A Critical Newsletter for the Serious Gamesman

What's Going On At Atari?

The announcement of Warner Communication's sale of Atari to Jack Tramiel as we went to press last month has caused our phones to ring off the hooks about Atari's future. It is, without question the biggest news and the biggest mystery of the moment.

First, we'll start with what we *DO* know. Jack Tramiel is the new owner and, to set the record straight as it has been misreported elsewhere, he no longer has *anything* to do with Commodore. He exited that company last February in a power struggle and has been enjoying the past few months off. When he took over Atari, he installed three sons to key positions within the company, as well as bringing along some of his trusted, former Commodore associates. As is usually the case when new management takes over a company, Tramiel immediately stopped all projects exactly where they were so everything could be "re-evaluated". Then, in a cost-slashing program, approximately 75% of Atari employees, from the top all the way down, were let go. At last count, only about 350 people remain at Atari headquarters. We also know Tramiel attempted to pull out of Atari's advertising commitment for the 1984 Summer Olympics where they were scheduled to run heavy advertising for the LucasFilm games (Ballblazer and Rescue on Fractalus) and the 7800 ProSystem. (Keep in mind that Atari is an official sponsor of the '84 Olympics.) Based on the first few days of the games, it appears he was not able to pull out; however, we have only seen Alan Alda adds for the Atari computers and a few ads for the 2600 (!?).

Rumors Abound

We, like many people, have grave concerns about the future of certain aspects of Atari and their products. Although we have confirmed there are 7800 ProSystems and 7800 software already manufactured and sitting in a warehouse, there is speculation that the 7800 may not ever be released. All the products announced at the recent C.E.S. are in the same situation. It is inevitable that at least some of the new products will never be released. At the very least, release dates are totally up in the air and will, undoubtedly, be bumped back severely. (We have kept all Atari products listed in the Availability Update under the months given us a few weeks ago as it is impossible to predict correct dates at this time.)

Atarisoft Should Continue

We have been told that Tramiel believes in the Atarisoft line and, therefore, its future should be good. We do not know, of course, which systems Atarisoft will continue to support. We do not expect future support for Intellivision and the TI99-4/A; however, support for C64 and Apple should be good. The future for Atarisoft/ColecoVision is a big question mark.

Computers Main Focus

It should come as no surprise that the main thrust at the "new" Atari will be computers. We expect the 800XL to continue as it has continued to be a strong seller for the company. Meanwhile, the rumors are flying about Tramiel's quest to manufacture a "half-price" MacIntosh and/or "half-price" IBM PC. We feel he will move quickly to make his mark.

It may take several more weeks to sort out the future of Atari under Tramiel's direction. We do not know his commitment in the videogame market; however, the very future of dedicated games could very well hinge on his posture. If he does not choose to continue support of the 2600 or release the 7800, it is highly unlikely that there will be much, if any, third party support for the machines out there, regardless of the high installed base. The 7800 could be the catalyst for instilling some excitement in the videogame industry. Without that, ColecoVision will be it, and it is apparent that, as time goes on, Coleco will be moving more and more heavily into ADAM software and away from ColecoVision software.

We will report on any and all developments as they surface. In the meantime, we have committed to reviewing all 7800 software which we already have in-house, regardless of its eventual fate.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..

APPLE-COMPATIBLE

STORY MAKER (NA / ★ ★ ★ ★) is a unique combination of a graphics program with a simple word processing program that is designed for ages seven to fourteen. With encouragement from the instructions on disk and the hints from "Hack" in the accompanying booklet, *STORY MAKER* leads children along the magical road of creating and illustrating their own stories. Children can start with either words or pictures to weave fantasies from their own imagination in this easy-to-use program. The graphics portion permits drawing of lines, boxes, and circles to create pictures which can later be "painted" in various colors. Drawing can be done with joystick, graphics tablet, mouse, or even keyboard for the most detailed, pixel-by-pixel rendering of small elements. All drawings are easily saved for incorporation into the finished story. (The screen accompanying this review shows a story illustration in progress.)

Stimulates Creativity

The very simplest elements of word processing are introduced in the text portion of the program. Hack, the child's guide in the instruction booklet, offers hints on how to write a story, from choosing characters to the importance of continuity. (The concept of editing is also introduced.) Hack even left one of his own illustrated stories on the disk for the child to read. Once the child is in the writing mode, a simple screen menu takes him or her effortlessly into the beginnings of word processing. Once the story is complete, a title page is created which shows the title of the story, the young author's name ("with a little help from Sierra On-Line") and the date of the story. One blank diskette is included with the program, along with ten "Story Maker" labels for additional stories. (A budding young writer could require quite a few blank disks because only one illustrated story can be saved on each disk.) This is an excellent program for stimulating a child's creativity and supplementing classroom writing work. In fact, many children don't get nearly enough practice at writing in school, and this program could be especially helpful in those cases. (Solo use; Keyboard; Joystick, Graphics Tablet or Mouse optional.) (Also available on disk for Atari and Commodore 64 computers.)
Recommended. (MSR $34.95)
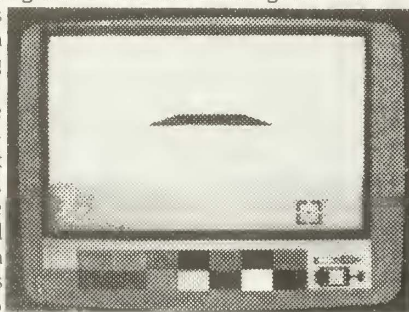
Revolutionary Rapid Load for C64

Datamost is putting the finishing touches on an item which could revolutionize the maddening slowness of loading disks into your C64 disk drive. Called the KWIK-LOAD, this utility disk will speed up the 1541 disk drive by 300%!! By loading KWIK-LOAD first (which takes about 10 seconds), you then load most programs using Commodore DOX — three times faster than normal! The program also includes a copy feature which copies individual files or a complete unprotected Commodore 64 disk three times faster with one drive and five times faster with two drives. KWIK-LOAD will feature full disk editing, allowing you to rename, delete and undelete files, validate and format disks (in 10 seconds), edit any track or sector, print out sectors, and get a directory of the disk. The program is menu-driven and one of the best features is the price — $19.95 for the disk and a manual. Watch for a review shortly.

Atarisoft Rumors

While it's no surprise that Jack Tramiel will do everything he can to knock his alma mater out of the box by lowering the price of the 800XL to compete more directly with the C64, we've learned that development of Atarisoft for C64 has STOPPED! We understand development for other computers such as Apple and IBM PC will continue, however. Stay tuned!

BOOK REVIEW

THE TI PLAYGROUND by Fred D'Ignazio introduces twenty-three short stories And original programs to children with the TI99-4/A, which will teach work and number skills. The book includes programs on a Spelling Bee, drawing with a Computer Crayon, chasing wild letters, a program to create music, and more. The book includes several programs with instructions for the 99-4/A graphics keys. You can also modify the programs. As in the earlier Playground books for other computers, this one is easy to read, written in a friendly manner, and allows the child to get truly involved with each chapter. The book is geared toward children ages 6-10. Hayden Book Company (MSR $9.95)

TI IN WONDERLAND by Fred D'Ignazio is a very good companion book to the above TI PLAYGROUND as it features twenty-one short stories with original programs which teach numbers and word skills. The book features tips for parents and teachers and is simply written for children to learn and understand such things as how to write a book report, learn angle measures while riding a 3-D roller coaster, create songs, test reflexes, learn how to count in Spanish and French, etc. One program which will embrace your child's imagination is the FORTUNE TELLER program where all sorts of questions can be asked for a yes or no answer. Sounds can be added for additional fun. This book is easy to use and gets the child involved in simple programming and learning.
Hayden Book Company (MSR $9.95)

New Books from Datamost

Prolific book and software publisher, Datamost, has added two more books to the line: *Getting into Computers* (MSR $12.95) by Kurt Hanks and *The Super Computer Snooper* (MSR $14.95) by Dr. Isaac Malitz. The first is a humorous look at what computers are all about. It is very much in keeping with the corporate slogan at Datamost, "The most out of our minds," presenting a whacky whirl through a cartoon-filled, high-tech world of CPU's, flow charts, disk drives, chips and even a few things you won't find in most other computer books. (Would you believe aardvarks and zebras? Well, a book has to begin and end somewhere!) As much as we appreciated the spirit of this book—telling people about computers in a way that will make them chuckle instead of cringe—we found it difficult to follow at times. The problem does not lie in complicated jargon or difficult concepts, but rather in the book's tendency to disorganization. Every page is full of cartoon drawings and isolated chunks of written material. On many pages, we really couldn't figure the order in which we should read the information to follow the author's thoughts. Perhaps the problem was in our approach, because this seems more of a book for browsing than one for actual reading. Do take a look at this one before taking it home. You may like its casual style, or you may be put off by its wanderings, as we were.

The Super Computer Snooper offers valuable information in an easy and accessible style. The author presupposes a knowledge of simple BASIC programming and then takes the reader on a fascinating tour of the inner workings of the Commodore 64 computer. The stops on this tour include memory, screen, programs and variables, keyboard, disk, graphics and sound. Along the way, the reader is encouraged to save the sample programs, because they are a series of experiments that can be used again and again. Some of them will become a valuable part of the reader's program collection. The book is full of useful information, such as how to restore a program that has been erased accidentally and how to identify deleted or hidden files on a disk. This is an excellent book for those who are curious about their computer and ready for something beyond simple BASIC programming.

Recommended. (MSR $39.95)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..APPLE-COMPATIBLE

AMERICA COAST TO COAST (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ½) is an educational program for ages eight to adult that includes five different activities. A pair of soft vinyl "EasyKey" keyboard overlays (one for the II +, the other for the IIe and IIc) allows direct, easy interaction with the program. The "State Facts" activity displays an overall map of the United States on which you can highlight any state and learn its capital city, year of statehood, nickname, and a major industry. These facts are utilized in "State Quiz." Here you must identify the highlighted state and then answer a series of multiple-choice questions about that state. If you answer incorrectly, the program gives the name of the state to which that answer *does* apply. After 50 questions, the stars of the American flag are used to display your score. Playing "Mystery State" and "Across the U.S.A." will strengthen your knowledge of where the different states are located. In the first game, the computer picks a state which you must try to guess. Each wrong guess elicits a clue, such as "The Mystery State is south of New York." In the second game, the computer selects a Starting State and a Goal State. Your job is to create a path through adjoining states, one at a time, until you reach the Goal State. This one can be played at three difficulty levels, which vary in the number of visual clues provided by highlighted states on the map. The final activity, "State Shoot," calls on a combination of coordination and knowledge. States are presented singly in their actual map position and must be "shot" with a moving arrow and then correctly identified. (Incorrect guesses will cost you five shots.) At the end of this activity, the stars on an American flag give a graphic representation of your score.

Great for Kids and Adults

This is a great program for kids and adults whose knowledge of basic U.S. geography and history is a little weak. (Judging from recently published results of surveys among U.S. high school seniors, which showed an appalling lack of knowledge about U.S. historical and geographical facts, there is more need for this type of program than we might like to admit.) The facts contained in the program are easy to learn, and the format makes learning a lot of fun. While the depth of information within the program is limited, it could be used as a springboard to family or classroom discussion. Graphics consist of clear, crisp map and flag displays along with text. Musical sound effects can be turned off, if desired. (Solo Play; Keyboard; Compatible with Apple II + /IIe/IIc.) (Also available for Commodore 64 and IBM PC/PCjr; BASIC cartridge required for PCjr.) Recommended. (MSR $49.95)

DINOSAUR DIG (★ ★ ★ ½ / ★ ★ ★ ★) is a fascinating look at the earth's animal inhabitants of 200 million years ago from **CBS Software.** It is designed for ages eight to adult, although it would take a fairly precocious eight-year-old to be able to read all the tongue-twisting names of these creatures! The first of the two disks in the program offers an overview of the various creatures, when and where they lived, their eating habits and various other facts about them. This disk has a number of illustrations, several of them animated to show what these dinosaurs looked like in action. The second disk contains five learning games. (Both disks make use of a soft vinyl "EasyKey" keyboard overlay which devotes separate keys to each of 32 different dinosaurs and reptiles covered in the program. Separate EasyKeys are included for Apple II + and for Apple IIe/IIc.)

