are at saving teeth, the more difficult the task becomes as you have more teeth to save! When all teeth are lost and the toothpaste is used up, the game is over because the plaque has won (not in real life, we hope). **PLAQUE ATTACK** has terrific graphics: every food item is immediately recognizable. In fact, the little sacks of french fries look as if they're fresh from McDonald's—anyone for a Big Mac? Game play is easy enough for youngsters in the beginner's variation, although the action escalates quickly, especially after the first run-through of all eight waves. The advanced game can be a regular riot, with so many food items flying around the screen at once that you're not sure which way to move next! Parents and dentists will unquestionably applaud the message this game delivers, but the kids (and adults) who appreciate good game play will just as surely love the great action it delivers.

Recommended. (MSR \$31.95)

DOLPHIN (★★★★½/★★★★½) is the realization of an unusual game concept: sound is used as an integral part of game play, rather than just for effect. To score well in this game, you'll want a fairly quiet spot to play—lots of noise in the room would be very distracting. **DOLPHIN** is a horizontally scrolling game playable at any of four difficulty levels by one or two players (alternating turns). You control a realistic-looking dolphin being

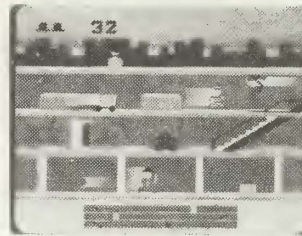


chased by a giant squid, and you must guide your dolphin through small openings in vertical walls of seahorses. (Bumping into the seahorses slows the dolphin down, allowing the squid to catch up.) Because the schools of seahorses appear on screen too quickly for you to react visually, you must be guided by the dolphin's sonar system, the pitch of the game sounds you hear. There are five distinct sound frequencies corresponding to five specific locations for the openings in the groups of seahorses. Listen to the pitch of the sounds, and you'll know where to move your dolphin so that he can slip through the opening. (High-pitched sounds are cues for openings above center, and low-pitched sounds for openings below center.) There are a few more variables in the game, as well. Periodically you will see little arrow shapes in the ocean indicating the direction of underwater currents. The dolphin can increase its lead on the squid by catching a "good wave," a current moving in its direction, or by luring the squid into a "bad wave," a current moving in the opposite direction. Obviously, you should have your dolphin avoid any bad waves. When a seagull flies overhead, announced by bird sounds, make your dolphin leap out of the water and touch it. For a few moments, the dolphin can zap the squid for bonus points. **DOLPHIN** is not an easy game, nor is it like any of the

many underwater games currently available. Especially at the higher difficulty levels, the margin for error can be very small. And don't think you must always make your dolphin swim to the right, just because that's the way the game starts. Sometimes you can elude the squid when he's about to catch your dolphin by simply reversing direction and having your dolphin swim to the left. Graphics are typical of Activision's high standards: the dolphin's swimming movements are realistic, and wispy little clouds drift above the ocean. Only the rendering of the seagull is not impressive. The game itself is fascinating, although fans of heavy video action may find it a bit too cerebral. There is plenty of action—and suspense—in this game, but the aquatic setting gives it something of a languid feeling at the same time. Also, for those who love to search for secret messages in video games, designer Matthew Hubbard has planted one in **DOLPHIN**. (Happy hunting!)

Recommended. (MSR \$31.95)

KEYSTONE KAPERS (★★★★½/★★★★½) is a crazy chase game in which you play Keystone Kelly, a cop who runs after the "Krook," Harry Hooligan, through a 1920's department store. This single-player game stretches horizontally over eight TV screens, while the vertical span of the three department store floors plus the roof are all visible at once. (All eight screens are visible on the store's security scanner at the bottom of the screen. A white dot on



the scanner notes Harry's position, while Kelly's location is marked by a black dot.) The Krook always gets a head start on Kelly, and the timed chase is on as soon as you move Kelly to the left along the ground floor of the department store. Kelly, who is nattily attired in blue uniform and black bowler, brandishes a billy club as he runs along, jumping over such unlikely obstacles as bouncing beach balls, runaway shopping carts, and old-time cathedral radios. Poor Kelly even has to duck toy biplanes at higher game levels! Harry Hooligan wears convict stripes, and in his haste to escape, he drops bags of gold and stolen suitcases which Kelly can recover for points. As he attempts to catch Harry, Kelly moves from floor to floor on escalators at the far ends of the store, or on the elevator in the middle. Escalators go up only, but the elevator can be taken up or down. However, the elevator has drawbacks because it is slow, stopping on every floor, and it does not go to the roof. We thought we'd be really clever by taking the elevator to the third floor, figuring we could ambush Harry as he ran by for a relatively effort-free capture. Well, the designer had us figured—Harry just started moving down instead of up, and all our scheming went for naught! Nonetheless, we suspect that clever gamers will come up with strategies other than simply running Kelly at full tilt from floor to floor to catch Harry Hooligan. The early levels of the game become quite easy with practice, but the later stages remain challenging. As you get further into the game, the numbers of obstacles increase, and some become much more difficult to pass without collision. This becomes critical because collisions subtract time from the constantly running clock. While the game can be played simply by running back and forth, dodging obstacles and climbing escalators to catch the Krook, the strategic possibilities of the game give it more depth of play opportunity than may be obvious at first. **KEYSTONE KAPERS** is a thoroughly charming and whimsical game with great animation, Garry Kitchen's first for Activision.

Recommended. (MSR \$31.95)

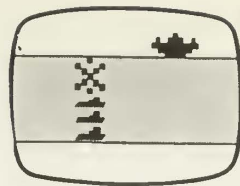
ATARI TO MAKE COLECO CARTRIDGES????

We have read reports and talked with informed sources that Atari is considering the manufacture of ColecoVision-compatible cartridges! If this were to happen, it would involve such titles as *Missile Command*, *Jungle Hunt*, and others and initial titles would hit the marketplace before Christmas.

We are bringing this information to you only so you are aware of possible events. Frankly, we accepted this information with a certain amount of skepticism as this would potentially hurt the sales of the 5200. With all the Coleco-licensed cartridges, the 2600 expansion module, and then the availability of the Atari-licensed library, why bother with the Atari 5200? As we learn more we will, of course, bring it to you. This may be the ultimate rumor that will reach a fever pitch before we find that Atari has no such plans!

We've been pondering this potential development and, if it indeed comes to pass, could it be part of the out-of-court settlement that recently took place between Atari and Coleco (see our April issue)?

SUB SCAN (★★★/★★★) is a single-player game in which you control a destroyer that cruises back and forth on the surface of the ocean, firing depth charges at submarines moving below your ship. Initially the submarines move back and forth across the screen at a very leisurely pace, giving you a chance to get used to firing depth charges over the bow or stern of your destroyer. Since you have a maximum of four depth charges to use at any one time, you do have to be careful. (One depth charge is returned to inventory each time a fired charge hits either a submarine or the ocean bottom.) At the bottom of your screen, there is a radar scanning viewport, a miniature map of the ocean with blips indicating all submarines at various depths on the screen plus those approaching near enough to be on the screen soon. Below this radar screen is a number which counts down from ten each time you allow a submarine to escape unhit from the edge of the screen. Once the tenth submarine escapes, your ship will self-destruct, ending the game. Naturally, you earn points for every sub your destroyer sinks, but there is also bonus scoring built up for every hit. To actually collect this bonus, you must hit a differently colored submarine that appears periodically at the bottom of the ocean. The bonus sub's appearance is announced by a loud klaxon, so you'll have no trouble knowing it's here. In the earlier, slower rounds, subs can become so easy to pick off that you may be lulled into thinking that this is a very easy game. However, as your score increases, the speed of the subs also increases, and they can become maddeningly difficult to hit. What starts out as an easy-going contest of moving and taking careful aim at the subs can become a totally frenetic and seemingly hopeless battle of chasing subs that seem impossible to catch! SUB SCAN is a game that may well bore the casual player who never goes beyond the first, slower speed levels. There are ten speeds in all.) However, the game presents plenty of challenge to the more advanced player at the higher speeds. Because of the fact that you can stockpile your bonus points, allowing the bonus sub to escape many times before you finally decide to collect your bonus, you can be suddenly pushed up many speed levels at once after the bonus is registered. For example, we were playing along happily at the third speed level when we decided to collect the very large bonus we had accumulated. After all those bonus points were added to the score, play action resumed at the *eight*th speed level! Were we ever shocked to find that subs were escaping at an alarming rate, and we could hardly hit anything! As we've mentioned in earlier issues, this seems to be the year of the underwater game, but this one is different from the others we've seen. The game is based on a simple concept, but it is well done. Graphics, too, are quite simple, but they get the job done.



SUB SCAN



TAC-SCAN

TAC-SCAN (★★★/★★★) is another game for one player only, and there are no options or variations. In fact, this game is so straightforward and easy to understand that it would be possible to play without ever looking at the instructions, except that you must follow the directions to plug your paddle controllers into the RIGHT controller jack. Absolutely nothing happens if you plug them into the typical position on the left. (This turns out to be a very convenient arrangement if you're switching off between this game and another with a joystick plugged into the left controller port.) In TAC-SCAN, you command a squadron of five triangular ships that move in unison. Forward movement through space is automatic, while side-to-side maneuvering of your squadron is governed by a paddle controller. Of course, you must meet the enemy in space, and for each ten of the enemies' ships you destroy, you are awarded a reserve ship. At the end of each round, if there are any empty spots in your squadron's formation, you have the option of docking one or more of your reserves into the squadron. We found it advantageous to allow the reserves to collect for use in later rounds when we really needed them. This is an extremely fast-moving game, demanding very good eye-hand coordination and allowing for the scoring of some VERY large point totals. Points are scored for all hits, of course, plus bonus points at the end of each round. (These figures increase with each level.) There are also bonuses awarded for hitting a shimmering enemy ship that appears occasionally, and for hitting three or four enemy ships with one salvo from your squadron. The game is over when your squadron loses its last ship on the screen, even if you have ships in reserve, so it pays to use the reserve ships wisely. The graphics are simple but good, and there are some nice touches, such as the little flames at the tail of each of your ships. Game play is very exciting and well-suited to the paddle controller. The escalation of the difficulty factor in this game means it will be a rare player who manages to explore all fifteen levels of the game. In fact, Sega explains that the figure of fifteen levels is theoretical because no one there has gotten past Level Seven! (The best we managed was Level Four.)

