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NEWS FLASH!!

NEC developing portable game system

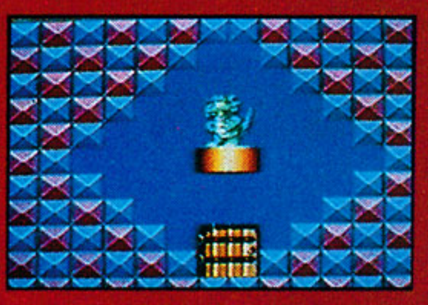
(See page 18)

The TurboGrafx-16 as an Arcade Machine? We've Got the Story!

Maps & Tips:

NEC's *Blazing Lazers*

Sega's *Wonder Boy III*, Part 2



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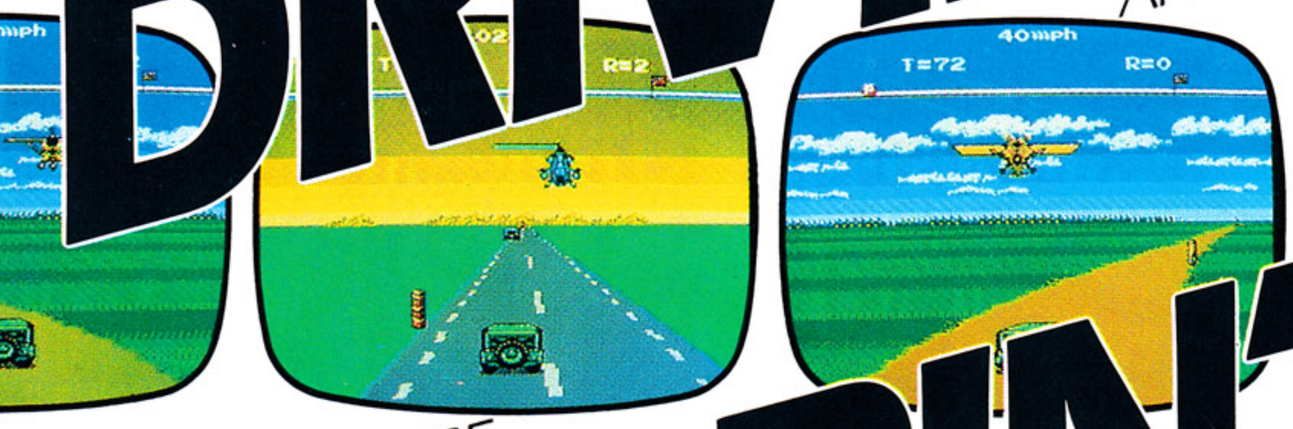

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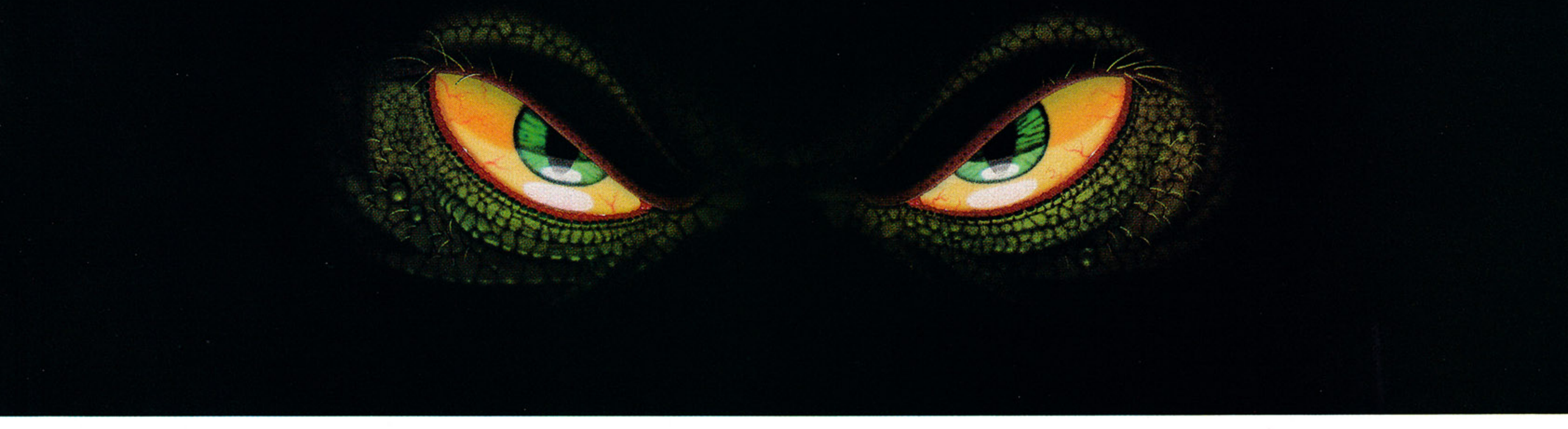

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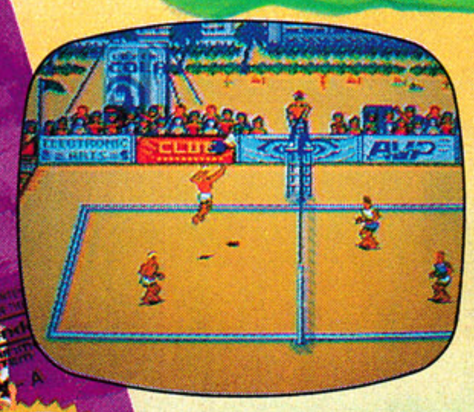
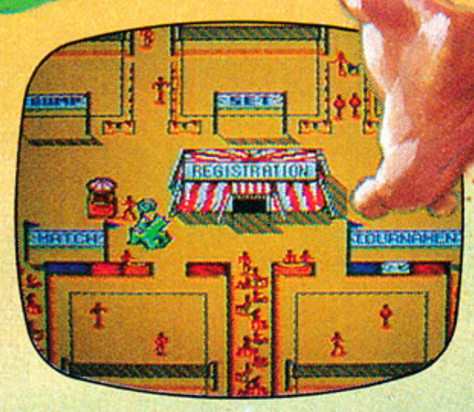
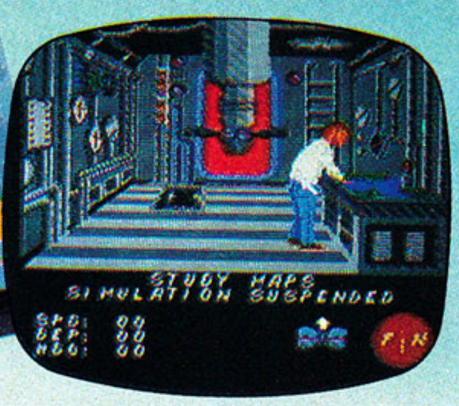




THEN YOU DIE.



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CIRCLE #103 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Cover: It's that time of year again—time to recognize those games that the VG&CE Editors felt were the finest of 1989. Let our robot presenter lead you to your seat for the major celebration that starts on page 42. And the winner is. . .

Art: Alan Hunter

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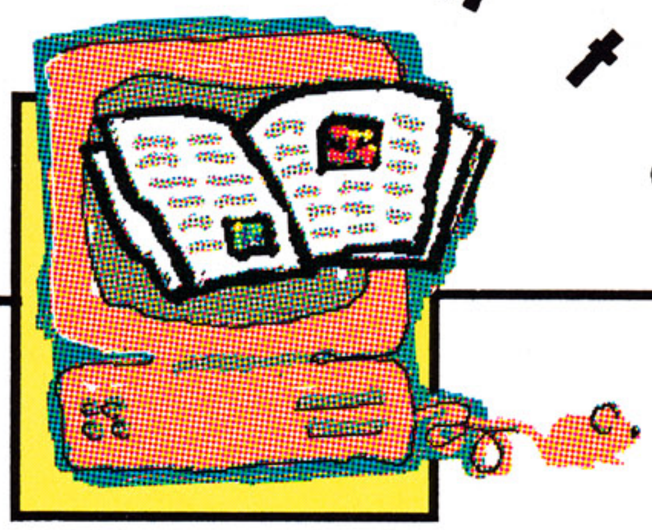

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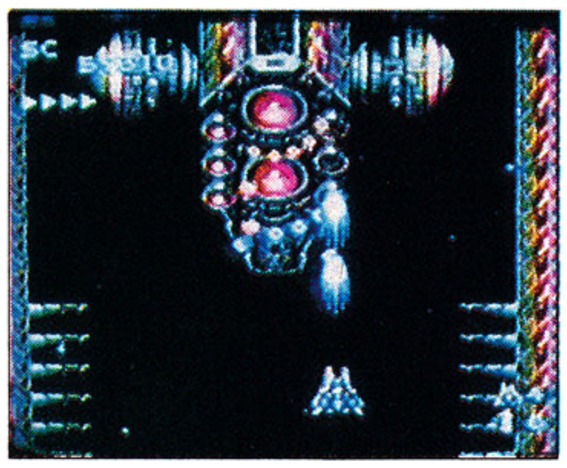

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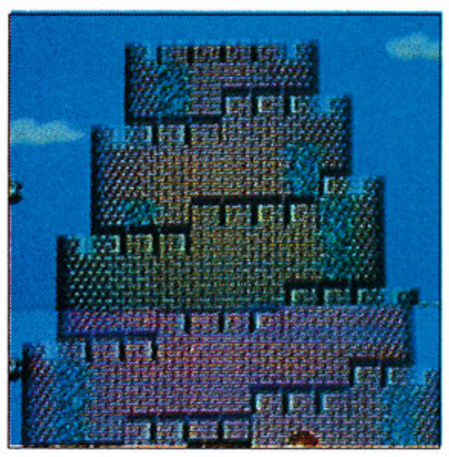

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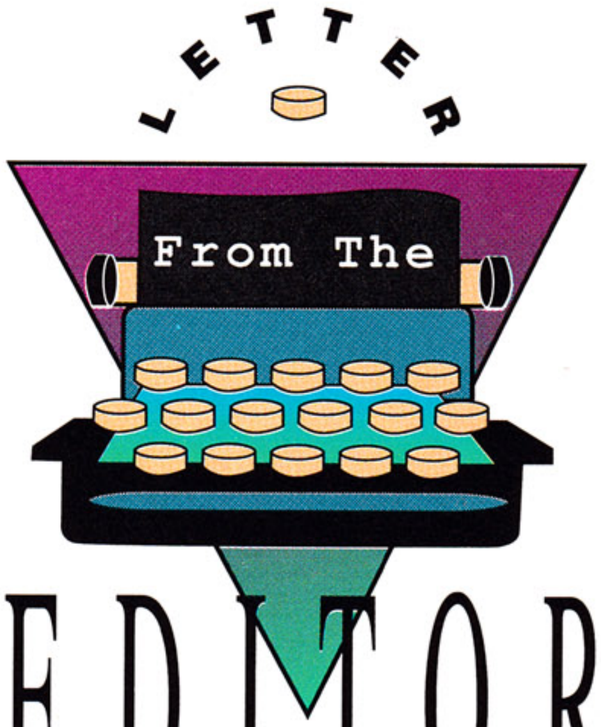

The editorial in the October VG&CE discussed Northern California's Silicon Valley. Sadly, on October 17th at 5:04 p.m., the normally tranquil area was rocked by a massive earthquake. The 7.1 temblor—the second-most powerful quake in history—shook up the residents, sending things flying around homes and businesses.

Sitting here in the Earthquake Row called Southern California is unsettling, especially when scientists rattle on about how our area is due for an 8.0-or-over quake. Seeing the devastation up north, particularly the collapse of the 880 freeway, isn't too encouraging when you consider an 8.0 quake is *10 times* more powerful than a 7.0.

When I moved from Connecticut to take this job over a year ago, I was only looking at the positive side—but after having been here for a while, I see much more of the negative potential. Still, the pluses outweigh the minuses, and having the position of running VG&CE is for the most part a lot of fun.

I'm lucky to have been a member of the computer-journalism sodality for about six years, starting with writing for ANALOG COMPUTING, a magazine that focused on Atari computers. At that time, one of the most respected writers in the Atari domain was John Anderson. John's work appeared in *Creative Computing*, a widely read source of general computer info, and his chatty yet informative style was free of the stiff, technical scribings that other compu-journalists were known for. John's articles were a substantial influence on many budding writers. Though I never met him in person, I had the pleasure of sharing views with him a couple of times over online services.

John's career took him to many publications over the years; most recently to *MacUser* as senior editor of electronic publishing. Just a few days before writing this editorial, I picked up the most recent issue of *MacUser* and read John's analysis of the Macintosh Portable, which shows his reliability in documenting new developments in technology.

The sad part of this story is that John and a co-worker were killed in the collapse of a building during the Northern California quake (see *News Bits*, page 14, for the complete story). The impact of disasters like this don't hit home until someone we know is involved. Our sincere condolences go to John's family, as well as the families of all the quake victims.

I realize this editorial has little to do with video games, but I wanted to take this opportunity to comment. I'm asking for those reading this to lend a helping hand, and the best way to do so is to contribute to your local Red Cross. I don't want to sound like Mr. Doom and Gloom, but you may need their help one day.

—Andy Eddy, Executive Editor

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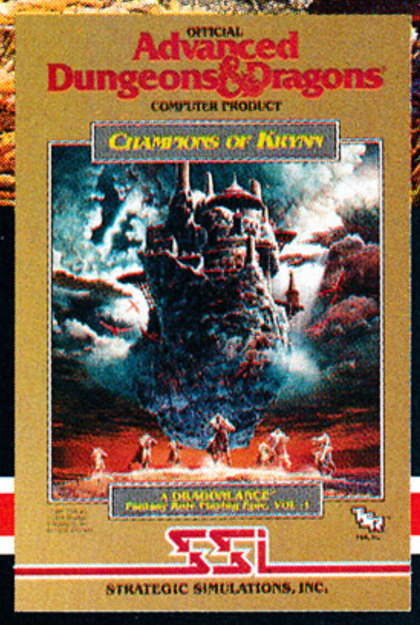

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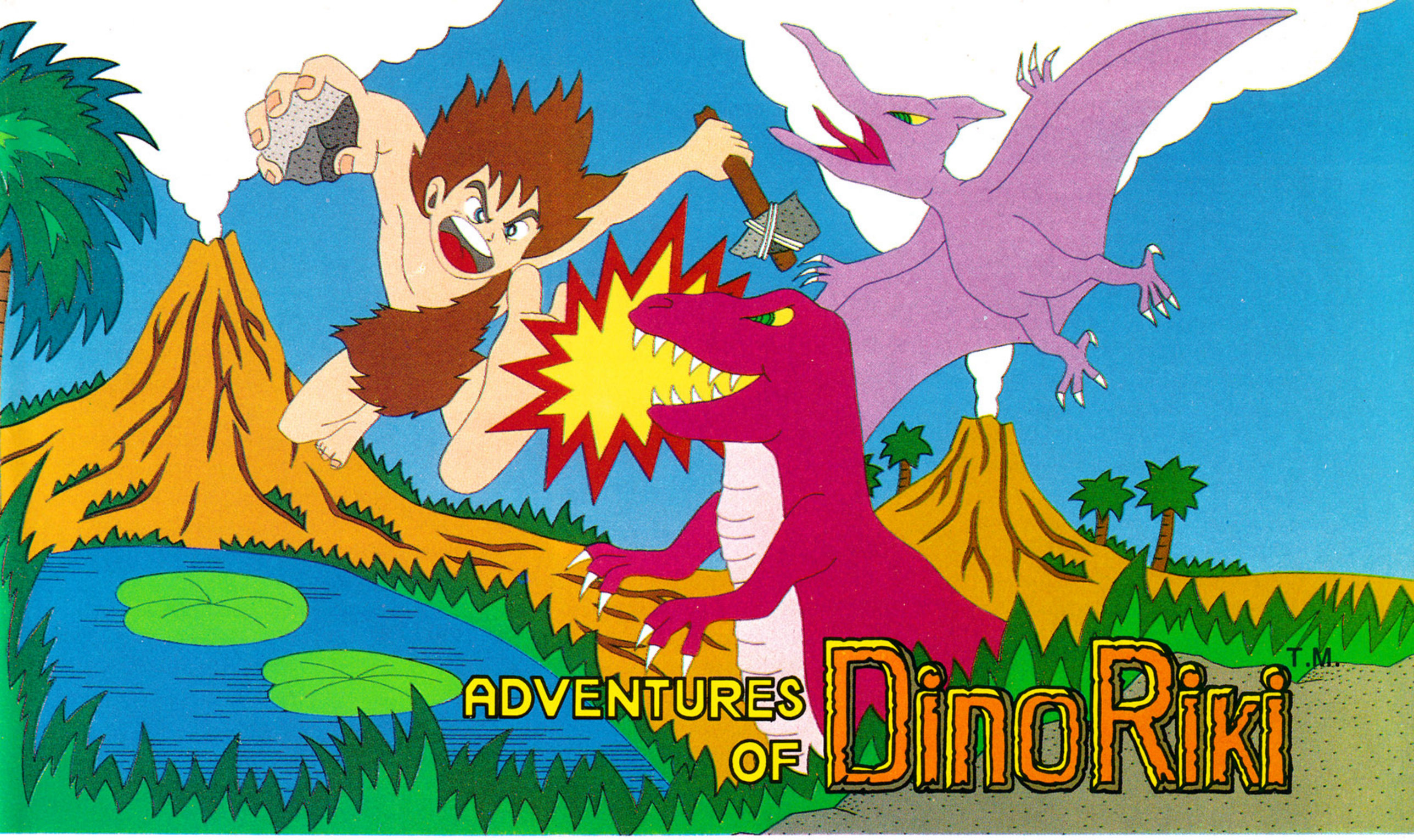

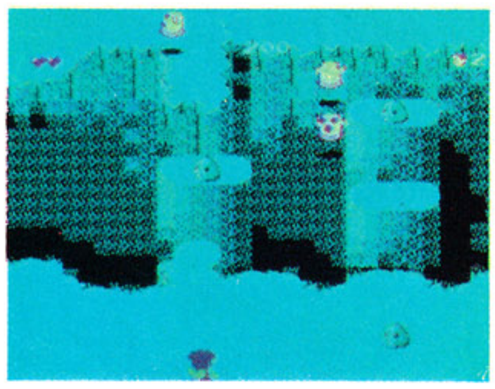

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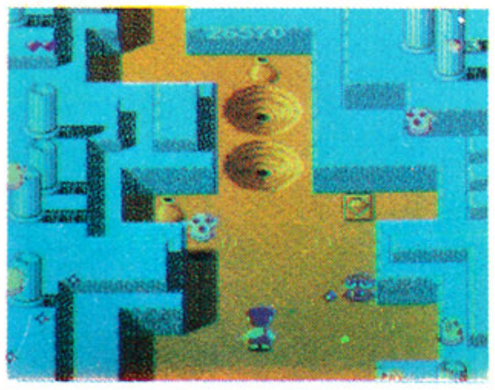

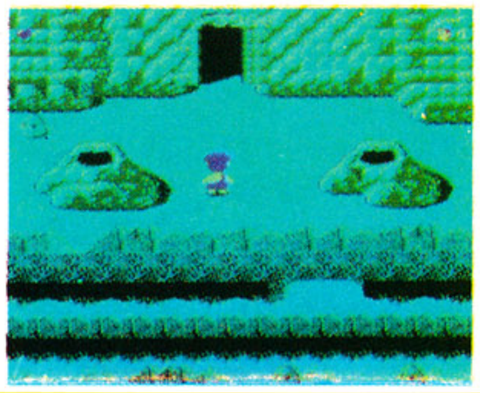

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READER MAIL

NO FAVORITES

Dear VG&CE:

I recently purchased your October issue, and I want to know why you favor the Lynx system over the Nintendo Game Boy? When I read the Game Boy feature (VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT, August 1989), most of it was negative. I think the only good thing you had to say about it was that it cost less than the Lynx!

