A Critical Newsletter for the Serious Gamesman

WE GET QUESTIONS . . .

We've been getting many questions from several of you and felt the best place to answer them is in the newsletter.

Mythicon has begin "test" shipments of their $9.95 games (Star Fox, Firefly, and Sorcerer.) However, in contacting the company for review copies, we were told there are none available at this time. A representative of the company indicated they are not soliciting reviews until they have an advertising push on the product. Because campaigns are not a criteria for our reviewing product, we find that unsatisfactory; and, if we are able to find the product in a store, we will purchase it for review. If a company is excited about their product, it seems to us they would be looking for press coverage!

Companies we have mentioned in past issues who have NOT released product (and nothing scheduled in the near future), are The Great Game Company and Sunrise Software.

Roklan does NOT plan ColecoVision-compatible games.

Imagic has pulled out of the Intellivision-compatible market and will not release such titles as Beezor, Moonsweeper, etc. And, because of reorganization of the company, we expect all product for systems such as Coleco, Atari computers, etc. to be bumped to an unspecified time.

Coleco's ADAM has received clearance from the F.C.C.; however, as of press time, Adam has not begun shipment yet. We understand there have been problems with the built-in software which is being solved right now. Coleco now projects release mid to late October.

COLECO LASER DISC???

Coleco has now confirmed what we reported a few months ago. They have signed a license for DRAGON'S LAIR, the phenomenally successful new arcade game. Although Coleco is not releasing any information regarding *how* they will translate this revolutionary game for home use, we understand Coleco has had meetings with the major laser disc manufacturers regarding an add-on laser disc module for the ADAM and/or Coleco-Vision. We must stress that any discussions at this point are speculative and any disc add-on would not be on the market before the second half of 1984, at the earliest. Industry insiders feel the laser disc technology would be the only way to bring DRAGON'S LAIR to the home screen, so it will be interesting to see what direction Coleco takes with this major title.

NEWS FROM FIRST STAR SOFTWARE

First Star Software, who brought you Astrochase, are preparing their Fall releases for several systems. In their first entry in the 2600 market, they will release BOING!, where you are a bubble, bouncing around a playfield of 36 multicolored squares. You must jump on each square to "turn it on", while obstacles try and stop you. First Star is promising first rate quality when your bubble is popped by The Pin, etc. The game will feature 6 levels of 5 "waves" each and 6 musical themes. FLIP AND FLOP is a 3-dimensional game planned for the Atari computers, Atari 5200, and Commodore 64. Quick reflexes are required as your kangaroo must hop onto and turn over certain tiles on a multi-screened, scrolling, stepped platform maze with ladders, sometimes with the zoo keeper in hot pursuit! In alternate levels, the entire playfield turns upside down and as a monkey hanging from the underside of the maze, you swing from square to square. PANIC BUTTON. for the VIC-20 and TRS-80, requires fast assembly of incomplete parts on an assembly line, such as televisions, telephones, etc. As the belt speeds up, the parts are tougher and tougher to put together correctly. Hit the panic button which gives you a few seconds to fix your mistakes. But, as soon as your boss sees you, he grumbles and turns the belt back on. BRISTLES, for the Atari computers, Atari 5200, and Commodore 64, is designed for four players. Each character, with their own theme music, must paint rooms in spectacular colors, while encountering a variety of obstacles such as the Smart Bucket, Flying Half-Pints, and the building superintendant's daughter who occasionally puts her handprint on the wet paint.
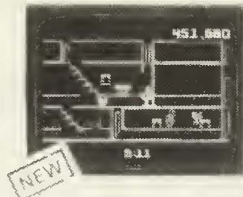
KOOL-AID MAN (★ ★ / ★ ★) stars the pitcher character from the Kool-Aid commercials in a battle with the Thirsties, which are stealing water from your swimming pool. This single-player game opens with Kool-Aid Man breaking through the walls of your back yard. Once in the back yard, Kool-Aid Man is beset by horizontally flying Thirsties, which he must avoid until one or more of them stops moving. Collision with a moving Thirsty, any of the backyard walls, or the water in the pool will cause you to lose control of Kool-Aid Mna temporarily. When a Thirsty stops moving, it dunks its straw into the pool and starts drinking. (Apparently Thirsties are unaffected by chlorine.) Bump Kool-Aid Man into the Thirsty for points, and it will disappear. In addition to Thirsties, the Kool-Aid ingredients of Water, Sugar and Kool-Aid Soft Drink Mix (W's, S's and K's) occasionally appear in the back yard. If you direct Kool-Aid Man to collide with one of these symbols, he'll get bigger and be unaffected by flying Thirsties for a few moments. There are 30 Thirsties per timed round, with bonus points awarded for time left after catching all of them. The game ends when the Thirsties drain the pool.

For Children Only

KOOL-AID MAN is definitely for small children only. For anyone over the age of seven or eight, this game is dumb and boring. Graphics are not up to Mattel's usually high standards: colors appear pale and washed out, except in the end-of-game sequence with all the characters against a black background. The game is easily learned and played—a plus for young children—but we doubt that it will hold much interest even among the age group for which it is intended.

Not recommended.

BURGERTIME (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) is based on the arcade game by Data East in which Peter Pepper, the chef, tries to build burgers while he avoids various food items that are running amok. This version can be played by one or two chefs. (Two players take turns with the *same* controller; only the active player's score is shown until the end of the game, when the display alternates both players' final tallies.) The five "mazes" in this game are various arrangements of platforms and ladders, with burger ingredients stacked separately, one above the other, on the platforms. Each time the player runs Peter Pepper over a burger ingredient, it falls down a level, displacing any ingredient positioned directly below. Once all the burgers are assembled at the bottom of the screen, the chef moves on to the next maze. A crazed group of walking hot dogs, square eggs, skinny bread sticks and hunks of cheese chases Peter Pepper around the screen and generally makes his life miserable. (No, we don't know why they don't want Peter Pepper to build burgers!) The chef has a few defenses against these nasties: he can drop burger ingredients on top of them (lots of points), lure them onto an ingredient about to drop (even more points!), or toss a pinch of pepper at one to stun it temporarily. Pinches of pepper are limited in number, but more can be earned by having Peter grab the occasional French Fries, Ice Cream, or Cup of Coffee that will appear on the screen for a few moments. Each player begins with five chefs; an extra one is awarded for every 10,000 points.

Slow Pace

We've played both the arcade and Intellivision versions of BURGERTIME, and we like them both, but we have mixed emotions about this adaptation for the Atari 2600. This one looks fairly good, considering the limitations of the system, and the musical sound effects are excellent. It's a challenging game to play, but we feel that it's just too slow. The more we played, the more we found ourselves wishing for an "advanced" variation that would allow for faster action. The degree of speed desirable in any game comes down to an individual decision for each game player: some may actually prefer this game's slower pace, so we do not feel we should condemn the game for its lack of speed. Do give this one a try. It's cute, musical and challenging, and you may like it.
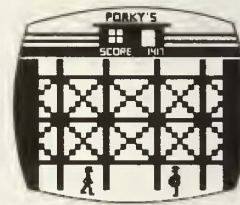
PORKY'S (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) is a four-screen adventure based on the hit movie of the same name. Your goal is to help PeeWee blow up Porky's bar, gaining as many points as possible along the way. In the County Line screen, PeeWee runs across the highway, dodging motor boats, police, Porky's girls, attack pigs, Porky's bouncers and the Pig-Mobile. (This segment is reminiscent of *Frogger*.) Then it's on to the Swamp, where PeeWee must pole vault over the murky waters, then collect bricks to form an escape ladder into the locker room. In the third scene, you're supposed to keep your mind off Wendy, the young lady taking a shower in the middle of the screen, and help PeeWee push objects into a pit. If your timing isn't just right, Ms. Balbricker will catch PeeWee and throw him back into the Swamp, where Porky will cost you points every time. If you can get PeeWee to climb out of the Shower scene, he'll be back at the County Line, and one band of traffic will have stopped moving. Crossing the highway takes him to Porky's bar (finally!), but PeeWee's troubles aren't over yet! You must guide him along the correct path to the top of the scaffolding, while Porky paces at the bottom of the screen. If PeeWee makes it to the top, then Porky's bar can be blown up. Throughout the game, you'll gain and lose points for various actions. It's possible to "win" and blow up the bar, ending up with either a high or low score.

Challenging and Fun to Play

This is one of the better efforts from Fox Video Games. Graphic detail is good, especially in the Swamp and Shower scenes. The game is challenging and fun to play, although it can be very frustrating at times. (We got so tired of being pushed back into the Swamp until we finally got the timing down in the Shower scene!) The combination of positive and negative points is an interesting way to score a game. Also, you do not start out with a predetermined number of "lives;" no matter how long it takes, every game gives you the chance to blow up Porky's. The designers have done a good job of getting the spirit of the movie into the video game, something that doesn't always happen with such adaptations.

Recommended. (MSR $19.95)

MOVED??? Don't forget to let us know so you don't miss one important 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

CRASH DIVE (★ ★ ★½ / ★ ★ ★) is a fanciful game in which you travel through air and sea in your fabulous flying sub, searching for treasure and avoiding or shooting obstacles in your way. In the sky, your way is blocked by birds plus planes and helicopters that shoot at you. At the ocean's surface, a boat may appear that also shoots at you. (The shooting objects can aim at your sub anywhere, even at the bottom of the sea.) A special submarine, the Seaview, also appears occasionally at the surface. Contact with the Seaview allows you to refuel your flying sub. Other obstacles underwater are many, and contact with any of them is fatal: sting rays, sharks, angler fish, squid, lobsters, sea monsters and mines. All but the mines can be shot for points. The mines must be avoided while you dive for the treasure beneath them.

A Busy Game

CRASH DIVE is a busy game with quite a varied cast of enemies to avoid and shoot at. Watching for occasional treasures while avoiding contact with any of the craft or creatures will really keep you hopping! Graphics are very nicely done, too. The game is colorful, with good sound effects. We especially liked the splashing effect as your flying sub dives below the ocean's surface. An enjoyable game for all ages.
Recommended. (MSR $14.95)

THUNDERGROUND (★ ★ ½ / ★ ★ ★) is a tunneling game with

THE ARCADE EXPERTS

an outer-space theme. The player controls a "Core Capsule" capable of digging subterranean mazes on a distant planet, and the object is to reach and destroy the enemy's nuclear bases on the surface within a limited period of time. Guarding the bases are two "Core Ranger Tanks." Some of these are meresentries which will fire at you, but can only move in existing tunnels. The more dangerous "Digger Tanks" can dig their own tunnels to pursue you. There are hidden enemy supplies underground,

too, and bonus points are awarded for uncovering them. As the game progresses, some rounds have invisible tunnel mazes, making it difficult to know when your Core Capsule is vulnerable to enemy tank attack.
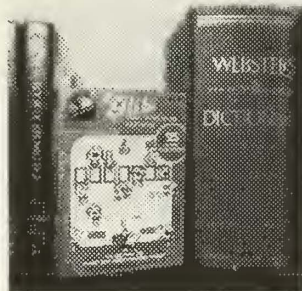
This is a very simple game to learn and play, and the graphics offer nothing to get excited about, but we found the game entertaining nonetheless. No doubt, we'll soon reach an oversupply of this "dig your own maze" type of game, but they're still appealing while there are so few of them. THUNDERGROUND should offer enough challenge for all but very skilled players—they may find it a little too easy. For most players, it's a good game at a reasonable price. (MSR approx. $11.00)

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STAR TREK (★ ★ ★½ / ★ ★ ★½) plays essentially the same

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as the version for Atari computers (see review in this issue's *Computer Entertainer*). Graphics, of course, are not as detailed as the computer version, but they compare very well to other games available for the 2600 system. For Trekkies and fans of space games, this one is a must!
Recommended. (MSR approx. $30.00)
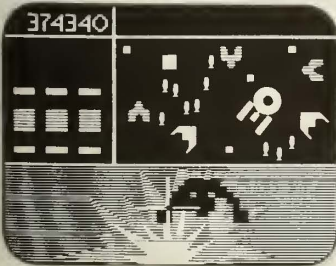
GLIB (★ ★ ★½ / ★ ★ ★ ★) is a must for anyone who loves word

games. It is marketed by **Selchow & Righter,** the SCRABBLE® Brand Crossword people, and **Qualtronic Devices, Inc.,** the electronic design firm that developed the game. Packed in this one cartridge are 25 different game variations: five basic types of word games, each playable at five different skill levels. (All variations may be played by one or two people.) In all games, the basic display is the same: two horizontal rows (racks) of seven positions each, plus bars at the bottom for entering or passing words. Depending on the skill level chosen, a timer bar may or may not be operating. The letters the player will be using appear in the top rack, along with the point value for each letter. (Point values correspond to those in the Scrabble® board game.) The bottom rack is where the player builds words. During games, some letter positions in this rack may result in double or triple letter scores, and occasionally the entire rack will appear in pink or red, signifying double or triple word scores for that turn. Letters are moved around by a cursor under joystick control. While the instructions seem a bit imposing at first, all the games are easily learned. (Parents may want to learn the games first, so they can show their young children how to play.)