Recommended

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE MUSICAL MATCHUPS (★★★/★★★)

PARKER BROTHERS ★½/★★★½ is a charming and tuneful game for little girls aged four to seven. All their favorite Strawberryland characters are here: Huckleberry Pie, Blueberry Muffin, Lime Chiffon, Purple Pieman, and, of course, Strawberry Shortcake herself. There are six game variations for one player only, each one a little more difficult than the last. Whichever variation a child plays, the initial display shows each of the Strawberryland characters in a gazebo, and they are identified by name and musical theme. In the first variation, the One Berry Game, a scrambled character will appear in the gazebo; the child's task is simply to put together any head, body and leg combination that matches (no time limit). If the child matches any character, that character's name will appear at the base of the gazebo, and the character will do a brief dance to its musical theme. An incorrect match results in a mixed-up tune and no display of character name. The Two Berry Game is like the first, but the child is given a character name to match. The Three Berry Game is a timed version of the Two Berry Game, with a yellow sun moving from left to right in the sky serving as a timer. The Four Berry Game is a faster version of the Three Berry Game. The Five and Six Berry Games require the child to descramble a character to match the musical theme played at the start of the game. Both versions are timed, but the Six Berry Game is faster. The colorful graphics should be very appealing to the age group for which the game is designed, and these licensed characters are very popular with little girls. While children will have a very good time playing the various games, there is hidden educational value, as well. STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE MUSICAL MATCHUPS is a charming game. Recommended. (MSR \$29.95)

KEY SKIPPER (★★/★★½) is a single-player game in which you fly around a vertically-scrolling maze, rescuing animals held captive by dangerous gorillas. You control a small airplane which can be flown at slow or fast speeds. (Better try it at slow speed first.) The object is to fly your plane into position above a gorilla's head, without crashing into the walls of the maze. Press your firing button to temporarily knock the gorilla off his feet and open the animals' cages. Then you must fly down and rescue the animals quickly, before the gorilla recovers and the remaining animals are returned to their cages. After rescuing the first group of animals, you must fly into the rest of the maze, find another gorilla, and rescue still more animals. Unfortunately, your plane has a limited supply of fuel, so you must work quickly. There is only one way to refuel your plane: rescue one of each type of animal consecutively—for example, one cat, one turtle, one rabbit and one duck. This is not particularly easy to do because the animals are caged in groups of three of the same type. Maze walls, gorillas and running out of fuel aren't the only hazards, either. Groups of moving white clouds appear periodically, blocking your way into portions of the maze. It takes some fancy flying to avoid crashing into the clouds! The concept of this game is simple, but original. However, the graphics are disappointingly blocky, and we feel there is not enough substance to the game to keep the player interested over a long period of time. This is one that should be tried out before making a decision to buy. Not recommended. (MSR \$34.95)

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

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

Back issues are available of most issues of THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE (no copies left of Vol. 1, Number 1, 2, and 3). Send \$2.00 for each back issue you wish. Buy any four for \$6.00 and any six for only \$9.00. Make certain you have a complete set.

GORF (★★★★★★)

is based on the venerable Bally/Midway arcade game involving several forms of outer space warfare for one or two players (alternating turns). The original coin-op comprises five different battle screens, and this version includes all but the Galaxian screen. Four difficulty levels are available: two are easier than the arcade version, one is more difficult, and one is quite similar to

the original coin-op. Play begins with a phalanx of Gorf's robots marching above your fighter in the Astro Battle screen that is so reminiscent of SPACE INVADERS. Your fighter has complete mobility within the area enclosed by an arched energy shield on the lower portion of the TV screen. This shield protects your fighter from the attacking aliens' fire until it is gradually destroyed by the advancing robot ships. Once the robot ships are eliminated, you progress to the Laser Attack screen to do battle with squadrons of robot ships, Gorf robots and deadly laser ships. The enemy attackers move in unpredictable ways on this screen—diving, changing directions, and even hovering in one spot at times. You must be especially careful whenever your fighter is positioned directly below one of the laser ships, because they fire brilliant, white laser beams when you least expect it. In this screen, as in the other three, an occasional saucer will wander across the top of the screen. You can shoot it for additional points. In the third screen, Space Warp, robot ships emerge from a warp tunnel at the center of brightly-colored energy rays. The ships are tiny when they first appear, but they rapidly become larger and more dangerous as they swoop around your screen dropping radiation bombs. If you still have any of your five ships left, the fourth screen brings you to an encounter with the Gorfian Flagship. The flagship cruises back and forth near the top of the screen, initially protected by a curved electromagnetic field. You must clear a hole in this field and then aim carefully to explode the ship's internal reactor. If you can accomplish this feat, the entire TV screen will light up with the resulting explosion! Your reward is a promotion to Space Captain and a musical fanfare. As you move through the various battles again, the action is faster and the tasks more demanding. We liked the fact that it is very easy to keep track of just how far you have progressed, due to the presence of a Mission Number Indicator in the lower right corner of the screen which counts the number of game screens you have completed. The ColecoVision version of GORF is extremely faithful to the arcade original, so it should please the game's coin-op fans. With four different battle screens, there is enough variety to keep gamers interested over long play sessions. The graphics are colorful and very detailed, even to the point of smiles on the faces of some invaders. If you like this game in the arcades, it is a must for your collection. Recommended.

SPACE PANIC (★★★/★★½)

is a climbing game for one or two players based on the Universal coin-op, and it is very closely related to the popular computer game, Apple Panic. You control a Spaceman in a bubble helmet who travels along four horizontal girders connected with varying arrangements of vertical ladders. A time limit is imposed, while he attempts to eliminate Space Monsters determined to do him in. Rather than shoot the nasty creatures, your Spaceman digs

holes in the girders to trap the Monsters so that he can fill the holes over them. At the easiest levels, there are only easy-to-eliminate red creatures that look like apples or tomatoes. The game becomes more difficult with the appearance of Boss, the green creature, and Don, the blue creature. Boss must fall through holes in two girders (one directly below the other) in order to be eliminated, and Don keeps coming back for more unless he plummets through three holes! Even the red creatures can be treacherous, though, because a half-buried one is reincarnated as Boss. (A half-buried Boss becomes a Don.) For this reason, you must be careful that your Spaceman doesn't wander too far away from a hole he has made in a girder. If he can't get to the hole fast enough after a creature becomes stuck, the hole

will heal over and the reincarnated creature will be more difficult to eliminate. Burying all the Monsters moves your Spaceman to the next screen, which will be essentially the same as the one he just left, except for a slightly different arrangement of ladders and a few more Monsters. A bonus is awarded based on the amount of oxygen remaining when the screen is cleared. A Spaceman is eliminated upon contact with any of the Monsters or if his oxygen supply runs out. (You start with five Spacemen at Skill 1 and three Spacemen at the other three skill levels.) While SPACE PANIC has one unusual feature in the method for eliminating the Space Monsters, the novelty wears off quickly. The game is fun to play at first, but boredom can set in after repeated play. Graphics are good, but not as varied as some other multi-screen contests from Coleco. The fact that one screen looks so much like the next contributes to a nagging sense of "is that all there is?" SPACE PANIC is a much better game than the recent SPACE FURY, but we have come to expect great things from Coleco, and SPACE PANIC just doesn't measure up to most of their previous games. Try this one before deciding you simply *must* add it to your collection—there are better games coming, based on previews we've seen.

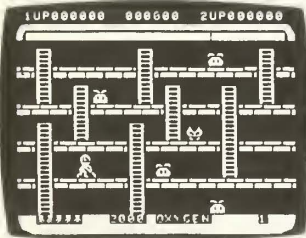
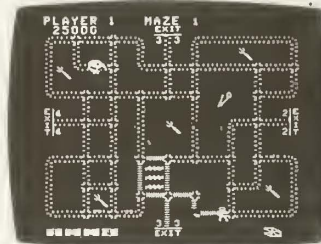
PEPPER II (★★★½/★★★½)

is an unusual maze-chase based on the Exidy play-for-pay game. The advantage to this version is that you can leave that piggy bank full of quarters intact! One or two players (alternating turns) guide the angelic Pepper around the zipper-like tracks of the maze, attempting to zip up the tracks surrounding rooms in the maze. At each level, there are four mazes, each accessible through tunnels from all of

others. Pepper can try zipping up all the rooms in one maze before moving on to the others, or he can flit between mazes, zipping up a few rooms at a time in each one. His nemeses are the Roaming Eyes that rush after him and the Zipper Ripper that unzips all the zipped tracks that do not enclose a room. Of course Pepper can avoid the Roaming Eyes and the Zipper Ripper, but he has other defenses. In every maze, there are several rooms with pitchforks in them and one room that contains a magic box. When Pepper encloses one of these rooms, the tracks change color, special music plays, and the angel Pepper turns into a devil Pepper capable of eliminating Roaming Eyes for extra points. He cannot eliminate the Zipper Ripper, but it will stop in its tracks as long as the special music plays. If Pepper has enclosed the one room with the magic box, the Zipper Ripper will quit the maze for a short time after Pepper turns back into an angel. Once Pepper has zipped up all four mazes on the first level, your bonus of 15,000 points and an extra Pepper are announced with a musical fanfare, and it's on to the next level. Now you must deal with a new problem: the tracks occasionally disappear, leaving only the intersections and your memory to guide you! The game offers four different skill levels: two easier than the arcade game, one more difficult, and one about the same as the coin-op. Level 1 is far easier than the other three, because you start out with five Peppers instead of three, but all levels are challenging. Altogether, we found PEPPER II a delightful game. The graphics are colorful, with intricate patterns filling the screen as you zip up the various rooms in the mazes. In fact, when the maze is almost entirely filled in with these patterns, it becomes difficult to see your Pepper, the Roaming Eyes, and the Zipper Ripper—our only complaint about the graphics. As with most Coleco games, the music is an excellent foil for the play action. This game uses the musical theme familiar to anyone who ever watched the old TV series, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, Gounod's "Funeral March of a Marionette." It adds a whimsical touch to the opening of the game. Game play is fast and exciting, though it took us a while to get the control stick action working as smoothly as we like. Pepper moves automatically on the straightaways, and the movement is fast. The trick is to anticipate turns and move your control stick *before* you want Pepper to turn a corner. PEPPER II is an addictive game, and it's a must for maze-chase fans.

Recommended.

MOVED?? Don't forget to let us know so you don't miss one issue. For the fastest change, either send us your mailing label, or copy the numbers on the top of it and we'll do the rest!



THE SKY IS NOT FALLING!

There's been a lot written over the past few months about the "problems" in the Game Industry. So much has been said that we decided not to address it. However, we now feel it's time to put our "Two Cents" in as we feel the industry is NOT getting a fair shake from the press, retailers, distributors, etc.

We indicated many months ago that a "shake-out" was inevitable due to under-financed companies, inferior games, and a variety of other reasons. Indeed, last year Apollo filed Chapter 11, followed later by the stock market plunge of Warner Communications, the parent company of Atari. The Wall Street analysts started screaming doom and gloom for the game industry. Then, two months ago U.S. Games backed out of the game field because their parent company didn't "see the light at the end of the tunnel". Follow that last week with the Chapter 11 filing of Data Age, and rumored problems at three or four other game manufacturers and everyone we talk with is screaming "the sky is falling, the sky is falling".

Well, we're here to tell you that we don't believe it for a minute and are distressed to hear distributors wanting to get out of their game business and retailers saying, "I should never have stocked games". We point to several factors which tell us that the game business is going nowhere but UP! Hit cartridges continue to sell at a rapid rate; specialty stores THAT KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING continue to talk about increased sales; and our readership, along with that of such magazines as Electronic Games continues to increase and flourish!