Also, you devoted four pages to the Lynx and even included some screen

shots of the games. I believe that a gaming magazine such as yours shouldn't take sides.

—Adam Thornburg
Columbia, Tennessee

Sorry that you feel that way, Adam. Our coverage of both machines touched on their respective features and different "personalities," and were structured to be as unbiased and purely factual as possible.

The Lynx has such advantages as a full-color display, independent backlighting, a networking capability for multiplayer competition and the option to be played more comfortably by a left-handed gamer. The Game Boy is smaller and has stereo sound and the option to let you go head-to-head with another player via an interactive play cable. We try to be fair and objective in all reporting that we do, and objectivity goes out the window when you pick a side. As for which is better— we leave that for you decide.

IT'S ALL IN THE WRIST

Dear VG&CE:

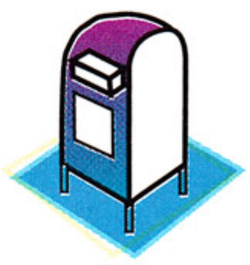
I have a of question for you. How do gamers figure out secret power ups, continues, extra lives and so forth? Are these features built into the game software intentionally in all cases or might they be the result of glitches in the circuitry or programming?

I think that your magazine is the best on the market covering the video-game scene. (What you need to offer is multiyear subscriptions!)

—Michael Sweda
Tucson, Arizona

Dear VG&CE:

I would like to congratulate you on the great magazine that you are publishing.



How do you find and figure out these great and complicated tricks for obtaining free lives and continues? For example, in the September issue you announced how to find endless lives in Sega's *Black Belt.*

Do you just mess around until you find these tips or is there a secret we readers don't know about? Please answer this question for a true game maniac!

—Peter Mei
New York, New York

Thanks for writing in, guys.

First off, all of the features you mentioned (lives, any continue features, etc.) are programmed directly into the game by the creators and design teams that produce the cartridges. These are the results of many hours of programming, not random glitches. The only thing a short circuit would produce is static, a blown game machine or something similar.

Secondly, our tips come to us from a variety of sources. If you've studied our monthly Easter Egg Hunt *column, you'll see that a number of tips come from die-hard gamers who write in. There's no substitute for rolling up those sleeves and taking on your favorite video game.*

Other tips are furnished by the game manufacturers who are kind enough to pass on some helpful hints and by your hard-working editors at VG&CE. *After all, we do get to play games* sometimes, *you know.*

STRATEGY FAN

Dear VG&CE:

I'm writing this to acknowledge a fine job on "Strategy Guide Part II" for Hudson's *Adventure Island* in the October VG&CE.

The level of detail found in this guide was amazing and far surpassed that of other magazines that I've read.

I was stuck in Area 7 of the game until reading your tips concerning a similar section in Area 8 (i.e., 4th pair of vertically moving Zigmos). That particular tip, plus those for the higher levels, allowed me to complete the game and save "Old-what's-her-name."

Thanks again, and enclosed is a request for a subscription to your excellent magazine!

—Curtis Hill
Monaca, Pennsylvania

No problem, Curtis. We're always glad to be of some help against those annoying Zigmos. Looking back, we'd have to say that that section was the biggest hurdle to finishing the game.

continued on page 115

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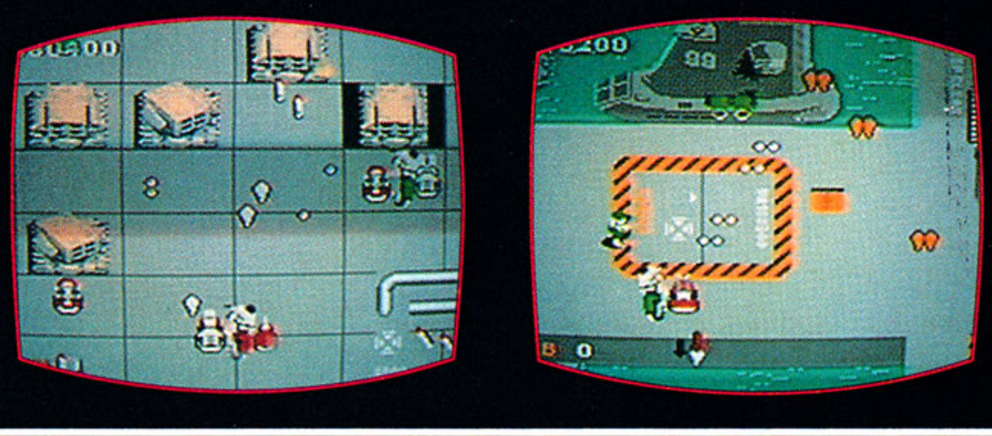

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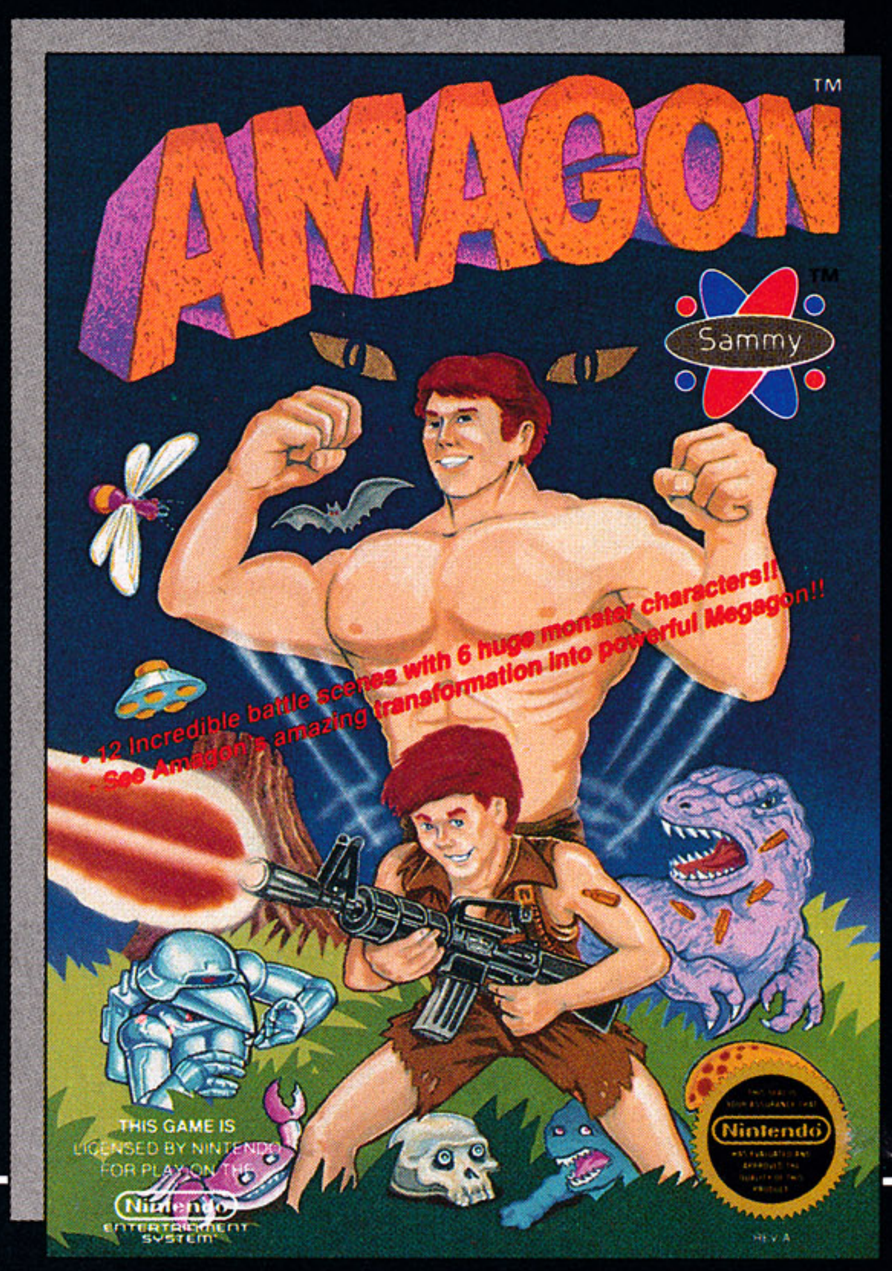

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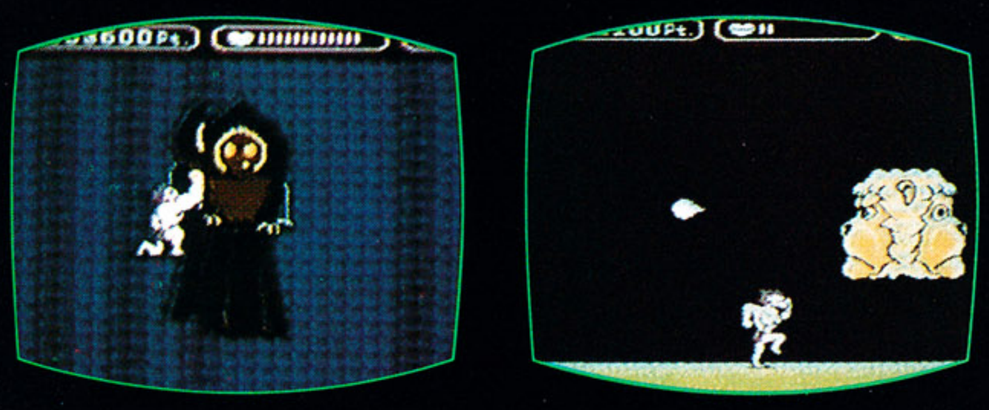

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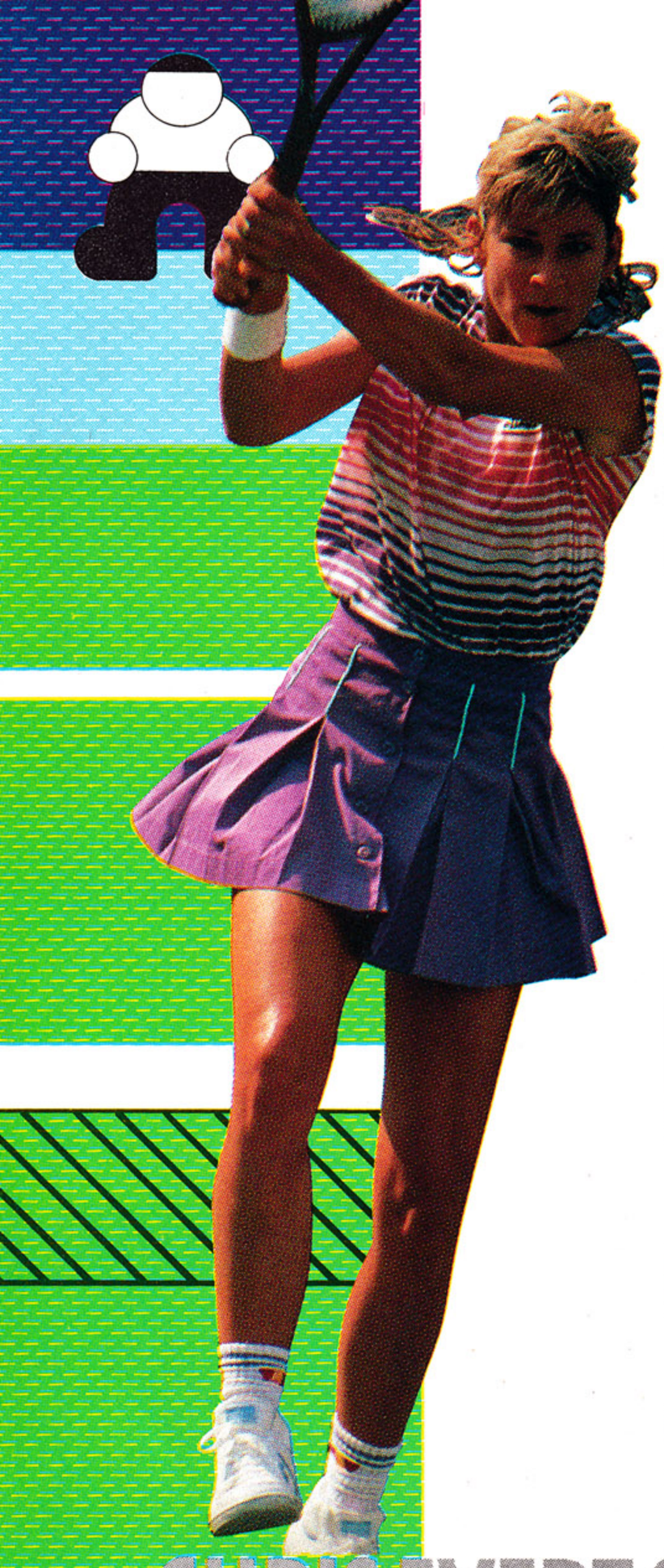

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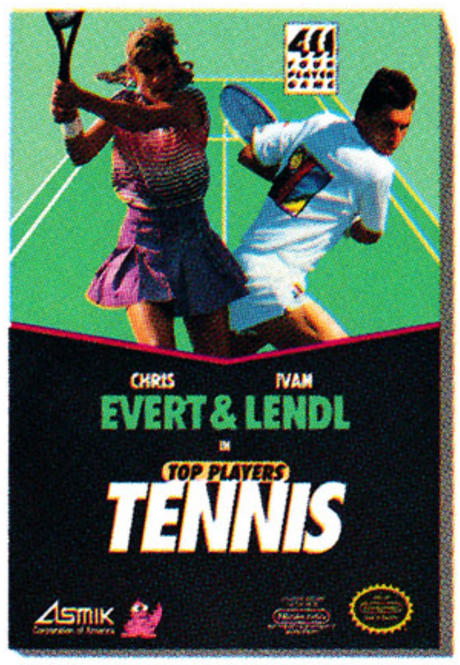

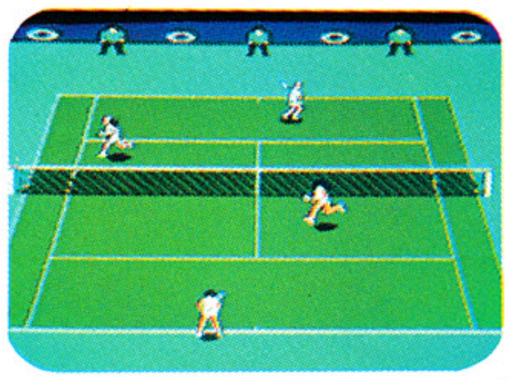

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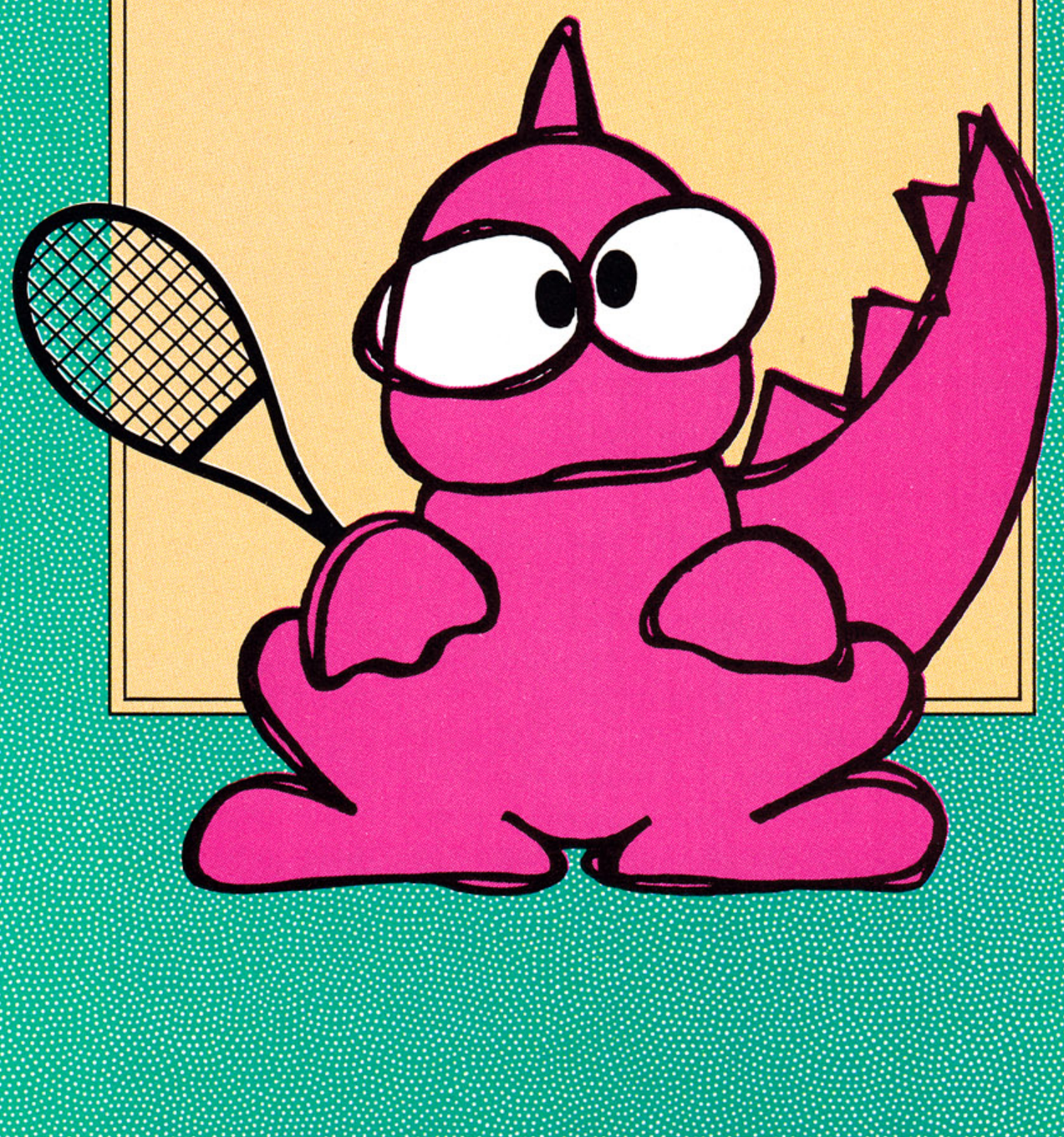
ASMIK Corporation of America