Five Different Games

The object in all games is to achieve the highest point score possible. A time limit is imposed in all but the easiest skill level. In Game 1, "Billboard," there is a set of 98 letters. Seven are shown with each new turn; unused letters will not reappear. "Skill Builder" works like Billboard, except that unused letters remain in the upper rack for each new turn. In "Time's Up," the player must race to create as many words as possible from a single set of seven letters shown at the beginning of each turn. "Encore" is a real challenge: six letters march continuously across the top rack. You have to nab the letter you want quickly! (Unused letters will show up again.) "Over the Edge" has marching letters, too, but once they leave the screen, they never return.

There is something here for everyone who enjoys word games. The player has a great choice of speed and type of game to play, and this would be an ideal game for children who show any interest in words. However, GLIB is not for children only—we had a lot of fun with it, and we're well past childhood! Graphics are crisp and clean; every letter and number is clearly readable. This is an excellent family game at a very reasonable price. (*Editor's Note: this cartridge works in most Atari 2600 units and in the ColecoVision Expansion Module #1; with SOME Atari 2600 units, the picture rolls and cannot be steadied with the TV's control knobs. At presstime, we had not yet been informed by Qualtronics that a solution had been found to the problem.*)
Recommended. (MSR $18.95)

Console Sales, 1982 (million units)			
	Worldwide	U.S.	Foreign
Atari	6.2	5.0	1.2
Intellivision	1.8	1.3	0.5
Coleco	0.5	0.5	--
Astrocade	NM	NM	NM
Odyssey	0.5	0.3	0.2
Total	9.0	7.1	1.9

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FROSTBITE (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) is a cute little jumping game for one or two players in which Frostbite Bailey

ACTIVISION tries to build an igloo before he freezes to death. To collect ice blocks for his igloo, he must hop nimbly across the ice floes, which move right and left across the Arctic Sea. Snow geese, Alaskan King Crabs and the dreaded Killer Clams of the North will try to push Frostbite into the frigid waters, so they must be avoided. (When Frostbite reaches desperation time, with a creature about to nudge him off the ice, the direction of the floe can be reversed by pressing the firing button; the penalty is loss of one block from the igloo.) Raw fish can be grabbed as they swim by for extra points. With each successful landing on an ice floe, the blocks turn from white to blue, and another block is added to the igloo. When the door appears, the igloo is complete, and Frostbite Bailey jumps inside to complete one round. (It takes four igloos to complete either a day shift or a night shift.) In each round, the temperature starts at 45 degrees and keeps dropping until Bailey enters the warmth of his igloo. If the temperature reaches zero, poor Bailey turns into a solid block of blue ice, and you'll have to start again. Beginning with the fourth round, Frostbite must avoid a prowling Polar Grizzly that comes out of hibernation and paces the shore. (We're convinced that Activision has a private zoo of rare animals from which they select these fabulous creatures!)

Must Be Played to Be Appreciated

FROSTBITE is a bright and colorful game, though the graphics are not as impressive as the typical Activision offering. Frostbite Bailey is a cute little guy in snowshoes, but he's a bit blocky. Of all the enemy creatures, the best are the white snow geese. Our initial impression of the game was basically, "cute, but kind of dumb." Much to our surprise, however, we found it very difficult to stop playing once we got going. The more we played it, the better we liked it! This game is quite simple to learn, but the difficulty level increases rapidly, especially after the Polar Grizzly appears on the scene. It's a game that must be played several times to be appreciated, and then you won't want to stop!
Recommended. (MSR $31.95)
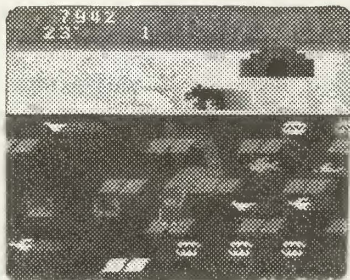
MR. DO (★ ½ / ★ ½) is Coleco's VCS adaptation of the arcade

COLECO game. The premise of the game is to guide Mr. Do as he tries to harvest his orchard before the evil Badguys can catch him. You mow a path to collect your cherries, use your Power Ball to squelch the Badguy, or push apples on top of the Baduys to stop their pursuit. In the 2600 version, the Badguys can turn into a Blue Chompie as there is no treat in the Badguy spot for Mr. Do to run over (in the ColecoVision version, the Blue Chompies only appear when Mr. Do runs over the treat). The Alphamonster will appear occasionally and you must get him with your Power Ball to gain a letter towards the spelling of "EXTRA" for an additional Mr. Do.

Poor Conversion

As fans of the ColecoVision Mr. Do, we were anxious to try this version and were severely disarnointed with the conversion. While we certainly did not expect the same game on the VCS, we were not prepared for the poor graphics and gameplay. The graphics are not bright (ala PacMan) and there is a blinking problem. We were appalled at the fact that as Mr. Do mows his paths, an entire section of the screen clears (these are NOT paths!) which leaves Mr. Do virtually helpless against the Badguys. As good as we had become at playing the ColecoVision version, we were constantly being mowed down by the Badguys in this one. With the quality of the 2600 games we've seen from several companies this year, this is a very disappointing game and certainly not worth adding to your library.
Not Recommended (MSR approximately $30)
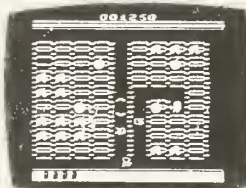
POPEYE (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★½) is based on the popular Nintendo

PARKER BROTHERS arcade game and features the well-known cartoon characters of Popeye, Olive Oyl and Brutus (otherwise known as Bluto). In this three-screen climbing game for one player, you control the spinach-eating sailor as he attempts to catch his sweetheart's tokens of affection, while avoiding Brutus and the bottles thrown from off-screen by the Sea Hag. On each screen, Olive Oyl moves back and forth at the top, tossing 20 hearts, notes or kisses (different items on each screen). Popeye has the run of four horizontal platforms, some connected by stairways, and some reached by jumping on a trampoline or sliding down a chute. Being a faithful suitor, Popeye must catch each and every sentimental gift before it plops into the water and sinks. Brutus patrols the platforms, too, using the stairs and frequently jumping up to catch Popeye on a platform above, and sometimes throwing bottles at him. Popeye can punch the bottles thrown by Brutus or the Sea Hag, but he has no way to jump or duck them. Once on each screen, Popeye can punch the spinach which moves around randomly. Then he has super strength as long as his theme plays, and he can wallop Brutus so hard that he falls overboard, earning you 3000 bonus points.

Very Challenging Game

This game should prove to be a popular one, especially among fans of the well-known cartoon sailor. The graphic rendition of the lead characters is amazingly good for the Atari 2600 system—no one will have trouble recognizing them. The backgrounds and structures of the three screens are fairly simple, but the overall spirit of the arcade game has been maintained. And it's a great game to play, even if you're not a fan of the Popeye cartoons. The early action in the first screen is easy to master, but the difficulty escalates quickly, making for a very challenging game. We must confess that Popeye is one of our least favorite cartoon characters, yet we kept playing the game over and over again, trying to improve on our last score. This version of POPEYE doesn't look exactly like the coin-op game, but play action is similar, and it's a thoroughly enjoyable contest.
Recommended. (MSR $42.95)

STRONGHOLD (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ½) is a rather abstract space game for one player in which

COMMAVID, INC. you attempt to break through the defenses of the abandoned asteroid, Stronghold. Controlling a ship that can fire vertically and diagonally, but not horizontally, you move over the barren asteroid's surface. Defense Drones attack, and then three moving force-shields become activated over the surface—they're protecting the Command Crawler, which moves back and forth at the bottom of the screen. While you try to avoid collision with Interceptors and Patrollers, you must fire to break through the force shields. Once a gap appears, you must be quick to destroy the Command Crawler before it annihilates your ship with a lethal bolt. In some game variations, a Mega-Field slowly descends from the top of the screen, seriously limiting your maneuverability as the game continues.

For Shoot-Out Fans Only

STRONGHOLD is a game for die-hard shoot-out fans only. While the game is extremely challenging, especially in the more difficult variations, we found that it just didn't hold our interest for very long. The graphics are good, though fairly simple. This game may appeal to some players who love fast-moving, shooting games, but we couldn't get excited about it. Try this one before you buy it.

EXPLANATION OF RATING SYSTEM:

★★★★—EXCELLENT
★★★—GOOD
★★—FAIR   First set of stars—Quality of graphics
★—POOR   Second set of stars—Quality of play action

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

FROGGER (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★) is yet another version of the

STARPATH ™ Sega arcade game, this one on
CORPORATION cassette tape for the Supercharger
under a sublicense from Sierra On-Line. It's difficult to believe that any video game player would be unfamiliar with the premise of FROGGER, so we'll keep the game description brief. One or two players (alternating turns) control a frog that must be jumped across five lanes of highway traffic, then across a river by means of floating logs, diving turtles, and the backs of crocodiles, and finally to its home bay on the other side of the river. Bonus points are awarded for time left when the frog is brought home, for rescuing a lady frog and carrying her to home bay, and for hopping into a bay with a fly in it. Each player begins with seven lives.

Superb Detail

The designers at Starpath have done their best job yet on the graphics in this charming game. Colors are brilliant, and detail is superb. The familiar FROGGER musical theme plays at the beginning of the game, but Starpath has added a few other tunes, too. Play action is faithful to the coin-op original, with very few departures. FROGGER was one of the first of the cute, character-oriented games, and it holds up amazingly well. Nudging Frogger across the dangerous course is still lots of fun, and this version certainly captures all the whimsy of the original. Joystick control is particularly smooth.

Recommended. (MSR $14.95)

We enjoyed this letter, and felt several important points were made; therefore, we are reprinting it as addtional information for the game, WALL BALL.

I'd like to thank you for your newsletter's flattering review of my VCS game, WALL BALL. Yours is the first non-in-house appraisal I've been able to see and touch, and while it's been good to know that my employers and my wife liked the game I have to admit to a certain bias on their parts.

Interestingly, most previous evaluations have praised the graphic aspects of the game more than the play value—I found it particularly gratifying that your view was the reverse. After all, nobody buys a game just to look at it.

To address a couple of specific points raised in the review: I too was not entirely satisfied with the missed-ball buzzer, and yet I felt that a sound was needed. Earlier versions of the game had a sort of tinkling noise there that I rather liked but that was almost universally reviled in play-testing. Basically, I think that almost any sound there risks becoming monotonous, particularly since it comes at a rather embarrassing moment (just after losing a ball). I settled on the buzzer largely because it struck me as an impersonal statement of fact from an impartial judge. Were I in a position to do it all again, and in future games, I might make that and similar sound effects selectively removable during play.

I'm glad you liked the sound of the ball bouncing. I tweaked that effect for several weeks (along with many other things) before I felt satisfied with it. Indeed my goal was that slightly hollow "thwock" characteristic of hard balls in reverberant rooms.

I do think your review neglected one minor but not quite trivial point, however. No, not that you didn't mention my name—it wouldn't mean anything to the public if you had—but that you didn't mention the PAUSE option using the Color/BW switch. I programmed that as a player convenience because of my own experience of needing a stretch in the middle of a long game, and I think skill-and-action games like WALL BALL are particularly fatiguing without such an option.

All in all, I was very pleased and gratified with your review. I found it thorough, concise, and more than fair to my game. If all critics were like yours then novelists, playwrights, and programmers could have no complaints. (I only wish that I could get play testing of such high quality.) If you ever have reason to pan a game of mine, I'll know that it was done honestly and dispassionately, more than which I couldn't ask. Keep up the good work.