When several video stores went under, no one said anything about video being "over," and the same holds true for the game retailer. Video stores go under every day and often because the owner jumped into what he thought was a "Pot of Gold at the end of the Rainbow" with no prior video experience, and often no business experience or savvy. This holds true in any business that is especially noticeable in a "Hot" business. The same holds true for games. A year ago, many dealers (and especially record retailers who were hurting from depressed record sales), figured games were a way to make a fast buck. Unfortunately, they didn't have the buying know-how to realize that you don't automatically purchase fifty of every game cartridge. You could get away with that when there were very few cartridges available and people would buy anything. We've said it time and time again that the

LOOPING (★★★★½★★★★) is a most unusual and challenging game based on the coin-op by Venture Line. In this game for one or two players (alternating turns), you control a little blue stunt plane capable of all kinds of acrobatic flying. Initially, your biggest task will be learning how to control that little plane as you dodge obstacles and shoot at a few things that get in your way. The control stick is used much like the one in a real airplane:

Push forward on the stick, and the nose of the plane goes down (plane dives); pull back on the stick, and the nose goes up (plane climbs). The right side controller button is used to fire bullets from the nose of the plane, either singly or continuously, and the left side button is an accelerator. The game starts with your plane on a runway surrounded by a few buildings; pull back on the stick and take off. Soon you'll be airborne, and balloons will begin to rise from the ground. The idea is to shoot the balloons, if possible, and avoid colliding with them. At the same time you're shooting and avoiding balloons, looping in midair, you must attempt to shoot the rocket to the left of the runway in order to open the gate to the pipe maze, which is the next stage of the game. Once the gate is open, fly to the right. (The screen scrolls horizontally as you move to the various scenes of the game.) As you enter the maze, baroque-sounding music begins, and it will continue as long as you remain in the maze. If you're up to a real gaming challenge, folks, this segment of LOOPING should suit you. The maze comprises formations of blue pipes, and you must loop your plane over, around, down and through the pipes without colliding with anything. The longer you stay in the maze and the faster you fly, the more points you amass. However, your task is anything but simple because you cannot steer through the maze in the usual way. For example, when your plane is fly-

ing straight up along a pipe toward an elbow requiring you to make a right turn, you must resist the urge to push the control stick to the right because it won't help. Instead, you must bring the nose of your plane *down* in relation to the plane's position in order to turn right. You will undoubtedly crash many a plane against those blue pipes before managing to leave this maze in one piece—we did! We were relieved to make it to the next room, where the plane is required to dodge and shoot at green drops falling from the mouth of a spigot. From there your plane enters a very small room controlled by twinkling monsters, which must be eliminated to enter the final room. The end is now quite literally in sight: a dock at the right edge of the screen bears a sign reading "END." In this last room you must dodge and shoot at bouncing balls before you can enter the inner chamber and dock your plane. This is a difficult game to master because of the physical and mental gymnastics required to keep your plane flying, which should endear it to gamers in search of a tough game to beat. The conceptual thinking required to survive for any amount of time in this game may also explain why the arcade version was never a big hit. The coin-op probably swallowed so many quarters with so little return on the investment that many people simply gave up on the game. This is a perfect example of a game that really works much better as a home video game than as a coin-op. Coleco has done a typically good job on the graphics. We especially liked the explosion effects. LOOPING is an exasperating game to play at first, but the challenge is irresistible. It will be too tough for the little kids in the family, but experienced players should love it.

We would remiss here if we did not mention the importance of manufacturer "stability" regarding pricing, etc. We have heard horror stories about dealers sitting on dozens of items, be it software or hardware, and the manufacturer slashes the price and refuses to make adjustments with the dealer. The poor dealer is then stuck with merchandise that he can't even sell for what he purchased it for (this is a problem that has also begun to occur in the video movie business as many companies lower the prices of the movies). We can only urge the manufacturers to rethink their positions, work out a "return's policy", and you will find your dealers 100 percent behind you. A combination of smart buying and manufacturer price stability and/or workable return policy will go a long way to stabilizing what's happening. Everyone CAN be a winner—from the manufacturer, to the distributor, dealer, and on down to the consumer!

While we are the first to tell you there is a glut of inferior games out there; equally so, there are many fabulous and challenging new games on the market right now and no end in sight. You can cite Atari as a perfect example of what a company can produce. Last year the inferior cartridges were, in part, responsible for their year-end problems. This year, they have addressed that problem and done a remarkable turnaround in the quality of their games.

It is an absolute fact that both dedicated game units and home computers are here and they are here to stay. People want entertainment in their home and they want to continue to seek new adventures, conquer new mazes and become a successful Space Commander. With the pressures we all incur we need to "blow off steam" and there are literally millions of people who do it by picking up a joystick and entering that marvelous world of make believe.

Recommended.

CHILDREN'S TELEVISION WORKSHOP LAUNCHES COMPUTER MAGAZINE

Children's Television Workshop has announced it will begin publishing ENTER, designed to introduce children to computers. The target audience for ENTER is the ten to sixteen year age group.



CRITICALLY SPEAKING... INTELLIVISION-COMPATIBLE ACTIVISION.



HAPPY TRAILS (★★★½/★★★½) is the second effort by designer Carol Shaw after her hit Atari cartridge *RIVER RAID*. She's done it again! This game is a unique skill and strategy exercise with a touch of humor. The bounty hunter and Black Bart are rather comical in their ten-gallon hats as they wind down the trails to a plodding western tune. The object of the game is to create a trail that leads to money bags and Black Bart by rearranging the blocks, sliding them to the left and right, and up and down so you can stay on the trail. (Remember those little flat sliding number puzzles you used to play? You slid the numbers all around trying to put them in order.) You control the speed and direction of your Bounty Hunter. He loses one of his four lives if he runs into a dead-end or an empty space, or if he touches Black Bart before he is able to pick up his deputy star which momentarily gives him the power to capture Black Bart. The screen board, called The Badlands, is a rectangle filled with blocks of different trail configurations, with one of the blocks missing. With nine types of blocks, each with a different trail configuration, there are thousands of possible moves. The Badlands grow from a 2 by 2 block puzzle at the easiest level to a 5 by 8 block puzzle at the most difficult. The game has four levels of difficulty, and each level adds puzzle features which further challenge the player. In the first level, the same block pattern appears each time it is played, and the bounty hunter chases Black Bart at a slow, methodical pace. In the second level, the pattern is random and different patterns appear. The characters move much faster in the third level, and in the fourth level it really gets crazy as there are two Black Barts and the characters move quickly across the random trail patterns. You have some "study time" at the beginning of each maze which will help you decide how to work the blocks around. Once you begin, you have a limited amount of time to get through each maze and pick up all the money bags and capture Black Bart. You have a Bonus Timer which starts at 500 points and counts down to zero. The sooner you get through the maze, the more bonus points you'll score. And, if you don't make it through the maze and collect all the bags and the sheriff's badge, you lose one life. When the timer reaches 100, you'll hear a warning buzzer. You begin with one hat on the trail and three reserve hats, then receive a bonus hat after you earn 10,000 points and with each 20,000 points thereafter. A maximum of six bonus hats are awarded. We found *HAPPY TRAILS* truly unique and it is the best Activision cartridge available for the Intellivision system. This will make a fun addition to any Intellivision library. Recommended. (MSR \$34.95)

Astrocade-compatible

TREASURE COVE (★★★/★★★) is welcome news for loyal Astrocade owners who have stuck by their system through many upheavals. This is the first cartridge game for the Astrocade designed by an independent software producer, and it's a good one. The undersea game may be played by one to four players. The opening screen offers a very impressive underwater view of a wrecked Spanish Galleon, a diver and various species of sea life—all deadly! The accompanying music is a group of familiar sea songs, including "Blow the Man Down," among others. (The music continues during game play, unless you want to turn it off by pressing the MR button on your keypad.) Before actually starting to play, you can choose to have one to nine divers. We suggest the nine divers at first, because you'll lose quite a few while you're learning the game. (For those who enjoy competition with distant friends, there is also a Tournament Level: select 0 divers, and each player will receive four divers; the score display screen will indicate "Tournament Level," allowing for photographs of verifiable scores.) Game play starts with a view of the ocean. The treasure hunters' boat cruises back and forth on the surface. fish

swim at different levels below, and there are bits of treasure at the bottom, guarded by a big, blue octopus. Squeeze the trigger on your controller, and a diver will appear below the boat. Before exhausting his limited supply of oxygen, he must swim down to the treasure, pick up a piece, and return to the boat with it to register a score. This process is repeated until each piece of treasure is recovered from the ocean bottom. The boat then sails to another cove with even more valuable treasure to be retrieved. The difficult part is having your diver avoid contact with any of the sea creatures swimming back and forth, or with the octopus guarding the treasures. If your diver even brushes a fish with the very tip of a flipper, he will float lifelessly to the surface, and you'll have to try again with another diver. The first *Treasure Cove* will let you get the feel of controlling your diver in his semi-weightless environment, avoiding fish that are often faster than he is. The diver's movements can be quickened by squeezing the trigger on your controller, but the penalty is increased consumption of oxygen, so you must use this trigger very sparingly. We found this game extremely challenging, particularly after the first cove. Each successive cove is inhabited by more and larger varieties of deadly sea creatures. We must have lost enough divers to equip a small navy with trying to survive some of the more difficult coves! The graphics are good, with the various sea creatures quite recognizable, and they really do look as if they're moving through water. Even if Astrocade owners were not starving for new games, this would be a worthwhile purchase. Recommended.

ODYSSEY

TURTLES! (★★★/★★★) is based on the arcade game *ODYSSEY* by Konami, and it's one of the best *Odyssey* games yet. This is a single-player maze-chase game in which you control a turtle attempting to save baby turtles and avoid being bugged by beetles. All the action takes place in the "Towers Hotel," starting on the first floor. You race your turtle for any of the rooms containing question marks where he will find either a beetle (run away!) or a turtlelet that will climb onto his back. Once the turtlelet has hitched a ride on your turtle's back, a white house will appear somewhere in the maze. Carry the turtlelet to the house to save him, but watch out for beetles scurrying around the maze. The blue ones are blind, but soon they turn yellow and can see your turtle along straight lines. Once they turn red, they're extremely dangerous because they can even see around corners. Fortunately, your turtle is equipped with bug bombs that can be planted in a beetle's path to stun him temporarily. Your turtle can even acquire more bug bombs by touching the flashing "X" at the center of the screen. If your turtle can save all the turtlelets on the first floor, he will climb to the second floor for a tougher challenge. Each successive floor has more beetles and fewer bug bombs. While this game has "voice enhanced," the enhancement amounts to nothing more than a couple of tunes hummed by the voice. The game plays perfectly well, and with just as much excitement, if you do not have the *Voice of Odyssey*. This is a great, fast-moving maze game—a must for your collection. Recommended. (MSR \$34.95)

IMAGIC GETTING READY FOR COLECOVISION

We have learned that Imagic has been licensed by Coleco to produce cartridges for the ColecoVision unit with the first 10 cartridges possibly being shown at the Summer C.E.S. Show. We understand those two titles will be *NOVA BLAST* (also coming shortly for Intellivision) and a new title, *MOON SWEEP* (also planned for the Atari 2600). These first two titles could be made available for the Christmas selling season. All in all, Imagic should be showing between twelve and nineteen new games on the various systems at the Summer Show (no format breakdown available at this time).

Intellivision Cartridges on Your ColecoVision

Several of our readers have asked whether Coleco plans to produce a ColecoVision expansion module to accept Intellivision-compatible cartridges. Such a module had been mentioned last year, before the first ColecoVision units were available. We recently asked a reliable source at Coleco about this possibility, and we were told that it is "not in Coleco's current plans, since (sales) activity in the Intellivision cartridge doesn't warrant it." We can assume that Coleco *might* consider such a module in the future if there is a substantial increase in the sales of Intellivision-compatible cartridges.