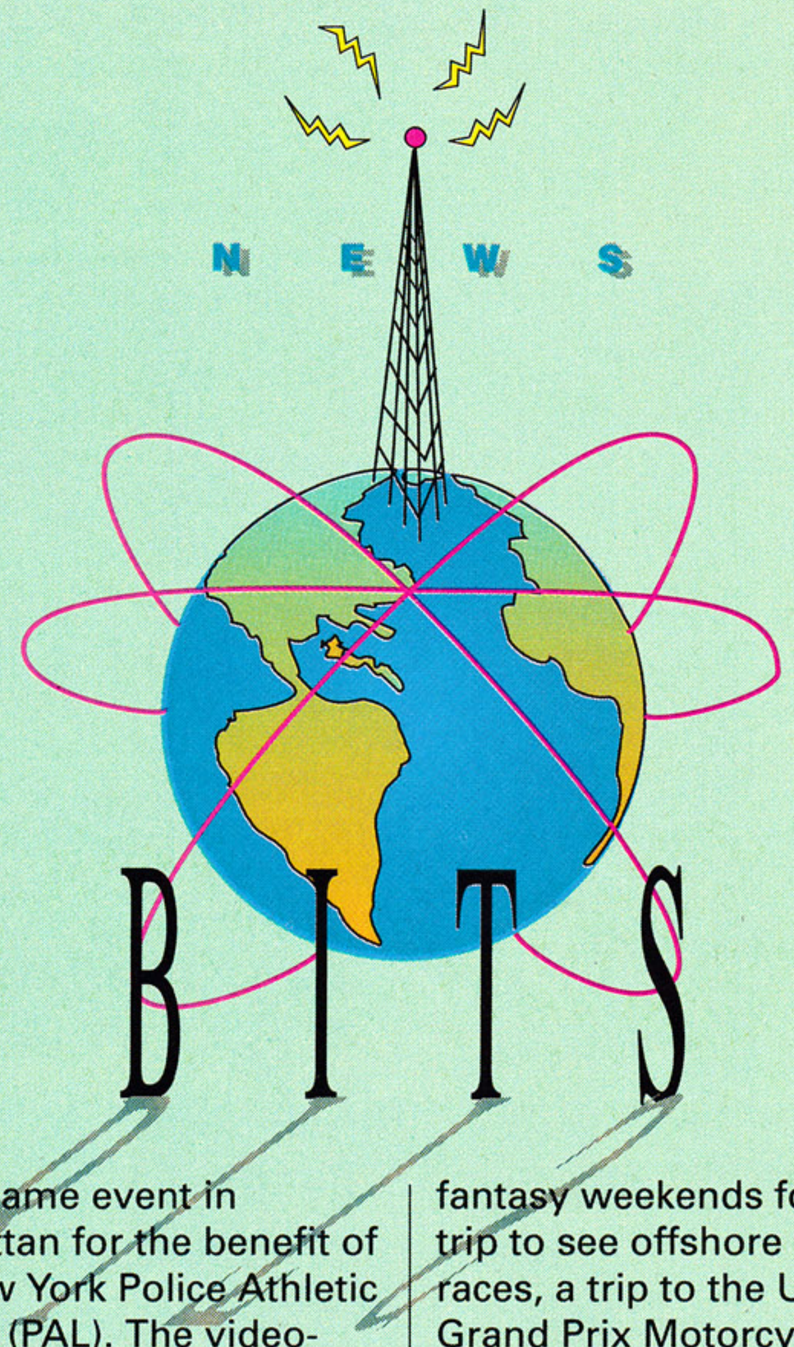
CIRCLE #106 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

4 FOUR PLAYER GAME

SCORE BIG WITH ASMIK

"Greetings, gamesters. I'm Boomer. You'll see me representing all the exciting games by a new company called Asmik. Asmik, has had popular success in Japan, so I'm sure you'll be seeing a lot of Asmik's great games for your Nintendo Entertainment System.® I'll be appearing in my own game, too. You can help me battle the enemy in a prehistoric adventure for Nintendo's portable GAME BOY.™ So when you want action and adventure remember Asmik, and remember me, Boomer."





Top Coin-Ops of September 1989

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

Best Upright Videos

1. *Hard Drivin'* by Atari
2. *Off Road* by Leland
3. *Crime Fighters* by Konami
4. *Operation Thunderbolt* by Taito
5. *Super Monaco GP* by Sega
6. *Chase H.Q.* by Taito
7. *Turbo Outrun* by Sega
8. *Narc* by Williams
9. *Mechanized Attack* by SNK
10. *Outrun* by Sega

Best Coin-Op Software

1. *WWF Superstars* by American Technos
2. *Golden Axe* by Sega
3. *Arch Rivals* by Bally Midway
4. *Splatterhouse* by Sharp
5. *Ninja Gaiden* by Tecmo
6. *Dynamite Duke* by Fabtek
7. *Strider* by Capcom
8. *Gang Wars* by SNK
9. *Cabal* by Fabtek
10. *Bottom of the Ninth* by Konami

Best New Uprights

1. *Willow* by Capcom
2. *Tournament Cyberball 2072* by Atari
3. *Crackdown* by Sega
4. *Crime City* by Taito
5. *Final Blow* by Romstar

Sega Gives Cash to PAL

Sega of America sponsored a fund-raising video-game event in Manhattan for the benefit of the New York Police Athletic League (PAL). The video-game challenge featured the new Genesis 16-bit game system and pitted PAL policemen against PAL kids in a high-tech baseball game. Competitors stepped up to the plate in the Genesis game *Tommy Lasorda Baseball*, but there were no real losers in this contest. Sega donated $50 to PAL for every run scored. In a presentation ceremony, David Rosen, chairman of Sega of America, presented Donald Trump a check for $15,000 to benefit PAL.

Among the top talent present was Mets infielder Dave Magadan. The three-day video-game event was held at several outdoor locations throughout Manhattan.

Accolade Sponsors Sweepstakes

Accolade, with four racing games, is supporting its line of high speed thrillers with a "Life in the Fast Lane" Sweepstakes. Winners will receive fantasy weekends to witness racing events.

Each winner will receive any one of the following fantasy weekends for two: a trip to see offshore boat races, a trip to the U.S. Grand Prix Motorcycle Championship at Laguna Seca Raceway in California or a trip to one of the Formula One or Indy Car Grand Prix races held during 1990.

The sweepstakes runs until March 15. Entry forms will be found in computer-magazine advertisements and at retail outlets. Three winners will be selected in a random drawing on March 16 and announced on March 23.

New Versions of Flight Simulators

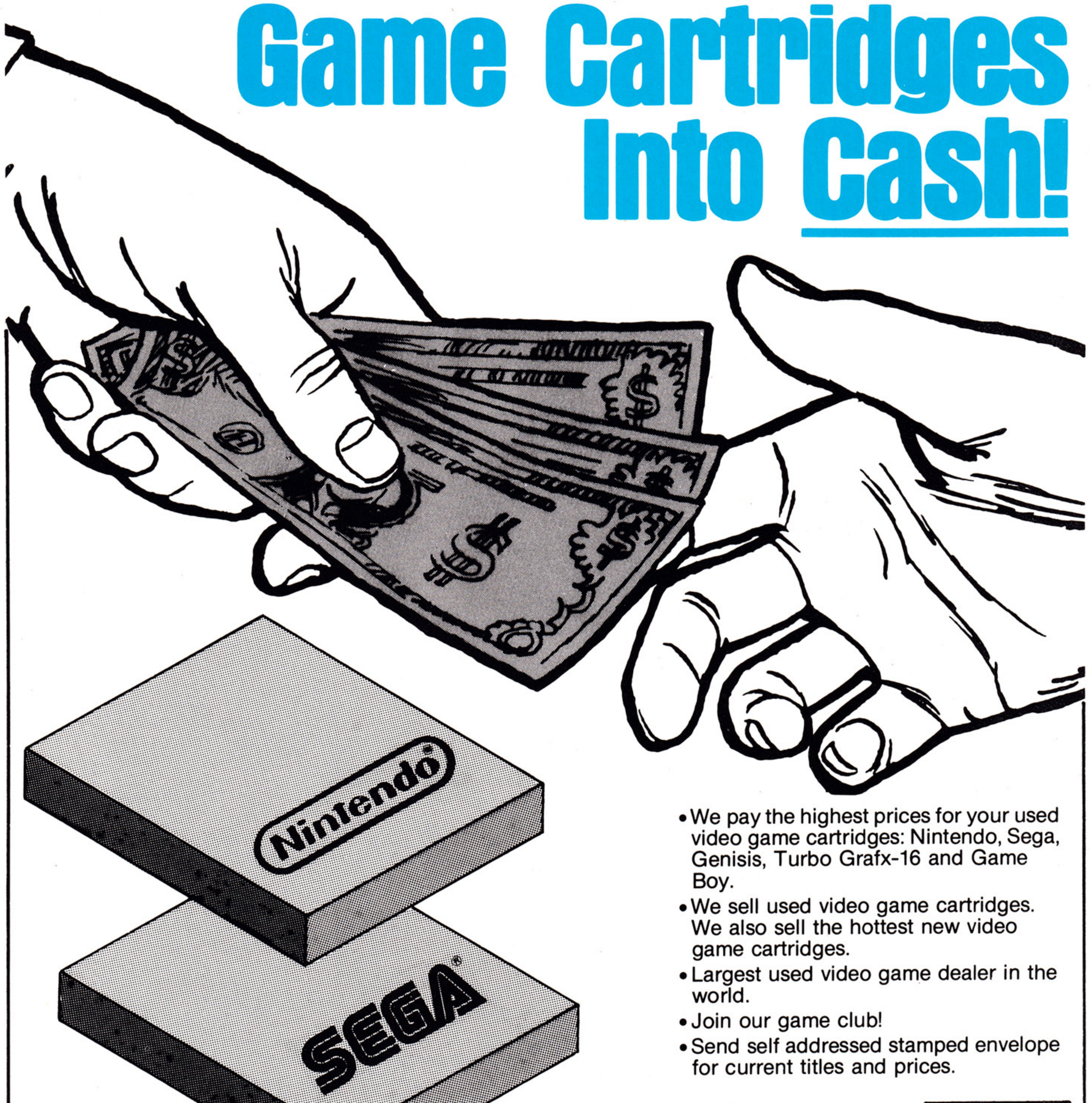
Velocity Development Corp. announced a new version (v1.5) of their IBM-PC simulator *JetFighter: The Adventure*. According to Velocity spokesman Moses Ma, the new disk features several innovations that make the simulator easier to use. *JetFighter* now supports CGA, EGA and VGA graphics, and it has a new system of generating external views to make fliers feel like they are really in the air. Pop-up menus can be used to reset sky color, plane model and other factors, even while in flight. A built-in help function and better documentation, coupled with a new joystick interface make the plane easier to handle. Even landings on carriers are easier due to a special practice-landing system to train pilots. If all else fails, Undo Crash gives gamers a second chance. In addition, there's a built-in antivirus capability that enables the program to resist viral infection and a remote repair faculty is available. If the program disk fails, Velocity's support team can usually fix it over the phone.

Velocity is offering upgrades to owners of previous versions. For information, call customer support at (312) 397-6176.

For the past year Bullseye Software has been working on their *Fokker Triplane* to make it fully compatible with Apple hardware invented since the program was introduced in 1985. Version 2.0 (for the Macintosh) has a bevy of new features, including digitized sound, improved flight characteristics, more realistic aircraft and control of enemy aircraft for dogfight training and bombing. Donald A. Hill, Jr., author and company spokesman, explained that *Fokker Triplane* is simpler and less complicated than *P51 Mustang*, Bullseye's other flight simulator, featuring "seat of the pants" flying. The speed range is slower, and this makes *Fokker Triplane* easier for the user to control. Even novice compu-pilots can take off

Continued on page 18

Turn Your Used Video Game Cartridges Into Cash!



- We pay the highest prices for your used video game cartridges: Nintendo, Sega, Genisis, Turbo Grafx-16 and Game Boy.
- We sell used video game cartridges. We also sell the hottest new video game cartridges.
- Largest used video game dealer in the world.
- Join our game club!
- Send self addressed stamped envelope for current titles and prices.

Place your Holiday order early!

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STRAP IN FOR FULL THROTTLE ACTION.

SKY SHARK® FOR YOUR NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM.®

The Original Arcade Hit Is Here Now!

Get ready for the flight of your life with the awesome WW II air battle, Sky Shark.® Pilot your P-40 fighter plane over a scrolling landscape of dangerous enemy territory. Use your machine guns, bombs and pilot skills to knock out attacking tanks, anti-aircraft guns and an armada of deadly battleships and aircraft carriers. The final fight brings you face to face with a massive flying fortress.

Now this white knuckle arcade thriller from Taito® is ready to fly on your Nintendo Entertainment System.® You won't believe the five incredible levels of action.

We bring even more arcade excitement into your home with other action packed hits like Bubble Bobble,™ the addictive dinosaur romp, Operation Wolf,® the awesome prisoner rescue mission, and Renegade,™ the knock-out street-style karate brawl.

Take off for the guts and glory of taming the skies with the high flying action of Sky Shark.® Don't be left on the ground.

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THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN.™

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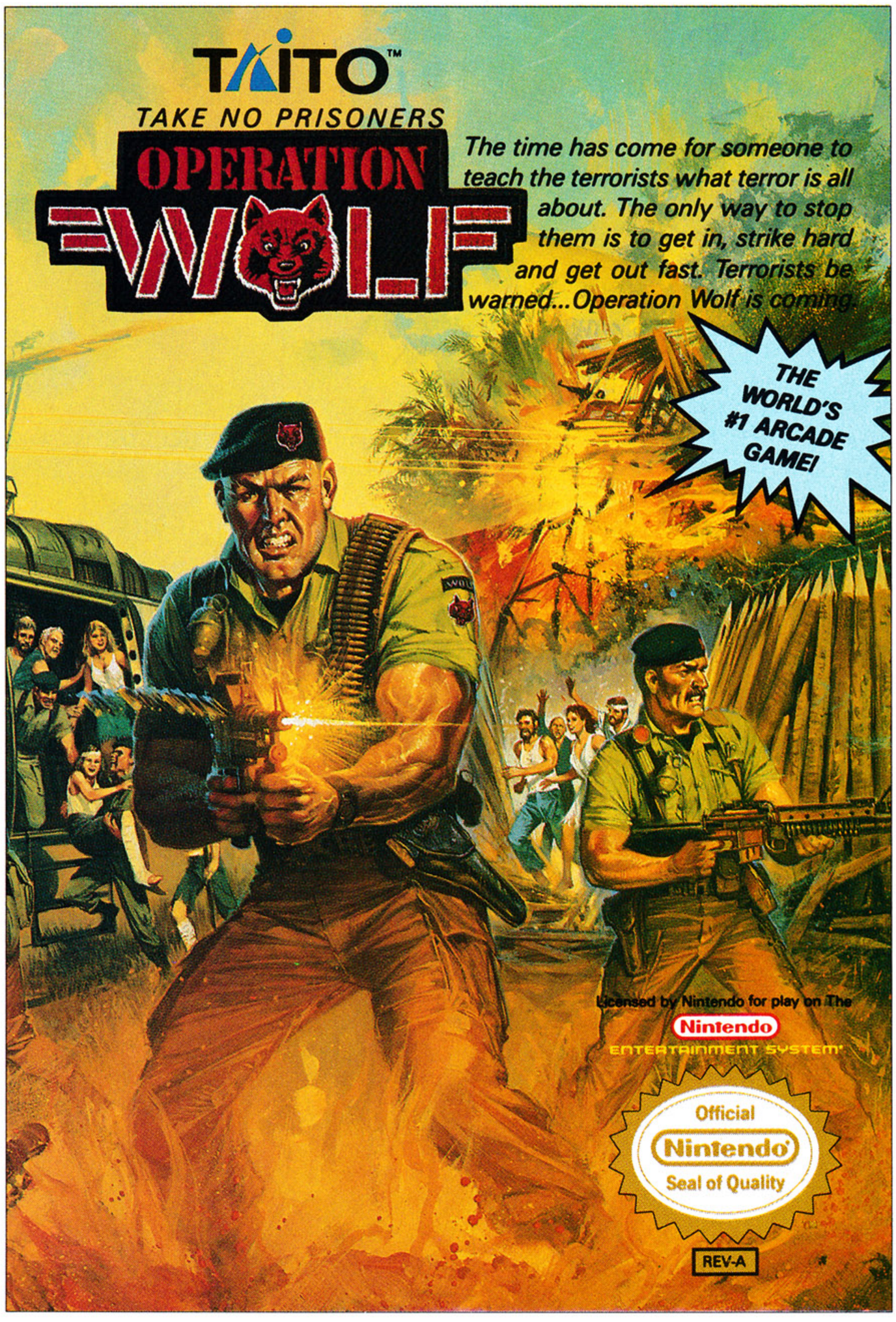
TAKE NO PRISONERS.

