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February 1991

GAME OVER?!!

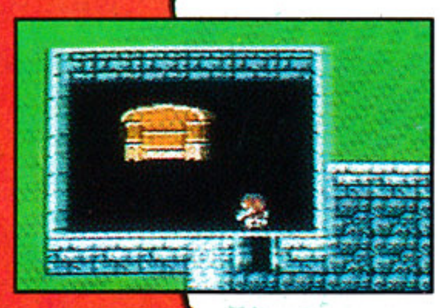
NEWS FLASH!!

Acclaim and the Simpsons Join Forces to Battle Space Aliens! Details Inside!

MAPS AND TIPS:

Mattel's Super Glove Ball, Part I

Nintendo's Final Fantasy, Part II



Take a Peek at an Arcade Museum

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MATT GROENING

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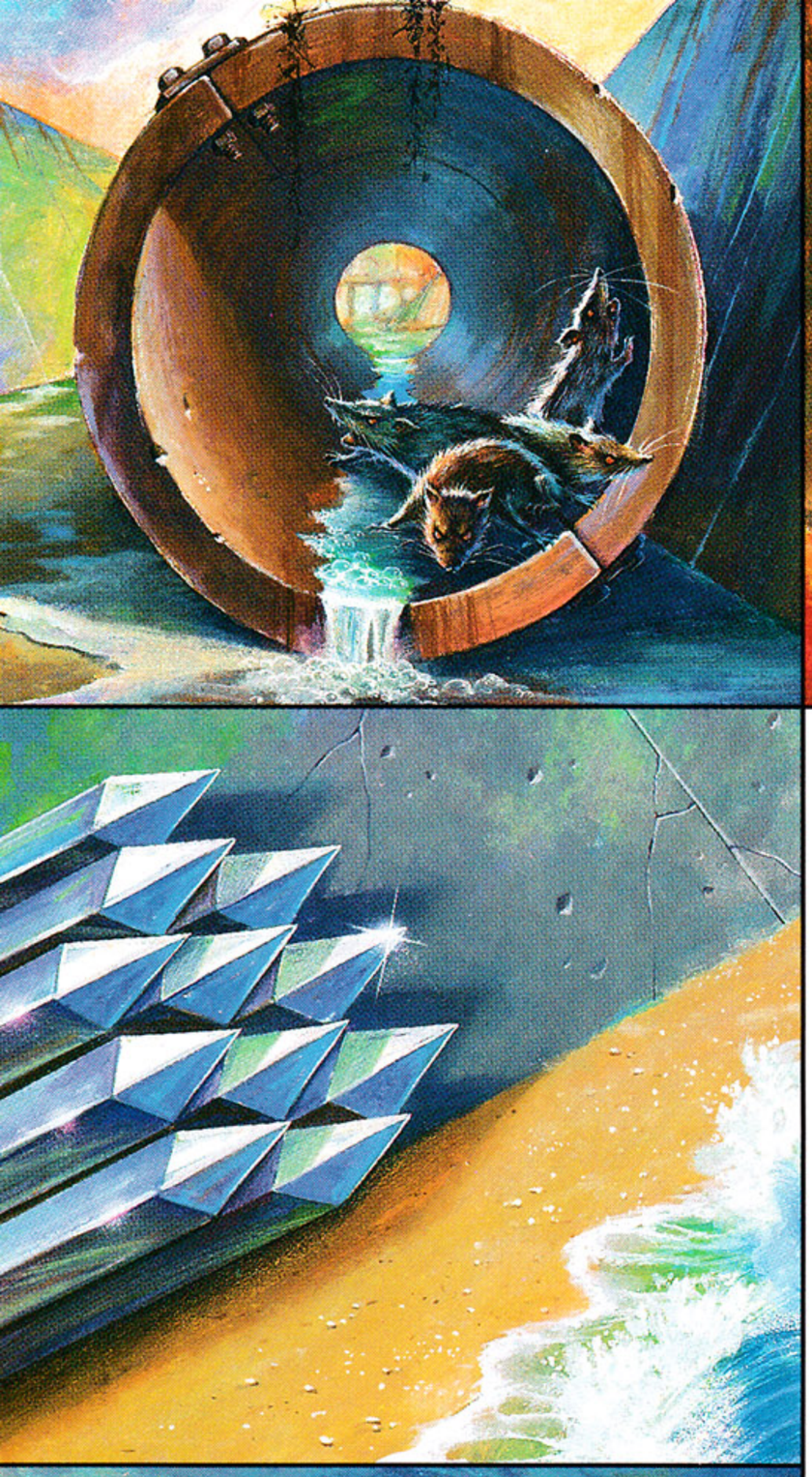
AND THE WINNER IS... CHECK OUT VG&CE'S BEST OF 1990



You'd need bazookas, lasers, fins and wings to get through all of this.

So all you'll get is a skateboard.

Not even a little help from your friends! In Konami's Skate or Die – Bad 'N Rad™ for Game Boy™ it's just you and a flat four-wheeler versus ElRad the Evil One and his nightmarish seven level adventure. Start revving up to hyper-cruising speed right now if you don't want to fall prey to the Cool Cat-Eating Rats, the Big Bad Rad Gun and the Whopper Chopper. Or a dose of wicked wheel busters like lava-spitting flying fish, razor-sharp spikes and the slow-but-rabid Carnivorous Canine (what a bite). And when you're not thrashing to safety before the clock ticks away, you're up against board baddies like Sonic Boomer, Bionic Lester and Sir Slice Alot. So get mad, be bad, go rad and spring Miss Aerial from ElRad's feudal fortress, dude.

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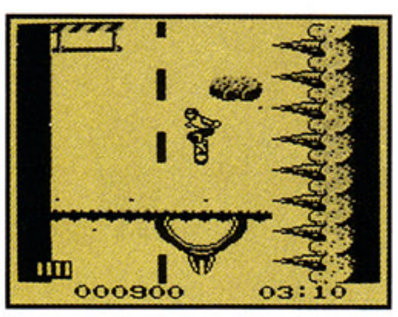

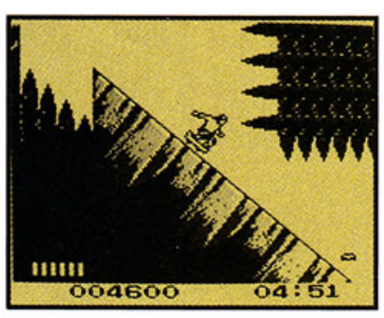

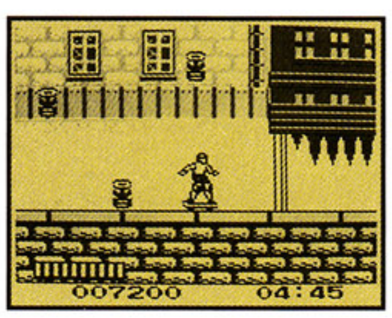

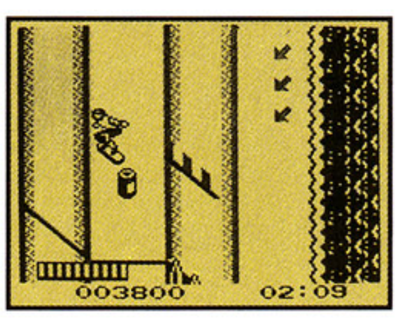

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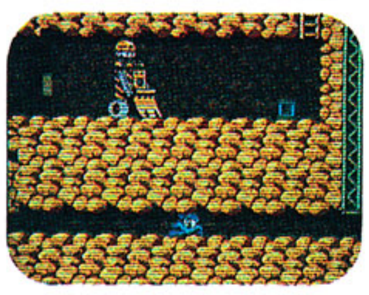
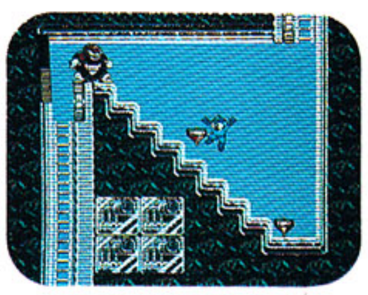
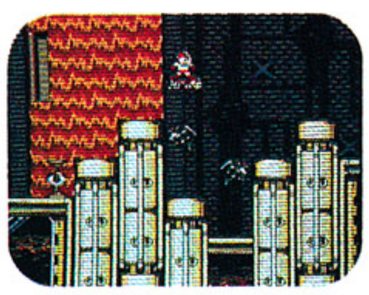
MegaMan® 3. Anything else you need to know?



You'll slide through secret tunnels to avoid bulldozing robots.



It's hard to top TopMan's dangerous spins.



You and your sidekick Rush will fly over enemy territory to avoid the walking time bombs.

SnakeMan, HardMan, GeminiMan, MagnetMan, NeedleMan, ShadowMan, SparkMan and TopMan. They're the eight new robotmasters in MegaMan 3. Defeat them all and you'll still have Dr. Wily to deal with. And possibly even a few of your old enemies from 1 and 2. Okay, now the only question that remains is how fast you can get to the store and get 3.

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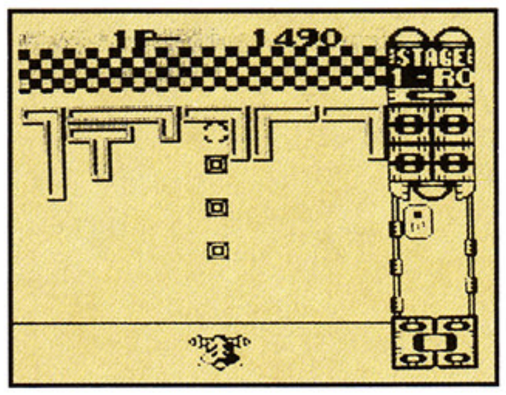

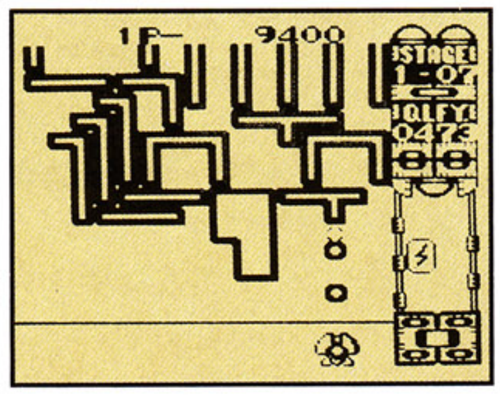

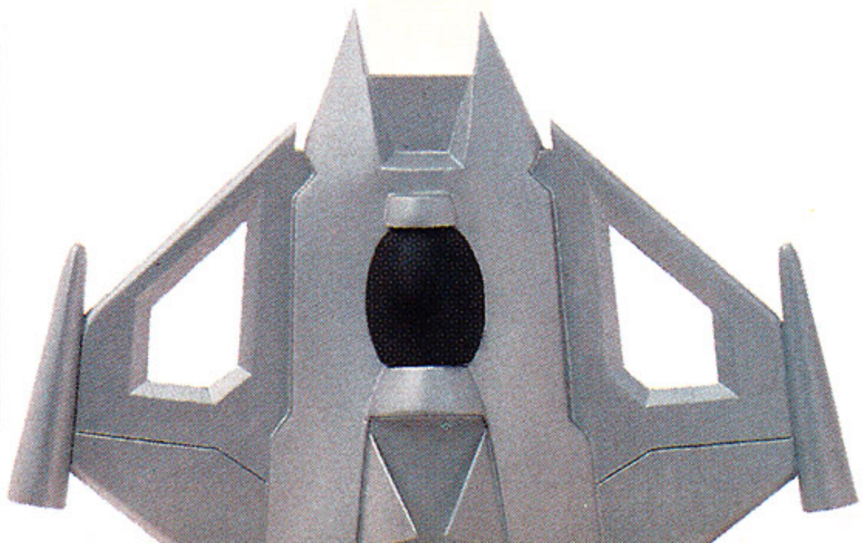

CIRCLE #103 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Cover: They're the talk of the nation, and now Acclaim is bringing the Simpsons to the NES in *Bart Simpson Vs. the Space Mutants*. Turn to page 38 for a sneak peek.
Cover Art: Matt Groening
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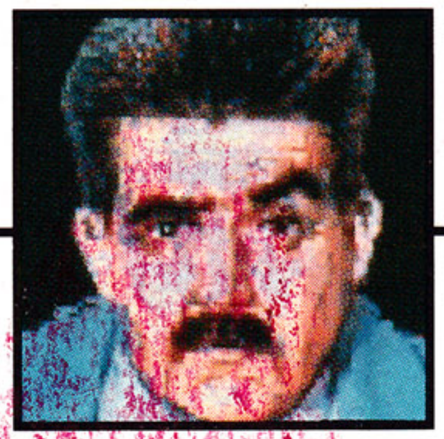

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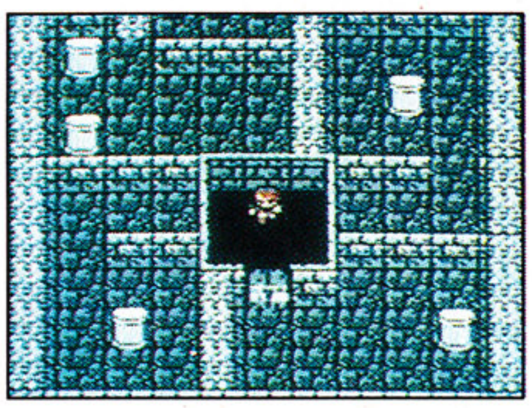

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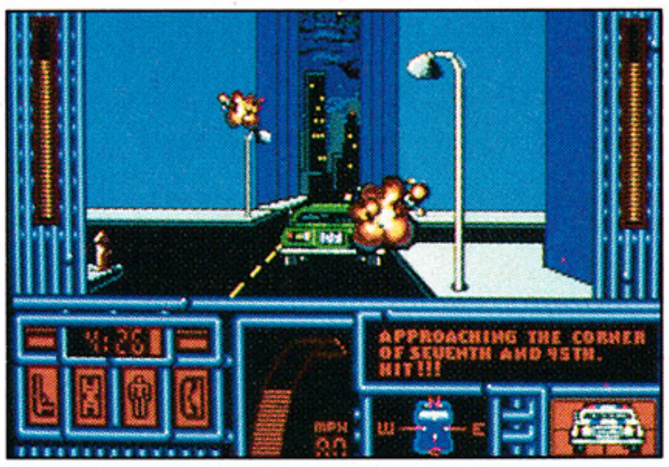

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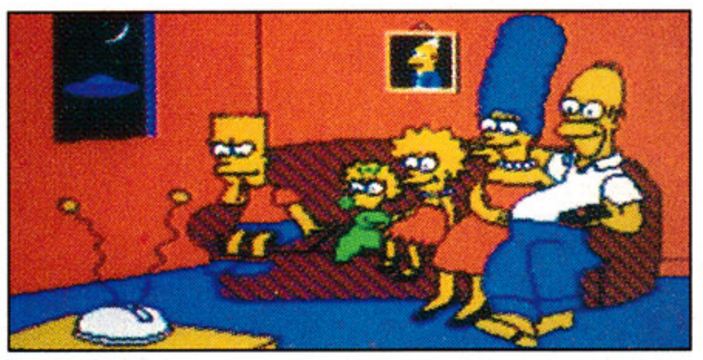

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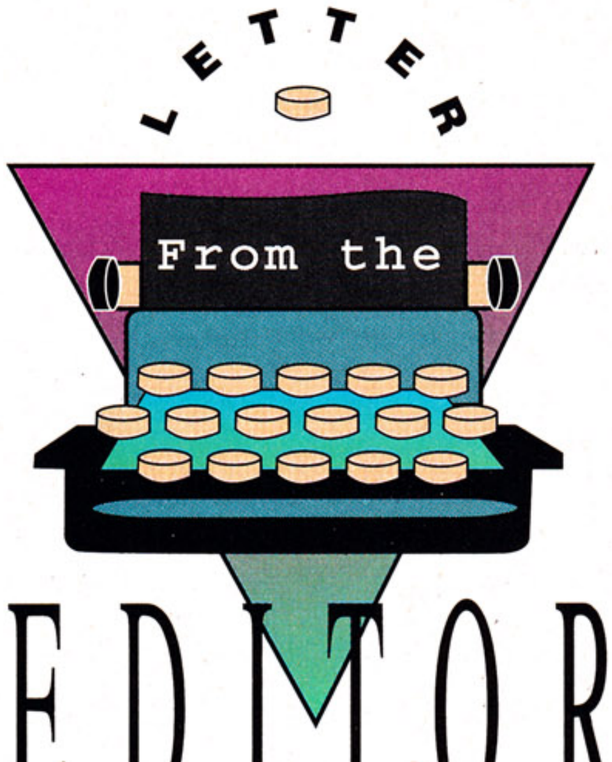
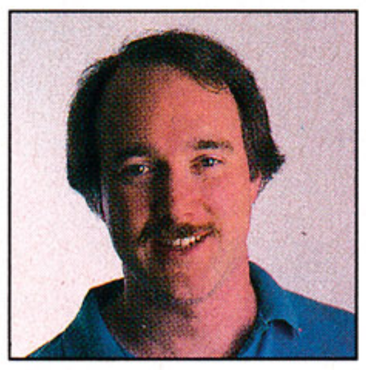


In my job, I go to some wild events that software companies use to publicize their endeavors. For instance, to get me to remember a disk-based baseball simulator, I was once sent to a stadium for a game.

However, in October I was involved in the weirdest publicity event I've been to, thanks to the backing of Activision. In support of its *F-14 Tomcat* flight/combat simulator for the IBM PC, Activision sent a few computer-game editors—yours truly included—to Air Combat U.S.A. in Fullerton, California. Air Combat U.S.A. puts a person up in a two-seat prop plane for "simulated combat." While most of my associates thought this was a flight simulator, I had to assure them the promotional materials said we'd be piloting and engaging in aerial dogfights *for real*.



When I arrived at Air Combat U.S.A., which operates out of Fullerton Airport, it was apparent that we would indeed be flying *real* planes over Southern California. Luckily for the residents of the area, well-trained pilots would be doing most of the dirty work—like takeoffs, landings and working the main controls and radio transmissions. Other than that, we would be on our own.

Flying a sensitively controlled plane at 5,000 feet at a speed of 200 m.p.h. is a lot different than flying a computer-generated plane with a joystick. Needless to say, after dipping through the skies in aerobatic maneuvers in an attempt to get on my opponent's tail and keep him off mine, my mouth was a bit dry, and my stomach was somewhat unsettled.

The actual experience was something that computer games can't quite touch on—that of looking in any direction and interacting with your three-dimensional universe. In some cases, my opponent would be to my side while at other times he was cruising below me. My instructor must have taught me well because I basically ignored all else, keeping my eyes peeled on the enemy plane. Indeed, at one point on the video-tape record of my "mission," my trainer noted that I might push forward on the stick because I was flying straight up. Some maneuvers we made were so forceful, it was hard to hold my head upright.

What may bring computers and 3-D perception together is something called "virtual reality," which Maurice Molyneaux wrote about in the January 1990 issue of VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT (*Is It Live or Is It Cyberspace?*). This process will let your movements become data for a computer, which will alter what you visualize through ViewMaster-like goggles, which display the world the computer has created. Mattel's Power Glove just touches on what virtual reality has to offer. Ah, the future.

I think from now on, though, I'm going to stick to pixel piloting. It doesn't hurt my head as much.

—Andy Eddy, Executive Editor

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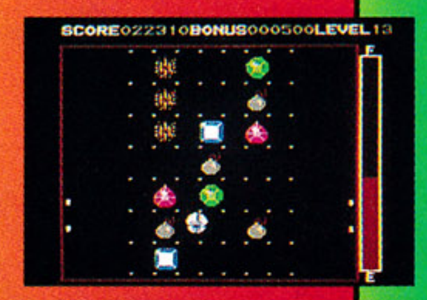

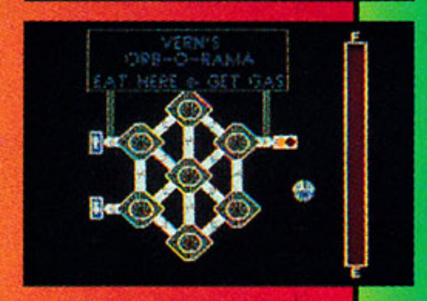

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READER MAIL

TRAVEL BOY?

Dear VG&CE:

With the portability of the Game Boy and Lynx systems, it seems to me they would be perfect for other uses. How about travel guides for vacation spots and major cities? Hotels and restaurants could place their locations on a map on a low-cost cartridge.

A bare bones map of a city, with its major points of interest and short listings offered, would be a lot of help for travelers.

—Scott Vanarsdall
Graham, Texas

Your ideas, Scott, are perfect, though you won't find many companies willing to break out of the "game" mold for these portable cartridges. Just the same, GameTek, a company well-known for video-game translations of TV game shows (like Wheel of Fortune, Hollywood Squares *and* Jeopardy*), recently announced its intention to release InfoGenius Productivity Paks for the Game Boy. These cartridges will turn Nintendo's portable game system into a powerful tool offering such diverse—and nonentertainment—applications as a spell check, thesaurus, dictionary, personal organizer (similar to the Sharp Wizard and Casio B.O.S.S.), phone dialer, European travel guide and language translator. Future InfoGenius cartridges will bring health and fitness applications, as well as an encyclopedia and more.*

THIS CARTRIDGE FOR RENT—CALL 555-1234

Dear VG&CE:

I would like to commend VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT for a class magazine that can keep us adult gamers informed and entertained month after month. You can count on my subscription for a long time to come.

I was wondering how the video-game manufacturers and marketers feel about the used-game market? I know Nintendo's point of view, but I've never seen anything in print on how the others feel about it. My personal point of view (and I'm sure many other gamers agree) is that [game-rental outlets] offer a valuable service.

—Michael Sweda
Tucson, Arizona

Thanks for your compliments. We like to hear from satisfied customers.

At this point in time, only Nintendo has fought rental outlets, but on technical grounds; for instance, Blockbuster Video was busted *for photocopying game manuals for its rental cartridges. Though renting video games isn't illegal, duplicating copyrighted materials (like the instruction manuals) is. Other than that, not many have spoken out against software rental. In fact, Tengen, because of its inability—for whatever reason—to get its NES product sold in major outlets, turned to rental as a viable outlet for getting its product in people's hands. Its strategy is "rent with an option to buy," figuring that if people try a game cart and like it, they'll end up wanting to keep it. We'll see how this all works out.*

The bottom line is, regardless of what the manufacturers think, game rental is legal and likely here to stay.

FOOTBALL FAUX PAS?

Dear VG&CE:

I read the article "Semi-Tough! Football Enters the '90s" in your October '90 issue and would like to say I am outraged with the bad comments made about *Tecmo Bowl* for the NES. It was called a "no-brains-required football game." Little do they know, *Tecmo Bowl*, in my opinion, isn't even close to matched in graphics, playability, excitement, all-pro top football players and edge-of-the-seat overtime action. It makes you feel like you're really leading an NFL team to the Super Bowl. Please correct this understatement.

As far as the rest of the magazine goes, don't change a thing. This magazine covers the Nintendo community better than any other magazine in the world.

—Danny Cabral
South Dartmouth, Massachusetts

By calling Tecmo Bowl *a "no-brains-required football game," Bill and Arnie aren't saying it's a bad game, but rather it steers away from the intricacies that the game could have been filled with. This means that the player can turn the game on and get instant satisfaction without a lot of reading of manuals, sweating and suffering. Of course, opinions vary as to how a game is rated. One man's ceiling is another man's floor.*

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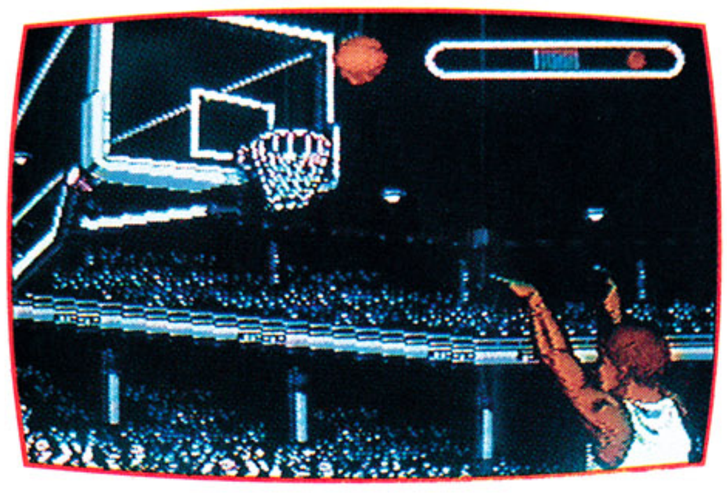
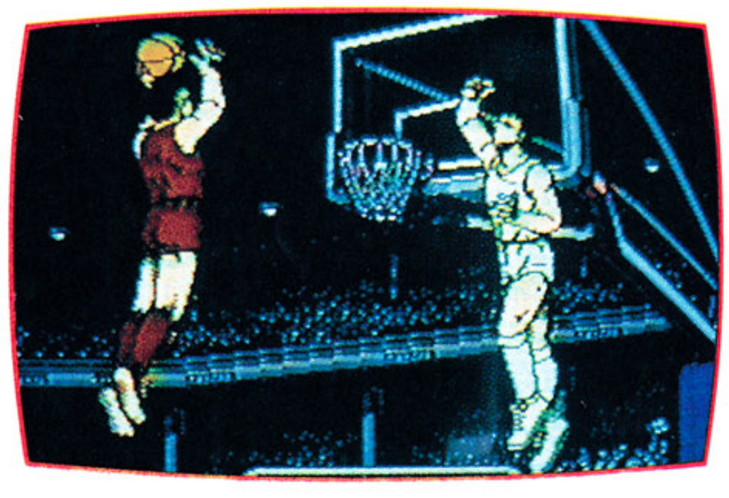


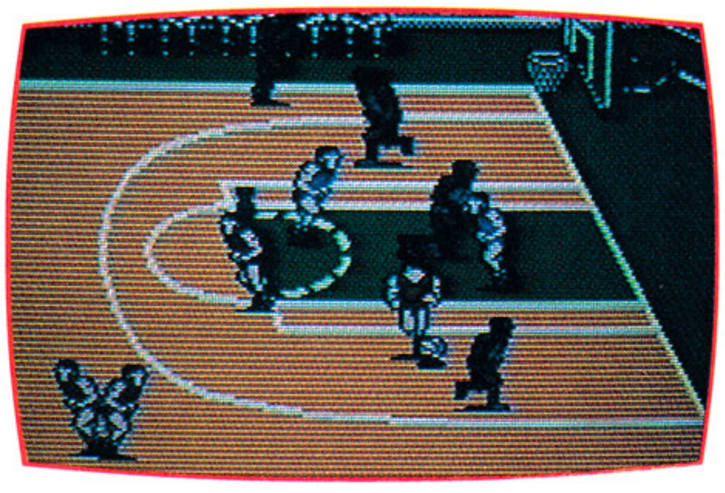
Be a part of the action–not just a spectator



See your shots–up close and personal

You control full court movement

Pick your starting line-up



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CIRCLE #107 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

By the way, thanks for the compliments, Danny. We try to make VG&CE a magazine that everyone can enjoy.

A GOLDEN EGG

Dear VG&CE:

Just a note to thank you for that great Easter Egg tip on *Thunder Force II* for level select and unlimited lives. I finished the game within an hour of buying the magazine! That game was really driving me crazy. Thanks!

I am a 27-year-old Genesis player. I gave up on the [NES] after six months of playing it, and I really look forward every month to your articles and tips on the Sega Genesis.

Keep up the good work.

—William Roush
Citrus Heights, California

Thanks so much for your comments, William. Our intention in the Easter Egg Hunt *column—in fact, in the entire magazine—is to be as informative as possible. It's nice to hear that what we are doing is working.*

SORRY, NO MULTIPLE CHOICE

Dear VG&CE:

I love your magazine. You're the reason I switched from the "Big N's" magazine.

I have a few questions for you:

1) Does the TurboExpress take TG-16 games or does it have its own?

2) What is the telephone number for MicroProse?

3) Why did Mindscape take *Fiendish Freddy's Big Top o' Fun* off the shelves? Thank you for your help, and I hope you can answer these questions for me.

—Alex Bartice
Spring Valley, New York

We'd be happy to help you, Alex.

1) The TurboExpress, NEC's portable version of the TurboGrafx-16 video-game system, does use the same cards as its big brother. This is what most people feel is the TE's strong point. In the future, NEC will be releasing TG-16 games that will take advantage of the TE's network capability, allowing two players to go head-to-head (similar to the Lynx's ComLynx).

2) MicroProse can be reached at its Hunt Valley, Maryland, office at (301) 771-1151. For information on ordering products from MicroProse, it has a toll-free number available: (800) 879-PLAY.

3) We can't say for sure why Mindscape took Fiendish Freddy *out of stores, but these days the life span of a game—whether computer or video game—isn't that long, a couple of months in most cases.*

TO THE POOR HOUSE

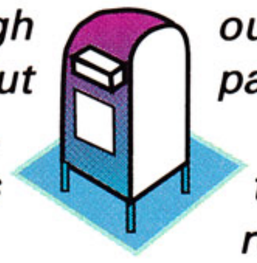
Dear VG&CE:

I am one of the happy owners of a Sega Genesis system and have 17 games to go with it. My question is why not all of these games are cracked up to what they claim to be. We all know that the Genesis has the capability of displaying great games, but some of the games are just so bad that they don't deserve the title "16-bit cartridges."

So why don't the programmers that make these certain disgraceful games use the system's full capabilities? My opinion is that they should design decent games rather than pile up on poor ones.

—Greg Mc Garry
Maplewood, New Jersey

Good questions, Greg, though I hardly think we can single out the Genesis for poor games. Every system has its hot titles as well as big bombs.



The trouble these days, in our view, is that it takes a long time to produce a game, yet consumers are clamoring for more software. At that point, a decision has to be made by the designers: Do you sacrifice the quality to get a game out on the market quickly? In too many cases, the answer is yes.

Another point to make is the quantity of spelling and grammatical errors contained in games, as well as poor translations from their Japanese counterparts. This affects the overall quality of cartridges.

One of the biggest complaints concerns the release of game after game with similar formats. Most players believe that the software market is getting boring. Some new titles are simply alterations of the characters and theme from previous efforts. New game concepts, like Tetris *and* Quarth, *are, sadly, not released frequently enough for our liking.*

The view from the VG&CE *staff, as Andy Eddy said in his* Letter From the Editor *in the September '90 issue, is that video-game companies have to be careful not to let quality slip, lest they alienate their valuable customers. And we wouldn't want to see a repeat of 1983, would we?*

ATARI NEWS

Dear VG&CE:

I heard that Atari Corporation has a video game out called *Pit Fighter* with real digitized images. Also, I heard that it was coming out with a 16-bit game system. Is this true?

—Keeve Harper
Ontario, California

Yes, Keeve, Atari has a coin-op game called Pit Fighter *out now. If you visit your local arcade, it may have this innovative martial-arts machine. (The game is covered in our AMOA report beginning on page 104.)*

We do have to clarify, though, that Pit Fighter *is released by Atari Games. Atari Corp, on the other hand,. is the maker of the Lynx, the ST line of computers and is rumored to be creating a 16-bit game console, which is currently named the Panther.* VG&CE *will run a story on this system when we get more information.*

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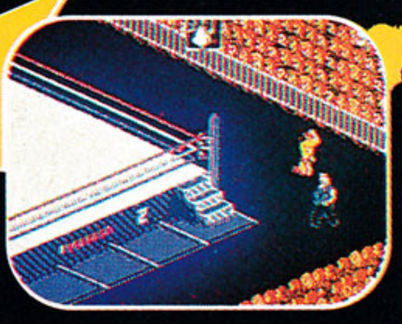
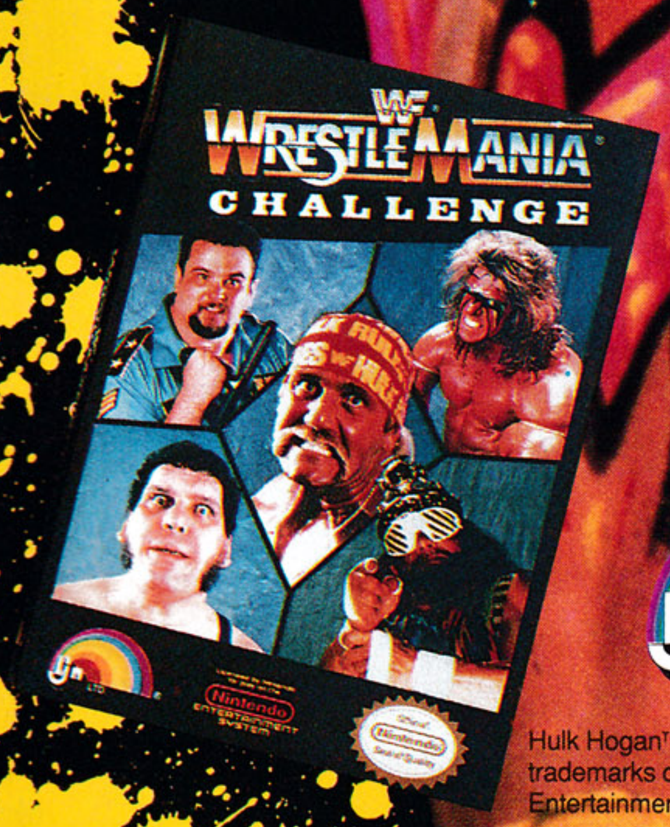


Unleash a Flying Atomic Drop — outside the ring.



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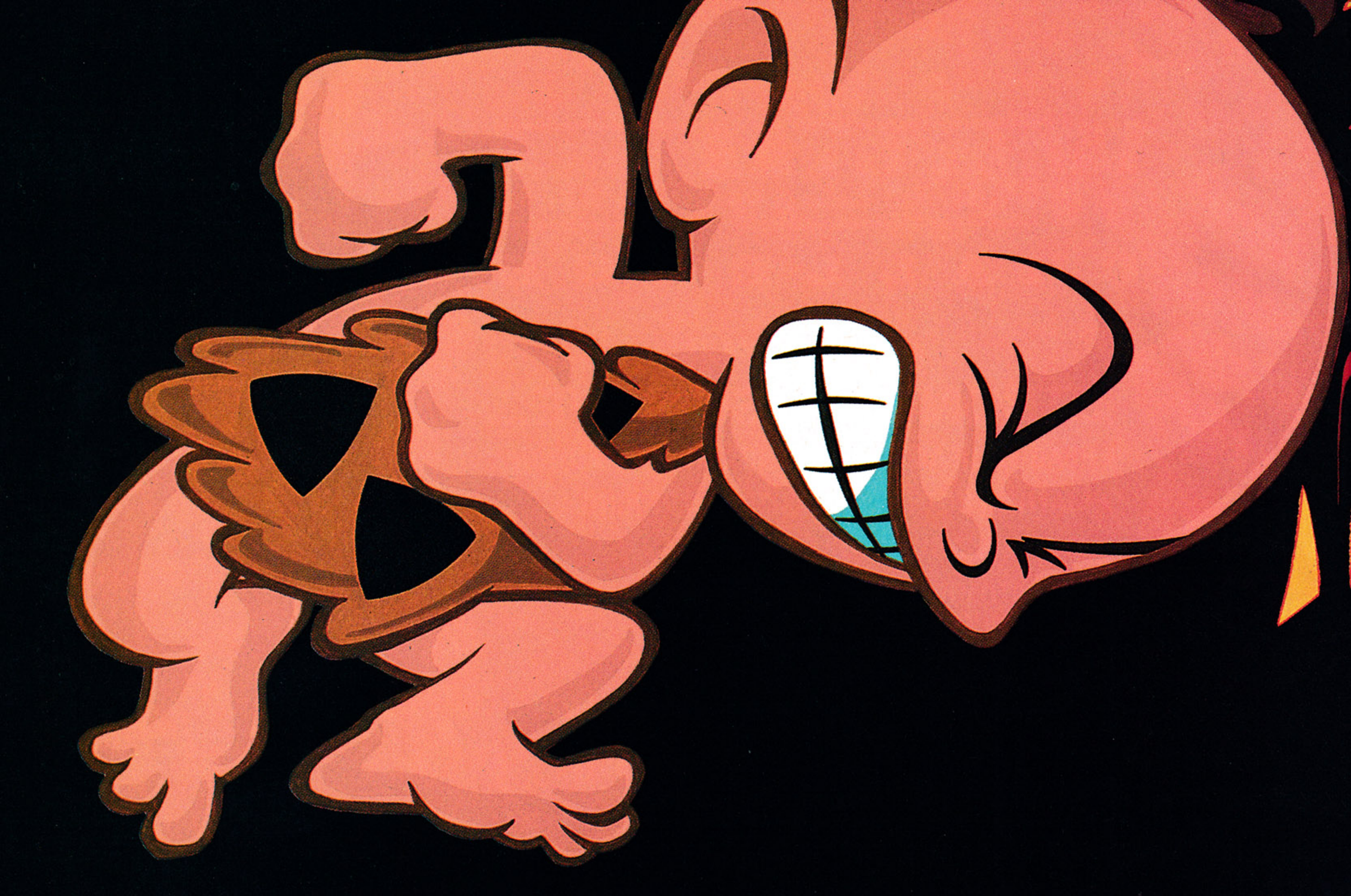


IT'S 10,000 YEARS AGO.

YOU MUST BONK 28 STAGES OF BAD GUYS

TO RESCUE YOUR PRINCESS.

AND YOU'VE ONLY GOT 1 WEAPON.

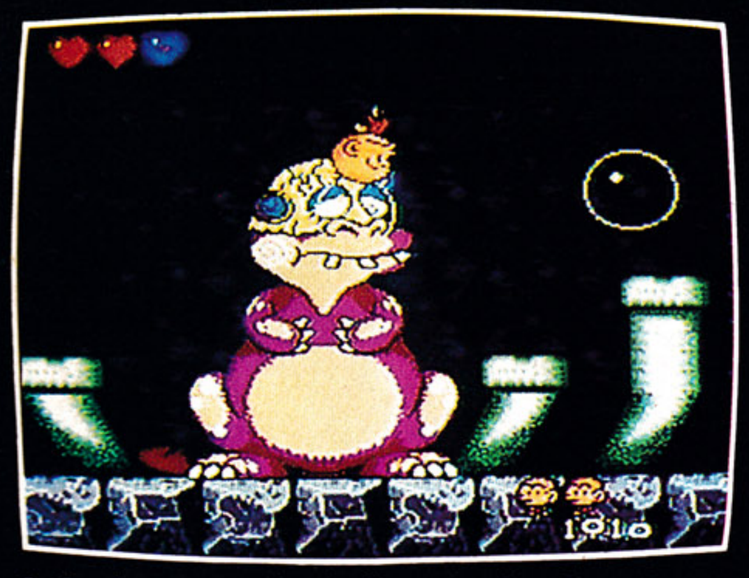
PREPARE TO BUTT HEADS.

You live in a world of prehistoric swamps, tropical forests and stone age deserts. Humongous dinosaurs, primordial gators and various other slimies, beasties and creepies roam at will.

And the bad news is, evil King Drool has kidnapped the Princess Za (a most excellent-looking babe.)

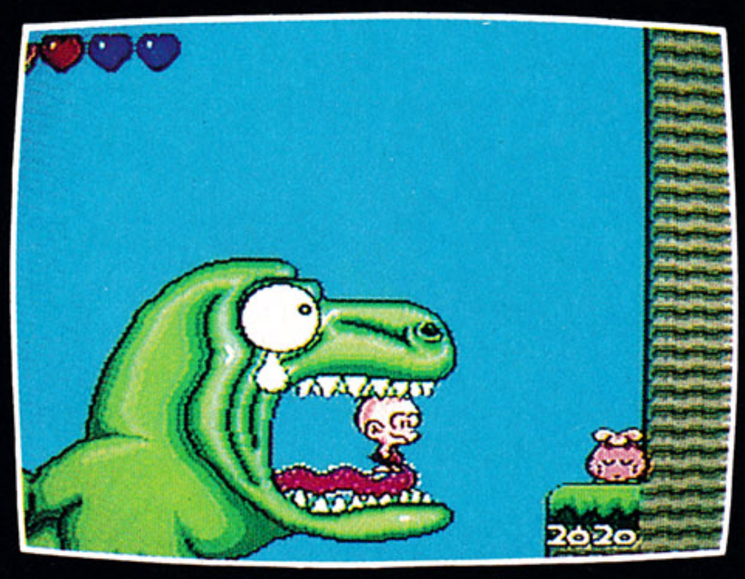
As Bonk, the heroic young Neanderthal head-banger, you will now embark on an epic quest through five levels of monstrous foes to rescue your princess. But there's just one catch. The only weapon you can take with you is your head.

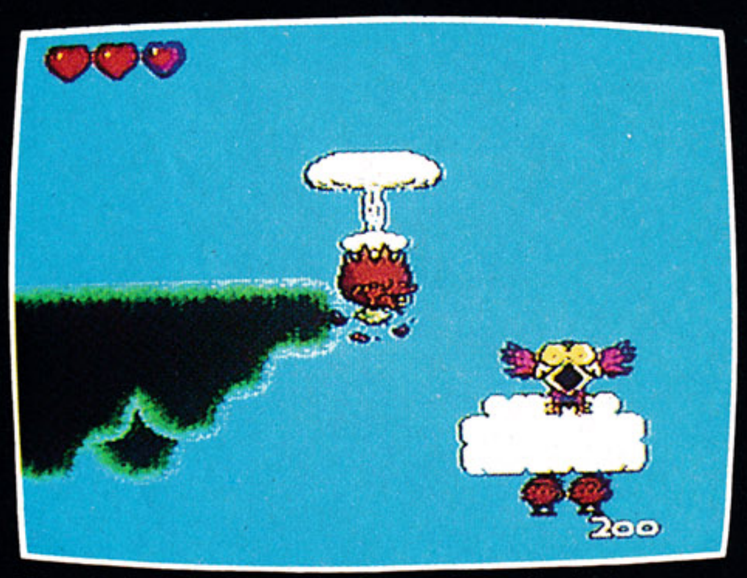
BONK'S ADVENTURE



As Bonk, you must battle Huey, the first Boss. Huey is hypnotized, so he forgets he's really your friend. Just keep bonking him on the head to jog his memory.

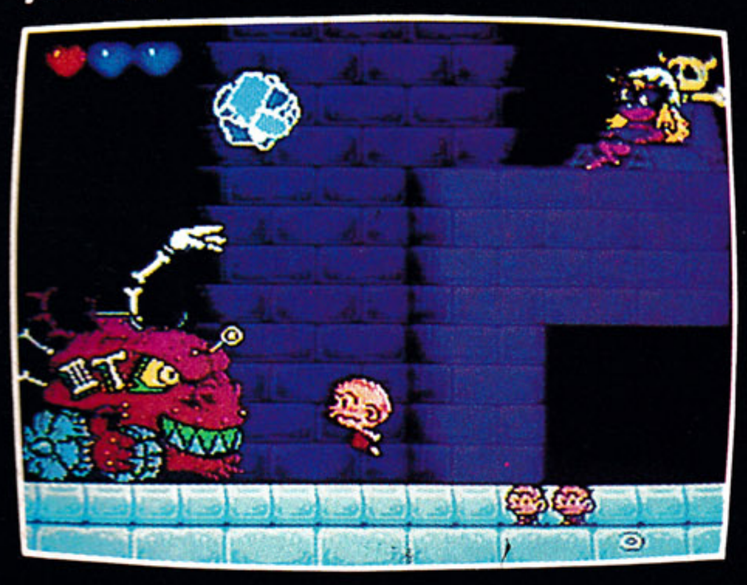
Look for more lives inside the dinosaur. Also remember to check every cave entrance and bonk all walls to find secret bonuses.

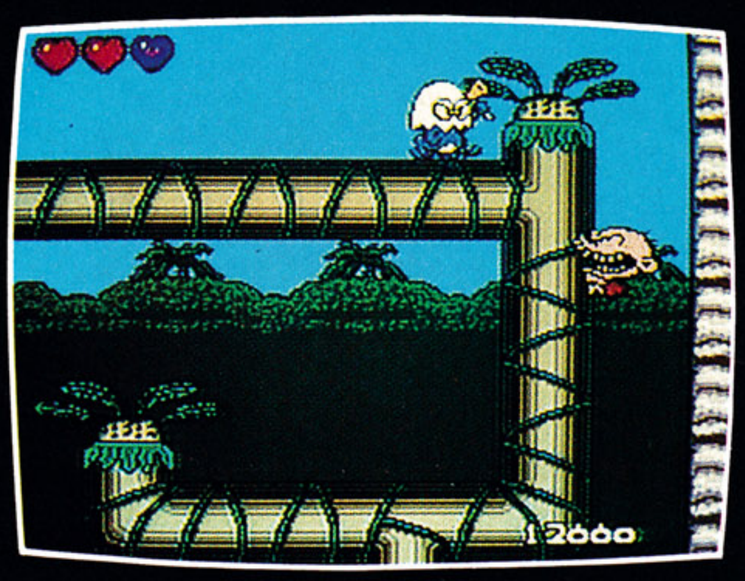




Meat helps Bonk get fired up to beat the bad guys. Like all fast food, you never know when you'll come across it, so keep your eyes peeled.

A most heinous boss, Tractor Head, has a deadly beanball fight with Bonk. You can beat him, just use your head.





Sometimes Bonk needs to climb to get where he's going. Since they hadn't invented the ladder in 10,000 B.C., he uses his teeth.

TURBO 16 GRAFX

NEC

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CIRCLE #109 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

CRASH & BOOM

BUZZ OFF, BUD! THREE'S A CROWD.

GREAT TIMING! MY POWER'S FAILING!

LET'S GO HON, I'LL CARRY YOU OVER THE THRESHOLD!

TAKE THAT, PIMPLEY ONE!

GRUNT!

OOOMPH!

SORRY, DUDESS... NOT THE MARRYING KIND!

YEAH, ON TO FANTASM FORTRESS FOR POWER-UP POTION!

LET'S JAM!

THEY'RE THE TAUNTING TURTLES. THEY CAN'T HURT US—THEY CAN ONLY TAUNT.

THAT'S MY NAME, DON'T WEAR IT OUT!

SAY IT, DON'T SPRAY IT! NAA NA NA NA NA!!

YOU'RE UGLY, AND YOUR MOTHER DRESSES YOU FUNNY!

STOCK UP, CRASH, WE'LL NEED THESE AT THE FORTRESS.

FORTRESS! – HA– YOU WEENIES WILL GET YOUR BUTTS KICKED— WAIT 'TIL THE BEAVERS GET YA!

GET A REAL JOB, DWEEBS!

AWESOME! ATOMIC EGGS AND BODACIOUS BATTLE SHIELDS.

NOTHING CAN GET US NOW.

OH, NO, I'VE GOT A RAMBO HERE!

SOMETHING'S FISHY...

OI, PINHEADS -BURP- WHERE DO -BURP- YA THINK YER -BURP- GOING? -BUURRP-

DON'T SWEAT IT, DUDES— JUST CRUISIN' TO THE FORTRESS.

BELCHING BEAVERS RULE!

TIME TO -BURP- KISS YER -BURP- LILY WHITE BUTTS -BURP- GOODBYE! -BURP-

DYNAMITE

RUN FOR IT!

POW

BOOM

BANG

POW

OOOHH! I'VE BEEN HIT!

WE -BURP- BLITZED -BURP- THEIR BUTTS!

YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN NOW, FRIEND.

HANG ON, BUD... I'LL GET YOUR POWER POTION!

WHOA, DUDES! THIS PLACE GIVES ME THE CREEPS!!

TO BE CONTINUED...

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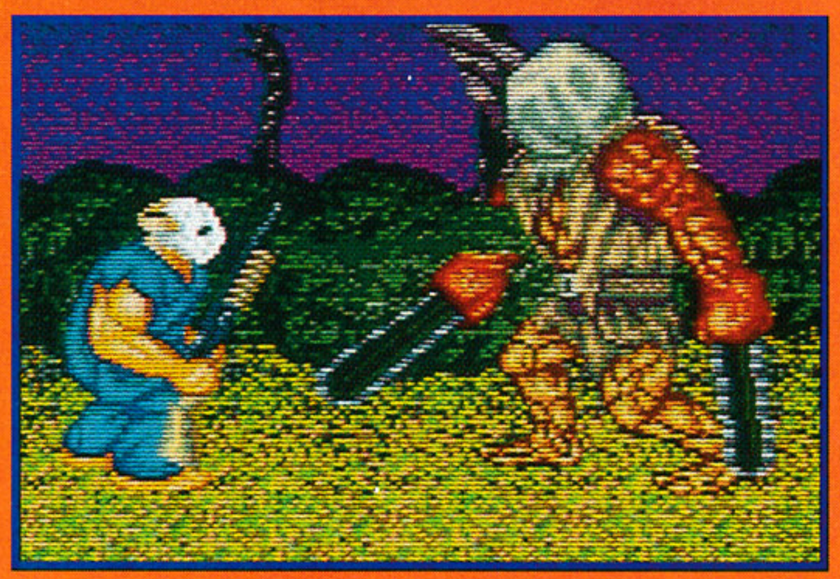

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CLOAW

Even the best player has trouble with a game now and again, but where can you turn for help? VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT has designed *Tip Sheet* to give you, the reader, answers to questions such as "How do I defeat the end boss on this level?" or "I've looked everywhere, but I can't find the blue vase." So if you're having a problem on a game, write to us, and our group of experts will do everything they can to solve it. Send your letters to

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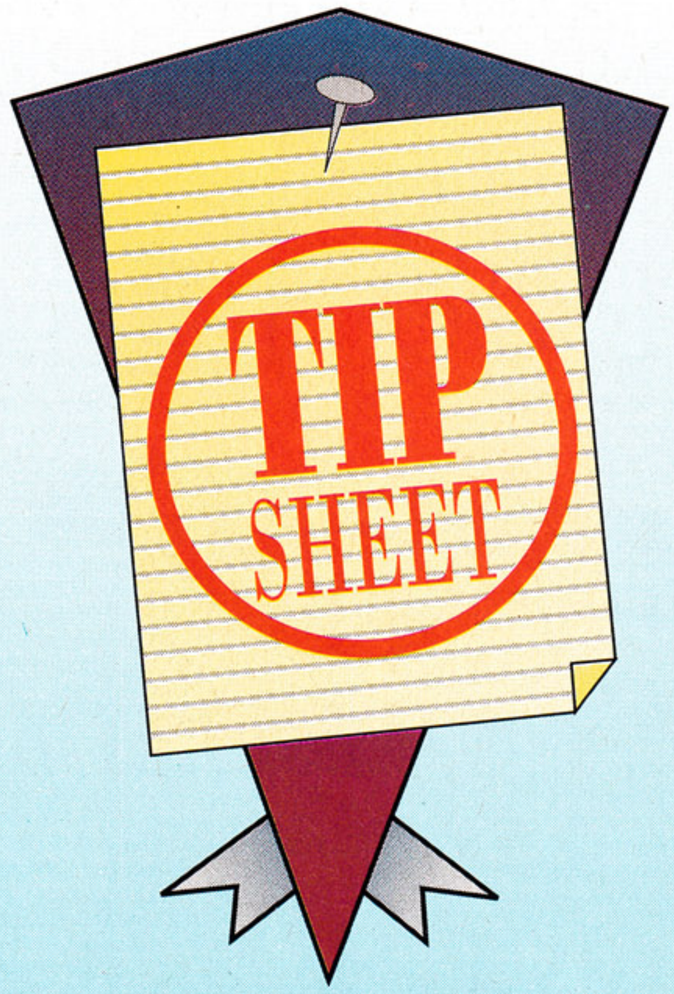
90210
Attn: *Tip Sheet*



by Donn Nauert

We have a question concerning the Sega Master System game *Alien Syndrome*. Is there any way to continue? If there is, we would appreciate the help.

—Andrew Greenwood
& Steven Rothman
Forest, Ontario, Canada

I've owned *Alien Syndrome* for the SMS for over two years, and I still can't destroy the monster at the end of Level 5. I would appreciate any tips you could give me.

—Brian Carty
via GEnie mail

Sorry Andrew, Alien Syndrome *doesn't have any level selects or continues that we are aware of. As far as battling the Level-5 boss goes, his weakness is his mouth. Try to work your way to the lower center of the screen, and shoot into his mouth with the fireball weapon.*

In the game *Snake's Revenge*, I can't seem to get past the bosses in the building that John Turner is in. Could you possibly help me get past this part?

I was also wondering if you could give me a password to help me finish the game.

—Jeff Mestayer
Kingwood, Texas

I'm not really sure if I understand your question, Jeff. There is only one boss in the building where John Turner is located. To get by the boss of this area, throw claymore mines at him from across the room.

Here's a password that will take you deep into the game. This password was sent in by Burton (he didn't give us his last name) of Edina, Minnesota: Enter 5WN3 8#MV RML9 BRP! %!HT N67Z 3QZ8 26.

"...it's just as addicting as *Tetris.*™"
—Nintendo Power™ May/June 1990

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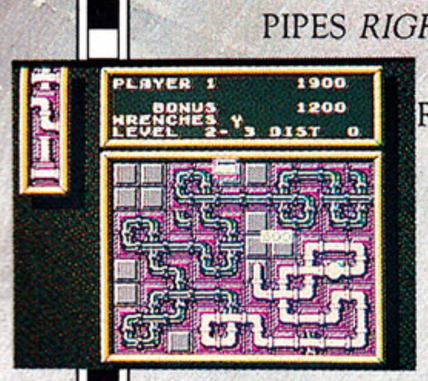

It takes about five seconds to get the idea. It can take a lifetime to get good at it. Really good.

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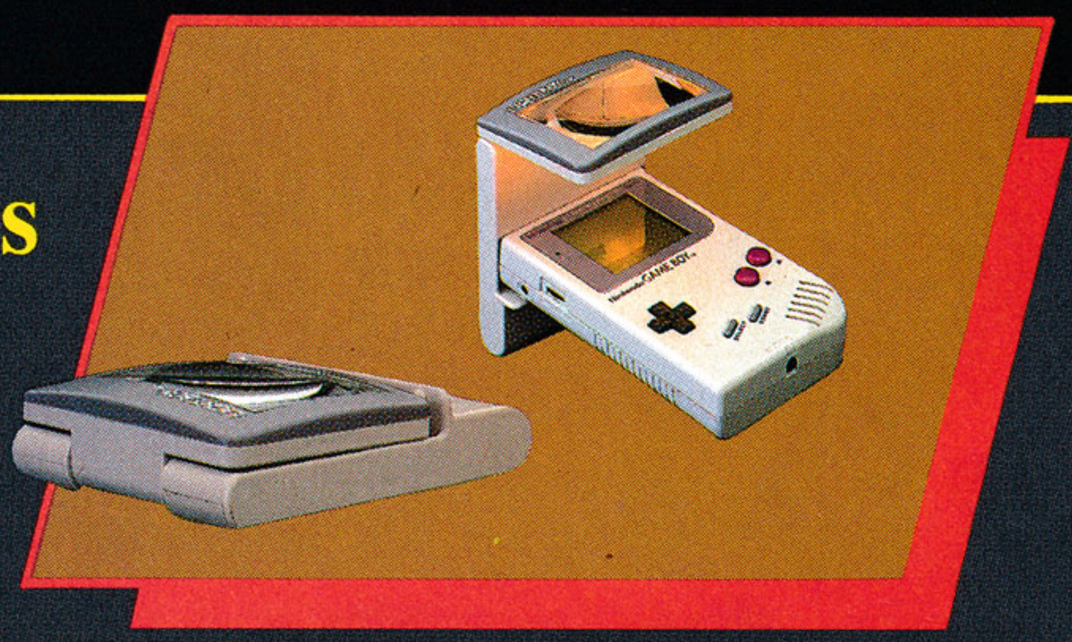
A Little Light Goes A Long Way



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GONE SOFT ON THE BRAIN ?

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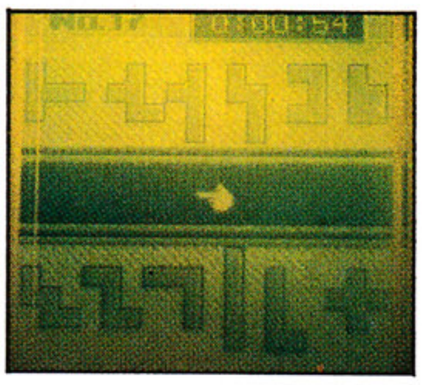
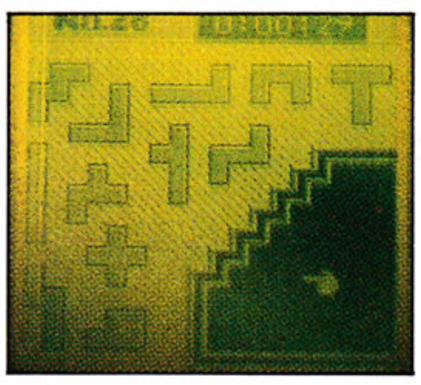
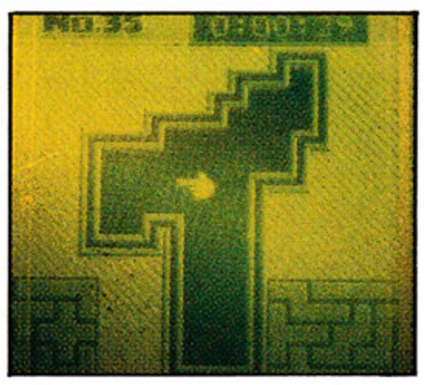


You've pulled away from the pretenders now. Keep those brain cells popping!



You've hit the afterburners, and you've exploded into uncharted territory.



Your brains are scrambled, but the end is in sight!

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Don't turn this page until you've played Daedalian Opus.

***Enter this password to start near the end of* Snake's Revenge.**

Here are the locations of the three fairies in* Hydlide. *To get the third fairy, you must shoot the two wizards with a single shot of the wave magic (see photo top left). Once you have all three fairies, it's off to the final castle.

I'm having trouble with the TurboGrafx-16 game *Ninja Spirit.* I can't seem to move fast enough to defeat the boss on Stage 6. He keeps appearing on top of me, and when I move I get slaughtered. How do you get by this guy?

—Tommy Sterling
Eureka, California

The trick to defeating this boss is not *to move. Once you get to the boss, move to the second rock on the right, and stand in the very center. Then jump straight up so that your alter egos will be directly above you. (Hopefully, you will have two alter egos and the extra powerful bombs.)*

At that point, you'll want to kneel down and start bombing as fast as you can. You should get rid of the Army of Fugitive Warriors in no time.

It's a lot easier to defeat the boss with extra alter egos and by kneeling in the center of the second rock.

In the game *Hydlide*, I'm having trouble finding the second fairy. Can you tell me a way to find it?

—Jeff Smith
Galveston, Texas

To get to the second fairy, you must go to the moving trees, located near the desert, and push up on one of the trees. It will usually be the tree that moves last.

To get the first fairy, you must go to the trees with the wasps in them, and push up on one of the trees. Try pushing all of them because finding the right one is strictly random.

The final fairy can be found when you shoot the wave magic and hit both *wizards with a single shot.*

Once you are in possession of all three fairies, you will be taken to the island with the water dragon on it. Here's a hint on how you can defeat him: Try burning one of the trees on the water dragon's island.

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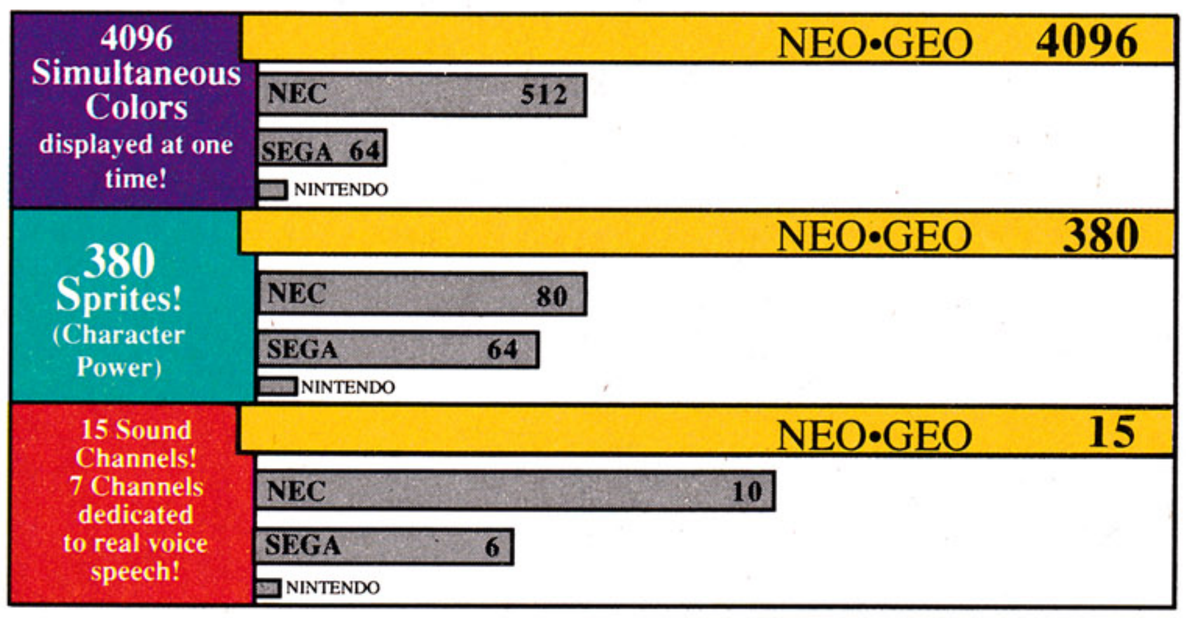
It's simple. Would you rather be a cold weenie?
Or a real hot dog!



A Quantum Leap Forward In Video Entertainment.

Call: SNK at (213) 787-0990 or Authorized SNK Dealers
- Video Express Inc. (800) 253-6665
- Premier Electronics Group (800) 783-7344

Anyone else may be a weenie in disguise.

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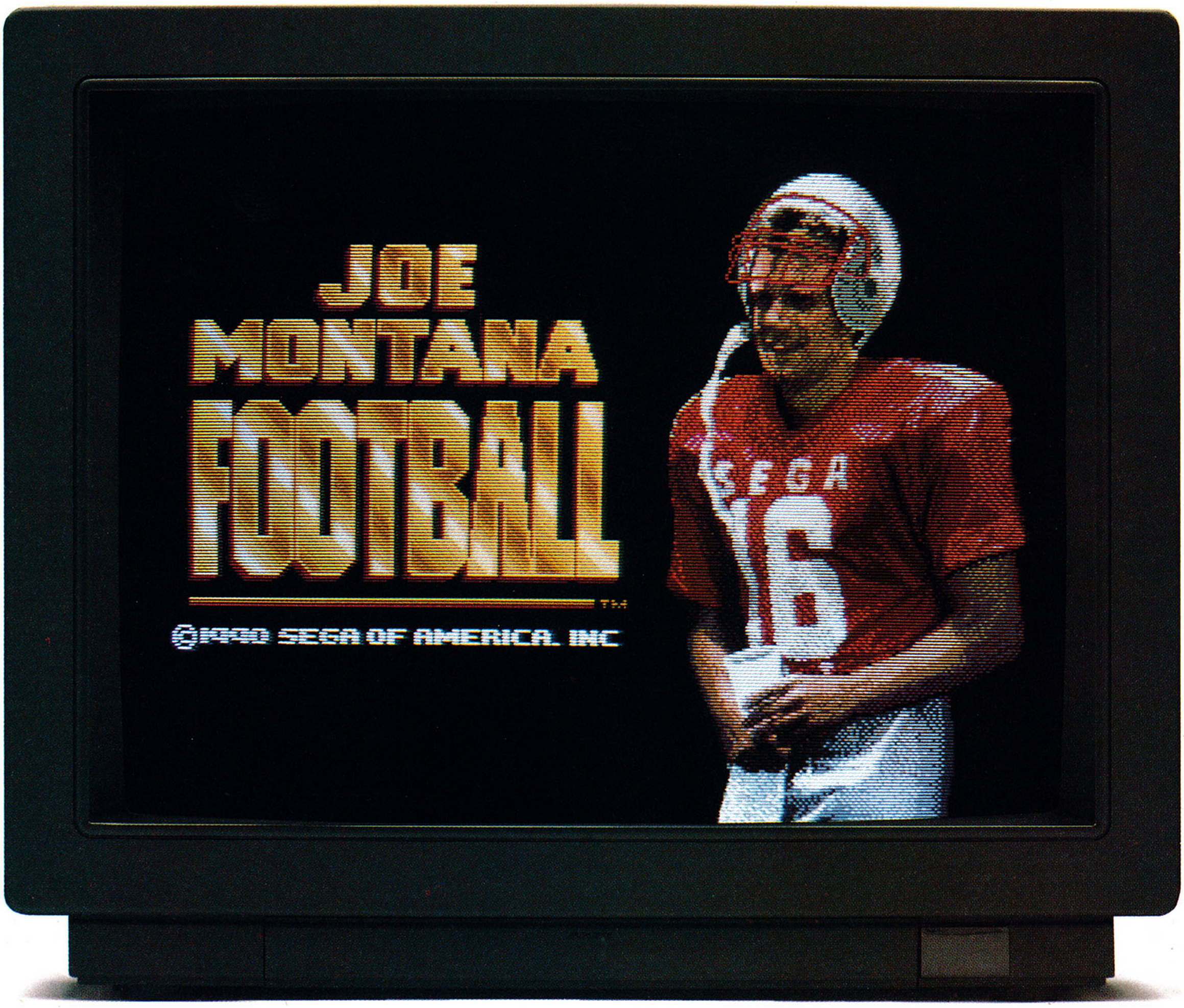
CIRCLE #113 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

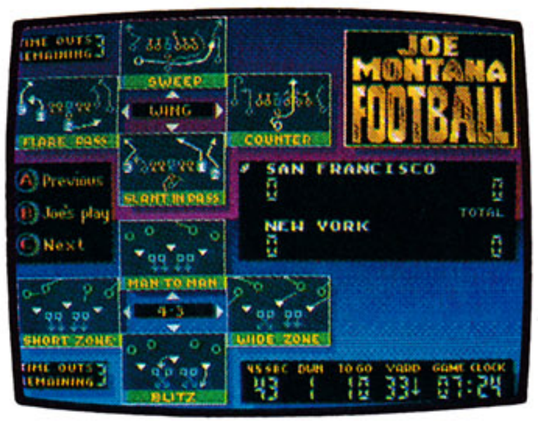
GENESI
JOE MONTAN

INTRODUCING THE ULTIMATE HOME VIDEO FOOTBALL GAME.