NEW CONTROLLERS FOR THE SUMMER

ZIRCON INTL. has what sounds like some interesting controllers coming this summer. First, the Zircon Track-Ball which has dual fire buttons and a fully variable autofire setting will be available at the end of the Summer for the Atari 2600. Among its features are the fire buttons on a recessed ledge which is out of the way of the hand spinning the ball. The Track-Ball will be equally usable by both right and left-handed players. The Dual Fire Buttons can be used interchangeable or, for certain Coleco games, the Dual Fire Buttons can function as two independent controls. Control over firing is further enhanced by the addition of the Variable Autofire which changes the buttons from a single shot to an automatic machine gun rapid fire. A full range of adjustment is available. Zircon has indicated that the suggested retail will be under \$50.

The second item coming is the Z-STICK, electronic joystick controller coming this July. Compatible with the Atari 2600, Coleco, TI, and Commodore it is fully chrome plated and offers three levels of control—Maze Control, Speed Control, and Autofire. Maze Control allows the player to select the option of eliminating diagonal response when playing maze games. On these games only the X-Y axis is used, and diagonal signals are ignored by the computer. Speed Control gives the player the ability to actually slow the object on the screen to 50 percent of normal speed, allowing for more accurate movements. Autofire, which has become a popular add-on feature, is also included. Suggested list on this joystick will be \$29.95.



Z-Stick™ Controller with Maze Control collar



TRACK-BALL with Dual Fire Buttons

QUESTAR is introducing their "BLASTER", a plug-in, adjustable speed, automatic firing module for the Atari VCS, 4/8/1200, ColecoVision, Sears, and Commodore VIC 20. It will convert single shot firing into high speed machine gun action, up to 20 shots per second. The adjustable speed control will allow the player to dial-in the firing rate to match the game software and the player's reference. Since it can be adjusted to a single shot mode, there is no need to plug and unplug the module for different games. The circuitry has been designed as totally passive to protect the game console. The unit is set for a June delivery at a MSR of \$12.95. Watch our June issue for a hands-on review. Also coming from Questar is a "Reverse Y Adaptor" which will allow you to play two-layer games and keep a two-player score while only requiring one joystick. This feature is especially helpful in situations where you're using an expensive joystick or trackball and don't wish to invest in two units for those times when you wish to play with a friend. This item will list for \$9.95 and should be available within the next two or three weeks.

Avallon Hill, which has had tremendous success in the computer software field for such systems as the Apple II and Atari 4/800, is planning to show their first Atari 2600-compatible game cartridges at the Summer C.E.S Show! The first three titles are DEATH RAP, a space showdown with a touch of strategy; LONDON BLITZ, where you enter the world of bomb disposal in a thinking man's game; and WALL BALL, a bouncing ball game in 3D! Watch our pages for more information!

TIERRA ON-LINE has announced its entry into the educational software market with the acquisition of a product line developed by Sunnyside Soft. The line will start with a focus on pre-school and elementary school skills, geared to specific ages within the three to eight-year-old bracket. The first four releases scheduled are LEARNING WITH LEEPER, developed to stress math, reading and writing readiness skills; BOP-A-BET, teaching alphabetizing; and two adventure games, DRAGON'S KEEP and TROLL'S TALE, which develop reading comprehension and fundamental map reading. In the future, they plan to expand the educational software line to encompass other age groups. All the programs will address education in either the home or school and will be accompanied by teacher and parent manuals.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING...

AVENGER Joysticks are a new product designed to mount on the control disc of your Mattel Intellivision I or II, Sears Super Video Arcade, or Tandyvision One game systems. They also work with the controllers for the Mattel Aquarius Home Computer system. These add-on sticks do not require disassembly of the controller, but you will have to pry off the aluminum circle from the center of the control disc. (This should have no effect on the warranty of the unit.) The base of the Avenger mounts on the disc with a high-tack foam adhesive pad, and there is a small pilot pin (visible in the accompanying picture) designed to allow

positive centering and to lessen stress on the adhesive mount. The stick itself is made of durable, black polystyrene plastic and is 1½ inches high. Most other add-on sticks available up to this time have been about two inches high and quite slender. The shorter Avenger stick is said to prevent over-torquing of the controller. The shape of the Avenger is also fatter and stubbier, with gripping surfaces designed to accommodate all finger sizes. We tried the Avenger with some of our favorite Intellivision games, and we liked the feel of it very much. The stick is comfortable to grip, and it affords excellent control. Unlike some other adhesive-based add-on sticks we've tried, the Avenger showed absolutely no sign of lifting off the control disc, even during rigorous game play. The Avenger also has an advantage over the sticks that require disassembly because it does work on the new Intellivision II controllers, which cannot be taken apart by the user. The Avenger joysticks appear to be well-made, and they are a definite improvement over the naked control disc. Selling price for a pair of Avenger joysticks is approximately \$7.00 or less. Recommended.



COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR GAMES!!

Atari and Milton Bradley have entered into an agreement whereby Milton Bradley will manufacture a plug-in peripheral containing voice synthesis and voice recognition for both the 2600 and 5200! The unit will be sold with a headset/microphone which will enable the player to voice control video game action. This twist of voice recognition is the first in the industry and is an interesting concept. In addition to the peripheral, Milton Bradley will also develop codes for a total of 18 Atari cartridges over a three year period. Most of these are expected to incorporate the use of voice capabilities. There has been no announcement as far as prices or when the units are expected to be made available to the consumer. Stay tuned and we will bring you updates as they are available.

LATE FLASHES

Data Age, which filed Chapter 11 last week to reorganize under the court's protection, has agreed to liquidate and discontinue operations based on requests from some of its largest creditors. What this means to you is that it is very unlikely that FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER will ever reach the dealer's shelves. Unfortunately for Data Age, they spent a great deal of money at both a trade and consumer magazine level on JOURNEY ESCAPE which never began to realize the potential the company had projected.

We understand that ColecoVision has possibly signed an agreement whereby they will produce a videogame cartridge in conjunction with the new MGM/UA film, "WARGAMES", scheduled for release in June.

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS TALLIED

We wish to thank all of you who returned your questionnaires. We knew we had some serious game players out there, and you proved it. Not only did you take the time to fill it out, but you did so in great detail, which was enlightening to us.

We have compiled all the information and include it here for you. A few notes about how we conducted and compiled this survey: the questionnaire was sent randomly to about 25% of our readership, and over 70% of those were sent back to us, a terrific percentage. Many questions were either skipped or answered in multiple; therefore, most categories will add up to a figure above or below 100%

First, a profile of our respondents:

MALE:	92%	AGE GROUP:	
FEMALE:	8%	8-14:	3%
		19-35:	64%
		15-18:	11%
		36-up:	16%

HOURS SPENT WEEKLY:

A) WATCHING TV (REGULAR AND CABLE):		B) LISTENING TO THE RADIO:		C) READING THE NEWSPAPER:	
1-5:	7%	1-5:	40%	1-5:	60%
6-9:	8%	6-9:	11%	6-9:	26%
10-15:	21%	10-15:	20%	10-15:	3%
16-25:	23%	16-25:	4%	16-25:	1%
26-35:	19%	26-35:	4%		
36-up:	11%	36-up:	12%		
D) READING VIDEO PUBLICATIONS:			E) PLAYING VIDEO GAMES:		
1-5:	68%	1-4:	26%		
6-9:	14%	5-8:	30%		
10-15:	5%	9-12:	25%		
		13-20:	10%		
		20-up:	4%		

We were a bit surprised by the high percentage who purchase only 1-3 cartridges a month until we read some of the comments. Many respondents own ColecoVision (see breakdown below) and would be purchasing more games if they were available. The same holds true to a lesser degree for Mattel owners. Other factors keeping purchases down are the many "inferior" games which have hit the market and the relatively high price of a cartridge.

NUMBER OF NEW GAME CARTRIDGES PURCHASED MONTHLY:

1-3:	80%	7-10:	1%
4-6:	11%	11-up:	3%

We asked what influences the purchase of a new game and, once again, the answers were enlightening, especially since manufacturers and dealers alike feel advertising is SO important. Our survey indicates that you are becoming more sophisticated while advertising makes you aware of a new game, it is apparently not the major influence leading to purchase of the game.

GAME PURCHASE INFLUENCES:

Game Play:	34%	Seeing the game played in a store:	9%
Video Game Update Review:	30%	Recognizable Title:	6%
Graphics:	26%	Advertising:	5%
Manufacturer's Reputation:	12%	Price:	5%
Reviews in other Game publications:	12%	Word of Mouth:	4%

Asked if the manufacturer's name alone could influence a purchase without seeing the game first, a surprising number indicated that they do place that trust in certain companies. Although we did not ask which companies they trusted to that extent, most respondents (80% of those who answered the question) indicated their favorite company. Those people who mentioned a company name cited two companies in particular. Split virtually evenly with 47% and 46% respectively, the respondents named Activision and Imagic. The remaining 3% went to Coleco, with not ONE mention of any other game manufacturer!

WOULD PURCHASE A GAME BASED ON MANUFACTURER ALONE:

Yes:	46%
No:	48%

Obviously, we asked what system(s) our respondents currently own and 55% own AT LEAST two systems! We also asked what system(s) they are considering for purchase.

SYSTEMS OWNED BY RESPONDENTS:

Atari 2600:	53%	TI 99/4A:	3%
ColecoVision:	44%	VIC 20:	2%
Intellivision:	35%	Odyssey:	2%
Atari 4/800:	9%	Astrocade:	2%
Atari 5200:	8%	TRS 80:	1%
Vectrex:	4%		

SYSTEMS BEING CONSIDERED FOR PURCHASE:

ColecoVision:	18%	Coleco Keyboard:	5%
Atari 8/1200:	18%	Commodore 64:	5%
Atari 5200:	13%	Mattel Keyboard:	4%
Apple II/E:	11%	Vectrex:	3%
Coleco Expansion		TI 99/4A:	2%
Module 3:	6%	TRS 80:	1%

Over half of those indicating an interest in purchasing ColecoVision commented that they are waiting to see if software availability eases up in the near future.

We asked for a rank order of favorite TYPES of games. Although Space and Maze games did well, the overwhelming favorite was Strategy games! This is not surprising when you look at the tremendous success of games such as DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS, PITFALL, and SWORDS AND SERPENTS, plus the interest in planned games such as TUNNELS AND TROLLS and TREASURE OF TARMIN.

1. STRATEGY	5. SPORTS
2. SPACE	6. RACING
3. MAZE	7. LEARNING
4. SKILL	8. VIDEO VERSIONS OF BOARD GAMES (e.g. CHESS)

Fully 65% of all respondents who answered this question mentioned Strategy games, 67% mentioned Space games, 62% mentioned Maze games, 57% mentioned Skill games, 58% mentioned Sports, 51% mentioned Racing games, 39% mentioned Learning, and 40% mentioned Board games.

Our next question was a bit loaded as we had the advantage of polling our own readers. We posed the question, WHICH MAGAZINES AND/OR NEWSLETTERS YOU READ, AND GIVE A RANK ORDER OF YOUR FAVORITES. We felt that the VIDEO GAME UPDATE should do fairly well among its own subscribers, based on recognition alone. We were gratified by the respondents' ranking, and their comments seem to indicate their belief that we are accomplishing what we set out to do—getting the news to you first, along with timely, unbiased reviews.

When we asked this question, we gave a choice of eight game-related magazines and newsletters. When we compiled the results, we made the decision to list only the top four publications for a very simple reason. If another publication did such a survey, and WE came out on the bottom, we would then not be mentioned at all!