Five Activities

"Dino Discovery" gives you a sort of fact sheet for each creature: a picture of the dinosaur, its name and the meaning of the name along with pronunciation (thank goodness!), its length and weight, the time period during which it lived, a map showing where its remains have been found, its diet, and its full scientific name. The knowledge acquired here is put to use in the other activities, including "Dino Dig," "Dino Flash," "Dino Encounters: Fact or Fable?" and "Who's Biggest?". "Dino Dig" requires that you guess what dinosaur is being described based on clues that are given one at a time. In "Dino Flash," you must identify the creature from its picture alone. An incorrect guess results in the picture of the creature you named, so you can even learn from giving the wrong answers. In "Fact or Fable," the object is to determine whether

or not two pictured creatures lived during the same time period. Knowing which dinosaurs are the heavyweights will give you the correct answers when three creatures are pictured in "Who's Biggest?" The activities in this program should be good for hours of learning fun at home or in the classroom. Very good color graphics add to the enjoyment, and the slightly eery music seems just the right background for these strange creatures. This is a superb program. (Solo Play; Keyboard; Compatible with Apple II + /IIe/IIc.) (Also available for Commodore 64 and IBM PC/PCjr; BASIC cartridge required for PCjr.) Recommended. (MSR $49.95)

MR ROBOT AND HIS ROBOT FACTORY (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ½) has been translated for Apple owners and it's a good one. Once again, there are 22 levels in all which can be played in any order, as well as programming your own screen. In the programmed game, Mr. Robot must avoid obstacles, and move throughout the various levels using moving treadmills, ladders, escalators, trampolines, and more. His job is to collect all the power pills before he can move to the next level. Alienfire must be avoided, or it can be killed by first touching an energizer. Every screen is quite different from the others as far as the mode in which you move around. Mr Robot loses his life by misjudging a jump and falling too far or by running out of energy.

Design a Screen

In a feature which has become more and more popular, you can enter the Robot Factory and design your own screen. With a cursor you can choose among many items at the bottom of the screen to create your playing screen. Throughout your designing you can test, edit, or save the screen.

Good Fun

A feature we have liked in this game is the ability to enter the game on any level — a feature which is a big plus as far as boredom not setting in. In addition, the Robot Factory has only one limit — your imagination. You can have great fun designing your own screens. The graphics are quite good with all the moving objects, although Mr. Robot does "blink" just a bit. Overall, this is a very good game which will provide hours of enjoyment — both with the pre-designed screens and the ones you can make yourself. (one player; pause; runs on //c; also available for C64 and Atari computer) Recommended (MSR $34.95)

Apple Introductions

Apple will debut the AppleColor Monitor 100, a 12" RGB monitor which will work with the //e, in early August. It will feature an 80-column text display, screen tilting, and an anti-reflective screen surface. A switch will allow the user to flip to a "green only" monochrome screen. The Apple Extended 80-Column Text/AppleColor card is required to connect the monitor to the computer. A low-cost RGB color adaptor that will allow the AppleColor Monitor 100 to be used with the //c will be introduced later in the year. The monitor will retail for $599 and the 80-column card sells for $299.

Enhanced Apple Writer II

August will also be the release date for an enhanced version of the Apple Writer II word processing software. New features will include horizontal scrolling; text display which allows the user to see the page and line count without having the print the document; a buiilt-in terminal mode that allows users to access information services such as the Source, CompuServe, etc; and a utility that enables users who do not have a ProDOS user's diskette to format a blank disk for use with the new program. An upgrade program will be available at discount to anyone who owns the previous version. Included with the program is a training disk.

COMPUTER TITLE BOUT (★ ★ ½ / ★ ★ ★ ½) allows you to recreate all the great boxing matchups with over 500 boxers individually rated for their abilities in over 20 areas. The program comes with two disks, with the second storing all the boxer's information. This is *not* a boxing "game" in that you create the atmosphere, conditions, and statistics for each round and then the computer plays out the round as you look on to see how well you set the boxers up. There is a great deal of strategy involved as you decide attitudes (all out attack, normal, aggressive, cautious, or all out retreat), and strategies (fighting inside or outside defensively or offensively, cover-up, going for the knockout, or no strategy). The computer then chooses the attitude and strategy for the other boxer and the round begins. On the screen below the ring, you can watch a running printed dialogue of the boxers as they work their way through the round "Break" called by the referree, and "knock-downs" will also be noted. Once the round ends, three judges use a 10-point system to decide the winner of the round. Your decisions will affect the outcome of each round, and you must adjust strategies between each round so your boxer can come out the winner.

AVALON HILL ARENA
ROUND 1   0:25 →

MUHAMMED ALI: 'LET'S GET IT ON'
MUHAMMED ALI WITH A COMBINATION

Modify/Create Boxer Files

This program gives you the ability to go into the Boxer Data file and either modify an existing data file or create your own junior weight class (over 100 slots are allocated for your own boxers). The program is a straight forward question and answer routine. You respond to the computer with the correct input (available on Boxer Data Cards directly from Avalon Hill—those cards also include biographical material on the "old time" boxers).

Great Boxing Strategy

There is so much depth to this program that it is impossible to go into it here. Suffice it to say that with over 500 boxers in file, there are virtually unlimited bouts to stage. And, within those bouts, so many variables that it will take you a long time to tire of this one. If you enjoy boxing, statistics, and strategy, Computer Title Bout will involve you for many, many hours of decision making in the world of boxing. (one player; two player simultaneous. BASIC required)
Recommended (MSR $30.00)

DRAGON'S KEEP (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ½) and **TROLL'S TALE**
(★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ½) are examples of a new kind of program for youngsters. Sierra calls these "junior adventures" because they can be operated without supervision by children as young as seven or eight. So long as a child can read at second grade level (DRAGON'S KEEP, picture on right) or third grade level (TROLL'S TALE, picture below), he or she will 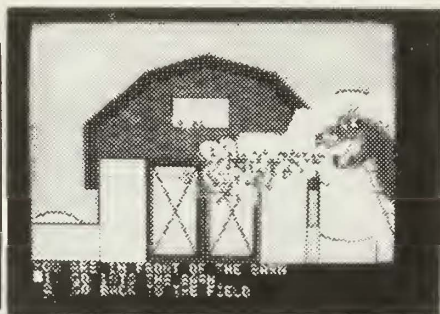have a marvelous time exploring a new world with the computer. The instructions are on the disk, and the child does not need typing skills. The space bar and return key are used to make all choices in the games. Each program comes with a large map and appropriate stickers to be placed on the map. In DRAGON'S KEEP, the object is to free 16 animals that are held captive in and around the dragon's magical house. Animal stickers can be placed on the map as the child discovers where the creatures are trapped. The stickers with TROLL'S TALE are of the various treasures which the wicked troll has stolen from the Dwarf King. The child must find the the treasures and return them to the king.

A Great Idea

We like the idea of the "junior adventure," since it combines entertainment with subtle training in reasoning skills. Young children will get a kick out of being able to play the same kinds of games their older siblings—even Mom and Dad—already enjoy. And we feel that these games have a great deal more educational value than some that are labeled as educational product. In solving these adventures, children begin to use inductive and deductive reasoning. But children care very little about such things—they simply enjoy the pictures and love the games. Children are always attracted to activities in which they can give free rein to their imagination, and these two programs do just that. *Note: owners of the Atari 400 or 800 will need the Atari BASIC cartridge.* (Solo Play; Keyboard; Disk.) (Also available for Apple II + /IIe/IIc, Commodore 64, IBM PC.)
Recommended. (MSR $29.95)

SYNCALC, SYNFILE +, and **SYNTREND** form a three-part integrated series of programs developed by **Synapse** for Atari. All three of these programs not only work with each other, but are also fully compatible with the AtariWriter word processing program. *SynCalc* is a full-featured electronic spreadsheet program designed for home and business. It is menu-driven, meaning that on-screen directions make it relatively easy for beginners to use. However, advanced users will not be slowed down by this approach, because "expert user command" provides single keystroke control. (Of interest to owners of Atari VisiCalc is the fact that entire files from the older program, including formulas and text, can be converted to a SynCalc worksheet.)

SynFile is a database management program with on-screen menus that allows the user to store and retrieve many kinds of information. Specifications include up to 66 fields per record, searches on up to 16 fields, up to 255 characters per field, and multiple reporting options. *SynTrend* actually includes two programs: *SynStat*, a statistical program for analyzing financial trends, and *SynGraph*, which is used to create clearly labeled, high resolution, color-coded graphs from data produced by any of these programs in the Synapse group. *SynGraph* can produce line graphs, bar graphs, scatter plots or pie charts which can be saved and/or printed.

A common characteristic of all three of these Synapse programs for Atari is clearly written, excellent documentation, complete with tutorials. This is an important point, because even an excellent program can be unnecessarily difficult to use with poor documentation. These programs are not designed for the casual computer user who has few needs beyond entertainment and a little education for the children of the family. However, they fill a gap in the Atari software line for the more serious computer user, particularly the one who would like to move toward business applications. (All programs require a minimum of 48K RAM and blank disk for data storage.)
(MSR $99.95 each)

War In Russia To Release

Strategic Simulations will ship WAR IN RUSSIA, a division-level strategic game which covers four years of warfare - June 19[ ] through December 1944. The scenarios of Barbarossa, 194[ ]; Stalingrad, 1942; and Kursk, 1943 are also included in the program. From each of these scenarios you can recreate just one year of the campaign or play out the rest of the war. The game mechanics allow for limited intelligence of enemy units, and simultaneous entry of orders. The program will come with diskette, documentation, and laminated maps for Apple and Atari at a retail of $79.95.

COCONOTES (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) is the first in a series of children's interactive musical programs which feature the Jazz Scats, a trio of musicians including Swivel Hips, Wahoo, and Mr. Bassman. Included with the program is a record which tells you, in music, how to play the game! There are three musical games included. *Catch a Coco-Note* involves Mr. Bassman fishing for notes on a tropical island. Pass his fishing line over the notes, listen for notes you like. "catch" them, and your melody will take shape in a palm tree above. Once you catch all the notes, the Jazz Scats dance to your melody. *Composin' Coco-Notes* takes the first game one further—now you can select an accompaniment too. There's a wide assortment to choose from before you once again fish out the notes. *Beat the Clam* is a game where you must help the Jazz Scats find some important notes missing from their tunes. You must attempt to find the missing notes while Mr. Cool Clam tries to eat the notes and put them on his seafood menu.

Very Musical

The Jazz Scats are very cute and musical throughout the game. The gameplay is easy for family fun and can teach a good deal about putting musical sounds together for a pleasing melody. The reward is appealing to children also as they can watch the Jazz Scats dancing away to tunes they have composed. It's a good basic introduction to music and the addition of the record is a big plus. is extremely cute and makes it extremely easy to understand the game. (one player; also available for C64)
Recommended (MSR $37.95)

MOVIE MUSICAL MADNESS (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) is the second in the Jazz Scat series of musical programs for children. Again, this one includes a record which explains, in music, how to play the game. The premise here is to build your own movie set with several different props, select your star from the three Jazz Scats, and pick the music for your movie. There is a top row of lights where you will find your props — animated, stationary, and moving props — including houses, space ships, elephants, castles, and much more. You can design your stage any way you wish and then go to the bottom set of lights to choose the type of music you wish to use for accompaniment. Once the music begins to play, use your joystick to direct your Jazz Scat anywhere you wish. By also using the keyboard, you can direct him to sit and float. When the music ends, your first scene is over. You can shoot another scene, review or reshoot the first scene, or end your movie. You can shoot several scenes or just a few.

Fun For Kids

This program is great at bringing out the creativity in your child. Again, as in many CBS games, there is a reward factor involved as the child gets to see and hear the results of their labor. And, there are an infinite number of various scenes which can be put together, only limited by the imagination of the player. (one player; also available for C64)
Recommended (MSR $37.95)

Game Screens and Reviews

Whenever possible, we obtain game screens from the manufacturers so that our readers can see how a game or other program looks, in addition to giving descriptions and evaluations in our reviews. Many of you have requested that we use screen art for all reviews, even if it means using artwork that may not reproduce well. (This is often the case when we must work from a color slide or color print.) In a further effort to provide some idea of what programs look like, with this issue we have begun to use screens from the instruction booklets when nothing else is available. Although these are usually drawings, rather than actual screen reproductions, they do give an impression of a program's appearance. You, our readers, have told us that you would rather have some idea of a program's appearance than nothing at all. Unfortunately, we still won't be able to provide artwork for all reviews. Some manufacturers use neither artwork nor photos on packaging or in the instruction booklets.

HALFTIME BATTLIN' BANDS (★ ★ ½ / ★ ★ ★) is the third of the Jazz Scat series and features half-time hijinks on the football field. As Drum Major, you must move, with your joystick, to the line of double-notes on the bottom of the screen. Press the joystick button as you move over a double-note, pick up a rotating row of bandsmen and direct them to lay over a pre-determined formation on the field. Once they line up perfectly, hit the joystick button to lock them into position. Each time you successfully position a row of bandsmen, you are composing part of a march as all the double-notes contain portions of march music, with some containing "silly music" (anything from Jingle Bells to Beethoven's Fifth). When playing the two-player version, you are competing against the other player to finish your formation first. There are several items you can use to slow one another down—from mustard-squirting hotdogs to whistles which cause your opponent to drop their row of bandsmen! It can become quite hectic.