Duncan Scott, Designer
Avalon Hill Video Game Company
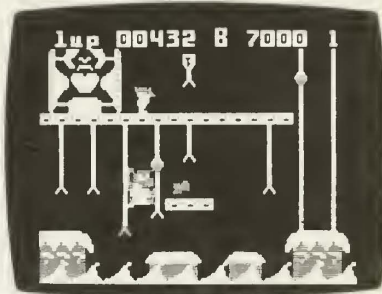
DONKEY KONG JUNIOR (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★ ½) is based on

COLECO the Nintendo arcade game that is the sequel to *Donkey Kong*. In this one, Mario
turns the tables on Donkey Kong and takes him prisoner. The player controls Donkey Kong Junior in a three-screen mission to rescue his papa at any of four skill levels. In the first screen, Junior begins his climb-and-jump quest for the key at the top of the screen to the accompaniment of the coin-op theme music. Chattering Snapjaws chase Junior as he climbs up and down vines and jumps to platforms and girders. Just as in the arcade game, there are various fruits hanging from the vines. If Junior nudges one at just the right time, he can crush a Snapjaw for extra points. The second screen is the chain mission: Junior must push eight keys to the tops of parallel chains to unlock papa's cage. Meanwhile, Snapjaws patrol the chains and Nitpicker Birds fly across the screen, trying to thwart Junior's rescue attempt. (Fruits on the chains can be loosened to eliminate the Snapjaws.) The final screen presents another set of challenges, starting with a jump board that propels Junior toward moving platforms and chains. On this screen, Stookybirds fly around, and they drop eggs at the higher skill levels. There is a time limit on all screens.

Pleasant Surprise

Game players who have been disappointed by Coleco's efforts for Intellivision will be pleasantly surprised by DONKEY KONG JUNIOR—we were! Graphics are truly outstanding in this game, with lots of detail and very bright colors. The designers have done a superb job of translating the arcade game to this format. Play action is quite good, too, with all the challenges a game player could hope for. We didn't even miss the fourth screen from the arcade game! The coin-op game is one of the most charming of the climbing games, and this adaptation retains all the fun of the original.

Recommended.

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YOU THINK THIS IS EASY???

As you know, we are in constant contact with the manufacturers in order to bring you the most current and factual information possible. Last month we reported, based on a conversation with an executive at Mattel, there would be virtually no new Intellivision games coming this year other than those the company is commited to by previous agreements (such as Bump and Jump). Just as we went to press, Mattel has begun shipment of PINBALL and TREASURE OF TARMIN!! When we spoke with someone at Mattel, even they expressed surprise at the release of these two games.

We will review both games next month. We do know these are two titles many Intellivision owners have been anxiously awaiting. We'll let you know what we think of them next month!

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..COLECOVISION-COMPATIBLE

Q*BERT (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) is yet another adaptation of the hot arcade title licensed by Gottlieb to Parker Brothers. There's hardly a system this game *won't* be made available for, and this one for ColecoVision is a winner! Once again, the nozzle-nosed Q*bert must hop diagonally around a pyramid of cubes, changing the color of the cubes to the destination color, while avoiding a strange cast of nasty characters. The enemies include bouncing Red Balls, Purple Balls that hatch into Coily the Snake, and Ugg, the creepy creature that crabs along the vertical surfaces of the cubes. Q*bert, prone to profanity, "swears" whenever he runs into an enemy or hops off the edge of the pyramid. On such occasions, a cartoon bubble full of assorted punctuation marks appears above his orange head. The bad guys can be escaped by hopping Q*bert onto a Flying Disk that transports him to the top of the pyramid. If Coily is close enough, he'll try to follow Q*bert, only to fall off the edge. Other characters found hopping around the pyramid are Slick, who changes the colors of the cubes back to their original hue, and the Green Ball. Slick can be stopped by running Q*bert into him, and catching the Green Ball causes everything but Q*bert to freeze for a few moments. The game can be played by one or two, with a choice of starting with three, four or five Q*berts. There are nine levels in a game, each comprising four rounds (four pyramids).

All the Fun of the Arcade Game

As with most arcade games translated into home versions, this one doesn't look *exactly* like the coin-op, but only a real nit-picker could find fault with the graphics. The colors are bright, the characters very recognizable, and the musical touches are delightful. This adaptation offers all the fun of the arcade game, too, especially after you become accustomed to controlling Q*bert. The controller has to be held at an angle, so that the usual north-south-east-west directions of the knob become diagonals for this game. It works quite well with practice, and we found that we preferred the ColecoVision controller to a standard joystick on this game. Q*BERT is one of the best games of 1983, and it's a must for any ColecoVision owner. Recommended. (MSR approx. $45.00)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..INTELLIVISION-COMPATIBLE

SEWER SAM (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★½) is a new kind of maze game for this system—one with first-person perspective that allows the player to be *in* the maze rather than viewing it from above. The player takes the role of Sam, trouble-shooter for the City Works Department, who must investigate the strange happenings in the murky corridors of the city's sewers. While making his way through tunnels—some dry, some partly filled with water—he encounters the creepy denizens of the depths: sewer birds, spiders, bats, rats, snakes, crocodiles and SUBMARINES! (*Anything* is possible in a video game, folks!) The player has a choice of four difficulty levels, and they vary in speed from deliberately plodding to recklessly daredevil. Whatever the level, most of the creepy creatures rush out of the blackness toward Sam. (Crocs raise their toothy jaws from underwater, and may appear anywhere in the watery tunnels.) Sam can avoid the nasties or shoot them, but he has to be careful with his gun. It holds but six bullets at a time, and it takes a few moments to reload. The player must be sure that Sam has some ammunition left when he encounters the submarines, because it takes three shots to a sub's missile launcher to destroy the vessel. Points are scored by shooting creatures and exploring new tunnels; the more tunnels Sam has explored and the farther into any one tunnel he has ventured, the more points are earned for each creature shot.

Original Game

SEWER SAM is a delightfully original game that offers good, three-dimensional graphics, nice sound effects, and entertaining game play suitable for all ages. Intellivision owners will enjoy the experience of being in the maze, always waiting to be startled by the next unexpected creature. Accurate shooting is a must, since many of the creatures are quite small, and there's the fun of exploring the unknown. Regardless of your experience and skill level with video games, we think you'll enjoy this one. Recommended. (MSR $29.95)

BLOCKADE RUNNER (★ ★ ★½ / ★ ★ ★½) gives the fan of space shoot-outs an opportunity to fly through an asteroid belt while attempting to deliver needed supplies safely to home base on Earth. It's playable as a solo game, or two players can become a team, one firing missiles while the other controls the ship's velocity and steering. The view is through the cockpit window, across the nose of the spaceship, and into dark space full of onrushing objects. An instrument panel at the bottom of the screen shows current point score, speed, fuel level, shield condition and distance left to Earth. The idea is to steer away from collisions with asteroids (they heat up your shields), destroy the robot mines before they explode, shoot down the alien ships, and steer your spaceship into occasional clouds of blue ice crystals to replenish the water in your nuclear fusion reactors and cool down the shields.

Unusual Features

Scoring in this game is an unusual combination of positive and negative points. Points are gained for each unit of distance covered, each refuelling with ice, each mine or enemy ship destroyed, and for reaching your destination. Points are lost for each second of time passed, each collision with an asteroid, each ship in your fleet lost, and each mine allowed to explode. Most players will have to endure at least a few games in which their final point total is a humbling ·10,000 *points* or so before they start seeing positive scores. While the scoring is unusual, the fact that this game will adjust its own difficulty level to the player's skill is definitely unique. To some extent, the player has continuous control of the difficulty level by adjusting the velocity of the spaceship during play, but the game will become increasingly difficult on its own if a skilled player is gaining points quickly. However, the difficulty will not escalate quickly for the less skilled player, making for a less frustrating experience.

Impressive Game

The first-person perspective from the cockpit gives a good feeling of realism to BLOCKADE RUNNER, and the sound effects are well done, too. We were quite impressed with this game initially, and we came to like it even better when we had played it enough to become fairly skilled. (Our first positive score was cause for celebration!) There's enough complexity to satisfy even the most skilled of players, but the game can be managed by less experienced space cadets, too. This one is a must for those who love space games. Recommended. (MSR $29.95)

BEAMRIDER (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★) is a new Intellivision-compatible title that has released without much fanfare; however, word of mouth will establish this as a solid hit! Touted as a dazzling duel between a solitary light-warrior (you) and legions of radiant enemy starships, this "vector-type" game is a truly original game. You begin by moving through a space station's hyperspace door into the first light-sector where enemy starships glimmer far in the distance. They begin their assault on you by sliding along both vertical and horizontal lightbars. Your assault is easy at first while the enemy is not firing; however, that doesn't last long. They begin sending red laser bolts down the vertical beams. You must avoid those red beams, all the while firing your lariats of laser fire at the enemy. When all fifteen enemy craft in the sector have been destroyed, a huge transport cruises across the top of the beams. You must destroy it using one of three solar torpedoes, but you must avoid and outsmart the droves of green, gleaming "blockers" while you shoot. You now move to the next sector, and more enemy starships. With each sector, the number and type of enemies increase. Avoid blobs of space debris, yellow "chirper" ships, green "blockers" and "bounce craft", blue "chargers", orange "trackers" and, finally, red "zig-zag" streakers. Throughout your venture, there are occasional yellow energy-forms which slide down a beam through a flurry of saucers. Let that form hit your ship, and you gain an additional life.

Truly Original

This is truly an original game for Intellivision owners, actually reminiscent of several arcade games. The gameplay is intense with quick reflexes of utmost importance. The game adapts very well to the Intellivision controller. Sound effects are excellent from the opening when you enter the first light-sector to the sound of a crescendo which had us mesmerized. The sounds of your laser lariat were very realistic also. The vector-type graphics work extremely well, and, typical of most Activision games, the colors are vibrant and varied. Designer Dave Rolfe has come up with an excellent addition to any Intellivision library.
Recommended (MSR $34.95)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..ATARI 5200-COMPATIBLE

ASTRO CHASE (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ½) is identical to the cartridge version of this game for the Atari computers, which was reviewed last month. This is one of those games that is extremely impressive when you first plug in the cartridge, because the graphics are gorgeous. But the basic theme is a familiar one—you are Earth's last defense against the evil Megardian Empire, which has surrounded our galaxy with a huge force field and planted 16 Mega Mines in space. The mines are gradually drawn inward by Earth's gravity, so all must be shot down to save Earth from destruction. The Megardians also command an armada of eight types of attack craft. These can be shot or rammed (if your ship's shields are activated). In addition to destroying mines and enemy spacecraft, you must keep an eye on your energy level, which is depleted by flying, firing, and bumping into "hot stars," planets or the force field. (There are energy generators at the four corners of the galaxy for replenishing your supplies.) The most unusual feature of this game is the ability to fire in one direction while your ship flies in another—"Single Thrust Propulsion." This is accomplished by establishing the direction of flight with the joystick, then holding the firing button down to cause the direction of firing to come under joystick control.

Plenty of Challenge

There's do doubt that this is one of the prettiest games you've seen on your Atari 5200. From the game's opening cartoon depicting your spaceman's ascent to his saucer and takeoff into space, to the 10-screen battle scene that scrolls omni-directionally and offers spectacular renditions of the planets, this is a dazzler. You even get classy music (Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*), which can be turned off, if desired. The game offers plenty of challenge, with 34 skill levels and some very persistent enemies. Those who love space shoot-outs will want this game, especially to experiment with the freedom of Single-Thrust Propulsion.
Recommended. (MSR approx. $45.00)

Q*BERT (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★) is programmed identically to the version for the Atari computers. (See review in this issue's *Computer Entertainer*.) In order to move Q*bert around the pyramid, you must hold down the firing button as you manipulate the joystick. This procedure seems to work well, and we had no trouble with the controllers on this game. Recommended. (MSR approx. $45.00)

STAR TREK (★ ★ ★ ½ / ★ ★ ★ ½) is programmed identically to the version for Atari computers (see review in this issue's *Computer Entertainer*). "Combat Control Panel" overlays are not supplied with this version. The only differences in play action are created by the lack of self-centering controllers for this system, creating a minor handicap in this game.
Recommended. (MSR approx. $35.00)

ACTIVISION WILL PRODUCE FOR 5200

Activision will release conversions of RIVER RAID and KABOOM for the Atari 5200, hopefully in time for Christmas! The two games will retail for $34.95 each and hint at the possibility of more 5200 and possible ColecoVision software in 1984.

OOPS!!!