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| 1. VIDEO GAME UPDATE - 88% | 3. ELECTRONIC FUN WITH COMPUTERS AND GAMES - 32% |
| 2. ELECTRONIC GAMES - 64% | 4. ARCADE EXPRESS - 16% |

Obviously, we couldn't do any type of survey without getting feedback on your favorite (and most hated) cartridges and game controllers. It's difficult to get any kind of consensus on cartridges since as there are so many out there for so many systems; however, we were rather startled at your number one pick. Others mentioned will surprise no one (we were as surprised by the omissions as we were by the games which received the most mentions). By the percentages, you can see that many, many games were mentioned.

FAVORITE GAME

1. Ladybug (ColecoVision) - 9%
2. Zaxxon (ColecoVision) - 8%
3. Demon Attack (Imagic) - 6%
4. River Raid (Activision) - 5%
Star Raiders(Atari 5200)- 5%
Donkey Kong(ColecoVision) 5%
Dungeons/Dragons(Mattel) 5%
5. Pitfall (Activision) - 4%
Missile Command(At 5200)- 4%

OTHER CARTRIDGES WITH MULTIPLE MENTIONS

- B-17 Bomber (Mattel)
- Football (Mattel)
- Frogger (Parker Bros)
- Kaboom (Activision)
- Lock N' Chase (Mattel)
- Ms. Pac Man (Atari)
- Starmaster (Activision)
- Swords and Serpents (Imagic)
- Venture (ColecoVision)

When we asked what the worst game cartridges are, the trend was much more clear-cut. There were three comments that surfaced again and again, and we feel they're worth mentioning. First, there was a general dissatisfaction with the Coleco software for the Atari and Intellivision systems. Without getting into arguments over the capabilities of those two systems vs. the ColecoVision, our respondents felt that games such as Donkey Kong, Mouse Trap, etc. did not begin to measure up on those systems and they questioned whether Coleco purposely "down-graded" the games to enhance ColecoVision's position. We feel that the more appropriate question might be WHY some games are translated for those systems if they are too complex for the Atari and Intellivision capabilities; controllers, etc. (See our review of Zaxxon for the Atari 2600 elsewhere in this issue as a prime example.) Secondly, many respondents indicated they felt that the Swordquest series (Atari) was just an excuse to "force you to buy all four games" in the series to be eligible for the prizes that Atari will be giving away. They felt the gameplay and graphics did not warrant investing in a total of four games. Thirdly, a great deal of disappointment was registered regarding the Intellivision voice module and games. Overall, the existing four games are "okay," but the fact that Mattel does not have more than one new voice game on the boards through the end of the year (that anyone knows about), is very frustrating to those who purchased the module for around \$70 when it came out. Couple that with the fact that modules are now being given away free to anyone who buys an Intellivision II, and many respondents felt that the whole voice system deserved to be voted "the worst game cartridge."

WORST GAME CARTRIDGES:

1. Pac Man (Atari 2600) - 19%
2. Early Atari 2600 games- 16%
3. Space Hawk (Mattel) - 8%
4. Voice Games (Mattel) - 6%
5. Swordquest Series(At) - 4%

OTHER CARTRIDGES WITH MULTIPLE MENTIONS:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| E.T. (Atari) | Amidar (Parker Bros.) |
| Donkey Kong (Coleco for Atari) | Smurf (ColecoVision) |
| Donkey Kong (Coleco for Intell) | Frog Bog (Mattel) |
| Warplock (Data Age) | Beany Bopper (Fox) |
| | King Kong (TigerVision) |

When we got to the subject of favorite controllers, the winner was an overwhelming favorite! Surprisingly, both the original Atari 2600 joystick and new Atari 5200 joystick made both the Best AND the Worst list! Among the reasons given for the 2600 joystick being a favorite included the fact that it's inexpensive, light, and easy to use. Given as reasons for being among the worst included the fact that it's uncomfortable to use for long periods of time, bulky, and easy to break. Just another indication that personal opinions can be worlds apart!

FAVORITE CONTROLLERS:

1. Wico Joystick - 44%
2. Wico Trackball - 10%
3. Atari 2600 Joystick - 8%
4. Starfighter (Suncom) - 6%
5. Pointmaster (Discwasher) - 5%
6. Atari 5200 Joystick - 4%

LEAST FAVORITE CONTROLLERS:

1. Atari 2600 Joystick - 26%
2. Intellivision Disc - 24%
3. ColecoVision Controller - 22%
4. Atari 5200 Joystick - 6%
5. Le Stick - 4%



Atari and Williams Electronics has signed a long-term agreement whereby Atari will have right of first on Williams' coin-operated amusement games. The first games coming from this agreement are rights to market MOON PATROL, JOUST, and ROBOTRON which will be available for the Atari game and computer systems later this year.

Our phones have been ringing off the wall following Academy Award night. We are convinced that virtually every gamer in the country was watching that show and wanted to know WHEN they can buy the new games advertised. Once again, we have the information you need to know! We've spoken with Atari and gotten an up-to-date rundown for you. We'll begin with some "old business". The Trackball for the 5200 has been bumped and is expected sometime this summer. The 2600 trackball is still scheduled for June. MY FIRST COMPUTER for the 2600 has been renamed THE 2600 COMPUTER and been bumped until September. The computer keyboard for the 5200 will not be available until 1984. The long awaited 2600 adaptor for the 5200 will not be available until "later this year", which is a severe disappointment for many 5200 owners. Meanwhile, on the software side of previously announced games—DUKES OF HAZZARD for the 2600 and BASKETBALL for the 5200 have been dropped. In other words, don't look for them as Atari has decided not to release either cartridge. Now, as far as the games announced on Academy Award night, first we'll give you a rundown of what's coming for the 2600. Planned for the end of August is BATTLE ZONE and in September look for MOON PATROL and JOUST. Coming for the 5200 in late August is JOUST and MOON PATROL, and planned for mid-October is TEMPEST and ROBOTRON.



Telesys will be entering the computer software field in July with the release of FAST FOOD, COSMIC CREEPS, and DEMOLITION HERBY for the Atari 4/8/1200XL. RAM IT and FAST FOOD will also be released for the Commodore VIC-20 late in the third quarter. They are also looking at the Commodore 64 and Timex/Sinclair for possible future releases. Telesys plans the introduction of a new VIC 20 title at the June C.E.S. Show.



Some third quarter plans are starting to come together at Vectrex. As we had reported earlier this year, the light pen is scheduled for September for under \$40 and we're told it will be packaged with a cartridge. Some education cartridges coming for the light pen will include two art cartridges: sketch and plan, and animation. The other two will be geography and music.

In entertainment, STAR CASTLE is scheduled for August, while POLE POSITION and DARK TOWER, a fantasy/adventure game, are planned for September. The computer for the Vectrex which we've mentioned earlier will be available in limited markets this Fall with a national rollout planned for early 1984.

A PEEK AT COLECO'S QUALITY CONTROLLER

Last month, The Video Game Update did two interviews with people we felt you should know about. One of those was a game designer from Activision. On the other hand, this month we visit with Coleco's Product Evaluator, Ms. Jodi McIlroy. You will notice a sharp difference in the fact that with a company such as Activision there is a lot of credit given to the game designer. With Coleco, SEVERAL designers may work on one game, and the buck stops at the desk of Ms. McIlroy whose main job is to approve, or kick-back any game that isn't up to Coleco's in-house standard. Jon Badeaux of The Video Game Update had an opportunity to speak with Jodi and find out what makes the Video Game Division of Coleco tick.

Jon: How does a person become a "product evaluator"?

Jodi: I started out as an administrative assistant at another electronic company and I wanted to come to Coleco, and the only position they had open in the electronic department was secretarial so I took it. When we started working on our cartridges I was looking over somebody's shoulder one day and I started picking the cartridge apart, saying "this has got to be fixed" and "why are we doing this?" and basically just pulling it apart. People started asking me to check out the games for them before they went out the door and eventually they promoted me into Product Evaluator. Now I have an assistant, so I'm Senior Product Evaluator.

Jon: Do you test your games with a focus group; in other words, do you take a cross-section of people and have them test the games to help "get the bugs out"?

Jodi: We have a number of people that test the products, from our programmers to marketing personnel that look at them down in the product development department where I am. Every time we put out a cartridge it's not just one person looking at it. Literally dozens of people end up seeing it before it goes out.

Jon: Do you work on software that Coleco produces for the Atari VCS and Intellivision systems?

Jodi: Yes, I handle ALL the cartridges that come down. It doesn't matter which system it's for.

Jon: When you step in and change a game or part of a game, do you, in essence, "step on the toes" of the original game designer?

Jodi: We bring up suggestions on how we think it would be easier for beginners and harder for experts. But, yes, I stand my ground when I don't like something.

Jon: Most (certainly not all) other game manufacturers list credits for game designers, such as Larry Miller for ENDURO, or Rob Fulop, designer of MISSILE COMMAND for Atari and DEMON ATTACK for Imagic. Is there a reason Coleco DOES NOT give credits to designers?

Jodi: It's not just one designer working on any given game; we could have quite a few designers at one point in time. They all have a button they can press to pop up a game screen to work on.

Jon: So, for instance, one designer could be working on screen number one of Donkey Kong, while another designer could be working on screen number two, and everything is a "staff project"?

Jodi: Yes, it just depends on the game.

Jon: Is there any game in particular you were responsible for drastically changing?

Jodi: There are no real "drastic" changes made here. Usually our game designers get at least the GRAPHIC point of view pretty well in hand by the time it comes down to me. I don't actually see the cartridges until they are playable. That is to say a game such as Donkey Kong where you can move Mario up and down and having him jump the barrels. The cartridges are usually in the sixth, seventh or eighth revision by the time I get them. That's when they become "playable". I do a lot of anomaly testing. Then I send it out to the marketing department. I just look for "glitches" and things that shouldn't be there. I don't play for score. I play to find problems. There has been no cartridge yet, knock on wood, that needs drastic changes.

Jon: I have heard that one of your newest releases, GORF, went through THIRTY-NINE changes.

Jodi: Yes, it did!

Jon: Were they just minor changes?

Jodi: Yes. We didn't want it to go out the door until it played right. We weren't happy with it. We made tiny changes here and tiny changes there; when it was right.. it went... it just happened to go up that high.

Jon: Do you have a favorite game you like to play?

Jodi: Well, I love PEPPER II, which is one of our new ones that will be going out very shortly. I like LOOPING—it was one of the more challenging games I've ever played. I couldn't play it at first; it took me about a week to get through the whole thing. They are good games. It's just the ones that are a little harder hold my interest.

Jon: Will you be involved with the "wafers" on the expansion module number three, the same as you are with current cartridges?

Jodi: Yes, I will.

Jon: Do you know the release date of the super-system yet?

Jodi: No, not at present. I'm not really familiar with the super module at this point. The only exposure I've had was at the Toy Fair in New York (in February, 1983) when I had to do demonstrations on it. It hasn't come down to our point of looking into the module as of yet.

Jon: Maybe you can lay to rest, once and for all, the confusion as to whether or not you need to buy cartridges with the wafers or just the wafers for the super game. I have heard the story both ways.

Jodi: You will only need the wafer (and the module).

Jon: Getting back to your job, what kind of "bugs" do you find in a game that would need to be revised?

Jodi: Do you want to pick out a specific game?

Jon: I imagine most people have at least seen Donkey Kong.