OPERATION WOLF® FOR YOUR NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM.®



Now you can thrill to the world's best arcade game right on your Nintendo Entertainment System.® Operation Wolf® takes you on a prisoner rescue mission you'll never forget. Mind-blowing arcade quality graphics put you behind enemy lines where you must destroy the terrorists and save helpless prisoners. One play and you'll know why it's the world's number 1 arcade game. Operation Wolf® uses Nintendo Zapper® or standard controller.

For more arcade quality fun at home, grab Taito's other action packed hits for the Nintendo Entertainment System.® Renegade,™ the fast paced street-style Karate brawl. Bubble Bobble,™ the totally addictive dinosaur delight. And coming soon, Sky Shark,® the arcade's meanest, most explosive high-flying World War II air battle.

TAITO™
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and land, practice blasting an enemy and experiment with three kinds of bombing techniques.

Owners of *Fokker Triplane* can update their disks for $15 with return of the program, which includes the newly updated and reprinted manual.

Accolade Tries RPG for Spy Lovers

Accolade, best known for its string of action arcade entertainments, introduced its first role-playing game, but with a theme that's far removed from the normal dungeon crawl. The company that made its reputation primarily with hard-hitting sports, sophisticated racing simulations and fast-paced joystick workouts, turned to the modern world of international espionage for its first venture into the RPG field.

Designed by Carol and Ivan Manley, who say they were inspired by Sidney "*Ace of Spies*" Reilly, *The Third Courier* casts the player as Moondancer, a secret agent working for the free world. In Berlin, the good-guy spy must try to recover nuclear defense plans stolen from NATO. Needless to say, the fate of the world rests in his hands.

The heroic spy has a lot of resources. A link to CIA headquarters puts information online, and electronic aids such as a photo-fax machine and various data displays provide the player with the the facts he needs to solve the puzzle of the missing plans. According to Accolade's spokesman, Ralph Giuffre, the object is to do everything possible to obtain information, "...whether it be by threatening a suspect with one of the graphically detailed weapons in your arsenal or bribing someone."

Gamers custom-tailor Moondancer by choosing his occupation, background, lifestyle and education level—factors that influence his spying abilities. On-screen aids include menus, icons, compass buttons, descend and ascend arrows and a character information display.

Initially available for the Apple IIGS, IBM PC and IBM PC compatibles, the graphics support EGA, CGA, MCGA and VGA, plus 16-color Tandy. Copy protection is off-disk, and a clue book of maps, hints, tips and answers is also available from Accolade for spies who need a little help.

Superman Flies to U.S.

Intracorp has brought *Superman: The Man of Steel* back to America under their Capstone label so gamers can join his battle for truth, justice and the

American way. Designed by Subway Software and programmed in England by Tynesoft, it lets gamers take on the role of the man of steel, as he battles Darkseid and Lex Luthor. Terrorist minions of the deadly duo have hijacked a yacht with Lois Lane and the Governor on board. The dastardly deed can only be stopped by Superman.

Gamers have an arsenal of super powers available for the fight, including telescopic and heat vision, super strength and super breath. *Superman* is available for the IBM PC, Amiga and Atari ST for $39.95 and for the Commodore 64 for $29.95.

Dynamix Introduces User-Friendly System

Dynamix' title, *David Wolf: Secret Agent*, introduces two new systems of play controls that, according to company spokesmen, greatly simplify the action, increase interactivity and make the game more accessible to the mass market.

The VCR Interface is a pop-up menu that gives the player more joystick control. Among its other features, a scene skip lets players skip to different parts of the story and the player may also fast forward or change difficulty levels at any time.

Smart Start is described as a "hardware intelligent" system. It detects what hardware is present when the game starts, then automatically selects the proper graphics and sound modes for that equipment.

Jeff Tunnell, president of Dynamix, explained what it's all about. "These systems provide the player with an amazing array of game play controls and automate the process of software installation. People won't have to struggle with hardware to get our products to run, and they won't have to wade through 50 hours of linear game play to see a story's ending." He went on to discuss the VCR Interface: "It actually lets the player determine the story that they experience by giving them control over when they enter into the story and how difficult the interaction will be."

David Wolf: Secret Agent casts the player as an American spy. Described as an interactive movie for IBM PC systems, it uses live actors, sets and costumes to create an adventure told through interactive storytelling and arcade simulations that feature hang gliding, auto chases,

NEWS FLASH!!
NEC Plans Blockbuster TG-16 Portable

Rumors have hit VG&CE that NEC is creating a portable version of the TurboGrafx-16 game system, similar to the Atari Lynx developed by Epyx. By the time you read this, NEC will have already introduced the revolutionary product at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

There are very few details that have been gathered about the secret project, but NEC does have the technological resources—in chip manufacturing and high-tech displays particularly—to do the job well, which should further shake up the video-game industry, especially Nintendo's standing with their Game Boy.

VG&CE has managed to find out the following tidbits:

- The as-yet-unnamed and unpriced modular system will accept standard TurboGrafx-16 cartridges.
- In addition to its built-in screen, an adapter will allow the unit to output to a standard television, much the same as a stand-alone game console.
- Another optional device will add the capability of converting the system into a portable TV receiver.

When more details become available, the whole story will appear in a future issue of VG&CE.

"YOU STAND AT THE EDGE OF A DEEP CHASM. FROM THE DARKNESS BELOW RISE THE SCREAMS OF THE UNDEAD."

Can you outwit and overcome the thoroughly-evil Warlock Lord? His mysterious spell holds Castle Shadowgate captive. Dozens of hidden pitfalls and nasty entities lurk in every corner.

Probe along menacing stone corridors looking for hidden passageways. Discover mysterious artifacts in dark chambers. Clues are there for those bold enough, and wise enough.
Torches. Keys. Gemstones.

Slay a dragon, cross a river of fire. But be careful. A wrong move could bring your quest to an untimely end.

A whole world of options are at your command with dynamic graphics to bring the dark mysteries of the Middle Ages to life.

The question is...are you up to the challenge of Castle Shadowgate?

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Shadowgate™

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skydiving and aerial combat.

Two Compu-Journalists Perish in San Francisco Quake

The October 17 Bay Area earthquake caused the deaths of two employees of *MacUser* magazine. John J. Anderson and Derek Van Alstyne had just left the offices of a San Francisco software publisher and returned to their car. The quake occurred at 5:04 p.m., causing the wall of a building to collapse on their vehicle, killing the two men instantly in a tragedy that also claimed three other lives.

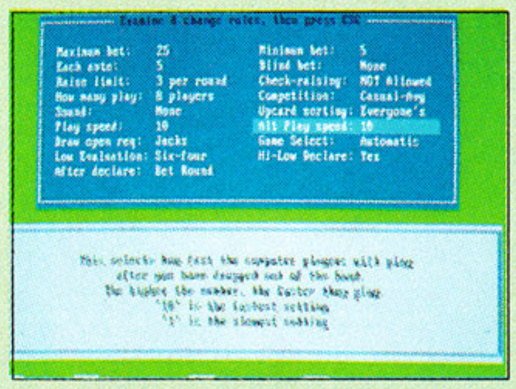
John J. Anderson, 33, was well-known in computer circles and seen at many trade shows. His byline was among the most famous of working computer journalists. Anderson was the director of *MacUser*'s media labs, John had held editorial positions at *MacUser, Creative Computing, Computer Shopper, MacWEEK, PC Magazine* and other publications. Author of over 100 articles, John was also known as an innovator in online database and CD-ROM projects. John is survived by his wife, Lauren, and two children, Peter and Katherine.

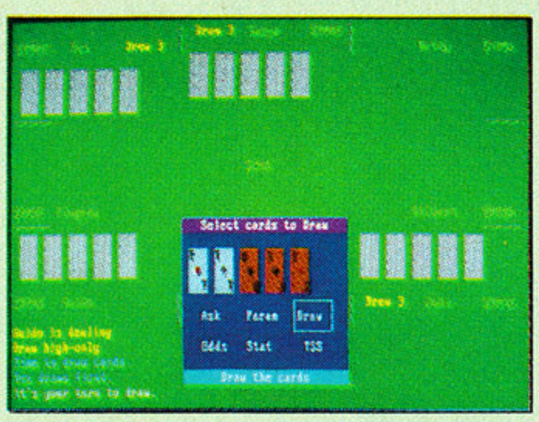
Derek Van Alstyne, 22, had joined the staff of *MacUser* only a month before the tragedy. He had previously worked for *MacGuide* in Denver, Colorado, doing software and database development for that magazine and had moved to the Bay Area just weeks before. Van Alstyne was involved in the development of MacGuide USA, a Macintosh computer-product database and one of the first commercial CD-ROM titles. He is survived by his mother, Jeanne LeFever, and his grandmother, Clara Taskett.

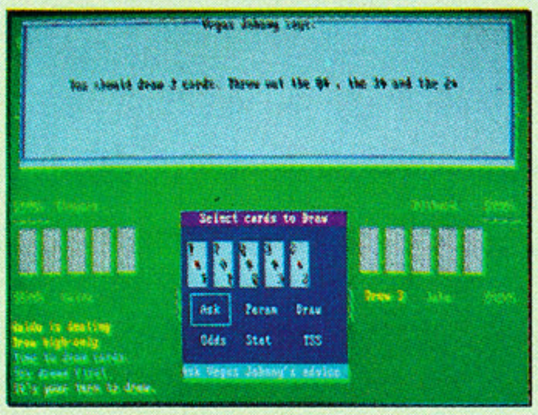
A trust fund has been established for the Anderson children. Donations should go to The Anderson Trust Fund, c/o Nancy Woods, Human Resource Dept., One Park Ave., New York, NY 10016. A memorial Triathlon Fund has been established in Van Alstyne's name by his high school; send contributions to Ms. Jeannette Marchant, Webster High School, 800 Five Mile Line Rd., Webster, NY 14580.

Poker Software for Vegas Johnny

Top Score Software of Townsend, Massachusetts, has a line of poker software for IBM PC and compatibles: *Vegas Johnny's Dealer's Choice, Vegas Johnny's Hold 'em Poker* and *Vegas Johnny's Draw Poker*. All three programs feature online betting advice, odds and statistical summaries and rules to be selected by the user, including number of opponents, level, betting limits and play speed. They can be played with keyboard or mouse.







V.J.'s Dealer's Choice has four variations of seven different games, including draw, hold'em, five-, six- or seven-card stud, high-low, high-only and low-only. It retails for $44.95.

V.J.'s Hold 'em Poker is the game used in Las Vegas each year for the World Championship tournament. It sells for $17.95.

V.J.'s Draw Poker is a full-featured game described as perfect for the more casual player. It's available for $9.95 direct from Top Score Software at (508) 597-8020.

Nintendo Reveals Stats to SPA

Nintendo's spokesman, Howard Lincoln, unveiled an interesting set of facts and figures to the Software Publishers Association members at a recent meeting held in Montreal, Canada. The market information answered many questions and reveals changing trends in NES players.

According to the figures provided by Mr. Lincoln, *Super Mario Bros.* and *Legend of Zelda* have accounted for $260 million in sales. The statistics also reveal that in the United States the average NES owner has five games, in contrast to Japan, where the average Famicom owner has ten carts.

The age breakdown of Nintendo owners indicates that NESers are primarily a young group, but older folks are getting into the fun also. Seventy percent of all Nintendo Entertainment Systems are owned by persons under 18 years of age. Sixty percent are in the 6-14 range. The remaining 30 percent are owned by players over age 18.

The most significant statistic was a contrast between 1985, when 91 percent of all NESers were male and only 9 percent female, and 1989, when males accounted for only 67 percent and female players increased to 33 percent of all owners.

First Vette! Sweepstakes Winner Chosen

Spectrum HoloByte chose the first winner in their "Drive a Vette Through the Streets of San Francisco" Sweepstakes (a random drawing). Jeff Venegas, of San Diego, California, and his wife were treated to three nights in San Francisco, in a prize package valued at $2000. Among the treats enjoyed by the Venegases was a chance to drive a red Corvette on their tour of the city.

Spectrum HoloByte's *Vette!* sweepstakes selected five winners, at the rate of one per month, from product registration cards returned by purchasers of the game. Each winner was gifted with a three-night stay at the Holiday Inn on Fisherman's Wharf, plus the use of the car that inspired the street-racing simulation.

Dads Monopolize Games Says Vid-Game Survey

In a poll of players conducted recently by Konami, kids reported that their parents were playing video games more than ever before. In fact, some gamers report that Mom and Dad are so fond of video gaming that they forget to take turns with the kids!

The young NESers questioned by Konami report that their parents favorite play hours are after

DO NOT ATTEMPT YOUR MISSION UNTIL THE CHOPPERS ARE OVERHEAD, SNIPERS ARE IN POSITION, AND YOUR HOMEWORK'S DONE.

Not doing your homework could be a mistake. Every move you make could jeopardize your fellow rescuers, and those held captive.

RESCUE: The Embassy Mission. The action comes fast and furious. Itchy-fingered enemy gunmen. A perilous rappel down the sheer face of the Embassy. If you survive that, don't get cocky. You've still got to out-maneuver and out-think your opponents inside and mastermind the escape.

There are 15 levels of difficulty, from "Training Mission" to wickedly-fast "Jupiter Mission." Thrills are delivered in bold strokes, with super high quality graphics and animation.

With *RESCUE: The Embassy Mission,* brainpower is as important as firepower.

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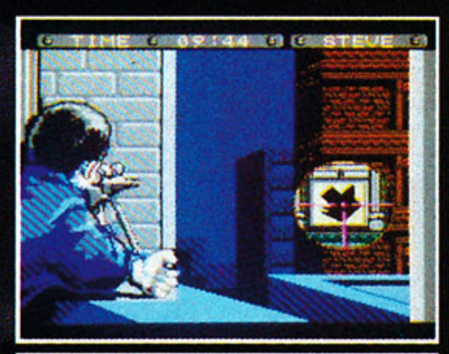

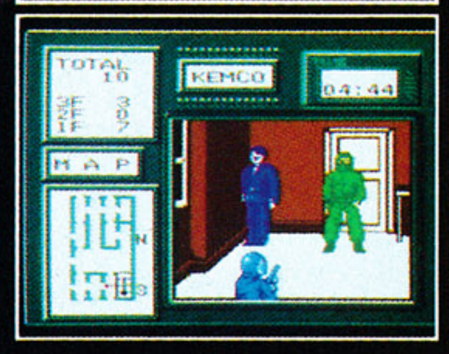

RESCUE
THE EMBASSY MISSION

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CIRCLE #111 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

work and on the weekends, though some say their folks use the NES after the kids go to bed. Dad plays more and is better at it than Mom, in the opinion of these vidkids. Overwhelmingly, the youngsters claim to be better players than their parents, which is probably the reason that the parents don't brag about their scores, according to their offspring.

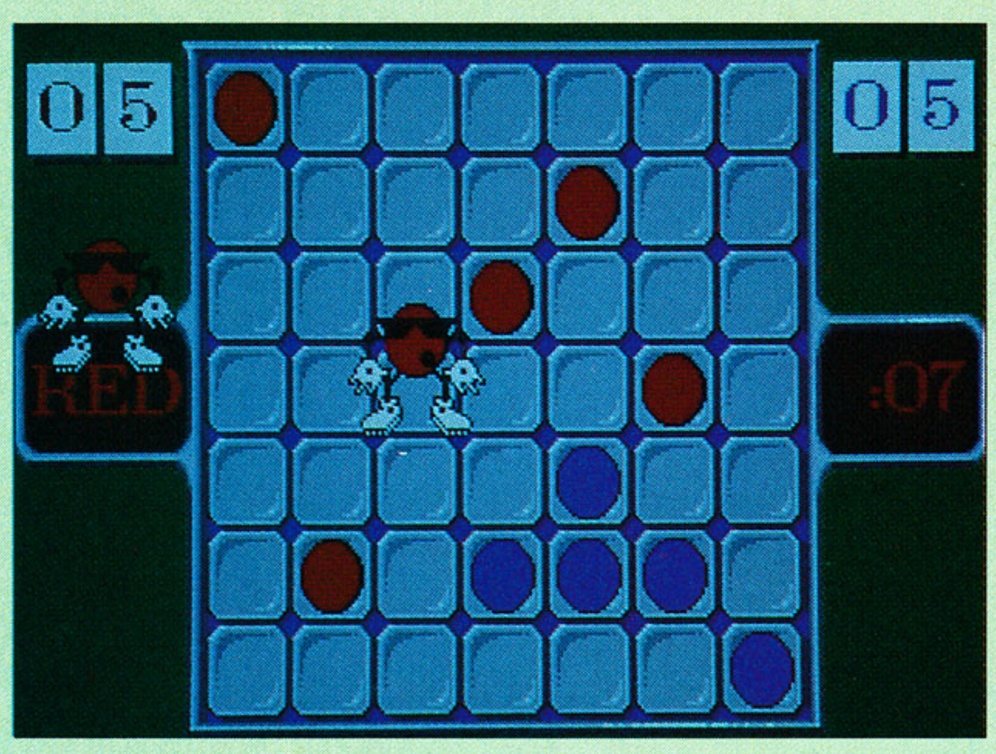
Over half the kids say that their parents ask them for hints and tips; unfortunately, fewer than half the youngsters are willing to tell them how to get better scores. The kids are also ambivalent about parents participation; although some like the family fun, even more claim the parents "hog it up and I cannot play for a while."

The poll of youngsters substantiates figures from other sources. Industry experts estimate that adults now represent 44 percent of the players, an increase of 15 percent in the last year. According to Emil Heidkamp, senior vice-president of Konami's consumer division, the increased number of grown-up gamers is causing designers to up the level of strategy necessary to advance, so that the games will be more rewarding for adult players.