A gremlin got into our last issue and did a little unauthorized rearranging of reviews! The review of the Astrocade game, SOLAR CONQUEROR, which appeared on page 84, should have ended with the second paragraph and the word "Recommended." The third paragraph, titled "Superb Detail," is actually the last portion of a review of FROGGER by Starpath for the Supercharger. The complete review of FROGGER appears in this issue. Our apologies for the confusion.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..VECTREX

SPIKE (★ ★ ½ / ★ ★ ★) is the first "talking" Vectrex utilizing the built-in nnnce synthesizer. The premise has the heroine, Molly, kidnapped by the evil Spud and only Spike can save her by navigating three catwalks connected by a moveable ladder. In order to rescue Molly, you must manuever Spike to pick up the key to the cell and get him to the top of the catwak using the ladders, which you control with one of your buttons. After you successfully reach the top of the first set of catwalks, there are additional dangers beginning in the next round. Birds and Bouncers go after Spike and you must use your buttons to destroy the enemies with your powerful kick. As you reach the higher levels of the game, the catwalks will change each time Spike destroys a Bouncer or Bird.

Just For Kids

This game is definitely geared for kids, and it is cute. Adults and accomplished game players will master the game fairly quickly. The addition of the voice is not integral to the gameplay, but adds a touch of humor with Molly's "Help Spike" and "EEK," to Spike's "Darn It", when he falls off the catwalks. The vector graphics are not as good as some of their earlier games. All in all, it's a game worth taking a look at, especially for the upcoming gift giving season for the kids. Young girls will probably especially enjoy this one.

STAR CASTLE (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) is the latest space adventure for Vectrex owners and puts you in command of a highly maneuverable star cruiser. Your mission (should you choose to accept it) is to destroy the powerful and deadly Energy Cannon which is shielded by three revolving octagonal walls in the center of the screen. You must attempt to destroy sections of the Castle's walls in order to give you a direct line of fire at the Cannon. At the same time, you must avoid or destroy the outer wall's energy bombs and the Cannon's fireballs. You are provided with five star cruisers which shoot missiles in bursts of four at a time. If you bump into one of the Castle walls, your cruiser will bounce off in the opposite direction. You have a thrust capability with one of your buttons which will help you escape the enery bombs and fireballs.

Great Maneuverability

The Star Cruisers enjoy tremendous maneuverability and thrust power, which allows you to be an aggressive fighter and move quickly out of the way. We felt as though we could enter hyperspace just like the Starship Enterprise with the fast movement of our ship. Fast reflexes are absolutely essential! It is very tough to penetrate the Castle walls and even get a chance to fire missiles at the Energy Cannon. This is a good game for space fans
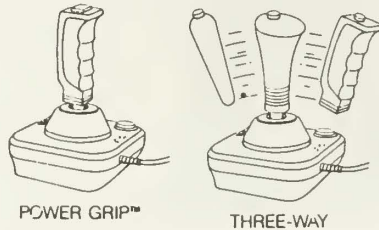Recommended

LIGHT PEN PACKAGED WITH ART MASTER is the first peripheral to be made available for Vectrex owners and it can provide hours of fun for the entire family. The light pen, which can only be used in conjunction with special Light Pen cartridges, allows you to sketch, connect the dots, and animate. Even if you are the most novice of artists, you can have fun playing with shapes. For the budding animator, there is a Animation mode whereby you can draw a figure, and move on to the next frame (to a total of nine frames), to begin animating your basic figure. In each of the additional frames, you can call up a "shadow" of the previous frame. Once you've finished your creation, aim your light pen over "Play", and you can see your drawing in motion. In this play mode, you can speed up or slow down the animation. The possibilities are virtually endless! The only thing we didn't care for was we have become used to the colorful overlays for the Vectrex games. Due to the nature of the light pen, there are no overlays so your drawings will simply be white on a black screen. Vectrex has promised additional cartridges for the Light Pen in the first quarter of 1984.

The **POWER GRIP JOYSTICK** and **THREE-WAY JOYSTICK DELUXE** are the newest products from this respected manufacturer of high-quality video game controllers. Like their previous products, these joysticks are directly compatible with the Atari 2600 and equivalents, plus Atari and Commodore home computers. The Power Grip Joystick features an ergonomically designed grip handle that is extremely comfortable to hold. A switch on the base allows the player to choose between the round firing button on the base and the squarish one on top of the stick. The Three-Way Joystick Deluxe comes with three interchangeable grips—one for every game player's preference. One is similar to the Power Grip's handle, with its smooth finish and indentations for the fingers. The second handle is a smooth, tapered grip-handle that flares at the top, and the third is a slightly textured bat-handle. The Joystick Deluxe also has two firing buttons, but the switch on the base operates differently from other Wico models. The F/1 position allows firing with the top button only, while the F/2 position allows simultaneous use of both base and top firing buttons. (If one finger gets tired, just switch to the other one!) Both the Power Grip and Deluxe sticks have steel shafts, and internal construction is leaf assembly for long wear. (It's almost impossible to break or wear out a Wico joystick.) The base on both has four rubber feet to keep the joystick steady if you prefer table-top to hand-held use.
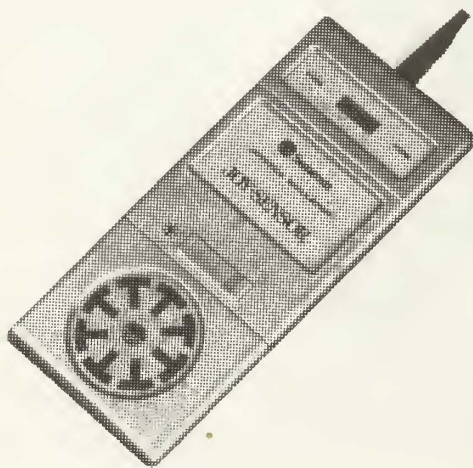
WICO
COMMAND
CONTROL™

POWER GRIP™   THREE-WAY

Both Are Sensitive and Responsive

These two new members of the Command Control line from Wico are essentially the same as earlier models in color and construction. The main reason for purchasing either would be a preference for a particular type of handle. In use, we found both joysticks quite sensitive and responsive, giving the solid feel so typical of joysticks by Wico. We liked the Power Grip instantly, because the handle felt as if it were made just for us. (That's what ergonomic design is all about!) It felt particularly good on flying simulation games. The three handles for the Deluxe model were also very comfortable, but we found that the handles had a tendency to slide up the shaft slightly when we became very enthusiastic in the middle of a game. We never noticed it before, but we obviously have a tendency to pull up on the joystick in heated moments. This problem only occurred when we were holding the joystick base in one hand and controlling with the other. When we switched to table-top use of the joystick, the handles stayed right where they should. We recommend the Power Grip Joystick, but suggest that you try out the Three-Way Joystick Deluxe before deciding to purchase one.
(MSR $29.95 Power Grip Joystick; $32.95 Three-Way Joystick Deluxe)

PROSTICK ACCELERATOR from **Newport Controls** is a plug-in firing accelerator module compatible with Atari 2600 and equivalents, ColecoVision (games with only one firing function), and Atari and Commodore home computers. The Accelerator is easily plugged into your system's joystick port, and then the joystick is plugged into it. The unit is equipped with a small knob which can be adjusted to produce anything from a single shot (allowing the software program to behave exactly as it was designed) to maximum rate of continuous firing, even if the game was not programmed for continuous firing. Thanks to the "single shot" setting, the Prostick Accelerator can be left in place permanently. The player can then choose the ideal firing rate for each game by simply turning the knob. This little gadget does wonders for that cramped firing finger in games such as *Zaxxon*, *Asteroids*, *Atlantis*, *Defender*, and others. (Scores tend to increase, too.) As a rule, firing range will decrease with the increased rate of firing. A little experimentation with your own library will give you ideal firing settings for those games that always leave you tired after a long playing session. Once you've used the Prostick Accelerator you'll wonder how you ever got along without it! Recommended. (MSR $12.95)

SUNCOM INTRODUCES NEW PRODUCTS

Suncom, the makers of the Starfighter and Slik Stik joysticks, are beginning shipments on new joystick products. The first product, JOY SENSOR, is a touch-sensitive joystick simulator which controls the game screen by means of two touch-sensor panels, one for direction control and one for firing. The sensor surfaces are actuated with the lightest force available to allow the user to control his game with great dexterity. Rapid-fire will also be built-in. Two versions will be available. One for the Atari 2600 and compatibles (MSR $34.95) and the other for ColecoVision (MSR $36.95). A snap-on joystick height extender for ColecoVision has also begun shipment, called the SNAPPER (MSR $5.95)

GET FIT WHILE GAMING

Suncom has also just shipped the Aerobics Joystick (MSR $39.95) which is engineered as an interface to be installed between most standard stationary exercise bicycles and an Atari 2600. We're told it works best with a game such as ENDURO or POLE POSITION, where the pedalling of the exercycle causes the car to move forward. The faster you pedal, the faster the car travels.

Look for reviews of these products in next month's edition of The Video Game Update.

ATARI HITS FOR EVERYONE!

We heard the first whispers of some very exciting news in April, and we reported in our May issue that Atari would be producing software for systems other than their own. Recently we spoke with Fred Simon, Senior Vice President of Software Marketing at Atari, and he answered all of our questions about the new project.

ATARISOFT, the new division headed by Mr. Simon, is a publishing company formed in May of this year for the express purpose of making available "proven hits" to owners of other than Atari systems. (Mr. Simon, being loyal to Atari in the extreme, kept telling us that Atarisoft would be helping those who made a "mistake" when they purchased their systems!) Atarisoft is committed to producing software for *any* system with an installed base of 500,000 or more units, and titles will include Atari's own proven hits plus licensing arrangements with other software companies for translation of their major hits.

Atari Games for Seven Systems

According to Fred Simon, seven systems will be supported by Atarisoft: ColecoVision, Intellivision, T.I. 99/4A, Commodore 64 and VIC-20 (cartridge format), plus Apple II and IBM PC (diskette format). To answer the question uppermost in your minds—tell us which games!— owners of the computers mentioned can look forward to seven releases between now and the end of 1983: *PAC-MAN, CENTIPEDE, DEFENDER, DIG DUG, DONKEY KONG, STARGATE* and *ROBOTRON*. In cartridge format, these games will retail for $44.95; the diskette versions will be available for $34.95. In addition to these titles, owners of the T.I. 99/4A can look forward to Atarisoft games licensed from Synapse Software: *SHAMUS, PROTECTOR, PICNIC PARANOIA* and *SLIME* in cartridge format for $39.95 each.

Atarisoft's first games for ColecoVision and Intellivision are scheduled for shipment the first part of November, and versions of *CENTIPEDE* and *DEFENDER* will be available for both systems. In addition, *PAC-MAN* for Intellivision and *GALAXIAN* for ColecoVision are scheduled. (Cartridges for ColecoVision and Intellivision will retail for approximately $40.00.)

Atarisoft Impact on 5200 Sales

We've been asked by several readers who own ColecoVision and/or the Atari 5200 why Atari would produce games for ColecoVision when this might hurt sales of the Atari 5200. We posed the question to Mr. Simon, and he feels that Atarisoft games for ColecoVision will have no impact on sales of the Atari 5200. As he explains it, many new and exciting titles will be made available for the Atari 5200 on a continuing basis, and Atarisoft will be dealing with only the older, proven titles for non-Atari systems. Anyone who wants to play *POLE POSITION* or *JUNGLE HUNT* will have to play them on an Atari system. According to Mr. Simon, the 5200 will continue to have plenty of new games that simply won't be available to the ColecoVision owner.

We delved into the topic of licensing, which is an area of confusion for many consumers, especially when they see a single title, such as *DONKEY KONG*, licensed to more than one company (Atari and Coleco, in this case). Simon explained that most of the licenses held by Atari, such as *DEFENDER, ROBOTRON* and *PAC-MAN* will allow Atarisoft to produce these titles for any home game or computer system. *DONKEY KONG* and *DONKEY KONG JR.* are special cases, because Atari has the license for computer game adaptations of these titles, while Coleco can produce them for home game systems. As he pointed out, Atari has the license to produce all home adaptations of the third game in this series, *MARIO BROTHERS*.

Atarisoft Plans for 1984

Now that we know all about Atarisoft's big plans for the balance of 1983, we tried to find out what they have in store for us in 1984. While Mr. Simon was able to tell us that Atarisoft plans about thirty releases for seven different systems—a total of over 200 releases—he couldn't be specific about titles at this time. He did tell us that Atarisoft plans more than just entertainment software. In the second quarter of 1984, we should see the first releases of home management and productivity software from this publisher.

Fred Simon is obviously very proud of the software to be released by Atarisoft. He feels that the division will be off to an extremely strong start because of the tremendous name recognition of both Atari itself and the game titles. He said that even those who made a "mistake" in their original hardware purchase will now be able to play some of the best games available. These people have been living without these Atari games until now, but they are the games people want to be able to play. To all of you who own any of the seven systems—it won't be long before you, too, can play an Atari game!