Jodi: Sometimes, when we first start off, there are barrels you could pass right through (without jumping over). The "kill factor" might not be in the game yet. Or Mario might be eliminated before he's supposed to be. You might jump a certain way and end up on a different screen. These are all things that have to be worked out (within) the program.

Jon: Do YOU know when games are scheduled for release? By "release date" I mean the day it's available to stores and consumers.

Jodi: We are given a general schedule as far as a date we are shooting for. It doesn't always happen to work that way, it depends on when a cartridge is ready to go.

Jon: So, for the sake of our May issue, what new games are officially out?

Jodi: PEPPER II is out, LOOPING is out, GORF is out, and BLACKJACK/POKER

Jon: All four titles are now for sale?

Jodi: They are all in production now.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Ms. McIlroy said that the games are "out", which, to us, means available for sale. To her, it means they have passed her department and are "in production". It should be noted that those terms have two distinctly different meanings, which has caused a great deal of confusion in the past year. If a game has been "released", Coleco means they are PHYSICALLY MAKING THEM and they will SOON be available for sale. If you don't see the above mentioned games in your favorite store, most likely they have not been shipped FROM Coleco TO the store. When sufficient quantities have been produced, they will be distributed to various game stores, record shops, chain stores, distributors, etc.

Jon: Do you receive a copy of The Video Game Update?

Jodi: Yes, I do. In fact, I was out of town and I was two months behind. I just caught up!

Jon: I was curious to know if you read the March issue which had "A Day In The Life Of A New Game Cartridge" and if you thought our hypothetical situation was close to the real thing.

Jodi: Yes, I read that and it was very accurate.

Jon: Let me ask you this: are you a super-serious game player?

Jodi: Yes, you could say that. I go through all levels of gameplay. I just finished playing PEPPER II and I almost hit eight million points. I think it was 7,300,460. I play in the arcades a lot, too.

Jon: I guess that answers the question of why you do what you do for a living!

Jodi: By the time I'm done looking for problems in a cartridge I know the game like the back of my hand. We could sometimes put in fifteen and sixteen hours total straight playing time. It figures you'll hit all the playing levels.

Jon: Thanks a lot for your time, Jodi, and maybe we will speak to you again sometime.

Jodi: Thank YOU!

Perhaps our inside look at one department of ColecoVision will give you a little insight as to their operation. We came away with the feeling a company that is, by-and-large compartmentalized to the point of Ms. McIlroy's being unable to comment on future Coleco projects that had not yet reached her department. You can rest assured The Video Game Update has a number of contacts at Coleco to combine with Jodi to keep you posted on all aspects of what's going on there.

In the upcoming months, we hope to delve further into Coleco (as well as other leading companies) so you can learn how your favorite games are made, as well as the thought process that goes on behind the scenes!

The COMPUTER ENTERTAINER

CRITICALLY SPEAKING... ATARI

DIGGERBONK (★★★/★★★★) is written by Steve Robinson for the Atari Program Exchange and, although not as fast as many maze/skill games, it is fun nonetheless. The object of the game is to "bonk" as any of your enemies as possible as you maneuver through vertically scrolling mazes. If you bonk a Pulsing Greenie along the way, you glow for a few seconds

and can bonk some of the special enemies such as the Purple Purple, the Yellow Blinker, or the Aqua Chaser. Of course, if you're out to get you too! As you maneuver through the maze, you must try and avoid hitting the sides of the walls as you lose points. You can easily end up in boxed-in passageways so you must maneuver quickly as the maze continues to scroll downward, and if you get caught at the bottom of the maze, you lose your life. If you bonk a Twinkler, you have a chance to pass through a wall, so strategy becomes important. A bomb goes off from time to time, blasting out sections of the wall which may help you; however, if you are too close to the bomb when it goes off, or if you touch it before it goes off, it's curtains! Although similar to many other games out there, after playing for a couple of hours, we found ourselves "hooked" as we made our way through the maze, using strategy along the way. You have no additional lives, so we found ourselves frustrated at times as we were heading towards a good score, made one mistake, and had to start back at the beginning. It is a random maze with nine levels of difficulty so it will keep you involved for many hours. (16K cass/16K disk)

Recommended (but try it first if you can) (MSR approx 24.95)

CATERPIGGLE (★★½/★★½), available through Atari Program Exchange, is written by Scott Ludwig and, except for some cute music, is just too similar to many other games currently available. In this game, you are the Caterpiggle and you're trying to devour the two snakes which slink through the maze. In addition to the chase after the snakes, there are the predictable pursuers, this time in the guise of three Serpent Security patrolmen. You must avoid them while finishing off the snakes who can break off into several segments, all of which you must consume before being allowed to advance to the next level. As you move to higher levels, the action becomes faster and faster with the Security patrolmen becoming smarter and smarter. You start with three lives and gain a bonus Caterpiggle each time you score 10,000 points. Interestingly enough, as we progressed up through the levels, some of them became almost "fuzzy", reminiscent of the screen on several of the older Atari 600 games! Again, while the music was fun, it certainly doesn't give us enough reason to run out and purchase it! (16K cass/24K disk)

Not Recommended (MSR approx 24.95)

SIRIUS SOFTWARE will be announcing a few new software titles for the Atari 4/8/1200, Commodore 64, VIC 20, and Atari 2600. Although this will be the first time they will offer Atari 2600-compatible cartridges, they did develop several games for FOX GAMES such as Turmoil, Deadly Duck, Beany Bopper, Fantastic Voyage, etc. The first title planned for all the systems above is SQUISH 'EM, a whimsical climb to the top of a critter-infested building for a suitcase of money. We will bring you additional news next month.

UPDATE ON WICO CONTROLLERS

In an effort to keep you totally abreast of what's being planned, we've had some further discussions with WICO regarding the new controllers that will be made available within the next several weeks. First, they have decided AGAINST releasing the ColecoVision keypad. Secondly, due to the many questions we have received from our readers, we have gotten a more complete description of the 5200 controller planned. Many people asked if the joystick would incorporate both the Analog and Self-Centering joystick. The answer is YES (now you can play PAC-MAN!), and will also incorporate a keypad. So, for those of you who were questioning the retail of \$59.95, that's the reason. If the unit is as good as it sounds, it will be worth it!

GETAWAY! (★★★★/★★★★) by Mark Reid for the Atari Program Exchange is a winner maze and strategy game! You get to play the bad guy in this one as you drive a getaway car around town picking up cash, prizes, and an armored van. There are the inevitable police cars in pursuit which are fairly easy to avoid until you "knock off" the armored van. It will then take all the savvy you have to get back to your hideout and "stash" the van. The town consists of 35 scrolling screens and you will find the money showing up randomly around it. You can pick up as much money as you want, but the more you are carrying, the smarter the police cars get. You'll want to drop off your stash whenever you are in the vicinity of your hideout. If the police car catches you, you lose all the money you are carrying, but not what you've already stashed at your hideout. To advance a level, you must find all three prizes on that level (e.g. diamonds on the first level) plus knock off the armored van. Whenever the police cars come close, you'll hear their sirens. An effect we liked was the constant appearance and then fading away of the siren as the police car came near and then headed off in a different direction. There are also radar "blips" on the edge of the screen which will help you keep track of the police, and there is a small white blip for the armored van which will help you, at least a bit, locate the van when you need it to advance to the next level. Of course, as you drive around the town, you will use up gas, so you must watch your gas tank and refuel occasionally at one of the three gas stations. Although there isn't a timer on you, you can't waste time either. You have one day to complete each level and as night falls, the police become more intent on stopping you. And, as time passes, you will encounter roadblocks and stop signs along the way. You can run through the roadblocks and they will disappear; however, as you do, you'll hear the roadblock fragments tearing into your gas tank, causing you to lose gas faster. The more roadblocks you hit, the faster you lose gas. All holes are repaired when you stop at a gas station. If you run a stop sign when it's on, announced by a car honk, it disappears, but you lose all the cash you're carrying. We found the graphics and sounds really terrific and the gameplay riveting. We especially enjoyed the 35 screens which forced us to really stay on our toes as we searched for money and prizes. You really have to pay attention to where you are so you can make your way back to your hideout. (32K cass/32K disk)

Recommended (MSR approx 29.95)

BOOK REVIEW

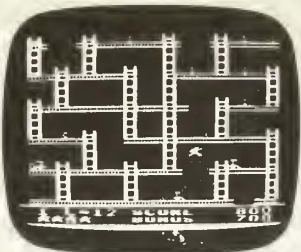
We've come across a book that every Atari computer owner will enjoy! Entitled "THE BOOK OF ATARI SOFTWARE 1983," this is a comprehensive guide to hundreds of software programs available for the Atari 4/8/1200. Not just limited to any one area such as entertainment, business, education, etc., this is just a good all-around guide to programs you may be interested in purchasing. There is a brief description of every program, along with manufacturer, suggested list, hardware requirements and a full range of rating including concept, creativity, depth, skill, challenge, graphics, documentation, value for money, etc. Several programs also include a picture of the game screen. There is an abbreviated section on the 2600 and 5200, but we would not recommend it for those sections. This makes a great reference guide and is published yearly in the Fall with three yearly updates available at the additional cost of \$15.00 per year. Suggested retail is \$19.95 and worth every dime! The book uses several reviewers and is edited by Jeffrey Stanton, Robert P. Wells Ph.D., and Sandra Rochowansky. If you can't locate the book in your local book or computer software store, write directly to: The Book Company, 11223 S. Hindry Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90045.

COMPARISON CHART UPDATE

Thanks for all your feedback on the Videogame and Computer Comparison Charts we ran last month. We have a couple of additions for the Videogame Chart. You should make the following changes in the Vectrex column. The Vectrex unit has 1K of RAM, 360 degree joystick, 6 new games planned by June, and the following major licenses: Konami, Stern, Cinematronics, and Paramount Pictures. We will continue to update any information as necessary.