A Wild Game of Music

Again, as in the other Jazz Scat games, there is a great deal of musical madness involved (this one also includes a record which gives a musical introduction to the game). Although it can be played as a one-player game, it is much better as a two-player game as there are many other elements introduced which are used to slow down your opponent. In the one-player game, the only challenge is to line your bandsmen up on the formation lines. We really would recommend it only as a two-player game for continued interest (one player; two-player simultaneous; joystick required) (MSR $37.95)

New Light Pen for C64

Inkwell Systems will release their 3.0 updated version of FLEX-IDRAWTM, an interactive software and light pen package for the C64 shortly. Enhancements to the program include the addition of 16 hi-res colors, a telecommunication program that allows FLEX-IDRAWTM owners to send their drawings to another location via phone modem, new disk handling functions and expanded drawing capabilities. The retail is $149 95

More Graphics Tablets

Personal Peripherals is the latest to enter the computer tablet market. SUPER SKETCH, designed for Commodore, Atari, TI, and Coleco, includes a software cartridge for illustrations and will retail for $49. SUPER SKETCH II, for Apple, IBM PC and PCjr, includes MASTER ILLUSTRATOR software which allows users to create video graphics in color. By moving the stylus control as you would a pencil, Super Sketch II will reproduce the movement on the screen. The clipboard format allows the user to trace from printed material and there is a zoom window feature, allowing a magnified view while drawing.

Software

Four programs will be released for the Atari/C64 Super Sketch including SUPER MUSIC BOX, a simple way to compose and perform music; BUSINESS PRESENTOR, a software package used to create full-color charts, graphs, and business related graphics; MASTER HOME PLANNER, an easy way to quickly visualize home planning concepts; and PRINTER UTILITY, a software package which provides the routines required to control many of the most popular printers so video graphics created on Super Sketch can be printed out.

SMART FILER From *Coleco* allows ADAM users an easy-to-use data base which can be operated via the Smart Keys without having to pour over the documentation for hours. This program can be used alone or in conjunction with other programs such as SmartLETTERS & FORMS™ (see review in this issue) and SmartWRITER™. You begin·by creating a form for your use. As you design your form, you set up several fields and you can designate up to four searchable fields. For instance…if you are cataloging your record collection, you can set up "Title," "Artist," "Location," "Year Bought," etc. You can then later search for records by one or more fields. If you want to find all titles by one artist, it's very easy, just as you could search records by artist OR title—all in one search. Once your form is designed, you can store your data on a blank data pack (or disk with the upcoming drive) and later recall it to modify or delete it. A very nice feature is the ability to "copy file." In other words, if you are entering names and addresses and you have more than one person at the same address, simply hit "copy file," that file will reappear, and you can simply change the name and leave the address, etc. You can also modify forms which have already been created, although you can only overwrite field names.

Print In Any Format

The Print feature allows you to print out your records in several formats, whether you need mailing labels, standard letters, narrow columns, etc. This feature is great if you want to send the same letter to several friends but wish to personalize the heading with the individual's name.

Fine Home DataBase

From several standpoints, this is a very fine home database program. From total ease-of-use to the flexibility in searching and printing records, this is a great home utility program for the ADAM owner. We were impressed with the relative speed in searching and saving records as we have worked with several very bulky programs which are somewhat slow and difficult to use. The only thing you'll have to use the documentation for is to discover all the nuances the program offers.
Recommended

SMART LETTERS AND FORMS is designed to help writers with the proper form and phrasing of everything from formal invitations, thank you letters, cover letters for resumes, complaints, household inventories, vacation checklists, and much more (over six *dozen* in all). For every type of letter there is a partially filled out form and a completed sample letter which shows the proper format and possible wording. On each form, you will find labeled blanks which tell you what type of information to insert in that space — foolproof! If you are writing an invitation or something else you wish centered on the page, there is a centering feature built-in. Of course, once you have the form finished to your liking, you can print it and/or store it in your data pack.

Very Easy to Use

Again, with the prompts from the SmartKeys, this program is a breeze to use. The one drawback — one that cannot be avoided without an 80-column screen — is that you cannot view an entire line. Coleco has introduced the "Moving Window Display" which features a cursor in the upper left corner of the text. With the use of the arrow keys you can move the cursor to any text character on screen and scan through the form. You can also use this program in conjunction with SMART FILER™ (see review in this issue) if you wish to send your finished letter to a database of names stored in the other program. All in all, this is a fine program for anyone who likes to write but needs help with format and form.
Recommended

(Editor's Note: We have adopted the convention of reviewing all ColecoVision/Adam programs that are in cartridge format under the heading "ColecoVision-Compatible" in the Video Game Update section. Programs that are for Adam ONLY (data-pack format) are reviewed under the heading "Adam-Compatible" in the Computer Entertainer section.)

FLASHCARD MAKER is an electronic Flash Card system which can be used in conjunction with several FLASH FACTS programs (see below) or by itself for creating your own Flash Cards. First we'll deal with the main program, Flashcard Maker. It is simply a means for you to write your own flashcards — in virtually any subject, including the ability to creat special characters and accents for typing foreign language text, in addition to exponents, subscripts, mathematical symbols, and musical notes. The program allows you to print the cards you make. You can choose to print the entire deck, just the A sides (questions), or B sides (answers). When using the flash cards, you can indicate if you wish to "Save Misses" for a later deck of special misses for redrilling. When answering the cards as they appear on the screen, you can choose to either type the answer in on the screen or just "think" the answer. If you type it in, ADAM will not tell you if you were right or wrong. You still have to "flip the card" for the answer. The documentation includes a very helpful "Smart-Key Tree" which indicates, in a simple flowchart, all the Smart Key commands as you work through the .program and create your own cards.

Flash Fact "Modules"

Coleco plans several *Flash Fact* programs which can *ONLY* be run in conjunction with FLASH MAKER. Initially, three such programs are being released. The first, **FLASH FACTS VOCABULATOR** includes twenty-five flash card decks which cover many areas to improve your vocabulary. Among the subjects covered are frequently-used words of foreign origin; definitions of foreign terms; meanings of common first names; homonyms, synonyms, and antonyms and more. The program touts 1000 words. In **FLASH FACTS FLASHBACKS,** you can test your knowledge of history in 22 decks. Everything from the discovery of America; Presidents; recent history (1970-present); and segments through American History that cover the various wars, depressions, and more. **FLASH FACTS TRIVIA** includes 23 decks on many varied subjects. Included in this program are Geography, Show Business, Olympics, Sports, Music, Bible, Animals, and more.

Think Before You Buy

We feel that flash cards are one of those things which really isn't enhanced by the use of a computer over using the tried-and-true real cards. There certainly isn't anything special about the graphics; however, it is an easy way to work flash cards, especially for young children who would probably enjoy working with the computer and the "Smart-Keys" over the old-fashioned verions.

BOUNTY HUNTER (NA / ★ ★ ★) is an all-text adventure of moderate difficulty, one of the first pieces of third-party software available on data pack for the ADAM computer.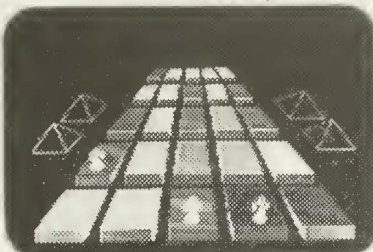 The mere availability of an adventure game for hungry ADAM owners is cause enough for celebration, but this turns out to be a good one. *BOUNTY HUNTER* is set in the Old West, a nice change from the more typical medieval and outer space settings. Your job is to find and arrest the notorious Oil gang, collecting a $5000 bounty for your efforts. Along the way, you can play a game of poker with the Dalton Boys, learn how to get past Apaches in warpaint, and use your wits and six-shooter to deal with the unexpected in the wilderness. The game employs a standard, two-word. verb/noun parser. A list of the twenty-one verbs is provided, but you must discover the nouns recognized by the program on your own. The designers state that the average solving time is 20-30 hours. Beginners may take considerably longer, and expert adventurers will obviously have an easier time of it. Regardless of your level of experience, *BOUNTY HUNTER* will be good for hours of puzzling fun. (Solo Play; Keyboard) (Also available on single disk for both Commodore 64 and VIC-20) Recommended (MSR $24.95; $22 95 for Commodore)

Diplomacy Ships

After two years in development, Avalon Hill is ready to ship DIPLOMACY for the IBM PC. Weighing in at a hefty 256K memory, this is the computer version of the classic board game which begins as players choose their country from seven powers. The game takes place on a scrolling map of Europe during the period of negotiations prior to and during WWI.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..COMMODORE 64-COMPATIBLE

THE WORLD'S GREATEST BASEBALL GAME

Epyx (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) is both a baseball game, and a managerial statistical game. As a two-sided disk, you choose between an actual baseball game or a statistical game in which you only manage your team.

The Real Game

In this version, you can play against the computer or against a friend. You begin by choosing the team with which you want to play (you can pick among 25 teams—from All Star teams and World Series teams to great teams of yesteryear). Once you choose your team, the most probable starting lineup and batting order is already in place. As manager, you can change pitchers, players, and the batting order at any time. Once the game begins, on defense you can control the type of pitch you make by manuevering the joystick and you can control all fielders individually in fielding the ball. There are five ways to make an out, including the catching of a fly ball by an activated fielder, throw to first base before the runner arrives, strike out, tag the runner out, and a force out. On offense, you can direct your player to bunt, steal, and hit (the ball will be hit according to the batter's actual statistics).

The Statistical Game

In this version you only manage your team and the game can be played from either the keyboard or joystick. Once again, as in the other version, you have your choice of several teams and you can change the batting lineup, etc. On defense in the statistical game you can order an intentional walk, or order your infield in. On offense, you can order a hit and run, steal, or bunt/sacrifice.

Documentation Confusing

The playing version is pretty good, although we found the joystick controls needed to activiate fielders confusing and a bit difficult to finely control. For instance, if you push the joystick down while the fire button is pressed, you will activiate the first baseman, push the stick down the second time and you will activate the right ielder. The same general pattern is used for all the other fielders. We found ourselves trying to manuever while, at the same time, pressing the button, moving the joystick and inevitably activating he wrong fielder. With a good deal of practice, you could master he system. The ability to use several teams and change the lineups adds a dimension to this version of baseball over some of the others but; however, we found the documentation faulty in its confusing ayout. You will probably have to refer back to the brochure many mes before you totally separate the functions on the two games vithin the program. The statistical game is obviously offered for he growing number of game players who prefer manipulating tatistics over actual gameplay. We did not find enough options vailable in the statistical version to highly recommend it. Overall, 's a good, but not great baseball program which we would suggest you try out before purchase, if possible (one player; two-player multaneous; pause; coming for Atari) MSR $40.00)

SILICON WARRIOR (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ½) is a straight translation of the game originally designed for Atari computers. It's a semi-abstract contest between the player, a Warrior representing one of the Earth's future houses of high technology, and the Syborgs, a super-human race that has invented the "Tenth-Generation Computer." (This is a computer that "combines more RAM and Artificial Intelligence than any computer ever designed by humans," according to the wonderfully tongue-in-cheek introduction that comes with the game. This preface to the game describes the Earth's "Hierarchy of the New Technology" in the year 2084, comprising the Knights of the "House of Peanut, the House of Apple, the House of Adam, and the House of Pong." Some unsung copywriter at Epyx has created one of the best scenarios to explain a game that we've ever read!)

Getting back to the game, the victor in this battle for supremacy in the Silicon Valley of 100 years hence is the Warrior who first links five programmed chips in a row on a five-by-five grid. The Warriors, whether controlled by humans or Syborgs, move among the chips by teleporting from adjacent positions, claiming or "programming" the chip where they land. There are seven skill levels, providing for various combinations of extras in the game, such as the appearance of black holes, laser firing, and shields. The number of human or Syborg Warriors can be set at zero, one or two. No humans and two Syborgs results in a demo game, while the opposite extreme of two humans and two Syborgs can be an all-out riot with four players on the grid at one time. Five battles must be won by one Warrior to win the game.