Virgin Mastertronic Will Have You Seeing Spots

Virgin Mastertronic, Europe's largest distributor of entertainment software and best known for their re-creations of board games like *Monopoly*, *Clue* and *Risk*, will soon introduce an interesting computerized board game called *Spot*. What makes this product more interesting than most is that the main character is the Spot from the popular 7Up soda commercials.

The game, which has been in development for over a year, can be played by up to four players, in any computer/human combination. The highly



active little devils are then manipulated around a 7-by-7-inch board in an effort to get as many of them in your color as possible. Each time a move is decided on, an associated animation takes the Spot to his place. This continues until the board is filled and the score determines a winner.

Mastertronic relayed to VG&CE that the ties to 7Up came in a odd way. The game was first submitted to the game manufacturer under the name *Infection,* a title that they didn't feel would be good marketing-wise. When they discussed the game's specs, particularly the 7-by-7-inch grid, a comment was made that the board's layout was a "seven up." The idea then materialized to see if 7Up would be interested in licensing their Spot character as the game's pieces, a move that was well received by the soda company. 7Up then released their profile for how the Spot should behave, and work began on adapting the game.

Spot will be available on a wide variety of systems, appearing first on the IBM PC in the first quarter of 1990 under the Virgin Games label, a new group of titles that includes *Double Dragon II* and *NY Warriors*. After the IBM version, it will come out in the arcades under the Leland umbrella (in March or April), on the Amiga, ST and C-64 (in the second quarter), then finally as an Arcadia Systems Inc. product for the Nintendo Entertainment System and Game Boy (in the third quarter).

Sticks and Storage for NESers

Suncom Technologies, long known for their line of high-quality computer accessories, has introduced a pair of products for NES users. The Mother Ship is billed as a Nintendo controller enhancer. The Nintendo control pad slips into the base of the Mother Ship, thus transforming the pad into a joystick with an aircraft-style grip. It has a top fire button and a sliding switch that allows gamers to move between the "A" and "B" game functions. Or the player can set the switch halfway to perform both functions at once by pressing the top fire button. It's available for $13.99.

Suncom also has two roll-top storage units for NES game carts. Docking Bay 10 holds ten games and retails for $12.99, while Docking Bay 20 holds 20 cartridges and retails for $24.99. Both units are color-coordinated to go with the Nintendo Entertainment System.

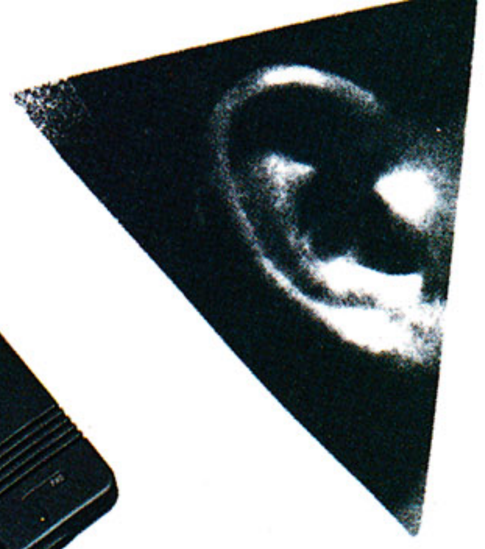
KAO Has *Pipe Dreams*

KAO currently has a bonus for disk buyers. Specially marked ten-packs of Kao diskettes hold a free sample of Lucasfilm Games' new strategy game, *Pipe Dreams*. The special edition of the game is packed on a free 11th disk, available in computer and office-supply stores while supplies last.

The Lucasfilm strategic challenger requires gamers to build a conduit from various pieces of pipe that appear in random order. The one- or two-player contest has 36 levels. The game ends when the plumber-computerist fails to connect the pipe in time to keep the chemical fluid ("flooz") off the floor.

Samples of the game are packed in boxes of 5.25" IBM disks, 3.5" PS/2 disks and 3.5" Macintosh disks. The complete version is available from Lucasfilm for IBM, Macintosh, Commodore 64, Amiga and Atari ST computers.

NEC



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D = DOWN
L = LEFT
R = RIGHT
A = "A" BUTTON
B = "B" BUTTON

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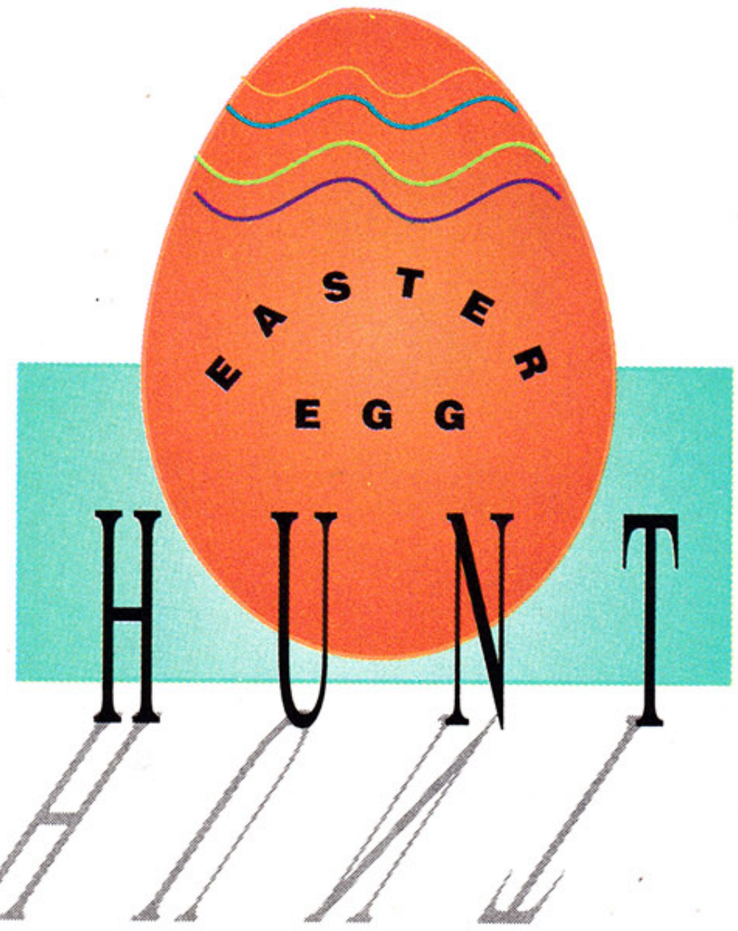
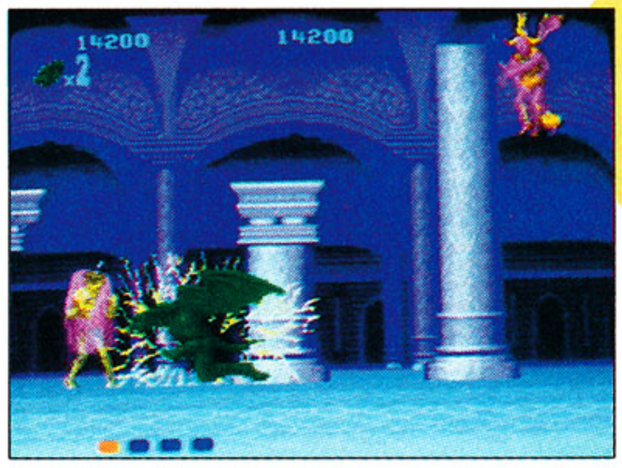




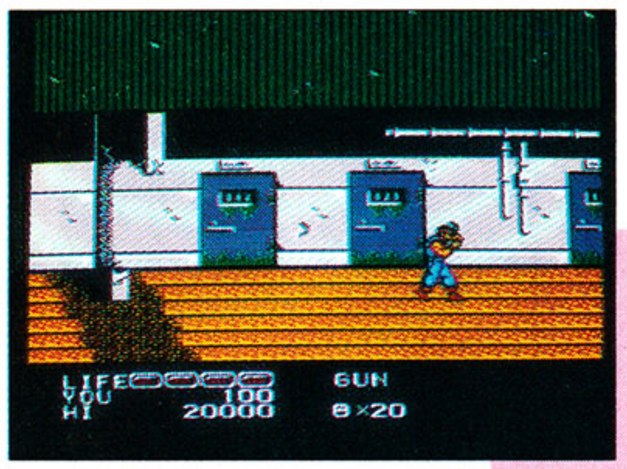
ALTERED BEAST

(Sega for the Genesis)

Though each level is programmed with particular beasts, the programmers of this fantasy game have an egg that will let you specify what creature you want to be when you power up.

From the title screen, if you hold A, B and C and the lower-left arrow on the directional pad when you hit START, you'll get a menu that will give you the opportunity to select what beast you'll be at any particular level.

Altered Beast is yet another game that offers a sound test. All you have to do is hold A and C and the upper-right arrow on the directional pad when you hit START, and you'll be brought to a sound-selection display. And some of those sounds are wild!



P.O.W.

(SNK for the Nintendo Entertainment System)

This combat game has been programmed with a helpful feature that gives you 20 men per session. From the title screen, enter this sequence:

A B B U U D L START

This egg also works if you are continuing a game, making it easier to finish this combat epic.

BLAZING LAZERS

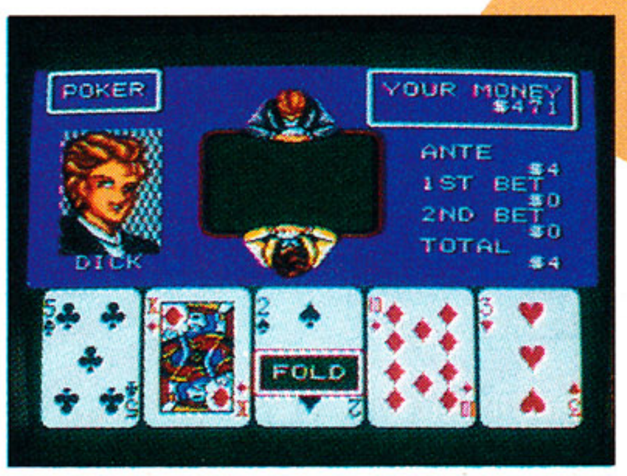
(NEC for the TurboGrafx-16)

Many games contain a sound-test menu, and this great blast-athon from NEC is no different. To get to this submenu, hold down SELECT at the title screen and toggle the directional controller L and R until the screen blanks. Next you'll see a changeable sound counter that will let you listen to any of the audio effects programmed into the game.

CASINO GAMES

(Sega for the SMS)

Michael Gunn and Carolee Montgomery have found a true Easter Egg—an animation that pops up when you complete a certain sequence of moves. In this case, the animation, which shows a dinosaur running through a pasture, appears if you are playing poker and you fold ten hands in a row. Good find, Michael and Carolee!



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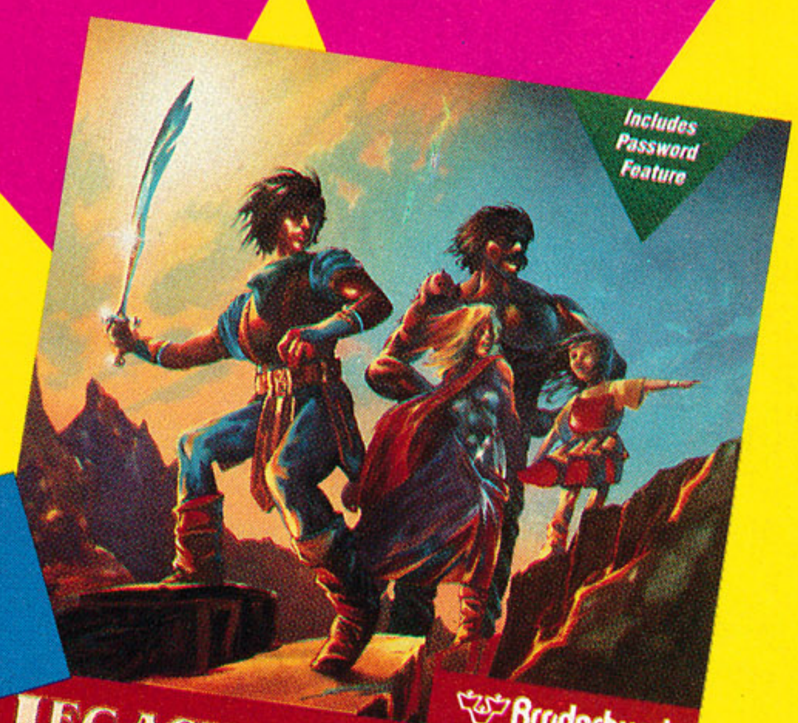

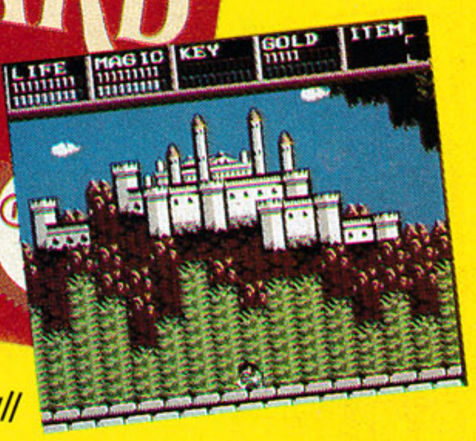

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**Sept./Oct. 1989 issue.*

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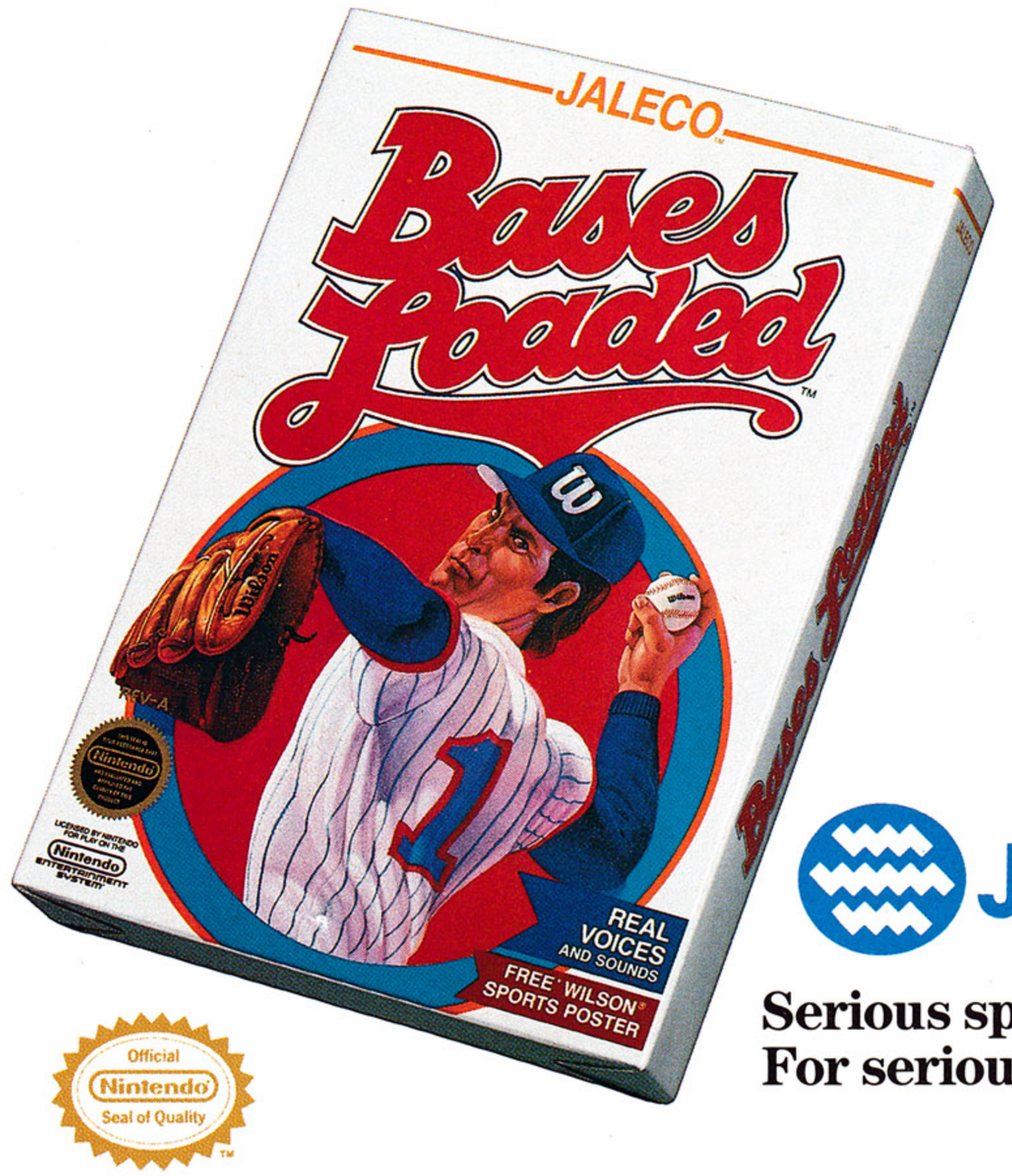

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VIDEO GAME REVIEWS

All-Pro Basketball

VIC TOKAI
For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($43.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	6
Graphics	7
Playability	7
Overall	7

The NES library is loaded with sports-related games. Some of the more popular sports are represented by more than one title; for example, there are currently six baseball games available from as many different manufacturers, with at least two more on the way. Vic Tokai's latest entry, their first sports title, is the fourth NES basketball cartridge.

All-Pro Basketball takes a realistic, no-nonsense approach to the game. It features true five-on-five playing action in a league of eight fictitious teams. In addition to the usual "player vs. computer" and "player vs. player" modes, there's a neat "two players vs. computer" option and a "watch" mode that allows you to watch the computer play against itself. When challenging the computer, either alone or with a friend, you can participate in a tournament with the hopes of advancing to the championship. The computer keeps track of your team's statistics and issues a "continue" password upon completion of each tournament game.

Perhaps most interesting is the ability to substitute players in midgame. When you see a player starting to slow down and miss simple shots, you can send him to the bench for a rest. After awhile, his energy will be restored, and he'll be ready for more action. The player-substitution screen is nice: You get to see each team member's name and energy level, and the faces of some players are also on view. (Some of these guys look familiar. In fact, one player bears an uncanny resemblance to Mick Jagger!) Each player has different strengths, and each team seems to specialize in one area or another.