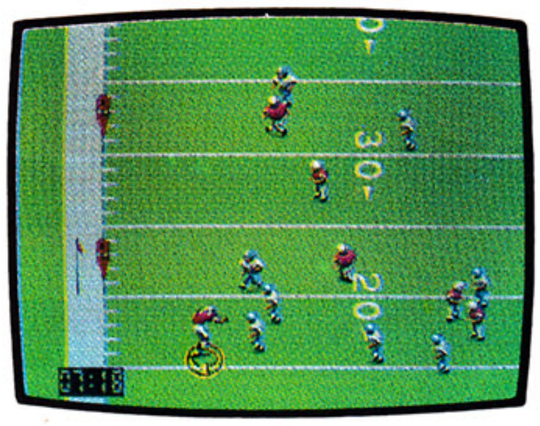
S™ DOES A FOOTBALL.™

1. Get your scouting info direct from Joe. All the inside information on all the teams. Go for the win!



2. Play select screen. Try a draw play, flare pass or maybe go for a bomb. Joe Montana even gives you his favorite play!

3. Check out your receivers through the face mask view at the top of the screen and find the open man. If the defenders are playing back, hit your receiver on a short slant for a big play.

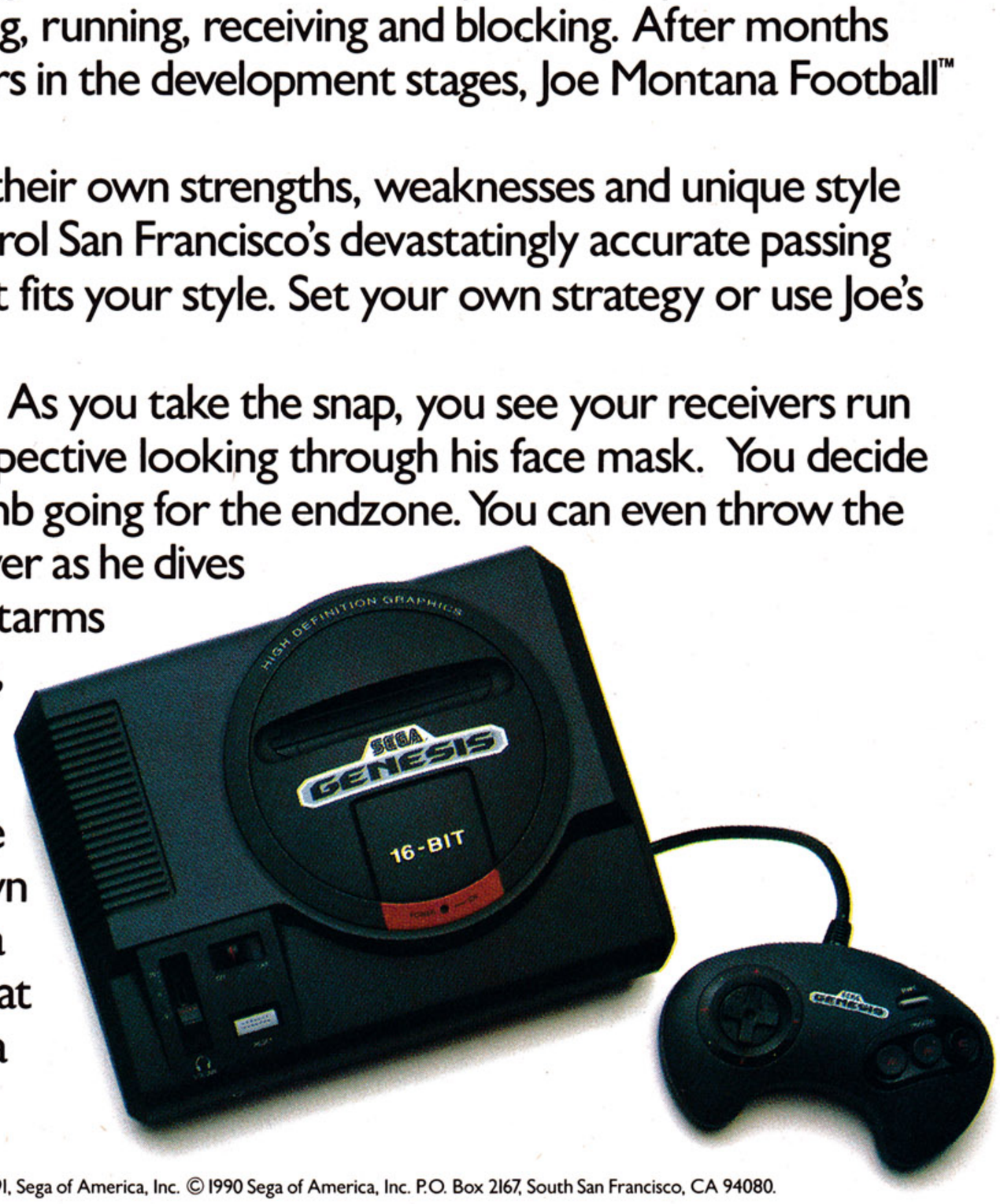


4. Make the catch! Stiff arm defenders as you sprint downfield for the touchdown.

Who better to design the ultimate football video game than the Pro Quarterback of the Decade, Joe Montana. And Joe chose Sega™ Genesis™ because only its 16-bit power could create the lifelike animation of real passing, running, receiving and blocking. After months of working closely with our programmers in the development stages, Joe Montana Football™ is here.

You select from 16 teams, each with their own strengths, weaknesses and unique style of play. You can be Joe Montana and control San Francisco's devastatingly accurate passing attack or quarterback another team that fits your style. Set your own strategy or use Joe's recommendation for the winning play.

Call audibles at the line of scrimmage. As you take the snap, you see your receivers run their patterns from a quarterback's perspective looking through his face mask. You decide whether the pass is a bullet or a long bomb going for the endzone. You can even throw the ball away. And you also control the receiver as he dives for the ball, or runs downfield and straightarms defenders. As the game clock runs down, dive for first down yardage. There's also halftime and end-of-game stats, delivered by Joe. Or, play the "two minute drill" and see if you can score a touchdown in just two minutes—in true Joe Montana style. Football couldn't get more real. What else would you expect from Joe Montana Football.™ You can't do this on Nintendo.®



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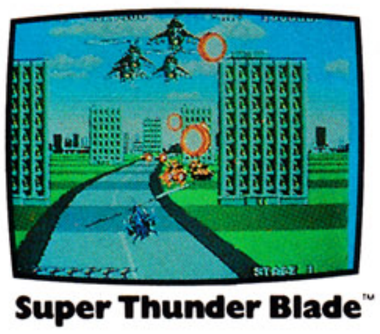
GENESIS DOES IT ALL.

ARCADE GAMES:

Golden Axe™

Space Harrier II™

Super Hang-On™

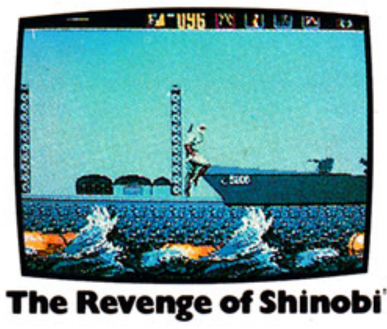

Super Thunder Blade™

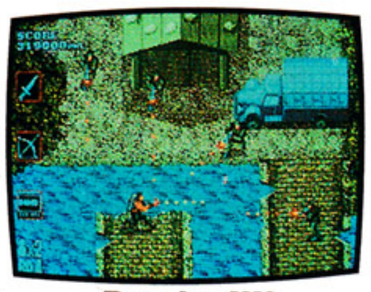
Cyberball™

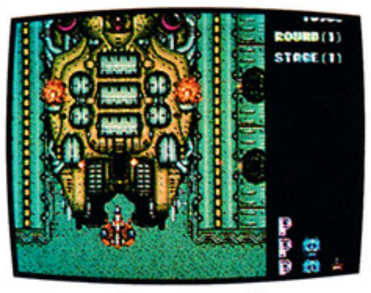
Strider™

Altered Beast™

Ghouls 'n Ghosts™


The Revenge of Shinobi™


Rambo III®


Truxton™

Forgotten Worlds™

MUSIC VIDEO:

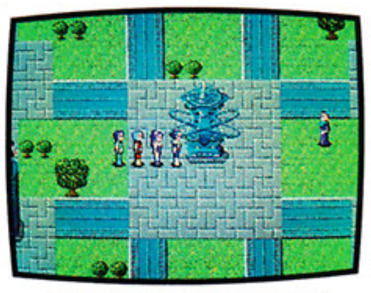
ADVENTURE GAMES:

Super Monaco GP™

E-S.W.A.T. City Under Siege™

Afterburner II™

Michael Jackson's Moonwalker™


Phantasy Star II™

The Sword of Vermillion™

SPORTS GAMES:

Tommy Lasorda Baseball™

World Championship Soccer™

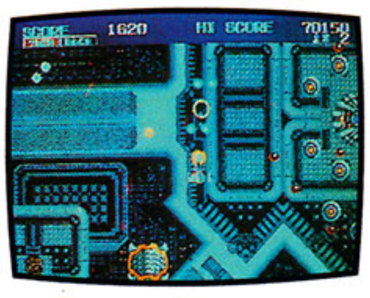
Arnold Palmer Tournament Golf™

Pat Riley's Basketball™

James "Buster" Douglas Knockout Boxing™

Joe Montana Football™*

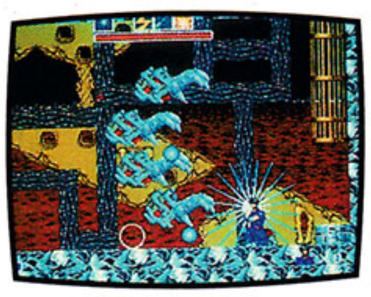
ACTION GAMES:


Thunder Force II™

Ghostbusters II™

Alex Kidd: Enchanted Castle™

Last Battle™


Mystic Defender™

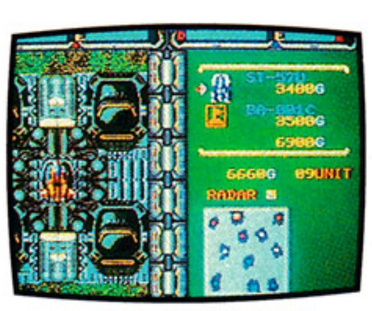
Dynamite Duke™

STRATEGY/PUZZLE GAMES:

COMING SOON:

Zoom!™

Columns™


Herzog Zwei™

Dick Tracy®

Spider-Man®**

The Castle of Illusion™ Starring Mickey Mouse

SEGA™ GENESIS™

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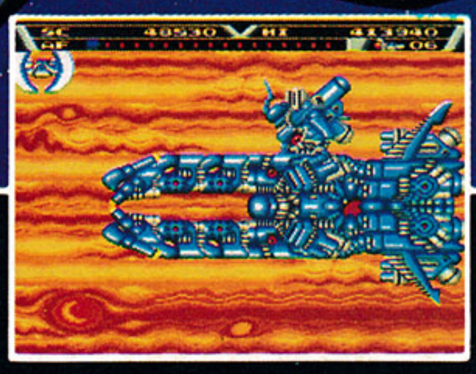
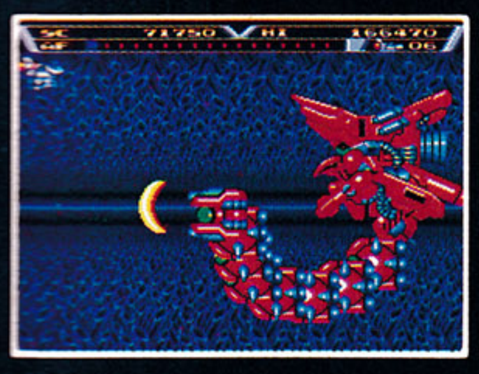
RENOVATION™ PRODUCTS

SEGA™ GENESIS™
16-BIT CARTRIDGE

LICENSED BY
SEGA ENTERPRISES LTD.
FOR PLAY ON THE
SEGA GENESIS SYSTEM.

ARROW FLASH™





In the 30th century, Viking terrorists, led by the vicious Great Hilagi, are plundering and destroying planets throughout the Galaxy. They move in warships capable of travelling in Nether Space... and Earth is their next target.

Now, there has been an assault on the laboratory of the renowned scientist Doctor Zerrek Keene who, in a state near death, has summoned his granddaughter, Zana Keene. "Zana," he said, "while experimenting with Nether Space transmission, I caused a huge magnetic field to be formed around our planet, and it has attracted the attention of the barbaric Viking Terrorists." Dr. Keene pressed a keycard into her palm, and with his last breath, whispered, "Zana, use this...save Earth."

Zana Keene, trained as a test pilot at the United Government Military Academy, knew what he had given her...access to the space fighter "Chameleon" ERX-75 — capable of combat in Nether Space, and of transforming itself into a robot — the strongest weapon ever developed by the United Earth Army. Zana Keene knew what she must do. "Use this...save Earth."

Renovation Products, Inc. 987 University Avenue, Suite 10, Los Gatos, CA 95030. Phone (408) 395-8375. Fax (408) 395-8377.

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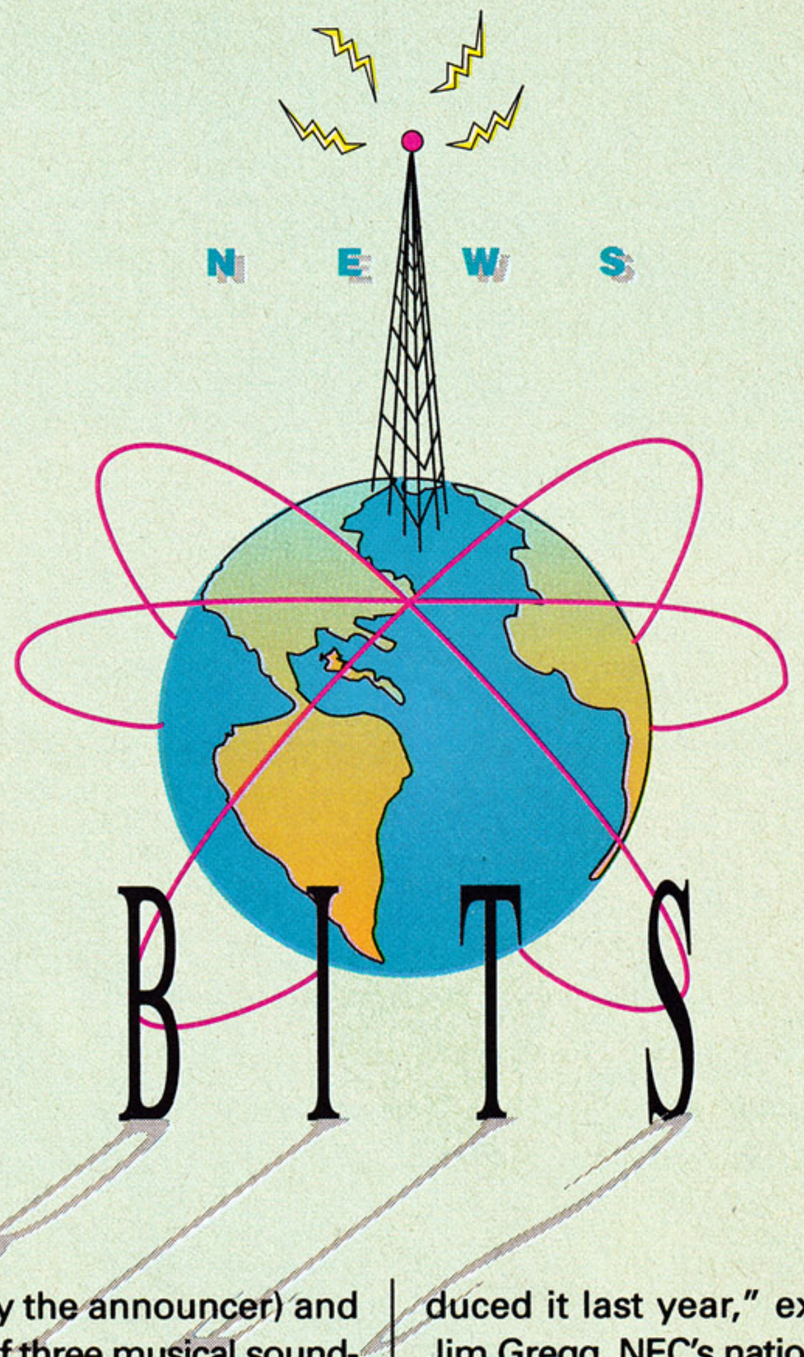
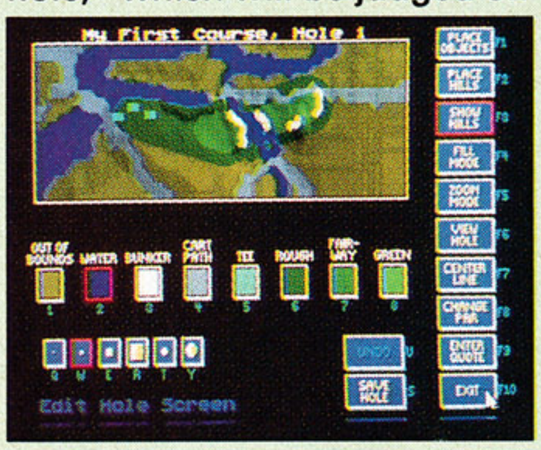


COMPILED BY
JOYCE WORLEY

Accolade Golf Contest

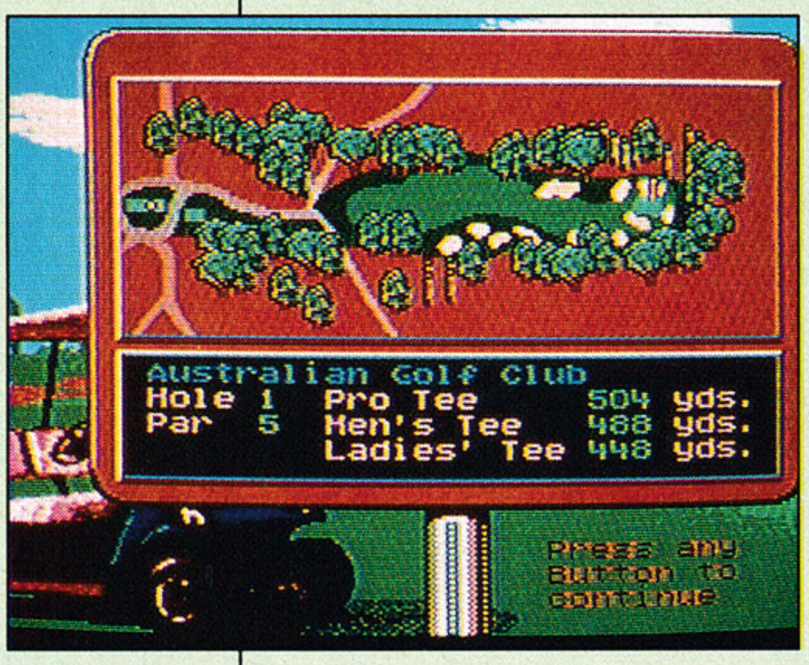
Accolade, in conjunction with Egghead Discount Software stores, introduced an "armchair architect" contest in support of *Jack Nicklaus' Unlimited Golf & Course Design.* Entrants try to design the "perfect par-4 hole," which will be judged on



originality, aesthetics and playability. The grand-prize winner will be personally selected by Jack Nicklaus and receive a trip for two to be guests of the champion at the 15th-annual Memorial Tournament at the Muirfield Village Golf Club in Dublin, Ohio, in May.

Ten second-prize winners will receive subscriptions to *The Wide World of Golf* video magazine, and 50 third-prize winners will be awarded the *Official Guide to Jack Nicklaus' Computer Golf.* Contest information is available at Egghead stores, and entries must be received by January 31, 1991.

In other golf news, Accolade made an agreement with NEC Technologies to produce software for NEC Technologies' equipment, including the TurboGrafx-16 and their CD-ROM player. The first title is *Jack Nicklaus' Turbo Golf.* According to Sheldon Safir, Accolade's producer for both versions, the CD-ROM game has five courses, digitized sound, narration (each course and every hole is described by the announcer) and a choice of three musical soundtracks to toggle off and on. The TurboChip version has one soundtrack and an 18-hole course (the Australian Golf Club at Kensington), allows skins and stroke play, offers club selection



and features tips by Nicklaus. Accolade has also started work on a TurboChip version of *Gunboat,* which should be available midyear.

Retailers Reach for 16-Bit

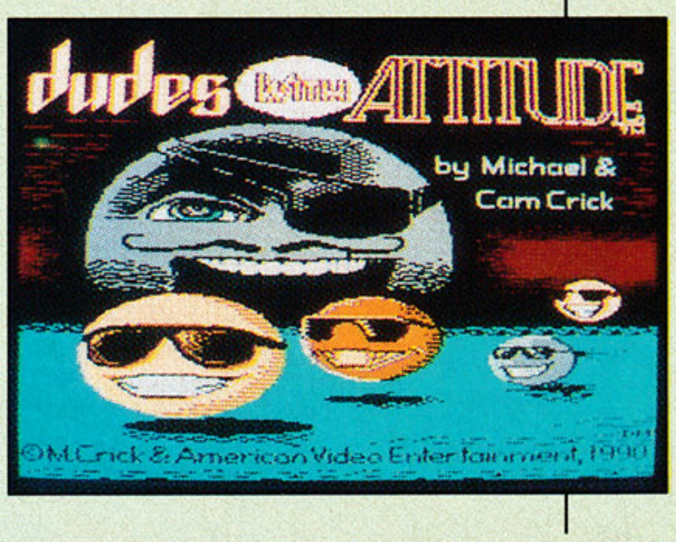
According to information compiled by NEC Technologies, the nation's retailers are making the jump up to 16-bit technology, marking the slowdown of 8-bit game machine sales.

"We've tripled the number of retail outlets for the TurboGrafx-16 system since we introduced it last year," explained Jim Gregg, NEC's national sales manager. "According to recent market studies, sales of Nintendo's 8-bit system have been tracking lower, while 16-bit system sales have increased."

NEC revealed that the TurboGrafx-16 system was in approximately 6,000 outlets before Christmas 1990.

American Video Cops an *Attitude*

In an interview with Phil Mikkelson, VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT learned that American Video Entertainment is currently working on *Dudes With Attitude.* The gamer plays the part of a dude, a babe or some other cool character, then explores mazes (about 32 of them) where he or she picks up attitude changers. These change the on-screen characters so that they are able to pick up color-matching prizes or destroy color-matching enemies.



The new game for NES machines should be ready during the first quarter of 1991.

Nolan Nods at CDTV

Pioneer gamesman Nolan Bushnell, creator of Atari's *Pong* and frequent spokesman for the gaming industry, says that Commodore's new CDTV is the future of interactive entertainment. Bushnell, currently the general manager of Commodore's Interactive Products Division, went on to say that the system opens new doors to gamers and software suppliers. "The challenge," according to Nolan, "is providing content, not just advanced technology."

The industry veteran lavished praise on the new system, asserting that CDTV is a major advance in technology and capability over any commercially available entertainment format. CDTV combines audio, video, graphics and computer interactivity into a compact disc-based system.

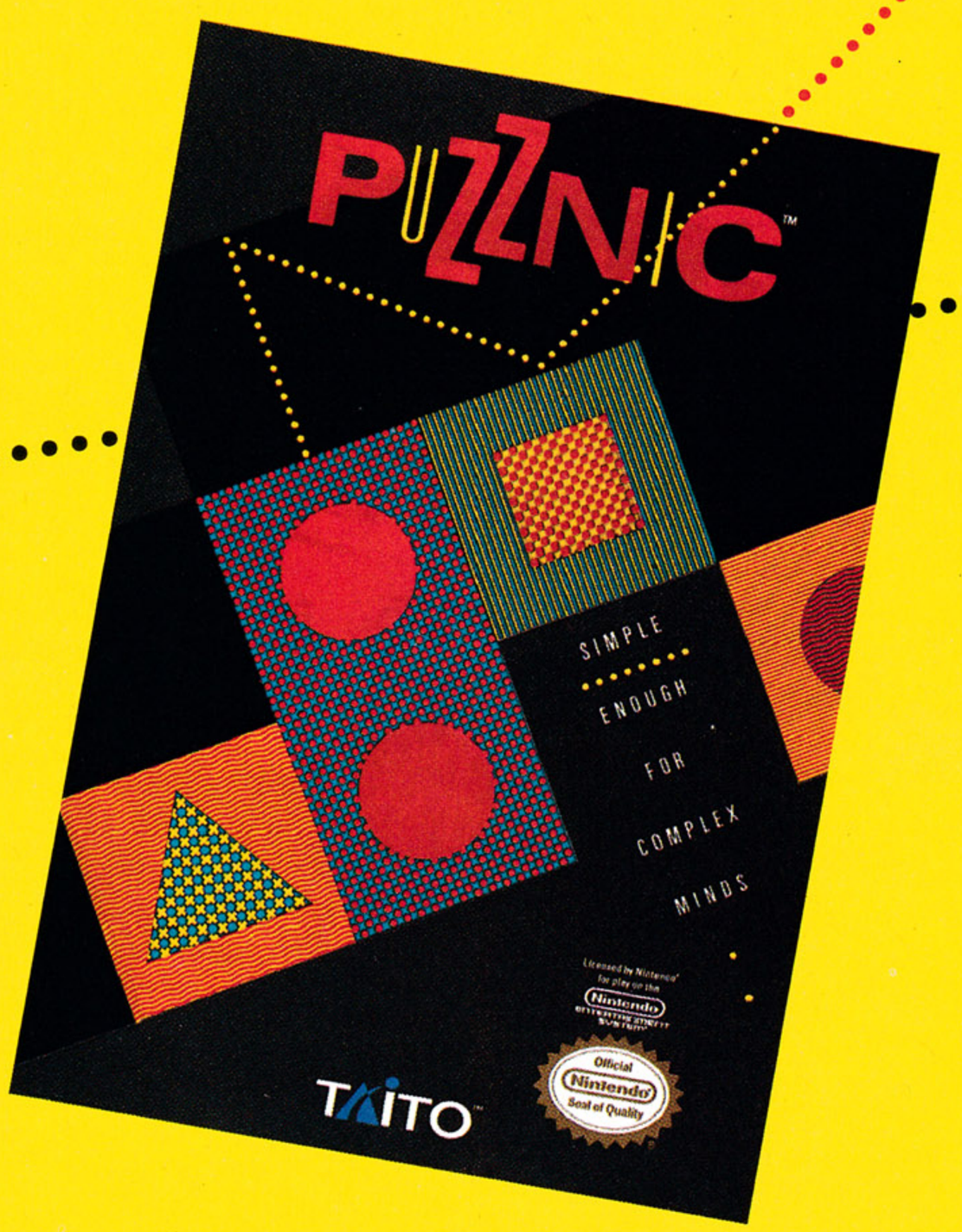
Commodore and other developers will be introducing new titles on a regular basis, according to Bushnell. Accolade, Cinemaware, LucasFilm, Mastertronic, Sierra and Spectrum HoloByte all currently have products in the works for CDTV.

The CDTV will sell for under $1,000. Prices for CDTV disks range from $30 to $100.

In a related story, Commodore announced more than 35 multimedia titles scheduled for introduction early in 1991 for play on the CDTV system. The system, described by Commodore as similar in appearance to a VCR or CD player is also compatible with over 30 CD+G (compact disc plus graphics) music discs already available.

Titles currently being readied include reference

No Brain no Gain



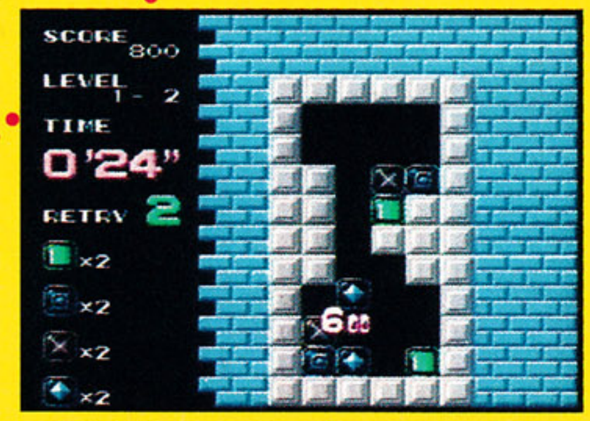
Had enough of ninja swordfights on Planet Zark? Wondering why it's always up to *you* to defend the universe against foreign terrorists with bad breath and giant radioactive amoebas?

Reclaim your brain! Get Puzznic™ — it's the fast-paced puzzle that'll give your mind a heavy duty workout.

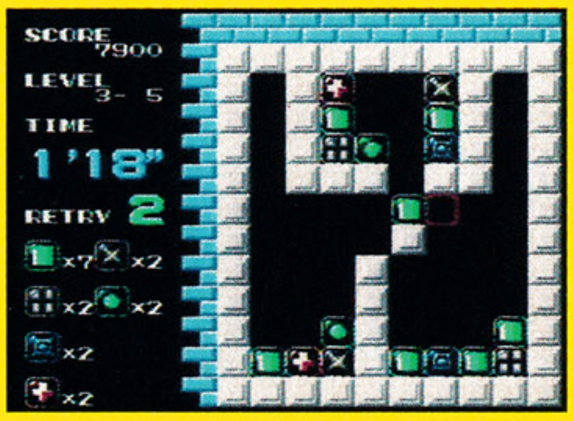
Puzznic seems easy — move and match geometric shapes to wipe out all the puzzle pieces. Trouble is, you've got to match the shapes in just the right order — or you won't blast one puzzle and get to the next. Rack up bonus points for matching multiples — if you're really fast, you can beat the clock and start some chain reaction action. And when you finish the first 160 puzzles, the fun's not over. You also get Gravnic,™ the *bonus game* that lets you play against gravity.

So dump the fake stun gun. You've got a few more hours before the universe goes terminal. Pump up your brain cells with Puzznic. When you pop back into those ninja pajamas, you might just have a fighting chance.

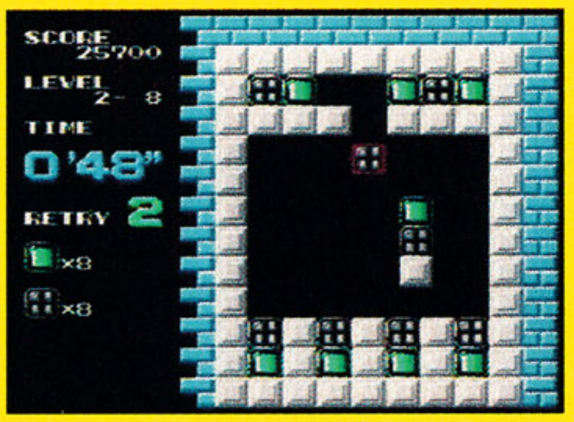
Actual Nintendo Entertainment System® screens shown.



Don't let nasty elevator cubes squeeze you into a corner!



Pick Password to resume your game after each completed level.



Plan carefully or you'll be caught with extra shapes.

TAITO™

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works, such as *King James Bible, World Vista Atlas, Family Medical Advisor, Illustrated Works of Shakespeare* and others; children's classics (*Cinderella, Peter Rabbit*); story books; activities, such as the *Animated Coloring Book*; educational programs; an electronic cookbook; and over a dozen games.

Games currently scheduled include *Battle Chess* (Interplay), *Airwave Adventure* (Tiger Media), *Defender of the Crown* (Cinemaware), *Classic Board Games* (Merit), *Many Roads to Murder* and *Murder Anyone?* (Vent); *Excalibur* (Virgin Mastertronic); *Space Quest III* (Sierra), *Pacmania* (Domark); *Future Wars* (Interplay) and *Xenon II* (Spectrum Holobyte).

The system also has two hot simulations scheduled for early release, Maxis' *SimCity* and *Falcon* (Spectrum Holobyte).

Top Coin-Ops of October 1990

Figures courtesy of *RePlay* magazine, based on an earnings-opinion poll of operators.

Best Upright Videos

1. *Pit-Fighter* by Atari
2. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* by Konami
3. *Hard Drivin'* by Atari
4. *G-LOC* by Sega
5. *Moonwalker* by Sega
6. *Final Lap* by Atari
7. *Four Trax* by Atari
8. *Beast Busters* by SNK
9. *Galaxy Force* by Sega
10. *Smash TV* by Williams

Best Coin-Op Software

1. *Final Fight* by Capcom
2. *Magic Sword* by Capcom
3. *Neo•Geo* by SNK
4. *Raiden* by Fabtek
5. *Violence Fight* by Taito
6. *Off Road Trak Pak* by Leland
7. *WWF Superstars* by American Technos
8. *Combatribes* by American Technos
9. *Thunder Fox* by Taito
10. *Cadash* by Taito

Best New Uprights

1. *Race Drivin'* by Atari
2. *Bonanza Bros.* by Sega
3. *Air Inferno* by Taito

Acclaim Is Acclaimed

Acclaim Entertainment received honors and kudos for the company and its management. Gregory Fischbach, chairman and CEO, was named 1990 Long Island Businessman of the Year by the Wharton Business School Club. The executive was honored at the club's annual dinner in November 1990.

Adam Weissman, president of the club, expressed enthusiasm for the choice: "We're pleased to be presenting this award to Gregory Fischbach because he has brought to Long Island one of the fastest-growing companies in the country."

Meanwhile, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., named Acclaim as "Vendor/Partner of the Quarter," making the company a candidate for the "Vendor of the Year" award to be announced later. The citation was based on Acclaim's contribution to Wal-Mart's sales growth, responsiveness to sales needs and ongoing efforts.

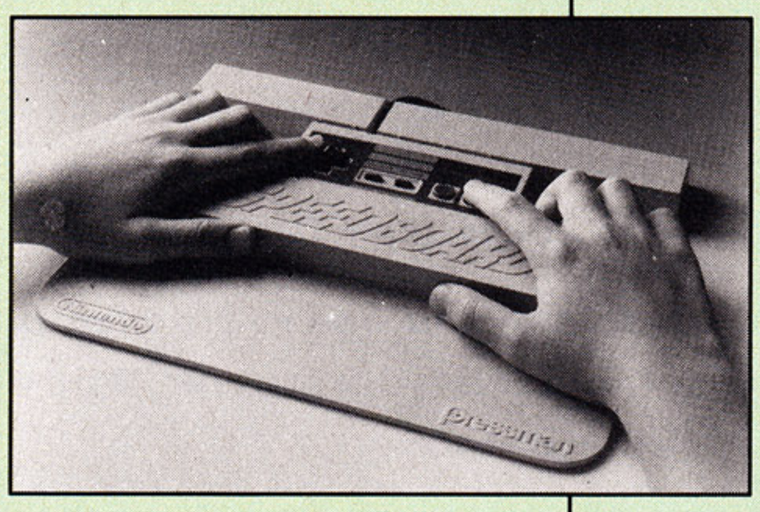
Activision Unveils '91 Games

Activision's lineup of 1991 games includes a clutch of NES titles as well as Game Boy cartridges and only a handful of IBM PC entertainments. *Galaxy 5000,* for the NES, features futuristic turbocraft racing for one or two players. *The Adventures of Rad Gravity* sends the hero space-exploring in a futuristic solar system of ten fantasy worlds. A still-unnamed *Stealth*-like game features air-ground combat with a Middle Eastern theme. There will also be a NES *BattleTech* game under the Infocom label. Finally, *Sword Master* is a side-scrolling, sword-fighting/spell-casting game with multiple levels and unusually large characters.

For play on the Game Boy, Activision will release *Ghostbusters II*, based on the hit movie, and *Heavyweight Championship Boxing*, which has a third-person ring view showing both boxers face to face and a first-person view that puts the player inside the ring.

The most recent computer titles, *F-14 Tomcat, Shanghai II* and *Crescent Hawk's Revenge,* will continue to be featured in Activision's 1991 catalog, and two or three new computer games will also be added, though their names are not yet set. One of them, tentatively titled *Death or Glory,* simulates historical air dogfights, from biplanes to jets.

Activision will be "primarily focusing on IBM PC for computer games, with maybe some Amiga," according to Michele Bowman, Activision spokesperson. Activision is "concentrating on bigger and better games, instead of action arcade titles, since the company feels that DOS gamers tend to be more sophisticated."



Controller Holder Boosts Scores

Pressman Toy Corporation's Speedboard is a holder for the NES control pad that frees a gamer's hands for play. The Nintendo controller snaps into the Speedboard to provide a firm base so that the player doesn't have to hold the controller.

According to company spokespersons, the board shortens reaction time so gamers can attain higher scores. The *Speedboard* costs about $7 wherever NES accessories are sold.

New Subdivisions for *SimCity*

SimCity, Maxis Software's hit disk, now has a couple of add-on graphic sets that allow players to build new (or old) cities. *Graphic Set 1—Ancient Cities* provides the architecture and technology to build cities in ancient Asia, medieval times and the Wild West. *Graphic Set 2—Future Cities* contains versions of a futuristic U.S., futuristic Europe and a Moon colony.

The cities made using the *Graphic Sets* can also be superimposed on the original *SimCity* structures to make weird combinations such as medieval Tokyo or Wild West Detroit.

Meanwhile, McGraw Hill has published *The SimCity Planning Commission Handbook,* authored by Johnny Wilson. The handbook thoroughly explains *SimCity* and provides strategies for city builders. It's available from Maxis Software or at bookstores for $14.95.

Commodore Cuts Amiga Price

Commodore lowered the retail price of the Amiga 500C to $599, a 25% price reduction that makes it the lowest-priced computer of its type. The computer will be discounted to under $500 by some retailers, which should make it very attractive to the home market.

The Amiga 500C package includes the console with standard 512K of RAM, built-in keyboard and mouse and an adapter that allows the computer to be attached to a television set and software. The purchaser receives the Textcraft Plus word processor, *Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego* (Brøderbund) and *Tetris* (Spectrum Holobyte).

This repricing is expected to make Amiga sales boom. "With this extremely competitive price

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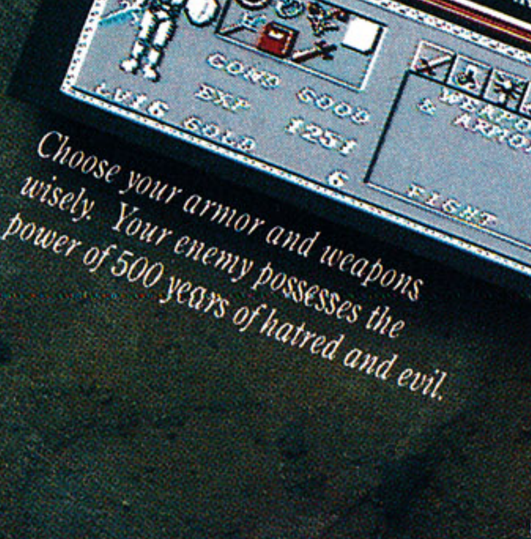
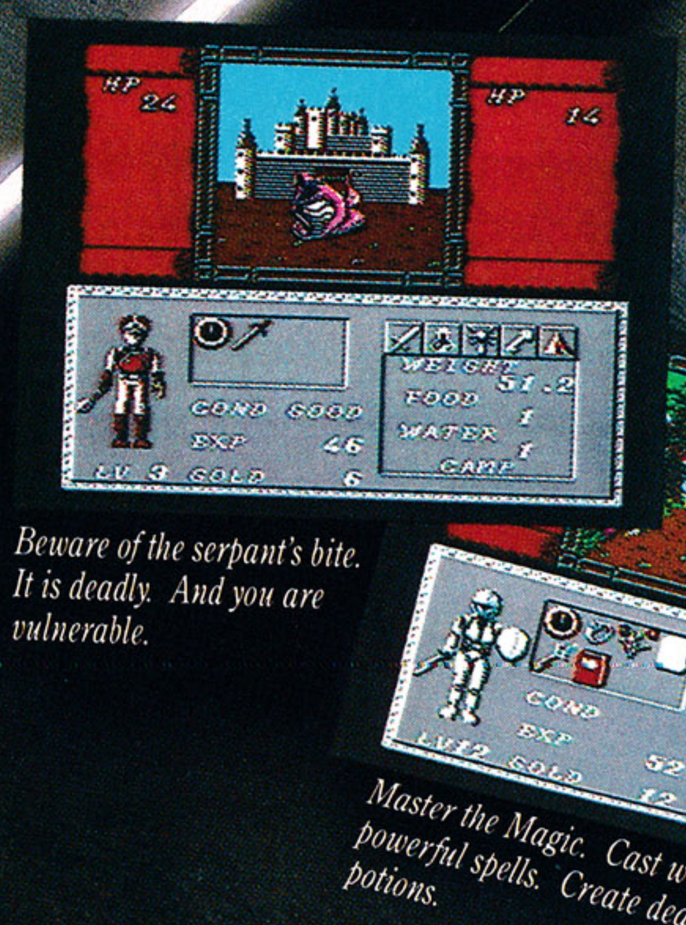
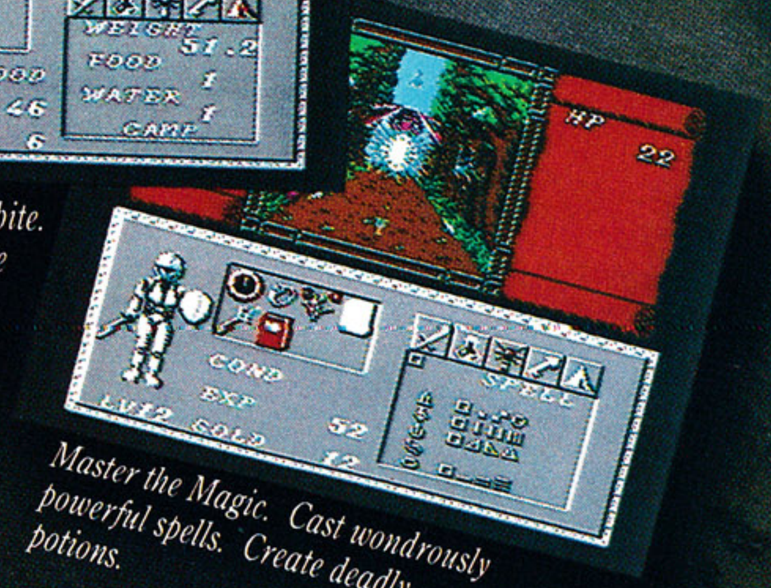




Beware of the serpant's bite. It is deadly. And you are vulnerable.



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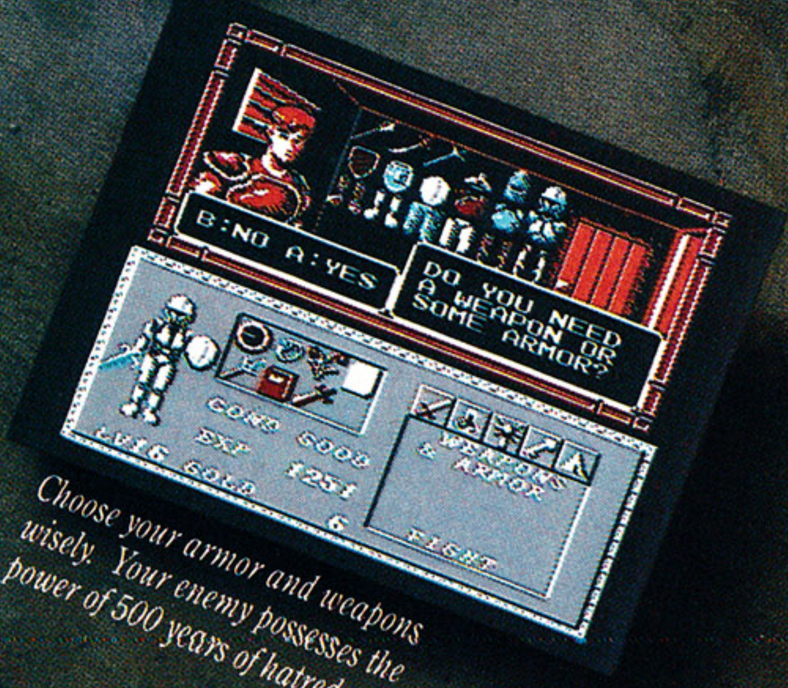

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and our innovative new customer service program," commented Bob Larsen, Commodore vice-president, "we're confident the Amiga will be the choice of families..."

Hobby Store Trades Games

HO/RC Hobbies, Inc. ([716] 244-8321 in Rochester, New York) has found a way to boost sales. For over two years, the store has been taking NES and Sega games in trade. It seems the store has over 1,500 new games in stock, in addition to a library of about 500 used video games,and does a big business both locally and by mail order. They accept the trade-ins toward any of the merchandise in stock, including radio-controlled vehicles, collector cards, skateboards and games. Payment (from $5 to $100) depends on the title's scarcity.

The hobby store sponsors monthly tournaments on arcade-style games and in-store tryouts of video games. They currently stock games for the Game Boy, Genesis, Lynx, Neo•Geo, Nintendo Entertainment System, Sega Master System andTurboGrafx-16.

High-Flying Thrills in Activision Sweeps

This past November, Activision introduced an eight-month sweepstakes that will turn some lucky gamer into a "fighter pilot for a day." The contest, a promotion for their new *F-14 Tomcat* (IBM PC), will send the grand-prize winner on an expense-paid trip for two to Air Combat U.S.A. (Fullerton, California). There he or she will go through a training program modeled from military tactics manuals and get briefed on aircraft systems, radio and in-flight engagement. Finally, the winner gets an hour of flight time that includes air maneuvers, formation flying and combat confrontations. Second prizes are leather bomber jackets.

The *Fighter Pilot for a Day* promotion details and entry blanks are available at software stores.

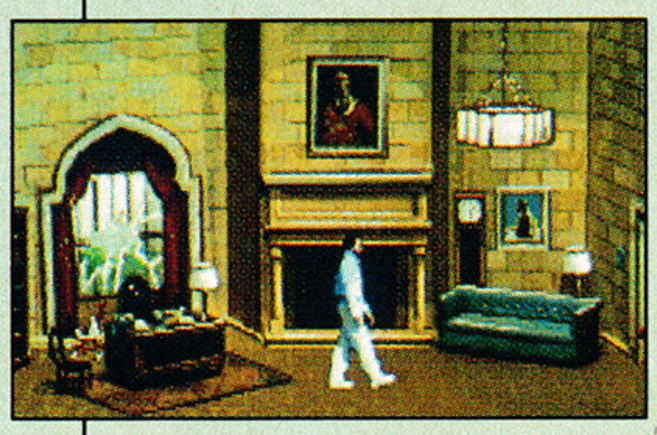
In support of its upcoming *F-14 Tomcat* game, Activision sent a few computer-game magazine editors to this innovative flight school. Air Combat U.S.A. took VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT's Executive Editor, Andy Eddy, into the skies off the coast to dogfight against Wes Nihei (of *GamePro*) and Johnny Wilson (of *Computer Gaming World*).

After a brief training session in the hangar, it was time for takeoff in a propeller-driven trainer, where each editor was aided by a combat-trained pilot. Following clearance through the delicate sections of Southern California airspace, the editors took their turn at the stick, where such maneuvers as "high yo-yos" and "displacement rolls" were used to get on the enemy's tail (or "six") for the kill. Microwave-based "guns" are used to trigger a smoke trail on a "hit" plane to signal the kill.

(See the *Letter From the Editor* in this issue for Eddy's perspective on the event.)

Hints for Gamers

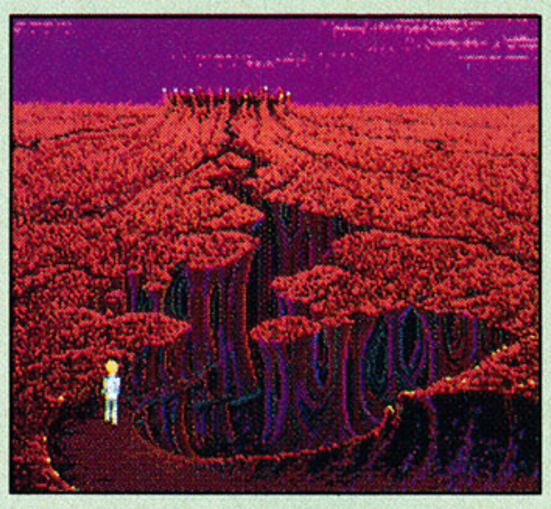
Accolade has completed a hint book to help would-be adventurers through their two latest programs, *Altered Destiny* and *Search for the King.* The first section of the *Altered Destiny* booklet gives some hints without revealing the entire game. The second part is a screen-by-screen walkthrough. Part 3 is a

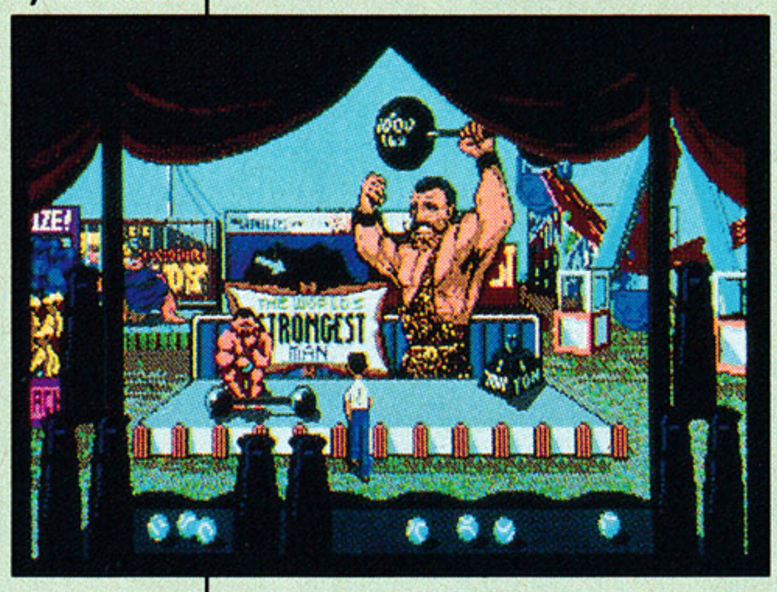


list of everything that must be accomplished to get a perfect score, and Part 4 maps the whole thing. The *Search for the King* book is a guide to completing all the puzzles in the game. Both booklets are available from the company for $12.95 each.

Accolade added hint lines for the two adventures, which can be reached by dialing (900) 990-HINT from a touch-tone phone. Prerecorded inquiries guide the player to hints for the correct area of the game at a cost of 85¢ for the first minute and 60¢ for each additional minute. Players with modems can access information and hints or leave questions on Accolade's bulletin board at (408) 296-8800.

Access has completed the hint book for *Countdown.* It's available from the company for $9.95. Hints are overprinted with a red patch, and in order to read them, gamers must use a clear red overlay.





Data East Bundles *Football*

Data East has a special entertainment bundle of fun for football freaks. The company is packaging an enhanced version of *ABC Monday Night Football* (for Amiga or IBM PC) with ABC Sports video, *Monday Night Madness*, for $59.95.

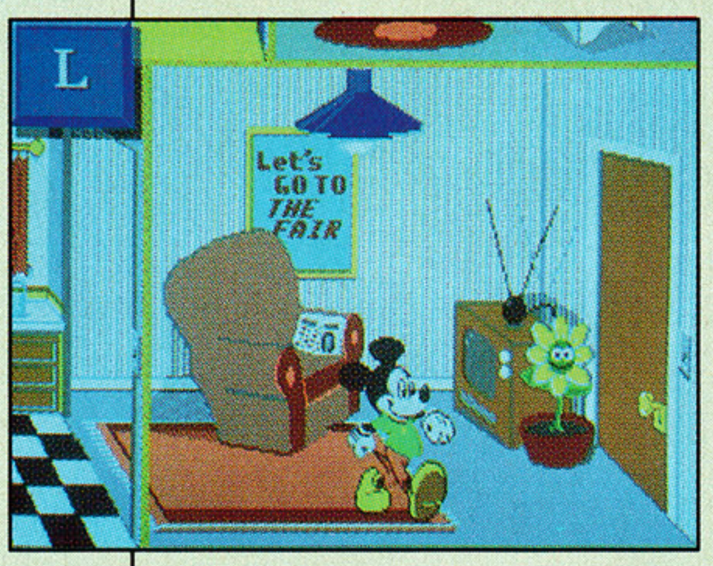
The new version of the game has improved graphics (through 256-color VGA) and sound (supporting Ad Lib sound board). It also boasts better artificial intelligence in the computer opponent and improved statistics.

The *Monday Night Madness* VHS tape is a 48-minute video collection of great moments in NFL history.

Study Current Events With Software

Capstone, Software Toolworks and Spectrum HoloByte have joined together to publish the *Triple Action Pak.* The three games included for play on Amiga or IBM PC are Capstone's *The Cardinal of the Kremlin,* a scientific spy thriller linked with laser missile defense; Spectrum Holobyte's F-16 fighter simulation, *Falcon AT* and Software Toolworks' *The Hunt for Red October*, a submarine simulation based on Tom Clancy's novel. The jumbo package is on sale for $89.95.

In a separate announcement, Spectrum Holobyte announced *Operation: Firefight, the Falcon Mission Disk II*, for Amiga or ST. It works with *Falcon* to add 12 new missions, new weaponry and new defenses.



Mickey Supports Sound Source

Walt Disney Computer Software has introduced three new preschool programs in support of the company's special sound accessory, *Sound Source.* The sound enhancer plugs into the printer port then produces digitized sounds with no additional sound cards, amplifier or speaker. (It contains an amplifier

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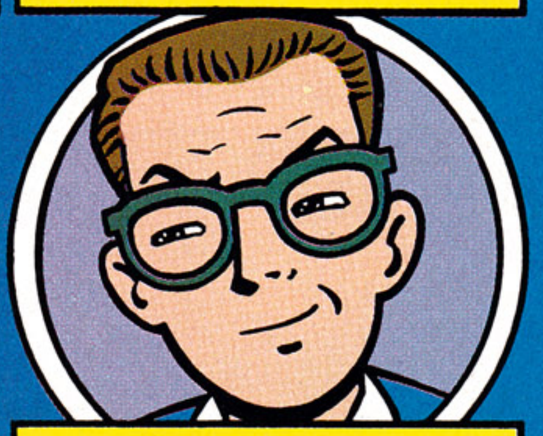

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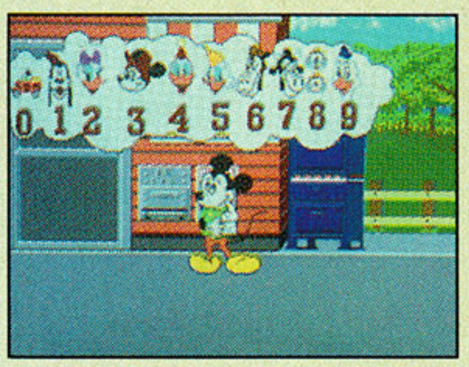
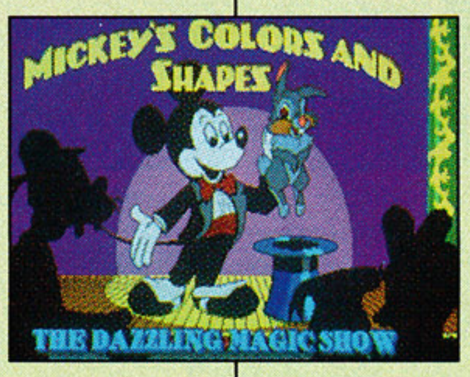


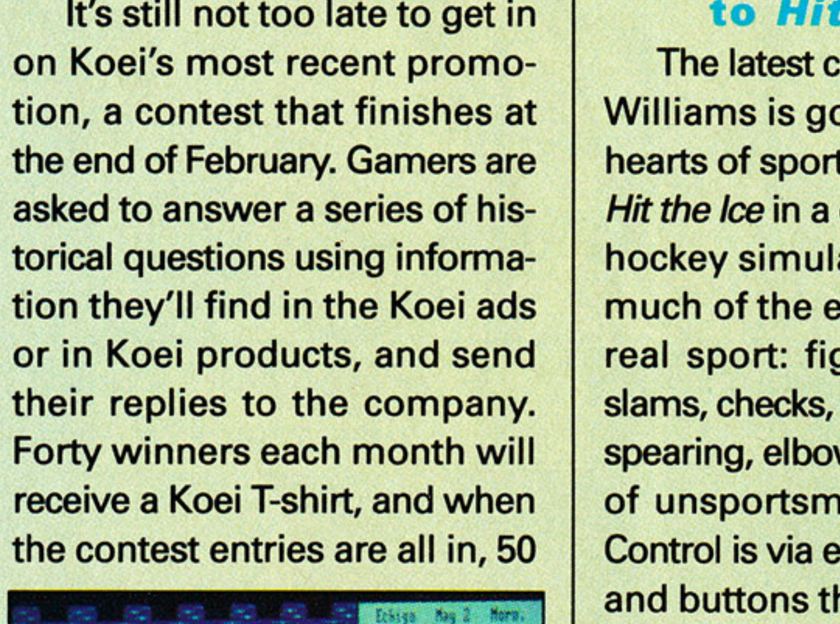
and three-inch speaker.) It retails for $34.95.



The juvenile titles include *Mickey's ABCs: A Day at the Fair*, where kids explore ten background scenes and meet many characters, including Donald, Goofy, Minnie and Daisy. *Mickey's 123s, The Big Surprise Party* teaches a child to count from 1 to 9 in visits with 11 Disney characters. *Mickey's Colors & Shapes: The Dazzling Magic Show* asks kids to match colors and shapes in order to do magic acts.

Koei Contest Tests History

It's still not too late to get in on Koei's most recent promotion, a contest that finishes at the end of February. Gamers are asked to answer a series of historical questions using information they'll find in the Koei ads or in Koei products, and send their replies to the company. Forty winners each month will receive a Koei T-shirt, and when the contest entries are all in, 50 winners will receive a Koei game. One grand-prize winner will get a Sony Handicam.



The contest, called "How Well Do You Know Our History?" consists of a half-dozen questions based on the characters from the Koei historical products.

In a separate announcement, Koei unveiled *Nobunaga's Ambition II*, which takes the player back to 16th-century Japan during the civil war period. It is said to be a significant advance over the first game and contains numerous new features. It adds 400 samurai, with separate personalities and intrigues, as well as new attack strategies, such as siege warfare and various personalizing features.

Williams Coin-Op to *Hit the Ice*

The latest coin snatcher from Williams is going to warm the hearts of sports fans when they *Hit the Ice* in a one-to-four-player hockey simulation. It contains much of the excitement of the real sport: fights, trips, body slams, checks, hacking, slashing, spearing, elbowing and all kinds of unsportsmanlike behavior. Control is via eight-way joysticks and buttons that let you shoot, check, pass or save.

It features spiffy graphics coupled with high-excitement sound tracks (with fog horns, sirens, organ music and even speech). The icemen are Gunner Hall, said to be able to catch a bullet in his teeth, Phil "Wild Man" Bungler, Referee Smitty Larson and other colorful players. Between periods, there are locker room intermissions with playing tips and a power drink that energizes the on-screen players into performing various acrobatic antics.

Windows Gets Entertainment Pack

Microsoft has released a special entertainment pack that works on IBM PC machines outfitted with *Windows*, the special software that installs a Mac-like graphic interface on IBM PC machines to make them a little more user-friendly. The *Microsoft Entertainment Pack for Windows* requires *Windows 3.0* (or a later version), an IBM PC or PC-DOS operating system 3.1 or later, 80286, 80386 SX or DX or higher, a hard drive, mouse, EGA, VGA 85514/A and a Hercules graphics card or compatible.

On the disk are seven programs: *Tetris*, the block-stacking hit game; *Taipei*, an Oriental game of chance; *Minesweeper*, a number game; *TicTactics* (four in a row); *Golf* and *Cruel* (card games); *Pegged* (cribbage); and a busy-screen art show, *IdleWild*.

Nintendo Shakes 8-Bit Biz

Two recent Nintendo policy changes will loosen its hold on the 8-bit video-game cartridge business. Nintendo turned down the heat on three makers of "unofficial" NES games and also relaxed its manufacturing exclusivity.

Nintendo, in its suit against Tengen, has noted that American Video Entertainment, Color Dreams and Sharedata are companies that have not infringed on its patented "lock-out" chip, called the 635.

Analysts expect Nintendo to pursue its suit against Tengen for illegal use of its patented technology. Nintendo clearly hopes that drawing the distinction between the two types of unlicensed NES cartridges will strengthen its legal position.

Nintendo's announcement that the 53 U.S. licensees are now free to manufacture their own cartridges drew a cynical response from Atari Corp. A spokesman for the Milpitas, California, manufacturer said that Nintendo would control the NES software field as long as it regulates allocations of the all-important lock-out chip.

Navigate The Ocean Depths Or Klash It Out In The 23rd Century With Sofel.

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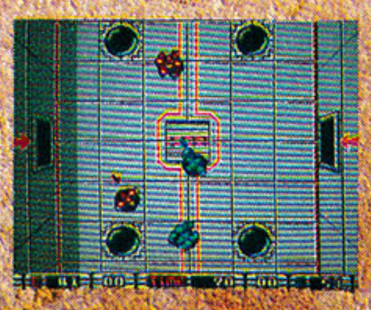
The future in your face.

SOFEL takes life-simulation into the future with the release of our newest game, KlashBall™, for the Nintendo Entertainment System®. In a stadium hundreds of years from now, techno-gladiators do battle, combining contact with speed and finesse. Two five-man teams go for it, each fighting to deliver a three-kilo metallic energy sphere into the opponent's goal zone.



The arena is way hectic.

It isn't pretty.

Teams challenge each other in a surreal arena that utilizes devices such as a warp tunnel, ball launcher, and magnetically charged bounce domes.

The gnarliest teams in the world.

KlashBall™ features a complete league system. There are eleven rowdy teams, each with unique skills, strengths and weaknesses. After each match the central computer analyzes the outcome and records the stats. Play against the computer or klash it out with a friend.

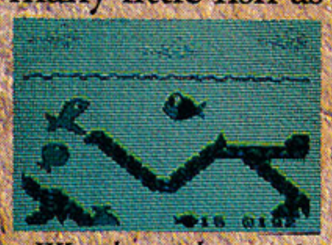
Know your competition.