JUMPMAN (★★★/★★★★) is the best

EPYX



for your Jumpman, creating more than enough variety to suit game players of various skills. The plot behind this game involves the infiltration of Jupiter Headquarters. Alienators have sabotaged all systems and planted bombs throughout all thirty levels of the building. Your job, as the Jupiter Jumpman, is to defuse the bombs and restore the communications systems. Playing the Beginner's variation (recommended until you get the feel of the game), you start at Level 1 ("Easy Does It"). Your Jumpman travels along girders, climbs ladders and ropes, and jumps across open spaces as he defuses all the bombs on that level by touching them—all this while dodging speeding bullets! If you complete the first level with at least one of your seven Jumpmen intact, you're treated to a brief but catchy little tune as the screen scrolls down from the top, revealing Level 2, "Robots I." (A note on the graphic treatment of the transitions between levels: the various levels of Jupiter Headquarters are so beautifully connected that the scrolling effect reminds you of a smooth pan by a good cameraman. There is not an awkward scene shift in the entire game.) The layout of Level 2 is a bit more challenging than that of the first level, and the enemy sends robots to make your task even more difficult. If you can keep a few Jumpmen, you'll go on to "Bombs Away" (whistling pink bombs fall from above), "Jumping Blocks" that have some strange effects when they collide with your Jumpman, "Vampire" (defusing some bombs awakens sleeping bats that are very tough to dodge), and maybe even "Invaders," in which your Jumpman is attacked by flying saucers. We found that half the fun in this game was discovering what kind of offbeat challenge was likely to greet us next! As the going gets tougher, defusing certain bombs makes part of a girder or ladder suddenly disappear, sometimes leaving your Jumpman in a very tricky position with few avenues of escape. This game will cause you to spend many, many hours discovering all the nuances and how to avoid the many traps the designer has set. There is one feature of this game that we simply must mention, because it added so much to the game's versatility and absolutely prevented boredom. If you've ever become frustrated with re-playing the first few screens of a game over and over again because you can't quite get through a more advanced screen, you'll fall in love with the Randomizer variation of JUMPMAN. In the Randomizer, you'll eventually get to see all thirty levels, even if you can't master them all, because the designer, Randy Glover, provides for scrambled sequences. (Transitions between levels remain smooth.) Using this feature, we even had a chance to try Level 30, "Grand Puzzle III," though it might have taken us weeks to survive that long in normal play. Other levels we especially enjoyed include "The Roost" (17) with its attacking birds, "Ladder Challenge" (19) with a gigantic moving ladder that Jumpman must hop onto to defuse some of the bombs, and "Gunfighter" (26) with its shootouts. "Mystery Maze" (25) was particularly difficult, because it is a totally concealed level that must be explored "by feel." The entire screen is a solid wash of color, and portions of the structure become visible only as your Jumpman enters them. The danger, of course, is in falling off the edge of a platform that you can't see until it's too late. The designer had some mercy on the poor player, though: there are no aliens to dodge on this level! We had an awful time tearing ourselves away from JUMPMAN because it is extremely addictive. (Don't say we didn't warn you!) While the graphics are fairly simple, they are cleanly drawn and colorful. The Jumpman himself is little more than a stick-man, but the cartoon-like animation of his falls and other moves is a nice touch. The collapse of Jupiter Headquarters when you lose your last Jumpman is accompanied by very good crunching and crumbling sound effects, and the whole scene reminds you of a structure made from an

climbing game yet for the Atari computers, and it's all the more fun because one to four players (taking turns with the same joystick) can participate. This game boasts an incredible thirty different game levels (screens), five game variations and eight possible speeds

erector set that has been taught in a great earthquake. Music effects are excellent throughout. Play action provides all the variety and challenge you could possibly want from a game of this type. From a company previously known best for its serious and complicated fantasy-adventure games, this is a light hearted but very welcome departure. JUMPMAN has *HIT* writer all over every one of its thirty screens, and we just couldn't get enough of it. (32K disk) Recommended. (MSR \$39.95)

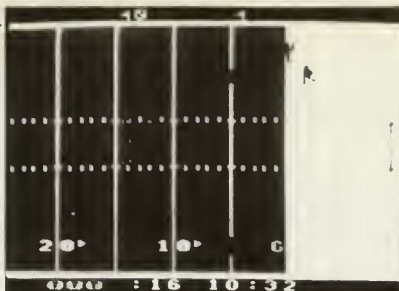
ASTRO CHASE, "there is no escape" (★★★★/★★★½) is the first offering from Fernando Herrera's First Star Software, and it is one of the most graphically dazzling games we've seen for any computer system. Stripped to its essentials, the story is another variation on the basic "only you can save the Earth from destruction" scenario. This time the Megardian Empire, bent on revenge for its defeat at the hands of the Earth's forces in the 23rd century, has surrounded our galaxy with a huge force field from which *there is no escape*. The Megardians have placed 16 pulsating Mega Mines in orbit around the Earth. Lured ever inward by its gravitational pull, they will destroy Earth if you don't destroy them first! Flying around in your sleek saucer and zapping Mega Mines would be easy enough were it not for the various types of attack craft launched by the Megardians. Included in their arsenal are eight types of ships with various combinations of five characteristics. Some Megardian attack fighters can only ram your ship, while others can ram and fire lasers. Some fighters can pass through planets while others cannot. Half of the fighters are classified as jets and can move twice as fast as the basic fighters. All eight craft have different shapes, so that you can learn to identify them. In addition to laser fire, your ship's defenses include shields which can be activated by touching any of the eight Shield Depots situated at the edges of the galaxy. The shield allows your saucer to do a little ramming of its own, but it only allows you to destroy attack fighters. The Mega Mines must be hit by laser fire in order to destroy them. The difficulty of the game can be adjusted by deciding which "Chase" (game level) you want to play; there are 34 altogether, though only Chases 1 through 24 may be chosen. You must survive Chase 24 to be awarded the opportunity to play Chase 25 or higher. (This takes *lots* of practice!) The higher the Chase number, the faster and more challenging the action. Typical of such space games, your saucer is equipped with a limited supply of energy. Flying, firing lasers, and bumping into "Hot Stars," planets or the Force Field all deplete your ship's energy. Supplies can be replenished by horizontal or vertical passes over any of the Energy Generators placed in the four corners of the galaxy. While the basic idea of defending the galaxy is a familiar one, there are several features that set this game apart from the crowd. The first thing you can't help but notice is the stunning use of the Atari computers' graphic potential. The game opens with an animated sequence showing your spaceman as he enters his saucer and blasts off to defend the Earth—to the accompaniment of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, no less! For the gamer with skill and perseverance, there are seven different animated intermissions, each awarded upon surviving a group of Chases. Plan to spend many hours at this game before seeing all of the intermissions! The actual scene of battle covers ten TV screens, and the graphics scroll in all directions. A perfectly gorgeous rendition of the Earth, showing the continents of North and South America, is set in black space full of twinkling stars and realistic-looking planets. But all this graphic splendor is not the feature that will really endear this game to lovers of outer-space battles. The designer has invented a system, trademarked "Single Thrust Propulsion," which allows you to fire your lasers in *ANY* direction, regardless of the direction your saucer is flying. This is nothing less than an amazing breakthrough for gamers accustomed to the restriction of being able to fire only in the direction of flight. The Single Thrust Propulsion feature takes some getting used to, but what fun it is to fire at an enemy *behind* you while you're in full retreat! This game is a must for those who love challenging space games. (32K disk, cassette) Recommended. (MSR \$29.95)

WATCH FOR OUR "NEW LOOK"

Watch our next issue for our "New Look"—but filled with the same timely reviews and information you've grown accustomed to.

commodore

Commodore has just formed a software division which will develop and work to acquire a large library of new programs for the Commodore 64 and VIC 20. It appears that, in addition to entertainment software, they will be putting a major emphasis on accounting, database, word processing, and management software. In addition to the software, they will introduce small business microcomputers this summer with powerful software packages.



STARBOWL FOOTBALL (★★★½/★★★★) is the answer for the armchair football player who has always wanted to don a football jersey and play in front of the roaring crowd on a Sunday afternoon (or Monday night)! From the opening Sousa march and the playing of an abbreviated version of our National Anthem, this is a faithful adaptation of the real thing. You have the choice of playing vs. a friend or the computer. If you pick the the computer mode, you are in for one tough game! You can choose the College or Pro level (it will take you quite a while before you will be able to leave the college ranks for the pros) and wait for the opening kick-off. After the ball is kicked (press your joystick button), the field will scroll in the direction of the play (a sensation that gives the game an even more realistic touch). You use your joystick to move the ball carrier up field, towards your opponent's goal. If the ball carrier steps over either sideline, he's out of bounds and a "whistle" blows and the clock stops. The team huddles and awaits play inputs from the offensive and defensive players. This game gives you 196 play possibilities!! You will spend a great deal of time just learning the nuances of plays you can call and control from the joystick. Look at it this way—if you were drafted by the Dallas Cowboys you'd have to spend a great amount of time learning their Play Book! This game includes such features as the 30-second clock, with penalty for delay of game, three time-outs per side each half, messages indicating touchdowns, penalties, etc. We found ourselves, especially as we played our first several games, constantly getting a "delay of game" while we were frantically going through the instruction booklet for commands! Meanwhile, Gamestar has published "Tips for Stars" which is available to purchasers on a direct basis, with various strategies on how to have a winning offense. It's a nice feature which will help you progress to the "Pros". this game is the ultimate football challenge for the armchair gamesman (no rookies need apply)!

Recommended (MSR 31.95)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING... VIC 20

DEADLY SKIES (★★★/★★½) is a typical "shoot 'em up" game where the player is equipped with five helicopters and must destroy an enemy military base. The helicopters must avoid ground fire missiles, smart bombs which track the sky in search of them, asteroids which dart around the skies, and UFO's which travel through the upper atmosphere dropping bombs. As you shoot out the military base and advance levels, additional objects enter the screen to make the hazards you must avoid more and more difficult. The graphics on the helicopters are good with the effect of the rotors spinning and there is a lot going on in the sky around you—especially the further you go in the game. Although this game is reminiscent of several games on the market, it is a good action-packed game of the genre. It features 32 play levels. (Cart) (MSR 39.95)

SCORPION (★★½/★★) pits a scorpion struggling for survival against such enemies as dragons, frogs, venus fly traps, stalkers, worms and pods. You work around the maze as the scorpion, and must shoot at your enemies, gathering eggs and stunning frogs to bring them back to your house for food. The screen features a "scan" screen to help you locate the eggs and frogs. The game features 32 levels of play. We found the game only mildly entertaining and nothing new. (Cart) Not recommended (MSR 39.95)

MINER 2049er (★★★/★★½) is the climbing game that will soon be available for nearly every game and computer system currently on the market.

BIG FIVE SOFTWARE

This cartridge version suitable for one or two players (alternating turns) follows the adventures of Bounty Bob in the year 2049 as he attempts to claim all ten stations (game screens) of a mine that is filled with radiation and inhabited by mutant organisms. The stations are "claimed" by causing Bounty Bob to travel over every bit of girder-like framework in each of the stations within a limited time span. (A Miner Timer at the top of the screen tells you how much time is left to finish claiming the station.) In each station, Bounty Bob must avoid contact with any of the mutant organisms unless he has just captured an item lost by a previous miner. For a short time after Bob captures one of these items, the mutant organisms will change color and can be eliminated for extra points if Bob touches them. The various mine stations themselves are full of escalating challenges. The first station, the Mine Shaft, is a fairly easy-to-negotiate series of ramps, and most players should have no trouble mastering it. This is followed by the Slides, a screen on which Bob can find himself slipping down several levels if he steps on just the right spot on a girder. Unfortunately, it's quite possible for Bob to slide right into a mutant organism if he's not careful! In the third station, Transporters in the center of the screen can let Bob "beam up" to any level of the framework, but he remains vulnerable to the mutants even while transporting. Stations 4 & 5, Lillipads and Advanced Lillipads, present Bob with an island-hopping challenge that even includes some slides and moving islands in the advanced screen. In station 6, there is a deadly tank of radioactive waste and some really tough mutants. Station 7, Advanced Transporters, is a regular three-ring circus with Transporters, Slides and moving Lillipads! The Lift in station 8 allows Bounty Bob to hoist himself anywhere in the station under joystick control, and in station 9 he must negotiate the deadly Pulverizers. For the supremely skilled player who reaches the Cannon (station 10), the most difficult of all challenges is dealing with the mutants without benefit of special items to make them momentarily vulnerable. Bob becomes the human cannonball in this one, shooting himself to any level of the station. To accomplish this feat, he must load the cannon with TNT—not too much TNT, mind you, or it's bye-bye Bob! There are enough challenges in this game to keep the player busy for many, many hours of frustration and triumph. As all good games should be, this one is addictive. Although the graphics are less than outstanding, they are varied and colorful. (Cartridge)

Recommended. (MSR \$49.95)

CLASSICS CORNER TO DEBUT

Our thanks to reader Martin Coats of Rocky Mount, North Carolina who wrote to us indicating that he would like to see us review some of the older game cartridges that are still on the market as a guide for gamers who are considering purchases, especially in light of some of the new, low prices of some of those games. This is a feature that we've been considering the past few months and you've given us the push we needed! Based on available space, we will review one or two games a month (some months we may not have space for any). We liked Martin's suggestion of "CLASSICS CORNER," so be on the lookout for this new feature within the next month or two. By the way, if YOU have any game(s) you would like to see reviewed, drop us a note and we will do our best!