Reminiscent of Othello

SILICON WARRIOR, despite its background story of futuristic battling for technological supremacy, is reminiscent of classic board games of strategy, such as Othello. The setting is three-dimensional, with the grid of chips appearing to recede into the distance against a background of twinkling stars. We had a great time trying out all the variations, particularly the two-player version against two Syborg opponents. This is an unusual game with an appealing combination of strategy and fast action. (Solo Play; 2-Player Simultaneous; Joystick; Disk.) (Also available on cartridge for Atari computers.)
Recommended. (MSR $35.00)

CHINESE JUGGLER (★ ★ ½ / ★ ★) is based on those carnival acts in which a juggler keeps a bunch of **CREATIVE SOFTWARE** plates spinning atop long poles. In this game, the juggler is Chinese and takes his plates from ornate Oriental tables at the bottom of the screen. There are eight poles, plates of five different colors (some colors worth more points than others), a clock that counts down the remaining time, and constant music. The idea is to have the juggler grab a plate from a table and then place it on one of the poles. If you're going for maximum points, have the juggler toss the plate over his head one or more times until it changes into one of the more valuable colors and then get it spinning on a pole. Of course, the plates already on the poles won't keep spinning forever, so the juggler has to run over to the poles (without a plate in his hand) to get them spinning faster again. This little routine continues until you run out of time, or all the plates break—or you become tired of the whole process. We'll bet on the latter.

Boring

The last game we played with this same premise was *Dishaster* for the Atari 2600 by the extremely short-lived company, Zimag (Remember them?) *CHINESE JUGGLER* plays a lot like it, although the graphics and sound are a little better. It's entirely too repetitive and limited in the skills it tests to merit more than a few plays, though. The entire game is nothing more than getting plates and placing them on poles, with a few moves to keep the plates spinning in between. In a word, it's boring. (Solo Play; Disk.) Not recommended. (MSR $29.95)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING.. COMMODORE 64-COMPATIBLE

THE SEVEN CITIES OF GOLD (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★) is a superb game from **Ozark Softscape** (designers of *M.U.L.E.*) and **Electronic Arts.** Rather than create yet another adventure set in a fictional world of fantasy, Dan and Bill Bunten have placed their adventure in the real world of the years 1492 to 1540. This was the exciting period of Spanish discovery, exploration and conquest in the New World. Embarking from Spain during this time, the player takes the role of explorer in search for wealth in far lands. Ships are provisioned with men and supplies: gold, food, and goods for trading. The voyage west may be uneventful, or it may be storm-tossed. If the ships reach land, the player must choose and equip an expeditionary force, deciding whether to meet the natives of the new land with trade or conquest in mind. The band of men must explore the lands and rivers, searching for hidden gold and other items to take back to Europe. Forts and missions can be established, foes or friends made among the natives. Upon the explorer's return to Europe, the Spanish court considers the gains of the expedition and may grant gold and a title of nobility.

A Thrill for History Buffs

THE SEVEN CITIES OF GOLD is a captivating game that's a real thrill for history buffs. Those who like to play adventure games seldom have the chance to experience one with such exquisite attention to detail. (When was the last time you found a bibliography in the instruction booklet for a video game?) And if participating in the discoveries and explorations of the Americas isn't exciting enough for you, the designers have provided the "World Maker." This feature allows the computer to generate random continents never before seen by anyone. These truly new worlds conform to geological and cultural principles, so there is a certain amount of predictability and consonance with reality as we know it. This program would delight any fan of role-playing adventures, particularly anyone who is interested in history. (Solo Play; Joystick; Disk; Blank disk required.) (Also available for Atari computers; coming soon for Apple.)
Recommended. (MSR $40.00)

BOULDER DASH (★ ★ ★ ½ / ★ ★ ★ ★) from *MicroFun* ha rolled onto the C64 screen and the conversion is excellent. Onc again, Rockford, our hero, digs through the earth collectin diamonds and avoiding the falling boulders. Collect all th diamonds (or a predetermined number for the difficulty level) an a magic door appears taking you to the next, more difficult cave If you get crushed by a boulder (diamonds can fall on you too), you must start collecting in that cave all over again. But watch out—boulders fall whereever gravity dictates! They can fall straight down if unsupported, or they will topple off underlying objects if there is nothing to block their way. Through trial and error, you will learn the physics of the boulders. There are several caves— from simple ones where you pick up diamonds before time runs out and move to the next cave, to rooms where you must move boulders to get to the diamonds. One cave we found particularly challanging (and beautiful) is the Apocalypse Cave where you must bring butterflies and Amoeba together to watch the jewels fly. There are 16 caves in all; however, only four are selectable. There are playable intermissions throughout the various games.

Great Game for C64

We fell in love with this one in its original Atari format and it plays just as well on the C64 format. This is a digging game which is totally addictive. Rockford taps his foot impatiently when you pause before making another move. The movement of boulders and diamonds (in certain caves) is very animated. Overall the graphics are excellent; however, we did mark it down slightly due to the fact that the variation in colors is not as evident in this version as in the Atari. Overall, however, this is a terrific game which C64 owners can now really enjoy! (one player; two player alternating; pause; joystick required; also available for Apple and Atari computers, coming for ColecoVision)
Recommended (MSR $40.00)

THE HEIST (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) from *MicroFun* has now been converted for the C64 and it's a good one. Once again, Graham Crackers, secret agent, is on a spy mission in an art museum where he must find the top secret micro dot. He must collect all the art from three floors and thirty rooms to complete his mission. Along the way, he must jump over robots, collect keys, avoid alarms, drones, etc., and manuever through the floors via the elevator and various escalators.

Very Animated

The gameplay is very animated with moving escalators, moving walkways, and an elevator which Graham can travel (you can even see his face through the windows as he passes a floor). It will be helpful if you map out your progress as you move through the rooms as you will have to pass through several rooms more than once to accomplish your mission. The one drawback to this version is a problem with the system, not the game. The Apple version boasts 144 rooms while the C64 version has 30 rooms. For those who master this type of game quickly, the 30 rooms may become a drawback. (one player; pause; joystick required; also available for Apple, coming for ColecoVision)
Recommended (MSR $40.00)

PRACTIFILE by **Practicorp International** and **Computer Software Associates** is a data base management program that is interactive with their spreadsheet program, *PractiCalc 64*. *PRACTIFILE* also supports several word processing programs for the purpose of file merging. (Your word processing program must have the ability to read sequential files.)

Virtually all data base management programs perform the same kinds of functions. In the home, they are especially useful for catalogue and list functions, such as maintaining family health records, cataloguing record or book collections, keeping Christmas card and gift lists, etc. They also have functions useful in running a small business, such as mailing lists, inventory control, and accounts receivable listings. *PRACTIFILE* is fairly easy to learn and use, and it has a larger file capacity than many other data base programs for the Commodore 64. It can handle up to 3800 records of 254 characters each. Another plus is its sorting speed: it can change a file from last-name order to zip-code order in less than one second, for example. Unlike some other programs of this type, it will accept and print upper and lower case data, too. Mathematical processes include arithmetic, log and trigonometric functions. This is a very good, comprehensive data base program that is economically priced for the home user. (Disk)
Recommended. (MSR $55.00)

TOTAL HEALTH by **Practicorp International** and **Computer Software Associates** is a nutrition program that helps you monitor your intake of calories, sodium, fat, protein and carbohydrates. You begin by entering certain basic statistics, including sex, age, current weight, desired weight, and activity level. If you want to lose or gain weight, the program will ask for the number of days in which you would like to reach your goal. The program contains 200 foods grouped in the familiar "basic four" plus a fifth category for miscellaneous (mostly "junk") foods. It is also possible to enter foods which are not contained in the program for a totally accurate record of your eating habits. The program keeps a complete record of your progress, even to the point of producing graphs in various categories, to help you to your goal of better nutrition and weight loss or gain. It is especially helpful because it considers the interaction of exercise and food intake, along with special considerations, such as dietary sodium levels. (Disk)
Recommended. (MSR $29.95)

Enhanced Studio 64

Entech is working on an enhanced version of their popular STUDIO 64 music program for Commodore 64. The new version promises truer musical notations, hi-res graphics, and control key functions. It should be available at the end of August and owners of the current version will be able to send in $10.00, along with their disk, to Entech for the upgraded version.

TYPE'N'WRITE is a combination typing tutor and word processing program created by **ChildWare** for ages eight and up. Both parts of the program are presented in a very straightforward manner—these are not games. The typing tutor program starts with a color-coded diagram for finger placement on the keyboard. Exercises proceed from practice with characters in the "home row" and other rows to the use of shift keys, four- and five-letter combinations, and four- and five-letter words. The program keeps track of the user's speed in words per minute (W.P.M.) and the number of errors made. Since the typing tutor is preparing the user for word processing, the space bar, rather than the "return" key, is used for moving from line to line. (In word processing programs, the feature known as "word wrap" causes a complete word to jump to the next line when all of it won't fit at the end of the preceding line. The "return" key can then control some other function in the program.)

The word processor in this program is a very simple one that is suited to basic home applications. A function menu at the top of the screen is all that most users will need, though there is a help screen that can be called up at any time. The help screen shows the functions of the cursor control keys plus "delete," "clear/home," and the process for changing background and/or text colors. The function key menu allows the user to find any specific phrase in the text, delete the line above the cursor, and erase, save, load, catalog or print files. *TYPE'N'WRITE* is a good choice for children and others who do not need a full-featured word processor, especially if the user needs to develop typing skills. (Disk) Recommended for children. (MSR $29.95)
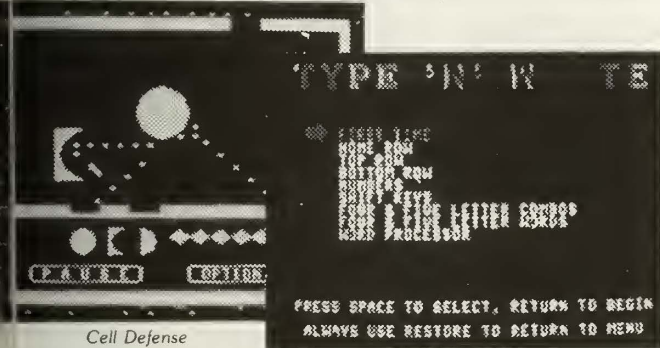
Cell Defense

Type N'Write

CELL DEFENSE (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) is a science simulation game by **HesWare** from a design by **ChildWare**. The object is to save an organism being invaded by viruses, and your weapons are Interferon, microphages, lymphocytes and antibodies. The difficulty level of the game is set by determining the number of cell layers in the organism, the virus reproduction rate, the cell regeneration rate, and the overall health of the organism at the beginning of the game. A chart keeps you informed of the general state of the organism and its various cell layers, while you must choose the right defenses to get rid of the invading viruses before they overcome the organism and kill it. Choosing the right defense depends on your learning about the way viruses and the immune system work. For example, sending a microphage into a cell already overrun with multiplying viruses does no good at all. There's no question that children will get a kick out of playing this game with hungry, green microphages and nasty, little viruses. They will also learn a little something about the immune system, but this game should not be considered a substitute for biology homework. (Solo play; Joystick; Pause; Disk.) (Also available for IBM PC.) MSR $39.95)

Science Fiction Plots

Spinnaker Software has developed a new division, Trillium Corp, which will offer adventure games feature science fiction plots by famous authors. Among the titles which will be offered before the end of the year are RENDEZVOUD WITH RAMA, based on the book by Arthur C. Clark; AMAZON by Michael Crichton; DRAGONWORLD, based on the book by Byron Preiss and Michael Reaves; FAHRENHEIT 451 by Ray Bradbury; and SHADOWKEEP, from a book which has been adapted by Alan Dean Foster. In the programs, players assume the identity of the characters in order to embark on adventures and explore the environments. The average game play is planned for about 40 hours and initial versions will be Apple ($44.95) and C64 ($39.95)

64 DOCTOR is a diagnostic program from **Practicorp International** and **Computer Software Associates** for your Commodore 64 computer and peripherals. It is designed to take some of the frustration out of those inevitable times when you know something is wrong somewhere in your system, but you'd like to avoid taking *all* the components to your local repair center. Individual tests cover keyboard, video display, audio, joysticks and joystick ports, disk drive, printer, memory (RAM), and the cassette player. Disk drive tests include the "save" function, DOS internal functions, and writing functions. The test will also tell you if a storage disk is worn out and should not be used for storage of data. The printer test makes sure that the device can print out all ASCII characters, both upper and lower case. RAM is tested byte by byte in the memory test, and there's even a continuous RAM test that can be run overnight. (The user is cautioned to turn the monitor off for this one.) Also included is an "auto-test" which checks the disk drive, RAM and printer in sequence. This is the only diagnostic program for the Commodore 64 of which we are aware, and it would be a worthwhile purchase for any Commodore 64 owner. (Disk or Cassette) Recommended. (MSR $29.95 Disk, $24.95 Cassette)

64 PAK from **Practicorp International** and **Computer Software Associates** is an inexpensive package for the whole family which includes ten individual programs. "Flash Cards" allows you to create your own tests for vocabulary, math, or whatever. (You will need a blank disk or cassette to save your flash cards.) "Speed Read" flashes single phrases on the screen at varying rates, requiring you to type them on the keyboard to test the accuracy of your reading. "Sign Talk" teaches and tests the hand configurations of the sign language used to communicate with hearing-impaired individuals. "Cash Register" offers drills in making correct change within the setting of a grocery store. "States and Capitals" gives the user the option of multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank formats for learning about the fifty states. "Perpetual Calendar" displays any month for the years 0-9999 A.D. "World Clock" helps you to find out what time it is in the major cities of the world. "Mortgage Calculator" will compute any one variable in a mortgage formula when the others are known. For example, it will compute monthly payments when the user enters the principal, interest, and term of the loan. This program will also display amortization tables. "Life Expectancy" asks a series of questions about your family history and lifestyle and then calculates the approximate age to which you can expect to live, along a comparison to the rest of the male and female population. "Big Time" turns your monitor or TV into a giant digital clock and demonstrates the color capabilities of your Commodore 64. At less than $2.50 per program, this package is quite a bargain! (Disk or Cassette) Recommended. (MSR $24.95 Disk, $19.95 Cassette)

Something Afoot at Commodore?