It might be too real.

If you're ready, take a trip into the 23rd century with KlashBall™. A game so real, it's in your face!

Get your feet wet.

Navigate through the ocean depths with the original aquatic homeboy, Fish Dude™. The object is to eat as many little fish as possible so Fish Dude™ can grow to fight off his hungry enemies. Big fish, seagulls and a floating feline are all after him. Luckily Fish Dude™ has some cool pals like Octo dude to help him out of tricky situations. Come on, get your feet wet and explore the high seas with Fish Dude!



Watch out homey!

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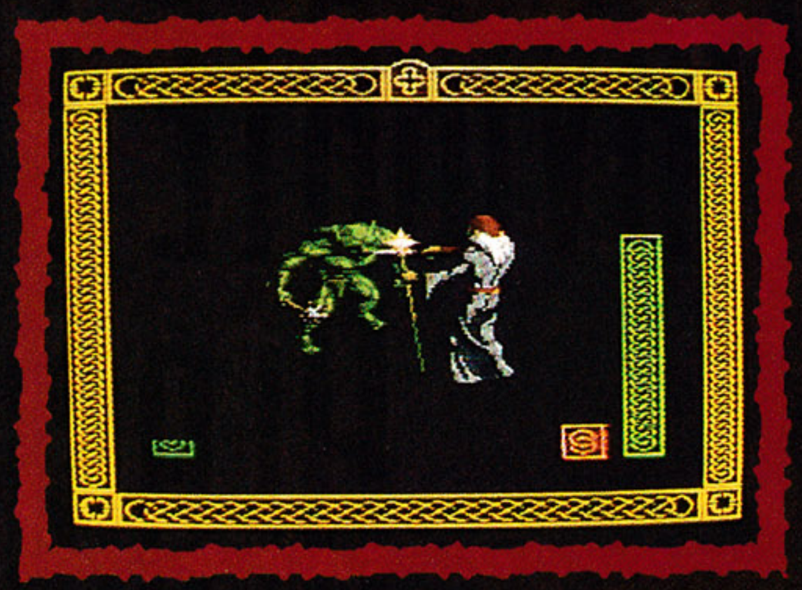
THE QUICK.



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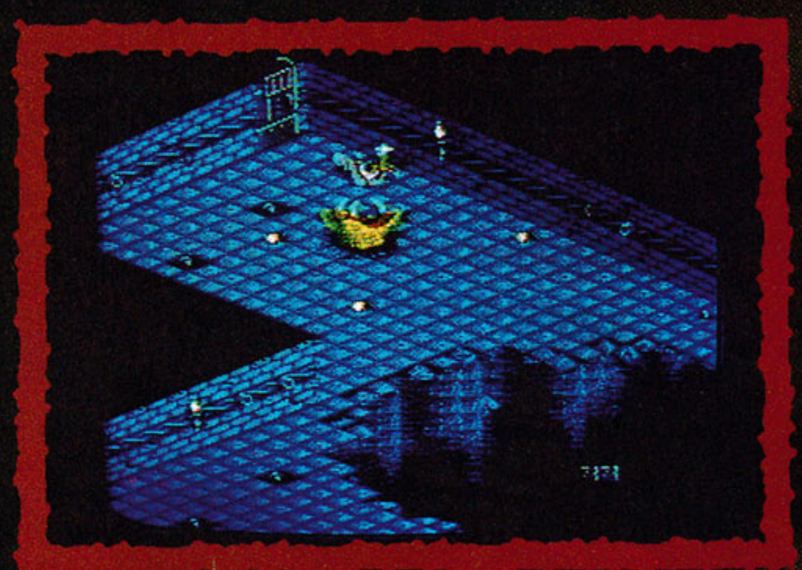

THE IMMORTAL.™

Sorcerer's recipe for excitement: Under a full moon, take a game with intense action and killer animation. Forget the eye of newt stuff. Just add full-screen combat that lets you dodge, jab, and slash enemies. Drop in a lot of nasty ways to go. Like getting skewered on a spike, roasted in flames, crushed by jaws, devoured by slime. Cast spells that let you shrink, fly, and change shape. Finally, set it in a plot as twisted and deep as your worst nightmare.

Now get ready for an action adventure as real as your heartbeat.

Wits and speed required. Squeamish types and people with heart conditions should proceed with caution.

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VIDEO GAME REVIEWS

Bart Simpson Vs. the Space Mutants

ACCLAIM

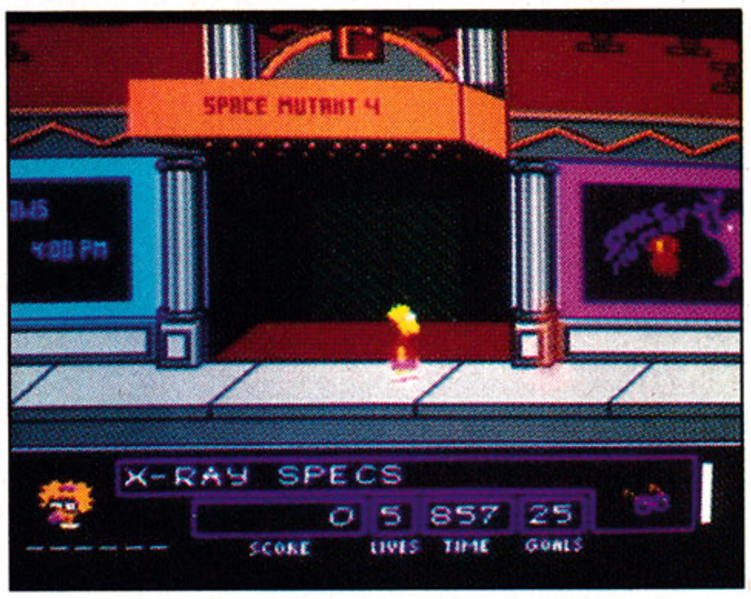
For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($44.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

It had to happen eventually—it was only a matter of time. The strange thing is that it took this long. Now you can sit in front of your TV on Thursday nights and click back and forth between channels saying, "It's a game! (click) No, it's a TV show! (click) No, it's a game!" *The Simpsons* have made the leap to the NES, courtesy of Acclaim, in *Bart Simpson Vs. the Space Mutants*. Bart would probably be quite happy with his new starring role.

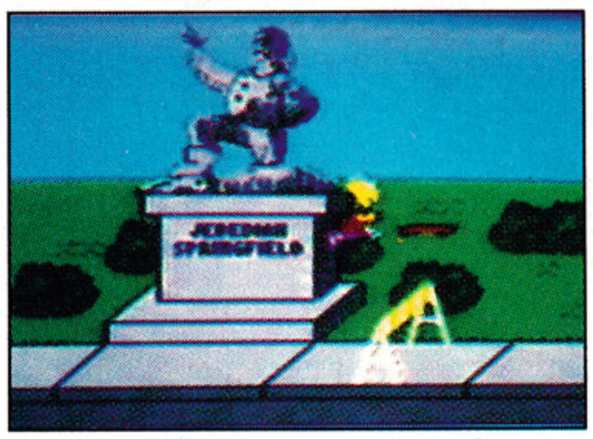
It's not that the game itself is anything earth-shattering or even unusual. It's a run-jump-and-fight adventure (what Chris Bieniek has dubbed in these pages a "guy game") where Bart's the guy and Springfield's the target. But there's something so wonderfully appropriate about Bart and NES games.

Acclaim has taken TV's most popular underachiever and created a video game for the NES. *Bart Simpson Vs. the Space Mutants* accurately reproduces Bart's zany antics in his new quest to save Springfield.

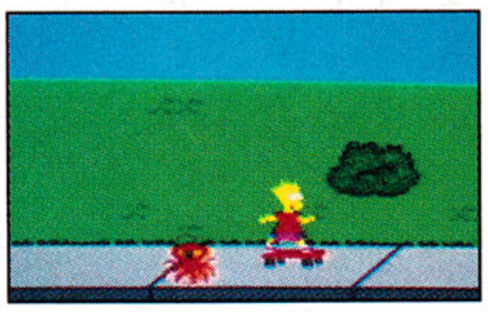


In this hybrid, Bart's goal is to prevent a race of silly aliens from enslaving the world, starting with Springfield. Bart zips from one end of town to another at breakneck speed—through the mall, the museum, the amusement park and more—with a large arsenal of kid-tested, mother-approved novelty-store junk. And because you have to think like Bart, you basically earn points for creative destruction.

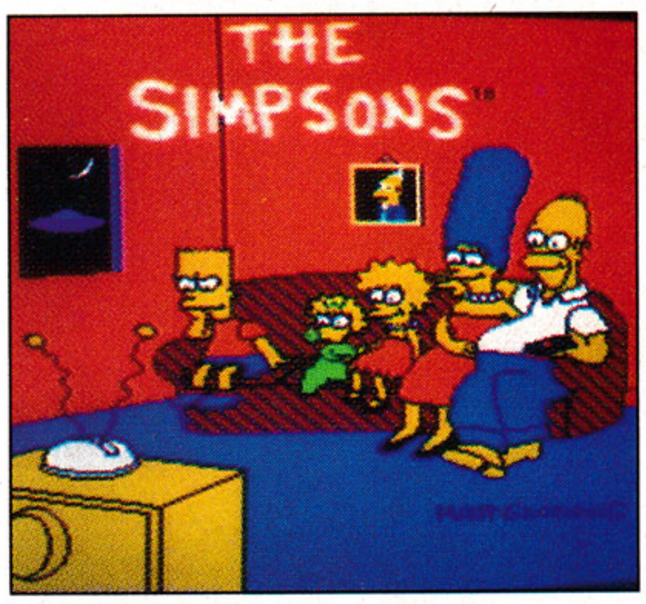
Isn't this the distilled essence of a video-game player's psyche anyway? Isn't Bart the perfect on-screen embodiment of the kid who wants to sit down and beat Dad at video games? Now even Dads can be Barts.



In the animated setup, the aliens discuss their plans for Earth, and Bart spies them disembarking from their spacecraft. (I played a preproduction cart, so some of the elements are sure to have changed in the release version.) The game consists of five levels, each presenting Bart with a different way of striking a blow against the invaders. For example, the aliens attempt to collect everything purple in Springfield (purple is a source of fuel). Bart goes around with a spray can, trying to disguise or cover up every last purple object around. By finding money in hidden locations, Bart can buy extra equipment, such as X-Ray glasses, dart guns, slingshots, magnets, explosives and more.



Part of the point of all of this, of course, is to allow Bart to pull the kinds of stunts he's known for in the series. Sure, he's protecting us against the aliens, but at the same time, he gets to commit hundreds of acts of malicious mayhem: weaving around crazily on a skateboard, shooting signs, knocking into people, setting off cherry bombs, spray-painting public property and so on. Perhaps this is all just an imaginative excuse Bart's concocted for his rambunctious behavior? In fact, that's something Bart's got to deal with: convincing his family and the town that he's battling a real threat and not just spending his Saturday immersed in his usual mischief.



The sound effects, music and graphics are all perfectly in the spirit of *The Simpsons* (who are very accurately re-created). The entire game has a crude, hand-drawn look to it (like the cartoon). It's simply and boldly colored (like the cartoon), and it's irreverent (yes, like the cartoon). Every time you die, Bart's digitized voice makes an appropriately rude comment; every time you lose a game, the aliens make rude comments about your abilities, things like that. There are elements of wise-cracking humor throughout the game, something more games ought to have.

Bart Simpson Vs. the Space Mutants doesn't take itself too seriously, yet somehow it turns out to be a good game for serious gamers. *Simpsons* fans will be delighted with the results.

—Joshua Mandel

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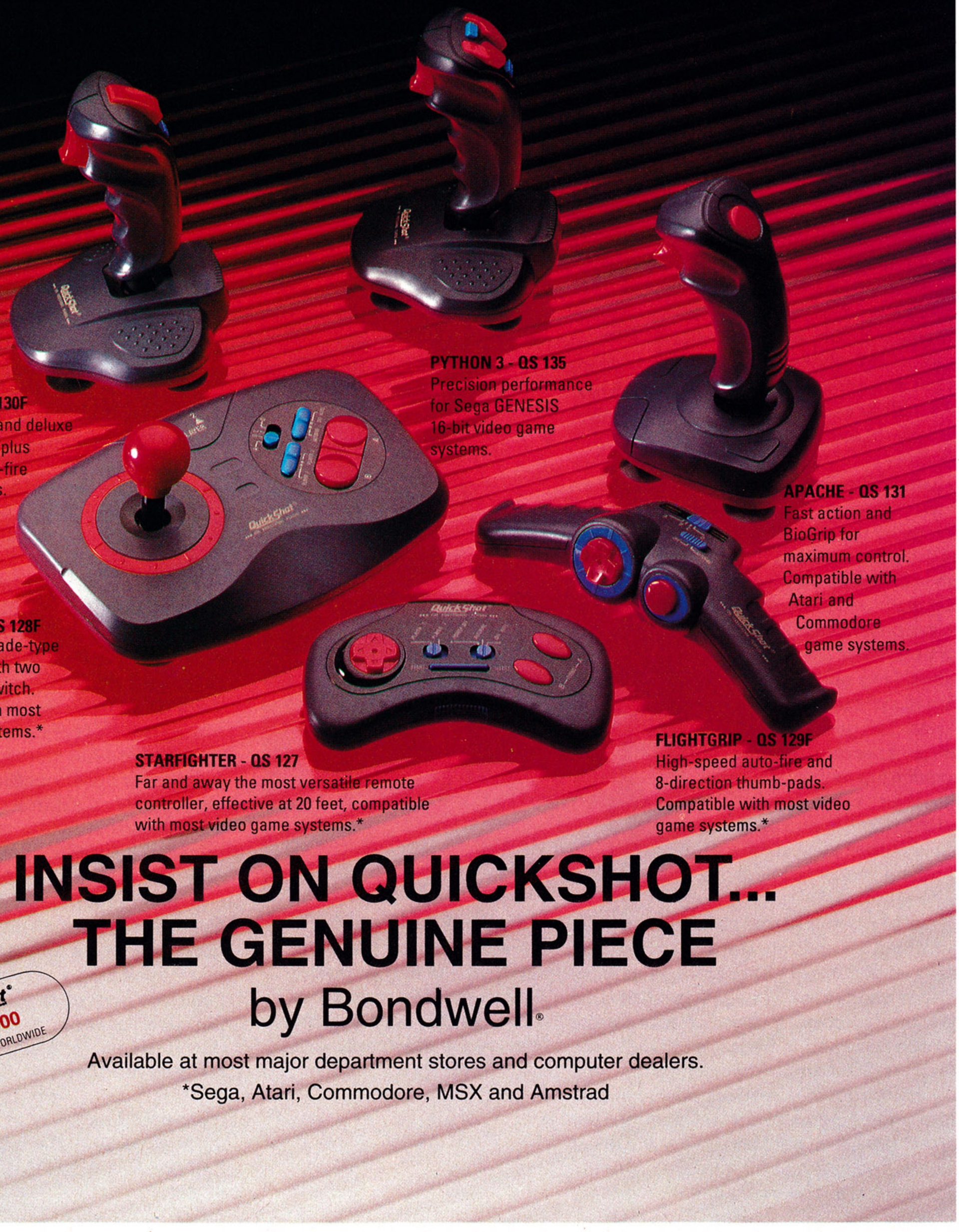

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Battle Squadron

ELECTRONIC ARTS
For the Sega Genesis ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

When *Battle Squadron* first came out on the Amiga, it broke new ground for that admittedly capable machine. The only real problem with *Battle Squadron* on the Amiga is that the joystick only has one button—and the game needs more controls. Thus, you must search for those controls on the Amiga keyboard in the heat of battle. *Battle Squadron* for the Genesis, however, is everything it is on the Amiga—coupled with an improved play mechanic made possible by the Genesis' multiple control buttons.

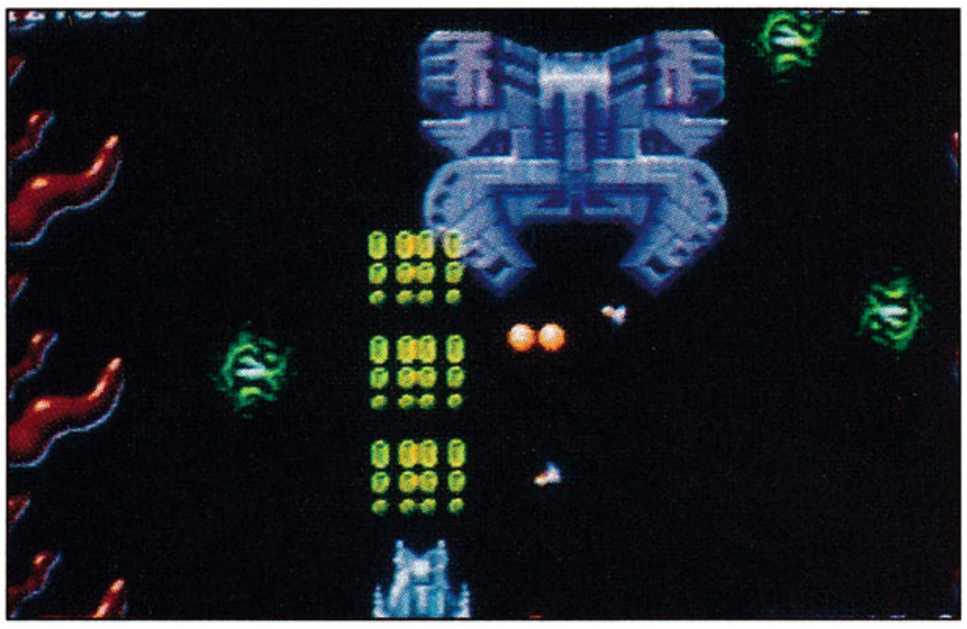
Battle Squadron is a horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up. You control your fighter with the control pad (although I found that the Genesis Arcade Power Stick works *much* better) and fire your weapons using two of the three available buttons. The first button fires your primary weapon, while the second fires an impressive fireball that destroys everything on the screen. You have three of these fireballs initially and can get more by destroying specially marked packages...er, enemy formations.

Battle Squadron centers around the plight of two of your comrades, who are taken hostage by the enemy. Your mission is to rescue them by attacking the enemy stronghold with your fighter. (At least, that's what the manual says.) As you can probably guess, your real mission, as it is in all these games, is to obliterate everything in sight until you run out of lives. The game can be customized to control the number of credits (up to three), number of lives per credit (up to five) and the number and speed of enemy bullets. Even at the lowest setting, however, this is one challenging game!

Upgrading your primary weapons involves destroying an enemy weapons carrier that shows up periodically. These require multiple shots or one fireball—I usually save at least one for this purpose. Once one of these carriers has been destroyed, it releases a colored pellet. The color of the pellet determines the type of weapon, from the lethal (but slow to repeating) orange magma to the devastating (but narrow) green-emerald laser. After the pellet appears, you can wait for it to change to the color of the weapon you want, then grab it.

Interestingly, different weapons are more effective in different areas, so strategy does play a part. Each successive pellet upgrades your weapons to the next level, but you do lose two levels when you are destroyed.

And what do you have to shoot at? Plenty, let me tell you. The enemy presents everything from slow-moving, hard-to-destroy tanks to darting fighters. There are ground installations ranging from single gun turrets to vast buildings that are chock-full of guns, missile launchers and tanks—and that is just on the surface!



Once you have upgraded your weaponry enough, you can go below ground to face the weirdest assortment of creatures you can imagine, all intent on only one thing: to put an end to you. There is everything from animated snakes to samurai lobsters, whole squadrons of fighters and some hideously ugly "bosses" to finish things off.

Battle Squadron, for the Genesis, has all the elements of the popular Amiga version and much more, in this exciting shoot-'em-up by Electronic Arts.

The graphics in *Battle Squadron* are beautiful—equal to the Amiga version. The landscapes are shaded, animation is smooth and there isn't a flicker anywhere, even when the screen is full of creatures. The sound is also impressive—full stereo, crisp and clean. A good set of headphones heightens the playing experience. As mentioned earlier, this is a tough contest, but the option of customizing it makes the game playable for almost everyone.

When I first got *Battle Squadron* for the Genesis, I figured it couldn't possibly be as good as the Amiga version, which was a stupendous hit. Boy, was I wrong! It's an excellent game and a necessity for people who not only like shoot-'em-ups, but also want to see what this machine is capable of in the hands of a talented programmer. Go get it!

—David Plotkin

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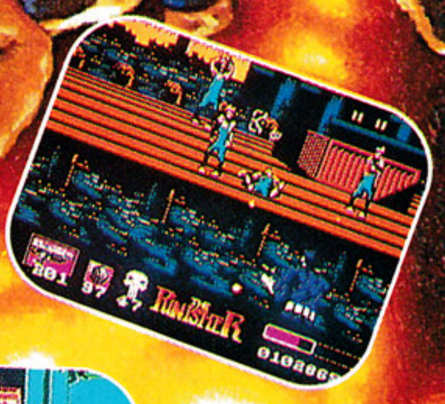

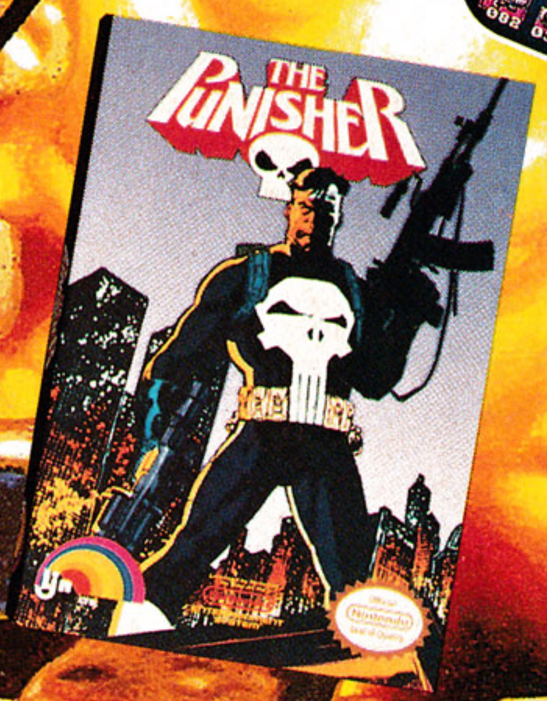

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CIRCLE #108 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

The Punisher

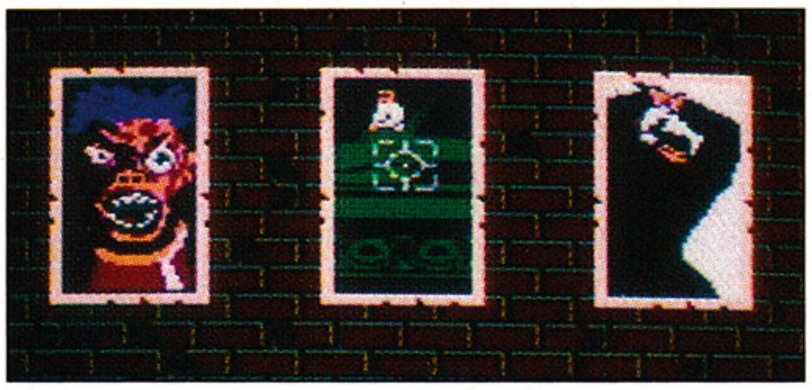
LJN

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($44.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	**3**	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7	8	9	10

When Frank Castle's wife and kids were the accidental victims of a mob assassination, he swore that from that day forward he would dedicate his life to exterminating criminals from the streets of New York. The Punisher was born. Now, armed with his hatred, determination and an arsenal of fire power, he prowls the city, blasting bad guys and making the Big Apple safe for the common man. Although, he's a vigilante, shunned by the local law-enforcement agencies, no one can say he doesn't get the job done!

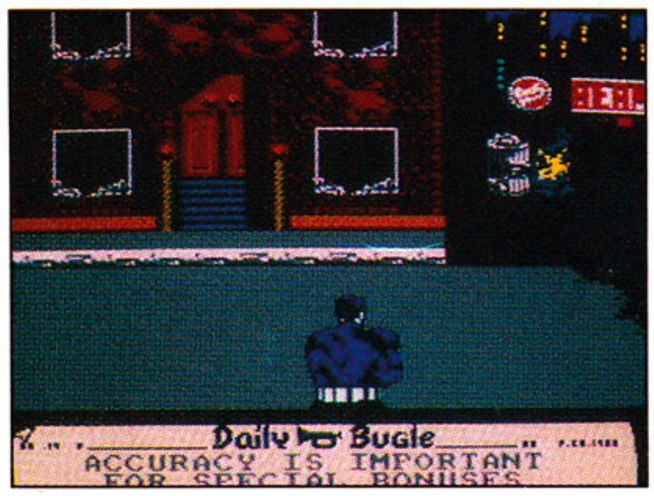
In LJN's new game, *The Punisher*, you get to take over Frank Castle's battle against crime by gunning your way through three stages of mobster-infected New York streets as you search for the big boss, Kingpin. As your crime-busting spree advances, you will have to defeat several minor bosses, whose orders are to keep you from getting to Kingpin. This is a tough game, and only hot shots will make it to the final scenes.

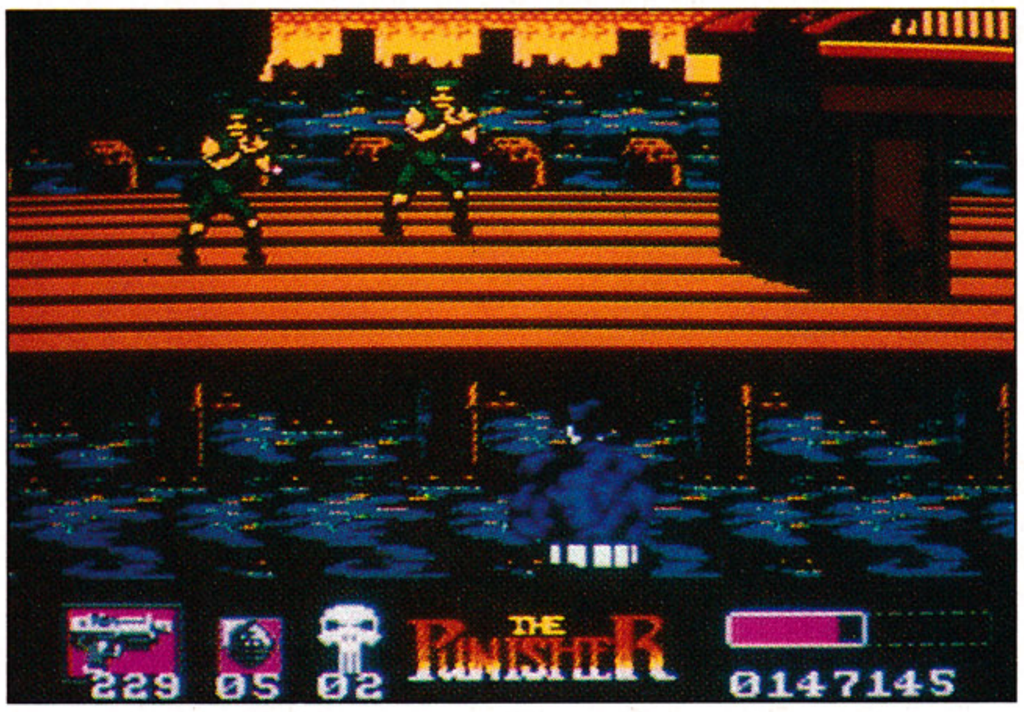


***The Punisher*, by LJN, takes you to the mob-infested streets of New York in search of the big boss, Kingpin.**

When you first take to the streets, you have only your trusty machine pistol, 300 rounds of ammo and three grenades with which to fight city crime. You can get additional weapons and ammo by shooting bonus icons that appear on the screen. For example, the trusty machine gun, one possible acquisition, fires almost twice as fast as the machine pistol, allowing you to spray lead over a larger area faster.

Picking up extra ammo is important; if you run out of bullets, your gun will be able to fire only single shots. Because many of the





bonus icons are hidden, and can be exposed only by shooting the right places, a single-shot gun will make it extremely difficult to power-up.

Other special items that may be picked up include first aid, which restores part of your lifeline; additional grenades; 1-Ups; kevlar vests, which increase the length of your lifeline; and rocket launchers.

Not the usual shoot-'em-up, *The Punisher* plays like a light-gun game, except that you aim your gun by positioning a crosshair cursor with the arrow pad on your controller. Otherwise, the game is the typical forced-scrolling "shooting gallery" type, where you look into the screen and fire at targets as they appear.

Music is virtually nonexistent—a simple theme is played sporadically throughout the game. The sound effects are unremarkable—the usual pops of guns firing and the weak explosions of grenades—and the graphics are anything but state-of-the-art. Frankly, from a sound-and-graphics point of view, *The Punisher* is a bust.

All in all, I'm not sure the game plays well enough to make up for its lack of visual and aural quality. In fact, many players may find that *The Punisher* quickly becomes boring. When playing a character with carte blanche for blasting bad guys and turning boss men into fertilizer, crime fighting should be more exciting than this.

—Clive King

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CIRCLE #123 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Shadow Dancer

SEGA

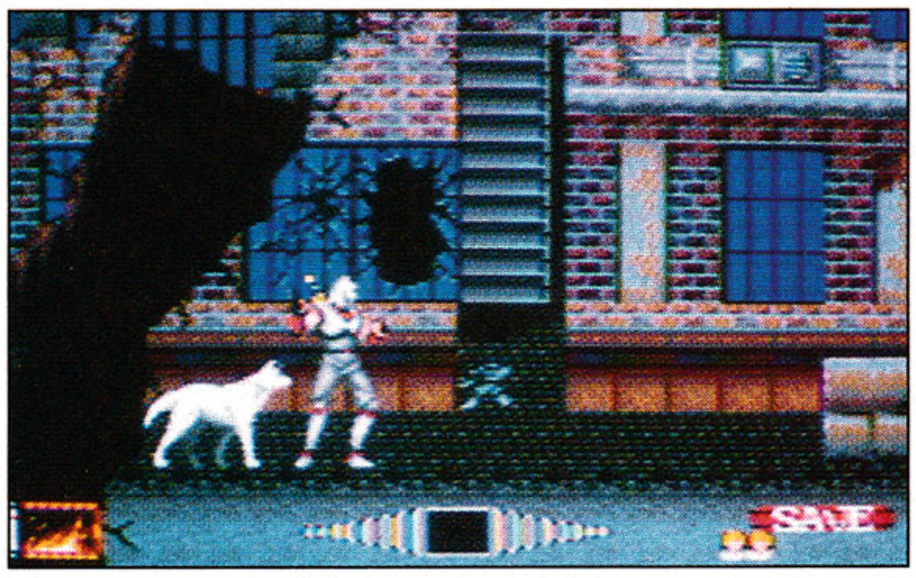
For the Sega Genesis ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

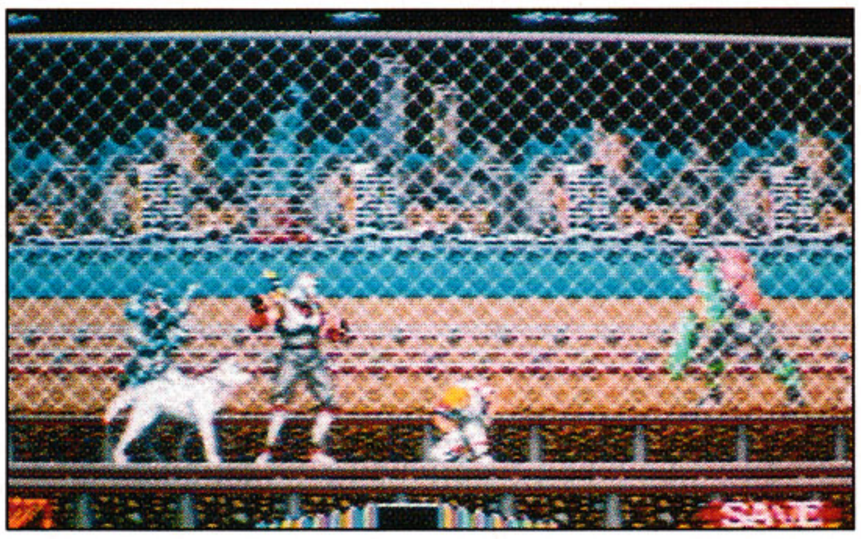
Sega's *Shadow Dancer* proves to be a worthy successor to the popular *Revenge of Shinobi*.

Any game with the audacity to proclaim itself a worthy sequel to *Revenge of Shinobi* (*RoS*), a game recognized as one of the best overall Genesis games, has got a lot to live up to. Happily, *Shadow Dancer* is as rich and elaborate as the original. The graphics are just as spectacular, and the game play is as tough and addictive. Although it's obviously built like its predecessor, there are just enough differences that the game doesn't feel like a rehash.

Joe Musashi, ninja master, returns to New York City, his job of defeating the organized crime syndicate Neo Zeed having finished in *RoS*. He spends some years of peace with his ex-student Kato. Kato dies while defending schoolchildren against a new group of renegades, the Union Lizard, which worships a mighty reptilian being. Musashi inherits Kato's faithful dog Yamato and vows to rid New York City of both the Lizard gang and the diabolical beast that rules it.



You control Musashi, defending yourself with shurikens, your sword, a burst of Ninja magic per sublevel and Yamato. The shurikens are your distance weapons, and you have an endless supply. Your sword is only effective at close range but is much more powerful than the shurikens. Yamato will prove a help to you. He will attack on command (as long as your enemy is on the same horizontal level you are), and although he can't successfully kill an enemy, he can take one out of your way for a few seconds.



There are four levels in the game, each containing three sublevels. This makes *Shadow Dancer* a much shorter game than its predecessor. That's the only disappointment about the cart: It's not liable to provide as much long-term challenge as *RoS*. There are three difficulty levels and the option to play the game totally without the shurikens. You can certainly increase the game to an incredible level of difficulty and eke out more challenge that way, but that's a sloppy way to extend game life.

Unlike the original, there are few objects to be found. There's a single power-up that replaces the shurikens with a fiery beam shot. You can also unearth 1-Ups and even 2-Ups. But that's about it. What you do have to find are hostages; there are six on each level, and each must be found and rescued before you can progress to the next level. In addition, there is something elusive called the Shinobi bonus to be achieved.

The action's fast and intricate, and the strategy changes significantly depending on which difficulty level you've chosen. Eliminating even the lower-rank enemies requires careful timing and aiming; the "aides" (creatures of extraordinary power at the end of each level) are extremely tough to kill, as they were in *RoS*.

If you thought *RoS* was graphically superior, you're in for some wonderful surprises. *Shadow Dancer* is just as breathtaking. Earthquakes split the screen in half, detailed multilevel backgrounds scroll, sway and tremble convincingly, creatures emerge as living brickwork and there's an incredible fight on a girder by the head of the Statue of Liberty. The boss attacks with whirling buzzsaws, clouds roll by in shifting parallax, all with the New York City skyline visible in the distance beyond Liberty Island. It's all a wild feast of action, magic, sound and spectacle.

The sounds are great too: Musashi cries out, Yamato barks, the buzzsaws whine menacingly and the drums beat ominously in the background. All told, *Shadow Dancer* may not be as enduring as *Revenge of Shinobi*—which set a standard—but it's still a brilliant and beautiful arcade monster.

—J. M.

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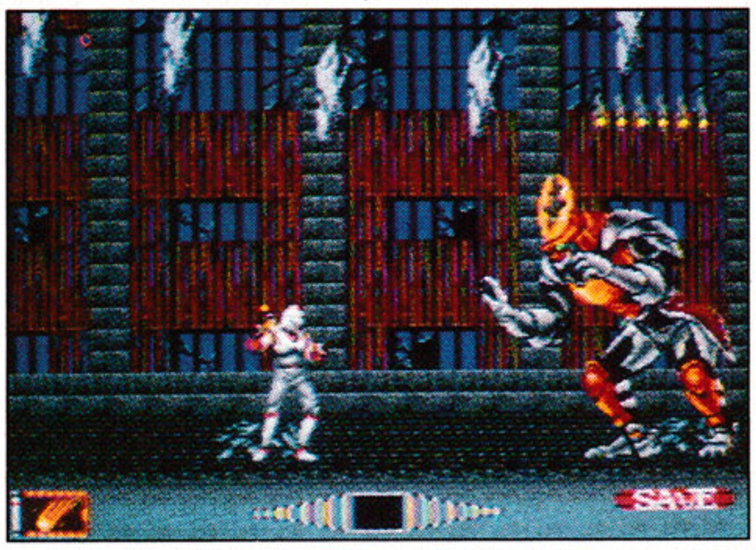

continued on page 48

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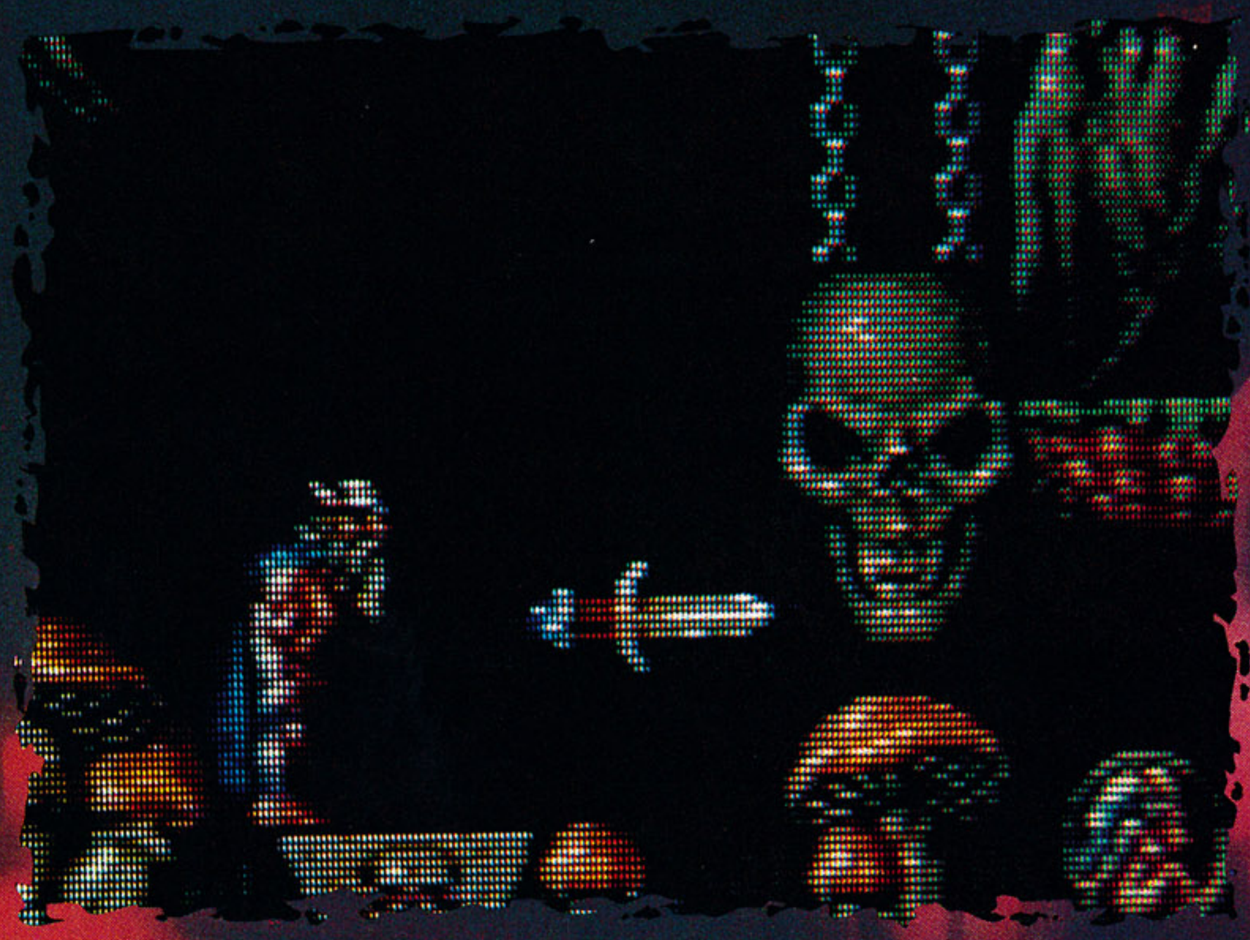

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continued from page 44

Galaxy 5000

ACTIVISION

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($39.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10

I've been describing this game to my friends as "*R.C. Pro-Am* in outer space," but Activision's *Galaxy 5000* is actually much more than that. This time it's "armored turbocraft racing," a 51st-century hyperspeed contest with vehicles that are sleek, futuristic and far removed from any old remote-control car.

Your ship can jump over obstacles, fire several different types of weapons and take advantage of shortcuts and hidden pathways to shave seconds off your time and rack up points. And if you don't complete the required number of laps before the on-screen timer runs out, the track will start to disintegrate beneath you, leaving you to explode in the infinite blackness of deep space.

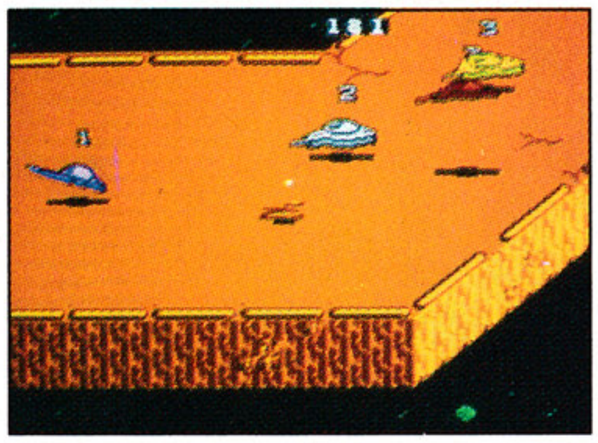
From Mercury to Pluto, each of the nine planets hosts four races. The courses are as varied as the worlds they're based on, with plenty of obstacles, pitfalls and stationary weapons that are just waiting to ambush your vehicle. If that's not enough, the races also include hidden "bonus rooms" filled with power-ups and secret warp doors that send you to more advanced planets.

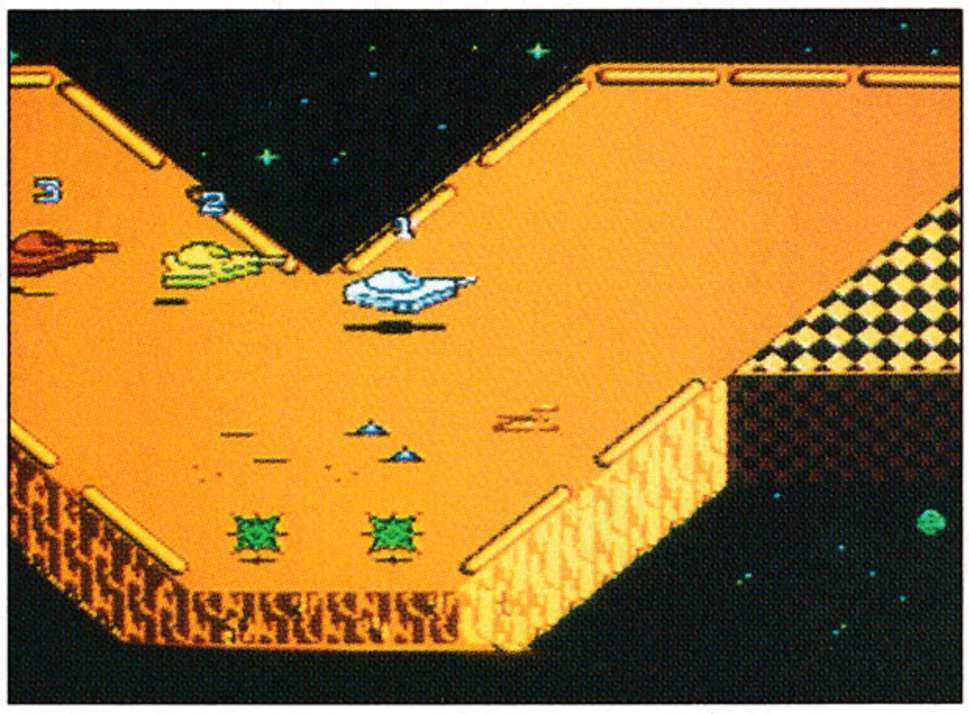
After each race, you'll find out how much money you've won during it (if any). Then a status screen informs you of the condition of your vehicle, offering comments that get more sarcastic as your ship increasingly deteriorates. You'll know you're in trouble when the computer reports with nonchalance that "your Tomahawk is toast!" Fortunately, you can use the money you've earned to make repairs, and it's fun to watch the dents and bullet holes disappear from your vehicle as the "damage" meter goes down.

If you can keep your ship in good shape, you can save your money and purchase a faster, sturdier vehicle with more powerful weapons. There are five ships in all.

The graphics are sharp and clear, but the movement of the ships is what steals the show. The races are so involving that I couldn't help reacting to the game on an instinctive, physical level. As I became lost in the heat of competition, I found myself leaning to the side of my chair as I banked my ship around the sharper curves. It's the type of game that inspires people to point their control pads at different parts of the room, squeezing the buttons as hard as they can—as if that helps!

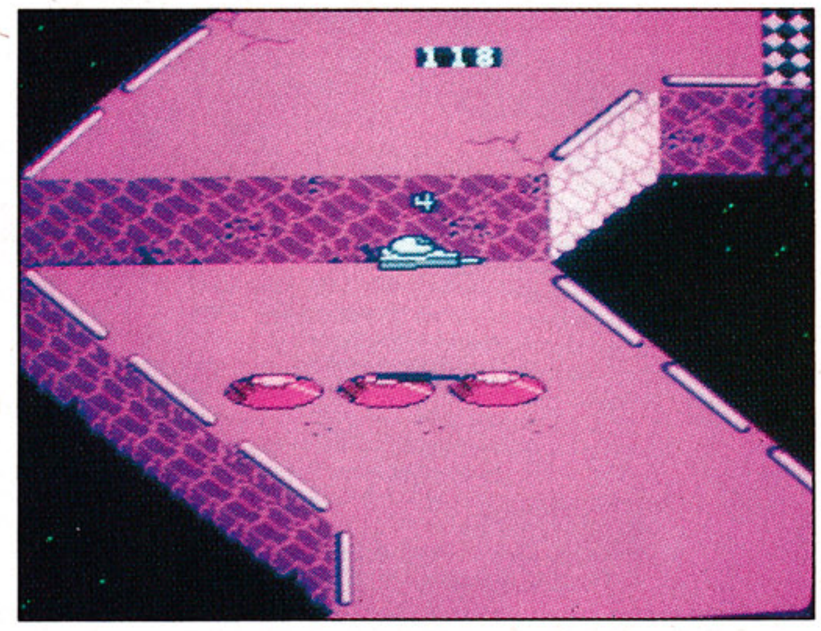
Galaxy 5000 is a futuristic space-race type game that is guaranteed to be involving.





Digitized voices and sound effects are always impressive, particularly on the NES, where hardware and memory limitations usually make such frills a luxury. *Galaxy 5000* is loaded with yelping and hollering, and you can clearly hear the contestants howling "Watch it!" or "Hey!" as they zip around the track. It's not uncommon to hear your character quip, "Excuse me!" as your ship passes an opponent. The tunes are equally good. The background music during the races is nicely subdued, and the pounding themes that play behind the title and intermission screens start my feet tapping every time.

If *Galaxy 5000* has a flaw, it's the two-player mode. In order to guarantee that both players' ships will be on-screen at the same time, the computer will "push" one of the vehicles if it falls too far behind the other player's ship, and the leading player will be awarded bonus points. Nice try, but this type of high-speed action should not be burdened by such a potentially confusing feature. The one-player version is more fun; in fact, if the two-player option had been left out, it would not have been missed.



All things considered, *Galaxy 5000* is fast, funny and fun. I've played a lot of NES games, and *Galaxy 5000* may be the most enjoyable NES game I've ever played.

—Chris Bieniek

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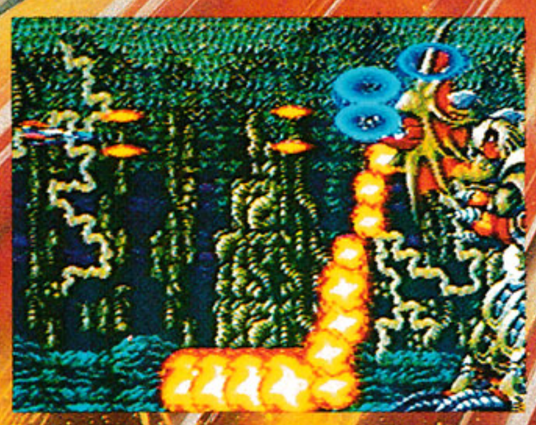

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SEGA GENESIS 16-BIT CARTRIDGE

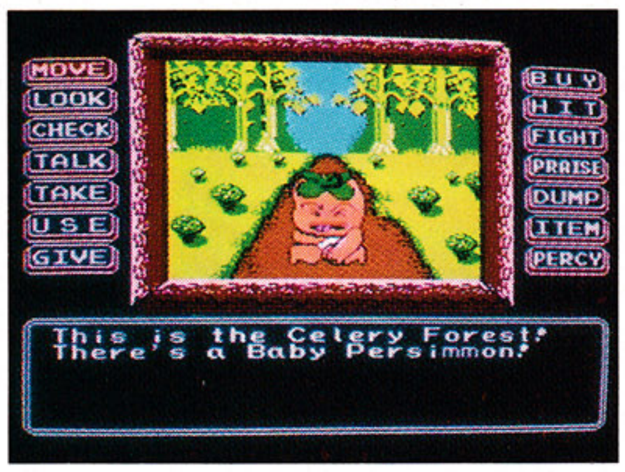
Princess Tomato in the Salad Kingdom

HUDSON SOFT

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10

In the world of Saladoria, otherwise known as the Salad Kingdom, the people are a race of fresh fruits and vegetables living together in peace and harmony. King Broccoli is their leader and protects them from the feared Farmies—humans who buy, sell and eat the Saladorians.



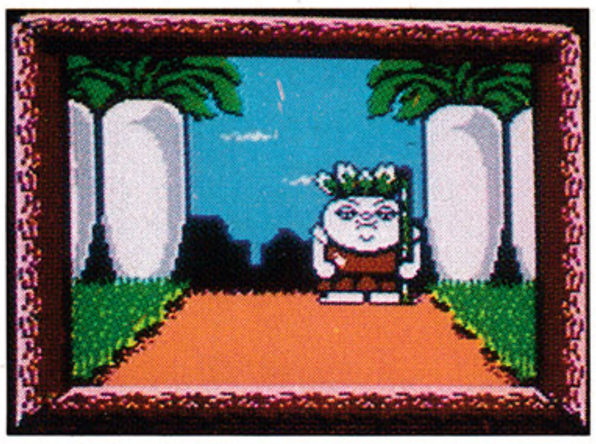
Minister Pumpkin, however, has overpowered Broccoli. From his castle near the Zucchini Mountains, he's established a new repressive social state over Saladoria. Anyone who questions his authority is promptly tossed into jail or shipped off to the Farmies, whom Pumpkin has allied with for consumption.

To fight back, Broccoli and his daughter, Princess Tomato, formed a resistance group. Unfortunately, the rebels met with a major psychological defeat when Princess Tomato was kidnapped by Pumpkin's henchmen. Now, news has gone around that Minister Pumpkin's son and Princess Tomato are to be married soon. This is when the dethroned King Broccoli conveniently dies from grief.

It's during times like these that a hero arrives to save the day. And Saladoria's savior is you, portraying the kingdom's mightiest warrior, Sir Cucumber. Of course, Cucumber has always had—ahem—a secret love for Princess Tomato. Together with his persimmon sidekick, Percy, he sets out on a mission to rescue Tomato from her dreaded wedding date and liberate the Salad Kingdom from Minister Pumpkin's iron fist.

Princess Tomato in the Salad Kingdom is a menu-driven graphic text adventure. Commands such as move, look, check, talk, take, use, give and buy are selected with the controller pad. A picture frame in the middle of the screen depicts where you and Percy are, as well as any notable characters or objects at this location. The bottom is a display window listing the dialogue of conversations carried out with characters. Any kind of important information that's conveyed to you by the computer is also shown here.

Sometimes when you come across an opponent, they'll challenge you to a "finger war," which is broken up into two parts. In the first half, you and your enemy play the game "rock, paper and scissors" with your hands. After this, your opponent will point in one of four directions, and, depending on whether you won or lost the first challenge, you must look either away or in the direction he points. In turn, you get to do the same to him. These contests comprise pretty much the only "battle" sequences in *Princess Tomato in the Salad Kingdom*. If you think they're as "exciting" as the above descriptions sound, you're not too far from being wrong.



Intended to appeal to a younger audience, *Princess Tomato in the Salad Kingdom*, by Hudson Soft, is a menu-driven graphic-text adventure.

The game play is your basic "search, take and give" graphic adventure-gaming objective. The point of talking to characters merely serves to gather clues and, hopefully, be given useful items, as expected. But what proves frustrating is that actions often must be performed in a specific sequence in order to get things accomplished. In the meantime, not much else can be done.

Many of the commands have to be thoroughly performed more than once—and with such a degree of retentive accuracy that what little fun there is in playing is quickly diminished. Unlike the typical graphic adventure, there's not much freedom to "move around" or explore your surroundings in *Princess Tomato in the Salad Kingdom*. You either have to do things "right" or spend a considerable amount of time figuring out how.

It's obvious that *Princess Tomato in the Salad Kingdom*, with its outlandish scenario, is intended to appeal to a real young audience. Yet, ironically, it's these very kids who will likely be the ones easily put off by the monotony of the game. Older players, accustomed to fare like this, will find this one not only hokey but rather limiting and the challenge not all that tough—just tedious. This might sound a bit pretentious, but *Princess Tomato in the Salad Kingdom* just isn't ripe enough.

—Howard H. Wen

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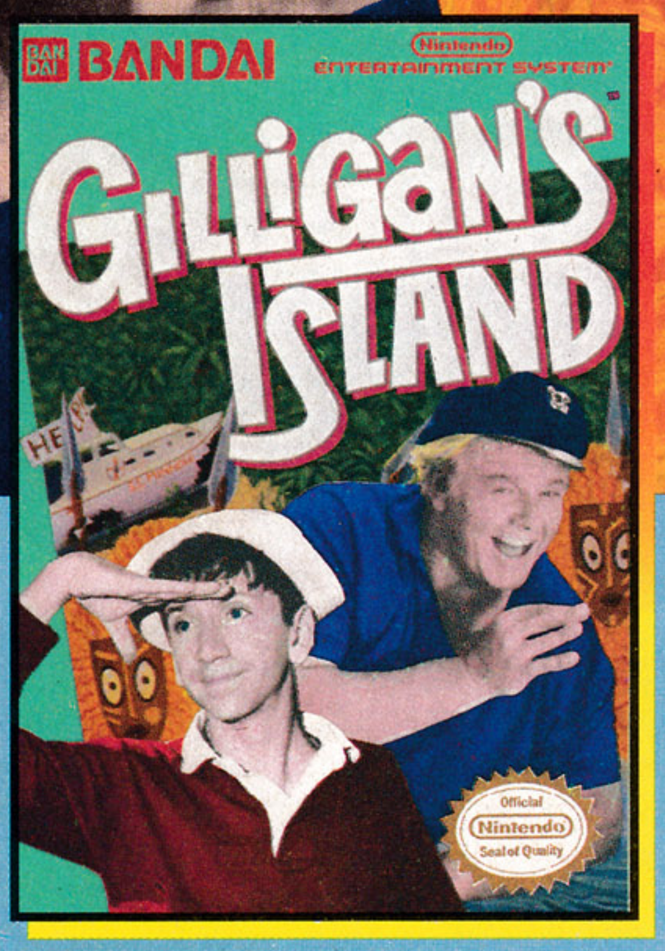

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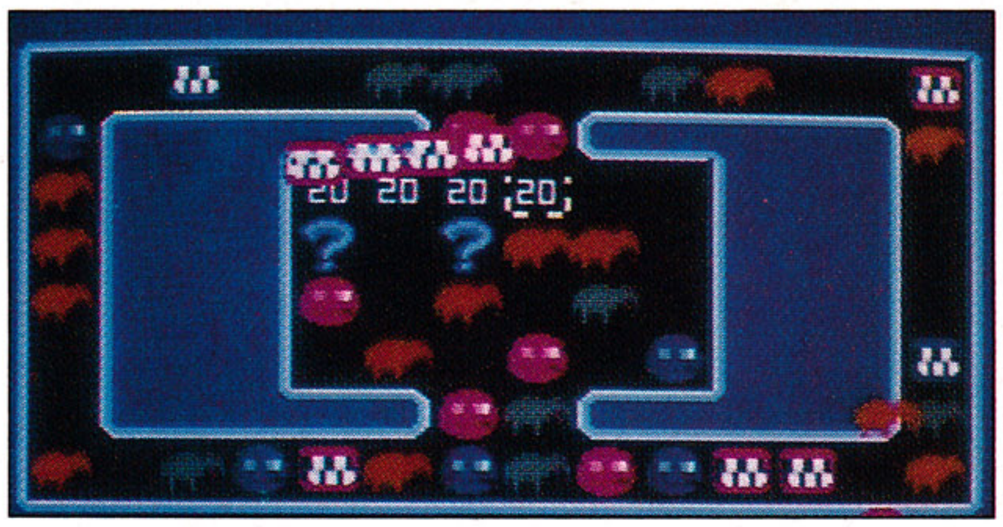
Krazy Kreatures

AMERICAN VIDEO ENTERTAINMENT, INC.
For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($29.95)

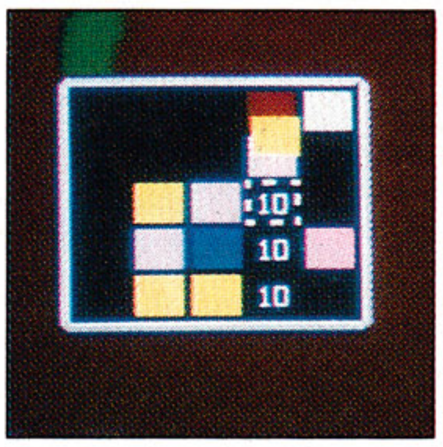
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10

A game as popular as *Tetris* spawns an entire industry of clones and similar games. It's always fascinating to see what designers will devise as they labor to create a new contest that's similar to the hit, yet retains its own identity. Frequently games inspired by a hit become hits themselves, such as *Klax*. They in turn spawn another wave of copycats.

Krazy Kreatures owes a great debt to both *Tetris* and *Klax*. It's a puzzle game in which you arrange matching "kreatures (small, icon-like objects)" on the screen into rows of three or more. Unlike *Tetris* or *Klax*, in *Krazy Kreatures* you can rearrange the "kreatures" into whatever order you like, making this more a sorting game than a piling game. Nothing is permanent until the timer runs out.

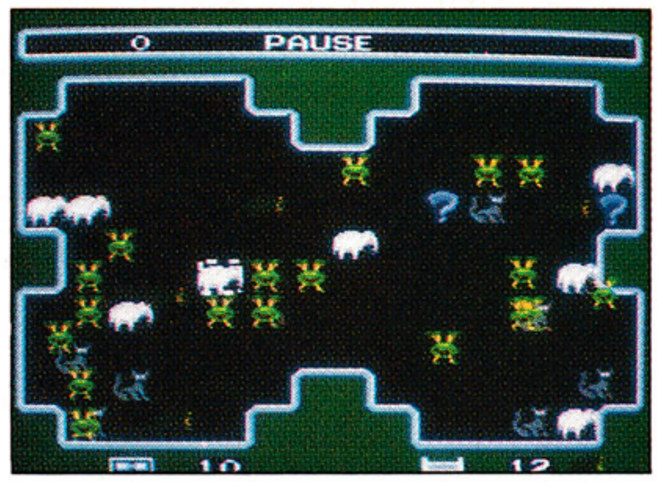


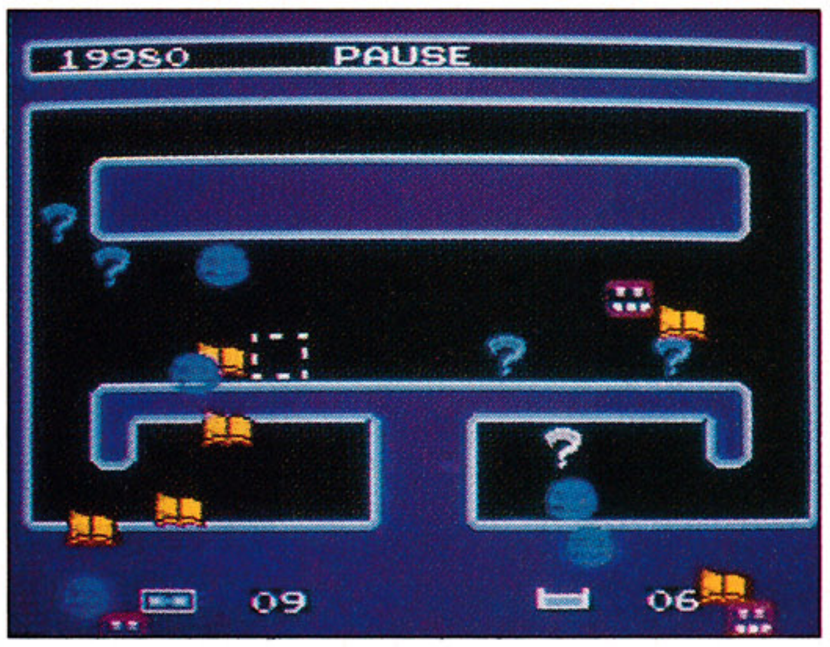
Each round is played in two phases. When a round begins, a steady stream of kreatures flows onto the screen. You keep the board as clear as possible by moving matching kreatures into rows. When a row of the proper length or longer is formed, the kreatures in the row disappear, and you are awarded points based on the length of the row. If you run out of space for incoming kreatures, the game ends.



Eventually, new kreatures stop coming. You then enter Phase 2 of the round, in which you race against the timer to clear as many kreatures from the board as you can. The emptier the board when the timer runs out, the more bonus points you get.

The first few rounds are a snap. As the game progresses, however, new types of kreatures must be placed in longer and longer rows (six or more) in order to score. In addition, some rounds have "walls" that block the movement of your cursor, forcing you to take longer routes in order to pick up kreatures. And, of course, the kreatures arrive faster and faster. It's enough to make you dizzy! In some rounds, kreatures appear so quickly that just when you've found a good place for a row,





an incoming kreature comes and snatches it away.

Krazy Kreatures' graphics are bargain-basement quality. The playing boards for each round are constructed of lines and filled blocks, with no backgrounds or other details. The kreatures are simple icons and incorporate only rudimentary animations. (*Space Invaders*, anyone?) *Krazy Kreatures* would benefit from the services of a professional artist. The sound is okay, but unexciting.

In spite of its poor graphics and sound, *Krazy Kreatures* is a lot of fun. It takes the game concepts explored in *Tetris* and *Klax* and manages to come up with something new. Worth a look.

—Clayton Walnum

Krazy Kreatures, for the NES, is a curious hybrid of _Klax_ and _Tetris_, adding "kreatures" for the gamer to arrange instead of blocks.

American Video Entertainment, Inc.
1348 Ridder Park Drive
San Jose, CA 95131
(408) 453-8088

Burning Force

NAMCO
For the Sega Genesis ($54.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10

It's gratifying, finally, to see games coming out for the Genesis that truly give an arcade-quality experience. The first year offered too many clunkers in a small selection. Now we're seeing a string of games that live up to the Genesis promise. It took Namco to take one of the less-inspired early games— *Space Harrier II*—and turn it into something exciting: *Burning Force*.