Though *All-Pro Basketball* adheres pretty closely to official NBA protocol, there are certain exceptions. For example, blatant goaltending violations are ignored, and it's physically impossible for a player to go out of bounds. Actually, these quirks are welcome; they make a complicated game somewhat simpler.

The programmers of *All-Pro Basketball* have made a conscious effort to avoid the "cartoon" appearance of many of the earlier NES sports simulations, and this is most apparent in the slam-dunk sequences. There are similar close-ups in two of the other NES basketball games, but they've been improved upon tremendously here. When your player goes up for a dunk, the screen switches to a huge, finely detailed, full-color shot of your attempt to slam it home! A variation on this sequence is seen when one of your opponents is close enough to block the shot: Both of you soar up to the rim, and an arm in your face will frequently send you both scrambling for the rebound.

On the negative side, this game features one of the strangest playing fields I've ever seen. The court is shown vertically, with your goal at the top of the display. However, when your opponent gets possession and crosses the half-court line, the stadium momentarily fades to black and the player is left alone on-screen with the ball. When the lights come back on, the entire court has been rotated 180 degrees, and your opponent's basket has replaced yours at the top of the screen! If you bring the ball back, the switch occurs again in reverse, and your half of the court is returned to an upright position. It's like shooting hoops in the Twilight Zone! The same thing occurs if you pass to a teammate who's on the other side of the line: The ball itself hangs there alone in midflight with darkness all around, and you might be tempted to dig out your old geometry textbooks to help you figure out where it's going to be headed when it starts moving again. It's possible to get used to this system, even take it for granted, but I'm afraid some gamers might never get the hang of it.

Go for the glory and that elusive three-pointer in *All-Pro Basketball* from Vic Tokai.

Also, you are not allowed to make player substitutions until the brief period after you've committed a foul. Why can't I do this while the game is paused? I've found myself intentionally throwing the ball out of bounds, just to be able to rid myself of a rundown slowpoke who's dragging the team down with him.

My personal Nintendo Advisory Board (a pair of 14-year-olds) really liked *All-Pro Basketball*, especially in the "two players vs. computer" mode. It was great, they said, to be able to work together against a common enemy rather than against each other. They had a tough time beating the computer, which made the game "frustrating," but apparently not so much so that it deterred them from trying again—and again and again....

They also liked the postgame sports

Computer art by Cameron

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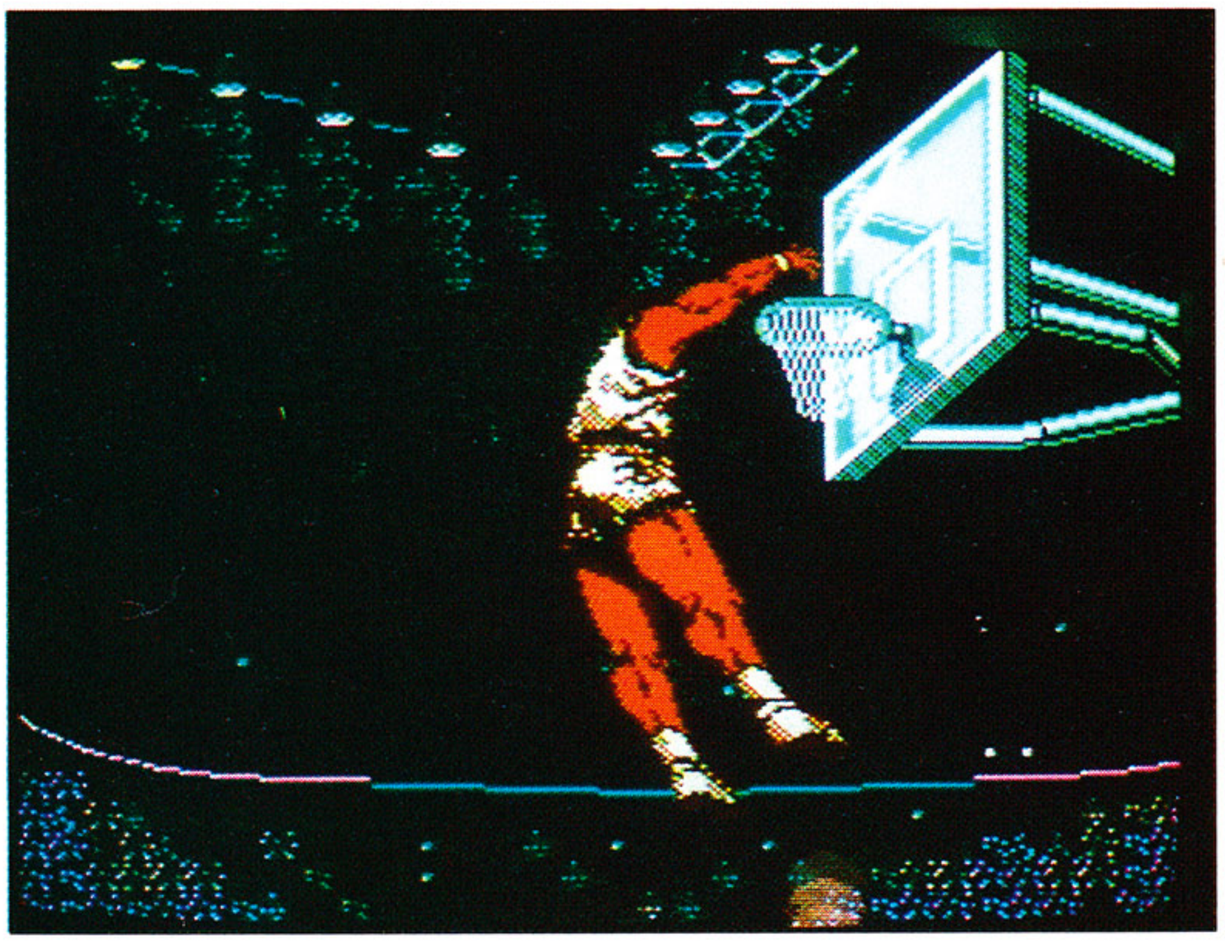
report, in which All-Sports newscaster Tracy appears on screen to comment on the game, the team's progress and the head coach's emotional state.

I've been trying to review this game without speaking in relative terms, but it seems unfair not to provide a comparison with Konami's *Double Dribble*, the yardstick against which all NES five-on-five basketball games must currently be measured. *All-Pro Basketball* has several features that its predecessor lacks, but the converse is also true, and many of the features common to both games are simply better in the Konami original. My 14-year-old pals surprised me when they both said they preferred this game to *Double Dribble*, a game they've each owned for nearly two years. Upon reflection, however, they added that their enthusiasm about the newness of a different basketball title may have influenced their decision and that they might feel differently after some of that excitement has died down. Personally, I think *Double Dribble* is a better buy, but Vic Tokai has a good, solid game here, and it deserves to be judged on its own merits.

If you own *Double Dribble*, you probably don't need to buy *All-Pro Basketball*, unless you're a basketball nut or your NES budget is larger than most. If not, then *All-Pro Basketball* is certainly worth a look.

—Chris Bieniek

Vic Tokai Inc., Torrance Tech Park,
370 Amapola Avenue, Suite 104,
Torrance, CA 90501; (213) 326-8880.



Hit the court in just one of the many plays featured in *All-Pro Basketball* from Vic Tokai.

Baseball Simulator 1.000

CULTURE BRAIN

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($49.99)

Along with the numerous *Super Mario Bros.* clones, *Legend of Zelda* lookalikes and martial-arts play-alikes, the next frequently overdone game theme on the NES has to be America's favorite pastime—baseball. It seems as if every third-party company has a baseball video game to its name. One such company that has recently gone up to bat with its own version, called *Baseball Simulator 1.000*, is Culture Brain. Don't be fooled by the name, though. "Simulator" is somewhat of a misnomer when used to describe this sports game. But what sets *Baseball Simulator 1.000* apart from other computer-baseball games is how unlike conventional, real-life baseball it is.

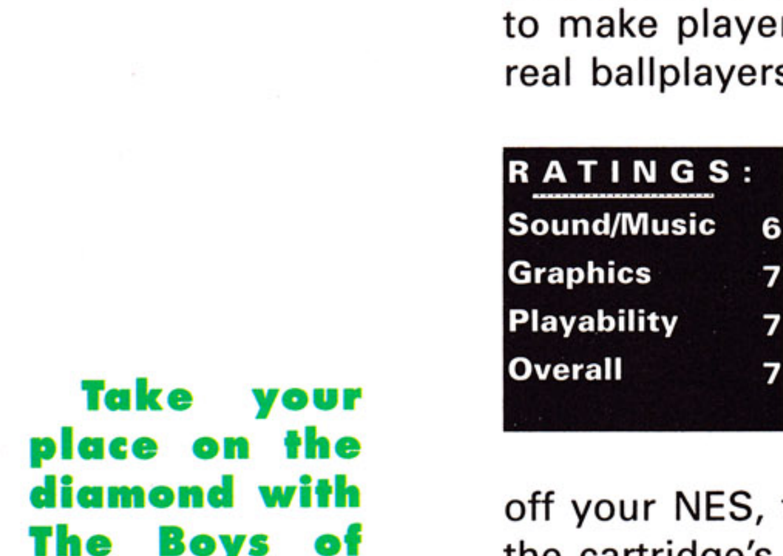
The first noticeable thing about *Baseball Simulator 1.000* is its immense number of game features. There are three fictitious baseball leagues to choose from, each one consisting of six teams. Each of the 18 teams' players has his own statistics, showing batting and pitching averages. The team lineup can be rotated or altered to your whim either before or during game time. If you don't care for the three leagues presented, you can build your own. Don't prefer any of the teams listed? Then put together a dream team of your own. What if you don't like the players themselves? No problem—just create your own on-field entities. Everything, from what your ballplayer's name is to whether he bats and throws lefty or righty, is up to you. This particularly useful function allows you to make players based on the records of real ballplayers. Thus, you can have your Little League team go up against the Red Sox.

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	6
Graphics	7
Playability	7
Overall	7

Another unique feature of *Baseball Simulator 1.000* is its ability to save game results onto the game pack itself. Even after you have shut off your NES, the data is safely stored in the cartridge's memory, thanks to a built-in battery. This memory-saving function operates exactly like *Legend of Zelda*'s and comes in handy for informal tournament play among friends.

You can pick six different baseball fields to play on. There are the usual places, such as an enclosed stadium, to the unusual, like fields set out in the middle of the ocean and outer space. Naturally, different fields affect the game in different ways. Players move faster or slower, depending on the kind of traction the ground surface provides. Fields that are physically smaller in size will allow for the likelihood of more home runs than a larger field.

Take your place on the diamond with The Boys of Summer in Culture Brain's *Baseball Simulator 1.000*.



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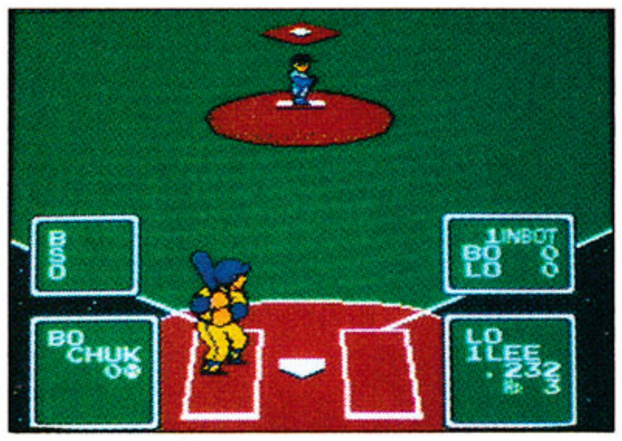
Wait, though, because here's the really unusual part: The players of the third league, the Ultra League, have superpowers. Yes, that's right, superpowers. Pitchers can throw balls that will freeze in midair, burst into flames or scatter in all directions. Batters can whack a ball into the air that will scramble its shadow upon descent (thus confusing the other team's attempt to catch it), knock over players in its path, explode like a bomb or cause a temporary earthquake upon hitting the ground. Imagine characters from Marvel or DC Comics playing baseball with the advantage of their superhuman powers. That's what you get with *Baseball Simulator 1.000*.



Strike one! Step up to the plate for your turn at bat in *Baseball Simulator 1.000* from Culture Brain.

Unfortunately, the one important thing that sets *Baseball Simulator 1.000* back from other titles is its graphics. The pitching, batting and other on-field screens look simplistic. When the ball is in play, the ballplayers scramble across the field like munchkins. The overall graphics aren't necessarily terrible, mind you. In fact, they have a slightly improved resemblance to Tengen's *R.B.I. Baseball*. But by today's standards—and compared to other, new baseball games available for the NES—*Baseball Simulator 1.000* just looks downright primitive.

There are those who might not need a baseball video game with all the features *Baseball Simulator 1.000* packs in or who would like one that indeed qualifies as a "real-life" simulator in respect to both gameplay and graphics. Choosing a baseball game for your NES has become akin to buying a car. And just as not one car is right for everybody, *Baseball Simulator 1.000* is by no means perfect for all video gamers. Usually, when deciding upon a car to purchase, you test drive vehicles you might like to own. The same should be done nowadays when selecting a video baseball game.

Baseball Simulator 1.000 is definitely a title that deserves consideration by anyone looking for that "just right" rendition of America's favorite pastime.

—Howard H. Wen

Culture Brain USA, Inc., 15315 N.E. 90th, Redmond, WA 98052; (206) 882-2339.

Double Dragon II—The Revenge

ACCLAIM

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($54.95)

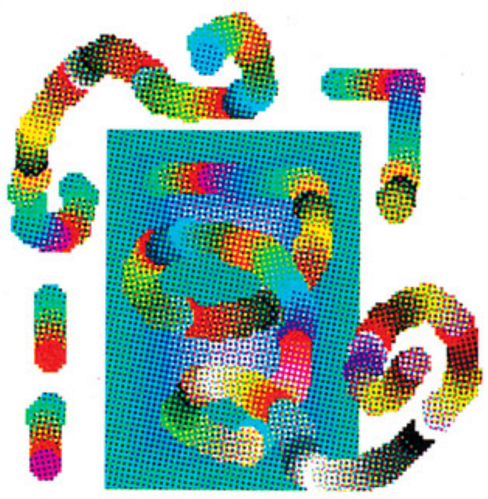
If at first you succeed...do a sequel. This seems to have been the motto of moviemakers and, more recently, of gamemakers. *Double Dragon II* is the sequel to *Double Dragon*. It retains the strong points of the original, but improves on it in many ways. It is, to my way of thinking, a successful sequel.

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	6
Graphics	6
Playability	6
Overall	6

In *Double Dragon II*, you again play the brothers Billy and Jimmy Lee, martial-arts experts extraordinaire. This time, however, the evil Black Shadow warriors have hit your dojo (school) and murdered Marion, your girl. So, it's revenge time as you seek to destroy the Black Shadow warriors and their leader. As in the original, you must move through different scenes, defeating all enemies in each before moving on. You have a number of different moves you can use as well, though mastering some of them will take quite a bit of practice.

The basic moves are easy to learn. The "A" button attacks to the right, the "B" button attacks to the left. If you are facing in the direction you're attacking, then the attack is a punch; otherwise, the attack is a backward kick. The fact that each button always attacks in one direction is different from other games and a little hard to get used to. Other moves get more complicated. For example, to execute a jump-kick, you must press both buttons to leap into the air, then press whichever button attacks in the same direction as you are facing. Finally, other moves build on one another. For example, you can grab an enemy by the hair, bang heads with him or hurl him through the air. Even more complicated moves, such as the "Spinning Cyclone" or "Hyper Uppercut" require several moves timed exactly right, and more often than not, you get clobbered by your opponent while trying to execute the move.

The enemies are many and varied, from the standard "punks" who wait around for you to hit them, to pipe- or knife-wielding warriors and the ever-popular punk girls. There are also plenty of giants, androids and Black Shadow warriors. You receive points for each punk you bring down and lose one of eight energy points every time you get hit. When all the



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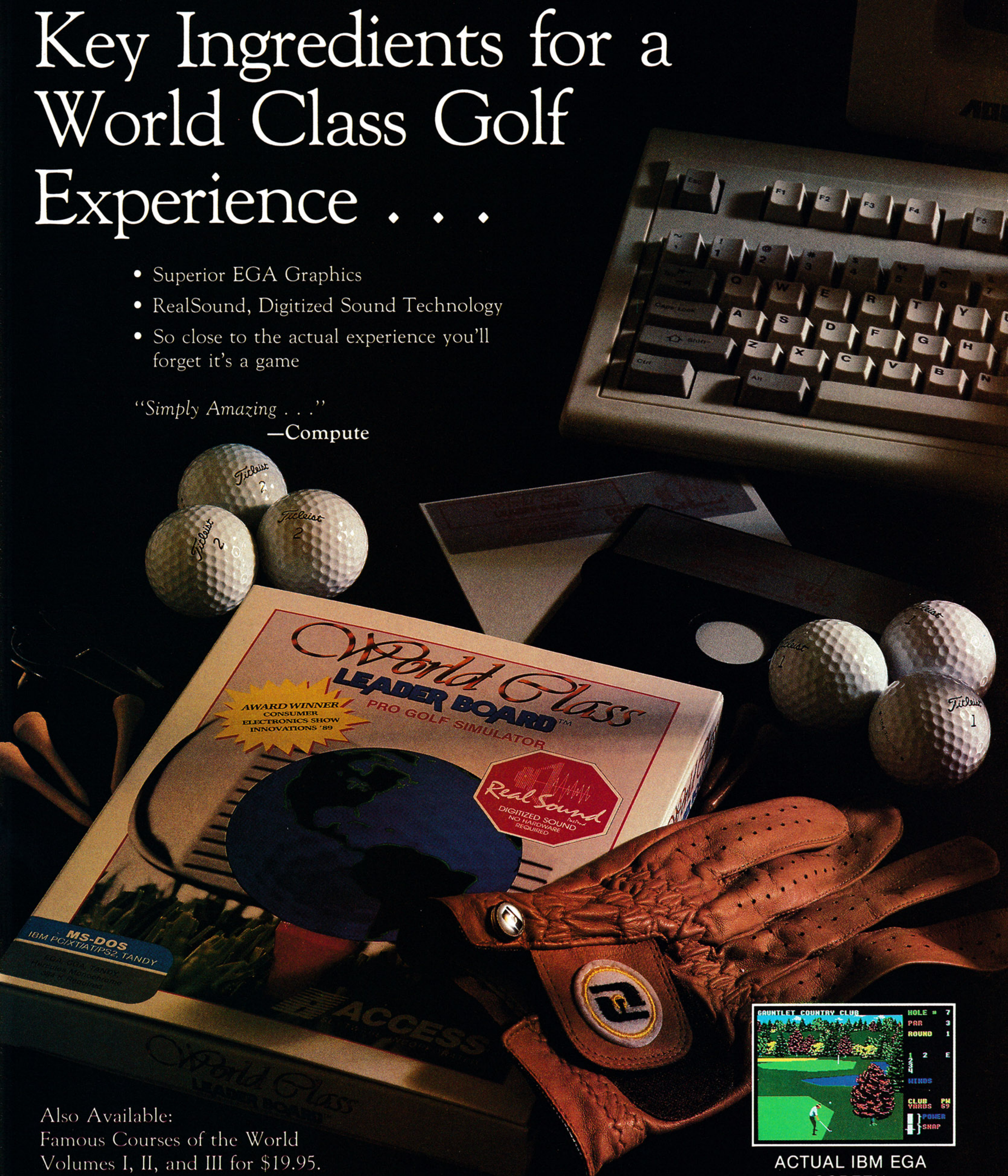

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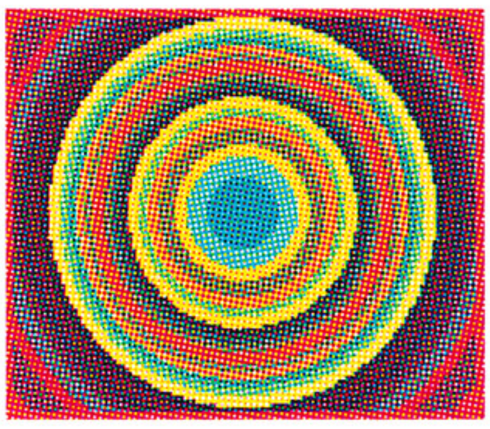
energy is gone, you lose one of your three lives.