There are rumors coming out of Commodore which indicate there may be cutbacks around the corner. We understand that, once again, the 264 (or Four Plus) computer has been put on "hold" and profits are not as good as they have been. Commodore, as usual, is staying quiet about any of these rumors so we will have to wait and see.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..COMMODORE 64-COMPATIBLE

SPACE AMBUSH (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★) is an invasion game without enough original elements to make it really stand out from the already overcrowded field of similar games. This one is by **Virgin Games,** distributed by **Quicksilva.** Your spaceship and the invading hordes move lethargically at first, but the action speeds up as succeeding waves are eliminated. The invaders assume fanciful shapes as they enter the screen from the top. There are Halloween faces, classic tragedy masks, little spaceships, and even birds that enter singly at first, later in groups. The first time you hit one, it splits into two, faster-moving invaders. The second hit may cause it to release a "proton bomb." After completing seven and then twenty-four waves, your spaceship must dock with a mothership, which will increase your ship's fire-power.

Play Action Too Familiar

The graphics in *SPACE AMBUSH* are nice and colorful, and the sound effects are fairly good, but play action is just too familiar. The invasion game should really be laid to rest if this is the best that can be done with it at this stage in the development of electronic games. (Solo Play; Joystick or Keyboard; Pause; Disk.) Not recommended. (MSR $29.95)

HIDEOUS BILL AND THE GI-GANTS (★ ★ / ★ ★ ½) is a **Virgin Games** design distributed by **Quicksilva.** This one is a three-screen maze game in which Hideous Bill attempts to save his lady love, Greta, from becoming ant food for the Gi-Gants. In the first screen, Bill must crush all the eggs while avoiding the roving Gi-Gants. There are four spears in the maze which allow Bill to get revenge on the Gi-Gants for a few moments. The second screen has no weapons, but there are a couple of doors which can be operated to trap a Gi-Gant or two, if you're quick. On this level, all the Inf-ants have to be crushed and you must retrieve the magic baked beans from the center of the maze. Greta can be seen in the third maze, where Bill must crush more eggs and break through walls to create an escape route.

Similar to Other Maze Chases

If the description of this game reminds you of other maze games, especially *Pac-Man*, you can be sure that the game itself will look familiar to most players. It's not a bad game to play, even though the graphics are rather pale, and the design of the game is similar to several other maze chases. The controls are smooth, and we had fun with it. However, it just isn't up to the level of sophistication achieved by several other maze chases on this system. (Solo Play; Joystick; Disk.) Not recommended. (MSR $29.95)

SUPER PIPELINE (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★) is an amusing, arcade-style game that will keep you entertained for hours. The player's on-screen alter ego is Piers Letcher, a plumbing supervisor whose job is to keep the water flowing through a maze of pipes so that 1000 gallons can accumulate in a vat at the bottom of the screen. Typical of some supervisors, this guy doesn't do much heavy work. Whenever a plug in the pipeline has to be fixed, he taps a workman for the task. The little workman follows the supervisor to the plug and does the job while the supervisor stands around. If he's a really good supervisor—and this is up to the player—he'll protect his little buddy by shooting at the deadly bugs that try to keep the pipeline from being opened. The pipeline bugs enter the scene by means of a red ladder on the right side of the screen, and a combination of accurate aim and quick trigger finger can prevent their lousing up the pipeworks. The small characters that cause the plugs to drop into the pipes also enter the screen on the ladder, and they, too, can be stopped from doing their obstructive work. Once the vat is filled with 1000 gallons of water, the player moves to the next pipeline, often with an intermission cartoon as a reward between screens.

Plenty of Options

We really like the amount of customizing that is possible with this game. There are lots of different screens, and the player can choose to start on any of the first eight. In addition, players may choose to have one to eight "lives," play at any of three skill levels, and change sound effects from full background with tunes, to basic sound effects only, to no sound at all. The flexibility of game options is a good feature, but what we like best about *SUPER PIPELINE* is the combination of sparkling graphics with captivating play action. The characters are delightful, from Piers Letcher and the cute little workman to the menacing red lobster. And the realism of the graphics contributes to the enjoyment of this humorous, yet challenging game. We had a tough time putting this one away because we were having such a good time! It's a game that really keeps you busy—watching for bad guys, leading the workman to the right spots, and avoiding the falling plugs and bugs. We wouldn't be surprised to see this one licensed to one of the arcade game manufacturers for adaptation to a coin-op version. *Note: to save high scores between sessions, you will need a blank disk.* (Solo Play; 2-Player Alternating; Joystick; Pause; Disk.) Recommended. (MSR $39.95)

LABYRINTH OF THE CREATOR (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ½) is an action adventure that will appeal to fans of the arcade games *Berzerk* and *Frenzy*. The Creator is one nasty creature who has filled the chambers of his labyrinth with an assortment of bad guys whose sole aim in life is to eliminate your on-screen character. The labyrinth itself is a very large grid of rooms, some containing keys or treasures, most containing danger of some kind. You start the game with ten lives, which seems generous until you've played several games, each ending with the same disheartening message on the screen: "Mission Failed." Fortunately, there is a pause feature. This gives you a needed breather from all the bad guys chasing your character, and it also gives you a screen showing your current location within the labyrinth. Also shown on this screen are the sites of the power source, the creator's chamber, and several necessary keys. However, knowing where things are and actually reaching them turn out to be two very different matters!

Fast and Relentless

LABYRINTH OF THE CREATOR will appeal to those who like adventure games and to those who like their action fast and relentless. With the very large number of chambers and the difficulty encountered in reaching them, it will be quite a while before a player can exhaust the possibilities of this game. Graphics are very colorful, although fairly simple. The sound effects are downright menacing, which adds to the spirit of the game. This one is a good game at a very reasonable price. (Solo Play; Joystick; Pause; Disk.) Recommended. (MSR $22.95)

GALACTIC CONQUEST (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ½) is a fascinating game of strategy from **Victory Software** in which one to six players set out to conquer the galaxy. Just as in the real world, your plans of conquest are affected by your own actions and by occasional random events over which you have no control. Each player starts the game in control of his or her own planet, the "homeworld," with a fleet of ships and a set production capacity for building more ships. A starmap is chosen, length of the game set, names assigned to the starfleet admirals, and the game begins. (The computer is always "Admiral Badguy.") Decisions, decisions—each fleet admiral must decide how many ships to send to any of the unconquered worlds. After all the admirals have taken their turns, the results of the maneuverings are shown in a series of alerts on the screen. Fleet Zardoz attacks Fleet Badguy; Zardoz conquers! Fleet Badguy reinforces one of his planets! The alerts continue, and the results of that year's moves are shown. (The game may be set for 1-200 "years" or rounds of turns for the players.) All through the game, a number of other moves are possible, and the combined results of these moves become more complex when more players are participating. It's easy to become very involved with *Galactic Conquest* as the tension and excitement build in each successive "year." It's a great game for one person, and it's even better for a group. (Solo Play; 2- to 6-Player Alternating; Keyboard; Disk.) (VIC-20 version on same disk.) Recommended. (MSR $22.95)

Attention Game Collectors

Over the past several months, with more and more magazines isappearing, we have discovered we are reaching more and more erious game collectors who are collecting everything from comlete 2600 cartridge sets to every game manufactured for every edicated game system out there! Several readers have approached s regarding the possibility of a Trading Mart where information ould be gathered and traders put together. In an attempt to be esponsive to our readers, we would like to know what you'd like. lease drop us a line and let us know whether you would like some rt of service and, if you would, what you need from us. If we ave enough interest, we will attempt to put together something hich will help all of our collectors.

Hesitation on Atari-Compatibles

With the situation at Atari far from resolved (see front page artie), we have contacted several third party software companies hich produce software for both the Atari computers and the 2600 nd 5200. Virtually all contacted have told us the same thing— ey have temporarily put "on hold" any software planned for those stems while they wait for word of Atari's continued commitment those systems. As a result, our Availability Update will reflect pcoming release dates which will undoubtedly not be met. We ll continue to stay on top of this situation and report any changes.

7800 Adaptor Questions Answered

Although the future of the 7800 and adaptor are highly in quesn (see front page article), we have had many questions from ders regarding the adaptor for the 5200 which we feel we should dress. First, the 5200 controllers (Atari or 3rd party) will not work h the adaptor. The 7800 adaptor, as currently planned, will ve joystick ports for VCS-compatible joysticks/trackballs, etc. e expect the adaptor to come packaged with the same ProStick ntrollers which are to be packaged with the 7800 unit. We also derstand that POLE POSITION II will be included, built-in on OM chip, on the adaptor. The original release date for the adap- was planned for the fourth quarter; therefore, it would be after t date that Atari had planned to put POLE POSITION II on a M chip on the 7800 unit. That 7800 adaptor would also, by way, include the ability to play 2600 games.

ow we'll just have to wait and see what Atari's plans are for unit!

7800 Interest Level High

Even prior to the recent sale of Atari, our phones have been ging off the hooks regarding the release of the 7800. As the ys and weeks have passed, our phones have been busier and sier and we've noted a higher interest in the release of this unit n what we experienced prior to the original release of Coleco- ion over a year ago! As far as our readers are concerned, games not dead!!

Update on Cartridges for ADAM

wo months ago we reported on a possible problem with both IST (MicroFun) and SUPER COBRA (Parker Bros.) working the ADAM expansion module. We have been back and forth h both companies several times AND Coleco and, although we e never received any clear answers, it appears that ones cur- tly being manufactured do not have the same problem as some he original ones did. We have had copies of both programs ur facilities and tried them on our ADAM Module without pro- n. We do not know if it was a "glitch" in the early cartridges ? but it appears to be resolved now.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..
ATARI 2600-COMPATIBLE

TRACK & FIELD (★ ★ ★ ½ / ★ ★ ★ ½) is the official video game of the 1984 Summer Olympics. It is an adaptation of the very popular coin-op by Konami and even comes packaged with an arcade-style three-button controller. This is one of Atari's new "super chip" games with enhanced graphics and variety in game play. There are six events for one or two players: 100-meter dash, long jump, javelin throw, 100-meter hurdles, hammer throw, and high jump. Each event has a minimum qualifying goal that must be met to move on to the next contest, and the qualifying times or distances vary depending on the level of difficulty chosen. In all events, speed is built up by rapidly pressing one or both of the "run" buttons on the controller, depending on whether the player prefers a one- or two-handed approach. At the critical moment in most events, the jump/throw button activates the next movement (jumping a hurdle, throwing the javelin, etc.). In some events, the amount of time the jump button is held down governs the angle of the athlete's body. In others, holding the button down changes the angle of a projectile, such as the javelin. With practice, the player learns the optimum angle for these jumps or throws. A scoreboard above the track shows the players' initials and scores. (The computer calls itself "C.P.U." of course!) Further information appears at the bottom of the screen, including a speed readout in centimeters per second and a bar graph that shows how much effort is being exerted.