The basic layout of *Burning Force* is the same as *Space Harrier II*'s (and every *SH* title): Face forward, shooting and dodging as you go. A geometrically patterned ground streaks

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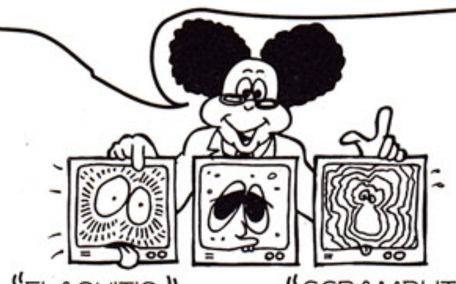
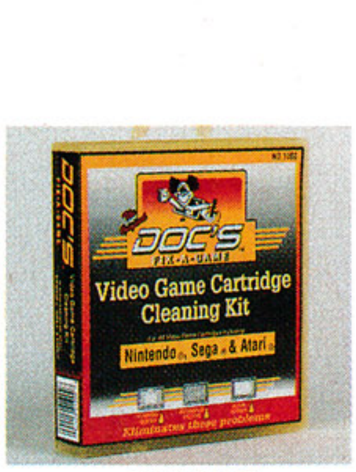


"FLASHITIS" "SCRAMBLITIS" "BLANKITIS"



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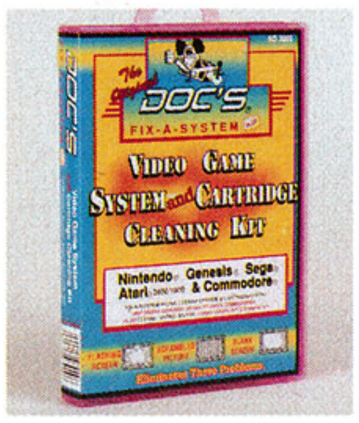
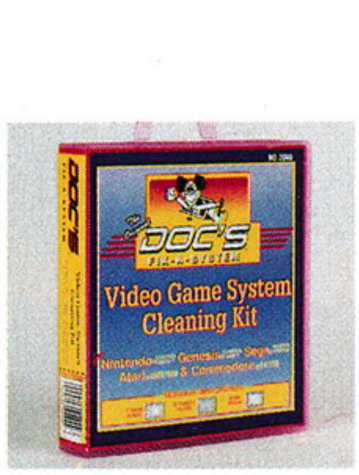


FIX-A-SYSTEM PLUS



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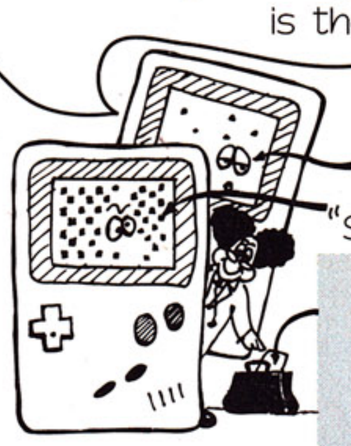

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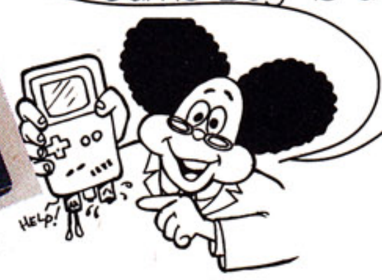

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by beneath you, and a plethora of enemies and obstacles above ground block your way. It all sounds tiresomely familiar, but *Burning Force* goes this route several times better.

For starters, you have two different crafts: airbike and airplane. The airbike, used in the first two areas of each level, can move left or right, but not up or down, and its speed is adjustable. The airplane, used in the third and fourth areas of each level, can move in all directions. Both craft have a gun and a set of homing missiles. Either weapon can be changed or refreshed by picking up power-up spheres, which are either released by the destruction of an enemy or are sitting there for the taking—if you can reach them.

The game's background: You're Hiromi, a student at Earth University, this game constitutes her/your final graduation exercise. You have six days to make it through alive. If you do, you graduate and earn the Space Fighter title. (If only there were a decoder ring in each box!) Each day corresponds to a level, so there are six levels with four areas in each. The third area of each level has the "boss"; the fourth area is purely to pick up bonus points and doesn't involve offense or defense.

Game play is far more challenging and varied than in *SH2*. In *Burning Force*, you not only have to avoid invincible obstacles, and determine where to hit the vulnerable ones, you also have to learn the locations of the power-up spheres, which ones will help in which situation and how to reach the ones that seem impossible to get. That usually involves riding your airbike over a jet of air that blasts you skyward; you then quickly adjust left or right to pick up the power-up of your choice.

Factors change depending on which power-ups you get. Some can actually diminish your weapon's effectiveness. You're also racing against a bonus timer clock, and you get three continues and an intelligently designed level select when you use the continue feature. An option screen gives two difficulty levels; a choice of the number of lives you start with; rapid fire on and off; joypad configuration options; and the usual music tests.

The graphics are about on a par with *Space Harrier II*—that is to say, excellent. *SH2* used more careful shading in some of its enemies for an almost photographic effect. *Burning Force* generally has slightly less detail in its corresponding opponents, but a much greater variety of them, more animation and more on-screen at once, as well as more detailed backgrounds. The animation is particularly outstanding when obstacles fall over, explode or transform into something else entirely.

***Burning Force*, by Namco, has outstanding graphics and animation and provides a plethora of enemies and obstacles to avoid.**

Even more impressive are the bonus screens, which call for incredibly precise aerobatics. You have to collect as many spheres as possible, because they snake off into the distance above the ground. On the downside, I noted more static than usual in the otherwise admirable soundtrack.

For sorely needed, imaginative twists on an old, underexplored formula, I give *Burning Force* a thumbs-up.

—J. M.

Namco America
3255-1 Scott Blvd., Suite 102
Santa Clara, CA 95054-3013
(408) 496-6371

Ultima: Quest of the Avatar

FCI
For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($59.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

Once again the land of Lord British and the world of Ultima have another quest for potential adventurers—*Quest of the Avatar*. This game is the second of the popular *Ultima* se-

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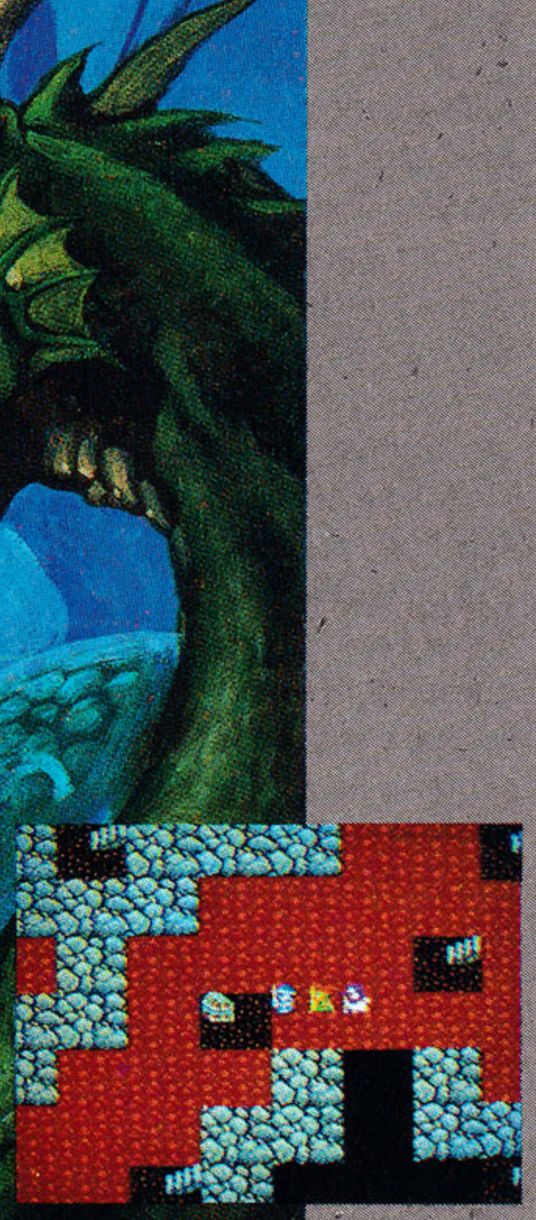

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ries to make it to the NES from original computer versions and has made the transition very well.

This time around, there aren't any immediate dangers, but Lord British has decided that an Avatar is needed to guide his people away from injustice and protect the land for the future. Your object as a would-be Avatar is to seek out the eight virtues of Avatarhood: honesty, compassion, valor, justice, sacrifice, honor, spirituality and humility.

Your quest starts with a fortune teller named Hawkwind. By asking several questions, he will judge your current level in each of the aforementioned virtues and decide with which type of character you will begin the game. There are eight character types possible: You may start as a mage, bard, fighter, druid, tinker, paladin, ranger or shepherd. Regardless of which type you start with, you will deal with a character of each type somewhere in the game, because your party of four will need to change slightly as your quest for each virtue progresses.

While a good portion of the game will deal with talking to people from town to town, never fear, there is plenty of fighting that must be done to find the many items needed to succeed in your adventure. In this game, however, fighting is just a smaller part of a bigger strategy. With an 80-page manual, I think I am justified in saying that the game is both complex and expansive.

Many of the features of this game will be familiar, such as the relationships between the characters' attributes and their abilities. Others are quite different. Spell-casting is more complex, for example. Spells are derived from recipes made up of herbs. These recipes must be recorded in your spell book first off (if you even know the proper ingredients), then you must have enough of the required ingredients on-hand before you can even think of casting them. Eight ingredients of varying cost and availability make up 25 spells, each having a cost in magic points upon a character.

I mentioned expansive—the world of *Ultima* is quite large. Travel by air, sea and land is required, as well as travel through deep dungeons full of nastiness. Some general maps are provided, but more will be needed if you wish to explore with ease. For rapid travel, "moongates" will whisk you from city to city, but only if you enter at the proper time. Weapons? Armor? Yes, several types of each, some magic! Helpful items? Yes, again. Runes, torches, gems, keys, stones, books, bells, horns...the list goes on.

The quest for each virtue is an adventure in itself, with much more than just monster-bashing required to reach your goals. Giving gold to the poor, valor in battle, honesty and, yes, even donating blood all affect the outcome of your quest.

Since *Quest for the Avatar* is obviously not something that is completed at one sitting, there are three spaces for saved games. A notebook would be a good idea for this game—you will have plenty to write down, believe me. The command structure is windowed for easy use, and the graphics are nice. The sounds of battle and lilting background music both fit in nicely with the atmosphere of the game.

If you are at all interested in games of this type, you will want this one. If you aren't interested, try it anyway and you will find how easily one becomes addicted.

Quest for the Avatar is challenging yet fun; difficult, but not impossible. This is the type of game that set the standard for all other role-playing games to follow and is definitely worth checking out.

—Brent Walker

FCI
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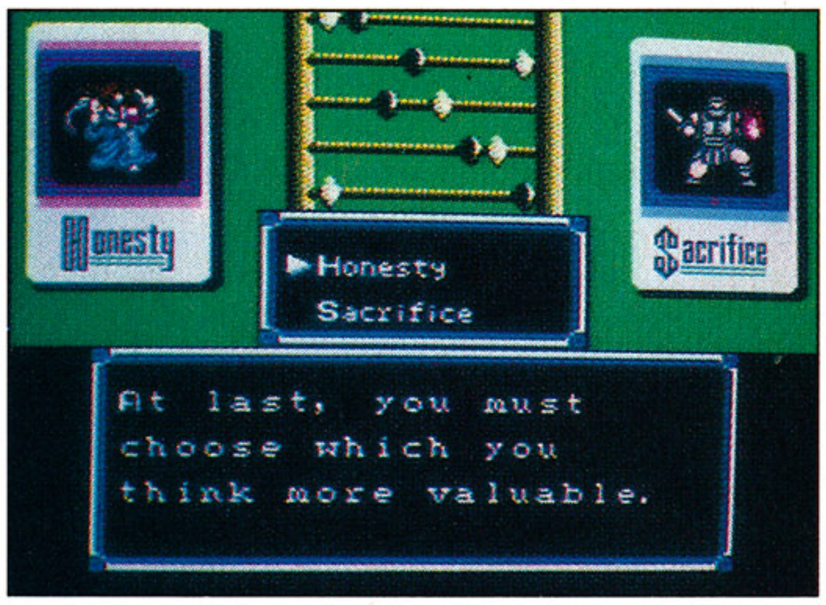

***Ultima: Quest of the Avatar*, by FCI, is the second game from the popular *Ultima* series to be translated from computer to NES.**

Arrow Flash

RENOVATION PRODUCTS
For the Sega Genesis ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10

This month, I'll give you a break, Gentle Reader. I won't whine about the overabundance of these scrolling shoot-'em-ups or wonder out loud why game companies continue to release them in a nonstop flood. Maybe I'm the only one who's sick of them. Maybe these things are top sellers. And maybe we'll see peace in the Middle East during our lifetimes.

Here's the story: The Great Hilagi has been plundering the universe with the help of a band of viking terrorists. (Viking terrorists?) Earth is now at risk. Dr. Zerrek Keene, a famous scientist, sends for his granddaughter, Zana, and admits to her that one of his inventions may have been what attracted the vikings to Earth. He gives Zana the keycard to the ERX-75 battle weapon and begs her to save the planet.

Unfortunately, not only is *Arrow Flash* yet another shoot-'em-up, it's not a particularly

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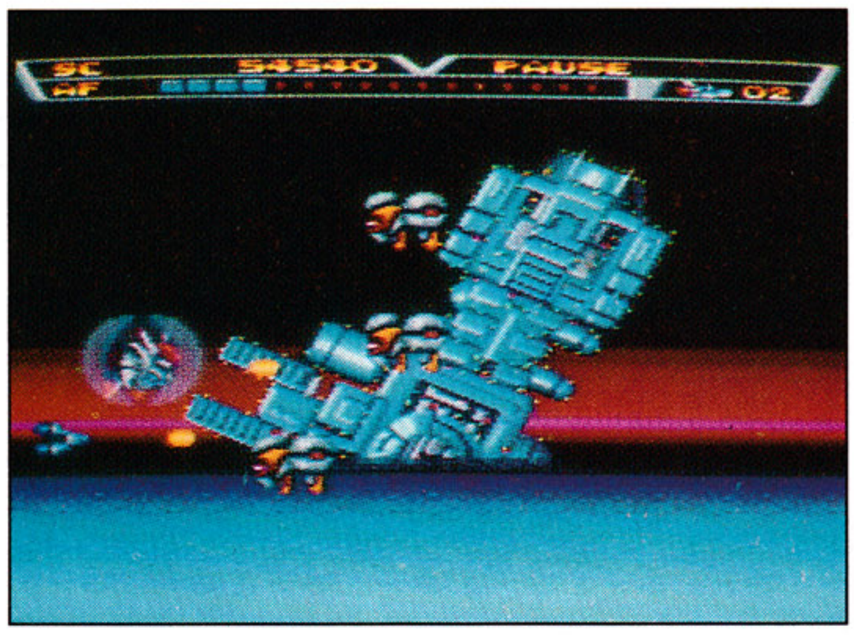
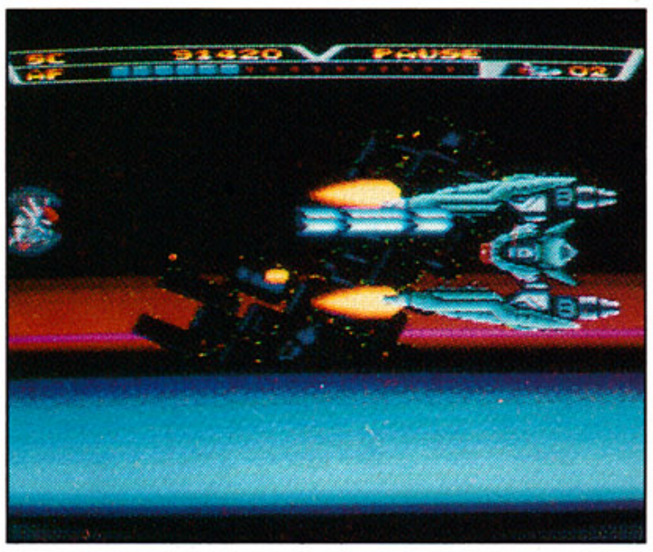
good one at that. You, as Zana, pilot the ERX-75 through scrolling scenes wherein you blast everything that moves and pick up power-up icons along the way. Different types of lasers are available, as well as items like homing missiles and shields. Picking up weapon icons allows you to switch to a different weapon or power-up the one you already have.

Pretty conventional stuff, eh? The only bit of originality in the whole thing is the arrow flash weapon, which, when activated, encloses the ERX-75 within a deadly energy shield or blasts the energy across the screen in a devastating attack. But when you get right down to it, arrow flash is really nothing more than a fancy "pow," a gadget included in most shooters.

Renovation Products' *Arrow Flash* might lack in originality, but makes up for its weakness with excellent musical passages.



Some shoot-'em-ups manage to survive a lack of originality by concentrating on detailed graphics and animations. *Arrow Flash* falls flat in this department as well. The backgrounds for each level are anything but lavish, many being nothing more than waving lines or other patterns. When you consider the power packed into the Genesis, graphics this poor are inexcusable—pure laziness.



If *Arrow Flash* has a saving grace, it's the hot musical tracks that accompany each scene. There's lots of music and all of it top-notch. If you buy *Arrow Flash*, go directly to the options screen and use the sound-test feature to check out the tunes. Cooking stuff.

Speaking of the options screen, *Arrow Flash* can be tailored to your playing abilities. You can select an easy, normal or hard difficulty setting; give yourself three, five or seven men; access the sound test; turn rapid fire on and off; and select whether the arrow-flash weapon requires charging before use.

But regardless of the option settings, *Arrow Flash* has little to offer: a ho-hum shooter with poor graphics and no lasting power. Unless you simply must have every game released for your Genesis, pass this one by.

—C. W.

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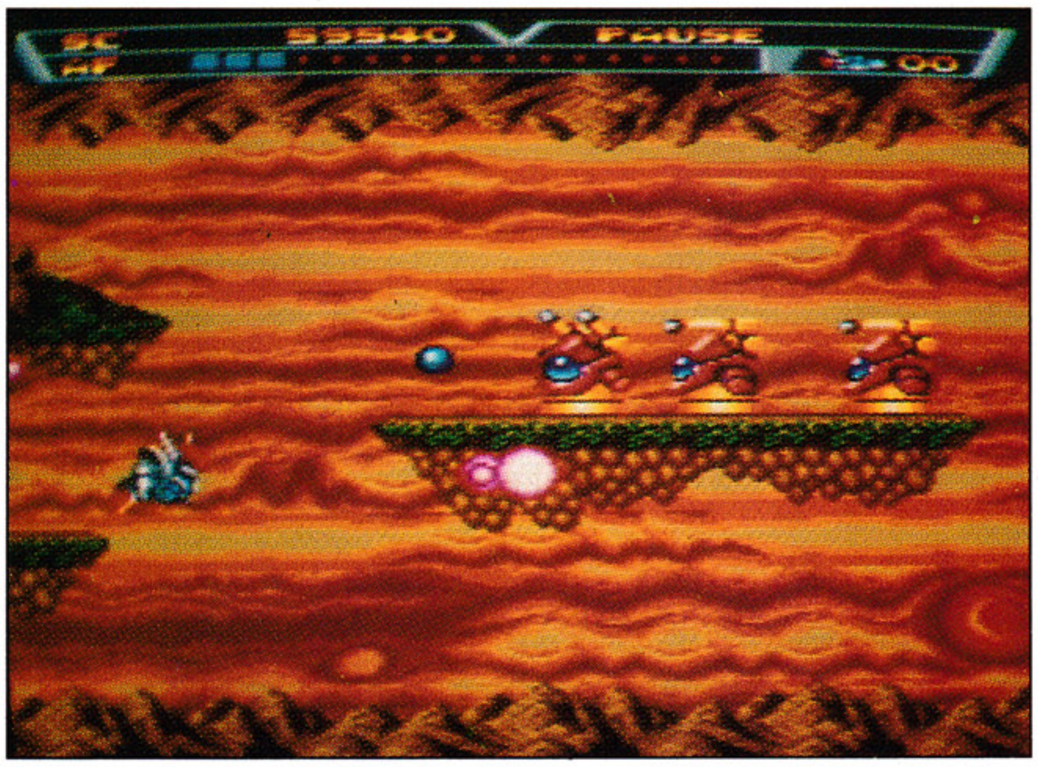

Pac-Mania

TENGEN
For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($39.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10

What is small, yellow, globular and just loves to chow down upon small white pellets and the occasional ghost? Yes, it's Pac-Man, here in yet another variation of the original classic.

I would hope that everyone is familiar with the object of *Pac-Mania*, which remains the same as its predecessors': traveling from maze to maze, Pac-Man must devour all the pellets contained within, all the while engaged in a constant "eat or be eaten" battle with up to seven different ghosts that are out to do him in. Up to two players may participate, alternating turns as one player dies.

Fortunately, there are a few changes that freshen up an otherwise stale theme. The first and most obvious is your perspective as the player. Instead of the traditional 2-D viewpoint, everything is presented from an overhead three-quarters angle to give a more 3-D look to the game. None of the mazes can be completely contained on-screen at a time, so the screen scrolls in whatever direction Pac-Man is moving to keep the appropriate sections in view. As I mentioned above, there are up to seven different ghosts after you this time around. Don't worry—Blinky, Pinky, Inky, Clyde and Sue are back, but with the help of new friends Funky and Spunky as well.

Even with larger mazes, you may wonder how it would be doable to possibly avoid so many ghosts at once. Sure, you still have your energizers to enable ghost munching, but wouldn't the ability to jump over the ghosts have been great in all the earlier versions?

Apparently, the designers of *Pac-Mania* agree, and that is just what is provided. By hitting either of your buttons, Pac-Man can jump over anything in his way. While this may sound like a surefire way to gobble through the game without any problems, think again. Remember those two new ghosts that have joined the family? Well, they have been gifted with the same bouncing abilities that you have. Whenever you jump, they jump, making it difficult to simply

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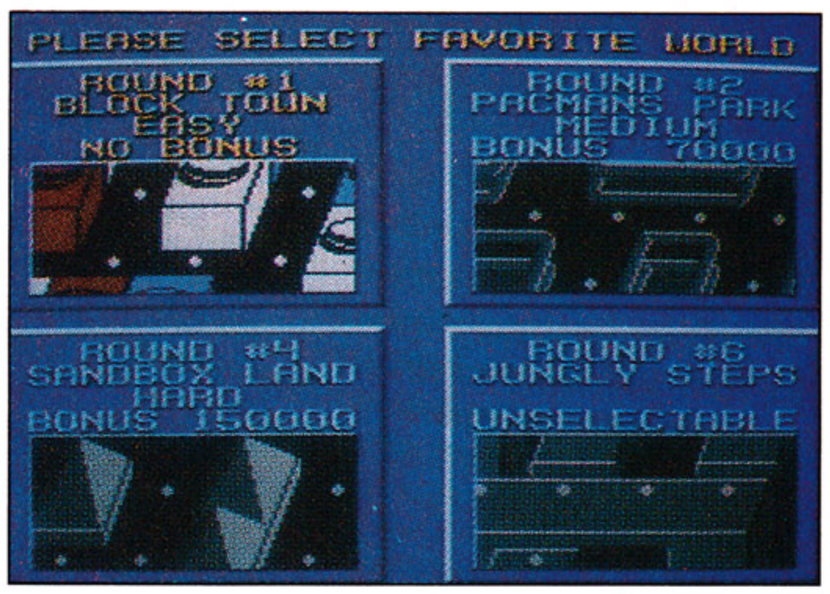
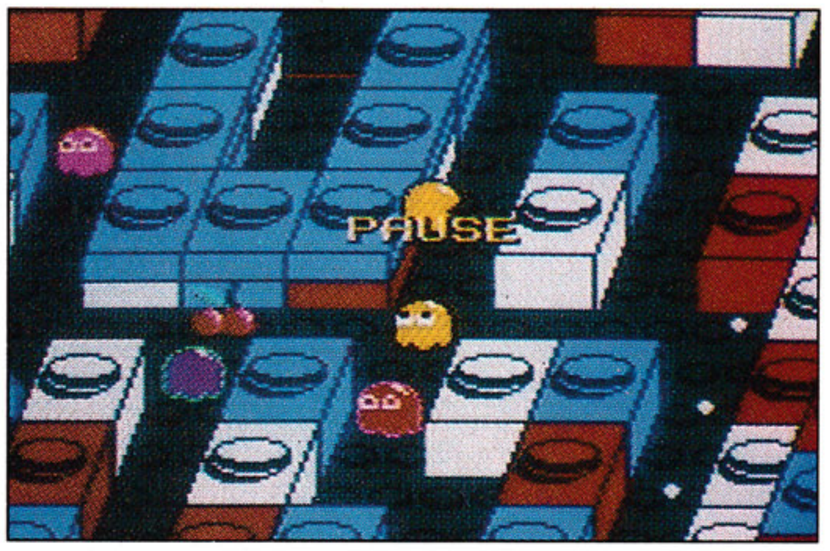
CIRCLE #129 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

sail over them without a fatal mid-air collision. Jumping over them isn't impossible, but good timing and reflexes are essential, especially when things start to speed up!

***Pac-Mania*, by Tengen for the NES, is the latest entry into the *Pac-Man* family, with a new overhead perspective, scrolling mazes and added adversaries.**



For some dining variety, there are eight fruits varying in point value and 11 special items that appear, including one that acts to increase your speed and another that doubles your points and behaves as an energizer to turn the tables on the ghosts temporarily. Since



there are more ghosts, the point values are accordingly higher. While only 200 are awarded for the first, up to 7650 may be awarded for successive ghosts.

Four different "worlds" are presented, but Pac-Man may only start at any of the first three. A "courage" bonus is awarded when you start on either the second or third worlds, so there is some incentive to proceed directly to the harder levels. Play starts with five men and one extra at 50,000 points, but even with only two continues, that's 18 lives—plenty to see all that the game has to offer.

For those that have seen the arcade counterpart to this game, you shouldn't feel disappointed. The graphics, while not as brilliant, are certainly close to the original. The music and sound effects are also similar and equally satisfactory. Cartoons, you ask? Yes, even the cartoons are faithfully reproduced. I can't really think of anything that is missing from Tengen's version, other than a coin slot.

If you are completely burned out on *Pac-Man* clones, you probably aren't reading this. If you are a true *Pac-Maniac* however, this gobbler is for you.

—B. W.

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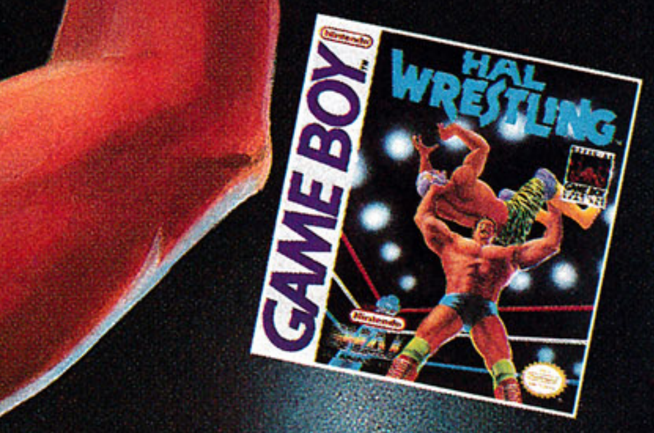

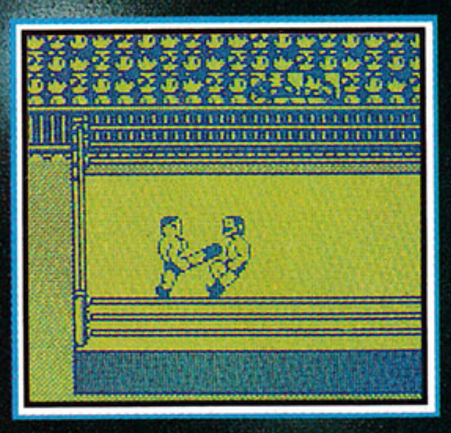

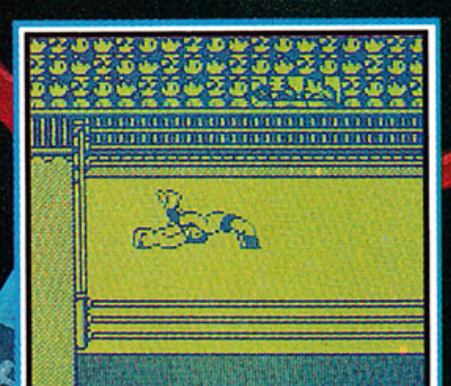

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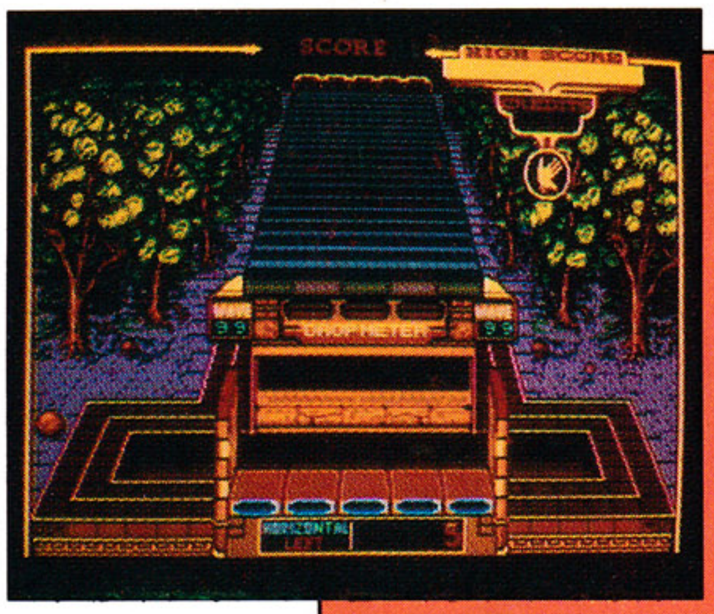
Tips are graded on a scale of one to five joysticks. The more joysticks that are colored in, the more valuable the hint.

Blow the dust off those old games, and try out some of our new hints! If you have some great hints and tips for us, just put them on a piece of paper, and send them to **VG&CE, 9171 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Beverly Hills, CA 90210, ATTN: Easter Egg Hunt.** *The author of each new tip we use will receive $10. Write neatly and be sure to include your name and address!*

EASTER EGG HUNT

Here's a key to the abbreviations:

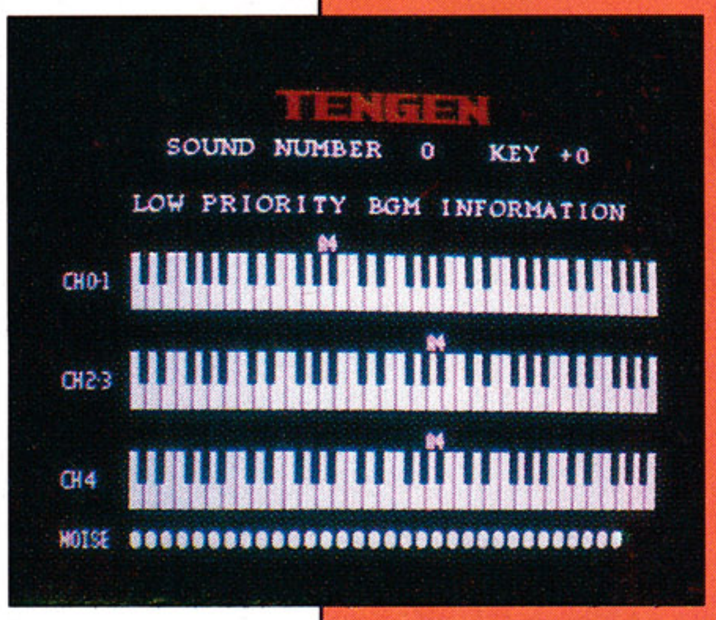
U = Up
D = Down
L = Left
R = Right
A = "A" button
B = "B" button
C = "C" button



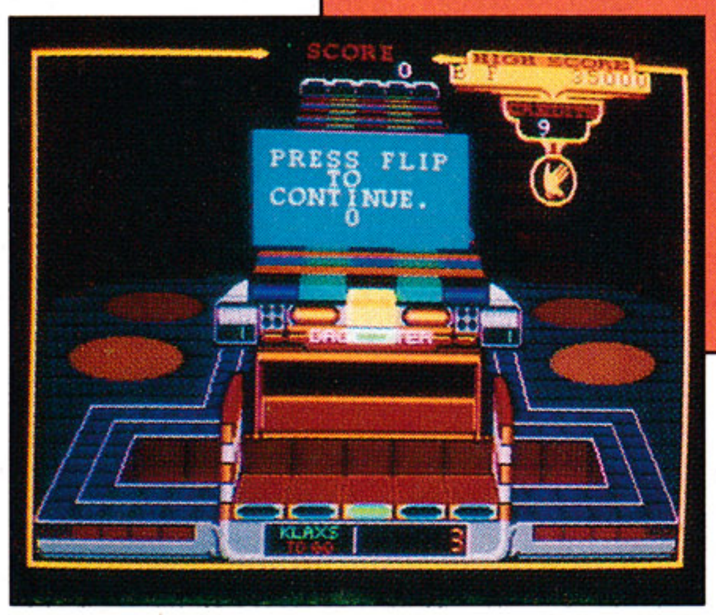
Klax

(TENGEN FOR THE TG-16)

During the title screen, press **SELECT** to enter the option screen. From here, hold down II and **SELECT**, then hit **RUN** to go into the stage select. Press U or D to select the stage. The I and II buttons will allow you to change the brightness of the screen. Once you are in the stage select, press and hold II and **SELECT**, then press **RUN** to enter a sound test.



When the continue mode appears on the screen, press and hold **SELECT**, then press U to get one extra credit. You can only have up to nine credits at a time, but you can repeat this egg as many times as needed.

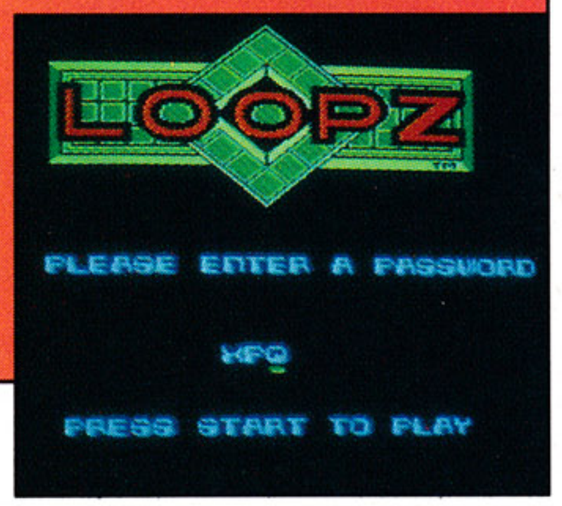


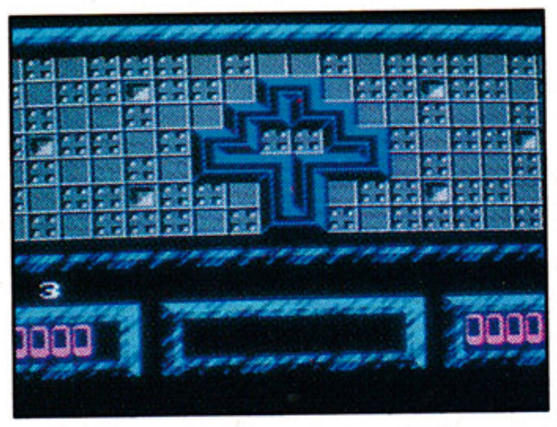
Loopz

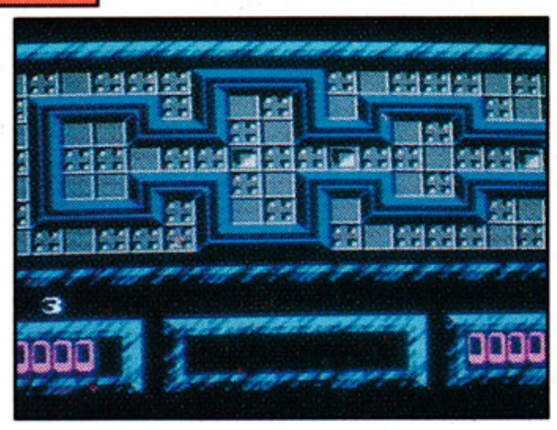
(MINDSCAPE FOR THE NES)

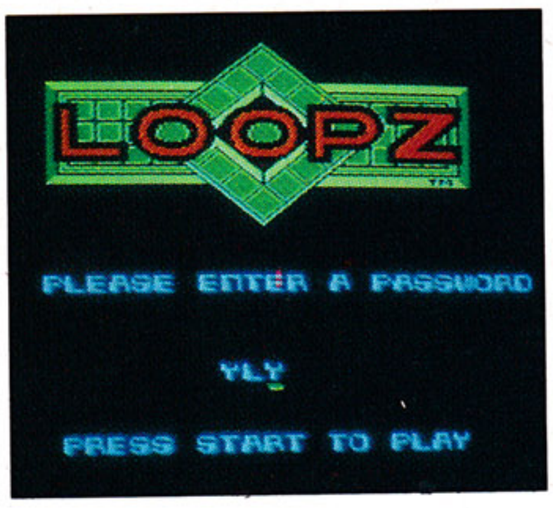
Paul Davis, of Dallas, Texas, sent in passwords for various stages in Game Type C. Thanks for your help, Paul.

Stage 6—**XPQ**
Stage 11—**JGS**
Stage 16—**ASL**
Stage 21—**PDS**
Stage 26—**WKK**
Stage 31—**YLY**









continued on page 64

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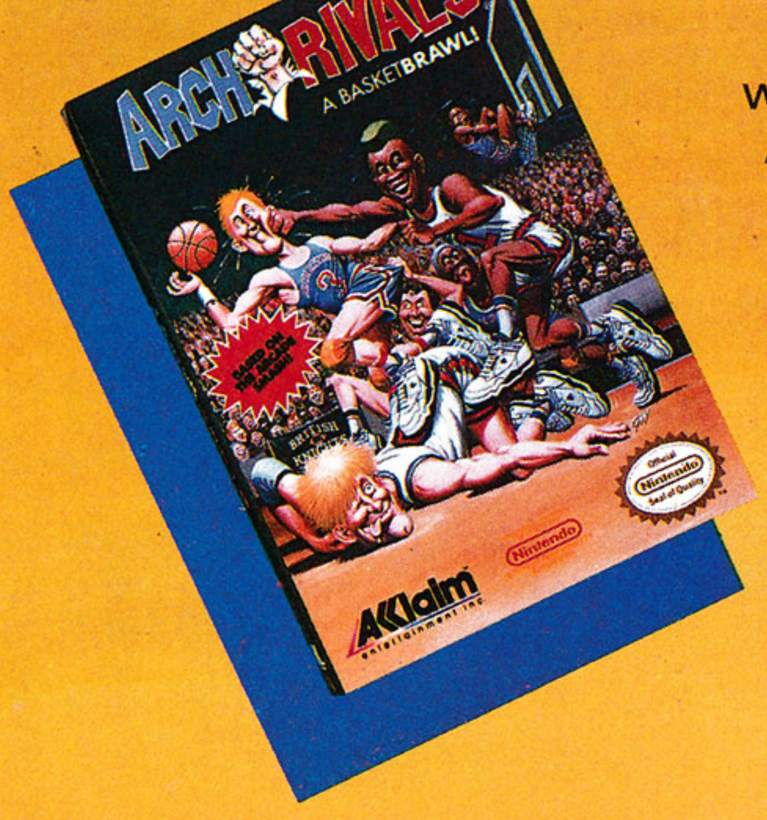

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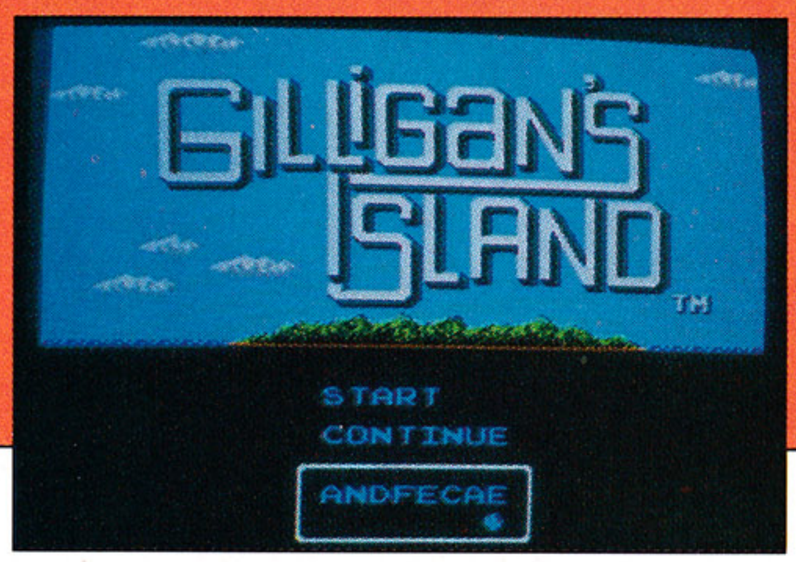
CIRCLE #108 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

continued from page 62

Gilligan's Island



Philip Davis (any relation to Paul?), of Dallas, Texas, sent these passwords:

To play Stage 2, enter GECBNIKB; for Stage 3 enter DLFEPNPA; and for Stage 4 enter ANDFECAE.

Thanks, Philip.

Super Star Soldier

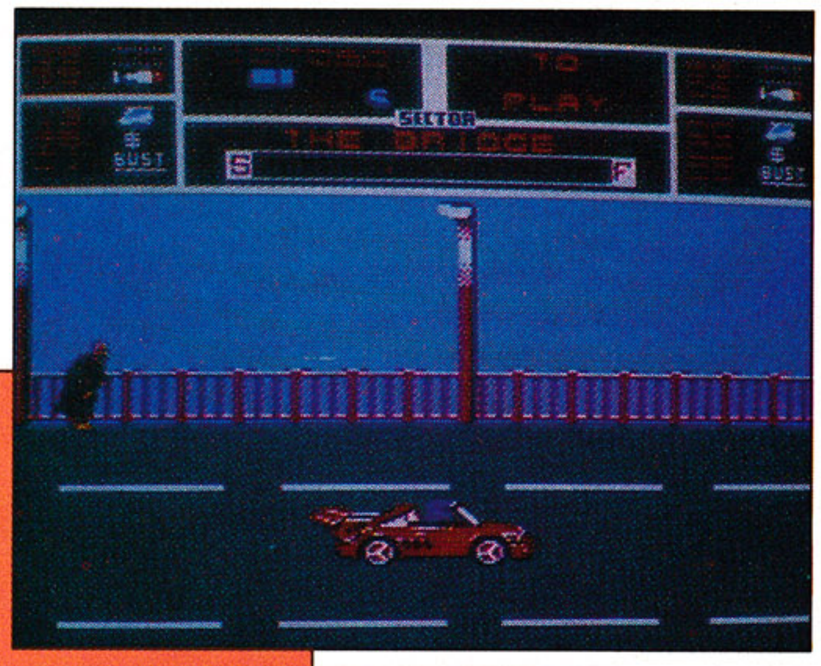
(NEC FOR THE TG-16)

With the TG-16 turned off, press and hold **RUN** and **SELECT**. Then turn on the TG-16 and release the buttons. During the title screen, press L, II, U, II, R, II, D, II, L, I, U, I, R, I, D, I, then press I and II eight times simultaneously and, finally, hit **SELECT** and I eight times simultaneously. Once you're in this test mode, you can select between a sound test, stage select, difficulty settings and whether to use a vertical or horizontal screen.

Gargoyle's Quest

(CAPCOM FOR THE GAME BOY)

Input JXAJ-RR74 as a password to begin deep into the game. This egg is courtesy of George Dickson, of Woodbury, Tennessee. Thanks, George.



Narc

(ACCLAIM FOR THE NES)

On Level 3, get in the car and run over the different bad guys until your money, drugs recovered and rocket bombs reach 99. Then go to the third dumpster and wait for the helicopter, but don't destroy it yet. Jump on top of the second dumpster, and wait for the helicopter to appear, then shoot it down. Helicopters will appear repeatedly. Use all 99 rocket bombs to destroy them, and you will earn a score high enough to get five or six free men.

To bring up a secret continue, during the title screen, press and hold A, B, **SELECT** and U, then **START**. If you're playing a one-player game, you can also continue from where you left off if you press **START** on Controller 2.

continued on page 66

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SEGA GENESIS 16-BIT CARTRIDGE

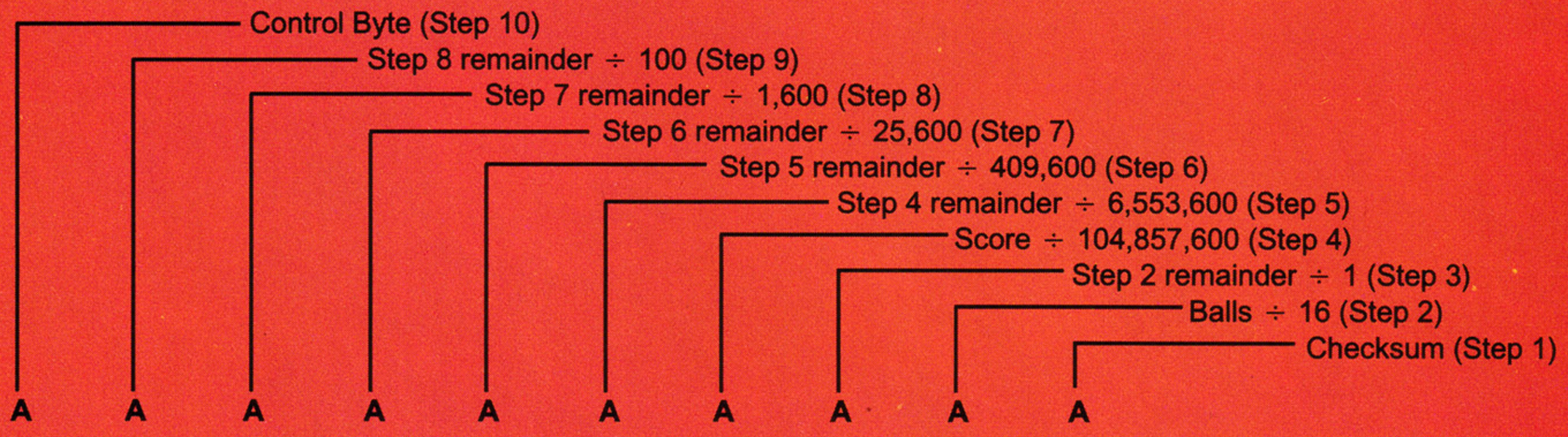
CIRCLE #132 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

continued from page 64

DEVIL'S CRUSH

(NEC FOR THE TG-16)

Via Delphi, Victor Ireland provided a detailed method for creating your own passwords for NEC's challenging pinball game. Here is the breakdown of the *Devil's Crush* password encoding:



The control byte should always be left at "**A**." It can be changed, but it unavoidably interacts with the rest of the password in an unpredictable manner. Its only purpose is to confuse would-be password crackers by changing at random when the password is requested. When it changes, it modifies the whole password.

The following example will demonstrate how to use the above information to start *Devil's Crush* in *any* state:

Let's say we want to start the game at 998,000,000 points so that we can play for the last million points and see the end. Just to make sure we can finish, we'll give ourselves 100 balls. To derive our password, it is easiest to work backward.

• Step 1—Leave the checksum (the last character of the password) blank—the rest of the password will determine what it is.

• Step 2—To get 100 balls, we divide 16 into 100. This gives us **6** with a remainder of 4. We carry that remainder (**4**) to the next column (Step 3).

• Step 4—To find the next character, we divide 104,857,600 into 998,000,000. This gives us **9** with a remainder of 54,281,600.

• Step 5—Now divide 54,281,600 by 6,553,600. We get **8** with a remainder of 1,852,800.

• Step 6—The remainder 1,852,800 divided by 409,600 gives us **4** with a remainder of 214,400.

• Step 7—Next, 25,600 divides into 214,400, which gives us **8** with a remainder of 9,600.

• Step 8—To finish the math, 1,600 divides into 9,600 to give us **6**. There is no remainder, so we carry **0** to the hundreds slot (Step 9).

• Step 10—Finally, the control byte should *always* be an "**A**."

• Now that we have the values, let's convert our numbers to the letters required by *Devil's Crush*. The designers made it quite easy—"A"=0, "B"=1, "C"=2..."Z"=25.

Using this conversion, our nearly complete password is **AAGIEIJEG**. All we have left to complete is the checksum letter at the end. The easiest way to accomplish this is to enter the password in *Devil's Crush* until you get to the last space. Then, starting at "A," successively try each letter by hitting **RUN**. If the game does not start, just advance to the next letter by pushing R on your controller and hit **RUN** again. Repeat this until the correct final letter is found and the game begins.

Good luck!

Mondu's Fight Palace

(ACTIVISION FOR THE GENESIS)

To transform into other characters, input the following commands during the title screen before the one- or two-player choice appears. (If the letters aren't separated by a comma, then press them at the same time.)

Edwina: L, BC, C
Guano: U, R, AB
Bonapart: A, U, C
Stump: AC, R, C
Webra: AC, UP, R
McFire: D, C, R
Sheba: BC, B, B
Weezil: D, R, U
Brainiac: R, R, C
El Toro: BC, A, U
Mondu: AB, D, L

CHIP'S CHALLENGE

(ATARI FOR THE LYNX)

Paul Leech, of Atco, New Jersey, was nice enough to send in the last three codes of this game. For Level 147, enter COZA; for Level 148 enter RGSK; and for the last stage, Level 149, enter DIGW. Thanks, Paul, for these great eggs.

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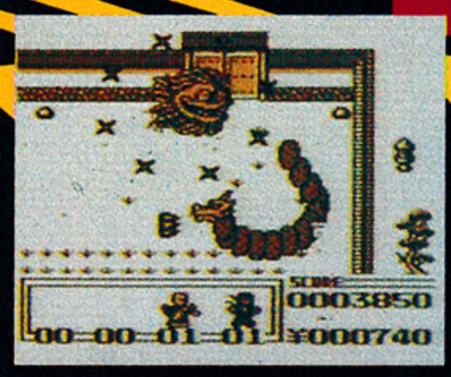
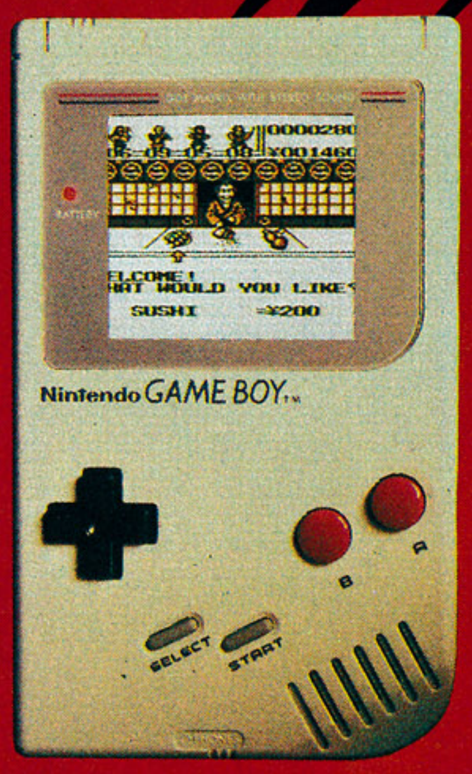
mercenary FORCE™





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CIRCLE #133 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

HOT CIRCUITS . . .

The Arcade Museum

BY

JAMES COOPER

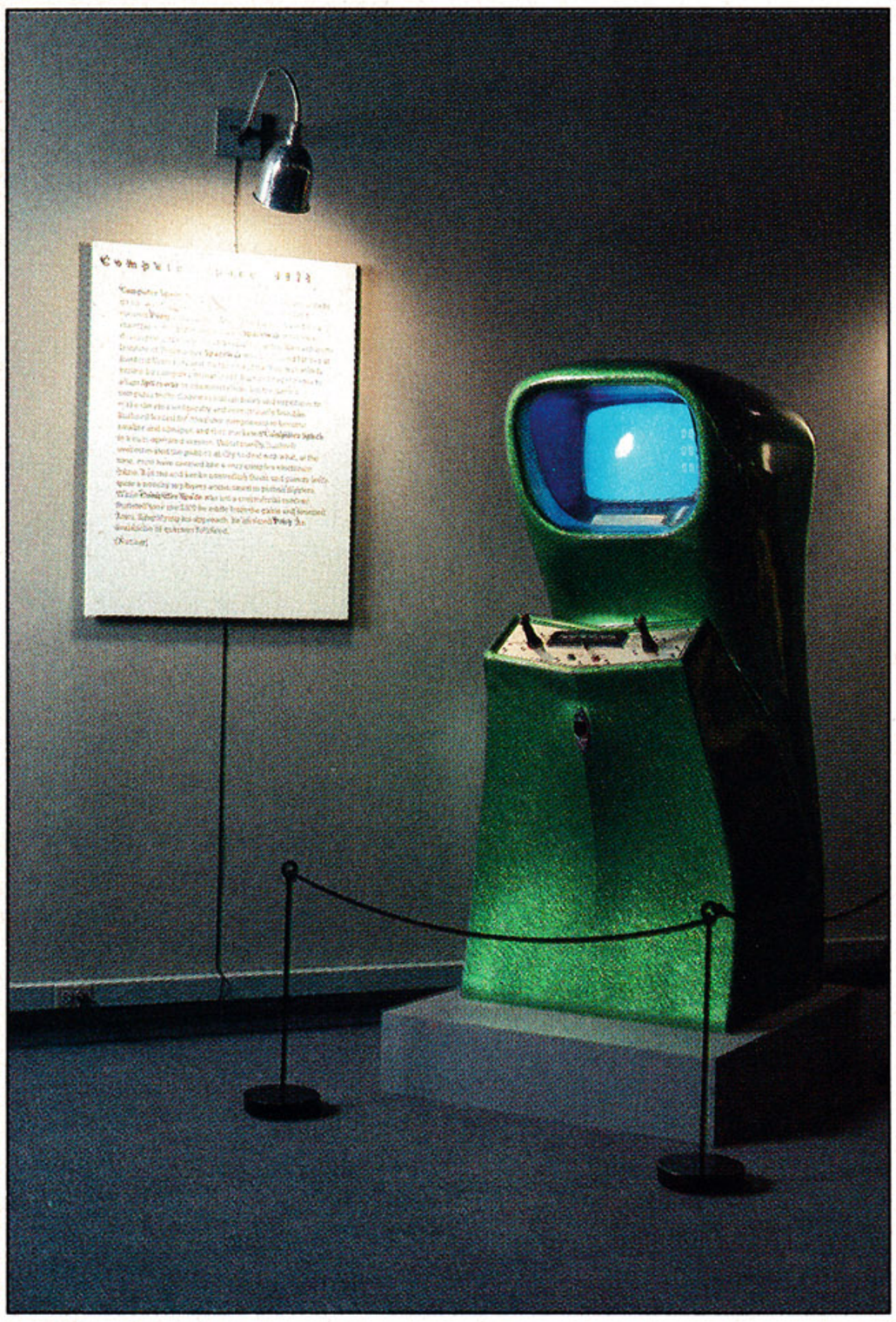
MOST MUSEUMS ARE OLD AND SOMEWHAT OPPRESSIVE—LOOK BUT DON'T TOUCH. THERE'S ONE MUSEUM THAT MAY CAUSE YOU TO WALK IN AND DO A DOUBLE TAKE. THE FIRST THING YOU MIGHT NOTICE IS THAT THE OLDEST ITEM ON DISPLAY DATES FROM 1971. THEN YOU'LL DISCOVER THAT YOU CAN *PLAY* WITH EVERYTHING IN THE ROOM. WHERE ARE THE ROPES, THE GLASS CASES, THE STUFFY CURATORS? AND WHAT'S THAT OFF IN A CORNER? A *CENTIPEDE*?

THE ONLY THING YOU'LL SEE IN THIS PLACE ARE VIDEO GAMES, DOZENS OF THEM. CLEARLY, THIS IS NO ORDINARY MUSEUM EXHIBIT. IT'S "HOT CIRCUITS, A VIDEO ARCADE," A TRAVELING HISTORY OF THE VIDEO GAME, CREATED BY THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE IN NEW YORK CITY.

HOT CIRCUITS CONSISTS OF 47 CLASSIC ARCADE GAMES, FROM THE SIMPLE BLIPS AND BEEPS OF *PONG* TO THE DIGITIZED WONDERS OF 1989'S *NARC*. THE BRAINCHILD OF ROCHELLE SLOVIN AND SHARON BLUME, HOT CIRCUITS DEMONSTRATES THAT MODERN SOCIETY IS FINALLY WILLING TO RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VIDEO-GAMING HOBBY.

"FOR MILLIONS OF PEOPLE, THEIR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH COMPUTERS CAME THROUGH VIDEO GAMES," BLUME EXPLAINED, "AND IT IS IMPORTANT TO EXAMINE THE GAMES' SHORT, DENSE HISTORY. THANKS TO THE SPEED OF TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE, TIME PASSES LIKE LIGHTNING IN THIS INDUSTRY. MANY GAMES BECAME ANTIQUES WITHIN A YEAR OR TWO. IT WILL BE IMPORTANT TO LOOK AT VIDEO GAMES AGAIN IN ANOTHER TEN OR 20 YEARS. I'M SURE THE CHANGES WILL BE NO LESS REMARKABLE."

Hot Circuits wasn't developed only for gamers fascinated by the origins of their hobby. "We also think it is important for parents to see what their kids are doing," Blum continued. "Believe it or not, many people of the 'older generation' still don't even know what a video game is. As curious as they might be, they'd never be seen in an arcade. But now that the games are in a museum, they have an excuse to have some fun." Not surprisingly, Blum pointed out that many older people find themselves immediately "hooked" after a few plays.



This exhibit may have come in the nick of time, considering that so many of the games are becoming increasingly difficult to find. The *Pong* on display, dating from 1972, is one of the few left in existence (the other resides permanently in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.), and several other games required months of searching to locate. The controversial racing game *Death Race 2000* (1976) is on loan from the manufacturer because it is apparently the only one left. The venerable *Pac-Man* (1980), the most popular arcade game of all time, arrived in pieces from different parts of the country just hours before the display first opened in June 1982. Many of the games required restoration, and several of them could not be repaired.

Why are so many of the original games on the endangered-species list? The answer is evident in the exhibit itself. Many of the "golden oldies" on display are graphically inferior to games released in later years. Indeed, the games change so quickly that many began to look "old" in a matter of months, but arcade owners responded by reconditioning the obsolete machines. Sometimes "speed-up" chips were added to increase the challenge. More frequently, dealers created new games out of the old by gutting machines, adding new software and painting over the cabinets.

Though the museum's creators haven't made the mistake of over-intellectualizing the exhibit, notes accompanying most games report on the historical and sociological significance of each machine. Most gamers, Blum reports, do read the cards, and along the way they've picked up some fascinating and funny tidbits.

One story chronicles the early rise of video games. The first arcade-style video game, *Computer Space* (1971), was rejected by the public as too complicated: Gamers were baffled by the concept that the movement of a joystick translated into movement of objects on the screen. Nolan Bushnell, the creator of *Computer Space*, took the few hundred dollars he cleared from the game and developed the simplistic *Pong*, which made its commercial debut at a California bar in 1972. The very next day, Bushnell received a frantic call from the owner of the bar, who complained that the gadget was already broken. Bushnell arrived to discover that the machine certainly had stopped working—but the "malfunction" was that too many quarters had been stuffed in the coin box. With this success, Atari, not to mention the video-game revolution was born.

Gamers will also learn that complaints about video games surfaced long before Nintendo became a household word. Exidy released *Death Race 2000* in 1976, much to the dismay of parents around the nation. In this primitive black-and-white classic, the player drives a little car around the screen attempting to run down stick-figure "aliens." Each time you hit one, a little tombstone appears in its place. Parents insisted that the stick figures looked too much like innocent human pedestrians and demanded that the machine be pulled from amusement centers. (Have these folks seen *Splatterhouse*?) Anyway, the controversy over *Death Race* made the game so popular with kids that Exidy had to go back into production again just to keep up with the demand.

Hot Circuits features little on home video games, which also began to appear in the late 1970s. Nevertheless, visitors will see the first appearance of everybody's favorite video-game character, Mario, in Nintendo's 1982 classic, *Donkey Kong*. Mario made his debut attempting to save his girlfriend from the clutches of a large barrel-tossing ape. Eight years and a zillion cartridges later, Mario is still trying to save unsuspecting females from evil creatures. What a guy!