Although a Double Dragon warrior doesn't carry weapons, you can pick up dropped weapons, such as chains, knives and pipes. Using these weapons can be tricky, because, once again, buttons must be pressed in the correct order to get the effect you want.

Double Dragon II is played against a scrolling background, which has considerably better graphics than the original. The initial round, "Into the Turf," takes place on the ground level and is relatively simple to master, but after that each level gets progressively harder. Level 3, the chopper, is especially difficult because the chopper keeps rolling back and forth and the door opens—you can fall out, instantly losing one of your lives.



The final confrontation comes in Mission 9, which can only be accessed by using the Supreme-Master mode. Here, you are up against the sensei (master) of the Black Shadow warriors—a lean, mean fighting machine. Defeat him, and the greatest miracle of all (according to the instructions, anyway) may take place.

The animation in *Double Dragon II* is much better, and the figures are larger and more detailed. This is a tougher game, however, and it will take considerable skill and perseverance to even make it past Mission 3. Those who are easily frustrated may want to pass this one up, but for sheer martial-arts gaming, *Double Dragon II* is excellent.

—David Plotkin

Acclaim Entertainment, 189 South Street, Oyster Bay, NY 11771; (516) 922-2400.

Practice your martial-arts skills while seeking revenge, in *Double Dragon II* from Acclaim.

A Boy and his Blob

ABSOLUTE
For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($49.00)

One of the joys of parenthood is never knowing exactly what your child will drag home with him when he comes tromping through the door. Often it's something simple, like a bottlecap or a twisted piece of junk that is christened a treasure, or something organic, like a dog, cat or reptile of some sort. Other times—well, let's just say it can be pretty interesting. Parents, have I got the perfect *drag-home* for you: How does a blob strike you?

Yep, a blob. That's the premise of Absolute Entertainment's newest game, *A Boy and his Blob.* This is the perfect offering for those of you who are sick of the shoot-'em-till-they-drop/punch-'em-till-they-blink games that have been pounded out in droves lately. This game is a relatively nonviolent, lighthearted action/adventure piece from David Crane, the same guy who brought you the classic *Pitfall.*

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	7
Graphics	7
Playability	8
Overall	8

In *Blob,* you take command of an unlikely duo through their adventures beneath the city in search of untold wealth and excitement. It seems that a young blob from the planet Blobonia (where else?) has come to Earth in search of a champion to help him save his planet. This little blob, after ingesting a particular flavor of jellybean, has the ability to transform himself into different items that will be helpful to the quest. Eating a tangerine-flavored bean will change him into a trampoline, for example.

Together, the boy and his shapeless friend must traverse the caverns beneath the city to find a way back to Blobonia. There they will team up to defeat the evil king, who has enslaved the peaceful planet of goo-men. (Enslavement on Blobonia takes the form of being force-fed only marshmallows and chocolate.) To do battle effectively on Blobonia, you'll have to gather a number of items along the way, including peppermints (lives), vitamins (weapons) and diamonds.

The variety of scenes you pass through are colorful and well detailed. Chests of gems sparkle brilliantly, subterranean caverns of the city's subway system are strewn with Day-Glo neon graffiti and outlandish creatures lunge at you from every corner. Beware the fiendish subway

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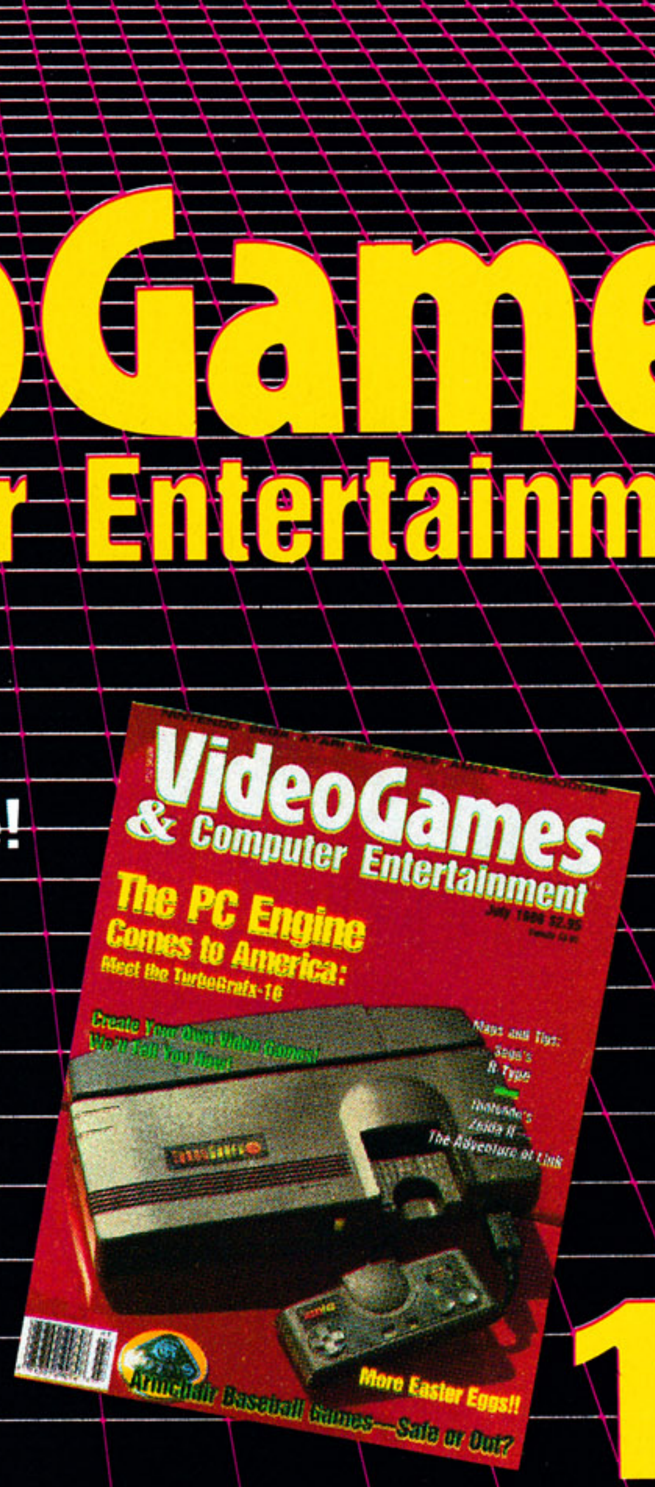

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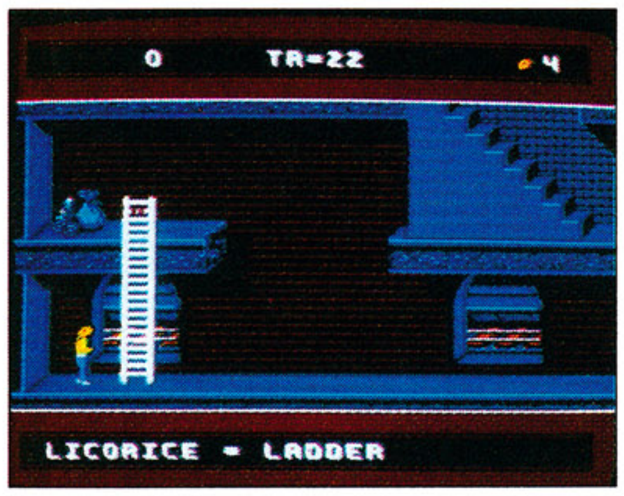
serpents, falling rocks and stalactites that can puncture soft beings!

The actual gameplay is smooth, with little slowdown of the program. The similarities to *Pitfall* are immediately apparent in the look of the characters and the fluid motion of the human hero. Other comic touches are evident as well; for example, the blob, when assuming its shape-shifting duties, always makes its presence known by including a characteristic pair of blinking eyes on its new identity, be it organic or not. You can summon your ectoplasmic friend with a quick whistle. This will serve notice to the blob to snap out of its new form and get back to "normal."



Take an incredible journey with an unusual companion in *A Boy and His Blob*

Also, pay close attention to the expression on the blob's face if you don't continually pump jellybeans into it. It will still follow you around faithfully, but with an ever-growing scowl on its face. It's little touches like this that separate the *great* games from the rest of the pack.

One of the most enjoyable things about this game is that it's actually *fun* to wander about with your friendly blob tagging along at your heels. There's very little chance of being waylaid in lower levels, so experimentation is definitely advised. It won't be long before you gain a mastery of the controls and can manipulate Blobert (that's his *real* name) with the best of them.

This is certainly one of the most unusual games to come along for the NES in quite some time. It will delight players of all ages for many hours. For those of you who are searching for an alternative to all of those highly violent games, *A Boy and his Blob* may be the one for you. Just remember, the next time your child comes into the house breathless, check the front yard. And keep an extra bag of jellybeans on hand—just in case.

—Patrick J. Kelley

Absolute Entertainment, 251 Rock Road, Glen Rock, NJ 07452; (201) 652-1227.

Casino Games

SEGA
For the Sega Master System
($46.99)

I know only one way to get someone to hand you $500, free and clear, to risk on a slot machine and a deck of cards. I know only one way you can become a millionaire with no risks and without leaving the comfort of your family room. How? By picking up a copy of *Casino Games* for your Sega Master System.

Casino Games lets armchair gamblers take on five different casino games: blackjack, baccarat, poker, the slot machine and pinball. Inspired by every gambler's dream, the goal of *Casino Games* is to increase your winnings to $1 million, a feat that isn't too difficult—if you play cards well.

The first time you play *Casino Games*, you must open an account at Club Sega's information desk. Here, you enter your name and receive $500 to bet with. (If only things worked that way in real life, eh?) A password system is used to maintain your account from game to game, allowing you to accumulate your winnings over the course of many sessions. Thanks to the password, once you've opened your account, you won't need to do so again until you either make your goal of $1 million or go broke.

Of the five games offered in *Casino Games*, pinball is the only one that won't help you increase your winnings. Although it's a good, solid version of computer pinball (it even has a tilt feature), it's recreational only and thus seems a strange thing to include in a gambling simulation. The real gamblers will want to pump coins into the slot machine or sit down at one of the card tables. Pinball is entertaining, though, and a good game in its own right.

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	7
Graphics	7
Playability	8
Overall	7

Feeling lucky? Win all or lose your shirt in Sega's new *Casino Games*.

Winning at the slot machine is, of course, a matter of pure luck. And like the slots at any casino, the odds on this machine are much in favor of the house. Regardless, you'll want to spend some time with the slot machine, if for no other reason than to enjoy the excellent graphics and sound this simulation offers. Your best bet is to stick with the $1 machine. If you risk big money on the spin of the wheels, you'll soon be bankrupt.

The quickest route to your $1 million is poker. *Casino Games*' version of poker is about as close to the real thing as you can get. The game is so realistic that your opponents' expressions can be a clue as to what she has in her hand. For example, if Nancy is frowning after drawing her cards, chances are good that she didn't get what she was drawing for. Once you learn to read these visual clues, the odds of your

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The evil Wizard Malkil is back. And his fury rages out of control in the form of four sinister elementals: Earth, Wind, Fire and Water. As Kuros, the knight warrior, you track them in their dark domains—pursued by armies of vile creatures. To emerge victorious, assemble the shattered IronSword. And face what no warrior has ever faced before!

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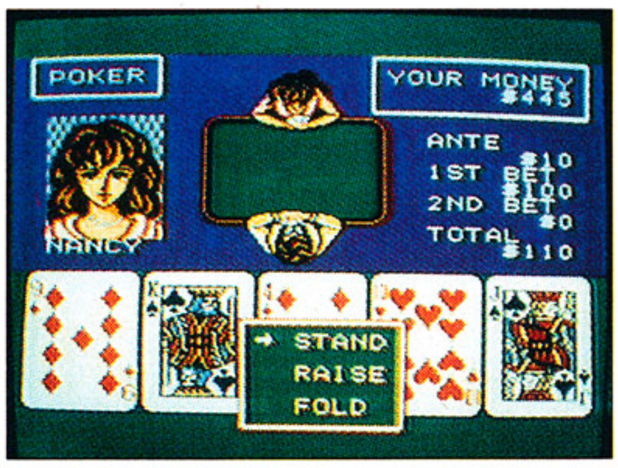
winning are dramatically increased.

All the card games here are full-featured contests, supporting all the basic rules of the three games. In black jack, for instance, you may "split," "double" or take "insurance." In all the card games, the stakes increase with your winnings. While a maximum bet of $100 is typical for the lower-level games, once you get into the big time, the maximums are raised to hundreds of thousands of dollars. That $1 million won't take as long to earn as you first think.



Hit the tables and be the big winner in the new *Casino Games* by Sega.

There's not much a reviewer can say about a set of games like this, except that it works as advertised. *Casino Games*' biggest strengths are the password reentry that lets you maintain an account from one session to another and the vivid expressions of your opponents that provide clues as to what they hold in their hands. If you're looking for a good gambling simulation for your Sega Master System, you can place your money on this one.

—Clayton Walnum

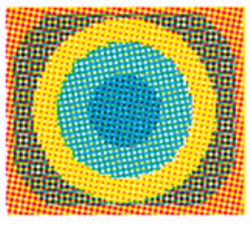
Sega of America, 573 Forbes Blvd., South San Francisco, CA 94080; (415) 742-9300.

Duck Tales

CAPCOM

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($49.95)

In Capcom's latest offering, *Duck Tales*, you get to play that lovable old quacker Uncle Scrooge, as he travels through five strange lands in search of five hidden treasures. Along the way, you'll get clues from his nephews, Huey, Dewey, Louie and Webby, as well as special treasures and treats from Bubba Duck, Mrs. Beakly, Gizmo-Duck and Launchpad.



Based on the cartoon series of the same name, *Duck Tales* is a goofy adventure that's part arcade action and part treasure hunt. As Uncle Scrooge makes his way through the five lands—the Amazon, Transylvania, the African mines, the Himalayas and the moon—he'll have to battle off all sorts of enemies, including deadly birds, poisonous spiders, tricky bats and man-eating plants.

But Uncle Scrooge needs to concentrate on more than just enemies. All the while, he must search for many treasures and helpful items that may be hidden in strange places. Among the items that he can find are diamonds, which add to his money score, magic coins that make him invincible, ice cream and cake that restore his hit points and Scrooge dolls that act as 1-ups.

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	6
Graphics	8
Playability	7
Overall	7

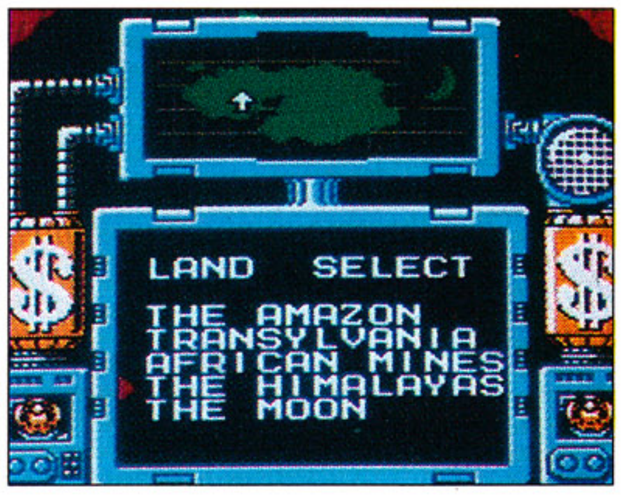
In addition to these hidden items, treasure chests are strewn everywhere. They may be opened with a sharp rap of Uncle Scrooge's cane or by having Uncle Scrooge "pogo" on top of them.

Uncle Scrooge may use several methods of movement. Just like any other video-game duck, he may waddle left or right according to the direction pad. He may also move by using his cane as a pogo stick. This gives Uncle Scrooge a much higher reach, especially since he can pogo on the backs of whatever creatures happen to be near him and not just on the ground. In fact, pogoing is the only way to reach many treasures, some of which are so high above Uncle Scrooge that he has no choice but to use some poor creature as a stepping stone.

Walt Disney's perennial favorite returns for all new adventures in the charming *Duck Tales*.