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AVAILABILITY UPDATE

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

ATARI 2600-COMPATIBLE

APRIL

x-M*A*S*H (FOX)
x-No Escape (IMGC)
x-Dink! (ACTV)
x-RealSports Soccer (AT)
x-RealSports Tennis (AT)
x-Sky Skipper (PB)
x-Smurf Rescue (COL)
x-Strawberry Shortcake (PB)
x-Zaxxon (COL)

MAY

Dolphin (ACTV)
Enduro (ACTV)
Flash Gordon (FOX)
Galaxian (AT)
Keystone Kapers (ACTV)
Miner 2049er (TGV)
Plaque Attack (ACTV)
Springer (TGV)

JUNE

Blueprint (CBS)
BurgerTime (MNTWK)
Donkey Kong Jr. (COL)
Earth Dies Screaming(FOX)
Jungle Hunt (AT)
Kangaroo (AT)
Kull (AT)
Meltdown (FOX)
O*Bert (PB)
Robotank (ACTV)
Solar Fox (CBS)
Spacemaster X-7 (FOX)
Star Strike (MNTWK)
Trackball (AT)
Tunnel Runner (CBS)
Turbo (COL)
Wings (CBS)

JULY

Alpha Beam (AT)
Big Bird's Egg Catch (AT)
Cookie Monster Munch (AT)
Deathstar Battle (PB)
Dig Dug (AT)
Gravitar (AT)**
James Bond 007 (PB)
9 TO 5 (FOX)
Oscar's Trash Race (AT)
Pole Position (AT)
Save the Whales (FOX)
Sorcerer's Apprentice (AT)
Super Cobra (PB)
Tutankham (PB)

AUGUST

Battlezone (AT)
Incredible Hulk (PB)
Popeye (PB)

SEPTEMBER

Lord of the Rings (PB)
**---available ONLY through Atari Club

INTELLIVISION-COMPATIBLE

APRIL

x-Frogger (PB)
Nova Blast(IMGC)
Truckin' (IMGC)

MAY

Donkey Kong Jr (COL)
Happy Trails (ACTV)
Lady Bug (COL)
Mission X (MAT)
SafeCracker (IMGC)
Shootin' Gallery(IMGC)
White Water (IMGC)

JUNE

BurgerTime (MAT)
Empire Strikes Back (PB)
Gorf (CBS)
M*A*S*H (FOX)
Meltdown (FOX)
Wizard of Wor (CBS)
Zaxxon (COL)

JULY

Fall Guy (FOX)
Jedi Arena (PB)
9 To 5 (FOX)
Strawberry Shortcake (PB)
Tutankham (PB)

AUGUST

James Bond 007 (PB)
Popeye (PB)
D*Bert (PB)
Super Cobra (PB)

ODYSSEY

APRIL

x-Killer Bees (ODY)
Turtles (ODY)

MAY

Atlantis (IMGC)

COLECOVISION

APRIL

x-Space Panic

MAY

Blackjack
x-Gorf
x-Looping
x-Pepper II

JUNE

Destruction Derby
Earth Dies Screaming(FOX)
M*A*S*H (FOX)
Meltdown (FOX)
Miner 2049er (MIF)
Mr Do
Rocky Battles the Champ
Roller Controller (w/Slither)
Spacemaster X-7 (FOX)
Super Action Controller (w/Baseball)

JULY

Fall Guy (FOX)
9 To 5 (FOX)

SEPTEMBER

Frogger (PB)
D*Bert (PB)

ATARI 5200-COMPATIBLE

APRIL

Realsports Tennis

MAY

Miner 2049er (BIG5)
Space Dungeon

JUNE

Kangaroo
Pole Position

JULY

Dig Dug
Jungle Hunt
Realsports Baseball
Vanguard

AUGUST

Joost
Moon Patrol

SEPTEMBER

Frogger (PB)
Q*Bert (PB)

VECTREX

JUNE

Bedlam
Fortress of Narzod
Heads Up Soccer
Spike
Spin Ball
Web Wars

ATARI 4/800

APRIL

Android (PDI)
Final Orbit (SIR)-Cart
Repton (SIR)-Disk
Squish Em (SIR)-Cart
Telengard (MIC)-Cas

MAY

Alpha Shield (SIR)-Cart
Communist Mutants (STP)
Dig Dug (AT)
Dragonstomper (STP)
Escape from Mindmaster (STP)
ET Phone Home (AT)
Nexar (SIR)-Cart
Spider City (SIR)-Cart

JUNE

Boulders & Bombs(CBS)
Bumper Bash (SIR)-Cart
Chess (PB)
Critical Mass (SIR)-Disk
Flip-Out (SIR)-Disk
Frogger (PB)
Mountain King (CBS)
Spacemaster X-7 (FOX)
Type Attack (SIR)-Disk
Wavy Navy (SIR)-Disk

JULY

Paris in Danger (MIC)-Disk
O*Bert (PB)
Scuba Oooba Ooo (GAM)
Star League Baseball (GAM)

VIC-20

MAY

Atlantis (IMGC)
Demon Attack (IMGC)
Spacemaster X-7 (FOX)
Spider City (SIR)
Squish Em (SIR)
Turmoil (SIR)

JUNE

Final Orbit (SIR)
Fly Wars (SIR)
Frogger (PB)
Pipes (CS)
Rat Hotel (CS)
Spacemaster X-7 (FOX)
Vein Game (SIR)

JULY

Cosmic Creep (TEL)
Demolition Herby (TEL)
Fast Food (TEL)
Q*Bert

x-this notation indicates the game has shipped as of press time, but may not be in national distribution as yet

VIDEO TAKE-OUT'S TOP 10 SELLERS

1. PAC-MAN (ATARI 5200)
2. SWORDS & SERPENTS (IMGC-INT)
3. DRACULA (IMGC-INT)
4. MS. PAC-MAN (AT-2600)
5. SHOOTIN' GALLERY (IMGC-2600)
6. RIVER RAID (ACTV-2600)
7. CENTIPEDE (AT-2600)
8. SPIDER FIGHTER (ACTV-2600)
9. PEPPER II (COL)
10. SPACE PANIC (COL)

Company Name Codes

ACTV - Activision
AP - Apollo
AT - Atari
BRO - Broderbund
CBS - CBS Video Games
COL - Coleco
CS - Creative Software
CVD - CommaVid
DA - Data Age
EPYX - Epyx
FIR - FIRST STAR
FOX - 20th Century Fox
GAM - Gamestar
GGC - Great Game Company
IMGC - Imagic
MAT - Mattel
MIC - Microcomputer games
MIF - Microfun
MNTK - M Network
ODE - Odesia
ODY - Odyssey
PB - Parker Bros
PDI - Program Design Inc
SIR - Sirius
SPCV - Spectravision
STP - Starpath
SYN - Synapse
TEL - Telesys
TGV - Tigervision
TRO - Tronix
ULV - Ultravision
USG - U.S. Games
VEC - Vectrex
ZIM - Zimag



Three new releases are scheduled for June. The first is RAT HOTEL which is an arcade-style, "hide-and-peek" game in which the player takes the role of "Ermine the Rat", a cheese-seeking inhabitant of the "Hotel Paradiso", who is pursued by "Waldo the Maintenance Man. Designed for the VIC 20, the player maneuvers the Rat from the attic, down six floors and into the basement where he can eat "Le Grand Cheeseball". The rat must reach the basement within a three-minute time period. Various obstacles are in his path, however, such as elevators which won't take him down if he hasn't eaten all the cheese on that level and traps that are set near the cheese. The Rat is allotted three lives. This game is set to retail at \$39.95. The second title coming is PIPES, an educational program which pays like a game while teaching the concept of spatial relationships and economics. Also designed for the VIC 20, the object of PIPES is to connect all the houses in town to the main water supply. Your joystick is used to direct "Arlo the Plumber" as he carefully selects the right pipe, such as elbow-joints, T-joints, and valves, each with differing dollar value and inventory limitations to create a cost-effective and efficient water network. If the pipes are not connected and sealed properly, leaks will be sprung and the game will end. The challenge of PIPES is to connect all the houses without running out of the right kind of pipe or using too much money. Designed for children between the ages of six and fifteen, it will retail for \$39.95. Set to ship in June and a Commodore 64 version is scheduled for August. The third title, available only for the Commodore 64, is MOONDUST, a science-fantasy game. It challenges the player to draw colorful trails of moon dust crystals through the heart of glowing concentric circles. Music, composed according to joystick movement, accompanies every action. It features a friendly "Spacewalker" who is the master painter for the "Moondust Fleet".



EPYX has a line of over ten new computer game titles coming in the third and fourth quarter this year. In addition to the action/strategy games planned, they will also introduce a "Learning Fun" series, beginning with a musical game—FUN WITH MUSIC. These games will combine the benefits of learning with the fun of playing and will be targeted at the six to twelve year old audience. In the action/strategy series, look for the several titles. First, PITSTOP (compatible with the Atari 4/800 and Commodore 64) has the player controlling his Formula I racing car during a race and the strategies involved in when to go into the PitStop. The faster you drive, the more gas you consume and the faster you turn corners. The faster your tires wear out. These factors must be considered by the player in deciding if and when to enter the pit, where the action gets fast and furious—after all, races are won and lost in the pit! PSI WARRIOR (Atari 4/800 and Commodore 64) is a three dimensional, chess-like game with shooting action. The game has up to four players competing with each other or against the computer. Using the joystick controller, players teleport around the battlefield trying to out strategize each other, using bolts of energy to attack and defend. ALL-STAR BASEBALL (Atari 4/800 and Commodore 64) enables the player to select a team of "all-star" players from the last 50 years. Using the computer and baseball playing cards, you call up individual statistics of your all-time favorites—like Babe Ruth, Pete Rose, Sandy Koufax—to determine your line-up. Another player or the computer will field the other team. GATEWAY TO APSHAI (Atari 4/800 and Commodore 64) is the latest sequel to the strategy game, TEMPLE OF APSHAI. This version combines role playing and strategy plus fast and challenging action with the use of the joystick controller reviewed elsewhere in this issue, will also be available on the Apple and IBM formats later this summer. FUN WITH MUSIC (VIC 20) game, DRAGON RIDER (Atari 4/800 and Commodore 64) is based on the Ann McCaffrey novel. In this version, you will ride flying dragons while defending your homeland from the "dreaded threads." Quick wits and fast action are necessary to avoid the fiery invaders. OIL BARONS (IBM and Apple) is a true to life "search for oil" that requires the player to make investment decisions, search for oil and drill. It takes the player into the realistic high-stakes world of international oil where decision-making and risk is a way of life. The game can be played by one to eight players and there are nine different levels of skill from novice to expert. The game includes a game board representation of the earth's topography and playing pieces so that the players can select and identify their drilling sites. Next month we will give you a rundown of expected shipping dates.

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