(Editor's Note: we expect to have the first reviews of Atarisoft games ready for the November issue of this newsletter.)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING.   APPLE-COMPATIBLE

AXIS ASSASSIN (★ ★ ★ ½ / ★ ★ ★) from **Electronic Arts** is a fast-moving battle against the army of the Master Arachnid. You begin your battle on various Grids (the Web Sweeps) which get more and more difficult. You can move forward and backward, up and down the Grid Corridors, until you run into a Web. You must blast Webs out of the way before you can go through them. Keep blasting away as Hunters, Spinners, Drones, and Spores come at you intermintently, spinning webs that can lock you in and anniliate you. As you thrust from the Grid (if you've survived), fire a Pulse Bomb which takes you through free space to the Arachnid's Nest. Here you try to rescue an extra life, without getting killed by the Master Arachnid or his army. Because it is free space, your ship will drift as you move about so you must move carefully. When you leave the Nest, it's on to the next Web Sweep Grid and more fighting. There are twenty different Grid shapes in five different zones. Ten of the twenty grids are selectable and there are three difficulty levels. If you survive twenty Web Sweeps, you will be elevated to Zone 2. The firefights intensify with each successive one you penetrate.

Three-Dimensional Graphics

The vector-type graphics are three-dimensional and very colorful. Gameplay is tough and relentless, with fast reflexes the key to survival. We really enjoyed the 3-dimensional feel and thrusting into free space. It gives you the sense of two, very different games. Electronic Arts once again provides extremely nice packaging with some playing tips from designer John Field. This would make a good addition to anyone's Apple library. Atari computer and Commodore 64 conversions are planned for the Fall.
Recommended. (MSR approx. $40)

HARD HAT MACK (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ½) is another in the climbing genre, and it's a tough one! Here you are Mack, a working class hero who has to finish the building in spite of vandals, government regulations, gravity, and time. On the first level, you must finish the steelwork by putting in girders and riveting them together. What seems like an easy task is far from it! Osha, your enemy, and vandals do their very best to stop your progress. This first level is one of the hardest first levels we've had to deal with on a climbing game! On the second level, you must collect tool boxes by jumping on the conveyor, then to the girder on the hoist. You must time your leaps carefully to the upper floors to collect additional bonus items on your way to the tool boxes. You finish the second level by timing your ride to the top floor conveyor so the big magnet will pick you up. In the third level, grab the steel blocks and drop them through the holes in the girders into the rivet machine, all the while watching out for the exposed wiring and falling into the rivet machines. If you can make it through this level, there are more awaiting you, with more and more perils on each one!

Another Winner

We've looked at several of the games from this new company, and they continue to put out good quality product. Graphically, this one looks great, with plenty of animation and bright colors. Gameplay is very tough and will challenge the most seasoned climbing expert. We found ourselves playing this one over and over again trying to do "just a little better" than the last time! Coming soon for your Atari computers and Commodore 64. (48K disk)
Recommended (MSR approx $40)

Q*BERT (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★) is the first version of the Gottlieb **PARKER BROTHERS** arcade hit for a home computer system, and fans of the coin-op will definitely want this one for their collection. One or two can play, controlling the diagonal moves of the funny orange creature with the tubular nose as he hops around a pyramid of cubes to change the colors of the cube tops. His task is complicated by an odd assortment of balls and other creatures: red or purple balls, Coily the Snake, Ugg and Wrong Way will eliminate a Q*bert on contact. (Any of these can be eluded by hopping Q*bert onto a Flying Disc for magical transportation to the top of the pyramid; if Coily can be lured to follow, he'll be eliminated and you'll earn bonus points.) Sam changes cube colors, making extra work for Q*bert, but he can be stopped by running Q*bert into him. There is a green ball, too, but running Q*bert into it is helpful, since everything but Q*bert will freeze for a few moments of unmolested color-changing. Anytime a Q*bert is eliminated by running into something or inadvertently hopping off the edge of the pyramid, he stops and curses. (A cartoon-like bubble full of assorted punctuation marks appears above his head.) The game consists of nine levels of four rounds (pyramids) each. The game ends once you've lost your three, four or five Q*berts, depending on the game variation chosen.

Excellent Adaptation

Of all the Q*BERT adaptations we've reviewed so far, this one has the most graphic detail, even to the point that Q*bert can be seen falling *behind* the pyramid whenever he hops over the edge. The perspective of this version is a bit different from the first three (for Atari 2600, Intellivision and ColecoVision) in that the view of the pyramid is from slightly above, rather than directly in front of it. As with the other versions, the joystick is held at an angle: the original up-down-right-left directions then become diagonals. We had a few control problems until we became accustomed to this arrangement, but a little practice was all we needed. We found that a short-throw joystick was much easier to use and more accurate than a long-throw model with this game. We really liked the ability to activate a pause in the game by pressing the joystick firing button. This gave us the opportunity to work on strategy in tight spots when several creatures were about to converge on Q*bert. This is an excellent adaptation of the arcade game that Q*BERT fans will want to own. (8K Cartridge) Recommended. (MSR approx. $45.00)

STAR LEAGUE BASEBALL (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★½) is the latest *GAMESTAR* sports entry from Gamestar and it ranks right up there as one of the best video baseball games available! This version opens with the American flag flying above the message board. Pick your pitcher (you have the choice of three); pick your team (for liners or sluggers); whether you wish to play with a friend or against the computer in a one-player version (which will provide you one tough game); and the national anthem begins. On defense, your pitcher has 8 pitches to choose from, based on the direction of the joystick. The same joystick will provide throwing direction for your fielders when the opposition hits the ball. If the ball is hit and there's a shadow, it's a fly ball and, if you move quickly enough, you can get under it and put the batter out. Without the shadow, the ball is a grounder, so quick fielding is the key. As the batter, you can swing, take, or try a bunt. Hit the ball and your player automatically runs to first base. To move him further, you must work with the joystick. The joystick will always control your lead runner. If that runner gets home, control switches to the next lead runner. You better pay attention as it's easy to wander off base (if you're playing against the computer, you can be sure the pitcher will throw your runner out!)

The Real Thing

From the unfurling of the flag to the overview of the stadium, the graphics are really terrific! Gamestar has even built in a trivia quiz on the message board between one inning, National and American league scores, and the day's attendance! You get a real 3-dimensional feel with the ball's shadow, including fouls into the stands! The music accompaniment is true to the real thing. Gameplay is very good with only a small complaint. We found, when fielding a ball and throwing it to the infield, the speed of the throw on the slow side, making it difficult to get the runner out.

Gamestar vs. Coleco Super Action

It was inevitable that our resident sports addict compare this to Coleco's Super Action Baseball (reviewed last month). Obviously, the two systems are quite different, but they are both good versions of baseball. The Super Action Controller for the ColecoVision baseball allows much more control over the entire team, which is a major plus. We would have to lean towards ColecoVision for gameplay. Gamestar's version has a major advantage in that it can be played as a one-player game. It also has lots of little "extras", like the ability to change pitchers in the seventh inning, which adds an interesting dimension to the game. In any event, baseball fans everywhere now have a couple of terrific options to extend the season beyond the upcoming World Series! (32K Disk) Recommended (MSR $31.95)

A.E. (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★½) offers a scenario that could be straight from **Brøderbund Software** a science fiction movie—the A.E., designed as a pollution-fighting robot, has escaped to run amok in the universe. This pest of the electronic age must be eradicated, and it's all up to you! A.E. is the Japanese word for "ray," as in Manta Ray or Sting Ray, and whole formations of the white rays swoop and swirl all over the screen while you attempt to destroy them with your anti-A.E. blaster missiles. Your joystick or paddle controls a horizontally mobile launcher at the bottom of the screen. Pressing the firing button launches a missile, and releasing the button detonates the missile, so you have control over the exact placement of each blast. In order to push the A.E.'s farther out into the cosmos, you must make three "perfect attacks" to advance from level to level. (A perfect attack means that you destroy every A.E. in a wave before they all disappear.) There are five levels of play, beginning with a futuristic street scene in which the waves of A.E.'s stay in formation. Later waves consist of various outer space scenes, and the A.E. formations have a greater tendency to break up at the higher levels.

Impressive Graphics

The graphics in A.E. are very impressive, offering finely-detailed scenery and gracefully moving, bird-like A.E.'s. We worked at advancing to the second level, so we could see what surprises the designer had in store for us. Unfortunately, level two was just like level one with a scene change. We had moved from the futuristic street to space, with two large planets occupying much of the screen. Until you reach the fourth level when the A.E. waves break formation, the play action remains similar from level to level. All the beautiful scenery is just background, contributing nothing to play action. Once we had played for a while, we felt that we were playing a very pretty invasion game in which the invaders have some attractive movement patterns—but still just another invasion game. A.E. is dazzling in appearance, and the swooping moves are nice, but this won't be enough to hold most gamers' interest over a long period of time. (48K Disk) Not recommended. (MSR $34.95)

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

POOYAN (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ½) is a translation of the Konami coin-op, surely one of the silliest games around! The word "Pooyan" means "piglet" in Japanese, and you play the mama trying to protect her piglets from the hungry wolves who cling to helium balloons, float down from the treetops and attack the piglets' home and family. The nasty wolves throw deadly acorns at mama and her babies as they float downward. Mama has nothing more than a bow and arrow to defend her lair as she travels up and down the cliff beside her piglets' home in a basket. But she has one secret weapon: a chunk of meat which can cause one or more hungry wolves to release their balloons in a futile attempt to grab it—*if* it is thrown just right! In the meantime, mama must dodge the acorns because she can fall out of her basket and lose a life if she's hit. But don't let the wolves float to the bottom of the cliff! The first four wolves that reach the ground safely will climb one of the ladders behind mama's basket., From this position, they can bite her and make her topple out of her basket. If you are able to shoot the balloons of 32 wolves with mama's arrows, it's on to the next scene where the wolves float up from their lair to a cliff topped with a giant rock. If you allow too many wolves to reach the top of the cliff, they will push the rock right on top of the mama pig. When you conquer most of the 40 wolves, a Boss Wolf appears, holding a blue balloon. If he makes it to the top, five more wolves appear. The only ways you can get rid of the Boss Wolf is to hit him with the meat or hit his balloon several times with your arrows. There are two bonus scenes if you reach certain scoring levels.

Cute For Kids

This game is very cute for kids, although many adults will (secretly) enjoy it also. Game play is very simple, but highly addictive. The overall look of the game is very attractive—an excellent translation of the arcade game. We thought the floating balloons were particularly colorful, and the musical background adds to the fun of the game. If you like the coin-op, you'll want to add this one to your library. (32K Disk, Cassette packaged together.) Recommended. (MSR $29.95)

ZEPPELIN (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★ ★) has a notation on its packaging which says "Instant Hit", and we agree!! You are pilot of a Zeppelin, and your mission is to explore 250 rooms of an underground cavern, locate the dynamite, and blow up the enemy lair on each of seven levels. You manuever your zeppelin through the caverns (no easy task), shooting enemy zeppelins, balloons, avoiding falling rocks and cavern walls, and shooting your way through barriers to other sections of the cavern. Several strategies come into play, right from the beginning when you pick up a key for later use to open up new areas of the caverns. Additional lives (you start with four), can be picked up along the way by finding the Life Markers. There are switches (they look just like light switches) throughout the caverns, all with specific functions such as turning off enemy balloons and zeppelins. Guarding some of the switches are Hamburger Creatures which can be momentarily lured away from their posts by giant hamburgers you can pick up along the way. One of the trickiest elements are the periodic earthquakes with their falling debris. It will take you a good bit of practice to safely get through earthquake zones. If you've survived all the obstacles, you will still have to pick up the TNT, take it to the room with the Plunger and detonate your bomb to gain access to the next level where you will encounter more difficult perils.

First-rate Game!