A Gold Medal for Atari

Inevitably, TRACK & FIELD will be compared to the other sports-themed games that are appearing at Olympics time. However, the only other game of this type that is available for the Atari 2600 is The Activision Decathlon, a ten-event game for one player only. Although the Activision cartridge is an impressive piece of programming, we would have to award the gold medal to the newer entry from Atari. Despite having fewer events, there is more versatility to TRACK & FIELD because two can play. The arcade-style controller makes a lot more sense and is not so physically exhausting as the pumping of a joystick handle that is necessary in Decathlon. TRACK & FIELD has very good animation, detailed graphics, and a balanced variety of play action in the different events. Fans of the arcade game will want this version to take home, and video sports fans in general will find it to be a winner. (Solo Play; 2-Player Simultaneous in some events, alternating in others.) (Also scheduled for Atari 5200, 7800 and Atari computers.) Recommended. (MSR $39.95)

Game Screens and Reviews

Whenever possible, we obtain game screens from the manufacturers so that our readers can see how a game or other program looks, in addition to giving descriptions and evaluations in our reviews. Many of you have requested that we use screen art for all reviews, even if it means using artwork that may not reproduce well. (This is often the case when we must work from a color slide or color print.) In a further effort to provide some idea of what programs look like, with this issue we have begun to use screens from the instruction booklets when nothing else is available. Although these are usually drawings, rather than actual screen reproductions, they do give an impression of a program's appearance. You, our readers, have told us that you would rather have some idea of a program's appearance than nothing at all. Unfortunately, we still won't be able to provide artwork for all reviews. Some manufacturers use neither artwork nor photos on packaging or in the instruction booklets.

DUKES OF HAZZARD (★★★½ / ★★★★) is the newest

COLECO

game for the Driving Module and it's the best one yet! You must drive the General Lee in pursuit of Jeremiah Stinge, the fat cat who owns the local mortgage company. He's faked a deed to the Dukes' place, Daisy has uncovered his scheme, so he's taken her off to parts unknown. Meanwhile, Boss Hogg wants to serve the foreclosure papers so he's just itching to catch up to you. So, the race is on as Stinge heads
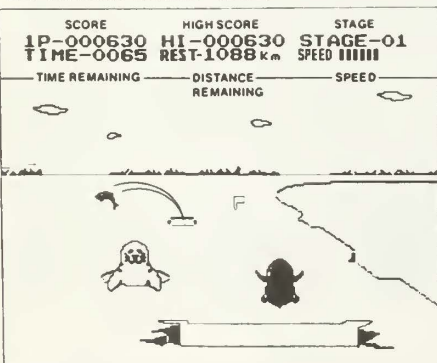

for the county line with Daisy. Meanwhile, you must keep an eye on your rearview mirror for Boss Hogg. You can always use the "bootlegger turn" if Hogg gets too close. As you start your adventure you must "gear up" starting with First and ending with Fourth — just like the real thing. There are lots of sharp curves which, if you're not careful, will send you against the roadside. Shift down to third or second to make it. Watch out when you're in town as Stinge may make a fast turn down a side street. Take your foot off the petal, spin the wheel, and follow him! You'll run into hills where you'll have to hang on and "fly". Yellow signposts indicate a cross street ahead, if you want to try another direction. If a bridge is out, you can jump it if your speed is at least 75mph. If your speed isn't fast enough, it's time for the bootlegger turn — hit the handbrake, turn the wheel fast and hope you can get the General Lee turned around so you can gear up again and head in the opposite direction. Of course, there are other obstacles including other cars just out for a Sunday drive. Avoid them or you'll slow down to a dead standstill and you'll have to start up all over again.

Many Exciting Elements

We had seen an early version months ago which was, frankly, not terrific. The delay in releasing this game is indeed evident (and worthwhile) in all the added elements which have since been programmed in. You get a real sense of driving with the rearview mirror which gives you the view behind you and we really enjoyed, for the first time, the ability to shift through all four gears, as opposed to just "low and high". The gear shifting is not mere window dressing either as you will stall out if you attempt to slow down without shifting down to lower gears. Each gear has a range and you must shift within that range. Features such as the Bootlegger Turn, jumping the hills, and screeching off into side streets takes this far above "just another driving game". If you held back from purchasing the Driving Module when it was first released because only one game was available for it, you should now run to your nearest store for the Module. You'll get Turbo with the unit which is a fine racing game, and by adding DUKES, you'll have a dynamic pair of games which will provide many hours of racing and chasing excitement! (one player; two player alternating; Driving Module 2 required)
Recommended

ANTARCTIC ADVENTURE (★★★★ / ★★★) is based on

the Konami arcade game, an ice-bound adventure that's a cool-

ing diversion on a hot summer afternoon. The object of the game is to help a penguin explorer (Admiral Bird, perhaps?) to circle the South Pole on the Antarctic continent, reaching each of ten ice stations. There is a time limit for each stage of the exploration while the amusing penguin

skates and glides over snow and ice, jumping ice crevasses, puddles, and curious seals that poke their heads out of holes in the ice. Green flags and jumping fish can be caught for extra points along the way. The penguin is never eliminated for running into obstacles, but they cause him to lose time as he attempts to regain his balance. The player's view of the game is from behind the skating penguin, giving a feeling of actually being in the game setting, rather than merely observing from above or from one side. Bonus points are awarded when the penguin reaches each ice station, depending on the amount of time left on the game clock. (Unlike most Coleco games, only one skill level is available.)

A Charming Game

ANTARCTIC ADVENTURE is a charming game that will be especially attractive to the younger members of the family, although it provides a challenge for all ages. The graphics are exceptionally well done, with smooth transitions between scenes. The sense of depth is enhanced by shading and perspective, and the well animated penguin is cute and appealing. The penguin performs his icy antics to the constant accompaniment of the "Skater's Waltz," adding to the wintery feeling of the game. The play action is somewhat reminiscent of *Turbo*, since the player races the penguin through curves and straightaways, jumping and weaving to avoid the obstacles. This one is good, family fun. (Solo Play; Standard or Super Action Controller.)
Recommended.
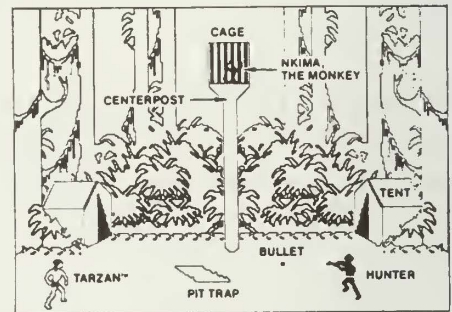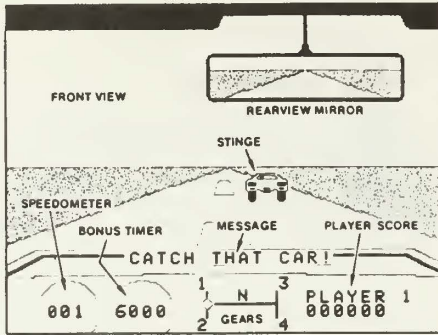
TARZAN (★★★ / ★★★) swings to life with an adventure in which he must rescue all the captured apes by running, swimming, climbing, and swinging through the jungle. Tarzan is never eliminated from the adventure; however, a red vitality bar, if allowed to run out by Tarzan being stunned by the enemies, will end the adventure. As Tarzan races through the various screens in search of the apes, he is menaced by various foes including Bolgani, the gorilla; Histah, the snake; Gimla, the crocodile; pits of doom; and the Hunter. The first rescue is Tarzan's faithful companion, Nkima the monkey, who is imprisoned in a cage atop a center post in the hunter's camp. Tarzan must avoid the pit traps and the hunter's bullets as he climbs up the pole to rescue Nkima. Once freed, Nkima accompanies Tarzan and warns him of hidden snakes and pit traps with a piercing cry. However, if he passes too close to a bunch of bananas, Nkima will desert Tarzan for a snack. Tarzan must swing his way above crocodile-infested waters to open the cages where the apes are guarded by Beastmen. The last apes are held in the Temple of the Flaming God, the home of the Beastmen. In the temple Tarzan must beware of cracks in the flooring and, once he frees the first ape, the idol awakens, hurling fireballs. After all the apes have been freed, Tarzan must engage in a contest with the Idol, carefully climbing the temple's platforms, continuially avoiding the fireballs. Once Tarzan reaches the top, hit any kepad button which will unloose his famous roar.
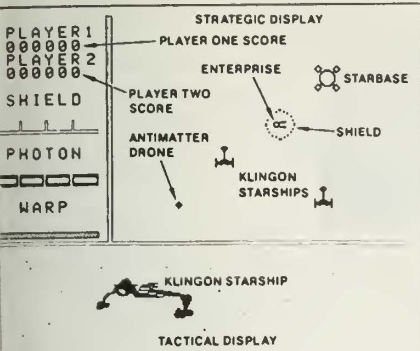
Good Adventure

As Tarzan ventures through the jungle, there are many perils which require various reactions such as punching, leaping over the foe, etc. Although you can use either the regular ColecoVision controller or the Super Action controller, we found better control over the various functions with the Super Action controller. The scenes are extremely realistic, both in gameplay and graphics and we were particularly impressed with the graphics of Tarzan's swing across various waterways. There's plenty of varied action and strategy involved which will keep you involved for many hours of fun. (one player; two player alternating)
Recommended

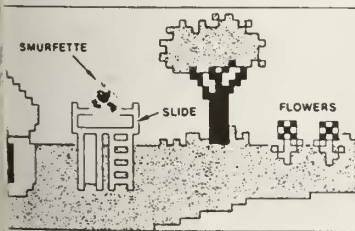**STAR TREK** (★ ★ ★ ½ / ★ ★ ★) is based on the Sega coin-op and is therefore quite similar to the versions produced in 1983 for several home systems by Sega itself. The game puts the player at the helm of the Starship Enterprise for battles with the Klingons and periodic encounters with the rogue space-probe, NOMAD. The opening strains of the *Star Trek* musical theme set the mood as the Enterprise glides onto the screen. The three-part display on the screen shows the Starship's gauges (shields, photon torpedoes and warp drive), an overall strategic view of the action, and a close-up tactical display for critical aiming. The initial object is to clear each sector, protecting the star-bases from Klingon attack by firing the phasers of the Enterprise at the enemy ships. (The player also has a limited number of photon torpedoes which can eliminate whole groups of attackers at once.) During the battles, the Klingons' Antimatter Drone often follows the Enterprise around the sector. If it makes contact, it drains warp energy from the Enterprise. (Shields, photon torpedoes, and warp drive energy can be replenished by docking at a starbase, but each docking subtracts bonus points.) The final objective is to eliminate NOMAD, which hops around like a flea in space, dropping space mines in its path. If the Enterprise destroys NOMAD, it's on to the next sector and more Klingons.

Straightforward Shooting Game

The designers at Coleco apparently felt that the Klingon and NOMAD battles are the strongest part of the Sega arcade game, because they left out the trips through asteroid fields and meteor showers in this version. The game plays just as well without these sequences, and it places more emphasis on the dodge-and-shoot aspects of the game. STAR TREK is a very straightforward shooting game in space whose primary appeal is to the Trekkie who has always wanted a chance to command the Starship Enterprise. (Those who aren't fans of the TV and movie series may find this game a little slow, with its short intermissions between sectors.) The music adds a lot to the feeling of participating in a real *Star Trek* adventure, and Trekkies will recognize the familiar shapes of the Klingon vessels and the Enterprise itself. Graphically, the designers at Coleco have outdone those at Sega, who created the first home versions of this game nearly a year ago. The rendering of Klingon ships, starbases, and space mines in the close-up tactical display window is superb—a real treat for Trekkies. (Solo Play; 2-Player alternating; Pause; Standard or Super Action Controller.) (Also available from Sega for Atari 2600 and 5200; Atari, Commodore 64 and VIC-20 computers.) Recommended for Trekkies.

SMURF PAINT'N'PLAY WORKSHOP (★ ★ ½ / ★ ★ ★ ★) is

a cartridge designed for learning and exploration by children from four to eight years old. They have a chance to manipulate some of their favorite cartoon characters—Smurf, Smurf-ette, Papa Smurf and Gargamel—in a variety of settings. There are four scenes (Papa Smurf's living room, the river and cave, outside a Smurf cottage, and Gargamel's kitchen) plus blank screens for the child to create his or her own drawings. A separate screen is full of objects such as flowers, letters, trees and furniture which can be moved to any scene and even "painted" in different colors. The possibilities for creative play are endless, especially when a child learns to use the recording feature of the program. Working with any or all of the four characters in devised or provided settings, children can create their own cartoon stories starring the Smurfs and then play them back. A child can even explore animation techniques by using the recording feature.