Every game in the exhibit has a special place in video-game history. That's because the creators attempted to choose

continued on page 74

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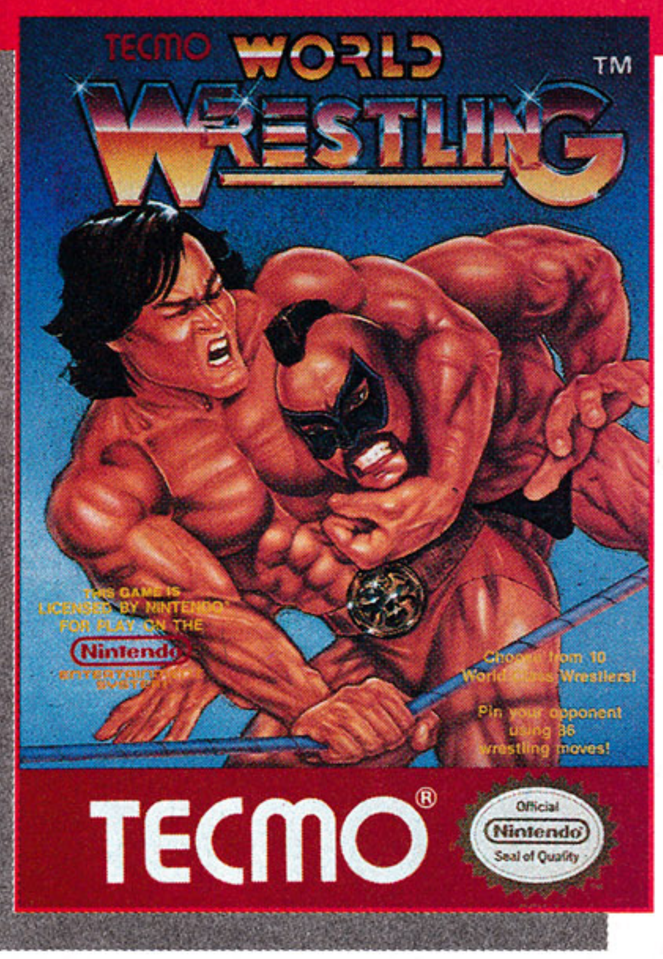
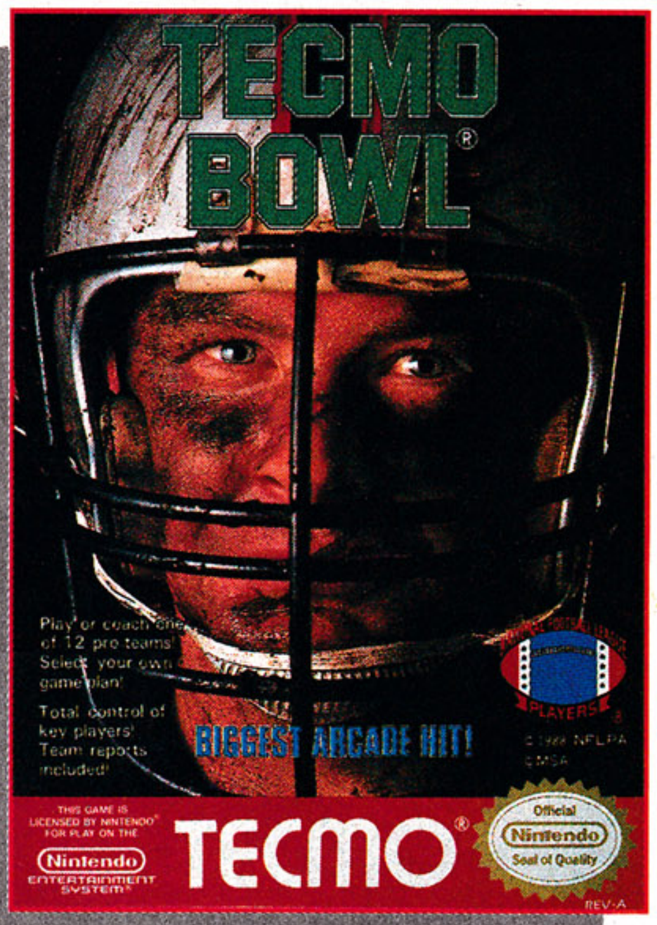


- 1 or 2 players
- Superior graphics
- Animated announcer
- Outside-the-ring action
- 34 different killer moves
- Power meters
- Training mode for 1 player



- 1 or 2 players
- Superior graphics
- Coaching mode
- Password for continued action
- 12 teams
- Super action cinema screens

- 1 or 2 players
- Superior graphics
- Password for continued action
- Instant close-ups
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- 24 Different teams
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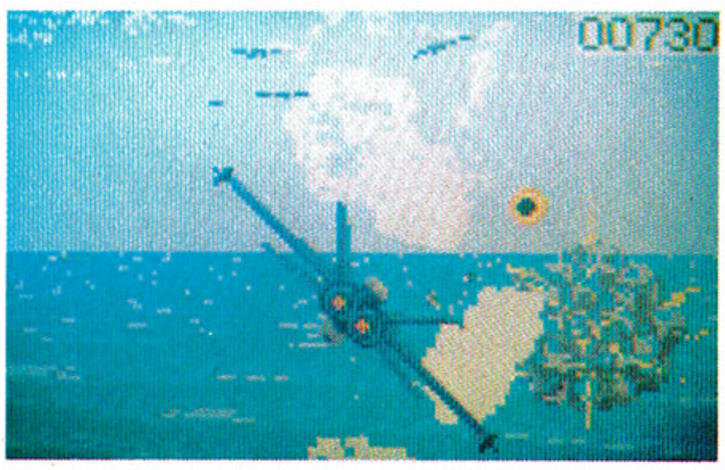
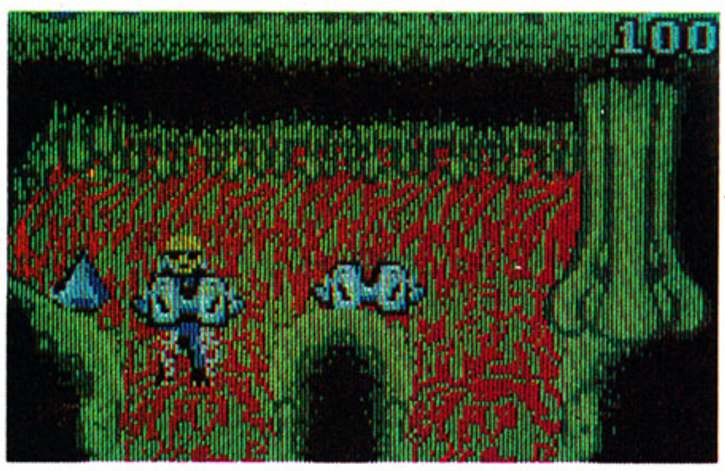
CIRCLE #134 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

The Following Too Graphic For



Why mow the lawn when you can bomb oncoming planes and destroy secret military bases in nine action missions with **BLUE LIGHTNING.**

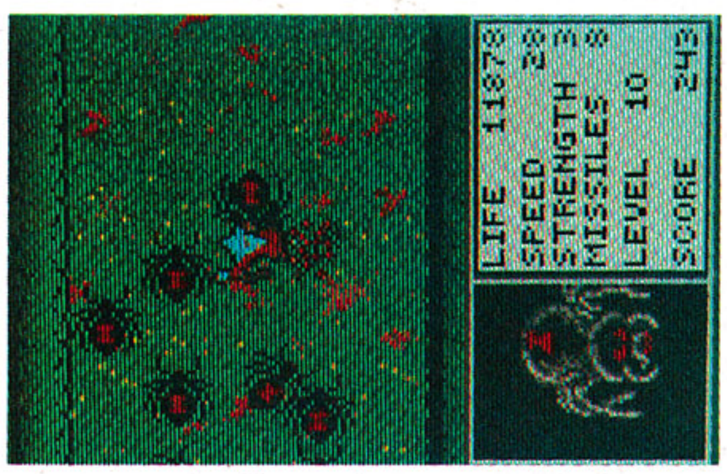


After dinner, you can always battle maggots, blood-flies and drools in the dangerous 8 player game – **SLIME WORLD.**

RYGAR, *the 2 player arcade hit that pits you against ferocious beasts, hideous demons or worse, your best friend.*

PAPERBOY. *Fling papers at non-subscribers, race your bicycle on people's lawns— in other words, the ultimate afterschool job.*

RAMPAGE. *Become a 60 ft. beast, demolish buildings and eat tanks as an army attempts to destroy you. Up to 4 players can take part in the destruction.*



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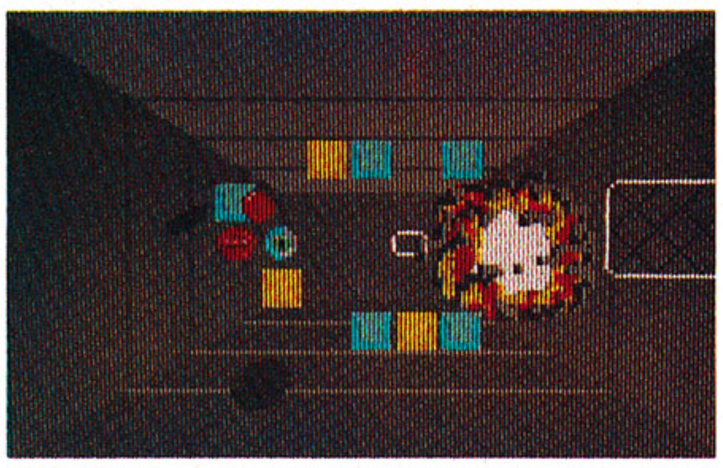
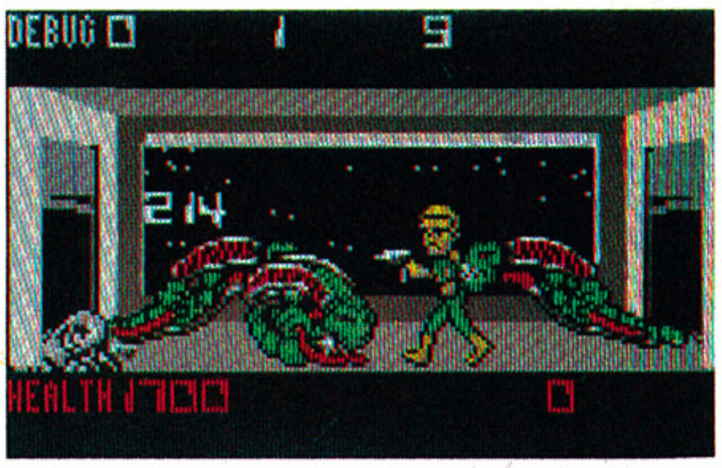
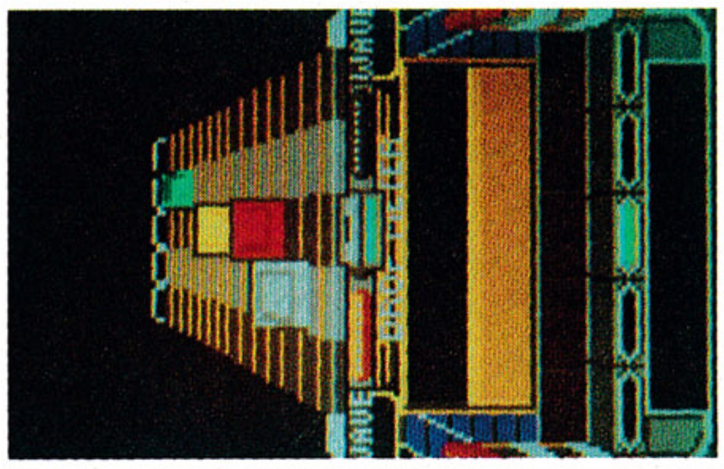


ROBO SQUASH. *The ultimate paddle game. The goal is to squash the enemy and line up four globes in a row to win. But be careful, three splats and you're out.*

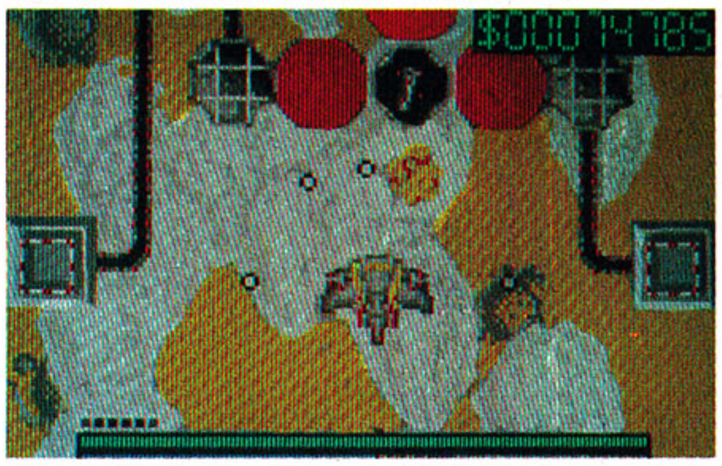


XENOPHOBE. *Trapped in a space station, you must destroy the aliens. Side-scrolling adventure for up to 4 players.*

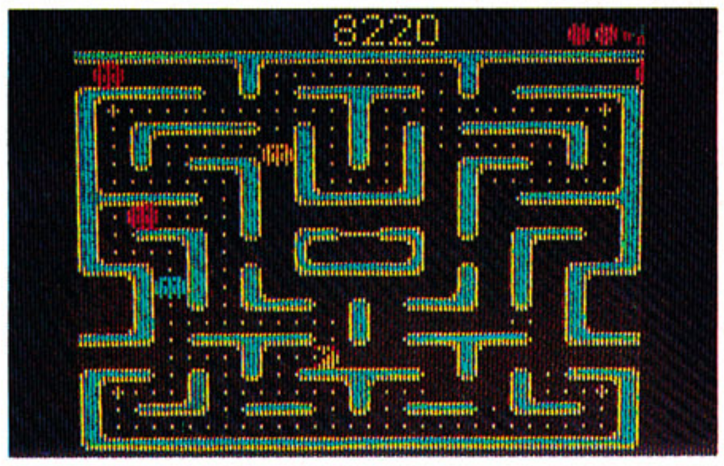


KLAX. *Maneuver your platform. Catch the falling bricks. Stack 'em for points. And try to do it all before your dad asks to borrow it.*

ROAD BLASTER. *Drive and avoid mines, exploding towers and enemy vehicles for points and make it through 50 levels. Great to play in the back of the car.*



It's a galactic shoot out between you and aliens in the 4 player game **ZARLOR MERCENARY.** *Your only hope is to kill them all or break for lunch.*



Help **MS. PACMAN** *escape the marauding ghosts by guiding her through multiple mazes gobbling up dots, energizers, fruits and pretzels.*

the Lynx lets you play arcade quality games that really look like arcade games. In 4 channel sound. Play by yourself. With one opponent. Two opponents. Three opponents. Or you can even link up with seven other players on certain games.

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CIRCLE #135 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

continued from page 70

machines that featured new technology enabling video games to go faster and further in a prettier way. *Pong* is certainly a far cry from *NARC*. The question is, how did we get from one game to the other? Hot Circuits provides some insight by displaying the games that took the major leaps forward.

Many games represented daring experiments. The 1980 Atari game *Battlezone* used the vector graphics of *Asteroids* (1979) in a new, exciting way to create three-dimensional effects. The joystick and viewscreen were designed to make the player feel as if he or she were in the cockpit of a tank, and the scrolling 3-D first-person graphics made *Battlezone* a hit.

The 3-D idea was very successful, and 1982 saw the release of the "talk of the arcade," *Zaxxon*. This visually stunning game used raster-scan graphics to create a three-dimensional effect with an array of colors never before seen in an coin-op machine.

Bolder steps were also tried, and examples are highlights of the Hot Circuits tour. For instance, Cinematronics' *Dragon's Lair* (1983) was the first game to utilize interactive video-disk technology instead of regular computer-driven graphics. Pinball and video game merged in *Baby Pac-Man* (1982), where skill was necessary in both portions of the game to succeed. The game was designed, of course, to satisfy pinball enthusiasts and video gamers alike. The most recent advance in video-game technology is displayed in *NARC*, which used actual computer-scanned video-tape images to produce its crime-blasting action.

Many games have spawned sequels and spinoffs. *Smash TV* owes more than a passing debt to 1982's *Robotron*, and spruced-up versions of *Centipede* and *Xevious* are reportedly on their way. But should you imagine that Hot Circuits is mainly just a walk down memory lane or, worse yet, a history lesson, then guess again. For all that we can learn from the display, the stars of this show are games that are meant to be played.

For many young gamers, Hot Circuits represents a chance to play the early classics they've only read about. Many "older" devotees wander in to enjoy the games they grew up with. Both old and young agree on one point: The old games are still great.

"The best thing about the old games is that they are all different," offered one 14-year-old. "Today, you just run and shoot and punch and save the princess. I played *Dig Dug*, *Centipede*, *Battlezone*, *Missile Command*—every game makes you do totally different things."

His friend agreed: "The new games look better but these old games are just plain *fun*. I come here all the time. It's better than the arcade."

Hot Circuits will travel to various cities across the country for at least the next two years. If you're among the lucky ones who live near one of the museum's scheduled stops (see "Coming to a Science Museum Near You" below), you won't want to miss it. Just tell Mom and Dad that you'll be spending the afternoon at the museum—and you'll need all the quarters in the house.

Coming to a Science Museum Near You

Hot Circuits has been a tremendously successful exhibition. Over 8,000 visitors flooded into the display in New York for approximately 11 months, and, amazingly, that figure may have been eclipsed in the much smaller city of Hartford, Connecticut, where the exhibition was displayed from June 2 to September 23, 1990. It's little wonder that the show is booked up for the next two years.

Though the exact dates have yet to be set, here are the next scheduled stops on the Hot Circuits national tour:

Space Coast	Science Center, Melbourne, Florida	October 1990-January 1991
Discovery Place	Charlotte, North Carolina	February-May 1991
Miami Museum of Science	Miami, Florida	June-September 1991
Cumberland Science Center	Nashville, Tennessee	October 1991-January 1992
Detroit Science Center	Detroit, Michigan	June-September 1992
Franklin Institute	Philadelphia, Pennsyvania	February-May 1992
Pacific Science Center	Seattle, Washington	October 1992-January 1993

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ADVENTURES OF LOLO	5.00	19.95	COMMANDO	3.00	12.95	HELL RAISER	10.00	18.95	MS. PACMAN	10.00	26.95	SOLSTICE	6.00	24.95	WORLD RUNNER (3-D)	3.00	14.95
ADVENTURES OF LOLO II	8.00	24.95	CONFLICT	15.00	32.95	HOGAN'S ALLEY WITH GUN	5.00	15.95	MUPPET ADVENTURE	9.00	24.95	SPELUNKER	3.00	12.95	WRATH OF THE BLACK MANTA	8.00	24.95
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A PLAYER'S GUIDE TO

Looking for the Light,

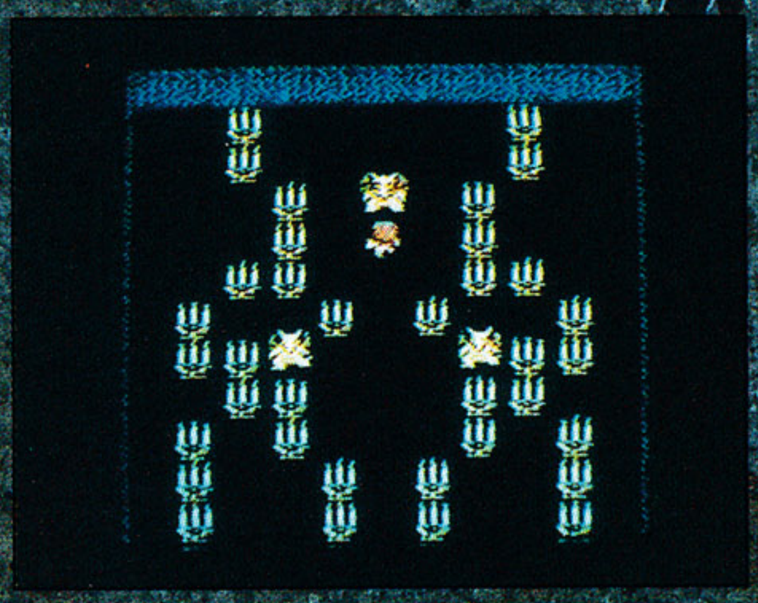
PART TWO

FINAL FANTASY

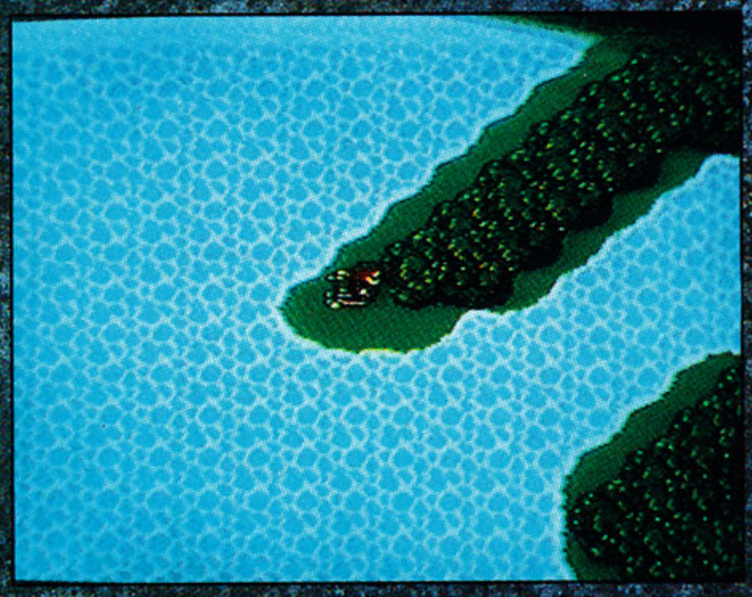
by Clayton Walnum

Last month we looked at a number of general strategies for getting the most out of *Final Fantasy*. We learned how to pick the right spells, how to battle the many enemies in the *Final Fantasy* world and how to travel safely from one location to the next. This month we've put together a "walk-through" for the last half of the game, the portion that isn't covered in the hint book that came with your copy of *Final Fantasy*.

The photos that follow will tell you just about everything you need to know to win *Final Fantasy*. Because the walk-through gives away many important secrets, you should refer to it only after attempting the game on your own. Discovering solutions to the game's many puzzles is a major part of the fun—fun that will be spoiled if you read the following hints prematurely.

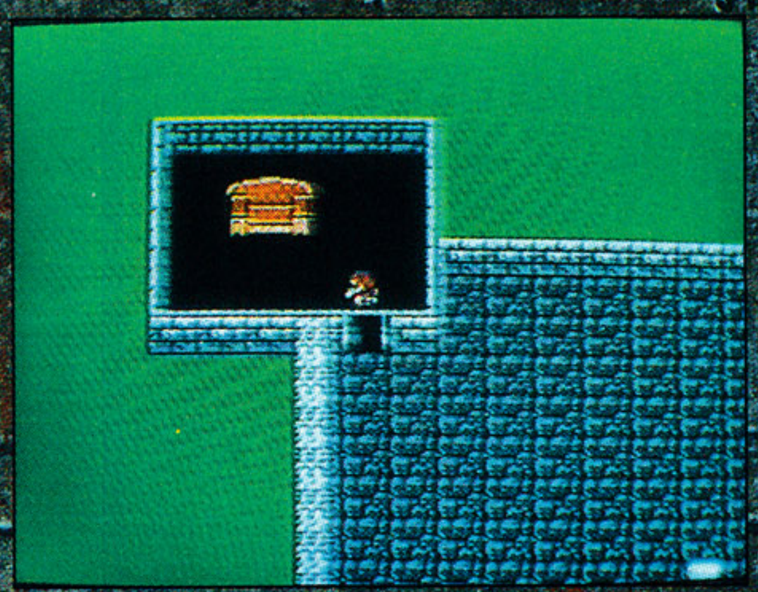


You'll find Bahamut, King of the dragons, in the Cardia Islands. He has a reward for warriors who can prove their bravery.



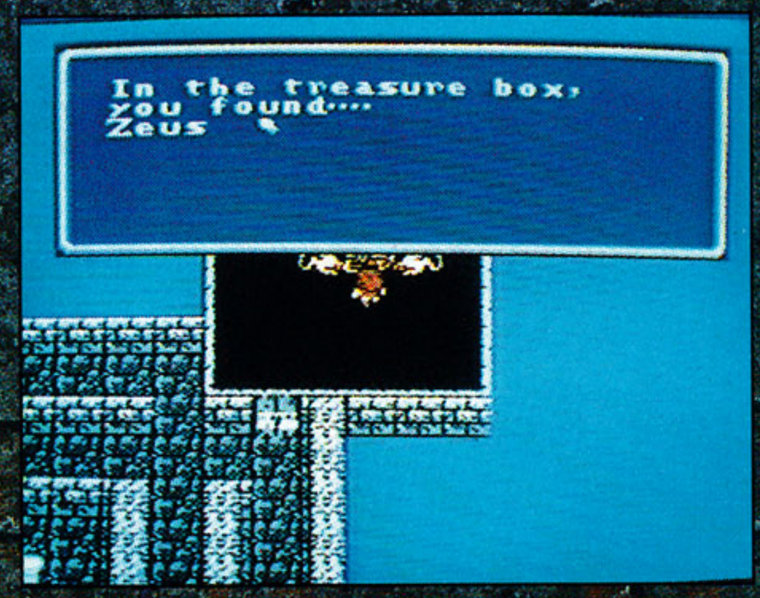
To prove your bravery, you must first travel to the Castle of Ordeal. You can go only part of the way with your airship. Land on this peninsula, and travel the rest of the way on foot.

As you journey toward the Castle of Ordeal, run from attacks. This will conserve your strength for the challenges yet to come.

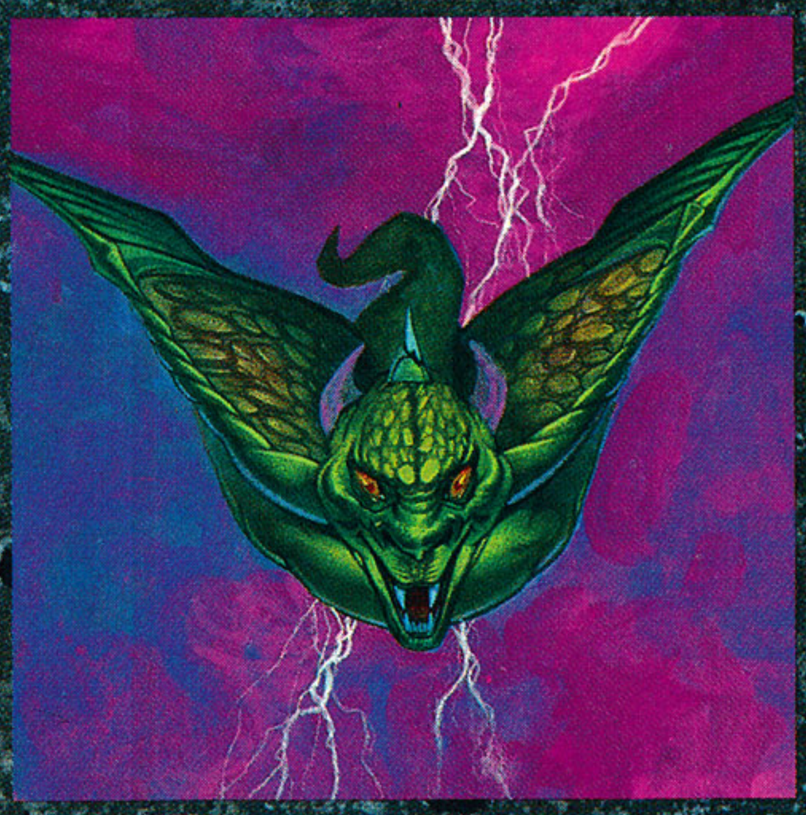


All the tower rooms on the first level are empty, except this one, which contains a transporter into the depths of the castle.

Each column in this maze will transport you to a different room, so it may take a while to find the right path. Keep track of where you go, making sure to try every exit.



Check every treasure chest for helpful items, like the Zeus sword and...



Bring the tail straight back to Bahamut...

...and all the members of your party will be transformed to a stronger class, giving them extra powers including, for some, the ability to learn spells.

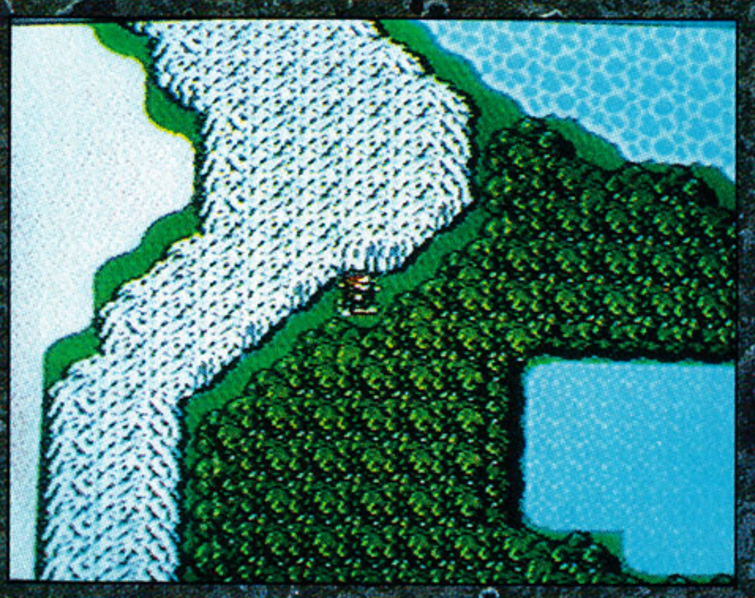
After a danger-fraught trip, you'll arrive at the castle.

Inside the castle, you need the crown to get past the guard. You should have found the crown a long time ago.

...the heal staff.

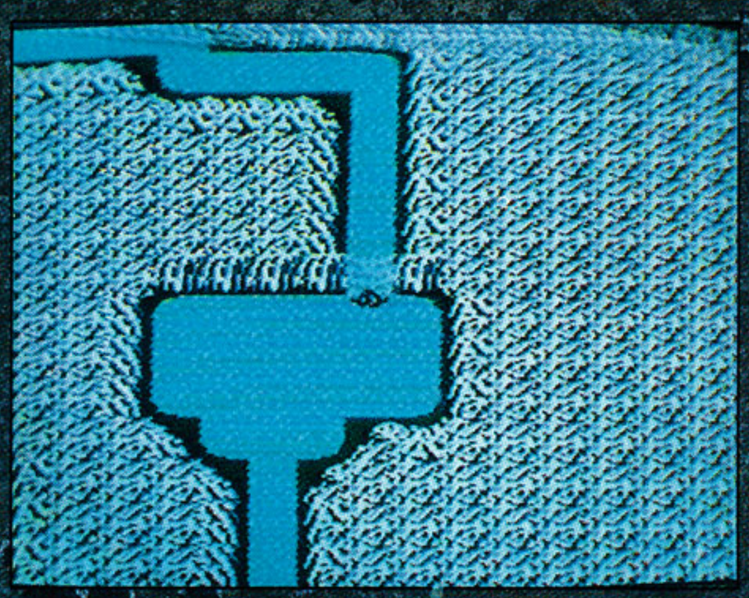
Finally, you'll find a treasure chest containing a giant rat's tail. The tail is the item King Bahamut wants as proof of your courage.

After getting the rat's tail, the transporter will take you back outside the castle again.

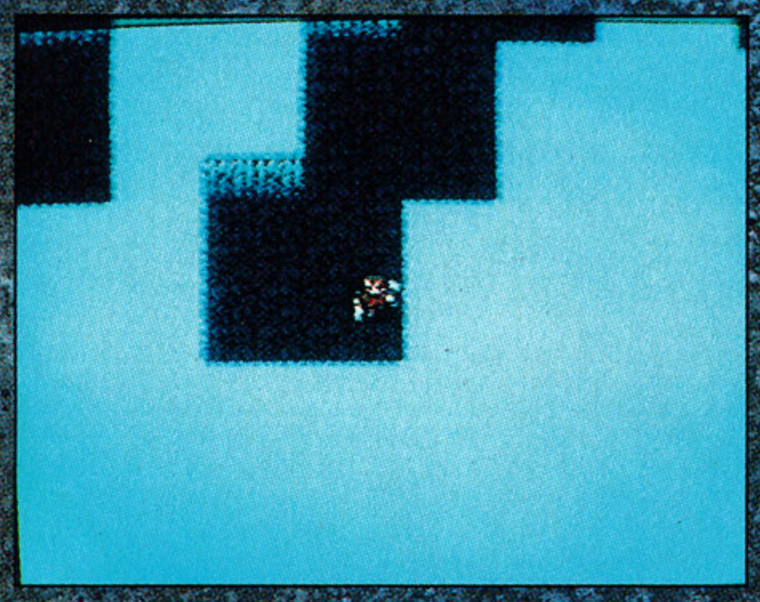


To get to the city of Lefein, you must land your airship here, and walk the rest of the way.

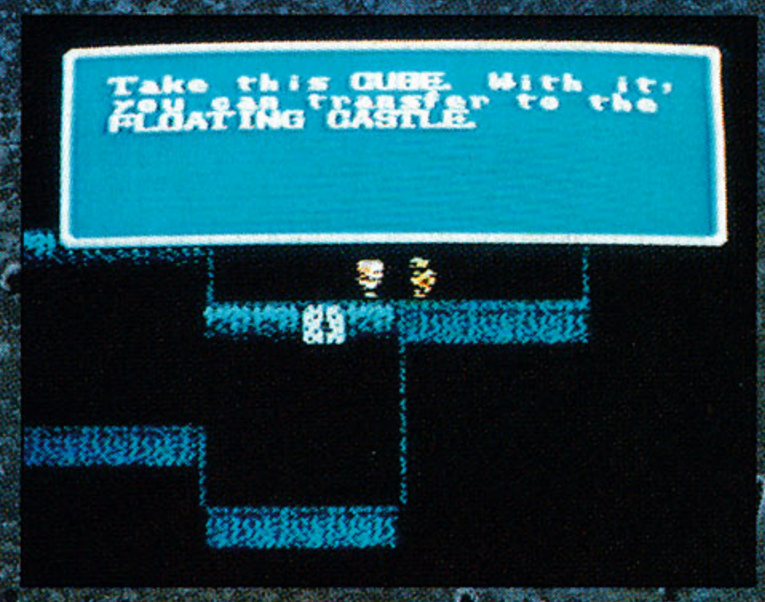
What's this? In Lefein they apparently speak a different language.



North of the city of Onrac, you'll find a waterfall that is reachable only by canoe. Pilot your canoe into the waterfall...

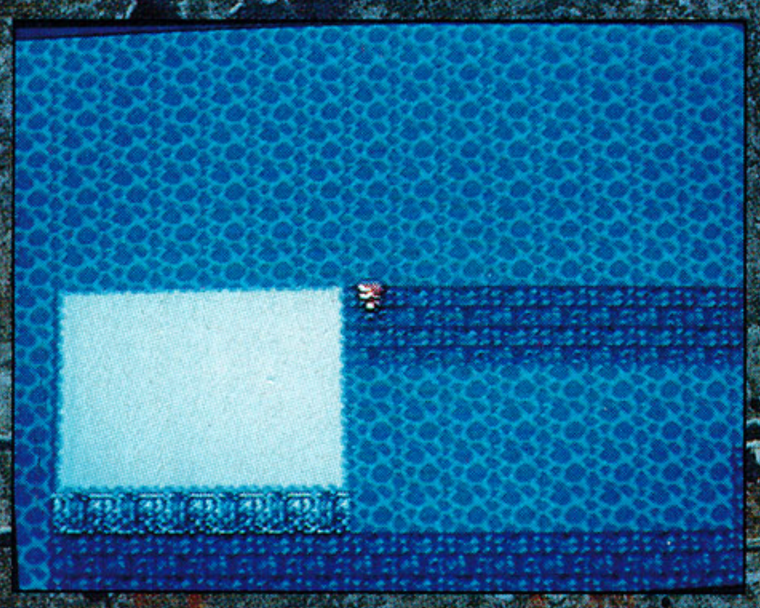


...and you'll end up right here in this maze.

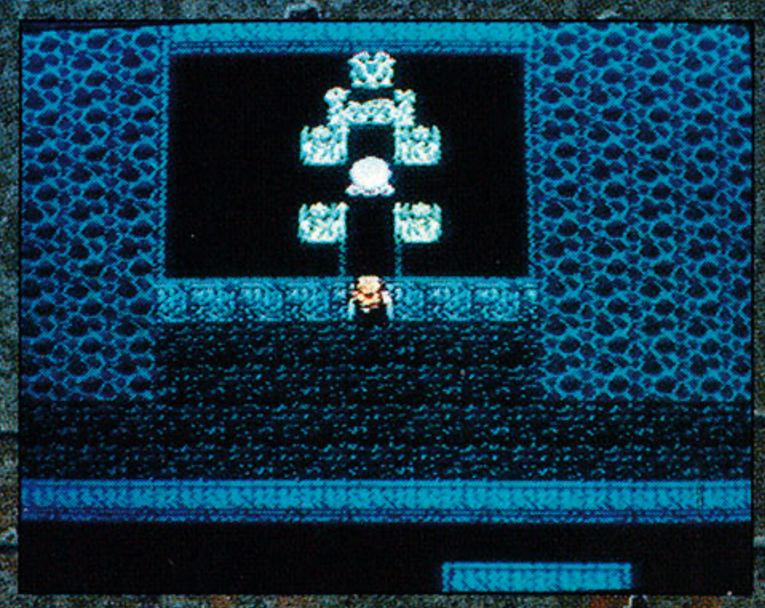


Search everywhere in the maze, and you'll find a robot with an important item: the cube.

The submarine will take you to the Sea Shrine, a multilevel, underwater palace filled with danger and surprise.

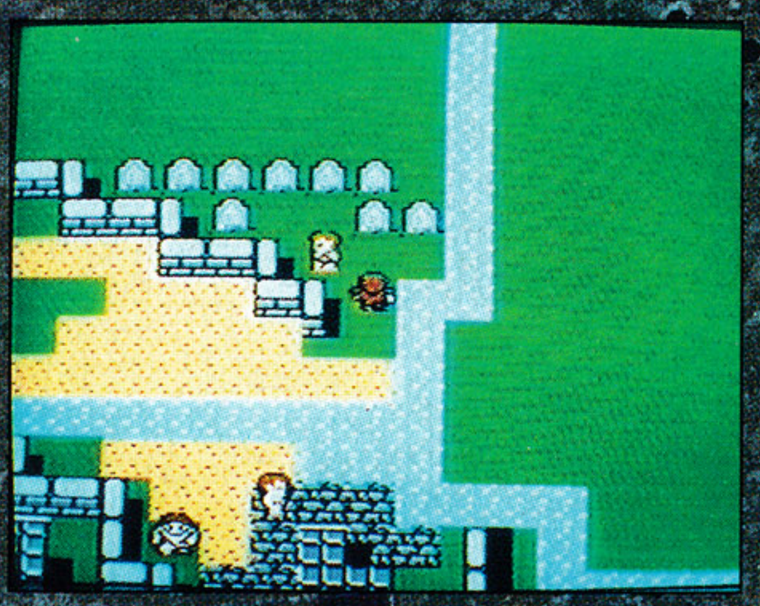


In the Sea Shrine, narrow walkways connect the many buildings, some of which contain treasure.

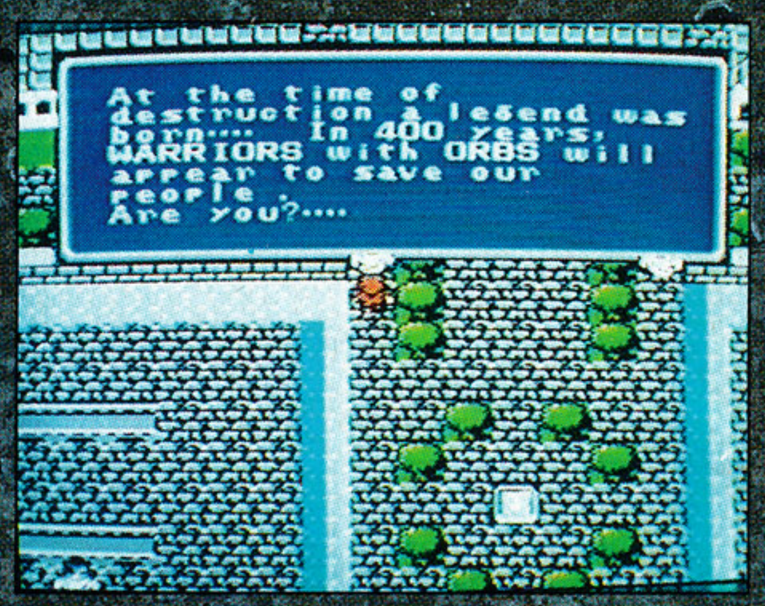


After a long, confusing journey, you'll discover the hiding place of Kraken, the water fiend.

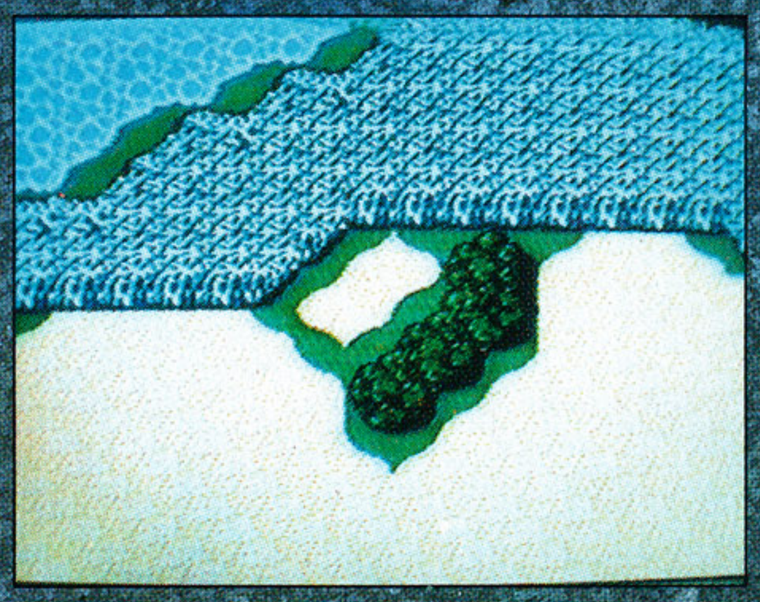
On the mermaid floor, find the stone slab, which contains the secret to understanding the citizens of Lefein.



Bring the stone slab to Dr. Unne in Melmond. He'll teach you to understand Lefeinish.



Now that you know Lefeinish, go back to Lefein and gather information. A hidden magic shop in this town sells Level-8 spells.

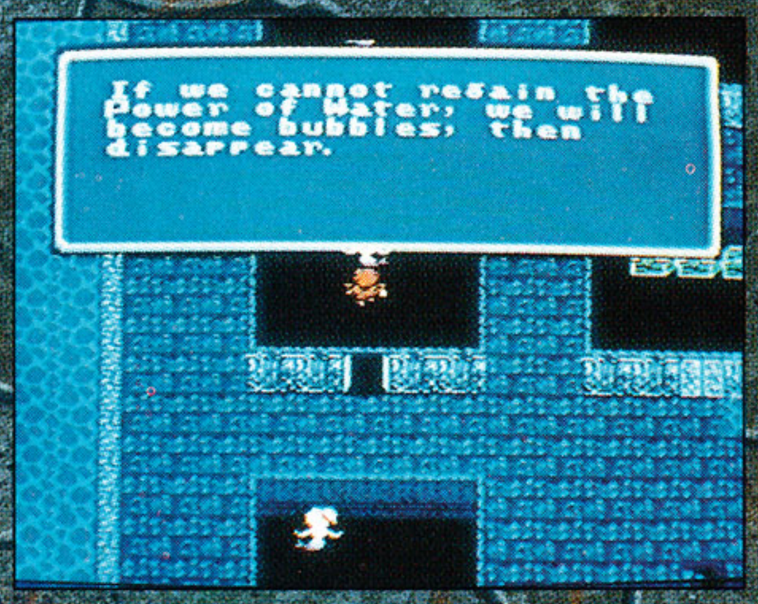


Another important item, a jar containing a fairy, can be bought from a salesman hidden in this oasis, southwest of Onrac.

Bring the jar to the fairy spring in Gaia. When the fairy is released, you can get her to give you the precious oxyale, which supplies air for submarines.

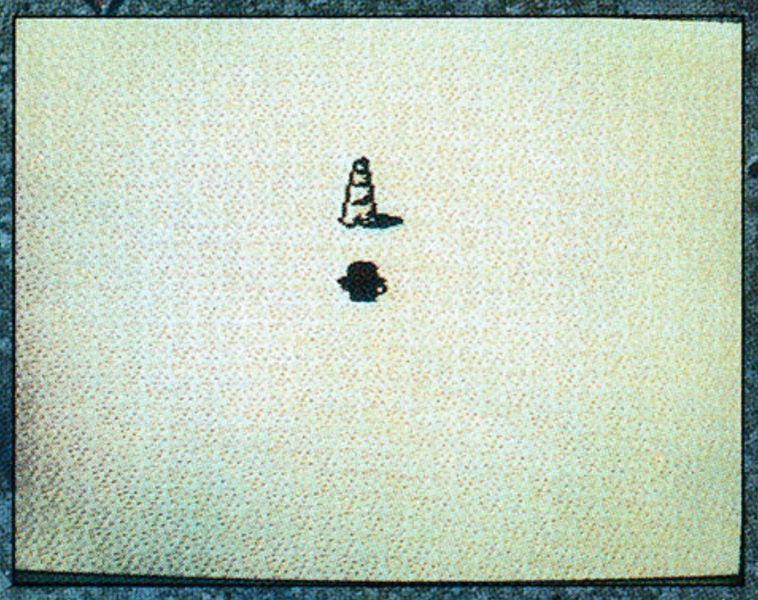
Once you have the oxyale, the man guarding the submarine in Onrac will let you climb aboard.

Beating Kraken is no easy task. If you find the battle too difficult, you may need to build up your character's experience levels.

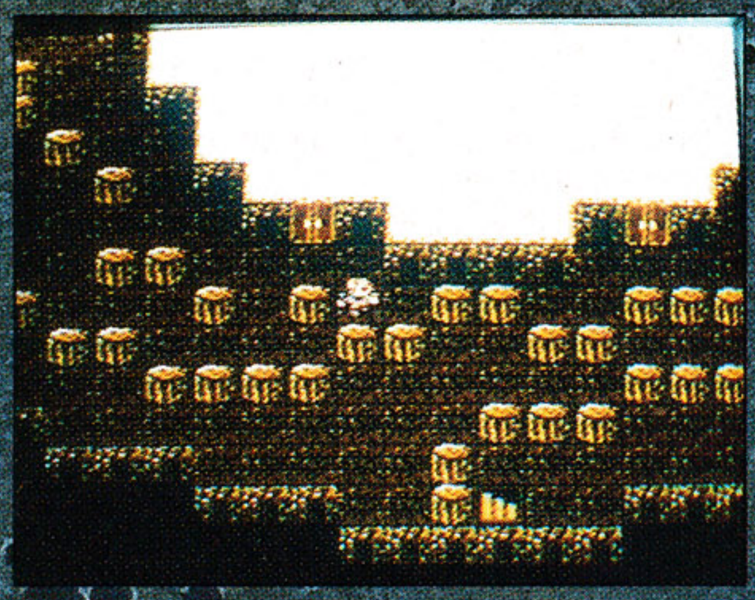


Also in the Sea Shrine are mermaids with important information and lots of treasure.

This citizen of Lefein will give you a chime, which you can use to enter Mirage Tower, found in the Great Eastern Desert.

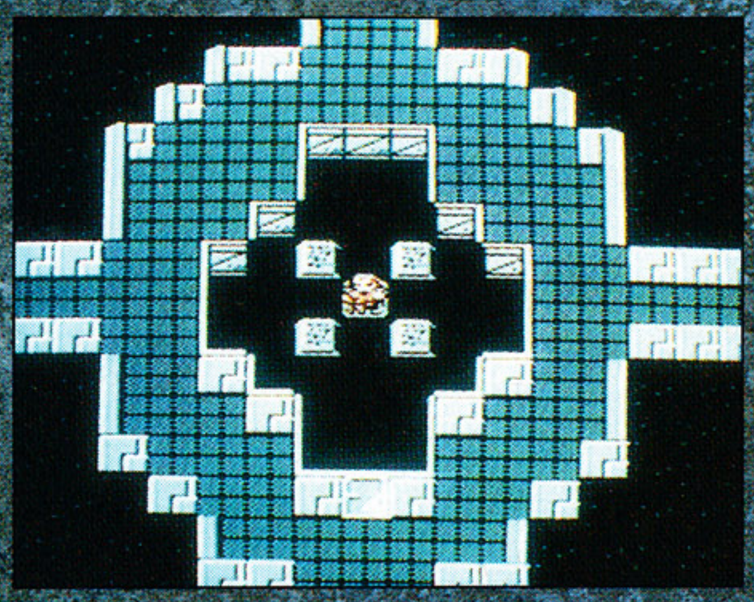


Once you have the chime, you can enter the tower just like any other location. Simply walk into it.

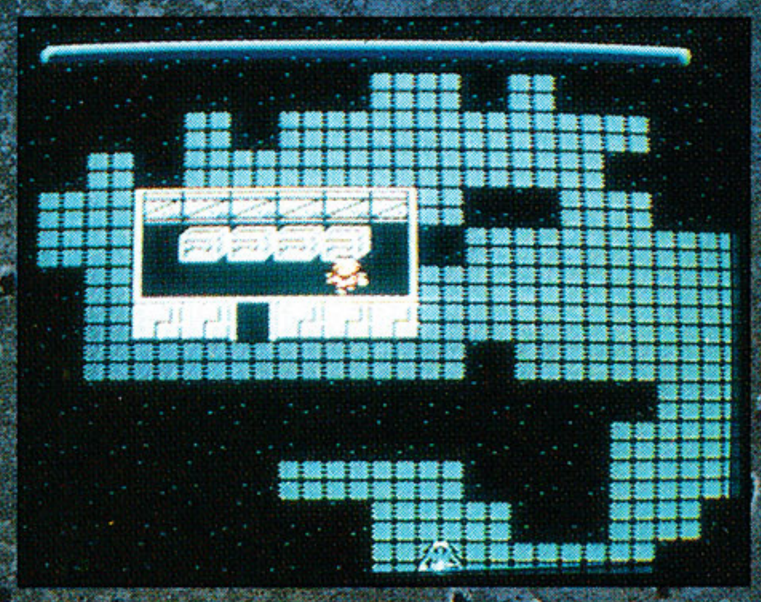


Inside Mirage Tower find your way through dangerous mazes and snatch tons of treasure.

This transporter to Sky Castle is activated by the cube you found in the waterfall.



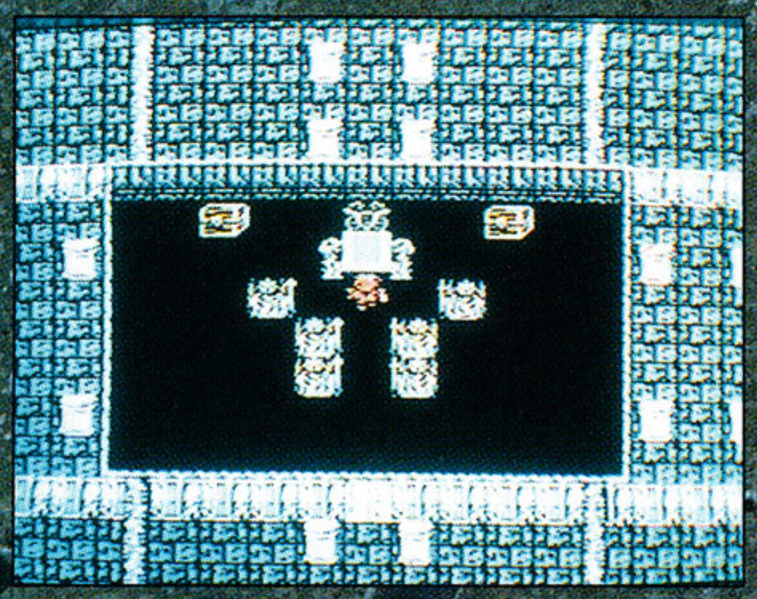
Sky Castle contains several more floors for adventurers to explore.



Each floor floats high in the sky and holds many secrets, including a chunk of the special mineral, adamant.

With Xcalber gripped in your sweaty fist, go back to Sky Castle...

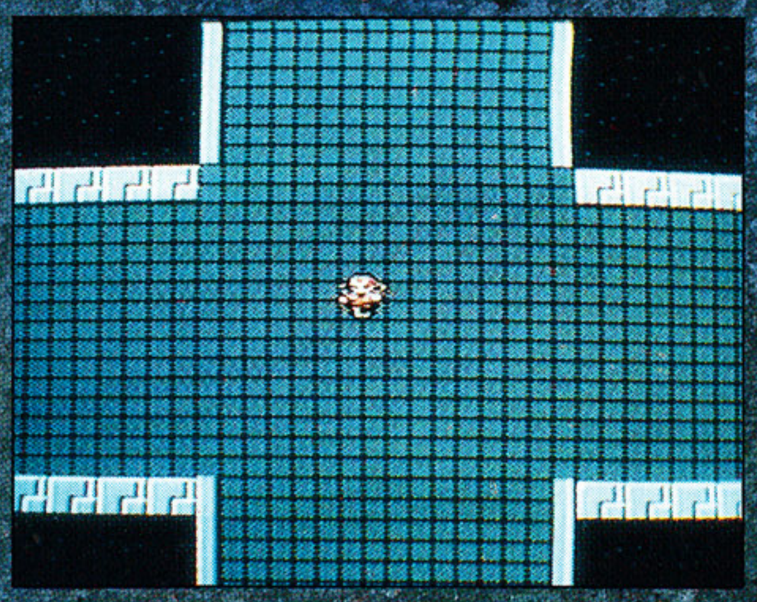
...for your face-off with Tiamat.



Use the lute here to reveal a hidden stairway.

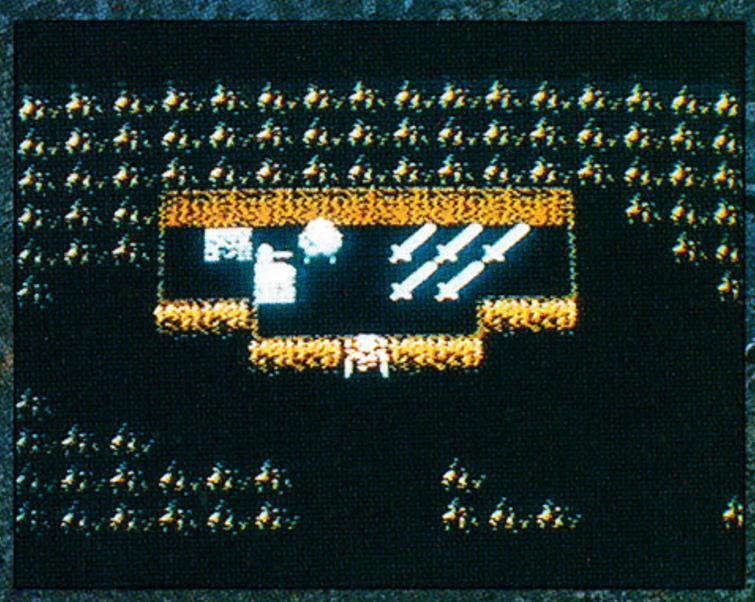
Before you reach the end of the game, you'll have to battle all of the fiends a second time.

Only the strongest...



When you get to this floor, avoid walking in straight lines. You must take several turns to find the final transporter, which will take you to Tiamat, the fiend of the wind.

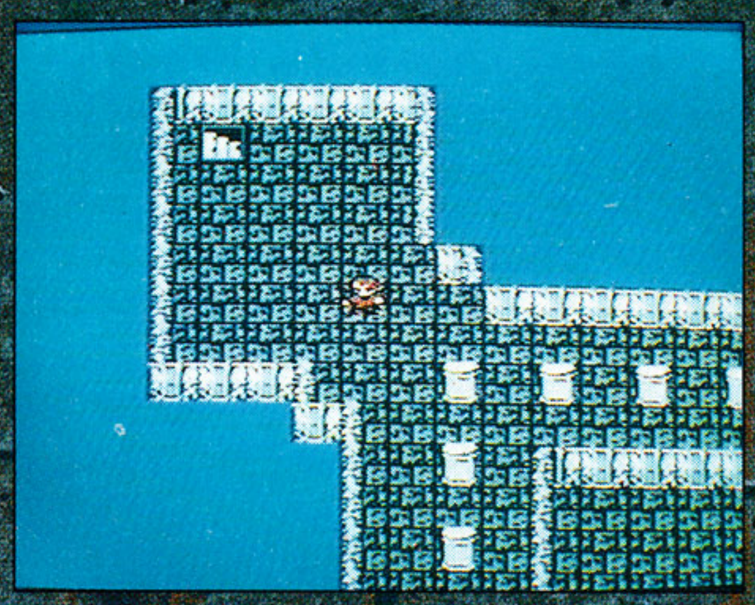
But before taking on Tiamat, bring the chunk of adamant to Dwarf Cave...



...where this helpful dwarf will use it to make you a powerful sword called Xcalber.

After destroying Tiamat, return to Crescent Lake, where the Circle of Sages will tell you what's been happening.

Finally, you must return to the Temple of Fiends, where the now-glowing orbs will reveal a hidden time gate.



Beyond the time gate, you'll face your final quest.

...and cleverest warriors...

...will be able to find the ultimate weapon, the masmune, and use it successfully against the horrible evil of Chaos. Good luck!

REVIEWS OF RECENT ELECTRONIC GAMING FANZINES

by Arnie Katz

There's no shortage of new fanzines this month. These amateur publications, published by knowledgeable gaming hobbyists like yourself, present a mix of news, reviews, opinions, hints and commentary that should interest many hard-core gamers.

Getting started couldn't be easier. Just find one that sounds interesting in the reviews and try a sample copy.

THE SUBVERSIVE SPRITE #5

Lane Rice
Rt. 1, Box 236-C
Jasper, AL 85501
Monthly
12 pages

Anyone who thinks electronic-gaming fanzines have to be bland should try *The Subversive Sprite.* Sometimes you'll want to wring Lance's neck. This guy has more opinions than Old Yeller had fleas, but he also has a savage sense of humor that is irrepressible. His column of the ten worst game ideas is hilarious, all the more so since I can almost imagine some misguided publisher actually doing something ridiculous like *Roseanne Barr Baseball.*

News of all systems, including home computers, is the main attraction. Lane also does a nice job describing a Japanese game based on a popular *manga* comic book/animated series. Even more detail would have been welcome in this piece.

As previously indicated, Lane Rice can also go "over the top" at times. His mini-war with Mike Ciletti of *Video Wars* isn't pretty reading, and some may find that *The Subversive Sprite* is too negative in its approach to the hobby. Still, Lane is emerging as one of the leaders of electronic-gaming fandom, and his publication is packed with tons of news notes of interest to all serious players.

DAN-MAN'S GAME REVIEW #3

edited by Danny Lee
28 Pippen Dr. East
Glastonbury, CT 06033
50¢—Irregular
Nine pages

Capsule reviews and a sense of humor are main attractions of this recently reformatted fanzine that covers Sega Genesis video games. Although the editor doesn't always use the available space effectively, there's plenty to read. Danny briefly comments on 36 games, presents a (fictitious) funny letter column and a gaming trivia quiz and draws a comic strip about the eternal battle between Sega and Nintendo owners.

PORTA-PLAY #1

Scott Boehner
118 Surrey Lane
Lake Forest, IL 60045
$1—No schedule listed
Eight pages

Game Boy and Lynx are at center stage in this entertaining, little publication. The lead article concerns the future of portable game machines in the coming decade, and there are also meaty reviews of new software. The most interesting piece is a review of *Super Mario Land* (Game Boy) written as a conversation among Scott and his two staffers. It's a cute idea and one that would be worth trying again in a future issue.

GENESIS MASTERS #2

Ben Clemmer
3817 Delaware Trail
Fort Worth, TX 76135
$1.50—No stated schedule
14 pages

This fanzine's name is a bit of a misnomer. The Sega Genesis gets the lion's share of the space, but the 'zine also reports on coin-op arcades, portable systems such as Game Gear and even the NES. Ben has asked his readers to suggest a new title.

Revenge of Shinobi and *Thunder Force II* are the subjects of long reviews enhanced by helpful illustrations and playing tips. Beginning with this issue a fanzine-review column is included. The second issue shows a great improvement over the first, so *Genesis Masters* is surely a fanzine to watch.

ATTENTION FANZINE READERS

If you want to see sample copies of many of the top current fanzines—or if you're a fanzine publisher looking for names for a mailing list—VIDEO GAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT can help you. The Fanzine Readers List is available to any fanzine editor who sends a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Anyone can be included on the list by simply writing and asking. In either case, the address is Arnie Katz, 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107.

MEGAGAMING

A sample copy of *Megagaming*, the biweekly "Voice of Electronic Gaming," is available for $1 from Arnie Katz, Bill Kunkel and Joyce Worley (330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107). Each issue contains news, previews, fanzine critiques, a forum for fan-oriented questions, columns and more.

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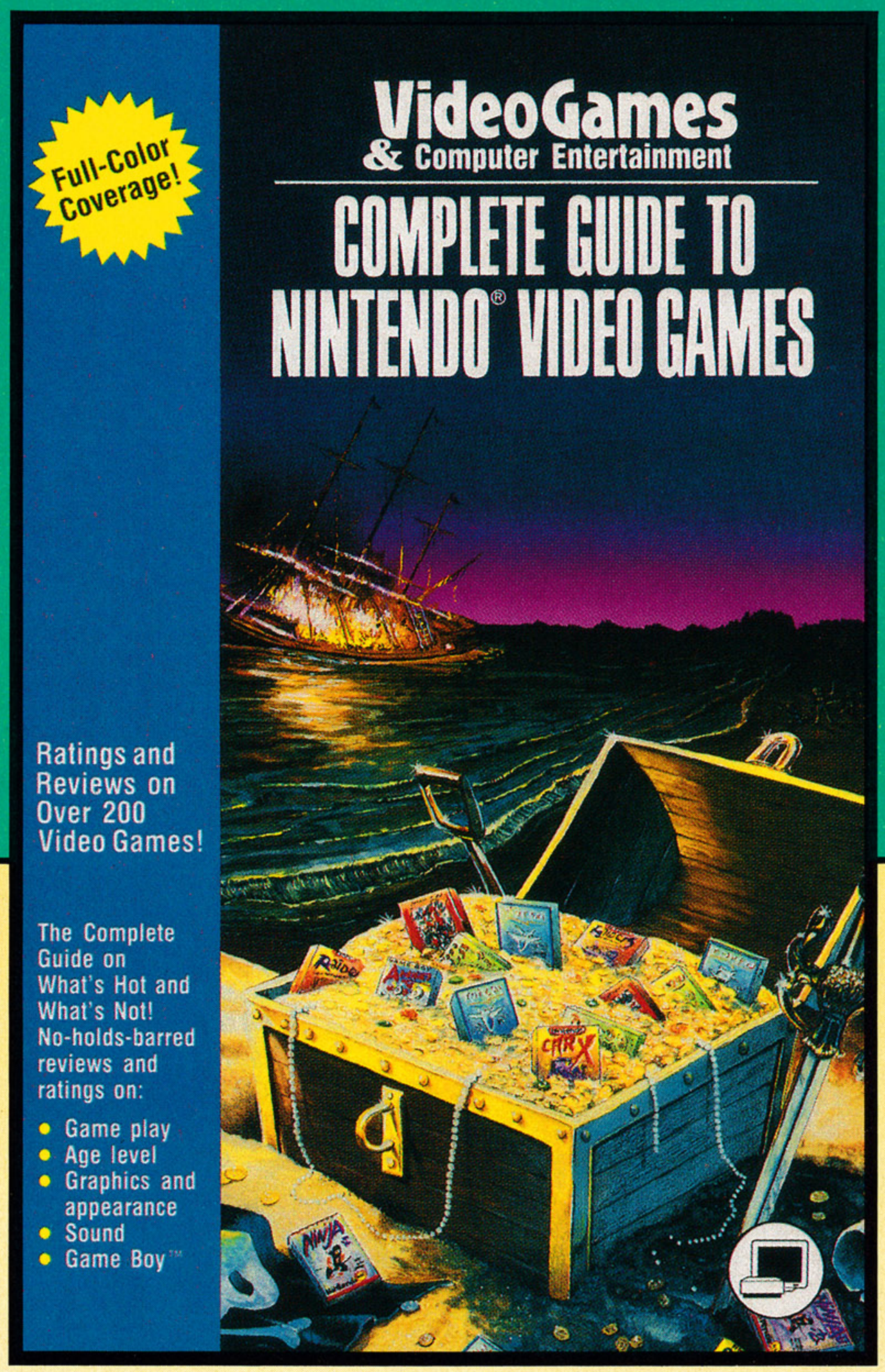
CIRCLE #137 ON READER SERVICE CARD.



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VG&CE's BEST GAMES 1990

BY THE EDITORS OF VIDEOGAMES AND COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT

Arnie Katz, Computer Entertainment Editor, chaired a panel of judges composed of VG&CE's writers and editors. This panel examined myriad games published for the first time between October 1, 1989, and September 30, 1990. This article presents our choice of the very best entertainment products.

It's a tough job, but someone has to do it. Last year, in both game factions—disk and cartridge—we on the panel often found ourselves weighing the merits of two mediocre games to determine which should squeak through to an honorable mention.

Judges faced the opposite problem this year. Some categories had so many outstanding qualifying entries that games that might have won the award a year ago could not garner even an honorable mention this time.

Competition was the fiercest since we started saluting the best of the year. No year has ever achieved a higher percentage of outstanding games.

If your favorites aren't listed, don't worry. As with the reviews we offer, these are simply the opinions of VG&CE's editors; opinions vary from person to person. You may want to get together with a few friends to compare your thoughts about our list—or even make a list of your own.

Apologies again go to publishers whose products arrived too late for consideration this year. There were some memorable titles released just after our deadline, but they will have to wait for their reward until the "Best of 1991" competition in the February 1992 issue.

Each category begins with the best new game of that type. Following the description of the winner are the games that have earned an honorable mention.

BEST VIDEO GAMES OF THE YEAR

Video Game of the Year

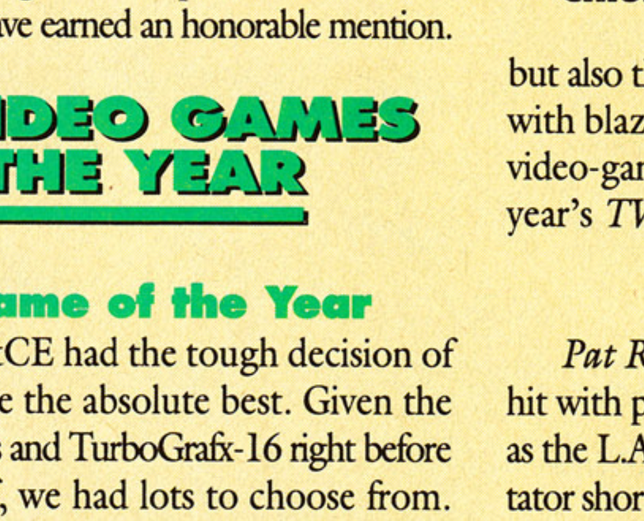
Last year, VG&CE had the tough decision of what game to name the absolute best. Given the release of the Genesis and TurboGrafx-16 right before our judging cutoff, we had lots to choose from. But when we chose *Legendary Axe*, we weren't worried that we made a bad selection.

We were in a similar bind in 1990, seeing that the TG-16 and Genesis libraries grew incredibly during the year. After much deliberation, it was decided that *Phantasy Star II* (Sega for Genesis) had edged out *Ys—Books I and II* (NEC for TurboGrafx-16) for the staff's favorite. What makes this interesting is that the category nominations had switched from the usual scrolling arcade fare to complex adventures. The next-generation machines seem to prompt the development of such epic creations.

Phantasy Star II offers the player exactly what should be expected from a "best game of the year": great graphics, wonderful sound that doesn't interfere with the action and, most important, *tons* of game play.

What makes the game worthy of such a lofty award is the hours of durable and engrossing challenge that the player faces as he or she tries to save Algol from the malfunctions of the Mother Brain.