This is a very challenging game which we found ourselves playing hour after hour, trying to master the various caverns, the floating sensation of the Zeppelin, and all the perils. We found ourselves dreading an earthquake zone as it takes real skill to make it through without losing at least one ship. The shaking sensation of the earthquake is absolutely terrific! Strategically, we were constantly trying different switch positions to make our journey easier. Graphically, the game is stunning with vibrant colors, different cavern patterns (all beautiful), and detailed airships. It was several games before we could even enjoy the breathtaking caverns, as we tried (sometimes in vain) to survive the perils. Zeppelin will provide endless hours of entertainment to the most skilled of game players! (32K Disk, Cassette. 16K Cartridge available soon) Recommended. (MSR $34.95)

DRELBS (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★) is one of those games that quickly becomes totally addictive. You begin as a Drelb in the center of the Drelbish kingdom, depicted as flip grid. While moving around the grid, you will note your movement causes gates to shift position 90 degrees. It's your task to race around the grid, closing off as many of the squares as possible. Just as you try and seal the squares, you find the Trollaboars are undoing your good work. They can't build squares, only destroy them. They are not your only concern, however. The Gorgolytes will also try and appear on the grid by randomly showing their ugly faces, in completed squares. Stay away from them. They cannot harm you; however, they will destroy the boxes in which they appear. Occasionally, the Mystery Lady appears in one of the Gargolyte squares. If you can race to that square and grab a kiss from her, you will jump to a bonus screen. Try to reach the magical diamond when it appears. Pass over it (before it disappears) and they automatically open a drelbish window into the dark corridor for you. The only other way to reach the dark corridor is by closing off all the possible squares and hopping quickly onto a Drelbish Window. Be quick though, as we found ourselves often hopping right into a Gorgolyte! Once you reach the Drelbish Window and the Dark Corridor, it's up to you to free all the enslaved Drelbs; the Gorgolytes with relentlessly pursue you. If you are successful, you will be transported to a bonus screen before returning to the grid and more hazards than ever!

Bet You Can't Walk Away From It!

This is definitely one of the more addictive games we've played. We whipped around the grid trying to close squares as fast as possible, all the time being pursued by the Trollaboars and screwhead tanks who control the perimeter of the screen. The second screen, the Dark Corridor, had a totally different feel to it as we sailed through black space saving Drelbs. The graphic detail is very good with the squares very colorful when you close them. The Drelbish Windows and Gargolytes are also very striking looking. This one is just good fun! (32K Disk; also available on 16K cassette) Recommended (MSR $34.95)

IN BRIEF...

★ Activision's designers have been working overtime in finishing new titles not expected until much later! Gary Kitchen's 8K PRESSURE COOKER for the 2600 will be available later this month; and WORM WOMPER, for Intellivision, will ship in November.

★ In addition to the ColecoVision version of WAR GAMES planned for the fourth quarter, Coleco also plans an Adam version of the same title in 1984.

★ Sega, in spite of the fact that Gulf & Western sold them to Bally (see last month), has told us everything is "straight ahead" with new product. In fact, they are getting ready for a multi-system release of Star Trek (see reviews elsewhere in this issue), with promised multi-system releases of Buck Rogers and Congo Bongo before Christmas. Due to their licensing agreement, they will not be making product for ColecoVision (Coleco has the option of translating Sega games for its own format, ala the promised release of Buck Rogers. However, Star Trekkies will not, at least for the forseeable future, be able to play Star Trek on their ColecoVision)

★ ZEPPELIN RESCUE, from Computer Software Assoc., is brand new for the Commodore 64 and features a life-saving mission in a dirigible which must navigate through a congested city skyline.

Worldwide Home Computer Sales, 1980-1982 (thousand units)			
Price	1980	1981	1982
$500 and above	100	120	170
$200-$499	--	150	1,220
$199 or less	25	50	1,165(a)
Total	125	320	2,555
Installed base	150	470	3,025

(a)About 800,000, or 69%, were $100 or less.

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CRITICALLY SPEAKING..ATARI COMPUTERS

ORC ATTACK (★ ★ ½ / ★ ½) pits you against the Orc siege as they attempt to climb the walls of the castle you are protecting. You must use rocks, oil, and swords as the Orcs relentlessly place ladders against the wall and climb up after you. You must race along the battlement dropping rocks from the open spaces and kill as many Orcs as possible. If you have time to pour boiling oil over the attacking Orcs, all the Orcs in that assault will be killed and it's on to the next round. All the dead Orcs will be stacked on the bottom of the screen for your point total. Any Orc who reaches the top of his scaling ladder will attack you with his dagger. To defend yourself, you must use your sword to injure or kill the enemy. If the enemy manages to stay at the top of his ladder without your killing him, it becomes easier for him to injure or kill you.

Much Too Violent

While there are enough games where your mission is to kill the enemy, we feel Orc Attack is far too graphically violent, from the pyramid of dead Orc bodies to the killing of your character by the Orcs. We found the beheading totally revolting and would strongly urge caution to parents before putting this game into the family's library. We did not find the gameplay good enough to overcome our strong concern regarding the violence. (Cartridge) Not Recommended (MSR $39.95)

MAJOR LEAGUE HOCKEY (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) brings the winter sport into game player's living rooms in a realistic version which will provide hours of entertainment for one to four players. Start with a face-off in the center of the ice. You gain control of a player by pressing the trigger on your joystick. You can alternate control between the two players nearest the puck by repeatedly pressing the fire button. When the player you are controlling is in possession of the puck, you can press the trigger to shoot or pass to another player. To take control of the puck, you must guide your player over it or, if an opposing player has it, you can check the player and take control in a similar manner. As in the real thing, you cannot pass over two lines (icing the puck) and no attacking player can cross the opposing team's blue line ahead of the puck. The game has three periods, with the option of various time periods which can be set by the player. The skating rink is almost three times as wide as the screen, so the screen will scroll horizontally to follow the puck.

Realistic Feel

This version is true to the real thing and give you the opportunity to have a spirited game of hockey in your living room. The players glide across the ice, giving the feeling that you are, indeed, skating. The scrolling effect works well and, overall, worthy of consideration to anyone who enjoys the game of hockey. (16K cartridge) Recommended (MSR $39.95)

DISCWASHER INTRODUCES INNOVATIVE PORT EXPANDER FOR APPLE

Discwasher is getting ready to introduce the CALLING FOUR expansion peripheral for Apple computers which will allow the user to plug in four different controllers simultaneously! The obvious advantage will be the fact that you will not have to continuously go into your computer to plug and unplug various devices such as joysticks, trackballs, mouse, etc. The peripheral also features an LED display indicating which of the four ports is in use. Suggested retail will be $69.95.

AT&T AND COLECO HOOK-UP

AT&T and Coleco have formed an agreement to develop an entertainment service via existing telephone lines and a special AT&T/Coleco modem. Planned to interface with any existing home computer or game system, the companies plan to make the service available on a subscription basis sometime in 1984. In addition to entertainment software, this service will open up the ability to involve the player in interactive and strategy games.

STAR TREK (★ ★ ★ ½ / ★ ★ ★ ½) is based on Sega's own arcade hit, and it's a dream-come-true for all Trekkies who play video games. You take the controls of the starship, USS Enterprise, and attempt to save the Federation from their most powerful enemy, NOMAD. Along the way, you'll battle the Klingons and Anti-Matter Saucers, dock with starbases, and pilot your craft through asteroid fields and meteor showers. Alas, it's only a training mission! (You didn't think Captain Kirk would relinquish his command to someone who doesn't have pointy ears, did you?)

The screen display is divided into three sections: gauges (score, shields, photon torpedoes and warp drives), radar scanner, and the view from the bridge of the Enterprise. Joystick controls allow you to turn the starship clockwise or counterclockwise, thrust, fire photon torpedoes (limited quantities), fire phasers, and engage the warp drives. (A "Combat Control Panel" overlay for your joystick is included with the game.) There are 10 Sectors (skill levels), each consisting of two rounds of Klingon Encounter, a round of asteroid field or meteor shower, another two rounds with the Klingons, and then the show-down with NOMAD and its deadly missiles and mines. In each round, you may dock once with a starbase to repair damage to your starship. The object, of course, is to make space safe for the members of the Federation by destroying all enemies. The destruction of NOMAD results in a colorful screen display and a brief STAR TREK musical theme, then it's on to the next Sector and more difficult battles.

A Delightful Game

As Sega says on the package, "You've seen Star Trek on your TV set before, but never like this..." The immensely popular TV series fueled a lot of fascination with space travel, and its vocabulary has crept into many another video game. Now we have the real thing to control with our very own joysticks! STAR TREK is a delightful game, from its use of the familiar musical themes to the equally familiar shapes of the Klingon attackers. It's a game no self-respecting Star Trek fan will want to be without! (Cartridge) Recommended. (MSR approx. $35.00)

EPYX INTRODUCES "PREVIEW DISK"

Epyx has come up with an interesting promotion for owners of Atari computers. You will be able to purchase a "preview disk" directly from Epyx for $2.50 which will contain segments of GATEWAY TO APSHAI, JUMPMAN JR., PITSTOP, SEAWOLF, and GUNFIGHT, where you will actually be able to try a key segment of each game on this disk before deciding to purchase. The price of the disk will then be refunded in full with proof of purchase from any one of the games on the disk, AND you can keep the disk! This is the type of smart marketing which could catch on more and more and sell additional games! For additional information, contact EPYX at 1043 Kiel Court, Sunnyvale, CA 94089.

COLECO AND SCHOLASTIC JOIN FORCES

Coleco and Scholastic Inc will join forces to publish a consumer magazine about Coleco's ADAM Family Computer System. The publication, to be entitled ADAM FAMILY COMPUTING MAGAZINE, will be developed by the staff of Family Computing Magazine and will be published four times a year. A one-year free subscription will be available to any purchaser of the ADAM system and will also be available on your local newsstand. No date has been announced for the premiere issue.

CREEPY CORRIDORS (★ ★ ½ / ★ ★ ★) finds you crawling through corridors in search of diamonds and magic doors. There are nine different corridor mazes with each containing diamonds you try to collect while critters come after you. You are able to shoot the critters and, once you clear the maze of diamonds or critters, a magic door appears which takes you to the next maze. Once you reach Level 5, skulls also appear. They cannot be killed, so you must race for the diamonds and gain access to the magic door and the next level.

Fun for Maze Fans

This is a very effective maze game, with enough challenges to provide hours of entertainment. Although the graphics are simple, the sound effects are quite good, including the sound when you pick up the diamonds and shoot the critters. Maze fans will enjoy the various mazes which start out as fairly easy to master, and get harder as you get to the higher levels. (Cartridge)
Recommended (MSR $33.50)

FOURTH ENCOUNTER (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) is based on the familiar theme of "Space Invaders," "Galaxian," and the like. The object of the game is simple—destroy the waves of aliens before they destroy you. You must dodge their missiles while they are firing at you by moving your ship. Beginning in Phase 4, you can move your ship up and down, as well as right and left.

Great Graphics

While the theme is familiar, the graphics are stunning in this version. The colors are vibrant; the play action is terrific as the aliens dance and dodge all over the screen. This is one tough space shoot 'em up and a worthy addition to any VIC-20 library (Cartridge). Recommended (MSR 39.95)

COMPUTER WAR (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) is based on the movie "Wargames" and combines strategy with fast and accurate shooting. The scenario is similar to the very popular summer movie in which a thermo-nuclear war is imminent, but the missiles were not launched by Russia. Someone has managed to get into the computer and activate a nuclear war simulation program. It's up to you to knock out the missiles in the computer's memory banks and crack the code to shut down the bases. When the race starts, the computer is at Defense Condition (DEFCON) 5, and decreases each time a missile base is activated. If it reaches 1, thermo-nuclear war ensues and the game ends. You begin by studying the map of North America to locate "attacking" missiles, which show as small blips. Then, decide which of the missiles pose the greatest threat and use the joystick to move the cursor over that missile. When you press the fire button, you will move to the second screen where you must track and shoot down the missile. There are markers on the side of the screen to help you find the missile. You're working against time as you make your shots count. When the missile is destroyed, you must match the codes of the left of the screen. The amount of time given to break the code decreases rapidly as the levels increase. Once you destroy all the missiles for that round and broken the last code, you receive a bonus and proceed to the next round.

Good Play

This game combines strategy, quick thinking, and fast and accurate shooting for an overall good game session. We were impressed with the amount of graphics and gameplay Thorn has packed into this VIC-20 version (it's already available for Atari computers). (Cart)
Recommended (MSR $39.95)

COMMODORE OFFERS INEXPENSIVE WORD PROCESSOR

Commodore is offering a brand new, full-featured wordprocessor for the Commodore 64 with a list price of under $50! EASY SCRIPT 64 includes features such as a Global/local "hunt and find" and "search and replace"; insert/delete characters; superscripts and subscripts; transfer of words and phrases; and more. In addition, this program is set to interface with EASY SPELL 64, a spelling dictionary containing up to 30,000 words (built-in 20,000 word vocabulary with the ability to add 10,000 words).