Wonderful Possibilities

This is one of those programs that is at its best when explored by parent and child together. Very young children will need some guidance to discover all the wonderful possibilities, and both parent and child will benefit from sharing the program. (Some parts of the program can even be used by two people at the same time.) Mom and dad will find lots of suggested activities in the instruction booklet which can be used as a springboard to creative play. Colors are bright, and the familiar Smurf musical themes will delight young children. Graphics are a mixture of high resolution for the Smurf characters and background scenes with low resolution for the movable objects. The blockiness of these objects won't even be noticed by the intended audience for the cartridge—they'll be having too good a time playing with the Smurfs! (Solo Play; 2-Player Simultaneous; Pause.) Recommended.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING.. ATARI 2600-COMPATIBLE

ELI'S LADDER (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ½) is an educational program providing drills in addition and subtraction for ages four to adult, although it is most useful for grade school children. "Eli" of the title is described as a space traveler from another planet. He can be helped to climb the ladder to his spaceship by providing the correct answers to eighteen or more of twenty addition or subtraction problems which appear on a chalkboard screen. The student moves the joystick to highlight the correct answer in a group of four numbers appearing below the chalkboard, pressing the firing button to indicate the choice. If the student makes the wrong choice, the correct answer is given. A correct answer is rewarded by showing Eli moving up one rung on his ladder. The parent can control advancement from one problem to the next, or the student can work alone at any of ten difficulty levels for each arithmetic operation. (In the lower difficulty levels, the student can enter a counting mode on any problem. The problem is then shown in numbers and graphically, with a display of red and green apples. The parent's firing button controls the counting of apples.) Three types of games can be played at each difficulty level: Practice, in which the student works at his or her own speed; Pacer, in which a symbol moves across the screen, allowing two to sixteen seconds to work each problem; and Phantom, which blacks out three of the four possible answers in addition to employing the pacer. With sums, minuends and subtrahends from zero to 99, depending on level of difficulty, the program covers a wide range of skills in these basic arithmetic operations.

Designed by a Teacher

The content of this program was designed by a teacher with more than twenty years of classroom experience—and that experience shows. ELI'S LADDER is an entertaining substitute for flashcards with its bright colors and musical sounds that appeal to children. However, its educational value has been given more importance than its game value, which parents should appreciate. The game aspect is used as a motivator, but purposeful drill is the centerpiece of the program. Additional motivation can be provided by the included "Spaceship Award Chart" and Eli stickers which the parent gives the child for especially good performances. ELI'S LADDER is exactly the sort of program that many parents want for their children: one that clearly teaches needed skills in an entertaining manner. This cartridge is available directly from the manufacturer, Simage, at 15 Leveroni Ct., Novato, CA 94947. (Solo drill; Parent-directed drill; Pause.) Recommended. (MSR $29.95)

(Editor's Note: We have adopted the convention of reviewing all ColecoVision/Adam programs that are in cartridge format under the heading "ColecoVision-Compatible" in the Video Game Update section. Programs that are for Adam ONLY (data-pack format) are reviewed under the heading "Adam-Compatible" in the Computer Entertainer section.)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..ATARI 7800

ROBOTRON: 2084 (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★) for the 7800 brings this frantic arcade hit to new heights for the home player. With your anti-robot gun you must destroy all the Robotron species while attempting to save humans. The Robotrons attack in waves, with different species in each wave. Among the Robotrons you will face are the Mindless Grunts, Indestructible Hulks, Giant Brains which are launched every fifth wave, Cruise Missiles which will hone in on you, Sinister Spheroids and their deadly spawn, Galvanizing Electrodes, and the Cubic Quarks and the Torturing Tanks. Wave after wave, they will come at you as you fire away and save those few humanoids left.

Frantic Movement on the Screen

When we heard that, at times, there were over one hundred moving objects on the screen, we thought it must be an exaggeration. The gameplay is so frantic we certainly did not have time to count the objects; however, we've never seen so much on a home screen before! The graphics are stunning with all the various characters clear in their differences. The gameplay is at a lightening pace and, as you reach the higher levels, virtually impossible to make it through with your life. There are four levels of difficulty so it will be quite a long time before you can master this one. This game is a perfect example of the advanced capability of the 7800 with its ability to reproduce varied and complex movement and gameplay. The game comes packaged with a dual controller holder as you will use both controllers. (one player; two-player alternating; pause)
Recommended (MSR $35.00)

JOUST (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★) is another superb arcade translation from Atari for the new 7800 ProSystem, this one based on the coin-op by Williams Electronics. It's a medieval fantasy-action game in which the player's knight on ostrich-back jousts against riders on buzzards. The winner of each joust is the one whose mount is highest at the moment of contact. Direction of the bi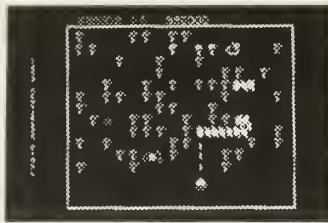rd's flight or running along ledges is controlled by the joystick, and its wings are kept flapping by pushing the firing button repeatedly. In the standard waves, an unseated rider turns into an egg, which the player must collect as soon as possible, or else it will hatch into a more dangerous buzzard. There are other hazards, too, such as the Lava Troll that resides in the fire pits beneath the lowest ledge and the Pterodactyls that prowl in search of ostrich prey. Just as in the arcade game, there are special kinds of waves scattered throughout the game: egg waves and pterodactyl waves, survival waves (solo game only), and team and gladiator waves (two-player games only).

Faithful Adaptation

We've seen the game before for several home systems, but the 7800 version of Joust is unquestionably the most faithful adaptation of the coin-op. Play action is fascinating in this unusual game because of the offbeat method of controlling your ostrich. It's ideal for players who enjoy sharing a game with a friend, because it allows for competition or cooperation with two players on the screen at once. And as a result of all the flying and bouncing around the screen, the game has a more "free-form" feeling than most, whether one or two play. Sound effects are anything but ordinary, too—the screeching sounds like brakes when the ostrich changes direction on a ledge are especially good. As with the other games adapted for the ProSystem, this version of Joust is closer than any other to the coin-op in its graphic quality. The difference between this and other adaptations is especially noticeable in the degree of detail in riders, mounts, and lances and in the menacing Lava Troll of the fire pits. It's hard to believe that your TV can look this much like an arcade screen! (Solo Play; 2-Player Simultaneous; Pause.) (Also available for Atari 2600, 5200 and computers; scheduled for ColecoVision plus Apple, Commodore 64 & IBM PC computers.)
Recommended. (MSR $37.95)

CENTIPEDE (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★) for the Atari 7800 Pro-System is the best home translation yet of the popular Atari arcade game, and it includes even more options than the original coin-op. This is the familiar bug-blasting game in which the player shoots at an onrushing centipede that snakes its way through a field of enchanted mushrooms. Other pests in the mushroom patch include a bouncing spider, a flea that plummets straight down the screen, and a scorpion that poisons mushrooms in its path. (When the Centipede hits a poisoned mushroom, it zooms straight down the screen toward the player's bug blaster.)

Best Centipede Yet

The arcade version of Centipede has always been one of our favorite coin-ops, and we've found Atari's adaptations for the various home systems to be among the best arcade to home conversions available. However, this one for the 7800 puts all the others to shame. The graphics, thanks to the Maria chip in the ProSystem, are nearly identical to the coin-op. The amount of detail in the objects is incredible, and the shading gives a dimensional quality we haven't seen before in any home version of Centipede. The mushrooms actually look rounded in this version. But as good as the graphics are, the play action is even better (especially if you use the optional track ball controller). Fans of the coin-op will really appreciate the number of original variations in this adaptation. Along with the familiar solo and two-player alternating games, there are two additional options for two players, allowing them to play simultaneously on the screen. In "Dual Play Competition," the players compete against each other, each scoring independently. Players have to avoid getting in each other's line of fire, though, because it's possible to lose a bug blaster that way. In "Team Play," cooperation is the key. The players get a total of six "lives" between them, and both team and individual scores are shown on the screen. (Incidentally, one very nice feature of the two-player alternating game is that both players can share the same track ball controller.) With the 7800 version of Centipede, Atari has taken a great game and made it better than ever—dazzling graphics, superb sound, and a variety of exciting game options. (Solo Play; 2-Player Alternating; 2-Player Simultaneous; Joystick or Track Ball; Pause.) (Also available for Atari 2600 & 5200, ColecoVision, Intellivision; Apple, Atari, Commodore 64, IBM PC, TI 99/4A computers.)
Recommended. (MSR $37.95)

MS PAC-MAN (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★) is a perennial favorite among gamers and it's an inevitable addition to the planned 7800 library. The premise is simple and well-known—our lady with a bow must eat her way through four mazes gobbling dots, energy pills, fruit, cinnamon bears, and pretzels while the four ghosts continue their chase. After every two completed mazes, we are treated to the intermissions which are taken from the arcade version.

Fine Rendition

The gameplay is very responsive with the ProStick joystick and we found we were able to rack up some impressive scores. The graphics are quite good with a major plus the fact that the intermissions are included from the arcade version. This version, however, is not so much better graphically than the 5200 version that it should be an "automatic" purchase unless you either do not have the 5200 version (this is based on the premise you have a good third party 5200 controller for Ms Pac-Man), or the intermissions are truly important to you. (one player; two-player alternating; pause)
Recommended (MSR $35.00)

PCjr Upgraded

Responding to poor acceptance and equally poor sales, IBM has announced upgrades to their PCjr which can really turn the success of the computer around! First of all, the "chicklet" keyboard will disappear as soon as current inventory is depleted and will be replaced with a typewriter-style replacement which is a smaller version of the PC keyboard. This new keyboard will be given FREE to current owners of the PCjr—and owners will not have to make an additional purchase of some sort of accessory to qualify for this free trade. However, if you bought your PCjr through a discount, non-authorized IBM outlet, you will not qualify for the new keyboard.

More Memory

Also responding to the many complaints regarding the fact that the PCjr will not run many programs designed for its big brother, the PC, IBM introduced memory expansion options which will allow the PCjr to grow to twice the capacity that has been anticipated. That expansion will allow programs such as Lotus 1-2-3 to run on the computer for the first time. The memory expansion parts will include diskettes that enable the PCjr to run complex programs which normally require two disk drives (the PCjr only has one). The memory expansion features take the PCjr's maximum storage of 128K up to 512K (about 330 typed pages). To move beyond 256K you will have to purchase a $150 part, while each 128K increment of memory expansion will retail at $325.00

Other Accessories

Other new items announced for the PCjr include a $300 speech-synthesis attachment which turns the PCjr into a talking computer; a $199 money management program named for financial advisor Andrew Tobias; and a $99 multicolor drawing program. In addition, Lotus has announced they will release a cartridge version of their popular 1-2-3 for the basic PCjr which does not have a disk drive.

While the improvements should help PCjr move off dealer's shelves, there is still concern about its future in the home market. The new PCjr with typewriter-style keyboard, 256K of memory, power booster, and built-in disk drive will sell for about $1475, which is approximately $300-$400 more than the Apple //c. On the other side of the coin, the PCjr will boast twice the memory as the //c features 128k (non-expandable).

Behind the Headlines

There is a human side to every story about a company being bought and sold, behind every headline about a major change that hits even the biggest companies. And so it was on July 2, 1984 in Sunnyvale, California when Atari, Inc. became Atari Corporation under the new leadership of Jack Tramiel. Certainly not a man to be accused of indecision, Tramiel moved swiftly and surely in laying off large numbers of Atari employees, many of them people we had known and worked with in the course of bringing news and reviews of Atari products to our readers. Especially in those first days of July, we kept in close contact with some of the friends we had made at Atari. Many have now been laid off, and some have left of their own accord. What has it been like for those who left and those who stayed? One Atari staff member, expressing her sadness on the day after one major layoff that affected all but twelve people in the Marketing Department, said "It was like graduating from school, with everyone exchanging phone numbers and promising to keep in touch...it really hurts because all these people have worked so very hard to make this company go."

No one can predict the future of the new Atari Corporation under Jack Tramiel. We wish him good luck and hope that he will continue to support the best of the Atari lineup of products. (Our readers would urge him to go ahead with the 7800 ProSystem if our phone calls are any indication. We get dozens of calls every day expressing the hope that the ProSystem won't be abandoned.) And to the former Atari employees, another wish for good fortune. Good people have a way of finding their niche, and we expect to encounter old friends in new positions soon.

PIONEER Video Disc Interface IU-04

More Interactive Laser

We've been talking about it for months. Last month we featured the first interactive laserdisc system in Halcyon and now interactive Laser is reaching out more and more as introductions are coming from various quarters. The latest word is that Pioneer will release a Interface Adaptor which will allow computer owners to connect their computer to the Pioneer LD-700 videodisc player. You will then be able to write programs which use existing videodiscs to create your own video games or instruction programs. Retailing around $250.00, the interface features a standard RS-232C connector which accepts input from your personal computer. Connections are provided for the video output from both the computer and videodisc player. Front panel buttons will allow the user to select either videodisc or computer images to be shown on your screen.