We expect next year's competition to be even wilder, considering the recent release of SNK'S Neo•Geo and the likely offering of the Super Famicom by Nintendo. The hype surrounding the latter console has been intense, and we're expecting Nintendo's 16-bit challenger to appear before our judging deadline next year.

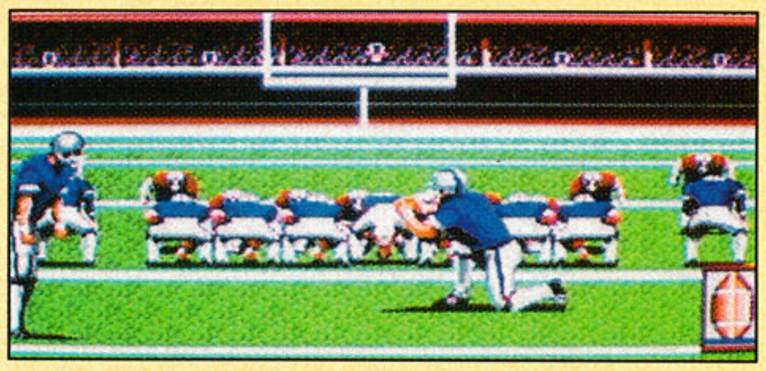


Sega's Phantasy Star II

Best Sports Video Game

Sports are a hot category for electronic games. Many new titles show up each month or so. The quantity of baseball, football, basketball, golf and volleyball games made picking this award difficult.

When it came right down to it, we chose Cinemaware's *TV Sports: Football* (NEC for TG-16), which was an honorable mention in last year's computer-game sports category. The appeal of the original game—which features not only hot gridiron action, but also the feel of a television broadcast, complete with blazer-clad announcers—carried over to the video-game version. We're anxious to see the next year's *TV Sports* installments for the TG-16.



Cinemaware's TV Sports: Football

HONORABLE MENTION

Pat Riley Basketball (Sega for Genesis) was a hit with players despite the fact that Pat Riley quit as the L.A. Lakers coach to become a TV commentator shortly after Sega announced the game. (*James "Buster" Douglas' Knock-Out Boxing* was another iffy license—Douglas lost his first title defense handily before the game saw the light of store shelves.) It's still hard to ignore *Pat Riley Basketball*, a quality basketball contest.

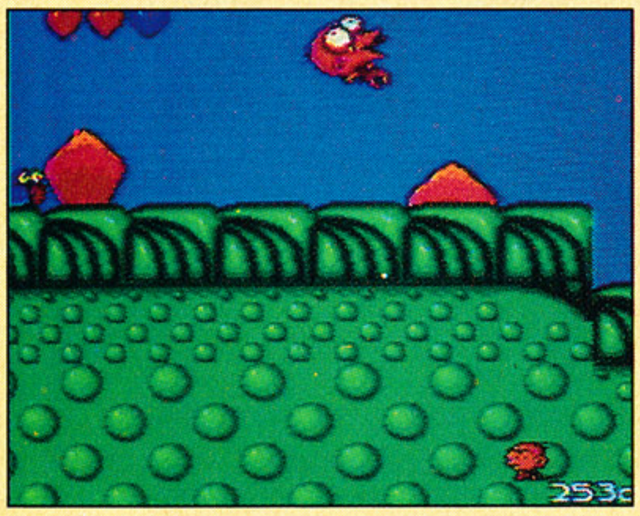
Additionally, there have been a slew of baseball games for the NES, but Culture Brain's *Baseball Simulator 1.000* adds enough new action, like superpower pitches, to make it unique—and worth honorable mention.

Best Action Video Game

In one of the most hotly contested categories (many video games can be considered "action" games), VG&CE's editors went with what many could call a money game. Last year, the choice of Ultra's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (NES) was popular not only because it was the hottest license of the season, but because the game actually has lots of intense challenge for the player.

Though many have stuck with the NES for *Mario* and its other action cartridges, one dark horse came on the scene: Bonk. The head-butting caveman took the video-game world by storm, giving Mario a run for the money in the media department.

Spotlights aside, *Bonk's Adventure* (NEC for TurboGrafx-16) is a fun game with a basic design. It is not only easy to play but has plenty of hidden bonuses throughout. Each time the game is powered-up, there are new things to find. We're anxiously awaiting Bonk's next appearance.



NEC's *Bonk's Adventure*

HONORABLE MENTION

We can't forget the other games that fell into the action category. One of the more elegantly designed games, Sunsoft's *Batman* (NES) was a wonderful clone of the 1989 movie's dark atmosphere. The programmers paid attention to every detail, right down to the billowing of Batman's cape when he glides down from a platform.

The other game that almost took the honors in the action category is *Phelios* (Namco America for Genesis). This mythological battle, much like *Legendary Wings* for the NES, is a shoot-'em-up with loads of crisp animation, sharp musical passages and intense game play.

Best Science-Fiction Video Game

Since the Summer Consumer Electronics Show, the licensees for the Genesis have been quite busy bringing new wares to the market for Sega's 16-bit wonder. One of those titles, *Whip Rush* (Renovation Products), takes you on a high-speed trip through space with lots of excitement and tension.

Renovation Products' *Whip Rush*

Like most games with a save-the-Earth premise, you have to battle extraterrestrials and try to survive for as long as possible. What makes *Whip Rush* stand out from its peers is its attention to detail and quality, offering the player loads of challenge, in the way of small and large craft alike, along the way. This one is a winner.

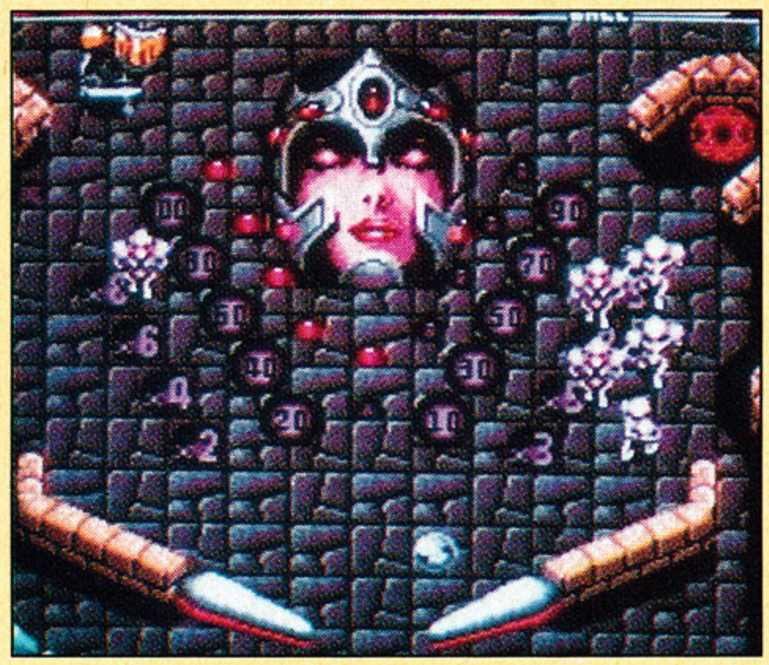
HONORABLE MENTION

In one of the strangest themes to appear in a video game, *Psychosis* (NEC for TurboGrafx-16) has you confronting the "enemy within": your own mind. Visually, what you are treated to in *Psychosis* is an amalgam of intricate scenes, like beachfronts and forests. In your quest to defeat Ugar, who is trying to steal your soul, you'll be busy with all the little enemies that you encounter, supposedly the residue of your own paranoid delusions. Your mental state is quite a mess—and crowded to boot. NEC's sci-fi shooter is a test of patience for any gamer.

Best Simulation Video Game

In the 1989 awards, the winner in this category was NEC's *Alien Crush* (for TurboGrafx-16), a wonderful pinball simulator with eerie graphics (similar to the movie *Alien*) and fabulous music. It's no wonder that the VG&CE editors chose *Alien Crush*'s follow-up, *Devil's Crush* (also NEC for TurboGrafx-16), as this year's best simulator.

Playing on yet another gruesome and gooey pinball table, it's easy to get lost in the game, forgetting it's only a video game on the screen. Though the documentation doesn't do justice to all that the game offers,



NEC's *Devil's Crush*

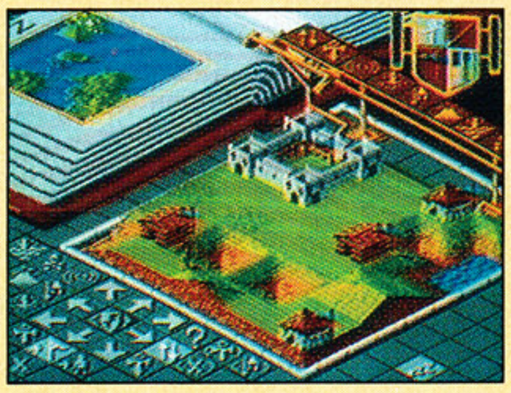
most players are inspired to find all the little secrets and reach all the bonus levels offered. *Devil's Crush* is one of those addicting games that will have you saying "...just one more!" all through the night. (And it's even more wondrous as a portable, on the TurboExpress!)

HONORABLE MENTION

Though Absolute Entertainment doesn't release more than a title or so per year, its band of veteran game designers (namely, David Crane [*A Boy and His Blob*, *Pitfall*] and Garry Kitchen) can always be counted on for quality and innovative entertainment. Recently the company created a tank conflict, *Battletank* (NES), reminiscent of Atari's *Battlezone* but featuring more action and up-to-date filled graphics for more realism. The end result is a fabulously challenging game that again pushes the NES to its limits in all categories.

Best Strategy Video Game

Electronic Arts jumped into the video-game fray with both feet, hitting both the NES and Genesis markets squarely—and profitably. Flexing its diverse library of games, it released a handful of titles on both machines, games that many would consider surefire hits. Is it any surprise then that EA's success story of 1989, the winner of VG&CE's Best Computer Game of the Year, has become 1990's Best Video Game of the Year?



Electronic Arts' *Populous*

No, the innovation of *Populous* (Electronic Arts for Genesis) hasn't diminished in the slightest in its jump from disk to cartridge. The controversial "god game" has just found another audience to capture.

HONORABLE MENTION

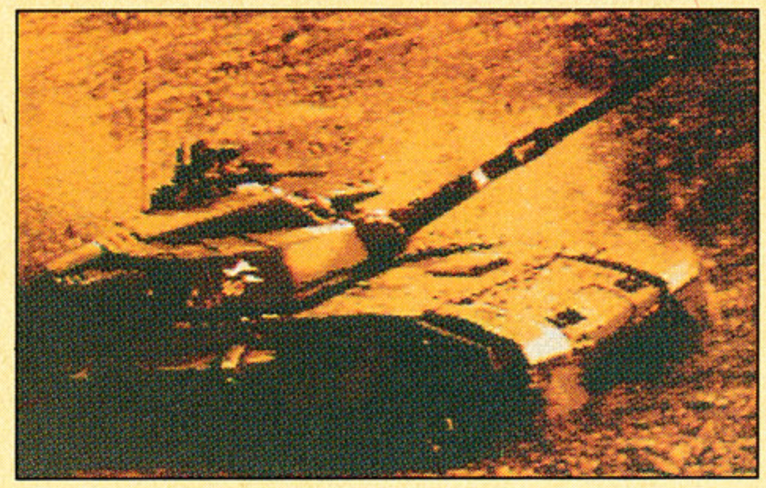
Tetris opened up another genre—puzzle games—and with it came a slew of copycats, knockoffs and a new concentration on brainteasers. NEC's *Timeball* (TurboGrafx-16) takes a different tack from Tetris, but still owes its existence to the changing of the tides.

On-screen the player has a playfield of tiles with tracks on them. When the ball starts its journey on a track, the player must move tiles in an effort to keep the ball rolling through all the available tracks to its final point. The ball moves at a constant rate and can't be stopped, so the time element keeps the player on his or her toes.

Best Military-Strategy Video Game

Another tie results in this category, and it's no surprise, since not too many titles of this genre were released in cartridge form. Offering nearly identical game play, *Herzog Zwei* (Sega for Genesis) and *Military Madness* (NEC for TurboGrafx-16) both feature hard-hitting strategy in different military scenarios, pitting the player against space adversaries in an effort to prove superiority of might and mind. *Herzog Zwei* alters the formula a bit by adding some shoot-'em-up elements, but it doesn't take away from the main premise that requires careful thought in considering the next move.

Right: NEC's *Military Madness*
Below: Sega's *Herzog Zwei*



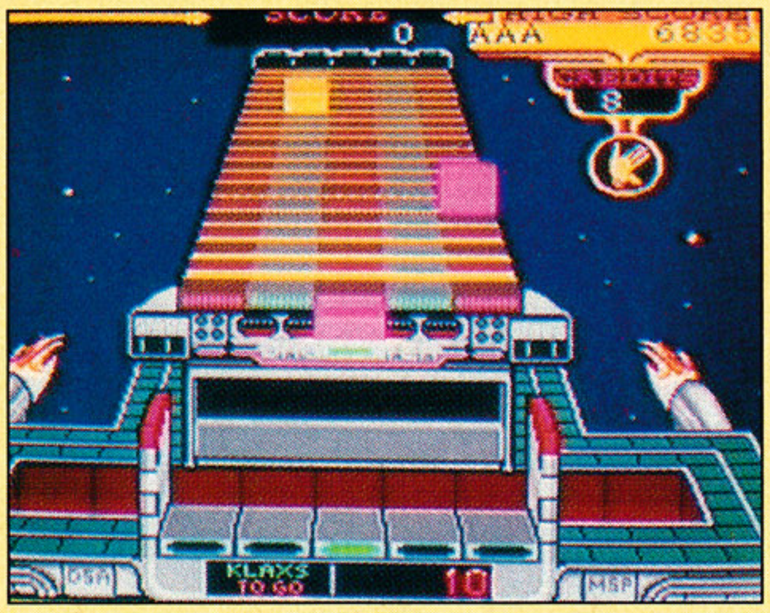
HONORABLE MENTION

Not to be left out, *Conflict* (Vic Tokai for NES) carved a niche out of the scads of shooters and

scrolling action games with its own attempt at a military simulation. It turns the battlefield into a grid and units into pieces to be moved on the map. *Conflict* is a quality contest for the armchair general.

Best Action/Strategy Video Game

Another *Tetris* influence, *Klax* (Tengen for Genesis, Lynx, NES and TurboGrafx-16) grabbed at the game player with its innovative theme. A bin lies at the end of a long conveyor belt, down which travel colored tiles. The player takes the tiles as they fall and flips them into rows, columns, diagonals and other high-scoring patterns to keep the game moving. Dropping too many tiles or filling the bin to the brim brings the game to a close. Quick reflexes and lightning-fast thought is all you have in your favor.



Tengen's *Klax*

HONORABLE MENTION

Harking back to the olden days of electronic games—the early '80s—Electronic Arts' computer game *Archon* successfully hit the market. Mixing chess- and checkerslike strategic elements with shoot-'em-up combat screens, it was a big hit and was praised for its innovative concept. Recently Activision brought *Archon* to the NES, in a translation that holds all the allure and challenge of the original disk-based contest. It was an award winner then, and it's an award winner now!

Best Adventure Video Game

As we noted earlier in the Best Video Game category, *Ys—Books I and II* and *Phantasy Star II* were filled with all the elements that make them the award winners they are. It's no surprise that VG&CE's editors couldn't say that one of these two is better than the other in the Best Adventure category.

The key to a great adventure is how it immerses you in the storyline, how you experience the game from one step to the next. Both of these games are massive undertakings that offer hours of enjoyment and challenge to the gamer.

HONORABLE MENTION

Another cartridge fits the criteria of our selections for Best Adventure. *Crystalis* (SNK for NES) is a wonderful RPG that takes you into the future, to an Earth in the grips of a post-war struggle against evil. In the words of Chris Bieniek, from his review in the September 1990 VG&CE, "Some people...may never experience a game as satisfying as this."

Best Sound in a Video Game

Each year, this category has been an improvement on the last, thanks to the upgrades in hardware capabilities. The NES took 8-bit sound up a notch or two, adding digitized sounds to some games. Then the Genesis and TG-16 took the ball and ran *hard*. Now, the Neo•Geo looks to be a hard act to top—though it wasn't released in time for this year's nominations.

By far, the most substantial promise in video-game sound comes from the compact disc. While the silvery disks are selling like hotcakes in the audio market, the TG-16's CD player is just getting people to test the waters for games.

If you haven't heard the magnificent soundtrack to NEC's *Ys—Books I and II*—which has also been released separately in Japan as an audio CD—you don't know what you are missing. Lavishly orchestrated arrangements and mood-setting passages abound, making *Ys* sound more like a movie than a video game.

HONORABLE MENTION

One of the most anticipated cartridges of 1990 was the partnership between Sega and Michael Jackson. Over the years, Jackson has sold millions of records with wide appeal. The soundtrack for *Michael Jackson's Moonwalker* (Sega for Genesis) is filled with Jackson's trademark: carefully woven synthesizers and pounding beats. Such hits as *Thriller* and *Beat It* are faithfully re-created by the Genesis' more-than-capable sound hardware.

Best Graphics in a Video Game

Everyone agrees that video games have come a long way since the 2600 days of moving a little blip around the screen and calling it a warrior. Imagination played a large part in these cartridges. Today graphics are more lifelike, with realistic motion and articulated animation.

A good example of this is *Phantasy Star II* (Sega for Genesis), which has richly detailed characters—both good and bad—that complement its epic adventure storyline. Its imagery helped make it the co-winner of the Best Video Game of 1990 and a good demonstration of the Genesis' capabilities. Word is that *Phantasy Star III* is on the horizon. We can hardly wait.

HONORABLE MENTION

The TurboGrafx-16 has some hot graphics too, and among the best of the 1990 releases is *Psychosis* (NEC). Aside from its scary theme, the overall look of the game is striking, leaving very little to the imagination. Whether you're being chased by goop-covered eyeballs, darting spaceships or shimmering globes, you'll feel the tension; and the visuals complement it that much more.

Best Coin-Op to Video Game Translation

Again, as game systems' specs approach those of their arcade brothers, it gets harder and harder to pick a solid winner in this this category. There may come a time when we'll do away with the category altogether, thanks to such products as the Neo•Geo, which makes home and coin counterparts virtually identical.

This year, we chose *Columns* (Sega for Genesis) as the best translation. The playing pieces look like colorful polished gems dropping from the sky, but the challenging *Tetris*-like game play is the strongest point. The puzzle-game genre is growing, and *Columns* is at the top.

Sega's Columns

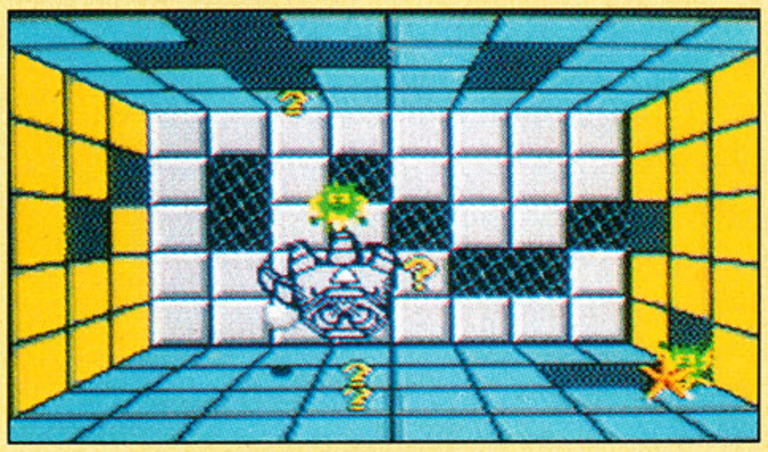
HONORABLE MENTION

We selected two good titles as honorable mentions, hitting both ends of the coin-op spectrum. *Klax* (Tengen for Genesis, TG-16, NES and Lynx), is the first to make a complete crossover of all the major video-game systems. This tile-manipulation game—yes, another brainteaser—did well in the arcades for Atari last year, and it's taking the cartridge world by storm.

The other title, *Splatterhouse* (NEC for TG-16), is a scrolling battle that pits you against evil, horrifying creatures in a haunted house. Your on-screen character, who looks like Jason from the *Friday the 13th* movies, wields fists, planks and other weapons along the way in an effort to make it through to save his girlfriend.

Most Innovative Video Game

This is by far the most exciting category, offering lots of fresh concepts to consider. This year's winner, Mattel's *Super Glove Ball* (NES), finally shows off the capabilities of the Power Glove as an alternative controller. Sensing the movements of the player, *Super Glove Ball* takes the *Breakout* theme into the '90s and in 3-D.



Mattel's *Super Glove Ball*

Those without Power Gloves can still take on the various enemies in *Super Glove Ball*, though there are some enhancements that come from the use of the Glove. We also hear that Mattel is looking at other innovative devices for the game world. Frankly, we can't wait!

HONORABLE MENTION

It's not often these days that a game comes along with a new premise, and the abundance of scrolling shooters is starting to get some players pretty bored. *Quarth* (Konami for Game Boy) is an example of an uncommon trend for innovation and nonviolent

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game design. The object of the game is to shoot blocks to "fill up" shapes until they become rectangles. The only enemy is time; the game's pace gets faster as you progress. You can count on Konami for some interesting, mind-twisting games.

BEST COMPUTER GAMES OF THE YEAR

Computer Game of the Year

Breaking the two-year string of victories from foreign designers, the home-grown *It Came From the Desert* (Cinemaware for Amiga and IBM PC) emerged as the outstanding title in this superlative field. Designer/director David Riordan transports players back to the early 1950s and plunges them into an interactive monster movie in this arcade adventure.

Cinemaware's *It Came From the Desert*

A modular plot allows surprising flexibility as the player maneuvers around Lizard Breath, California, and tries to thwart the menace of the Bug-Eyed Monster. The dialogue is excellent and evokes the B-movie world perfectly. Finally, the storytelling technique is similar to the approach Cinemaware pioneered in *Defender of the Crown*, but there's a much tighter plot.

Late last year, Cinemaware introduced *It Came From the Desert II*. This module provides a new plot that work in conjunction with the original disk.

Best Computer-Sports Simulation

Baseball still reigns as the top subject for statistic sports simulations, but this was definitely the year for basketball and golf. The two sports monopolized this category.

PGA Tour Golf (Electronic Arts for IBM PC) is from the same publisher as last year's winner, *Zany Golf*, but it's hard to imagine two more different games about putting a little white ball into a hole. *PGA Tour Golf* is a serious, meticulous simulation of professional golfing.

Electronic Arts' *PGA Tour Golf*

Besides all the usual touches expected of today's electronic golf programs, *PGA Tour Golf* introduces a number of excellent innovations. Its unique features include wind direction, tournament play, tips from tour champions, instant replays of notable shots and an intricate putting mode.

Designers Lee Actor and Dennis Koble (Sterling Silver Software) have set a new standard for computer links programs. Despite merely adequate sound and graphics, *PGA Tour Golf*'s realism and playability bring it the top honor.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

The creator of *Mac Pro Football* (Avalon Hill for Macintosh) returns with an even better statistical football game that emphasizes league play, *NFL Pro Football* (MicroPlay for IBM PC and Macintosh). It's even possible to play this game over a modem.

Playmaker Football (Brøderbund for Macintosh) uses imaginary, rated players instead of representations of NFL stars, but it takes plenty of gridiron savvy to be the general manager, coach and quarterback in this action-strategy simulation.

Jack Nicklaus' Ultimate Golf & Course Design (Accolade for Amiga) includes challenging links play and a module for designing an infinite number of new courses. The golf fan can create an 18-hole course in a few minutes. For those who want to boot and play immediately, the program has Muirfield Village and The Bear's Track, a course Nicklaus designed for this one-to-four-player simulation.

Best Computer Action/Action-Strategy Sports Game

This year VG&CE split the computer-sports gaming award into two categories. The previous one honors programs that take a more cerebral approach to athletics, while this one addresses action-oriented titles.

Cinemaware's *TV Sports: Basketball*

Though both types have plenty of fans, action sports contests are much more popular. They may not be rigorous simulations, but they convey a stronger sense of immediacy and test players' motor as well as mental skills.

The *TV Sports* line, though not exempt from flaws, has quickly become a favorite among sports-minded computer gamers. They offer a good amount of strategy within an action game structure. *TV Sports: Football* won an honorable mention last year, and *TV Sports: Basketball* (Cinemaware for Amiga, Atari STand IBM PC) has captured the top prize this year.

Whether played as an action contest or coaching simulation, *TV Sports: Basketball* is packed with exciting play. Excellent sound, graphics and frills create exceptional realism, but this is no mere collection of frills and flashy tricks that produces only yawns the third time you see them. Larry Garner and John Cutter, who authored the game, have built this hoops hit on rock-solid play mechanics and unwavering attention to significant details. *TV Sports: Basketball* looks and feels like the professional sport.

HONORABLE MENTION

Technically impressive implementation is the main bragging point for *Indianapolis 500* (Electronic Arts for IBM PC). This track-racing simulation has excellent graphics and moves faster than any comparable IBM PC action title.

Best Computer Action Game

The action game category is a microcosm of the entire computer-gaming field. Publishers released only about one-fifth as many action titles for home computers in 1990 as in 1989, but lack of numbers didn't prevent plenty of high spots.

Brøderbund's *Prince of Persia*

It has been six years since Jordan Mechner gave the world the martial arts masterpiece *Karateka*. Fans have waited a long time for Mechner's next creation, and he really hit the jackpot again with *Prince of Persia* (Brøderbund for Amiga, Apple II and IBM PC).

The player has one hour of real time to rescue the Princess, or the usurping Grand Vizier will marry her and seize the country. The lone hero, viewed in modified side-perspective, must negotiate a labyrinth filled with physical puzzles and a bloodthirsty warrior to accomplish the task in time. The figure animation is positively inspiring in this filmlike action quest.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Gauntlet broke the sequel jinx last year by grabbing an honorable mention, and *Battle Squadron* (Innerprise for Amiga and IBM PC) does the same for 1989. This arcade-style product elaborates the scrolling-and-shooting format of 1988's *Hybris*, including even more outstanding sound and graphics.

Death Track (Activision for IBM PC) combines racing and combat action in a single fast-paced program. The gamer selects one of three cars, which can be modified over a series of races, and battles through either one race or a multi-city circuit. Activision has acquired quite a name for adventures, but *Death Track* proves it can handle real-time fun too.

Best Computer Science-Fiction Game

Fans may debate all night about which is the greatest game, but few would question the statement that science fiction is the most popular theme for

So you thought that the text adventure was dead, eh? Magnetic Scrolls has spent the last three years preparing to prove you wrong – with a little help from Lewis Carroll. Gary Whitta goes through the looking glass...

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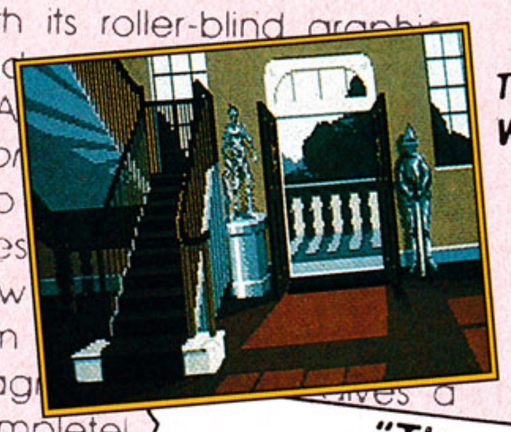
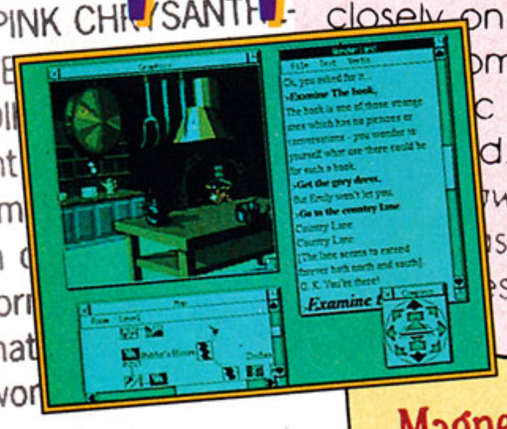
WONDERLAND™

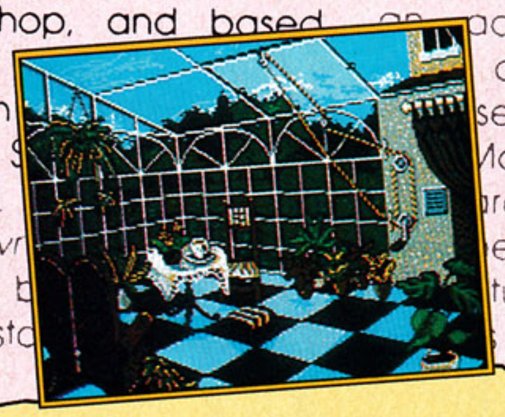
Magnetic Scrolls' new release, *Wonderland*, promises to reinvest the adventure game. A totally new games system, Magnetic Windows, has been developed and the results look astonishing. Keith Campbell gives CU an exclusive preview.

Wonderland, based on Alice in Wonderland, is a new adventure due soon from Magnetic Scrolls — their first major release since *Fish*, nearly two years ago But with 30 man-years of development behind it, *Wonderland*, written by David Bishop, and based closely on



The graphics in Wonderland are stunning





Magnetic Scrolls have come up with the ultimate multi-windowing game system. Could it introduce a new age of intelligent gaming?

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...You've read the book, now play the game. **John Minson** on an adventurous twist to Lewis Carroll

'IF Lewis Carroll was alive today, he'd be more interested in adventure games than books. It's a very logical medium." Anita Sinclair has more on her mind than pleasing literary pedants, but she should be safe. Wonderland, Magnetic Scrolls's forthcoming adaptation of Alice in Wonderland, has been crafted with the original. But the ... me also mar... the compa... nder its ow... d it introd... ich Sinclai... re the mag... ext a... re.

such as The Pawn and Fish, Magnetic Scrolls was at a crossroads.

"I strongly believe in the text adventure," says Sinclair. "It's the most flexible and powerful medium for games. It's not necessary to ... the text ... t's do ... stead we ... l the ... go, ... hop ... h a ... an ...

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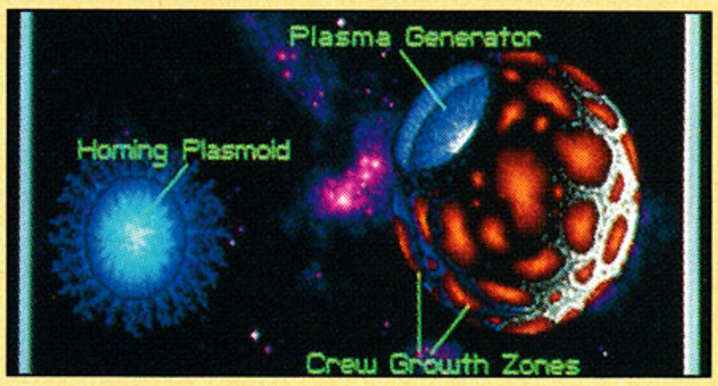
computer games. Sci-Fi and computer entertainment have gone hand in hand since a bunch of M.I.T. computer-science students set up *Spacewar* as a demonstration of their system's capabilities.

Star Control (Accolade for Amiga and IBM PC) brilliantly blends action and strategy in a game about clashing interstellar empires. Paul Reiche III and Fred Ford, the two creators, have put together a game that is great either as a full simulation or an action-combat contest.



Accolade's *Star Control*

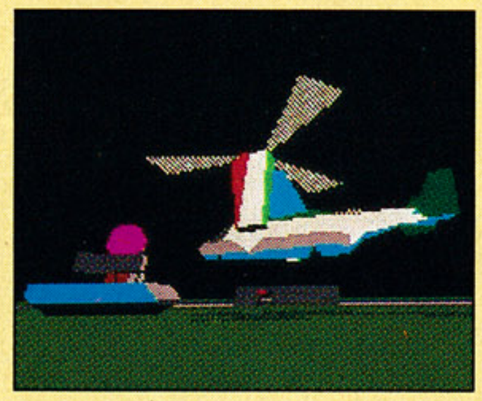
In the campaign version, the player tries to explore, annex and defend territory against a hostile enemy. Space admirals have a fleet of ships at their disposal, each with advantages and limitations. The melee sequences are especially enjoyable. This reflects the ability of Reiche, whose credits include *Archon* and *Mailorder Monsters*, to combine strategy and action in one game.

HONORABLE MENTION

Few games rated higher with the editors than *Wing Commander* (Origin Systems for IBM PC). It may not have won an award, but it was a serious contender in at least *four* categories: science fiction, action, graphics and sound. This is the spiritual descendant of *Sytar Raiders*, a stirring mission to save the universe in first-person perspective.

Best Computer Simulator

The last two awards in this category went to automotive simulators, but military-themed simulators ruled in 1990. Driving games seemed to reach a temporary dead end, with many publishers reluctant to market any auto simulator that wasn't a big advance over *Vette!* and *Test Drive*.


Electronic Art's *Attack Chopper*

Despite its name, *LHX Attack Chopper* (Electronic Arts for IBM PC) gives the armchair aviator a choice of four choppers: Blackhawk, Osprey, Apache and LHX. Not only does each craft's cockpit look right on the screen, but each of the whirlybirds has distinctive maneuvering characteristics.

Purists may not wholly approve of the simple control system, but most gamers will welcome the lack of complication or need for memorizing a lengthy list of commands. This puts the emphasis on the superlative combat action.

Individual missions include rescuing prisoners of war, clearing potential landing sites, aerial intercepts and supply drops. Some missions take place at night or under low-visibility conditions.

Sound and multiple-viewpoint graphics are worthy of the frenetic action of *LHX Attack Chopper*. It establishes a new benchmark for helicopter simulators.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Want to try something a little different in a flight simulator? The spirit of *glasnost* takes wing in *Stormovik* (Electronic Arts for IBM PC). This simulator with accompanying role-playing elements puts the computerist into the cockpit of some of the Soviet Union's hottest jets.

World War II's Battle of Britain springs to life in *Their Finest Hour* (Lucasfilm for Amiga, Atari ST and IBM PC). The use of bit-mapped illustrations for the aircraft gives extra visual impact to the 100 missions included in this top-notch simulator.

M-1 Tank Platoon (MicroProse for Amiga and IBM PC) is a strong AFV simulator that includes a significant factor overlooked by previous tank games. The player controls a group of tanks, not just one, and must orchestrate the whole platoon to win the combat scenarios.

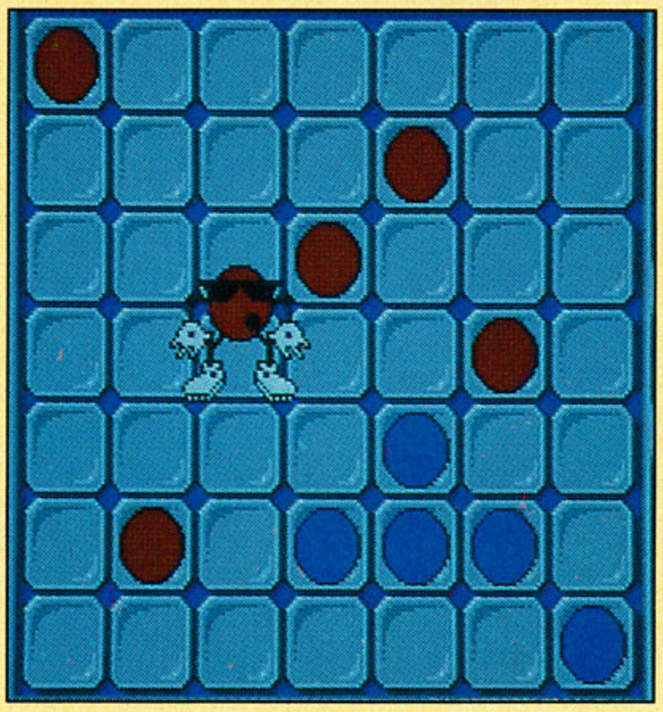
Sands of Fire (Three-Sixty Software for IBM PC and Macintosh), by Digital Illusions, puts the player in command of U.S. and British units confronting the fabled Afrika Corps in the North African theater of World War II. An excellent tanker's eye view of the battles, choice of individual engagement and campaign scenarios and effective use of animation for the shell-loading sequence help make *Sands of Fire* a feast for electronic wargamers.

Best Computer-Strategy Game

The licensing coup of the year is probably *Spot* (Virgin Mastertronic for Amiga Commodore 64 and IBM PC), which is based on the little character in the 7-Up commercials. *Spot* is more than just a hot property; this is a challenging and exciting game that offers the brain-gamer tremendous variety.

This cross between *Battle Chess* and *Reversi* combines the strategy of placing pieces on the board to change the other side's pieces with the glitz of excellent animation. Spots run, strut and pole-vault into their new positions.

Spot is also notable for its flexible rules. It has so many options that each computerist can customize the game to his or her individual taste. This year's top computer-strategy game is a serious mental challenge presented in a whimsically humorous style.


Virgin Mastertronic's *Spot*

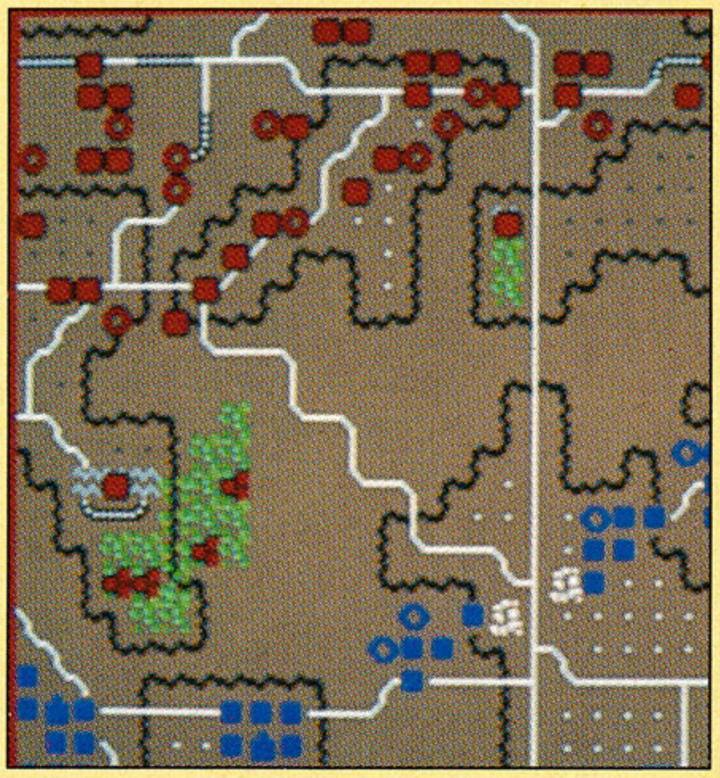
HONORABLE MENTIONS

Sid Meier first gained fame as a designer of highly playable simulators. He's since applied many of the same techniques to outstanding titles like *Pirates* and *Sword of the Samurai*. In Meier's latest, *Railroad Tycoon* (MicroProse for IBM PC), the electronic entrepreneur must build up a new railroad company against up to three computerized rivals in this absorbing strategy-campaign game.

Power Monger (Electronic Arts for Amiga, Atari STand IBM PC) proves two things: Peter Molyneux is no one-game wonder, and the United Kingdom can produce great software if given the time and resources. The goal is more limited than in *Populous*—conquering a continent rather than becoming supreme deity of a world—but *Power Monger* shares most of the virtues of *Populous*.

Best Computer Military-Strategy Game

Several designers have tried to break away from the traditions set in concrete by nonelectronic military games. *Lords of the Rising Sun* and *Universal Military Simulator* are examples of war games without the usual hex-grid map, square trooper counters and other trappings familiar to players of Avalon Hill, Game Designers Workshop and SPI.


SSI's *Battles of Napoleon*

Battles of Napoleon (SSI for Apple II, Commodore 64 and IBM PC) is an advanced-level simulation of the famous general's campaigns. The player may re-wage pivotal battles like Auerstadt, Borodino, Quatre Bras and Waterloo or revise any of the existing orders of battle with the editor.

Unlike many previous war games, which employed crude user interfaces, *Battles of Napoleon* is quite easy to play for such a complex game, thanks to its system of pull-down command menus. This frees the computerist to concentrate on *what* to do instead of getting bogged down in *how* to get it done.

The cavalry rules represent the greatest innovation in *Battles of Napoleon*. After the players pick a target unit, the cavalry charges the selected foe. This forces strategists to treat mounted troops as something more than lightly armed, faster infantry.

HONORABLE MENTION

Genghis Khan: A Study of Regal Principles (Koei for Amiga and IBM PC) is a war game that goes beyond the confines of the battlefields to immerse

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LINKS also includes a practice area for driving, chipping and putting.

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LINKS is brought to you by *Access Software*… the same fanatics for accuracy and realism who gave you World Class Leader Board Golf—*and the graphics are unbelievably realistic.* Gone are square-edged screens that look like Lego blocks. With *LINKS,* hills actually look like hills, trees look like trees, water looks like water. (And, yes, golfers even look like golfers.) In fact, *LINKS* uses graphics technology so advanced that a VGA system is absolutely required for play.

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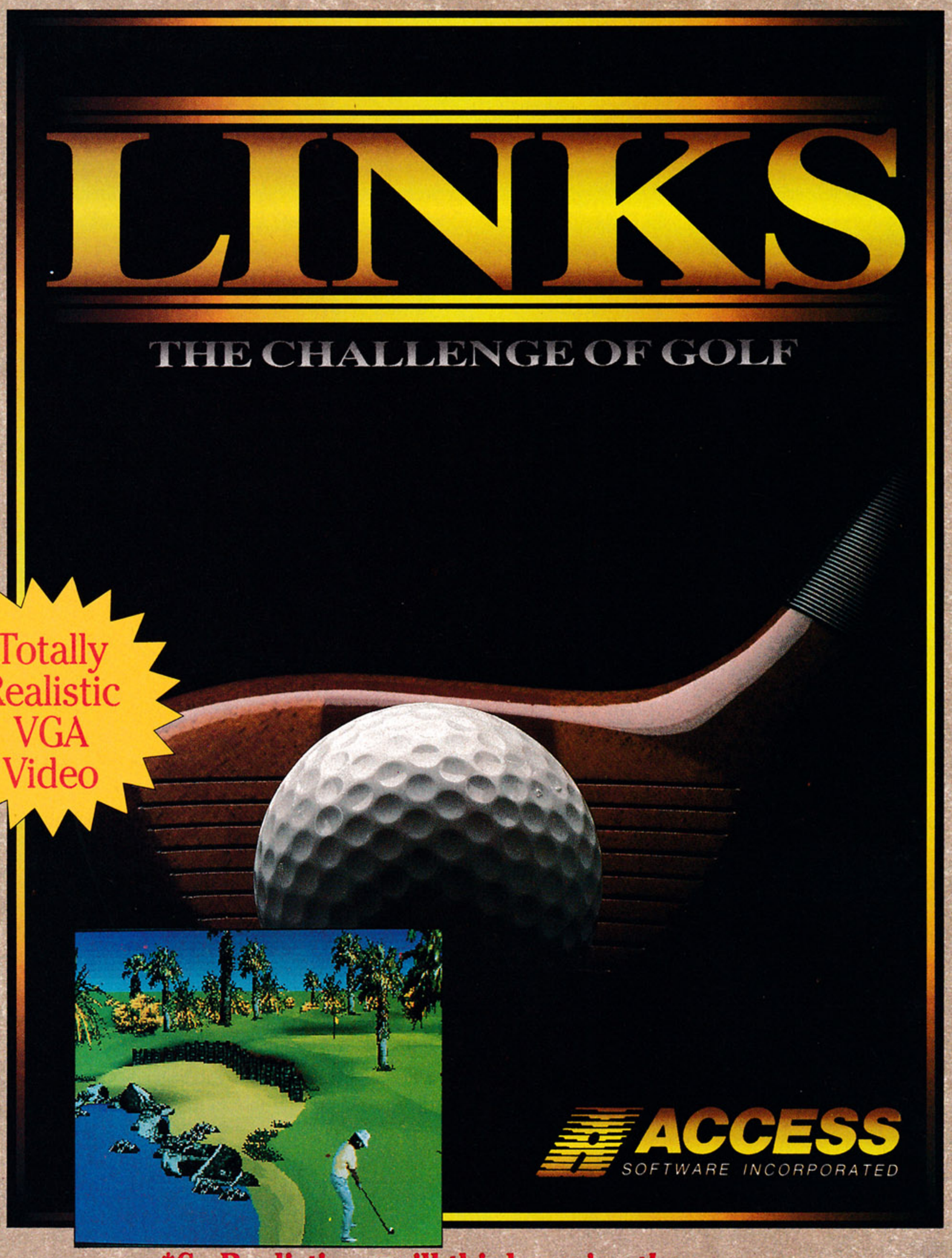

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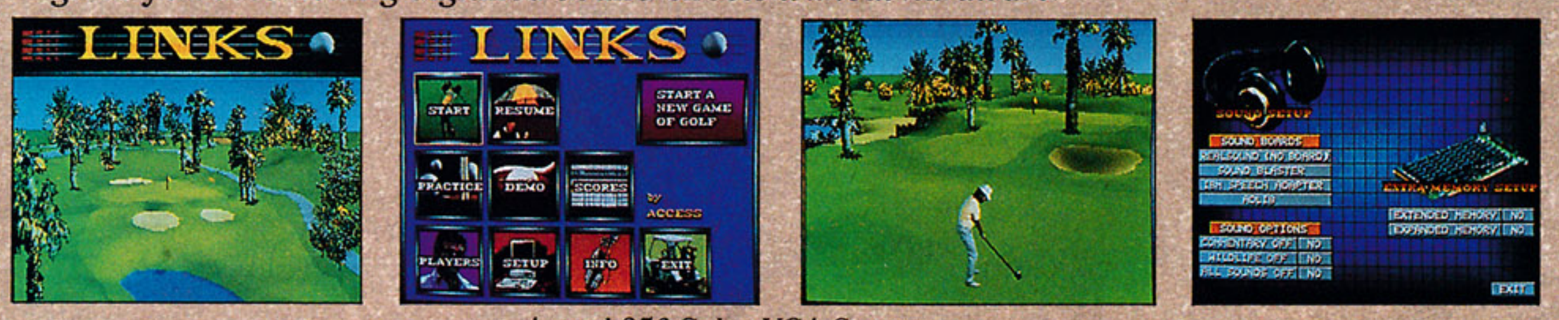

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the player in a socioeconomic simulation of life in the Middle Ages. In two connected scenarios, the player attempts first to unify Mongolia and then bring the entire known world under the rule of Genghis Khan.

Twelve scenarios set during the struggle for the North Atlantic during World War II form the core of *Wolf Pack* (Brøderbund for Amiga and IBM PC). Some scenarios are real, others imaginary, but all require sharp thinking and good tactics.

The user can specify the conditions under which the missions occur, including the period of the war. Each ship's captain has a unique personality, so the commander must manage men as well as machines to win the day.

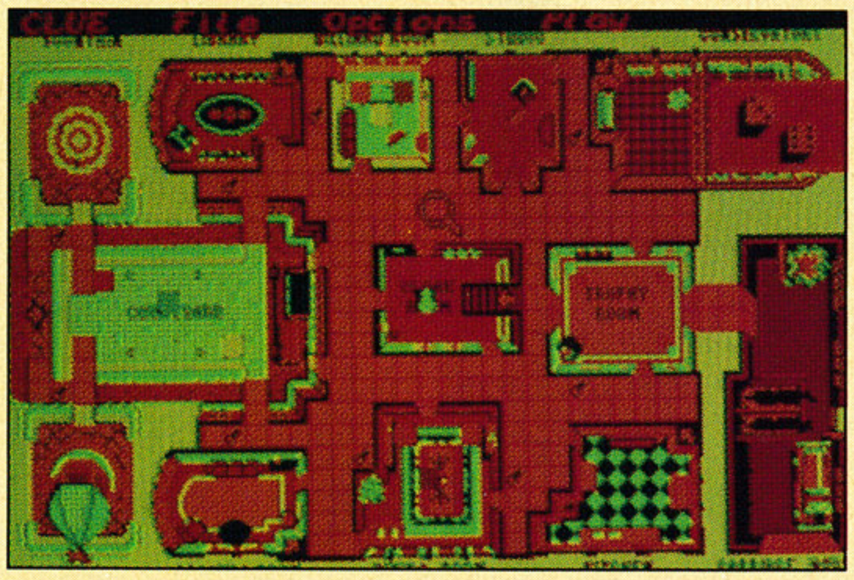
Best Computerized Board Game

Another of this year's new categories reflects the incredible increase in the number of electronic board games based on original designs or adapted from tabletop family-social games. Computerized board games have several advantages over the conventional variety, including graduated difficulty, computerized opposition, rules variations and animated graphics.

Inaugurating the category as a fitting winner is *Clue: Master Detective* (Virgin Leisure Genius for Amiga, Apple II, Atari ST IBM PC and Macintosh). The Parker Brothers perennial favorite comes through in fine shape in this translation to the computer screen.

The gamer can assume the identity of any of the ten men and women gathered at the mansion to solve the murder. Traditionalists will want to use the familiar names like Colonel Mustard and Miss Scarlett, but the program allows the user to substitute any monikers for the stock suspects.

Other handy features are the ability to get a hard copy printout of the proceedings and the special animations that run whenever someone enters a room. It isn't always easy to get enough folks together for a full-dress game of *Clue: Master Detective*. Fans of the detection contest can enjoy a stimulating hunt for the weapon, the location and the culprit at any time.



Clue: Master Detective by Virgin Leisure Genius

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Hidden movement is the key ingredient in *Stratego* (Accolade for IBM PC and Macintosh). This attribute has prevented even the most imaginative gamers from enjoying solitaire sessions of the board game. The electronic edition has a variable-skill robot adversary that goes for the jugular in every game. Besides the standard rules, *Stratego* includes options for customizing the playfield and armies.

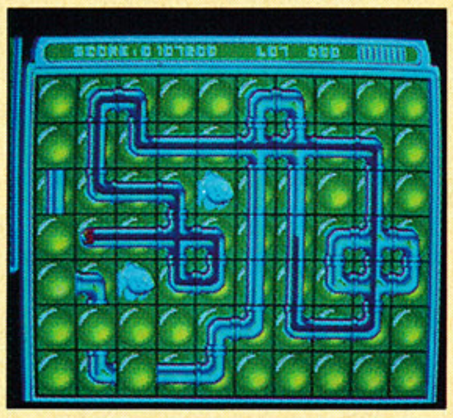
The original version was good, but it's hard to imagine that anyone wouldn't prefer the computer edition of *Nuclear War* (New World Computing for Amiga and IBM PC). Wonderful animations enliven this humorous game based on international power politics. The excellent cartoon illustrations don't prevent *Nuclear War* from being a stimulating game of bluster and bluff.

Best Action-Strategy Game

No type of game has gained acceptance among computerists faster than action-strategy contests. They tease the brain like a strategy contest and tax the reflexes like an arcade game.

None of the *Tetris* sequels, clones and imitations managed to claim an honor in this category, but *Pipe Dream* (Lucasfilm for Amiga, Apple IIgs, Atari ST, Commodore 64, IBM PC and Macintosh) can claim kinship to the classic block-dropper. Both have the same elegant simplicity.

The player pieces together a pipeline from the sections that appear randomly. The longer the pipe before the flooz overflows, the higher the score. It's a task that sounds easy, but turns out to be exceptionally challenging and involving during actual game play.



Lucasfilm's Pipe Dream

The game's 36 levels begin with a training round that lets the player master the basic rules. The difficulty escalates quickly, thanks to the introduction of one-directional pipes, obstacles and faster-flowing flooz.

Rescuing the Acme Chemical Company may not be quite as heroic as saving the universe, but it's hard to imagine that the latter could be any more entertaining than *Pipe Dream*.

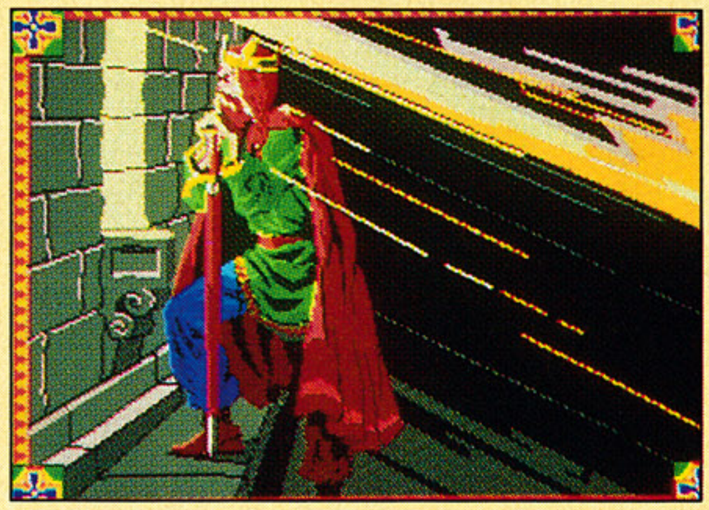
HONORABLE MENTIONS

Centurion: Defender of Rome (Electronic Arts for IBM PC) chronicles Rome's attempt to carve out an empire in 275 B.C. Kellyn Beck, author of *Defender of the Crown*, and the team of Evan and Nicky Robinson mix action, strategy and role-playing like master chefs. The plot twists may not be totally logical, but they convey the essence of this colorful and tumultuous period in history.

BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Inception (Infocom for Amiga and IBM PC) is based on the FASA science fiction game world. The player becomes apprentice MechWarrior Jason Youngblood, who becomes a key figure in the struggle among five powerful houses vying for control of the Star League. Westwood Associates brings the world of the future alive with outstanding still and animated graphics, highlighted by the Manga-like dramatic "cut scenes."

Best Computer Adventure

"To type or not to type" remains the crucial question in the area of computer adventure and role-playing games. Though a few publishers continued to experiment with parser-driven adventures, menus, icons and point-and-click interfaces have captured gamers' allegiance.



Sierra's Conquest of Camelot: The Search for the Grail

Conquest of Camelot: The Search for the Grail (Sierra for Amiga, Atari ST and IBM PC) marks the debut of a hot new design team, Kristy Marx and Peter Ledger, and the smoothest-playing adventure system yet developed by Sierra.

The plot concerns King Arthur's quest for the chivalric world's greatest prize, the Holy Grail. Marx weaves the familiar elements of Arthurian legend into a new and involving story. Ledger's art, excellent music and fine writing make *Conquest of Camelot* a total treat.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Ultima VI: The False Prophet (Origin Systems for Amiga, Commodore 64 and IBM PC) is the culmination of Lord British's third trilogy. Executed in a new generation of the *Ultima* game-system, this role-playing adventure has great graphics, plenty of action and a philosophical side not often seen in fantasy games.

Circuit's Edge (Infocom for IBM PC), one of Westwood Associates' three award winners for 1990, is based on two science-fiction novels by George Alec Effinger. Effinger contributed to the design of this graphic adventure, which lets the player assume the role of private eye Marid Audran. This anti-hero's adventures in the futuristic ghetto, the Budayeen are a breath of fresh air for an adventure gaming field that has slain one too many dragons and assembled one too many magic wands.

The line of fantasy role-playing programs based on TSR's Dungeons & Dragons just gets better and better. *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Secret of the Silver Blades* (SSI for Commodore 64 and IBM PC), the latest in the series, gives the adventurer the opportunity to save the world from an ancient evil. Fine visuals and the dependable play system introduced in the two earlier *Forgotten Realms* adventures make this an unalloyed pleasure to play.

Best Computer-Game Sound

The rise of IBM PC had the short-term effect of reducing the use of sound and music in computer games. Gamers' anguished cries encouraged the development of a wide selection of sound boards, including the Ad Lib, Roland MT-32 and Sound

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Can design own track	no	yes	**YES; plus 9 pre-designed courses**
Maximum number of computer opponents	2	1	**3**
Two player Head-to-Head mode	no	no	**YES; via serial cable or modem connection.**
Interactive demolition with opponents (Bumping allowed)	no	no-instant death	**YES**

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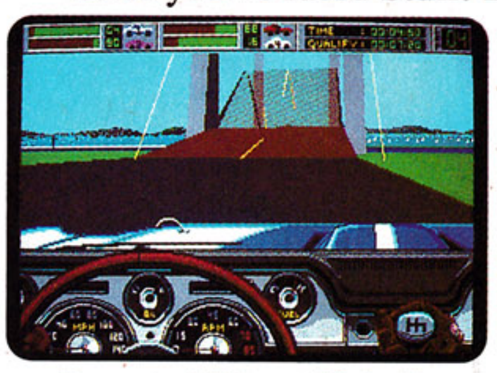
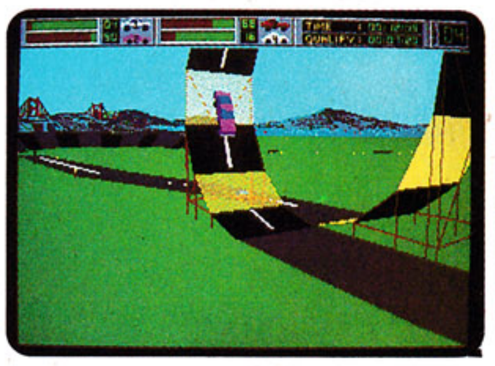
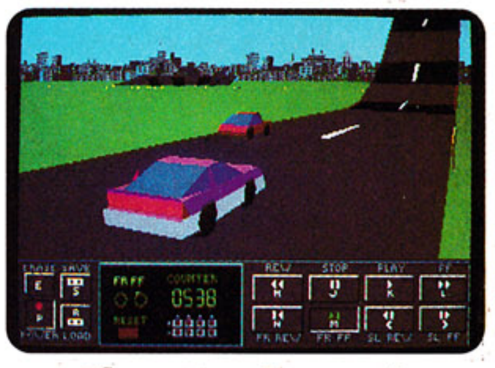


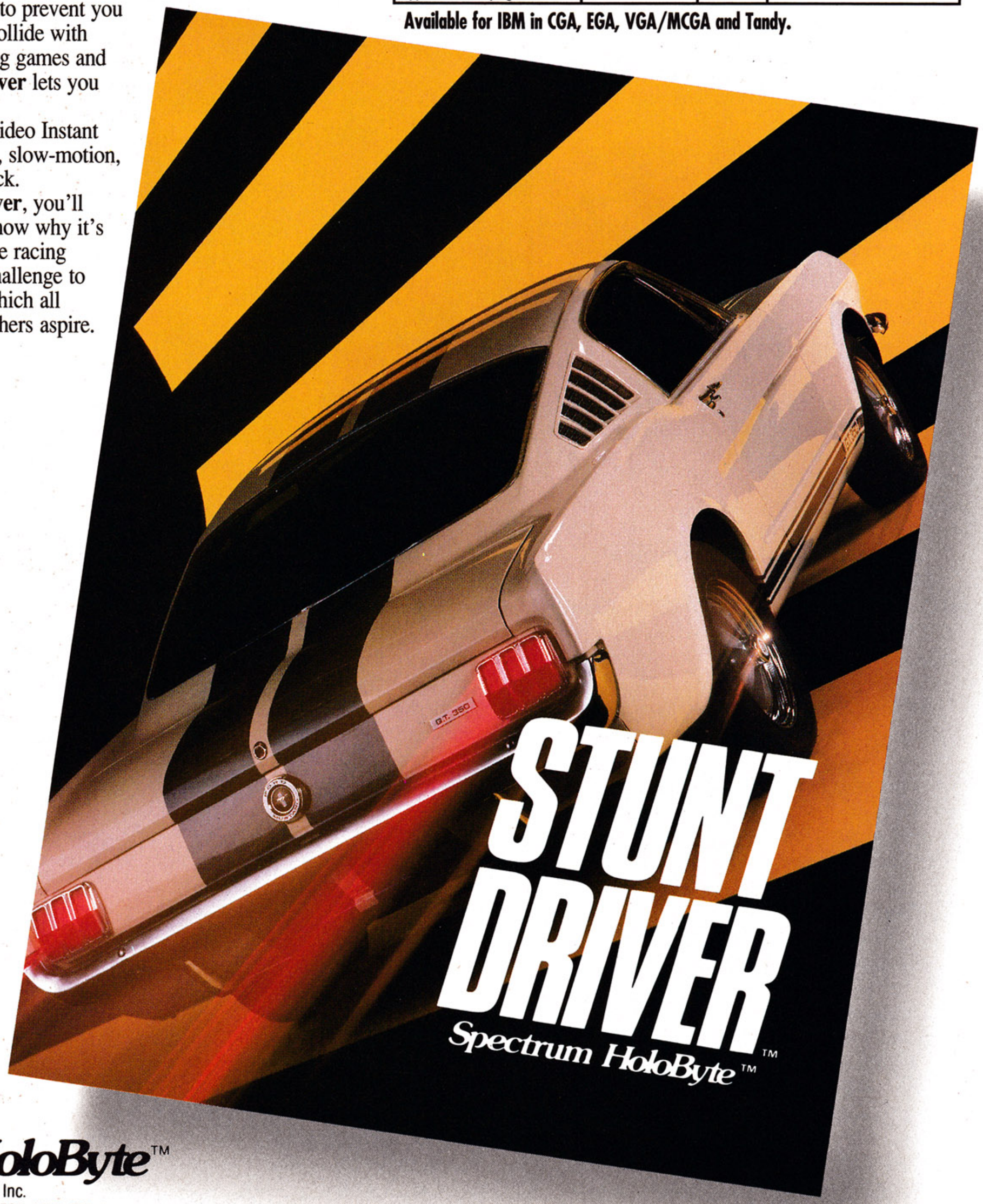
Down shift and hit the gas! You'll need plenty of speed to clear that open drawbridge!



You can almost feel the gut-wrenching G-forces from the loop.



The recorder mode plays back the action from numerous camera sites.



Screens shown are IBM EGA.

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Blaster. These peripherals have boosted the audio capabilities of IBM PC machines with top-of-the-line sound quality. Sound-board coding has become a major selling feature of PC titles.

Lucasfilm's *Loom*

Kudos for the year's most inventive use of sound go to *Loom* (Lucasfilm for Amiga, Atari STand IBM PC). This adventure is set in the mythical Age of the Great Guilds. As Weaver Guild member Bobbin Threadbare, the computerist uses a magic wand called the Distaff to rescue the other members of the Guild.

Music is an integral part of the game. Each magical spell is a four-note musical phrase, so games conducted at the top difficulty level require the computerist to use ears as well as eyes to monitor developments.

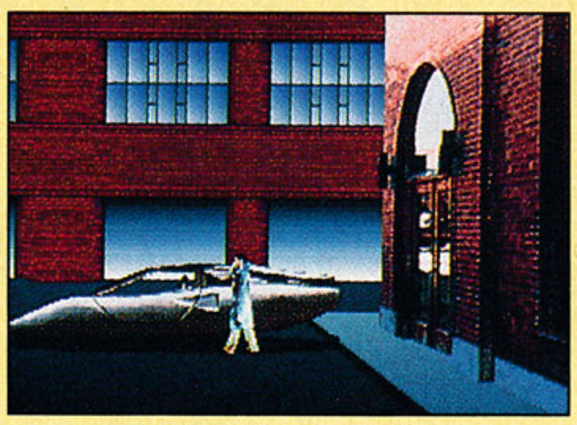
HONORABLE MENTION

A professional quality film score puts *Space Quest III* (Sierra for Amiga and IBM PC) among the best of the year. The music in this science-fiction adventure makes everything that happens seem so much more exciting and important. No adventure's music more effectively intensifies its game's mood.

Best Computer Graphics

Two years ago, virtually all IBM PC titles relied on CGA graphics, though a few better games utilized EGA. Now, no major publisher would think of issuing a game without EGA visuals, and a large percentage opt for VGA.

A complete flight simulator with polygon-fill graphics is just one of the visual highlights of *Mean Streets* (Access for Amiga, Commodore 64 and IBM PC). A private eye visits exotic West Coast locations and meets a cast of 30 decidedly offbeat characters in this science-fiction detective adventure.



Mean Streets by Access

Clever animations individualize each of the nonplayer characters. The way the victim's girlfriend sobs and dabs her eyes with her handkerchief is a good example of visual characterization.

A cast of 30 actors, movie-quality sets and scale models make a truly stunning graphic statement. The futuristic San Francisco found in *Mean Streets* is utterly convincing, because the graphic presentation is so rich.