FUN WITH MUSIC (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) is a combination game and music learning experience. One facet is a musical chase game where you use the paddle controller to guide your drum major over the notes of DIXIE, while avoiding the crashing cymbals and a hungry dog nipping at your heels. Each time you cross the screen from left to right, you complete a level. Every level becomes more and more difficult as it starts at a faster tempo, and you have to reach more notes to finish that level. This musical chase game is not easy! The graphics are very cute, with drum major strutting across the screen trying to capture all the notes and the hungry dog running after you.

Compose Your Own Music

The second aspect of Fun With Music is the ability to compose your own song, including tempo and note duration values. You can program in one of the songs provided in the instruction manual, another favorite song, or write your own from scratch! You can save your newly created masterpiece to tape or disk. This is an excellent way to teach children music tones and general composition. The graphics for the composition mode are simple as a keyboard is displayed and the notes added in the correct places as you program them in. All in all, this is a worthwhile addition to the family library, as it's a very good introduction to music composition, with a challenging but fun game included. (cartridge)
Recommended (MSR $40.00)

STAR TREK (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ½) is similar to the version for Atari computers (see review in this issue's Computer Entertainer). Apparently due to limitations of this system, each Sector comprises five Klingon Encounters and one showdown with NOMAD. There are no trips through meteor showers or asteroid fields. This version of STAR TREK has much better graphics than usually seen on this system, and it's a great space game for Trekkies. (Cartridge)
Recommended. (MSR approx. $35.00)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..ASTROCADE-COMPATIBLE

COSMIC RAIDERS (★ ★ ★ ½ / ★ ★ ★ ½) is the better of the two new Astrocade releases, in our opinion. It's a horizontally scrolling game for one to four players in which you control a spaceship defending your planet against the Larkin force. Your spaceship skims the surface of the planet, firing at enemy fighters and attempting to destroy enemy bombs before they hit the planet's surface. Energy stars are scattered in space; fly through one and your ship gains a temporary shield of invincibility. (Extra energy stars are earned for each two enemy bombs destroyed.) A radar screen at the bottom of your picture lets you know where the enemy craft are and pinpoints the location of the energy stars. Enemy bombs are signalled by a whistling sound. Although the instruction booklet says the bombs are visible in red on the radar screen, we found them indistinguishable from the black dots which indicate your ship and the energy stars.

Explosion Effects Are Great

We really enjoyed COSMIC RAIDERS. At the lowest difficulty level, which is great for getting used to the game, enemy ships do not fire at you, and the difficulty does not escalate as you earn more points. At all other levels, the longer you can keep going, the more intense the battle. Enemy ships become more active, flying more evasive patterns and firing on your ship. There is more than enough challenge in this Defender-style game to keep even the most accomplished player happily involved for hours. Graphics are very good, offering quite a varied armada of enemy craft. The explosion effects are great—when you destroy several enemy ships in a row, the display will remind you of the night sky during a Fourth of July fireworks extravaganza!
Recommended.

MANY ROADS TO MURDER is an excellent follow-up to *MURDER, ANYONE?*, the award-winning first MysteryDisc from **Vidmax.** These two discs represent a new trend, interactive video, in which the owner of a laser disc player can go beyond being a passive viewer and become an active participant in the action on the screen. A word of caution: in order to play these games, you must own a top-of-the-line laser disc player with a wireless remote control (such as the Pioneer LD-1000, or equivalent). A basic unit without the remote feature cannot be used.

The object of *MANY ROADS TO MURDER* is to uncover the identity of the murderer, the motive, and the method of the crime. Set in the late 1930's, the approach is reminiscent of Mike Hammer investigating an Agatha Christie mystery. Like its predecessor, this interactive mystery features actors Paul Gleason as the detective, Stew Cavanaugh, and Kate McGregor-Stewart as his trusty assistant, Maxine Blair. Aside from these two, this second MysteryDisc has an entirely new cast of characters. Improvements over the first disc include better production values with location shots, and 16 entirely different plots. After playing about 10 games of the first disc, we had become a little bored with the same victim over and over, with only the villains changing in different scenarios. With *MANY ROADS TO MURDER*, the plots, victims and villains all change randomly, giving more variety to repeated playing sessions.

Home Computer Shipments, 1982
(thousand units)

Price	U.S.	Foreign	Total
$500 and above	145	25	170
$200-$499	1,020	200	1,220
$199 or less	850	315	1,165
Total	2,015	540	2,555

Worldwide Home Computer Market Shares, 1982

Company	Units (thousands)	Share Total	Above-$100 Category
Timex/Sinclair	800	31%	—
Commodore VIC 20	550	22	32%
Atari 400/800	500	20	28
Texas Instruments TI 99/4A	425	17	24
Tandy	200	8	13
Apple II	30	1	2
Others	30	1	2
Total	2,555	100%	100%

Different Kind of Party Game

The game can be enjoyed by two to six players, and you can set up investigative teams for a different kind of party entertainment. (It's a good idea to provide pen and paper for note-taking.) Each game lasts about 40 to 70 minutes. The game is started by pushing the "play" button on your remote control. This sets up the first video segment, a full enactment of a robbery or disappearance, which will stop automatically to allow the players to read segments of the detective's diary. The story continues to unfold when "play" is pushed again. After a sequence of four video scenes, the acting portion ends, and players are shown an investigative file of clues. The clues are called up alternately by each playing team, using the remote control to search indexed frames on the disc. As soon as either team thinks they've solved the mystery and know "who-dunit," they may call up an accusation frame on their turn. Incorrect guesses cause the team to lose a turn, and the game ends when the mystery is solved. (Incorrect guesses by one team need not provide clues to the opposing team—accusations can be made by numerical calculations.) Desperation clues are provided if both teams exhaust the regular list of clues. We solved the first mystery in 40 minutes and thought the game was too easy. The second game proved us wrong, though. We gave up after an hour of playing and had to pool our information to finally come up with the correct solution!

A few words of advice for would-be detectives: detailed note-taking is vital; also keep a record of the games you have played so as not to repeat the same mystery. We also found it useful to keep track of the clues we had called up to avoid wasting a turn with duplications. We loved *MANY ROADS TO MURDER*—it's a new and different kind of video gaming designed to stimulate the mind.
Recommended. (MSR approx. $37.00)

PITFALL HARRY GOES FULL CIRCLE

Pitfall Harry, the main character of the hit Activision cartridge, PITFALL, has been licensed for his own Saturday Morning show. He will appear as a swashbuckling jungle adventurer in search for treasure. Several new characters have been added for the TV show. Pitfall Harry will appear as one segment of the "Supercade Cartoon Hour", which will also feature segments starring Donkey Kong, Q*Bert, and others.

Pitfall will also be produced as a board game through Milton Bradley for release in October. Activision, showing what can be done in licensing a hit videogame, is also licensing Pitfall Harry to coloring books, jigsaw puzzles, comic books, crayons, and card games!

UPDATE ONE ON ONE

Last month, we had an interesting chat with Carol Shaw, designer of RIVER RAID for Activision. Unfortunately, we did not have quite the space for inclusion in the September issue. We did, however, take some time last month to take a drive up the coast from Southern California to Silicon Valley (about one hour north of the Wine Country by car).

A nice visit to the offices of Activision and IMAGIC were highlights we'd like to mention before getting to the interview with Carol. Although the day we visited Activision, news had been released that, for the first three month period since they have been on the Stock Exchange, Activision had posted a loss. Gloomy faces? Not one! And, why not! With news they had a brand new game to release... one not previously announced... was good news. (The mere fact that BEAM RIDER looked to be an instant hit might have had something to do with it.) Activision appeared to be a small city within itself (as we discuss later). We were treated to the newest harvest of gaming cartridges in one of the relaxing game rooms, which seemed to be designed more as a recreational room than a cold impartial test area. There was a choice of three TV's dedicated to three seperate games (or systems, your choice).

As we wove our way through the maze of offices, computers, sales personel, and refrigerators with ice cold soda... (THIS is starting to sound like a new video game)... we wound up in the actual test room, complete with all of the system masters, various computers and even a couple of videocassette recorders! A very nice young gentleman played BEAM RIDER 'til his arm was ready for traction. Not bad, considering the game was relatively new to him. We thank Activision for spending time with us, especially on a day with no notice that we would be popping in to say hello.

The following day we were at the offices of IMAGIC. In sharp contrast, this was one small building housing the entire operation. The art room caught our immediate attention, as they create and use scale models of the artwork seen on their packaging. While designers are busy creating new games, the art department will work on the same games from the packaging point of view. They actually built scale models of spaceships, deamons, small cities, etc.

In two days we saw two of the leading third-party software manufacturers in operation. The big, immense Activision; as well as the much scaled down IMAGIC. The bigger seemed to be striving (on the face of it), the smaller (physically) was actually making staff reductions the day we came by. There are many nice people we have come to know at IMAGIC and we will miss them a lot.

Enough of our trip to Los Gatos and Mountain View and back to the interview portion. The designer is Carol Shaw and her latest conquest is RIVER RAID... finding a home in the Video Game Hall of Fame.

VGU: Having RIVER RAID now for home computers poses a question as to which is it easier to build; a videogame for a videogame system, or a videogame for a computer?

CAROL: In a way computers are HARDER because everybody expects the computer to do more. You have to work just as hard to get a really good game out of a computer.

VGU: To do the computer version of a game such as RIVER RAID, do you have to start from scratch, or can you use existing data from the 2600 VCS?

CAROL: I didn't find the operating system of the Atari computer to be all that useful, but it does have the same microprocessor (the 6502) as the Atari 2600. I was able to take some of the codes and reuse them but most of it was re-written.

VGU: What gave you the inspiration to take the game one step further and, on the computer version, allow the player to start at a different bridge as an option?

CAROL: I pretty much mastered playing the game, myself. I thought it might be fun to start the game at a higher level. And it provides a much shorter game for people who don't have as much time. Sometimes I like to play a game for a few hours, sometimes only a few minutes so I might want to just play a harder version.

VGU: Do you like to play your own game or do you prefer playing different games?

CAROL: My own, yes, but also I like some of the games that were here when I started at Activision; STAMPEDE I really liked, and MEGAMANIA is another. Of the more recent I like ENDURO.

VGU: Did it surprise you to learn that the original RIVER RAID for the Atari 2600 sold over one million units?

CAROL: Yes it did. I knew it was a good game, but I didn't expect it to hit Number One. Of course I was happy when it did!

VGU: While we know you were not the first woman to design a video game, you are the first "acknowledged" female achieving the mark. Why are you "acknowleged" and the the others not?

CAROL: Activision is one of the first companies to list the designer's names. When I was at Atari, my name wasn't given on a game so no one knew I was over there. But there are at least eight women designers we know of.

VGU: When you design games for the 2600, what did you find as built-in obstacles to overcome?

CAROL: You are very limited in time and memory space, both ROM and RAM. There is a three-way trade-off you have to make trying to cram everything together. Plus the display capability is extremely limited, so you really have to work at it to get anything out of it.

VGU: I don't know many designers who work well with both Atari and Intellivision systems, yet you seem to do so with ease. Is their a trick to that?

CAROL: The systems are quite different. People who like one usually don't program for the other because the programming IS so different. But I found if you really work at it you can do games on any system. You just have to be flexible.

VGU: Which of all systems you have worked with do you prefer to program for?

CAROL: I really like the whole Atari home computer series. It has a lot of flexibility and has a bigger capability than the 2600. So, it retains the flexibility of the 2600 but it adds a lot more. The Intellivision does not have the display capability. That might be another reason why some programmers have trouble transfering from one to the other.

VGU: HAPPY TRAILS is one of those simple, easy to understand, yet addictive new games that you just can't put down. It's a bonafide new game and a new concept. How did you come up with that one?

CAROL: First, I decided to do a game for the Intellivision. A strong point of the system is you can do detailed backgrounds. You can't have as many moving objects on the screen as the VCS, so I figured how about something that really uses the background. An important part of the game is going in and rearranging the background.. the sliding block puzzle. Steve Cartright actually came up with the idea of a little cowboy hat. We licensed the song HAPPY TRAILS and then we used the bass line of the song.

VGU: Speaking of Steve, do you collaborate a lot with your peers?

CAROL: We have the "Design Center" concept with small groups of four to six people who all work together. Everybody can give their ideas for the game. The main designer will choose which ideas will be implemented. If everybody at the Design Center says something would be a good idea.. it usually is. It's informal, but every game, to some extent, is a group project. One person does all the coding and has the final say on the game.

VGU: We hear many Activision-people say it's a great place to work.. in fact "work" may be the wrong word. I think I'm looking for the word "family".

CAROL: Yes, it's a very nice place and we have flexible working hours so we can work when we want.

VGU: What about Carol Shaw. What do you like to do for recreation?