Video Visions Laser

Video Visions is about to introduce a series of Interactive Image discs designed for interactive game playing. The company has also just released a $125 Apple-compatible interface and LASER WRITE, a $75 package to aid interactive programming. They also plan future products including LaserMouse, an Apple Mouse/laserdisc authoring program, and LaserVoice, a hardware/software item for voice-activated laserdisc programs.

Back issues are available for most issues of COMPUTER ENTERTAINER/VIDEO GAME UPDATE (none left of Vol 1, #1,2, or 3). Send $2.00 for each back issue you wish. Buy any four for $6.00 and any six for $9.00. Make certain you have a complete set!! Remember, we reviewed over 325 games in 1983 alone!!!

Suncom to Debut Animation Station

Suncom will debut a graphics tablet September 1 for Apple, C64, and IBM (Atari version temporarily on hold) called the ANIMATION STATION which will boast 160K of memory (vs. 16K memory on the Koalapad). It will feature a wide variety of type fonts, interactive color mixing, over 200 color options, pre-drawn shapes, airbrush feature, full-screen drawing, horizontal format, retractable easel, etc. There are over 10 printers supported by the tablet and Suncom promises software compatibility with the Koalapad! The retail will be under $100. and software will retail for about $25.00.

By the way, several readers have indicated that they have read that the tablet will also be made to be compatible with Coleco's ADAM. We checked with Suncom and found they have NO plans for an ADAM version.

AVAILABILITY UPDATE

ATARI 2600

THIRD QUARTER
Choplifter (AT)
x-Gremlins (AT)
Jr Pac-Man (AT)
Last Starfighter (AT)
Stargate (AT)
The A-Team (AT)
Tarzan (COL)
Track and Field (AT)
AUGUST
Circus Charlie (PB)
Frogger II: Threedeep (PB)
Mr Do!'s Castle (PB)
SEPTEMBER
Montezuma's Revenge (PB)
FOURTH QUARTER
Elevator Action (AT)
MindLink System (AT)
Peek-A-Boo (AT)

COLECOVISION

AUGUST
Circus Charlie (PB)
Decathlon (ACT)
Frogger II: Threedeep (PB)
H.E.R.O (ACT)
Mr Do!'s Castle (PB)
Pitfall II (ACT)
Summer Games (EPYX)
Temple of Apshai (EPYX)
Zenji (ACT)
SEPTEMBER
Montezuma's Revenge (PB)
THIRD QUARTER
x-Antarctic Adventure (COL)
Boulder Dash (MF)
Crisis Mountain (MF)
x-Dukes of Hazzard (COL) ★ ★ ★ ★
Fortune Builders (COL)
Joust (AT)
Jungle Hunt (AT)
Lunar Leeper (SOL)
Moon Patrol (AT)
Pole Position (AT)
Mountain King (SUN)
Short Circuit (MF)
x-Smurf Paint & Play (COL)
x-Tarzan (COL)
FOURTH QUARTER
Stunt Flyer (SOL)

★ ★ for use with Super
Action Controllers
★ ★ ★ for use with
Roller Controller
★ ★ ★ ★ for use with
Expansion Module 2

ATARI 5200

JULY
H.E.R.O (ACT)
x-Meteorites (ELE)
THIRD QUARTER
Ball Blazer (AT)
Final Legacy (AT)
Flip and Flop (FS)
Gremlins (AT)
Millipede (AT)
Montezuma's Revenge (PB)
Quest for Quintana Roo (SUN)
Rescue on Fractalus (AT)
Scraper Caper (BIGS)
Tutankham (PB)
AUGUST
Beamrider (ACT)
Decathlon (ACT)
Frogger II: Threedeep (PB)
Mr Do!'s Castle (PB)
Pitfall II (ACT)
Tempest (AT)
Track and Field (AT)
Zenji (ACT)
FOURTH QUARTER
7800 Adaptor (AT)
Space Shuttle (ACT)
Toy Bizarre (ACT)

ATARI 7800

THIRD QUARTER
Centipede (AT)
Dig Dug (AT)
Food Fight (AT)
Galaga (AT)
Joust (AT)
Ms Pac-Man (AT)
Robotron: 2084 (AT)
3-D Asteroids (AT)
Xevious (AT)

ATARI COMPUTERS

THIRD QUARTER
Ankh (DM)
Atarilab Light Module (AT)
Ballblazer (AT)
Barbie (EPYX)
B C Grog Revenge (SOL)
Beat the Beatles II (INAC)
Breakdance (EPYX)
Crime Lab (AT)
Crystal Castles (AT)
Dr Seuss Fix Up (COL)
Final Legacy (AT)
Flight Simulator II (SUB)
Fortune Builders (COL)
Free Trader (AH)
G I Joe (EPYX)
Green Globs (AH)
Gulf Strike (AH)
Habitats (tent tit)(AT)
Hot Wheels (EPYX)
Jet Boot Black (DM)
Jr Pac-Man (AT)
Juno First (DS)
Last Starfighter (AT)
Mancopter (DS)
Meridian III (DS)
Millipede (AT)
Mission Algebra (DES)
Moon Patrol (AT)
Mycess II (DM)
Pitstop II (EPYX)
Polar Pierre (DM)
Quest for Quintana Roo (SUN)
Rescue on Fractalus (AT)
Rock N' Rhythm (SPN)
Short Circuit (MF)
Space Cowboy (AH)
Summer Games (EPYX)
Tarzan (COL)
This is Ground Control (AT)
Through the Star Bridge (AT)
Track and Field (AT)
Wargames (COL)
AUGUST
Beamrider (ACT)
Computer Ambush (SSI)
Computer Baseball (SSI)
Decathlon (ACT)
Frogger II: Threedeep (PB)
Grammer Examiner (DES)
H.E.R.O. (ACT)
Mr Do!'s Castle (PB)
Notable Phantom (DES)
Pitfall II (ACT)
Reforger 88 (SSI)
Seti (TRAP)
Super Football (NEXA)
Super Music Box (PPI)
Twisted (TRAP)
Zenji (ACT)
SEPTEMBER
Dunzhin (SCRN)
Kaiv (SCRN)
Master Home Planner (PPI)
Montezuma's Revenge (PB)
Romper Rm I Love My Alphabet (FS)
Spy Vs Spy (FS)
U.S. Adventure (FS)
Wylde (SCRN)
FOURTH QUARTER
Elevator Action (AT)
Escape! (AT)
MindLink System (AT)
Stargate (AT)

COMMODORE 64

JULY
x-Beyond Castle Wolfenstein (MUSE)
Crystal Castles (AT)
Decathlon (ACT)
Donkey Kong Jr (AT)
Galaxian (AT)
Gremlins (AT)
x-Heist (MF)
H.E.R.O (ACT)
Impossible Mission (EPYX)
x-Juno First (DS)
Lite Sprite (TS)
Lost Tomb (DS)
Mario Bros (AT)
Pitfall II (ACT)
x-Seastalker (INF)
Track and Field (AT)
Trivia Mania (PS)
Viking Raider (INT)
Your Personal Net Worth (SCR)

AUGUST
Ankh (DM)
Baltic 85 (SSI)
Blockade Runner (INT)
x-Boulder Dash (MF)
Circus Charlie (PB)
Demon Attack (IMGC)
Dracula (IMGC)
Dragonfire (IMGC)
Frogger II. Threedeep (PB)
Grammer Examiner (DES)
H.E.R.O. (ACT)
Jet Boot Black (DM)
Mabel's Mansion (DM)
Moonsweeper (IMGC)
Mr Do!'s Castle (PB)
Mychess II (DM)
Notable Phantom (DES)
Nova Blast (IMGC)
Polar Pierre (DM)
Seti (TRAP)
Sierra Championship Boxing (SOL)
Super Music Box (PPI)
Swords & Serpents (IMGC)
Toy Bizarre (ACT)
Twisted (TRAP)
Whistler's Bros (BRO)
Zenji (ACT)
SEPTEMBER
Dunzhin (SCRN)
Injured Engine (IMGC)
Kaiv (SCRN)
Master Home Planner (PPI)
Miner 2049er II (MF)
Montezuma's Revenge (PB)
Romper Rm I Love My Alphabet (FS)
Short Circuit (MF)
Spy Vs Spy (FS)
Time Machine (IMGC)
U.S. Adventure (FS)
Wylde (SCRN)
THIRD QUARTER
Barbie (EPYX)
B.C. Grog Revenge (SOL)
Breakdance (EPYX)
Dr Seuss Fix Up (COL)
Fortune Builders (COL)
G.I. Joe (EPYX)
Hot Wheels (EPYX)
Impossible Mission (EPYX)
Joust (AT)
Light Waves (CBS)
London Blitz (AH)
Mancopter (DS)
Meridian III (DS)
Mission Algebra (DES)
Moreta: Dragonlady of Pern (EPYX)
Pitstop II (EPYX)
Robots of Dawn (EPYX)
Rock N'Rhythm (SPN)
Stress Manager (BI)
Stunt Flyer (SOL)
Super Pipeline (INT)
Tarzan (COL)
Trivia Arcade (SCRN)
Wargames (COL)
Weather Tamers (CBS)
FOURTH QUARTER
Ballblazer (AT)
Rescue on Fractalus (AT)

APPLE II/IIE

JULY
Boulder Dash (MF)
Crystal Castles (AT)
Donkey Kong Jr (AT)
Graphics Exhibitor (KOALA)
Gremlins (AT)
Mario Bros (AT)
x-Seastalker (INF)
Short Circuit (MF)
Sierra Championship Boxing (SOL)
States & Traits (DES)
Summer Games (EPYX)
Track and Field (AT)
Your Personal Net Worth (SCR)
War in Russia (SSI)
SEPTEMBER
Bank St Filer (BRO)
Romper Rm I Love My Alphabet (FS)
Spy Vs. Spy (FS)
U S Adventure (FS)
THIRD QUARTER
Ankh (DM)
Another Bow (IMGC)
Baltic 85 (SSI)
Barbie (EPYX)
B C Grog Revenge (SOL)

Breakdance (EPYX)
Dragonfire (IMGC)
Dunzhin (SCRN)
Earthly Delights (DM)
G I Joe (EPYX)
Grammer Examiner (DES)
Hot Wheels (EPYX)
Injured Engine (IMGC)
Juno First (DS)
Kaiv (DM)
Kings Quest (128K)(SOL)
Lost Tomb (DS)
Mabel's Mansion (DM)
Mancopter (DS)
Meridian III (DS)
Miner 2049er II (MF)
Mission Algebra (DES)
Mychess II (DM)
Notable Phantom (DES)
Pitstop II (EPYX)
President's Choice (SPN)
Reforger 88 (SSI)
Robot Odyssey I (LC)
Seti (TRAP)
Station 5 (MF)
Trivia Arcade (SCRN)
Trivia Mania (PS)
Twisted (TRAP)
Wylde (SCRN)
FOURTH QUARTER
Ballblazer (AT)
Rescue on Fractulas (AT)
Stunt Flyer (SOL)

IBM PCjr

JULY
Baseball (IMGC)
Centipede (AT)
Crime & Punishment (IMGC)
Donkey Kong Jr (AT)
Football (IMGC)
In The Chips (CS)
Match Wits (CBS)
Moon Patrol (AT)
Ms Pac-Man (AT)
Murder by the Dozen (CBS)
Pac-Man (AT)
Pipes (CS)
Quest for Quintana Roo (SUN)
Seastalker (INF)
Sierra Championship Boxing (SOL)
Summer Games (EPYX)
THIRD QUARTER
Barbie (EPYX)
BC Grog Revenge (SOL)
G I Joe (EPYX)
Hot Wheels (EPYX)
Juno First (DS)
Lost Tomb (DS)
Mancopter (DS)
Meridian III (DS)
Trivia Mania (PS)
FALL
Earthly Delights (DM)
Miner 2049er II (MF)
Short Circuit (MF)
FOURTH QUARTER
Stress Manager (BI)
Stunt Flyer (SOL)

ADAM

THIRD QUARTER
x Electronic Flashcard Maker (COL)
English I (MF)
Expertype (COL)
x-Flashbacks-Amer History (COL)
x-Flashbacks-Trivia (COL)
x-Flashbacks-Vocabulary (COL)
Math I (MF)
Recipe Filer (COL)
x-Smart Filer I (COL)
x-Smart Letters/Forms (COL)
Sub Roc (COL)
U S Constitution (MF)
Zaxxon (COL)
FALL
American History (MF)
Health (MF)
High School Algebra (MF)
High School Geometry (MF)
Jr High School Algebra (MF)
Jr High School Geometry (MF)
Physics (MF)

(x - indicates shipped to retailers by our press date (may not be in national distribution, however.) (Editor's Note: We feel in some cases, dates given us by the manufacturer are simply not realistic. However, we feel it is our responsibility to give you the projected release dates as they are given to us, without any alteration.)