HONORABLE MENTION

Battle Chess II: Chinese Chess (Interplay for Amiga and IBM PC), the sequel to the much-honored *Battle Chess*, applies the same general idea to another ancient strategy game. All the lessons learned with the first program have gone into improvements for the new one. The capturing and movement animations are like little movies; a wonderful embellishment of an absorbing mind-stretcher.

Best Coin-op to Home Computer Translation

Except for the introduction of high-tech coin-op video-games, the family amusement centers are no longer the spawning ground for all new gaming developments. Home technology has largely caught up with coin-op, and few quarter-snatchers show much originality in theme or play-action.

Virgin Mastertronic's *N.Y. Warrior*

The trend toward arcade-machine "kits" has also helped close the technology gap. Kits use the same hardware for each new program, so they seldom have features (like controls with physical feedback) that the home systems can't match. In fact, a lot of coin-op kits work on hardware that's essentially the same as the Amiga 500.

This year's number-one translation, *N.Y. Warrior* (Virgin Mastertronic for Amiga and Atari ST), is not just "based on" the Arcadia Systems coin-op; it *is* the play-for-pay machine right down to its raucously exciting soundtrack.

It's all here. *NY Warrior* has eight exhausting levels of relentless action, knockout graphics and house-shaking music and sound effects. Action aces are sure to love this street-fighting extravaganza.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Ivan Stewart's Ironman Super Off Road (Virgin Mastertronic for Amiga and IBM PC) is a superb translation of Leland's *Super Off Road* coin-op. The VGA graphics on the IBM-compatible version are fantastic. This eye-popping artwork captures all the sudden turns, jumps and swerves of a hot off-road race.

Most Innovative Computer Games

Since publishers generally introduced fewer games in 1990 than in 1989, many tried to make each release more "special." The happy outcome of greater attention to product was—what else?—more innovative and distinctive games. The electronic-gaming field appears to be entering a period of fresh experimentation, partially brought on by the impending arrival of CD, so this category could get even more interesting next year.

SSI's *Dragon Strike*

One enjoyable aspect of electronic gaming is its constant ability to surprise. Who'd have expected a fight simulator to be the year's most innovative computer game? Yet *Dragon Strike* (SSI for IBM PC) manages to find something utterly fresh and original in this genre.

The gamer pilots a giant dragon against equally fantastic foes in this first person-perspective simulator. The program also takes the imaginative step of offering a choice of two graphic treatments: bit-mapped and polygon fill. The former is not as detailed in some ways, but it provides a detailed representation of every rippling movement of the huge on-screen dragon steeds.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Wings (Cinemaware for Amiga) abandons many flight-simulator conventions to portray the rigors of World War I combat flying. The role-playing elements provide an on-going rationale for the combat, recon and other missions that comprise the action portion of the game.

The Game of Harmony (Accolade for Amiga and Commodore 64) has "new age" pretensions that may irk some gamers, but it is undeniably original. Players manipulate geometric shapes around a playfield in an effort to clear the screen. The game's conceit is that it cannot be played well if the gamer has not established a "harmonious" relationship with the program. It's a strangely calming and involving entertainment.

Those are the winners and honorable mentions for the 1990 gaming year. Like the rest of the gaming world, the editor-judges can't wait to see the marvels that will constitute *next* year's winners!

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A PLAYER'S GUIDE TO

Super Glove Ball

PART ONE

ILLUSTRATION BY JIM MCDERMOTT

BY DONN NAUERT

You've just begun working on a spy satellite in space. Everything seems to be normal and routine when suddenly you're caught in a rip in space. You've been thrown into a strange maze, and all contact with the outside has been lost. Your only hope is to use your jet-powered robo-repair glove and mysterious energy balls to break yourself out and return to the Allied Space Agency.

Super Gloveball is the first game specifically designed for the Power Glove. In the game you must use your robo-repair glove and energy balls to unlock the mysteries of the maze by completing various tasks in different types of rooms. Some rooms require you to knock out all the blocks on one wall to leave, while others make you solve a puzzle before you can leave.

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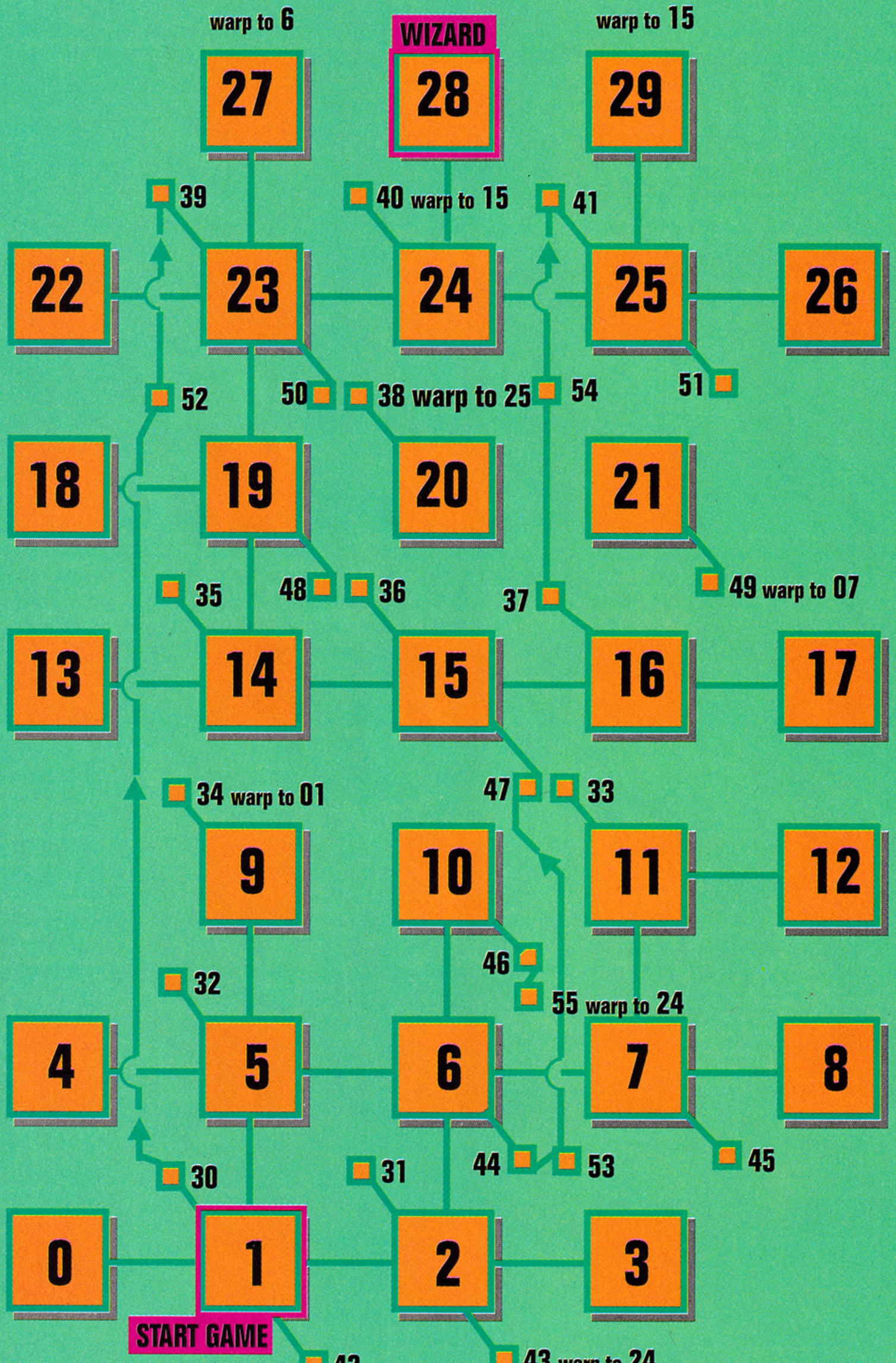
A general suggestion for the game is to go for all the question marks you can. Not only will you earn more points, but you'll also get special power-up items that will help you clear each particular room. Try not to panic when you get the super ball, you can't lose it, so let it bounce around the screen until the power wears off and then resume play. It would also help to catch the ball as often as possible. This will allow you to position the ball to destroy tiles easily and create faster game times. While the Power Glove might offer more game enhancements, such as rotating the glove at the same time you hit the ball, causing the ball to slice, it's not required to play the game. Use whichever is more comfortable for you. But remember, you can't change controllers during game play. You'll have to finish with whichever controller you begin with or reset your game.

SUPER GLOVE BALL

AREA 1

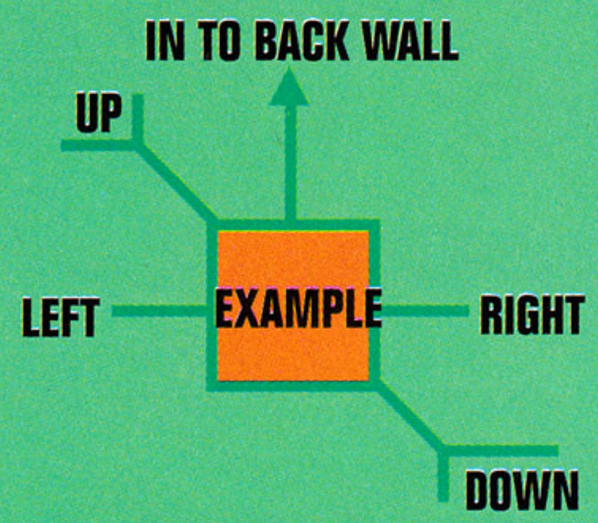


Area 1 is pretty basic. By destroying the tiles on a wall, you can create a path that will lead you to the Wizard. Starting with Room 1, you'll be trying to work your way to Room 28. There are about seven different ways to reach the final room, but the easiest is to start at Room 1 and go to Room 2. From there, you will need to break through the tiles at the bottom so that you can move down into Room 43. After hitting the tile in the upper-left-hand corner of Room 43, you'll automatically be warped to Room 24. In Room 24 break through the back wall (the one in front of you), and enter the final room, Number 28.

The Wizard will follow your every move. The key to defeating him is to release the energy ball, then move to the left or right and then move back so that the energy ball is between the back wall and the Wizard. This will cause the ball to bounce off the Wizard repeatedly, and he will soon be easily defeated. All you have to do from here is complete the puzzle room (by getting one row the same color) before entering Area 2.

There's also a hidden bonus room that you might want to aim for. From Room 1, move left into Room 0, and begin knocking out the blocks on the back wall. If you hit the correct tile on the back wall, you'll be sent to a bonus room. Complete the room and see what you get.

Key: Here's an example of how to read the key. If you want to go from Room 15 to Room 36, you need to knock out the tiles on the top of Room 15, then press and hold the **SELECT** button, then push **UP**. To move from Room 1 to Room 5, you need to clear the back wall, then press and hold the **SELECT** and A buttons.

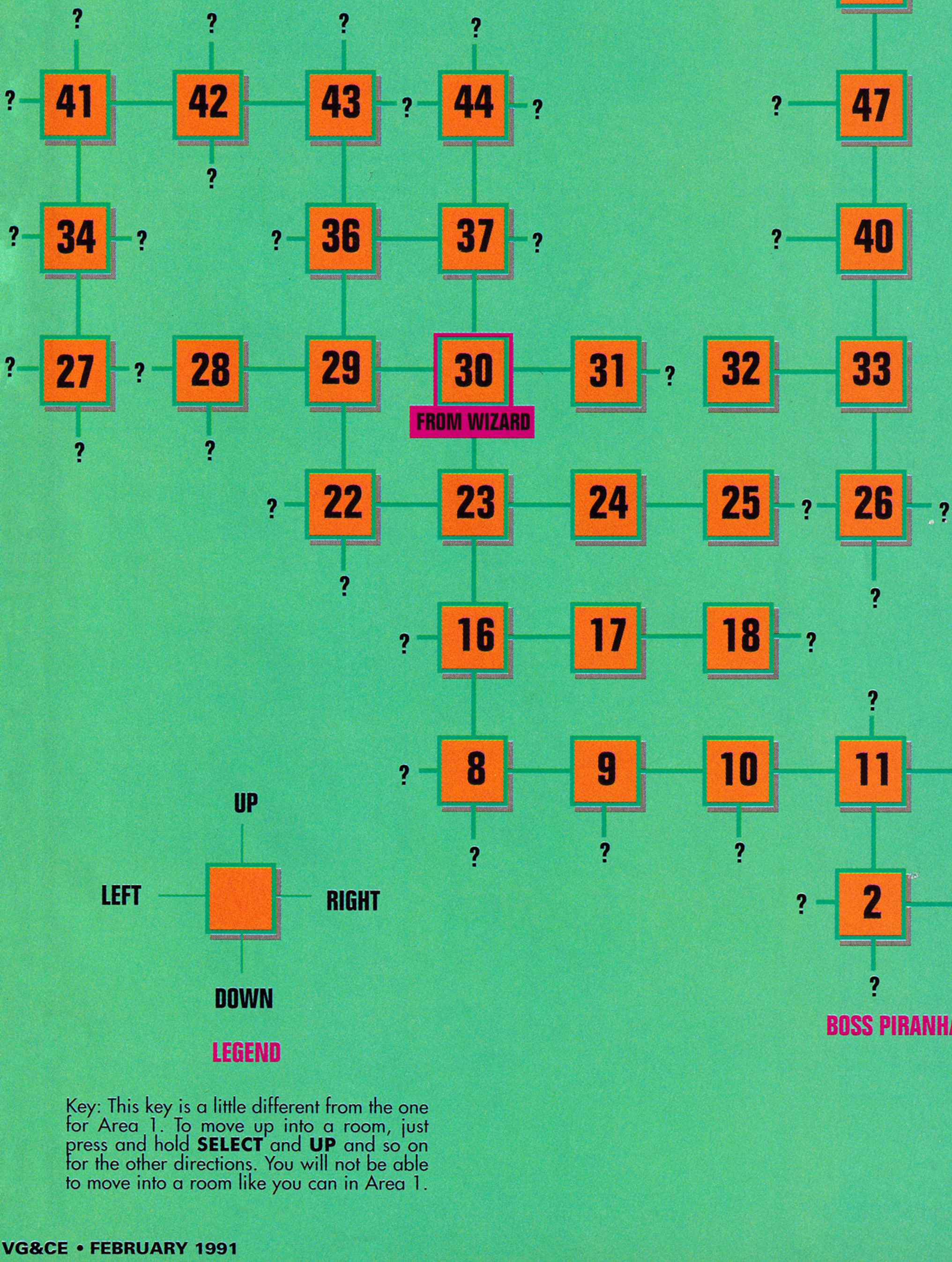


LEGEND

SUPER GLOVE BALL

AREA 2

In Area 2, it's essential that you've mastered the ability to catch the energy ball and throw it at specific tiles. Be ready for some weird slices and hooks after the ball hits the acid pools on the back wall. This area is difficult because not only do you have to use precise aim to get through it, but now you also have to contend with crabs and lionlike creatures jumping at you or throwing bombs. If they do enough damage to your robo-glove, you'll lose a life. For this area we have made a map of the more important rooms and left some exploration up to you. For the piranha, in Room 3, try the same technique as for the Wizard in Area 1.



UP

LEFT — RIGHT

DOWN

LEGEND

Key: This key is a little different from the one for Area 1. To move up into a room, just press and hold **SELECT** and **UP** and so on for the other directions. You will not be able to move into a room like you can in Area 1.

DESTINATION ARCADIA

THE 1990 AMOA SHOW REPORT

BY DONN NAUERT

The Amusement & Music Operators Association (AMOA) has traditionally held their annual show, called the Expo, in Chicago. Every few years or so, the AMOA ventures outside of the "Land of Lincoln" for a change of scenery by going to some other city, such as Las Vegas.

This past November, the AMOA was off to New Orleans for some "down home" Cajun cooking and some of the best blues music in the world. While New Orleans will always be known as the home of such great events as Super Bowl XXIV, the Sugar Bowl and Mardi Gras, the Expo '90 will undoubtedly be known as the "show of sequels." Featuring many of the best games of 1990, the show also included some new titles that are either direct sequels to games, such as *Double Dragon 3*, or games that just look like they could be, such as *Carrier Airwing* (which appears much like *U.N. Squadron*).

Games that could have a "II" or "III" next to their names weren't the only talk in town. American Laser Games introduced its new game at the show, and it was an instant hit—to many, but not all. There are still more than a few operators and distributors who say they will not touch another laser-disc game—period. I guess only time will tell if this resurgence of laser-disc games is for real.

Here is the first of a two-part feature on the Expo '90. Look for the conclusion in our March '91 issue.

American Laser Games

MAD DOG MCCREE

Laser Disc games are starting to get more attention, American Laser Games' new offering in particular. You play a lone stranger who wanders into a town controlled by a vicious outlaw. The townspeople immedi-

American Laser Games' *Mad Dog McCree* brings interactive laser-disc games to the arcade.

SHOOT 'EM OR SCOOT 'EM!

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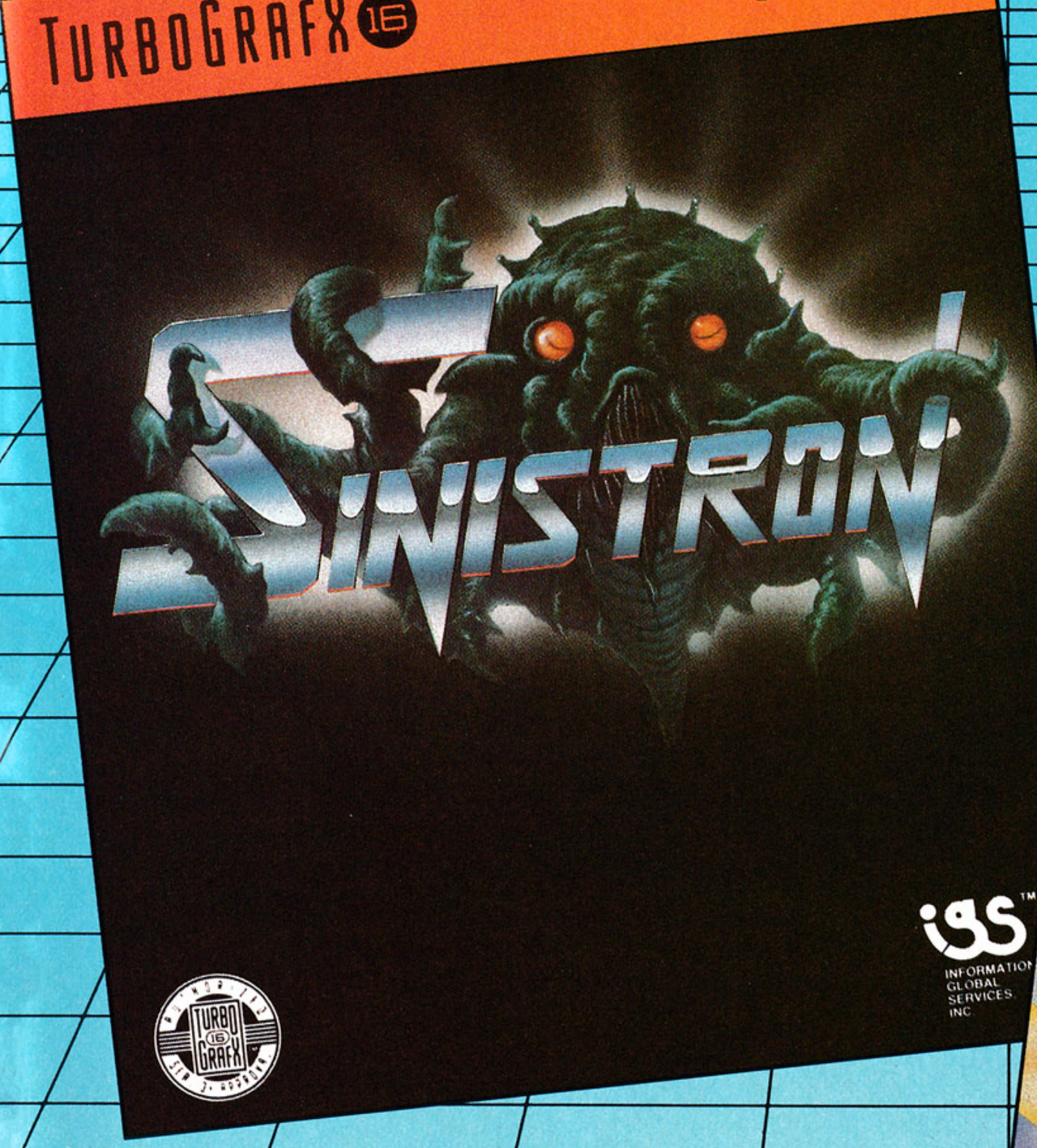
SHOOTER



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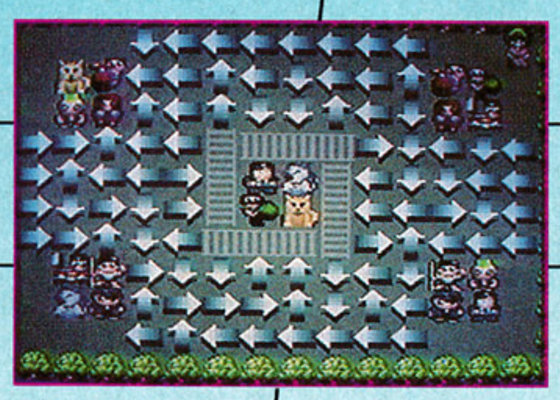

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ately ask you for help. Using digitized scenes of filmed actors in the game, you'll battle your way through various locations including a saloon, a bank and a stable. Test your reflexes and aim for a good ol' fashioned street-clearing showdown, or take pot shots at bottles.

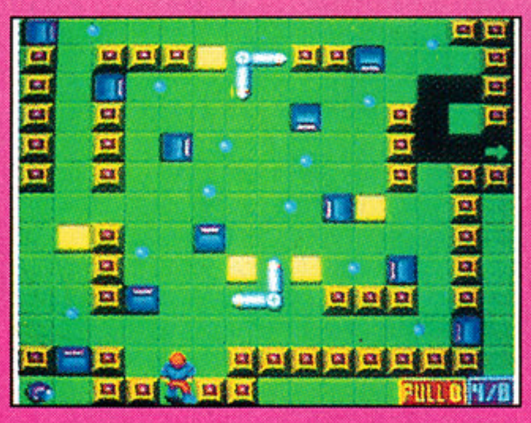
American Sammy

Bio-Ship Paladin

In this horizontal shooter, you guide your ship, made of bio-matter, through various waves of hostile alien forces. Your mission, which starts on Earth, is to battle your way to the main alien flagship located in deep outer space.

Pushman

A new twist has been added to this puzzle game. Instead of matching tiles of like colors or forming a line, you must navigate blocks through narrow passageways, and attempt to place them over black voids, which prevent your character from leaving that stage, before the enemy gets you. The stages are more difficult because of turnstilelike objects that force you to find the best route and order in moving the blocks.

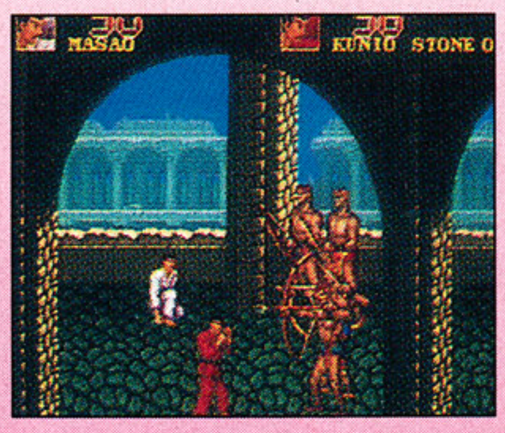


American Sammy's *Pushman*.

American Technos

Double Dragon 3

Jimmy and Billy are back, bigger and better than before. This time they're joined by Sonny as they travel across the world in search of the Rosetta Stone. Select one of the three characters as you battle Egyptian mummies, Roman archers, Samurai swordsman and more. (Note: There is a two- and three-player version of this game, so the game you might see in your local arcade depends on the settings the operator uses.)



American Technos introduces the third chapter in the *Double Dragon* series.

Atari

Race Drivin'

The sequel to the popular *Hard Drivin'*, this high-speed racing game features all the thrills of its predecessor and more. The game play features include two new tracks (the AutoCross and Super Stunt Track) as well as the original track from *Hard Drivin'*. The highlight of the game is the incredible corkscrew obstacle in the Super Stunt Track.

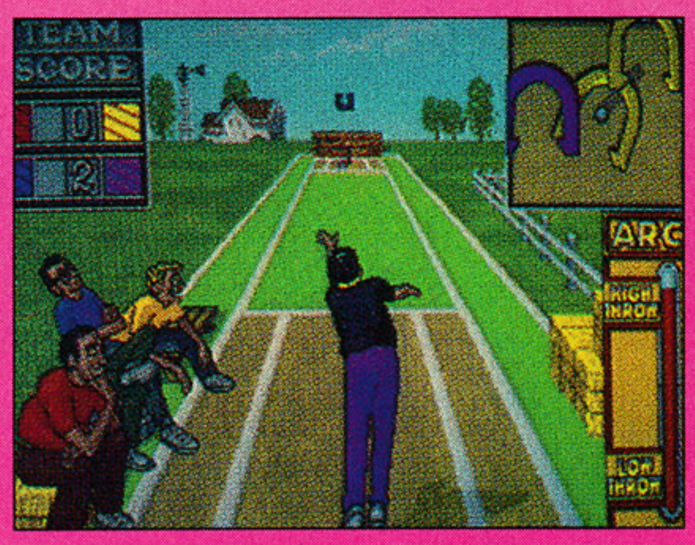
Pit Fighter

A basic down-and-dirty street fight, *Pit Fighter* could be called a modern day *Karate Champ* with digitized graphics. Select from three players to battle your way through the latest underground sport and, eventually, compete in the elimination match, which pits you against the champion, the Masked Warrior.

Atari's *Pit Fighter* uses digitized graphics in a head-to-head martial-arts contest.

Shuuz

Shuuz , a simple but fun game, is the first video horseshoes game. The target audience is an older crowd, so you may find this machine in a tavern; the game also has an optional "Beer Round" for the bar and tavern locations.



Horseshoes is the focus of *Shuuz* by Atari.

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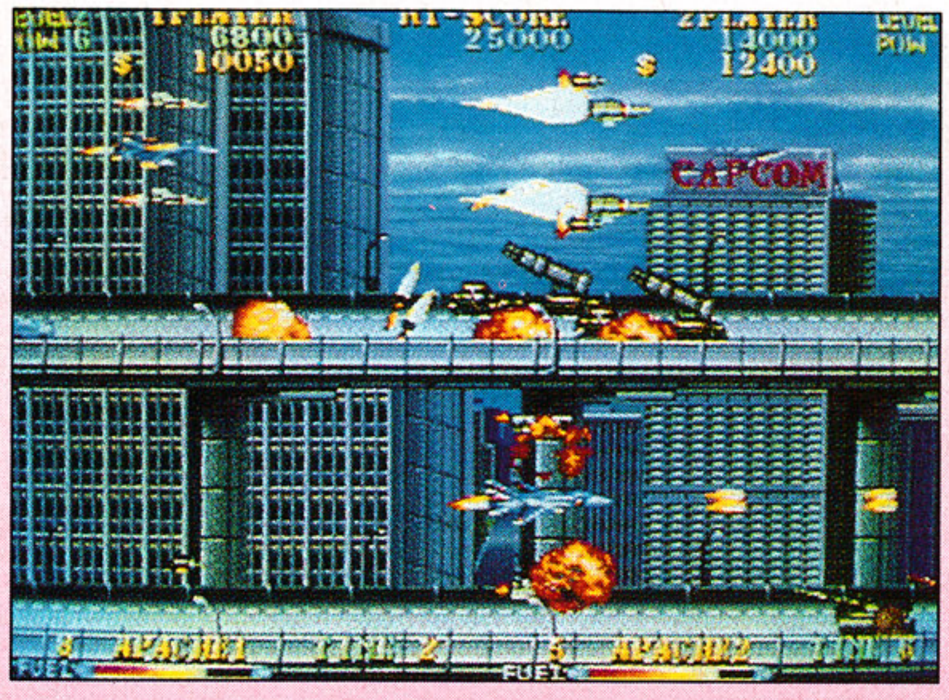
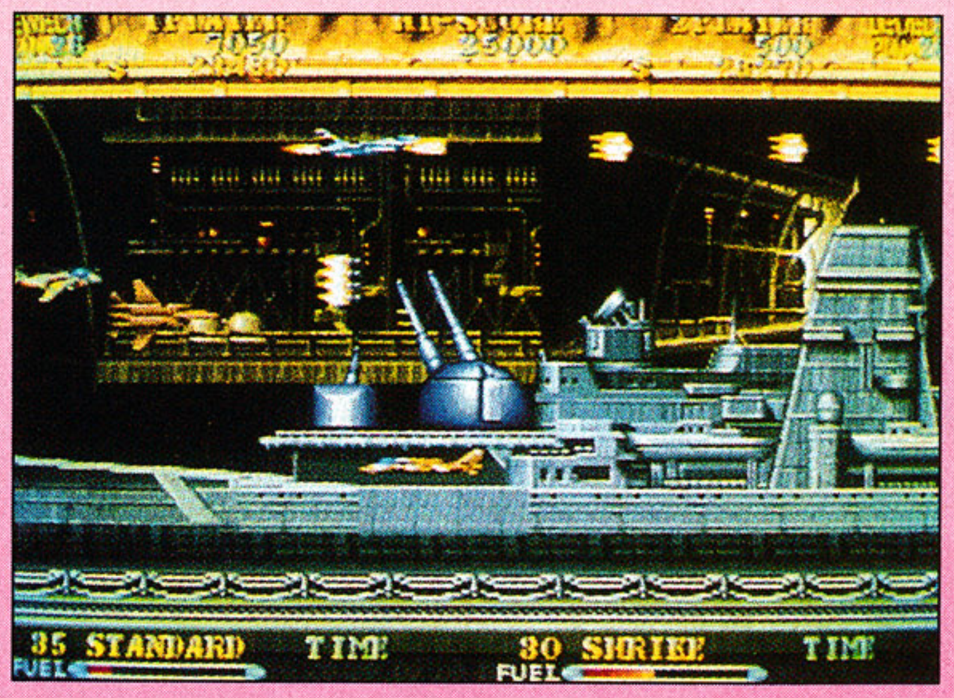




Carrier Airwing, Capcom's latest horizontal shooter, plays much like its predecessor, U.N. Squadron.

Capcom

Carrier Airwing

Choose from the latest high-tech fighters to combat madmen in the Middle East that have invaded friendly neighboring countries for their oil. If this two-player horizontally scrolling shooter looks familiar, it's because *Carrier Airwing* is programmed by the same people that created *U.N. Squadron*.

Magic Sword

Capcom continued to show this popular magical-adventure game. This Dungeons & Dragon-type video game, similar to *Magician Lord* or *Cadash*, includes sword-toting ghosts, mummies and flying dragons.

Buster Bros.

In this unusual action-adventure game you set off on a safari, only this time your quarry is menacing balls that are bouncing all over the world. The game has some great still screens of places like Egypt, China and the Antarctic.

Data East

The Adventures of Edward Randy

Data East is releasing its latest shooter. Hop in your biplane, and wipe out the enemy in this flying adventure.

Data East's *The Adventures of Edward Randy*, its latest shoot-'em-up, received lots of attention for its fabulous graphics and fast-paced game play.

The Simpsons

America's favorite cartoon family comes to the arcades in Data East's new pinball game. The table features some fast-paced action and includes a 1,000,000-point ramp shot—in addition to the wise-cracking Bart Simpson.

Irem

Blood Brothers

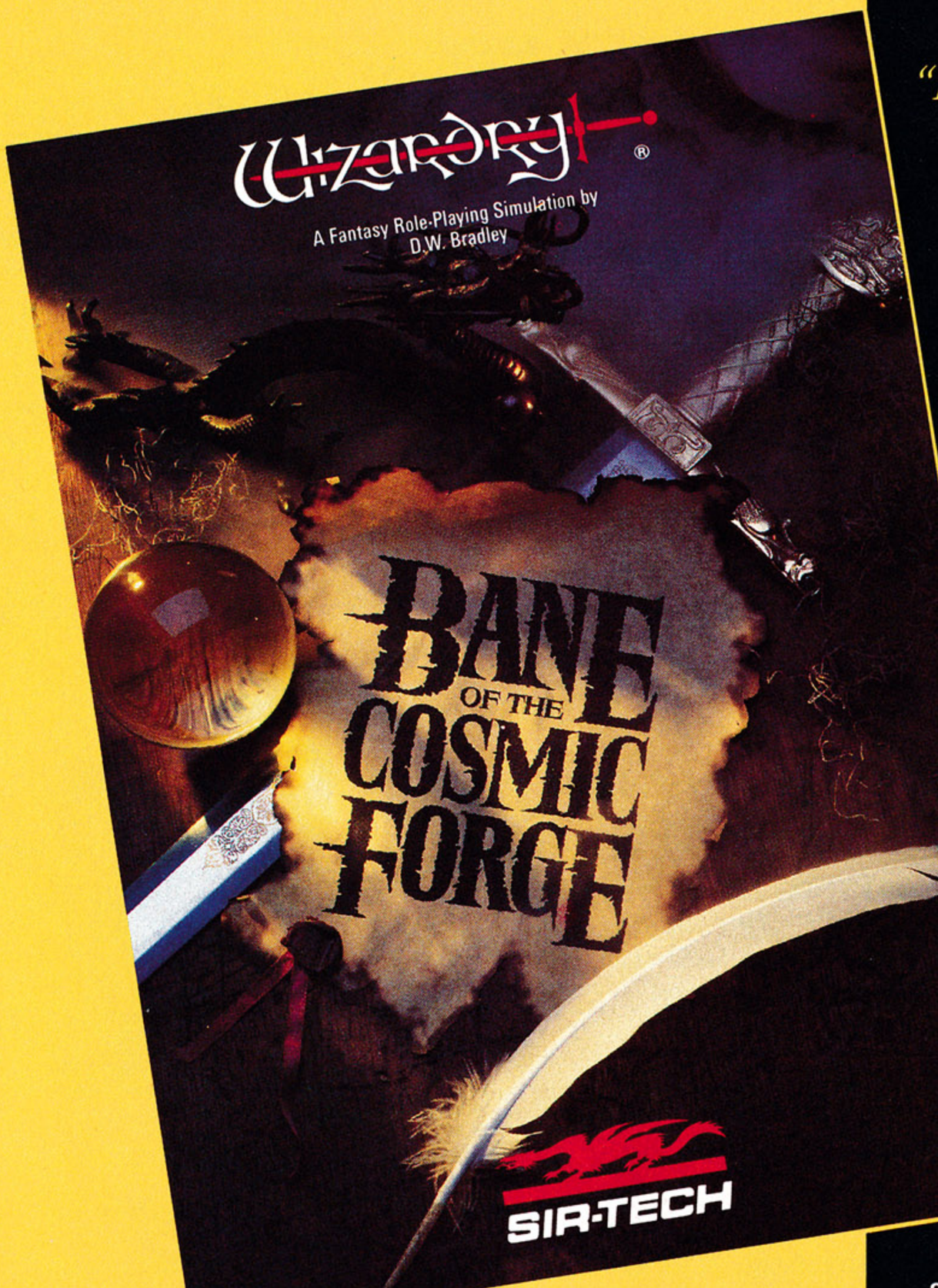
Big Bad John and his gang are on a rampage. The only way they can be stopped is if the cowboys and Indians unite and join forces. This game is designed by the same group that programmed *Cabal*, so it has that same look and feel, only this time with a Western flavor.

Hammerin' Harry

An action-adventure game in which you play Harry, who uses a hammer to smack the bad guys.

Pound for Pound

Go blow-for-blow in this new boxing game. This game is different from other boxing games in a couple of ways; for example, it has an overhead view throughout the game and a trak ball that is used to control the players. Players duke it out with eight other opponents trying for the heavyweight championship.



"I do not know thee, but I have known of thee, since the times when it all began..."

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You'll see swords swinging before your eyes; creatures of all shapes and forms will move before you; spells coming from your magician will swirl through the air. You'll walk under gargoyle-laden arches and watch candles flicker in their sconces. Your PC's internal speaker will play all of these digitized sounds without any add-on hardware . . . swords swinging, monsters venting their anger and spells letting fly.

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Artificial Intelligence!

Find the ancient and cryptic dwellers who can aid you in your quest. Talk to them as you would your friends – in sentences. Only through the power of the latest in programming technology could the full dimensions of conversation this real be possible.

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Using all the mechanics of Fabtek's *Cabal*, Irem's *Blood Brothers* features the same great graphics and game play, replacing the military theme with that of the Wild West. In an odd mixture, the cowboys and Indians have joined forces to battle it out with Big Bad John and his gang.

Jaleco

'Cisco Heat

Get behind the wheel of a souped-up high-speed pursuit police car as you enter the first National Championship Police Steeplechase. The race takes place in San Francisco and includes all the city's landmarks, from the Golden Gate Bridge to Treasure Island.

Jaleco's *'Cisco Heat* sets you loose on the winding streets of San Francisco in a souped-up cop car.

Earth Defense Force

The Earth is once again under attack, and it's up to you to save the planet by blasting the evil forces into oblivion.

Konami

Escape Kids

This race game is a little different, only because it has nothing to do with cars: It's a running race. Up to four players can go head-to-head against the champion (who is controlled by the computer) and compete for cash prizes. The contestants will race through various theme mazes, including a jungle, sea and the old West.

Over Drive

Experience the high-speed action of world-class stock-car racing in Konami's latest driving game. Negotiate the hairpin turns and super S-curves as you travel through various places with names like the Valley of Doom, Sunset Cruise and the Final Frontier. Just be glad you wore your helmet.

Konami puts you in the cockpit of a world-class stock car for some realistic action in its racing machine, *Over Drive*.

Punkshot

Your team is good, but the other team says it is better. It's street basketball at its best as two of the toughest two-man teams battle it out for total city domination. You can select the site—an alley, the local park or dockside—so there's no home-team advantage. Take your best shot, because if you don't the other team will as they let the punches fly.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

Turtlemania is still with us as Konami displayed its mega-hit game from 1989.

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CIRCLE #148 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

GIVING CRIME THE BOOT

ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT ERNSTER

Crime stalks the electronic-gaming world, but don't worry. There are enough digital detectives and software sleuths to bring a thousand felons and a million murderers to justice.

Science fiction and fantasy are still the most popular topics for games, but the popularity of mystery subjects has gained steadily since the mid-1980s. There are several major reasons why more and more computer and video gamers spend their hobby time chasing crooks and cracking cases:

Popularity in other media genres rise and fall in the public's esteem, but the enthusiasm for mystery and suspense in books, on television and in the movies never seems to die.

Crime is an important issue. Crime in the streets, white-collar crime, software piracy and the drug crisis make crime an important issue for most Americans these days. A pile of opinion polls fingers crime as the single biggest issue affecting our national, state and municipal elections. Real-life crime makes most of us feel powerless, because it seems to flourish everywhere despite the best efforts of government and concerned citizens to halt its encroachment upon every phase of our society. A mystery game gives the player the chance to confront this plague directly. In a computer or video game, we can come out from behind locked doors and safety-gated windows to defeat crime.

The composition of the typical mystery story, in which the investigator collects clues in logical sequence and arranges them to arrive at a solution, parallels the most commonly used adventure game formats. Manipulation of objects and short conversations

with nonplayer characters are what most adventuring systems do best, and these are precisely the activities in which a detective must engage to solve a crime. It's no coincidence that many science-fiction and fantasy adventures are actually detective stories in a futuristic or imaginary setting.

So if mystery and gaming are made for each other, how come it has taken so long for detective adventures to make a mark? The limited memory of early video- and computer-game hardware made it difficult to get a sophisticated plot in a playable game without exceeding the machine's memory capacity.

Exaggerating the effect of the memory cap was the limited disk capacity of drives used with machines like the Commodore 64 and Apple II+. The economics of games with five or more disks aren't very favorable, and repeated disk access, especially on the pokey C-64, didn't enhance playability.

The game design methods used until the late 1980s also held down the number of mystery and suspense titles. Until the team concept took hold, the "designer" was often a technologically sophisticated programmer wearing two hats.

It is a truism that computer mavens are more often science-fiction and/or fantasy fans than mystery lovers, so they naturally gravitated to the types of games they liked best. Now that more and more designers come to the job with a literary, instead of a scientific, background, mysteries are much more in favor among game inventors.

Now, let's investigate the latest and greatest of the electronic detective games.

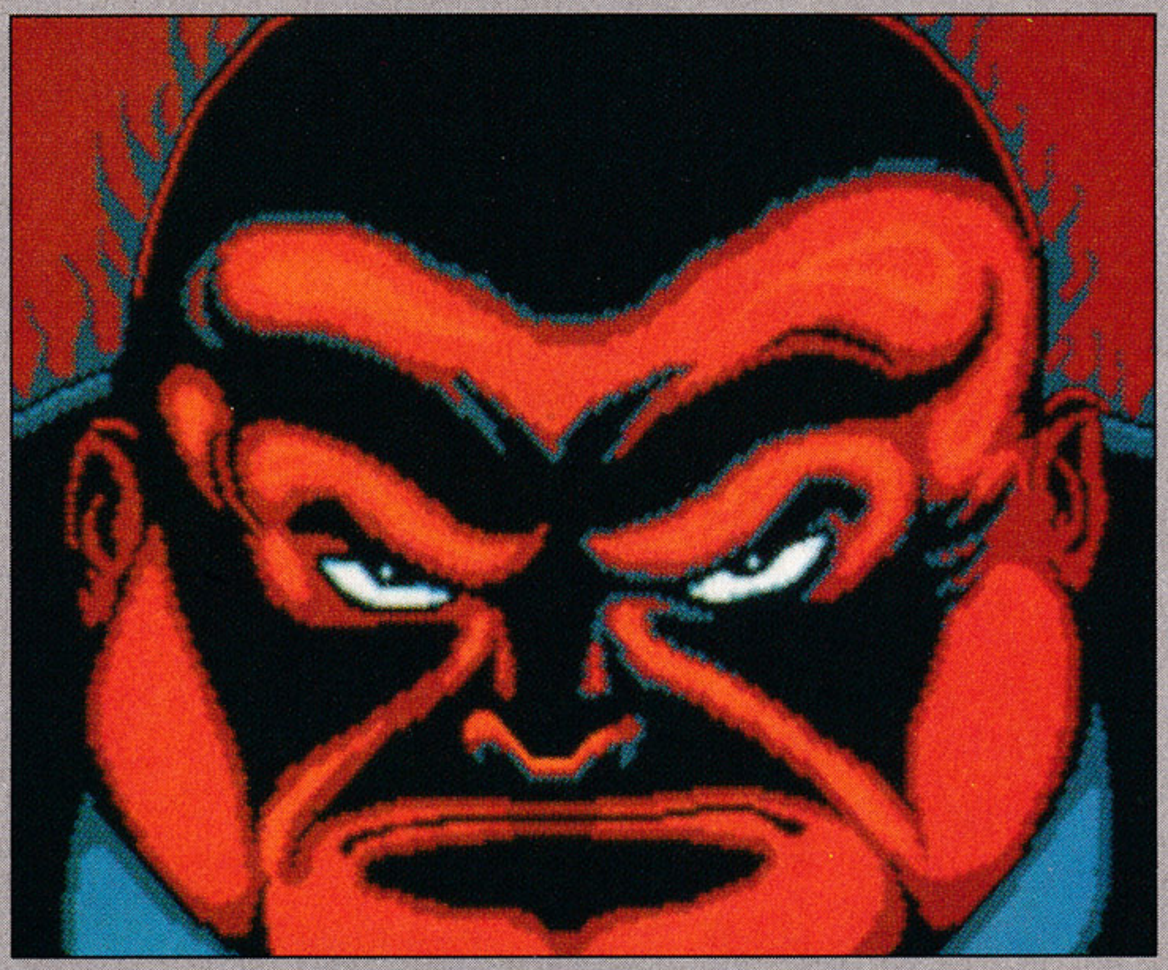
SLAM-BANG SLEUTHS

There's more than one way to solve a crime. While Agatha Christie's detectives are frequently mild-mannered people who do nothing more active than think hard about the clues, the Raymond Chandler school of mysteries emphasizes down-to-earth characters, physical action and the seamier side of life. The same split is evident in the field of interactive electronic whodunnits.

The calendar reads "2033" in *Mean Streets* (Access for Amiga, Commodore 64 and IBM PC), but two-fisted shamus Tex Murphy would be right at home in the pre-World War II era. The investigation of a university professor's death brings Murphy in contact with a wide variety of unusual characters as he searches for clues and shoots it out with the denizens of the 21st-century underworld.

Mean Streets is a truly breathtaking adventure that uses 30 "live" actors, sophisticated modeling techniques and RealSound speech to make the story fairly reach out and engulf the player. It is probably the most successful attempt to blend digitized video with tight illustration and rates as a "must buy" for compu-crimestoppers.

Vintage comic book illustration enlivens *Airwave Adventure* (Tiger Media for all CD formats), a 1930s murder mystery. The game, already available in Japan, has 100 times more data and graphics than a



MicroProse's *The Punisher* brings to the computer screen a comic-book antihero with over 100 missions.

conventional computer adventure, which allows intricate plotting and in-depth characterization.

Blasting out of the pages of Marvel Comics comes *The Punisher* (MicroProse for IBM PC). The costumed comic-book antihero brings his fight against the nation's criminals to the gaming screen in over 100 high-action missions.

Another mystery, set in the depression, is *The Untouchables* (Ocean for Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64 and IBM PC), based on the the 1989 movie. Eliot Ness and his booze-busters star in five related arcade games,including an assault on an illegal warehouse, a confrontation at a railroad station, a border raid, an alleyway shootout and a gun battle on the rooftops of Chicago.

Police Quest and *Police Quest II* (Sierra for Amiga, Apple IIgs, IBM PC and Macintosh) are filled with the uncompromising realism that only an actual former street cop like designer Jim Wells would include. While these adventures utilize a variation of Sierra's popular game system, the ambience is far removed from the gentle fantasy of *King's Quest* or the slapstick humor of *Space Quest*.

***Police Quest* contains a high level of realism to entice computerists.**

The main villain of both pieces is the Death Angel. The plot of the first title involves the Death Angel's scheme to flood a Midwestern town with drugs. The second starts with a murderous jailbreak and a kidnapping and culminates in a showdown with skyjacking terrorists.

Borrowed Time got good notices when it was originally released by Activision, and now this illustrated detective adventure is again available, this time at a substantially lower price.

Time to Die (Virgin Mastertronic for all systems) introduces hard-bitten Sam Harlow, a 1930s private eye. Players beware, Harlow's world is a violent one. The gamer must also be adept at solving some tricky puzzles and fitting together a convoluted chain of evidence in order to smash a far-reaching criminal conspiracy that involves murder, counterfeiting and kidnapping.

The gamer is a one-person police department in *Crime Wave* (Access for IBM PC). Coin-op quality graphics and sound provide a colorful backdrop for the player's crusade to wipe out a criminal network that has seized the major cities of a near-future United States. From the ornate train station to the palatial mansion of the Crime Lord, it's fast-paced action all the way.

A couple of months ago, Access introduced an upgraded version of *Crime Wave* that makes it even more fun. Added features include joystick control and a handy "save" utility for those who want to take a breather between assaults on the thieves, murderers, arsonists and other felons who populate *Crime Wave*.

MINDS AGAINST CRIME

The hardboiled detective is a staple of the mystery field, but more cerebral sleuths are the norm. They use brainpower rather than bullets to catch crooks.

Laura Bow, student and would-be detective, is the heroine of *The Colonel's Bequest* (Sierra for IBM PC). This is author Roberta Williams' first mystery in more than seven years, and she demonstrates a solid command of the form. It's a case of murder on the Bayou in 1926, and it's up to the computerist, as Laura, to unravel the exceedingly complex plot to find the culprit.

User intellect is the main ingredient in solving *The Colonel's Bequest*.

The game system is similar to the *King's Quest* format, though the art and music are as appropriate to the subject. The player must catch the killer before she becomes the next victim.

***Search for the King* combines humor with mystery.**

A missing rock 'n' roll idol is the focus of the quest in *Les Manley in: Search for the King* (Accolade for Amiga and IBM PC). Steve Cartwright's parser-driven adventure, similar in format to Sierra's *King's Quest*, blends detection with dashes of humor as the lowly TV network employee tries to track down the missing entertainer. The game falls victim to all the troubles that traditionally beset parsers, but its lively plot and multiple-use objects generate many interesting situations.

The queen of computer- and video-game malefactors is Carmen Sandiego. The globetrotting lady of crime is the subject of an entire series of games, published by Brøderbund for all major computers, the Nintendo NES and the Sega Master System. The player collects clues and makes logical deductions to track down Carmen and her

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henchmen in a series of games that painlessly teach geography.

Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?, the most popular title in the series, has recently become available in a deluxe edition for IBM PC computers. It features digitized location graphics in VGA, with five times as many animations. Other enhancements include more strategic options, twice as many clues and a full musical score. Presumably, other games in this educational detective line will also get the deluxe treatment if this first effort proves successful.

***Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?*—the deluxe version—from Brøderbund.**

The world's most famous criminologist takes center stage in *Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective* (ICOM Simulations for TurboGrafx-16 with CD). Adapted from the popular multiplayer board game, this CD-ROM title allows amateur sleuths to travel around Victorian England to find clues to catch evil-doers in scenarios with cases as challenging as any story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

In Britain they call it Cluedo, but in America the popular board game is known as Clue. *Clue: Master Detective* (Virgin Mastertronic for all computer systems), like the other titles in Mastertronic's computer board game line, precisely duplicates the non-electronic edition while also offering some options not available in the board game, including the ability to rename the characters.

***Clue: Master Detective* is the popular board game brought to the computer screen by Virgin Mastertronic.**

***Countdown*, by Access, is a top-notch spy thriller that casts the computer gamer as a U.S. field agent in a race against time.**

Countdown (Access for IBM PC). This top-notch spy thriller casts the participant as Mason Powers, a U.S. field agent who must derail the plans of a bloodthirsty terrorist band called "Black December." This tough job gets tougher when Powers is wrongfully accused of a murder and tossed into a government-sponsored asylum. *Countdown* is a race against time with the kind of high-quality sound and graphics that have made Access one of the leaders in the adventure gaming category.

David Wolf: Secret Agent (Dynamix for IBM PC) features five action simulators with cinematic story sequences. To successfully combat Viper, Wolf must hang glide, sky dive, pilot a plane, drive fast and shoot straight.

***David Wolf: Secret Agent*, by Dynamix, combines action with cinematic story sequences.**

Domark's *Licence to Kill*, previously available for home computers from Brøderbund, is now a cartridge for the Nintendo Entertainment System under the Tengen banner. It's a lively series of action games that chronicle James Bond's attempts to catch a gang of drug smugglers. The wide range of action includes flying helicopters, piloting boaters and parachute jumping.

CRIMEBUSTING AROUND THE WORLD

The world is a lot smaller today than it was when bootleggers and Feds shot it out in the bloody streets of Prohibition-era Chicago. Like legitimate businesses, crime has gone international. Illegal enterprises like the drug trade and black-market arms dealing are world-girding conspiracies, and similarly extensive law-enforcement agencies battle them tooth and nail.

Gamers smash drug rings in the home version of the coin-op hit *NARC* (Acclaim for NES). The head-to-head two-player option makes the intense street-fighting sequences even more exciting than the standard solitaire shoot-'em-up.

Istanbul, Turkey, is the mysterious and romantic locale for

FUTURE & FANTASY CRIMESTOPPERS

Crossover games, which incorporate other genres, extend the armchair detective's scope to include worlds of tomorrow and realms of airy imagination.

Loom (Lucasfilm for Amiga, Atari ST and IBM PC) is an icon-driven fantasy quest that stars Bobbin the weaver as the unlikely investigator. When the elders of the Weavers Guild vanish, Bobbin uses his deductive powers and a bit of magic from a distaff to dispel the mystery surrounding the strange disappearance. Exceptional

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CIRCLE #150 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

sound and graphics, including some ingenious sonic clues, are big pluses.

The computerist becomes an agent of the Terran Mining Guild in *Earthrise* (Interstel for IBM PC). A distress call sends the agent to the asteroid belt, where he must find out what happened to the crew of an artificially powered planetoid and figure out a way to keep the runaway piece of space rock from plowing into the Earth. Designer Matt Gruson enhanced this exciting yarn with excellent 3-D graphics and lots of eye-catching animation.

Using an icon-driven interface, *Loom* features an impressive array of sound and graphics.

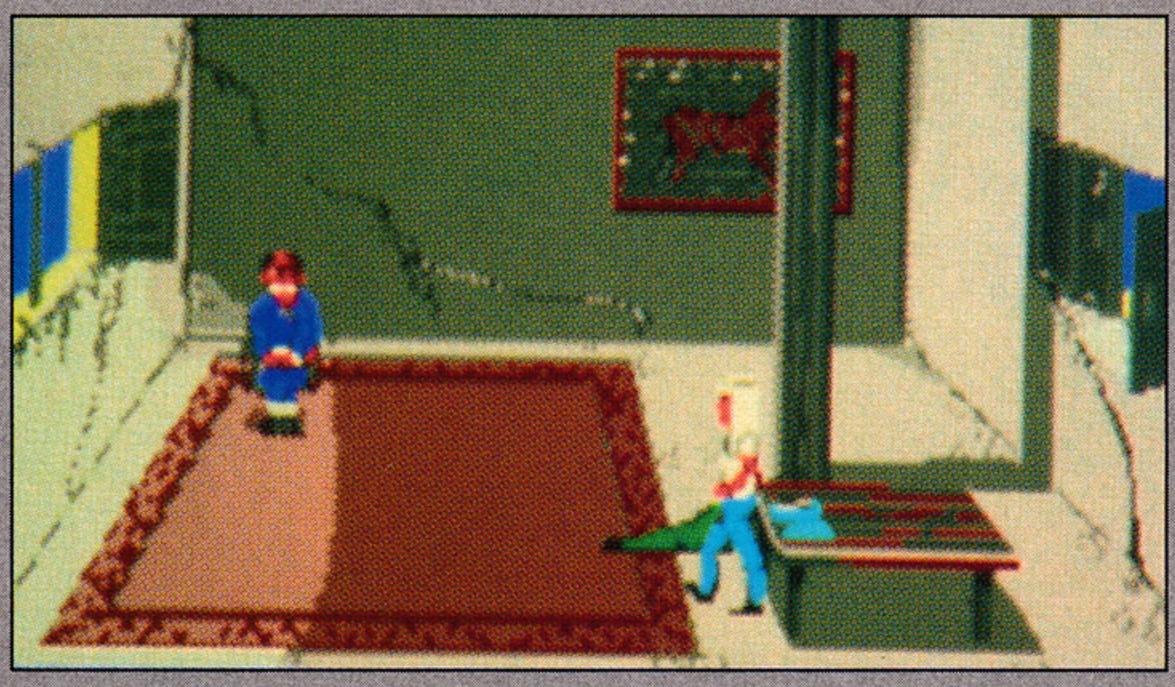
Interstellar extortionists turn the screws on an entire planet in *BAT* (Ubi Soft for Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64 and IBM PC). As an operative of the 23rd-century's galactic peace force, the Bureau of Astral Troubleshooters, the player must travel to Selenia and eliminate Vrangor and his chief lackey, Merigo. The agent has a bio-implant computer and other futuristic gear to help on this critical mission and uses a full-fledged flight simulator for crossing Selenia's arid wastes.

***BAT*, by UbiSoft, catapults the game player into the 23rd century.**

A grim, dangerous tomorrow is the setting for *Rise of the Dragon: A Blade Hunter Mystery* (Dynamix for IBM PC). This adventure, which should be in stores this month, features a first-person point-and-click user interface that eliminates laborious typing. The player, as the title's Blade Hunter, ventures into a savage futuristic society to thwart the evil plans of a sinister crime cartel.

***Rise of the Dragon: A Blade Hunter Mystery*, by Dynamix, uses a first-person point-and-click interface to eliminate laborious typing.**

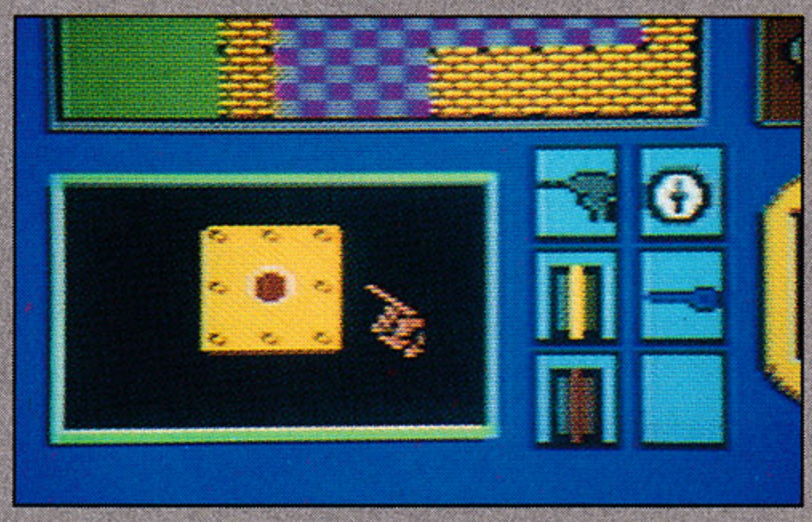
Code Name: Iceman (Sierra for IBM PC), by Jim Wells (*Police Quest*), has the same authentic feel, though it is set a few years in the future. Agent Johnny Westland must breach the security defenses of a terrorist group in this high-voltage adventure. Intense undersea action, which occurs when Westland tries to penetrate a heavily defended port area, makes *Code Name: Iceman* quite a departure from the usual science-fiction detective story.



***Code Name: Iceman*, by Sierra.**

CRIME-STARTERS

Security Alert (Intracorp for Commodore 64) is a strategy game with lots of arcade action that explores the perspective of someone on the other side of crime. Instead of enforcing the law, the player tries to successfully circumvent it as a nimble-fingered safecracker.



Breaking the law is the name of the game in *Security Alert*, by Intracorp.

The compucriminal must find the tools needed to circumvent 1,400 rooms full of electronic safeguards and roving security officers. The cracksman can steal jewels, secret documents or rare antiquities in five different scenarios.

THE FINAL VERDICT

Mysteries offer the electronic gamer a bit of mental stimulation that's often coupled with action as exciting as any space battle or sword fight. The incredible graphics and music possible with today's hardware promise even more intense mystery and suspense titles in 1991.

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Wing Commander

ORIGIN

Versions: Amiga ($69.95), IBM PC ($69.95)

SOUND W/BOARD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	**10**
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10

Every once in a while a game comes along that instantly seizes the attention of every electronic gamer. In the past, games like *Defender of the Crown* (Cinemaware), *Test Drive* (Accolade) and *Tetris* (Spectrum Holobyte) have, for various reasons, occupied that lofty position. The latest in this noble line is Chris Roberts' red-hot science-fiction shooter, *Wing Commander*, a program that defines audiovisual state-of-the-art in the IBM PC universe.

The player in *Wing Commander* is one of the elite corps of pilots on-board the *Strike Carrier Tiger's Claw* fighting for the Terran Confederation against the Empire of Kilrah. The game goes to great lengths to enhance the illusion of reality. Players can visit the *Carrier*'s bar, for example, and collect the latest scuttlebutt, check the chalkboard to see how well the other Terran pilots are doing or fine-tune their combat skills on the *TrainSim* video game. The bar connects to the ship's barracks, where the user can save a game, quit or continue on to the Mission Hangar, where heavy duty action awaits.

Terran Confederation pilots live and die by the buddy system. Every pilot is cast either as a Wingman or a Wingleader, and the various pilots are profiled in the superb documentation. The Wingleader's job is to execute a mission. A Wingman's job is to protect the Wingleader.

The player is always cast as the Wingleader and can give various orders to Wingmen, including one to "attack my target." In this scenario, the Wingman and Wingleader temporarily exchange roles, though the player continues to give the orders.

The cockpits of the four different confederation fighters are visually distinctive, but each contains a viewscreen and head-up display (HUD); radar; left and right video display units (VDU) or secondary viewscreens; armor/shields indicator; fuel indicator; speed; baster indicator; and eject warning. In-flight systems include targeting, navigation, autopiloting and communications (for giving orders to Wingmen).

In addition to stunning bitmapped graphics, *Wing Commander* offers some delightfully cinematic bridging sequences, such as the pilots scrambling for take-off and fighters being launched from the *Tiger's Claw*. The sound, for those PC owners with enough RAM to run both the game and a sound board (Ad Lib, Roland or Soundblaster), is brilliant. The problem for many potential users, however, is that they simply will not have enough power to run this game at anywhere near optimal levels. The game *plays* at 640K and 12 Mhz, but a meg, 20 Mhz and a sound board is necessary for a true *Wing Commander* experience.

On the other hand, for anyone with a loaded PC who's been looking for software that takes the machine to its limits, *Wing Commander* is the game you've been waiting for.

—Bill Kunkel

Origin Systems, Inc.
P.O. Box 161750
Austin, TX 78716
(512) 328-0282

In addition to stunning bit-mapped graphics, *Wing Commander* offers some delightfully cinematic bridging sequences.

Spot

VIRGIN MASTERTRONIC

Versions: Commodore 64 ($39.99), IBM PC ($39.99)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

Spot is an intriguing new strategy contest from Binary Magic starring the

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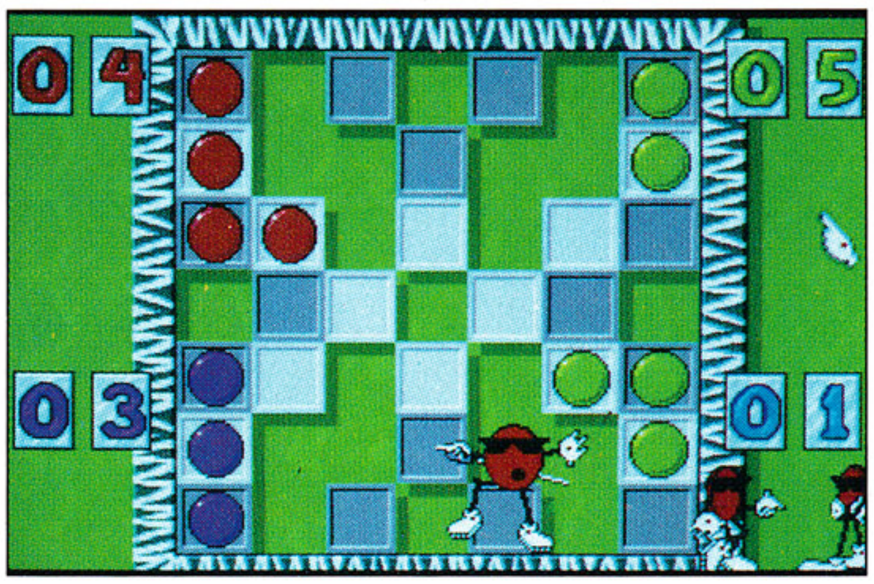
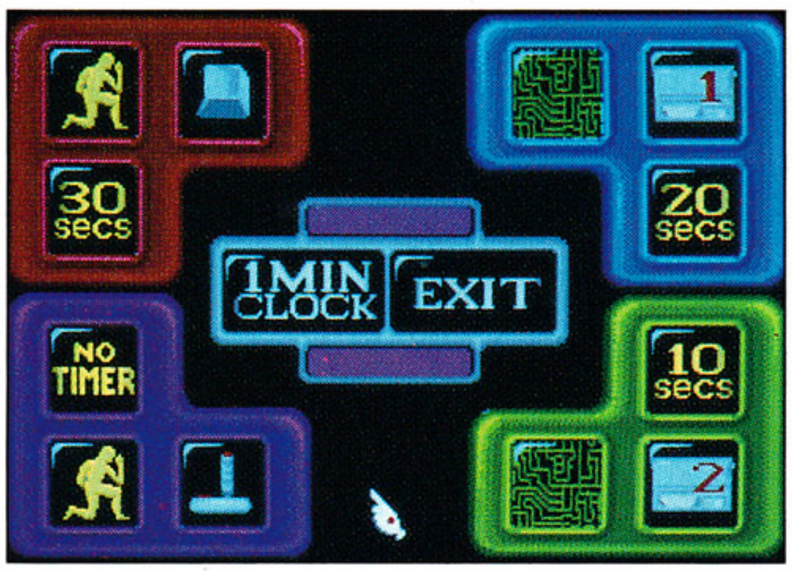
cute, little dotlike characters with shades and sneakers from all those delightful 7-Up commercials. The game itself is a clever and compelling *Reversi*-style contest further enlivened by the animated antics of its stars.