CAROL: I like to go bicycle riding. I do that everyday, and I love to go out on weekends. We have overnight camping trips and I go out on those, too. We're actually involved in so much mental activity all week, we need some physical activity to just get out and get some exercise. It keeps everyone from getting burned out.

VGU: What is your educational background?

CAROL: I got a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science from U. C. Berkeley, and I got my Master's Degree in Computer Science. In college I was in a work/study program where we worked for Atari full time for six months then went back to school for six months. I worked at some other companies, but when I finished school I went back to work for Atari. After that I went to work for Tandem Computers doing diagnostic programming. Then I got an offer from Activision and here I am.

VGU: And we're glad you are!

We also took time to admire Activision for the policy of putting a lot of support behind their products, meaning if you (the reader) decide you want an Activision game three, six or even ten months after the release, it is still on the market, and most likely being advertised. Carol Shaw is one of many Activision designers putting good, fun, exciting and challenging games on the market. One of the reasons is Diane Douglas, who is in the Product Publicity Department. A video game player herself, Diane says:

"It's pretty hard around here not to be a game lover. It comes out especially in instances such as later in the month when I'll be taking a game to the East Coast to show some editors of magazines, and I have to know how to play it. At the risk of looking silly, it behooves me to know the games."

Aside from what WE saw at the headquarters in Mountain View we asked Diane to describe that crazy maze of offices.

"There are two main buildings, three if you count the one where Carol Shaw and the designers work. There are departments for marketing and sales. There is a Consumer Relations Department to take care of all the many letters and calls from players with questions about games or want to know about high score qualifications. There is a lot of activity over there. We have a gym for people to work out... a cafeteria with some great food. We have many activities for employees such as "Family Affair" day where we all get together once a month to introduce new people. There are also barbecues in the summertime. It's just a great environment in which to work!

AVAILABILITY UPDATE

(Based on projected release dates given to us by the manufacturers. May change without notice.)

ATARI 2600

SEPTEMBER
x-Crash Dive (FOX)
x-Mr Do (COL)
✗ Popeye (PB)
Quick Step (IMGC)
Sir-Lancelot/Robin Hood (XON)
x-Spike's Peak/Ghost Manor (XON)
x-Thunderground (SEGA)
Time Pilot (COL)
OCTOBER
Alpha Beam (AT)
Berenstein Bear-voice (COL)
Big Bird's Egg Catch (AT)
Boing! (FS)
Bump & Jump (MNTK)
Cookie Monster Munch (AT)
Cosmic Commander Power Arcade(MB)
Dr Seuss One Fish-voice (COL)
Ewok Adventure (PB)
Flight Commander Power Arcade(MB)
Frostbite (ACT)
James Bond 007 (PB)
Krull (AT)
Laser Gates (IMGC)
Moon Patrol (AT)
Mountain King (CBS)
Off Your Rocker (AM)
Omega Race (CBS)
Out of Control (AH)
Party Mix (STP)
Pigs in Space (AT)
Power Lord (ODY)
Power Play 1 (AM)
Power Play 2 (AM)
Pressure Cooker (ACT)
Pursuit of Pink Panther (ODY)
Realsports Baseball (AT)
Rocky & Bullwinkle (MNTK)
SAC Alert (AM)
Shuttle Orbiter (AH)
Sky Blazer (BRO)
Sorcerer's Apprentice (AT)
Springer (TGV)
Star Trek (SEGA)
Surf's Up (AM)
Survival Island (STP)
Sweat (STP)
Sword of Saros (STP)
Targ (CBS)
Trackball (AT)
Tunnel Runner (CBS)
Voice Module w/Smurf (COL)
Wings (CBS)
NOVEMBER
Asterix (AT)
Buck Rogers (SEGA)
Kick-Man (CBS)
Master of Universe (MNTK)
Power Play 3 (AM)
River Patrol (TGV)
Snoopy & Red Baron (AT)
Space Shuttle (ACT)
Wing War (IMGC)
DECEMBER
Congo Bongo (SEGA)
Front Line (COL)
Mario Bros. (AT)
M*A*S*H 2 (FOX)
Oscar's Trash Race (AT)
Subterranea (IMGC)

INTELLIVISION

SEPTEMBER
x-Beamrider (ACT)
x-Q*Bert (PB)
OCTOBER
2600 Adaptor (MAT)
Blueprint (CBS)
x-Donkey Kong Jr. (COL)
ECS Keyboard (MAT)
Gorf (CBS)
James Bond 007 (PB)
Kick-Man (CBS)
Kool Aid Pitcher Man (MAT)
Omega Race (CBS)
River Raid (ACT)
Solar Fox (CBS)
Super Cobra (PB)
Turbo (COL)
Wings (CBS)

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

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

Wizard of Wor (CBS)
Worm Womper (ACT)
NOVEMBER
Bump 'n Jump (MAT)
Domino Man (CBS)
Joystick w/Keypad (WICO)
Madden Football (CBS)
Master of Universe (MAT)
DECEMBER
Congo Bongo (SEGA)

COLECOVISION

SEPTEMBER
x-Q*Bert (PB)
War Room (ODY)
OCTOBER
Buck Rogers (COL)
Cavern (ODY)
Destructor (COL) ★ ★ ★ ★
Dragonstomper (STP)
Escape from Mindmaster (STP)
Frogger (PB)
Frontline (COL)
Joystick w/ keypad (WICO)
Moonsweeper (IMGC)
✗ Omega Race (COL) ★ ★ ★
Phaser Patrol (STP)
Rocky (COL) ★ ★
Roller Controller w/Slither
✗ Sub Roc (COL)
Super Action Football (COL) ★ ★
Super Donkey Kong (COL) ★
Super Donkey Kong Jr (COL) ★
Super Gorf (COL) ★
Super Zaxxon (COL) ★
✗ Victory (COL) ★ ★ ★
NOVEMBER
Apple Cider Spider (SOL)
Dino Eggs (MIF)
Domino Man (CBS)
Frogger (SOL)
Globe Grabber (MIC)
Lord of the Dungeon (ODY)
Joystick w/keypad (WICO)
Lunar Leeper (SOL)
Madden Football (CBS)
Mountain King (CBS)
Powerlords (ODY)
Quest for Tires (SOL)
Sammy Lightfoot (SOL)
Scraper Caper (MIC)
Super Cobra (PB)
Super Smurf (COL) ★
Super Sub Roc (COL) ★
Super Time Pilot (COL) ★
Time Runner (MIC)
Tutankham (PB)
Wings (CBS)
Wing War (IMGC)
DECEMBER
Dukes of Hazzard (COL) ★ ★ ★ ★
Jawbreaker (SOL)
Learning With Leeper (SOL)
M*A*S*H (FOX)
Porky's (FOX)
Pursuit of Pink Panther (ODY)
Wargames (COL)

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

ATARI 5200

SEPTEMBER
x-Analog Joystick (WICO)
x-Jungle Hunt (AT)
x-Ms Pac-Man (AT)
x-Pole Position (AT)
Popeye (PB)
✗ Q*Bert (PB)
x-Space Dungeon (AT)
OCTOBER
Blueprint (CBS)
Choplifter (BRO)
Dig Dug (AT)
Domino Man (CBS)

Gorf (CBS)
Joust (AT)
K-Razy Shootout (CBS)
Madden Football (CBS)
Moonsweeper (IMGC)
Mountain King (CBS)
Omega Race (CBS)
Realsports Baseball(voice)
Satan's Hollow (CBS)
Serpentine (BRO)
Solar Fox (CBS)
Star Trek (SEGA)
Vanguard (AT)
Wings (CBS)
Wizard of Wor (CBS)
NOVEMBER
Battlezone (AT)
Berzerk (Voice) (AT)
Bristles (FS)
Buck Rogers (SEGA)
Fathom (IMGC)
Flip and Flop (FS)
Jawbreaker (SOL)
Mario Bros (AT)
Moon Patrol (AT)
Pengo (AT)
Polaris (TGV)
Quick Step (IMGC)
Road Runner (AT)
Sport Goofy (AT)
Star Trek (SEGA)
Super Cobra (PB)
Wing War (IMGC)
DECEMBER
Congo Bongo (SEGA)
Laser Gates (IMGC)
JANUARY
Robotron (AT)
Xevious (AT)

VECTREX

OCTOBER
Polar Rescue
Star Castle
NOVEMBER
Batter Up
Dark Tower
Pole Position
3-D Imager

ATARI COMPUTERS

SEPTEMBER
x-Q*Bert (PB)
✗ Spare Change (BRO)
OCTOBER
Bristles (D/Cass)(FS)
Domino Man (CBS)
Droll (BRO)
Flip and Flop (D/Cass)(FS)
Kaboom (ACT)
Learning With Leeper (SOL)
Lunar Outpost (EPYX)
Moonsweeper (IMGC)
Oils Well (CBS)
Polaris (TGV)
Rainbow Walker (SYN)
✗ River Raid (ACT)
Sammy Lightfoot (SOL)
Solar Fox (CBS)
Springer (TGV)
Star Trek (SEGA)
Wings (CBS)
NOVEMBER
Archon (EA)
Axis Assassin (EA)
Buck Rogers (SEGA)
Da Fuzz (ROK)
Diamond Mine (ROK)
Dimension X (SYN)
Fathom (IMGC)
Journey to the Planets (ROK)
Laser Gates (IMGC)
Lode Runner (BRO)
New York City (SYN)
Quick Step (IMGC)
Quest for Tires (SOL)
Rack Em Up (ROK)
Risk (PB)
Rockball (ROK)
Space Journey (ROK)
✗ Super Cobra (PB)
Wing War (IMGC)
DECEMBER
Donkey Kong Jr (AT)
Football (AT)
M*A*S*H (FOX)
Porky's (FOX)
Popeye (PB)
Revenge of Beefsteak Tomato (FOX)

VIC-20

SEPTEMBER
Panic Button (FS)
x-Squish 'Em (SIR)
OCTOBER
Cnsis Mountain (CS)
Frogger (SOL)
Polaris (TGV)
Seafox (BRO)
Sky Blazer (BRO)
Springer (TGV)
Star Trek (SEGA)
NOVEMBER
Buck Rogers (SEGA)
Lode Runner (BRO)
Popeye (PB)
Sammy Lightfoot (SOL)
Super Cobra (PB)
✗ Tutankham (PB)
DECEMBER
Congo Bongo (SEGA)
M*A*S*H (FOX)
Porky's (FOX)
Revenge of Beefsteak Tomato (FOX)

COMMODORE 64

SEPTEMBER
Alice (UMI)
x-Apple Cider Spider (SOL)
Choplifter (BRO)
Earthfall (INF)
In The Chips (CS)
Lode Runner (BRO)
x-Mr Cool (SOL)
Seafox (BRO)
Serpentine (BRO)
OCTOBER
Archon (EA)
Axis Assassin (EA)
Bank St Writer (BRO)
Blue Max (SYN)
Cnsis Mountain (CS)
Fun With Art (EPYX)
Hard Hat Mack (EA)
Jumpman Jr (EPYX)
Learning With Leeper (SOL)
Lunar Leeper (SOL)
Morgol (SYN)
M.U.L.E (EA)
Pharaoh's Curse (SYN)
Pinball Construction (EA)
Quasimodo (SYN)
Worms? (EA)
NOVEMBER
Bristles (D/Cass)(FS)
Cannonball Blitz (SOL)
Castle Hassle (ROK)
Creepy Corridors (SOL)
Da Fuzz (ROK)
Death in Caribbean (MIF)
Diamond Mine (ROK)
Drelbs (SYN)
Droll (BRO)
Flip and Flop (D/Cass)(FS)
Gateway to Apshai (EPYX)
Journey to the Planets (ROK)
Necromancer (SYN)
Oils Well (CBS)
Picnic Paranoia (SYN)
Pitstop (EPYX)
Q*Bert (PB)
Quest for Tires (SOL)
Rack Em Up (ROK)
Rockball (ROK)
Sammy Lightfoot (SOL)
Scraper Caper (MIF)
Spare Change (BRO)
DECEMBER
Congo Bongo (SEGA)

TI 99/4A

OCTOBER
MBX Voice System (MB)
Microsurgeon (IMGC)
Miner 2049er (TGV)
Schnoz-ola (FUN)
Springer (TGV)
Star Trek (TI)
NOVEMBER
Buck Rogers (TI)
Demon Attack (IMGC)
DECEMBER
Congo Bongo (TI)
M*A*S*H (TI)
Moonmine (TI)
Porky's (FOX)
Sneggit (TI)