Spot is a board game played on a 7 x 7 grid containing two, three or four sets of color-coded chips or Spots, depending upon the number of players. The object is for one player to turn all the Spots to their color. Pieces are moved in one of two ways: A Spot can be cloned to any adjacent square, or it can jump a distance of two squares without producing a clone. After moving, a Spot will turn any adjacent Spot to its color.

Since it's Spots being manipulated, rather than inanimate chips, movement is not as cut-and-dried as selecting





Spot offers game players an impressive array of customizing options, including 512 preprogrammed alternative board configurations.

a Spot, clicking on the square to which it should be moved, then watching it reappear. These Spots moonwalk, somersault, dance, pole vault and strut to their new positions in a series of delightfully whimsical animations—a feature that *can* be disabled for more streamlined play.

Each game also includes a "magic" square which, when landed upon, gives the player landing on it a chance at a slot machine-type contest. The object here is for the gamer to stop each of the three reels with the same graphic appearing on the middle line. Successful completion of this bonus round wins the player a free turn, extra time (in timed games), a free move to any unoccupied square or the opportunity to swap Spots with another player.

Playable by any combination of four human or computer players, with nine difficulty levels, *Spot* also offers users an impressive array of customizing options, including 512 preprogrammed alternative board configurations as well as a design-your-own feature.

Reversi mavens will find *Spot* a vaguely familiar yet stimulating, original contest, while younger players will find the adorable animations a great inspiration to learn the game. Definitely recommended for strategy fans.

—B. K.

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Ishido

ACCOLADE

Versions: Amiga ($54.95), IBM PC, ($54.95), Macintosh ($54.95)

SOUND/MUSIC N/A											
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	**10**
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10

This highly cerebral strategy game for one or more thinkers shows how successfully Accolade has branched out from its traditional base in sports and action contests. *Ishido* may not have the kinetic fury of a coin-op blastathon, but it more than makes up for it with the kind of subtle, involving strategy that keeps brainy gamers peering into the screen far into the night.

Michael J. Feinberg's classic creation began life as a limited-edition treat for affluent Macintosh owners. Accolade's popularly priced version sparkles as brightly as the original version, but at a fraction of its premium price. Brad Fregger's previous work on *Shanghai* and *Solitaire Royale* demonstrates his deep insight into this category, and his excellent job as producer of *Ishido* adds another feather to his cap.

An 8 x 12 board partitioned into rectangles is the playing surface for *Ishido*. The user is shown one tile at a time from the pouch of unused stones. The user must position each piece so that it matches either the symbol or the background pattern of all adjacent pieces.

An on-screen scoreboard tallies the player's points as they accumulate during the game. Placing a piece on the board adjacent to two, three or even four pieces scores correspondingly higher.

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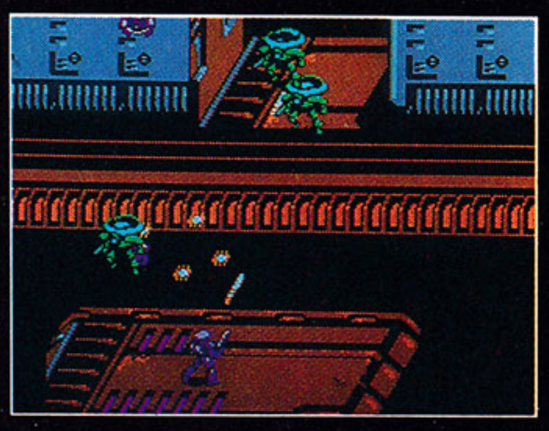
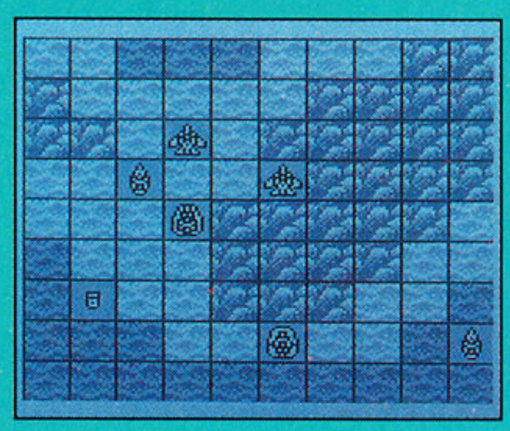
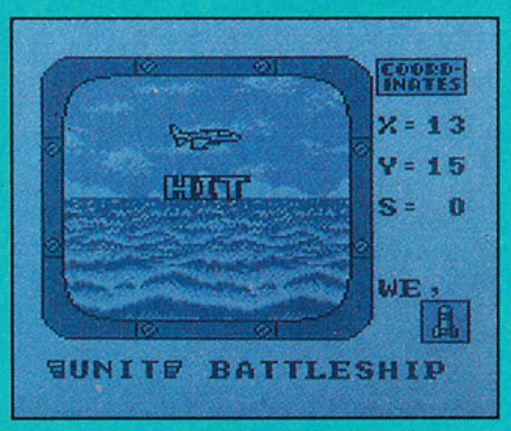


Power Mission simulates a realistic sea battle against a powerful enemy force. Select and deploy one of seven fleets and then destroy the enemy using radar, missiles and various weapons. Power Mission has 10 stages and the enemy gets stronger and stronger. Prepare yourself for this challenging, strategic, Game Boy game!





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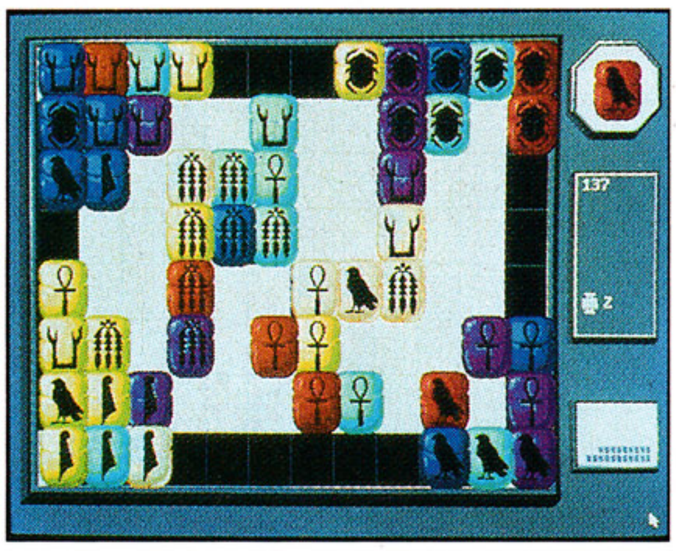
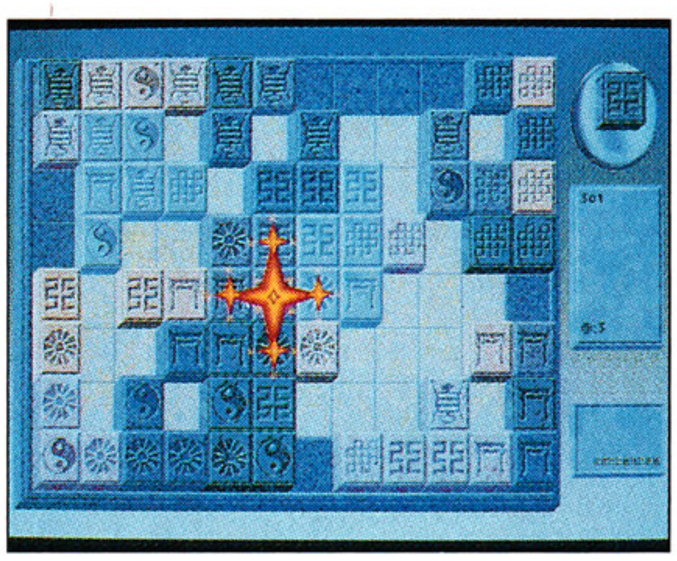
The so-called four-way, in which a piece matches the symbol of two pieces and the background of two others, is the ultimate move in *Ishido.* Don't expect to quickly master the knack of setting up four-ways with a series of preparatory moves, but the trick becomes easier with practice. Fortunately, Rick Barba's manual is exceptionally complete and liberally illustrated with examples. The strategy section is brief, but helpful.

The user interface is appropriately simple. The user points and drags the piece from the touchstone area located in the upper right-hand corner to the desired space on the board. If the stone is set in an illegal position, the program voids the move, returns the piece to the touchstone and presents a window with an explanation of the infraction.



The oracle adds atmosphere to the contest, but can be ignored for those who aren't fond of the *I Ching*. When the computerist executes a four-way, he or she can get a mystical reading based on the titles from the oracle. *Ishido* strikes a blow for gender equality by offering a choice of male or female seers.



***Ishido*, by Accolade, provides for hours of relentless strategy, enough to quench most brain gamers' thirst.**

Besides solitaire, *Ishido* is also playable head-to-head against the computer or a human opponent. There's also an intriguing option that lets the user design a new set of playing stones with customized patterns and symbols.

Ishido has drawn raves from many critics since the limited edition appeared in 1989. Now we can all enjoy this habit-forming mental challenge on our favorite home computers.

—Arnie Katz

Accolade
550 S. Winchester Blvd., Suite 200
San Jose, CA 95128
(408) 985-1700

It Came From the Desert II

CINEMAWARE

Versions: Amiga ($19.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

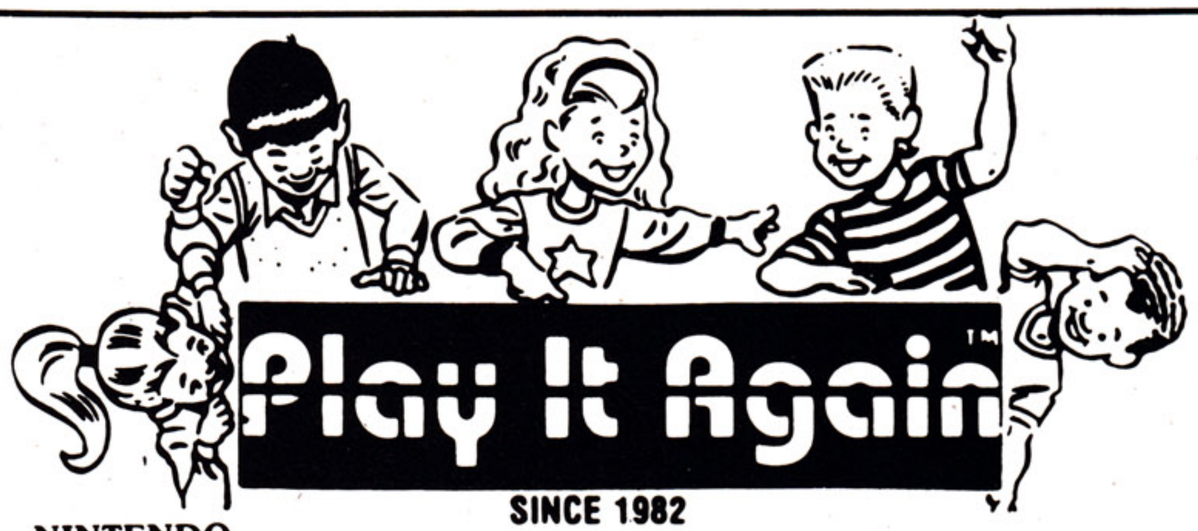
The master disk for *It Came From the Desert II* contains nothing more than a program and associated data files that use the original game as the basis for a new set of disks; it takes about 30 minutes to create the *Desert II* disks. The time is worth it, because the end result is a new game at half the cost of the original. Cinemaware's first plan was to include the *Desert II* data disk with the first game, but the company decided instead to add some features and offer it as an add-on disk. The sequel differs both in the plot of the first half of the game and the number of days the player has to win.

The ultimate goal in both games is to rid the backward town of Lizard Breath from a plague of ants mutated into gigantism by radiation from a fallen meteorite. To do this, the player must find the bugs' nest and kill the ant queen.

The first half of *It Came From the Desert* required collecting evidence of the ants to convince the mayor to call in reinforcements and put the player in charge of them. *Desert II* uses the same map and locations but for a new goal: to find a hidden notebook that contains information about nearby radiation as recorded by Dr. Wells from the first *Desert* game.

The second half of both games is spent finding the nest, halting the ants' invasion and destroying the queen ant. Both are the finest examples of Cinemaware's attempts to offer gamers an "interactive movie." The graphics and music are of the highest quality, contributing significantly to the experience. The game takes place in simulated real time to add to the effect, and characters move from location to location in the game as their habits dictate.

The only problems are the slow disk access and procedure for restarting the game. *Desert II* is pokey because it needs a full megabyte of memory to run. To avoid this problem entirely, in-



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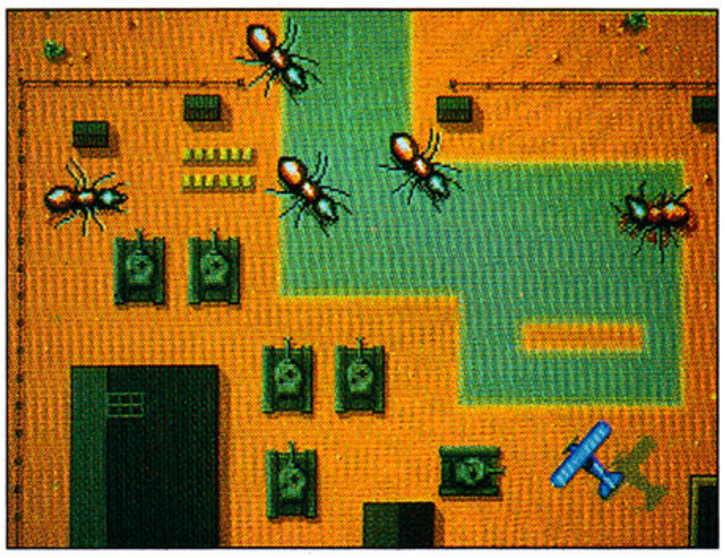


Cinemaware's *It Came From the Desert II* returns the game player to the dusty jerkwater town of Lizard Breath, California, for new adventures in this interactive B-movie.

stall the game on a hard disk. Then it moves like a racehorse. The other problem that detracts from playability is that you have to reboot the computer to restart the game if you don't install it correctly. Although this is frustrating, the game more than makes up for it.

It Came From the Desert II is truly Cinemaware's best. It turns a Saturday matinee into a moving experience and puts the gamer in the thick of the nightmare-turned-real action.

—Russ Ceccola

Cinemaware
4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Westlake Village, CA 91362
(805) 495 -6515

Altered Destiny

ACCOLADE
Versions: Amiga ($59.95), IBM PC ($59.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10

Accolade's latest action/adventure assigns gamers the role of P.J. Barrett, a mild-mannered office worker, then suddenly whisks him into an alternate reality, the fantasy world Daltere. The basic plot is set up in a well-animated introduction. It seems that JonQuah's twin brother Helmar stole the Jewel of the Light from its proper place and thus hurled Daltere into a state of panic and disorder. JonQuah summoned a hero, who turns out to be you, to reclaim the jewel and restore peace to the universe.

The graphics are the seemingly standardized EGA graphics mode adventurers have grown accustomed to thanks to Sierra On-Line. The story is sparked by encounters with some bizarre objects that can be used in unexpected ways. These add interest to the otherwise common game play. Another nice touch is the strange-looking aliens who are always up to something peculiar.

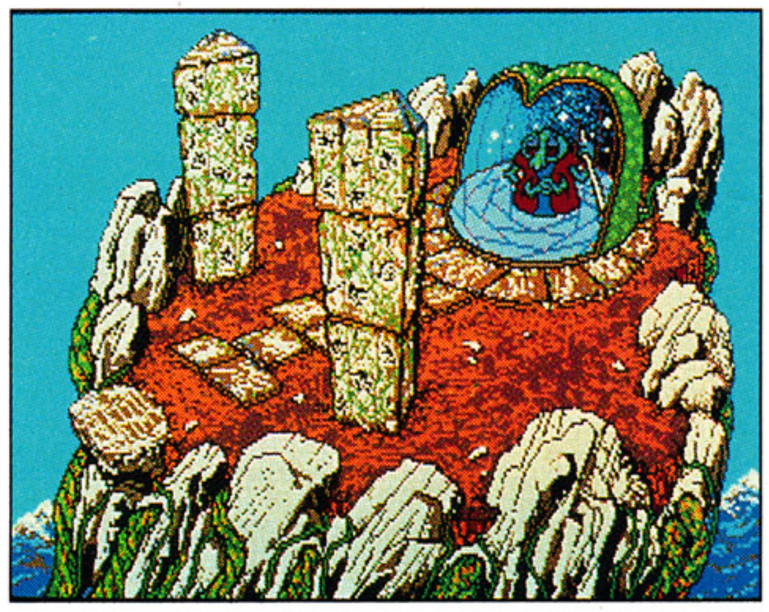
The parser is nothing special. Players may stop P.J. at any time and simply begin typing to enter a command, but that doesn't mean the parser is conversational. Getting this game to understand exactly what you want is just as frustrating as it is in any other parser-driven adventure.

Altered Destiny does have one outstanding feature, the imaginative sound effects. If gamers have an Ad Lib or Soundblaster, the special effects are terrific, and so is the music. Even without a sound board, the variety of effects Accolade has wrung out of the PC speaker is still quite impressive.

Overall, the game is moderately difficult because some puzzles are solved in strange ways on Daltere. On the positive side, Accolade has two great ways to get hints. Stumped adventurers can either call a 900 number to get a hint, or they can purchase the hint book. The book is well-written and includes three different sections based on how much of a hint the player actually wants.

The problem with *Altered Destiny* is that aside from the strange aliens and sound effects, nothing else really

Accolade's *Altered Destiny* is an action/adventure game that assigns gamers the role of a mild-mannered office worker thrust into an alternate reality.



comes flying out at you. The adventure plays well and has a fairly solid plot. As far as overall adventure quality *Altered Destiny* does not disappoint. If, however, gamers are looking for a different adventure with a new and exciting point of view, this one's not the answer.

—Frank Tetro, Jr.

Accolade
550 S. Winchester Blvd., Suite 200
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(408) 985-1700

Anarchy

PSYGNOSIS
Versions: Amiga ($39.99), Atari ST ($39.99)

SOUND/MUSIC N/A										
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10

Anarchy is a hybrid of the venerable old coin-op, *Defender.* It's a nice departure from the normal Psygnosis fare, which sometimes tends to be fun for only the very top-notch arcade aces.

As usual, the player must protect the world from alien attack. In this world-threatening emergency, the invaders are intent on pilfering canisters of a life-saving serum. Why they have been left out in the open is anyone's guess.

The screen contains information panels at both the top and bottom. The radar readout is at the top and plots the location of approaching attackers with single pixels. Other indicators give information about power levels and weapons status.

The game starts with "defender" at the center of the action (the screen is scrolled, instead of moving the player sprite) with just a wimpy single-shot joystick-controlled laser. As the destruction begins, some of the aliens release power-ups ranging from double laser fire to "nackem power," in which all weapons and 500 boost points are awarded for a short period of time.

Psygnosis pulled out all the stops in an effort to please users who enjoy a little mayhem in their computer entertainment. The artwork is excellent, due largely to custom display routines that produce 48 simultaneous colors. While backgrounds are mostly nonfunctional, they add a lot to the atmosphere of the contest. Though most of the sprites are quite small, they are intricately detailed and animated. Four levels of silky smooth parallax scrolling aid the illusion of depth. Up to 80 sprites can be on-screen at one time, without even a hint of flicker. The game plays at an arcade speed of 50 frames per second.

There is even a bit of humor. For example, the walkers are actually pairs of blue booties that stroll across the bottom of the screen. Excellent explosions and appropriate sound effects further enhance the furious game play. Another milestone for Psygnosis was achieved when it incorporated a save-to-disk routine for the top 50 high scores .

The ten levels of progressive difficulty are gradual and not in the least frustrating. Because of this, *Anarchy* is addictive, especially if the player has an auto-fire device to help stem premature arthritis in the triggering appendage. A must-have for every arcade enthusiast!

—Frank Eva

Psygnosis
29 St. Mary's Court
Brookline, MA 02146
(617) 731-3553

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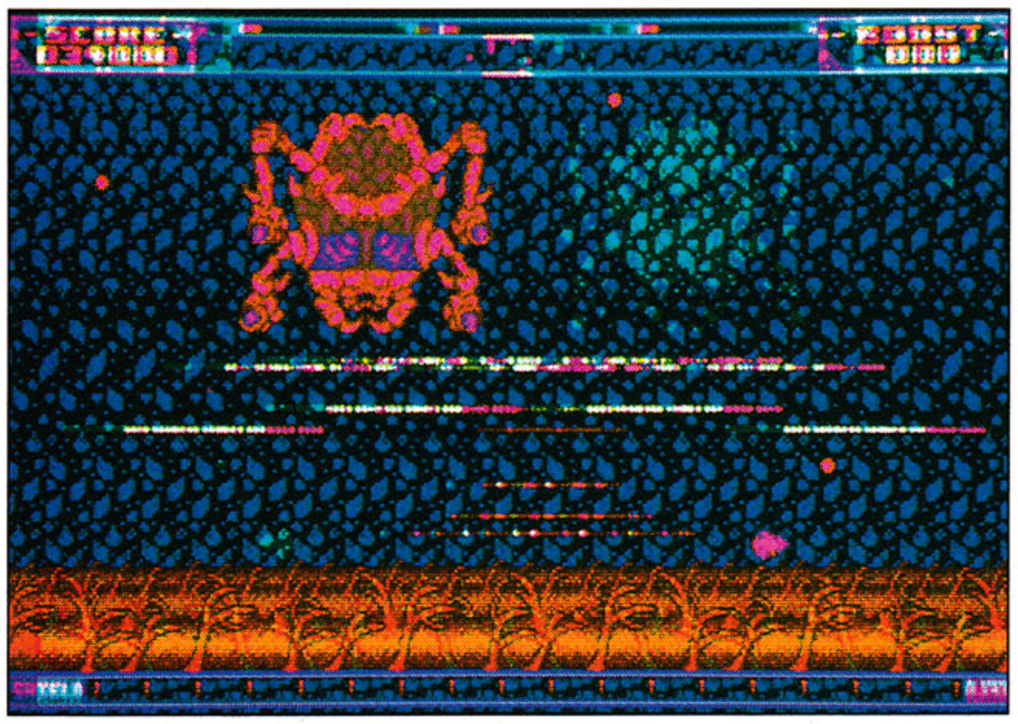

***Anarchy*, by Psygnosis, offers users excellent graphics, up to 80 sprites on-screen at one time, and a movielike game play of 50 frames per second.**

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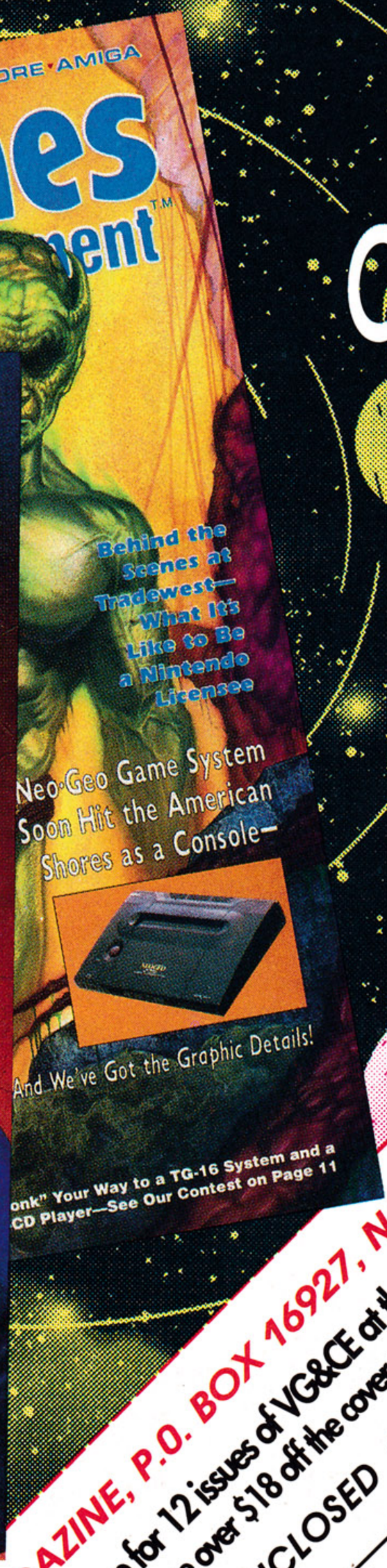

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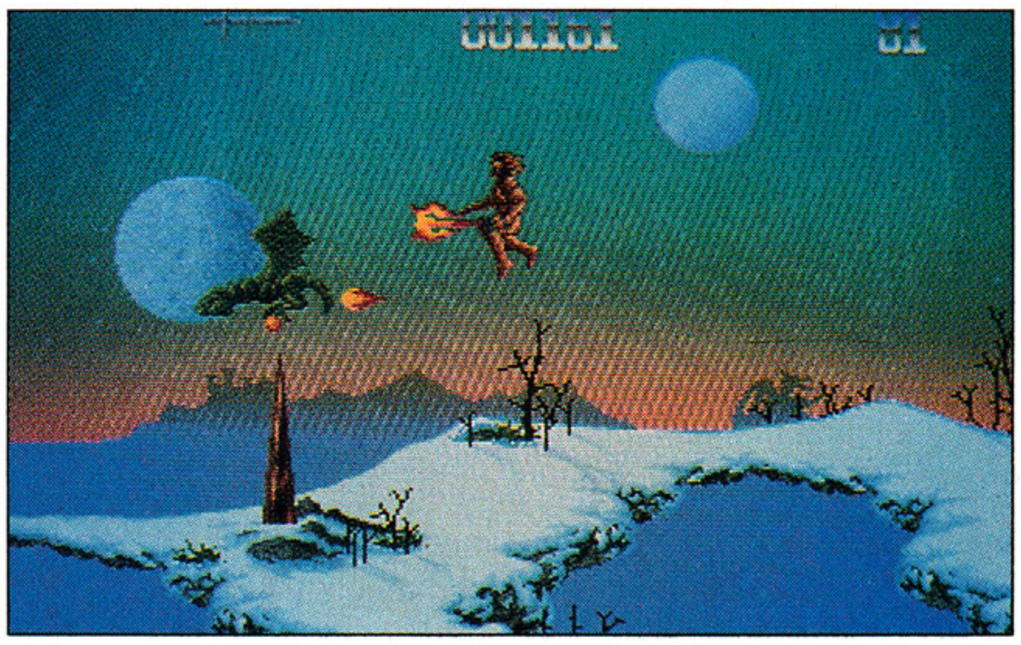
Unreal

UBI SOFT
Version: Amiga ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10

As Artaban, the main character in *Unreal*, the player must attempt to rescue his sweetheart, Isolde, from the clutches of the evil Polymorphe. A friendly dragon, Dracus, provides protection and transportation through some of the more dangerous areas of this mystical world, where the balance of good and evil has gone awry.



***Unreal*, by Ubi Soft, has some of the most beautiful game scenes ever created on a computer.**

Unreal is one of the most beautiful computer games ever created. A player might think that behind all the graphic atmosphere should be a wonderful adventure. But, alas, *Unreal* eschews plot in favor of an action arcade game. There are no real puzzles to solve; the trials that occur throughout the game are no more than tests of timing, frequently requiring hair-trigger reactions to be successful.

Unreal consists of eight levels, with two distinctly different scenarios. There are five levels of 3-D-perspective shooting similar to *Space Harrier* but with a medieval twist. The three remaining levels are side views in which Artaban hacks and slashes his way—or even strangely shoots his sword. These 2-D levels are moved with a combination of paging and/or multilayer scrolling.

In true arcade fashion, Level 1 is the tease, while Level 2 is devilishly difficult. The greatest mystery to overcome is the joystick routine, which at times seems totally unresponsive. Holding the stick in the direction of an intended jump results in only one jump taken. Each additional leap requires centering the stick and repeating the action. At other times, holding the stick in the jump position for just a fraction of a second too long elicits an unwanted spring.

While the 3-D sequences rely on software scaling that renders the largest sprites rather blocky, they move so quickly and fluidly that this is not a problem. Three game saves are permitted, but when using these the player enters the practice mode, in which scores are not kept. To rack up higher scores (which are also saved to disk), play must begin from Level 1.

Delays in moving short gaming sequences to the screen and a high level of frustration shoot *Unreal* in the foot. However, seasoned arcade enthusiasts looking for a mega challenge will not be disappointed with the high level of action found here.

—F. E.

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SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10

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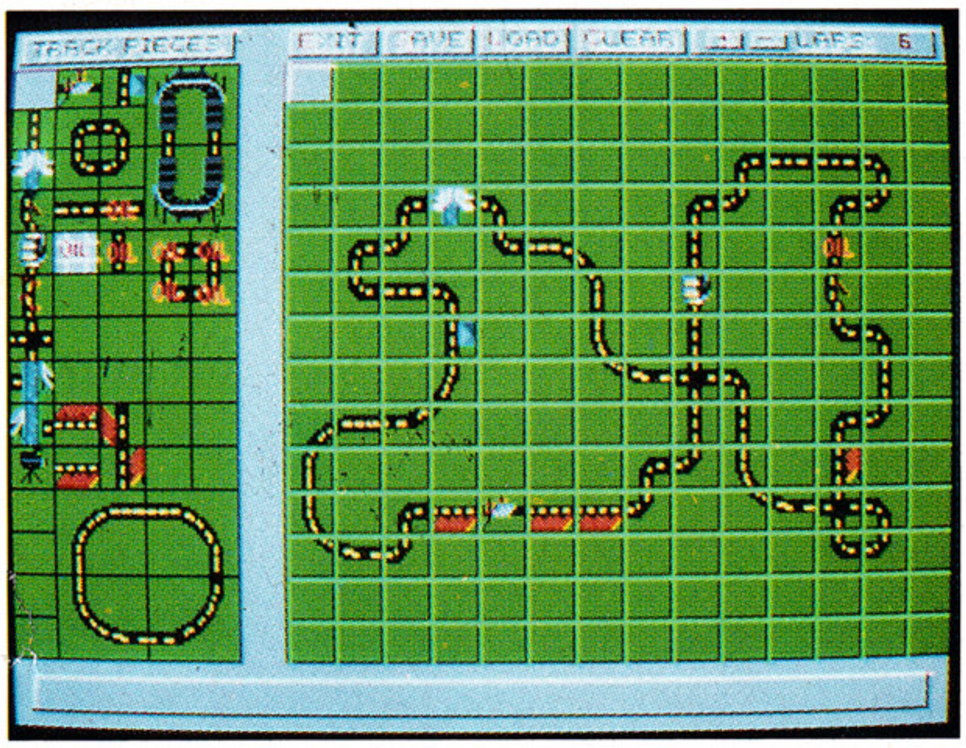
There are also tough opponents with distinct yet competitive personalities, or you can go head-to-head with another player via modem. Multiple views and instant replays are also available. *Stunt Driver* even comes with the roar of the crowd, engines and other sound effects, which are enhanced even more for computers with Ad Lib cards.

Driving can be controlled by keyboard, joystick or mouse. *Stunt Driver* starts off easy, with the player behind the wheel of the Shelby '66 two-door Mustang, ready to qualify for time around a training track. Function keys provide alternate views through the left, right and rear windows, plus an adjustable helicopter angle showing the player's car from behind. Also available are automatic camera views of the track from various positions around it, which are useful for following another car in competition. Custom cameras may also be set up, and there's even a VCR mode for instant replays, so drivers can review what went wrong after a spin-out or botched stunt. On top of everything else, pressing "P" (to pause) brings up an



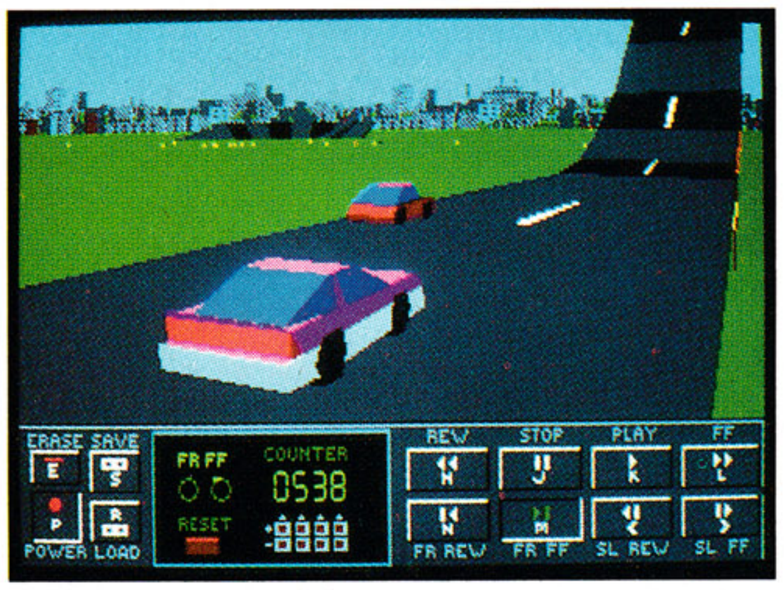
overhead view of the entire course, pinpointing locations of all cars on the track.

Competition begins at the second or rookie level. Opponents' personalities do not come into play until the third, expert level. Then the player races against Ethel "Grandma" Moezes, a pesky old lady in a VW bug who hates to let anybody pass her; Blake "Shyster" Fitzwater, who weaves his Porsche all over the road; and Jimmy "Skid" Rowe, who'll try to bash anybody who gets in front of his IROC Z. Forget about comradely competition; for that, the player must find a friend with a modem.

Five pre-designed courses range from the basic training oval to a nightmare with three intersections, one of which has oil patches on two approaches, and a drawbridge jump. The fifth course has a nastier disposition than a Mickey Spillane villainess.

There's also a track-construction editor that contains oil hazards, stunts and pit stop garages, plus rivers, tunnels, trees and houses, and even sections with people you must maneuver past. Camera placements can be set up in a custom series on pre-designed courses. There is a separate configuration program to adjust some elements, such as graphic details and collision and crash variables. There are also alternate cars to drive, and details such as colors can be changed.

Stunt Driver is perhaps the ideal combination of arcade action and simulation for players whose primary interest is the contest itself. The driver never looks under the hood or crawls under his car to check the suspension. No chopping, no engine replacement, no realignments. In the garage, the mechanics do the work, and a damage bar changes length to indicate degree of repair. All the player has to supply is the smell of the grease and expert driving skills.



Stunt Driver is perhaps the ideal combination of arcade action and simulation for gamers whose primary interest is the contest itself.

—Ross Chamberlain

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Stormovik

ELECTRONIC ARTS
Version: IBM PC ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

Here's a new, unique twist on a popular game theme. Electronic Arts' latest release, *Stormovik*, focuses on a staple

of modern computer games, the air-combat simulator. But instead of flying U.S. planes against Soviet aggressors, the player gets to fly the Soviet's finest ground-attack aircraft against a terrorist threat based in the reunited Germany.

As is obvious from the title, the game focuses on the SU-25 Stormovik ground-attack aircraft, the Soviet equivalent to the U.S. A-10. But its missions take place in a world that is, hopefully, quite divergent from the future of our own planet. Fearing the complete loss of their waning influence, leading officials in the military industrial complexes of both the U.S. and Soviet Union have initiated a large-scale terrorist rebellion based in the ranks of the NATO and Warsaw Pact forces that are withdrawing from the reunited Germany.

As a member of the elite Red Guards, the player must pilot the SU-25 through a series of 30 different missions, and strike against the terrorist's activities. The missions are split into three difficulty levels, and each group of ten missions covers one of the three years of the crisis. Things get gradually more complicated—and deadly—as the years go by.

At startup, the player selects the pilot roster to use, the year of conflict and one of the ten missions for that year. The preflight brief covers many elements the pilot must know about the mission: its goal, the map and way points and ordinance loading of the plane. Then it is out to the runway and into the air. Typically the player/pilot flies in a fairly straight path at a low level to the target way point and accomplishes the mission goal; for example, destroying an enemy ammo dump. The pilot then proceeds to the final landing sight and ends the mission with a debriefing.

Accomplishing all mission objectives lets the pilot continue his career growth, but failure puts the player out on the first train, destined to be a prison guard in the Siberian prison camps. Some things have still not changed in Soviet society.

Learning to effectively fly the SU-25 is quite a task. Not only must the player master the game's controls, he must do so while the plane is flying at low level and avoiding enemy detection. The keyboard can be used by itself to fly the plane and control the various options available to the pilot, but it quickly becomes frustrating, since it moves the controls a little too coarsely, making precise adjustments nearly impossible. A joystick or mouse is almost required if the player actually wants to be able to land at the end of the missions.

A training mode allows the player to practice the various tactics required to effectively fly the SU-25. The manual explains the underlying principle, but it takes practice for the player to effectively maneuver the aircraft.

In *Stormovik*, the player is the pilot of a Soviet SU-25 ground-attack aircraft, in pursuit of terrorists.

Stormovik appears to use the same graphic engine as that developed for *LHX Attack Chopper*, Electronic Arts' helicopter flight simulator. While bitmaps are used for the display of the cockpit interior, all outside views use polygon-fill graphics. Simple and clean-lined in appearance, items refresh quickly, and most geographical features can be easily differentiated. A variety of detail levels are available to ease the graphics burden on slower processors.

Sound is used throughout for both engine noise, sound effects and warning tones. The Ad Lib and CMS sound boards are supported, along with Tandy sound and the PC's own internal speaker.

Stormovik is an enjoyable twist on the air-combat theme. The missions are interesting and challenging. In fact the game's only major drawback is that of the genre: It takes many hours of practice for the player to master the more complicated missions. Controlling the plane's flight direction from the keyboard can also be a problem, but utilizing a good joystick makes plane maneuvering much easier. *Stormovik* is a sharp product from a sharp company and deserves to be on every air-combat fan's shelf.

—R. Bradley Andrews

Electronic Arts
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LOOKING BACK—AND AHEAD

by Arnie Katz

Writer, editor, lecturer and game designer Arnie Katz knows the field from every perspective. Each month his column tackles the most important issues in the electronic gaming world. This month Arnie evaluates the past year and makes some predictions for the New Year.

VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT's February issue features our annual awards, an opportune time for assessing the state of the gaming hobby and peering into the crystal ball. Magazine lead time being what it is, this means that I generally spend October reviewing the preceding gaming year. (For the uninitiated, the electronic-gaming year begins with the holiday gift season [October 1] and ends with the last hits of summer.) On the computer-game side, Bill Kunkel, Joyce Worley and I start the judging process by re-reading all the reviews and consulting the software-release log we maintain.

As the leaves are starting to turn color even here in balmy Las Vegas, the three of us heatedly debate the virtues and flaws of the leading candidates for awards and honorable mentions. We praise our favorites and damn the ones that left us cold. Quite often, I boot the cream of the crop for comparative testing to make sure my memory isn't playing tricks. After seeing hundreds of new products, it's so easy to forget the stuff produced last November.

In some years, the research hasn't been as much fun as I would have hoped. Pickings were slim when we gathered to bestow VG&CE's 1989 awards. The quantity overwhelmed us, but the quality did not have a similar effect. A flood of generic European-produced games filled store shelves to bursting—and dampened player interest. *Populous*, *Hostage* and *Tetris* were foreign software at its best, but they weren't typical of the hasty, bug-ridden programs that drove 1989 sales down for every computer system except IBM PC.

It's a tribute to entertainment software publishers that even a down year had its stellar exceptions. *Vette!* and *SimCity*, to name two 1988 hits, rate with the all-time best. But it was hard for the magazine's editors to find as many legitimate honorable-mention recipients as in earlier years.

Video games reached a new height of popularity in 1988, but the individual games had a sameness that troubled some gamers. Almost every title seemed to be a side-perspective jumping and fighting game in the tradition of *Super Mario Bros.*

The computer- and video-game industry has just wrapped up one of the best years in the annals of interactive electronic entertainment. It will take the perspective of time to show how many 1989 releases are enduring classics, but there's no question that a fantastic number of good games have appeared in the last 12 months.

The Genesis, TurboGrafx-16 and SNK's Neo•Geo, plus the imminent debut of Nintendo's Super Famicom/SFX, have sealed the fate of 8-bit video game consoles in the United States, but the NES is not fading away quietly. Nintendo has widened its target audience beyond the original core group of owners (males, aged 10-12) with innovative play formats like *Ultima*, *Tetris* and *SimCity*.

The 16-bit cartridge systems provide more than just better sound and graphics. Despite occasionally falling back on the tried-and-true horizontally scrolling action-adventure, Sega and NEC worked hard to introduce concepts that are more interesting than just conquering level after level until there are no more bosses to bash. Titles like *Military Madness* and *Herzog Zwei* add new twists and strategic complexity to popular traditional formats.

Computer-game sales skyrocketed during the final quarter of the game year, after sagging badly during the preceding 18 months. Atari ST, Commodore 64 and Apple II software dropped precipitously, and Macintosh, Amiga and IBM PC products were slow to take up the slack. Some companies left the field or severely curtailed their release schedule in response to 1988's bleak sales performance. Publishers actually marketed less than half the number of games they originally announced.

This proved to be a tonic for computer gaming. Today's average computer-entertainment title

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would rate a "7" by 1988 standards. The year's releases showed an increased attention to detail and, in general, the benefits of a slightly longer development cycle.

This time squeeze, though not directly visible to the average player, makes itself felt in product quality and dependability. Economic competition from foreign developers forced American houses to bid low and promise quick delivery. In fairness, it's hard for a company to let a rival's unrealistic promise of fast completion capture a coveted project. It's irresistibly tempting to go along with the charade and pledge even quicker work.

When reality catches up with the development cycle of such a game, the flourishes and refinements are omitted to save time. A hasty manual, skimpy play testing and lack of polish separate the average game from the excellent one. When these things go in the dumper, it often lowers the quality rating by two or more points in my view.

Rushed development continues every day in the software business, but some publishers are getting more realistic about how long it takes to guide a game from concept to a playable commercial product. Publishers' experiences with CD have had a positive effect on conventional computer product. CD games take so long to do that 12 months to create a computer game no longer frightens as many publishers as it once did.

Gaming categories rise and fall in popularity—moving in and out of fashion—from year to year. Computer sports games lost their iron grip on the audience in 1989, though there were many new basketball and golf simulations.

Adventure and role-playing games showed the biggest gain in popularity in 1989. The most likely reason is the growing dominance of IBM PC computers These machines present this type of game a lot more effectively than any kind of real-time fast-action contests. Virgin Mastertronic's *Wonderland* is an earnest attempt to update the parser-driven adventure, but quick-play systems have virtually pushed the typing-oriented games out of the field.

Peering into my recently shined crystal ball, I see the coming year as a pivotal one for the entire electronic-gaming industry. Here are five predictions for the gaming year to come:

• This is the year that 16-bit video-game systems either convert the nation or lose the mass audience. Nintendo's Super Famicom/SFX is a late starter, but neither of its two main competitors are building up an insurmountable lead. By Christmas 1991, all three will be poised for the big push to break the three-way deadlock.

• Computer hardware sales trends will push modestly upward, with IBM PC still leading the way. The spread of *Windows* could remove a lot of user-unfriendliness that has kept many from buying into the computer revolution.

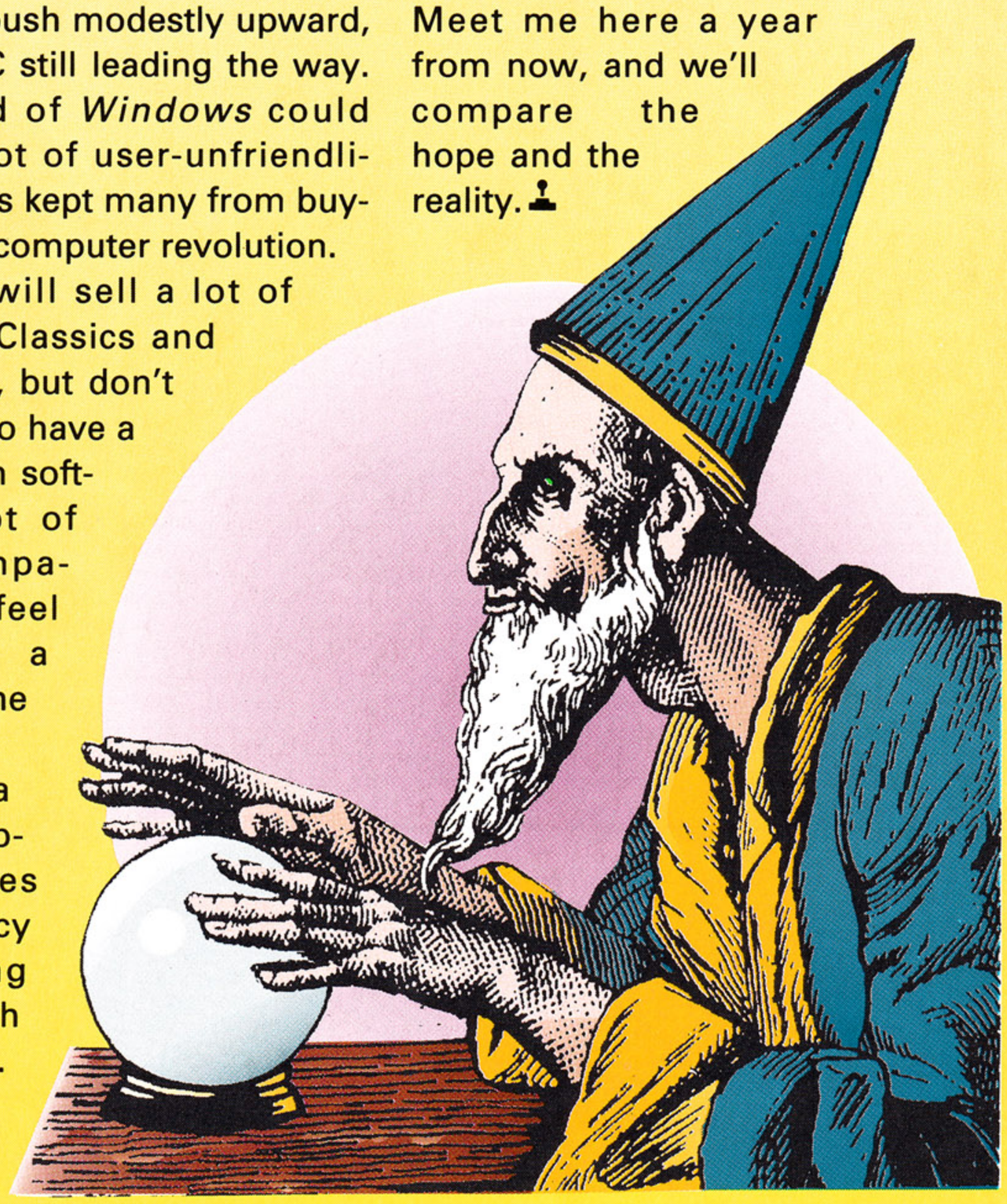
• Apple will sell a lot of Macintosh Classics and LCs in 1990, but don't expect this to have a big effect on software. A lot of game companies don't feel they have a handle on the audience, and quite a few development houses have a policy of avoiding Macintosh assignments. Doubling the size of the market would change the story, but I don't look for anything significant until the end of 1991 at the earliest.

• Mergers and buy outs will make big headlines in 1991. Several famous company names will have new ownership or cease to exist this year. Also, look for Hollywood studios to invade the leisureware world.

• Although the total sales volume won't be bad, 8-bit cartridges will experience a major drop in units sold per title. Rentals are going to be a much larger part of the business, and some forthcoming titles will be sold primarily through this channel.

There's one final prediction I almost hate to mention, since I make it almost every year. The fact that it continues to come true is the only reason for even mentioning it: The year of 1991 will see electronic gaming go to new heights of artistic quality and entertainment value.

Meet me here a year from now, and we'll compare the hope and the reality.



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Shooting High in Brainblaster

SPOTLIGHT
Versions: Amiga, Atari ST, IBM PC

Spotlight Software's dual package gives gamers two action-packed arcade games for the price of one. In "Xenon 2," players must maneuver a megablaster star cruiser through the evil Xenite galaxy in an attempt to thwart the evil conquest plans of the Xenites.

The main strategy in Xenon 2 is never stop moving. This game is very difficult due to the relentless kamikaze runs of the enemy. Most of the time, enemy patterns will include a beeline for the player's ship. Counter by moving constantly and firing in short, fast bursts to knock out an entire squadron at once.

Taking care of entire squadrons is important for another reason: This is the best way to earn money, which can be traded in for better weaponry later on. Besides, any ship left alive doesn't just go away, as in other games. It'll be back later to settle the score, so take it out while you can.

Periodically, a small diamond-shaped object flies across the screen. Make every effort to shoot this craft. Doing so will award the player better firepower or other helpful devices.

When flying toward the space shops, keep a close eye on the walls of the caverns for *anything* that moves. The rule here is, if it moves, fry it before it gets you. Many of the cavern creatures are well camouflaged against the backdrop, so be on guard at all times.

The second *Brainblaster* challenge is a slightly more relaxed strategy game called "Bombuzal." The player guides a little creature around a game grid in an attempt to blow up as much as possible. Levels are completed by exploding all the bombs on the screen and remaining around to talk about it.

The secret to Bombuzal is to study the game grid carefully before making a single move. Often a level can only be completed by detonating the bombs in a precise order. By studying the map, one can see where the bombs are located and how they must be manipulated to conquer the level.

Remember that once a dissolver square is stepped on, it disappears for good, so be careful not to trap yourself in a corner with an exploding bomb!

Some levels have transporters that always send the player to the same square. Test these before you plan a strategy. Often the very place where these machines transport is the key spot

***Brainblaster*, by Spotlight, provides gamers with two action-packed arcade-style games for the price of one.**

one must reach before the bombs begin going off.

In the upper levels, gamers have to contend with droids, both good and bad. The good droids are easy to figure out. Simply use them to detonate a bomb that would otherwise kill you. The evil ones must be dealt with quickly, or they will mess up a player's strategy in no time. These droids always move in either all left turns or all right turns. Determine their pattern and quickly explode a bomb nearby in an effort to destroy them or at least seal them off from the rest of the grid.

Keep in mind that many of these screens have only one solution, so remember to study the map when a droid appears, and choose carefully when picking the bomb you will use to blow that little bugger to smithereens!

—Frank Tetro, Jr.

Winning the Race in Turbo Out Run

SEGA
Versions: Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64, IBM PC

Sega's newest arcade translation places the gamer in the driver's seat of a hot, red Ferrari F-40. The object: Pilot the sportster through 16 cities, and get to California ahead of the ominous white Porsche. Along the way, players can purchase superior engine parts and tires to better their chances, assuming they've won enough money in the preceding heat to do so.

Sega's *Turbo Out Run*, returns the game player to the driver's seat, in a new, powerful Ferrari F40.

The secret to *Turbo Out Run* is mastering the steering controls. In the game setup, the player must choose between high or low sensitivity on steering. Select high response; this will allow the player to get out of tight situations and make sharp turns much faster than at the low setting. The drawback is that players must learn to use a light tapping motion, because steering with a heavy finger will result in a spinout. This light touch comes only with practice, but is well worth the effort.

Another important aspect of steering is learning to anticipate a turn and react to it early on. If a player is on the left of a pace car and comes upon a left turn, you must begin to steer left *before* actually hitting the turn. Failure to do so will result in your car swerving to the right as the turn begins and smashing into the pace car.

There are some places in the course that simply cannot be navigated at full speed. Learn to spot these early on by turning sharply as the curve begins and watching the car closely. If the Ferrari begins screeching outward, immediately decelerate through the turn. Once out, punch the turbo to regain top speed.

Speaking of the turbo, don't forget about this baby. Its use is a crucial part of a successful run. After firing the turbo, count in your mind the six-, eight- or ten-second recharge time, and fire it again when it's ready. Just remember to keep an eye on the temperature gauge to make sure you don't blow the engine. Once the turbo is activated, keep the button pressed for the entire duration. The unit will disengage when the button is released.

The final strategic element is the parts store. Here, players can save the game as well as make key purchases for the upcoming heats. As far as tires go, buy the slicks first because they perform the best in dry conditions. Once you move westward and bad weather is forecast, switch to all-seasons.

The stock six-cylinder is fast enough to win the race, but if you plan to increase it, skip the eight- and save for the 12-cylinder car. The eight-cylinder engine overheats too easily.

In the transmission area, go for the low-ratio gears. They give a higher top speed. This is better than fast acceleration because to win, one must drive fast, not continually accelerate after experiencing a crash!

Finally, there are the three turbos. They all seem to counter each other in firing versus recharge time. The only thing to keep in mind is that a big turbo with a little engine could be big trouble!

—F. T., Jr.

Questions Answered, Doubts Assuaged and Fevers Calmed

by the Game Doctor

It's been a busy month here in Glitter Gulch with mail pouring in from all parts of the world. The variety of new hardware that has been unleashed upon us has the entire gaming world filled with questions.

Our opening letter contains, however, not a question but information from ICOM Simulations' Michael Garber. ICOM has been working extensively with NEC on several eagerly awaited CD-based projects, including *Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective*, so Michael knows whereof he speaks.

question

In the November '90 issue of VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT, you responded incorrectly to a letter sent by Daniel Morgan concerning the maximum resolution of the TurboGrafx-16. You stated that the TG-16 was only capable of 320 x 224, with 256 colors on-screen at once. I am a software engineer currently developing games for the TG-16, [and] I must set you straight on this issue.

The TG-16 is capable of three different resolutions: 256 x 256; 320 x 256; and 512 x 256. (Although there are 256 physical lines, only about 224 are clearly visible on the television/monitor.)

As for color, the TG-16 can display 240 colors for its background, 240 for its foreground (sprites), one for a default background color and one for a border color (if used), for a total of 482 on-screen colors.

Most TG-16 products use the 256 x 256 mode, and some use the 320 x 256. I haven't yet seen any games use the 512 x 256 resolution, mostly because it takes much more memory for the graphics. I'm sure products in the future will make use of this mode, however, especially ones on CD-ROM.

—Michael Garber
ICOM Simulations

answer

Thanks for the scoop, Michael; I was basing my numbers on numerous published reports on the TG-16's specs.

question

I really enjoy reading your column, and I have some questions:

1) Why did Data East stop making *Side Pocket* for the NES?

2) I've heard rumors about a 32-bit converter for the Genesis. Do you know anything about it?

3) I went to my local arcade and stepped into a normal race-car game (I forget the name). I looked around and there weren't any coin slots! Ever happen to you before?

4) Will Nintendo [cut down production on NES software] to make more Super NES-SFX games?

—Matt Cianchetti
Des Plains, Illinois

answer

Your answers, Matt, my friend:

1) The lifetime of most video games is several months. Because there is a limited amount of retail display space, publishers periodically clean out their catalogs in order to make room for new entries. Alas, this causes classics like *Side Pocket* (the best billiards simulation for any video game) and Nintendo's own brilliant *Pro Wrestling* (which is *still* the best arcade-style wrestling game around on *any* system) to be dumped along with the turkeys that no one will miss.

2) Sega continues to deny that a 32-bit game player is in the works. The idea of a 32-bit converter seems *extremely* improbable.

3) I have indeed had similar experiences—some of these modern coin-ops go to incredible lengths to hide their all-important coin slot! Keep looking, however, because if there's one thing you can be certain of in this life, it's that *every* coin-op has a coin slot.

4) Eight-bit games are a dying trend, to be sure, but I'd expect to see many, many Nintendo NES games published before that system bites the dust of antiquity.

question

Having just heard about the capabilities of Nintendo's new 16-bit machine, I am curious about what hardware implementation enables scaling and how it actually works from a software standpoint. Apparently, neither the Genesis nor Turbo-Grafx-16 has this ability.

Also, considering the latest revelations about a Sega CD drive and the persistent, yet unconfirmed rumor of a 32-bit upgrade for the Genesis, is it possible for the Genesis to one day have scaling abilities, given these hardware additions, and if not, can current 16-bit games be programmed with enough sophistication to simulate true scaling?

—Clark S. Smith
San Jose, California

answer

"Scaling" refers to the process whereby a character grows larger when moving to the foreground and shrinks when traveling into the background. This can be achieved as a function of either software or hardware, but, obviously, if it's handled automatically by the hardware, it's a major savings of memory.

As I understand it—and I'm sure someone will correct me if I'm wrong—a hardware-based scaling system automatically redraws a character based on the distance between its current position on the screen and a point representing the

middle ground. A software-based scaling system has to produce a new bitmapped image every time the character moves into the background or foreground.

question

I have a very important question. I have a 486 IBM-compatible equipped with Super VGA, Ad Lib, CD-ROM and 4.01 DOS. I bought it thinking that I could get some pretty awesome games but I was wrong. I can't find one single SVGA game here. Please tell me where I can get some super games, or there will be a vacant area in my computer desk [and] a TG-16 [in its place]!

—Tim Huff
Des Moines, Iowa

answer

There's no simple answer for you, Tim, but I promise that I *will* name some state-of-the-art PC games for you before I finish. First, you must remember that the great fallacy about the IBM PC universe is that all PCs are compatible. Games have traditionally been designed to play on everything from the runtiest Tandy PC clone to a high-powered, souped-up system like yours. That's a lot of ground to cover, not to mention a lot of different versions to produce. As a result, VGA versions are only now becoming standard for PC software; SVGA will take some time before it garners heavy software support.

On the plus side, you now own a machine that will be able to play the hottest PC software for the next three to five years. The folks who face difficulties are those users with 286/12Mhz machines, for while they can, theoretically, play hot new titles like *Stunt Driver* (Spectrum Holobyte), *Wing Commander* (Origin), *Test Drive III* (Accolade), and *Links* (Access)—see, I *told* you I'd name names—these programs can't run at anywhere near their optimal levels. And as for your CD drive, Sierra and Access have several major releases on the way and you can rest assured that any CD product produced for any system will find its way to the IBM PC systems.

In other words, Tim, tomorrow belongs to you. I'm not certain, however, that PC games will ever totally satisfy the soul of a true arcade gamer, so you might want to think about that TG-16 anyway.

question

I recently purchased a TurboGrafx-16 and am very impressed with [its] graphic capabilities. I have heard rumors that the TG-16 is "not a true 16-bit system" and that the Genesis is a better system graphically. Please answer in depth to explain it to us noncomputer experts. Thanks.

—Timothy M. DiLellio
Athens, Ohio

answer

To understand what people mean when they refer to 8-bit and 16-bit systems, it's necessary to have a slight understanding of how computers work. An 8-bit system uses an 8-bit microprocessor; the bit size refers to the size of the data chunks the system processes. An 8-bit system can "bite off" data in 8-bit chunks; a 16-bitter takes "bites" that are twice as large, meaning the data is processed faster and smoother. The TG-16 employs a hybrid 8-bit processor (the HU6820) but has a special 16-bit graphics chip that accounts for its great visuals.

If you want to avoid the numerous technical specs that manage to confuse most of us—myself included—you can always use the "Game Doc Graphics Guide." Here's how it works: Do some reading and talk to gamers. Find out what are considered the top three or four games on each system and check them out. The top games generally reflect state-of-the-art technology for that system, so you can see for yourself what that machine can do.

question

I'm a programmer/analyst and have been working on the IBM System 38 mid-range computer for about the last ten years. As a programmer and a video gamer, I'm curious [as to] how people program video games. What languages are used, or must the programmers work strictly in machine language? Do they have software tools to help them? What special hardware is used for input and storage? I'm mostly curious about the newer systems like the NES [sic] and Genesis.

—Fred Wagaman
Denver, Pennsylvania

answer

Good question, Fred. Since you're primarily interested in video, rather than computer games, we'll stick to that subject. There have traditionally been two ways to develop video games: reverse-engineering or becoming an "official" third-party publisher. Official publishers get the appropriate development systems from the original hardware manufacturer while "renegade" publishers, like Tengen, laboriously produce their own development system by backward engineering the available hardware and software.

Most NES games are actually developed on PCs, using special software tools. Cartridge copies are made by running the computer program through an EPROM burner into an EPROM. (An EPROM is an erasable and programmable ROM cartridge.) This allows programs to be downloaded from a remote developer to the publisher at any point in the development process. The publisher then produces a test version via EPROM and boots the cartridge.

ODDS & ENDS

• Remember, gang, the Game Doc simply does not have the resources to answer letters personally. Much as I'd like to, there just aren't enough hours in a day to answer the hundreds of letters which arrive for each issue.

• Also, any winner who hasn't gotten their Game Doctor Prize Packet should drop me a postcard and I'll send out a backup!

• Readers interested in obtaining or selling older, hard-to-find game software should contact Frank M. Polosky (P.O. Box 9542, Pittsburgh, PA 15223). Frank sells no pirated material, and his list had some great old games at reasonable prices.

• Mark Ouser of St. Catherine, Ontario, Canada, who characterized himself as "Atari's Loyalest Fan" and believes it'll be back, sent a nice long letter. He says that while he's heard rumors that the Lynx is fragile, he's dropped his several times with no ill effects.

And that about wraps things up for this month's installment of *Game Doctor.* We'll be here next month, same game time, same game channel, so send along those questions, corrections and comments to *Game Doctor*, 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107.

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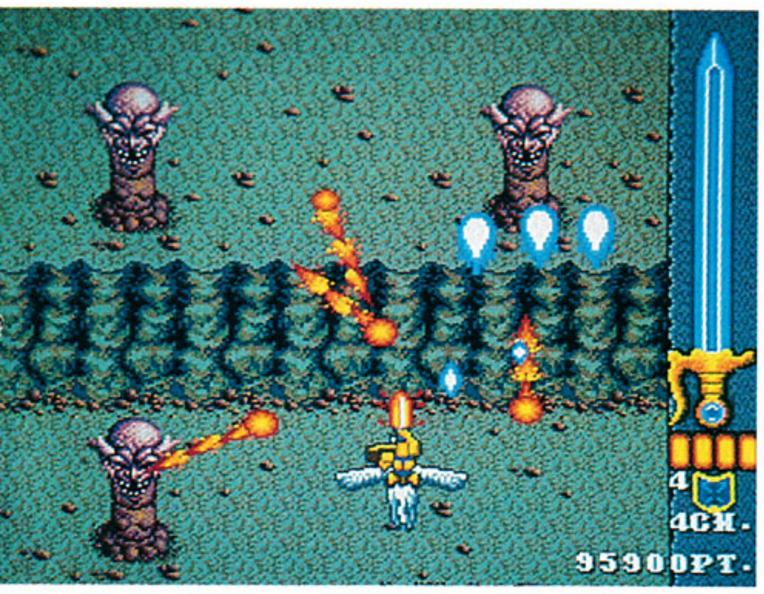

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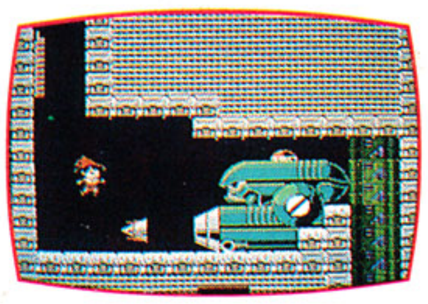
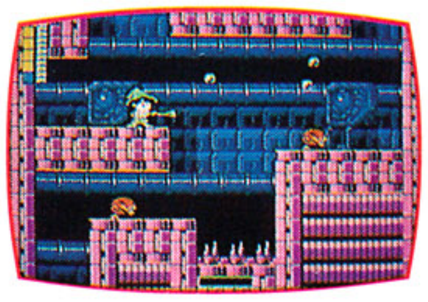
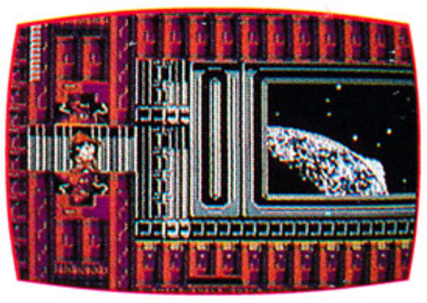


- The good witch Francesca, who has come to save the planet from The Krion Empire, has infiltrated the ice base! Before she can do battle with Yukimaru, the Snow Monster, she must get by this Krion Menace!

- Among the clouds Francesca searches for Sky Hawk's base. Beware of the robo bees and *deadly* spikes!



- "Gasp...Choke!!!" Francesca had better find an air pocket fast or risk drowning!



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