Other methods of movement include jumping, climbing ladders and vines and falling down deep pits. Some pits are deadly, others lead to yet other mysterious, underground passageways.

When Uncle Scrooge begins his quest, he starts at the control room and picks which of the five lands he wishes to enter. Once he enters a land, he must battle his way forward, gathering all the treasures and searching for that level's goal. In the Amazon, Uncle Scrooge must find the Scepter of the Incan King. While in Transylvania, he must locate the Coin of the Lost Realm. The other lands each have their own goal as well. Once he completes a level, Uncle Scrooge may then find Launchpad, who'll bring him back to the control room to choose another land.



The graphics in *Duck Tales* are generally well detailed, approaching cartoon quality in many places. Game play is smooth, with good controller response.

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As Orin the Falconer, you must save the world from the evil of the 8 Eyes. These Jewels of Power are held by the King's dukes, who plan to use them to rule the world for their own profit. Control Orin and your falcon Cutrus alone, or in the unique simultaneous mode, where you are Orin, and your friend is Cutrus. Contains Password feature.

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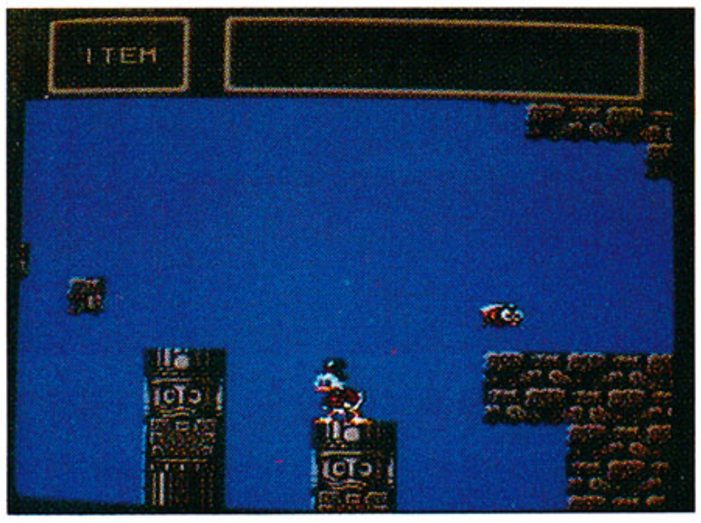
However, some of the movement techniques may take a little practice. For example, to pogo, you must press down on the control pad, press the "A" button and then, when Uncle Scrooge is airborne, press the "B" button to activate the pogo stick. Happily, once the pogo is in action, simply holding the "B" button will keep it going. This is a technique you have to learn, since you'll probably spend more time pogoing than anything else. (The pogo stick is also a weapon; when you pogo on top of a creature, you destroy it.)



Lead classic character Scrooge McDuck on a wild quest in *Duck Tales*.

In general, there's nothing unusual or original about *Duck Tales*. It's a decent arcade game that will give many hours of enjoyment. Kids who are fans of the cartoon series will probably like it the most.

Is *Duck Tales* everything it was quacked up to be? Close enough.

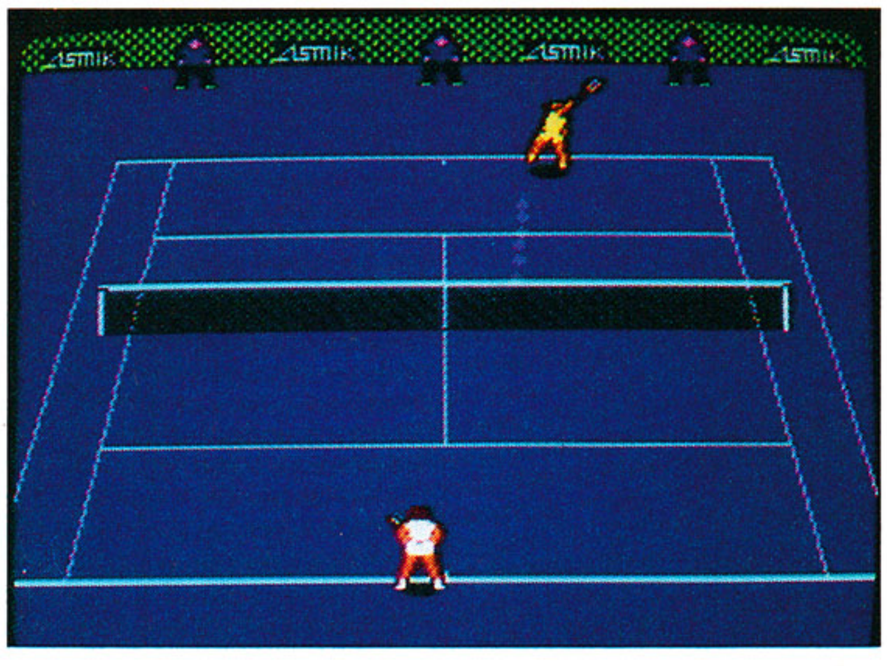
—Clayton Walnum

Capcom, 3303 Scott Boulevard,
Santa Clara, CA 95054; (408) 727-0400.

Evert & Lendl Top Players Tennis

ASMIK
For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($44.95)

Video gaming started with *Pong*, and it sure has come a long way since. *Evert & Lendl Top Players Tennis* gives you such options as one- or two-person play, tournaments, scrolling backgrounds and some talented opponents. It allows you to build a player and improve that player over time. It even has digitized sound to announce the score.



There are many modes that you can choose from in *Evert & Lendl Top Players Tennis*. You can play singles or doubles with either one or two players. If you choose doubles and there is only one player, the NES will be your partner. You can then choose your player: either Ivan Lendl or Chris Evert or one that you build yourself. If you choose to build a new player, first select its gender, then name your alter ego and allocate 20 points among eight different categories. The categories include strength, stamina, agility, speed, focus, skill and miracle. After each match, you will gain more points to allocate to these areas, with the number of points you're awarded based on how often you win during the match. It's important to gain these points, because your on-screen player is clumsy at first, with little ability to quickly change direction. As a point of reference, Chris Evert has 87 points and is very fast (ninth level on speed).

If you choose to play doubles, you can select from a number of tournaments. Aside from the graphics of the opening, the tournament you play doesn't make too much difference, though different tournaments are played on different surfaces, which impacts how the ball moves. With either singles or doubles tournaments, you are presented with a screen that shows the matchups to reach the trophy. By pressing the SELECT button, you can modify the order of the matches so you don't always have to play the same opponents in order. Tournaments are based on three sets, with each set made up of six games. A set must be won by at least a two-game margin.

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	4
Graphics	6
Playability	6
Overall	6

The view in *Evert & Lendl Top Players Tennis* is from high over your player's shoulder. As your player(s) moves back and forth across the court, the screen scrolls, showing the stands and judges off to the sides. The graphics are quite good. The ball rebounds realistically off the court and casts a shadow. The players are animated: looking downcast when they miss a shot or jumping up and waving their rackets when they make a good shot. It can be difficult, however, to gauge the distance and run up to the ball accurately.

The player's controls allow for many difficult shots and work better as you amass ability points. The basic moves are to guide your player to the ball and press the "A" button for a hard smash, the "B" button for a slow, high lob and the control pad as you make the shot to impart spin. Furthermore, the strength with which you hit the ball is controlled by how long you hold down the button. You can also dive for a shot and try for a miracle. Miracle shots don't exist in real life; for example, the spiral shot winds through the air. You must have miracle points to make these shots, however.

During any match, you can check your ranking, get advice from Lendl or Evert or look at your password. The password allows you to quit and return with all your statistics intact. It's very long, however,

continued on page 87

Are You Quick Enough For Mappy-Land?

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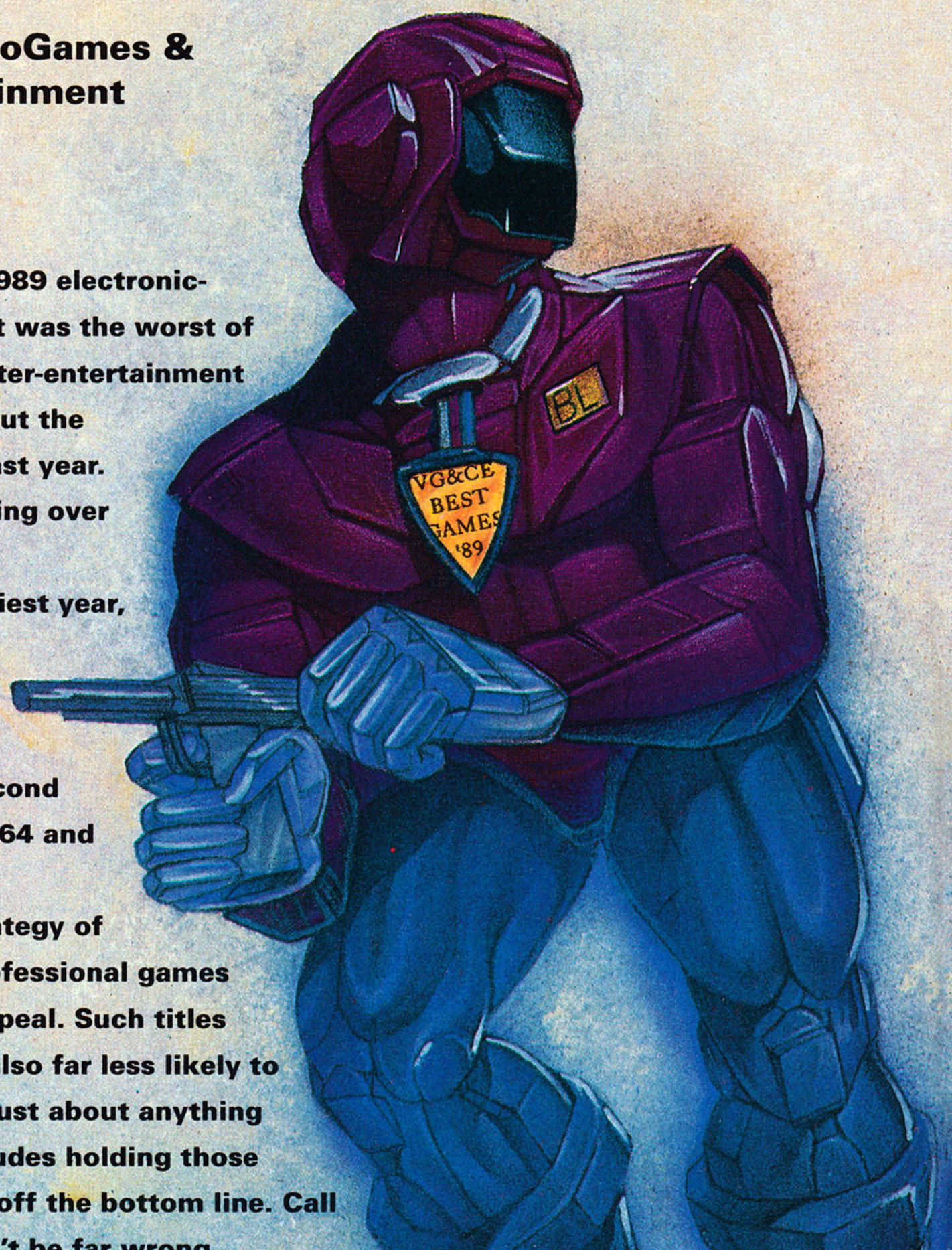
VG&CE's Best Games of 1989

by the Editors of VideoGames & Computer Entertainment



To borrow from Charles Dickens, the 1989 electronic-gaming year "was the best of times, it was the worst of times." The average quality of computer-entertainment programs reached new heights of excellence, but the individual high spots were less plentiful than last year.

The increased dominance of product marketing over product development at many large publishers contributed to both trends. This wasn't the easiest year, financially speaking, for many software companies. Video-game systems competed strongly for the gaming dollar; over-ambitious shipments caused a product glut during the second quarter; and old standbys like the Commodore 64 and Apple II are rapidly dwindling in popularity.

Quite a few publishers have adopted the strategy of going for "sure things." That means slickly professional games in established niches with proven consumer appeal. Such titles seldom become platinum sellers, but they are also far less likely to fall absolutely flat. Worried publishers will do just about anything to avoid outright flops, and that definitely includes holding those trailblazing new concepts until the pressure is off the bottom line. Call 1989 the year of the B-plus game, and you won't be far wrong.

Arnie Katz, Computer Entertainment Editor, chaired a panel of judges composed of VG&CE's writers and editors. This panel examined hundreds of games published for the first time between October 1, 1988, and September 30, 1989. This article presents their choices for best entertainment products.

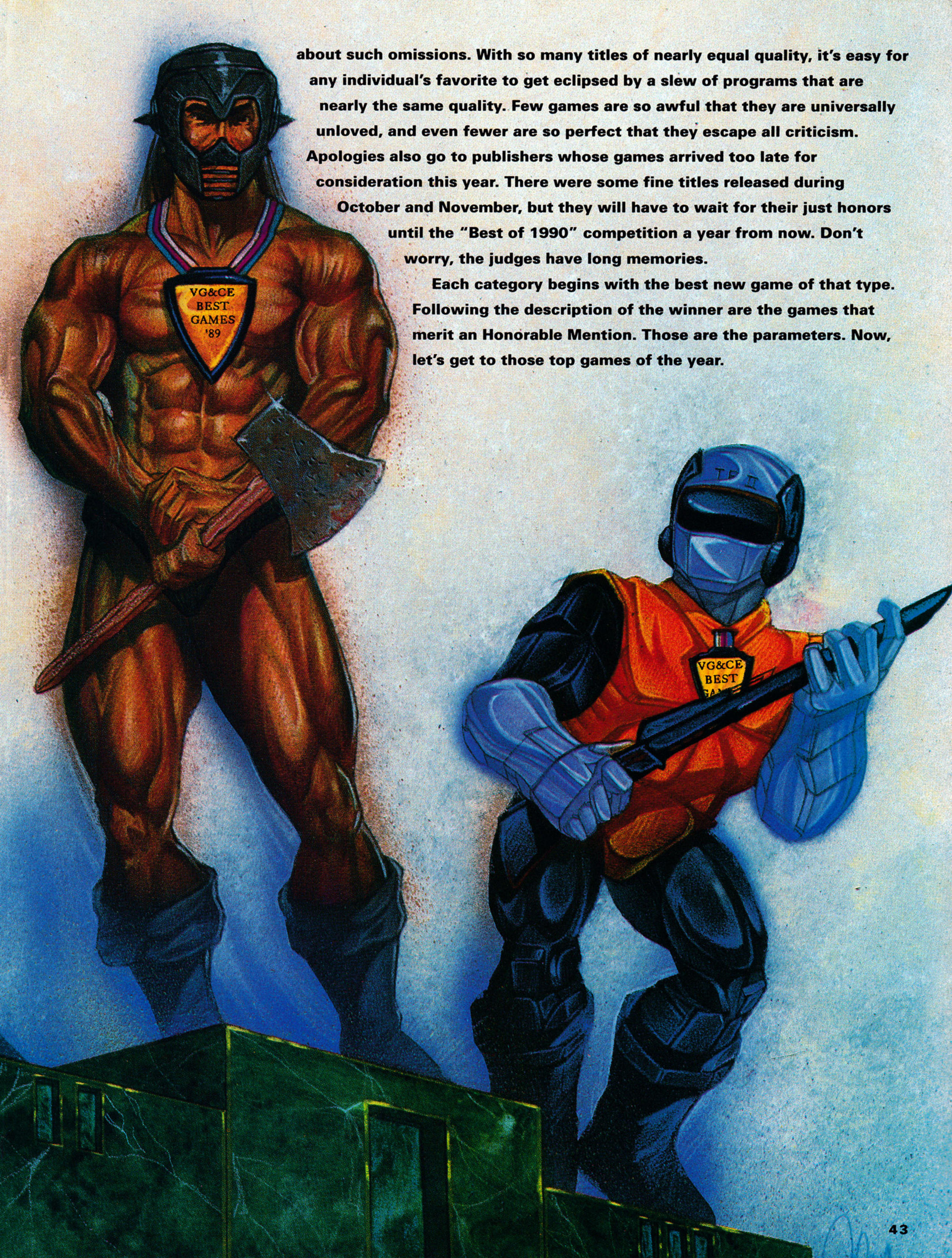
The small number of truly monumental achievements made the competition for this year's awards the hottest so far. With fewer clear-cut winners, it opened the way for a lot more legitimate contenders for each and every award.

For this reason, the judges hope that readers whose favorites didn't make this year's list will be charitable

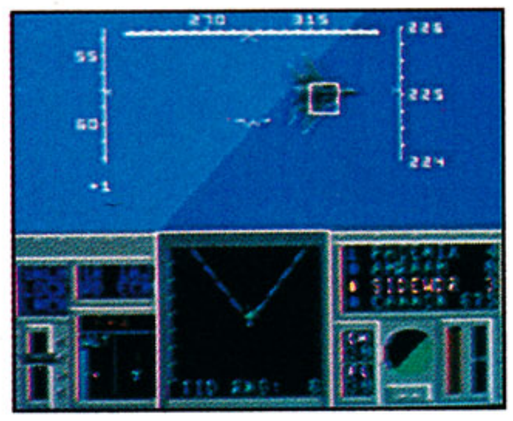
Illustration by Alan Hunter

about such omissions. With so many titles of nearly equal quality, it's easy for any individual's favorite to get eclipsed by a slew of programs that are nearly the same quality. Few games are so awful that they are universally unloved, and even fewer are so perfect that they escape all criticism. Apologies also go to publishers whose games arrived too late for consideration this year. There were some fine titles released during October and November, but they will have to wait for their just honors until the "Best of 1990" competition a year from now. Don't worry, the judges have long memories.

Each category begins with the best new game of that type. Following the description of the winner are the games that merit an Honorable Mention. Those are the parameters. Now, let's get to those top games of the year.



Will they call you "Tinkerbell" or "Deadeye"?



Take on the best pilots in one-on-one dogfights at the Naval Fighter Weapons School to find out who is the real top gun.

You don't know what a good chewing out is until you've ticked off Admiral Hawk. Wipe that smirk off your face, Lieutenant.

Find out, on the toughest fighter training ground in the world. In *F-14 TOMCAT.*

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F-14 TOMCAT features 80 randomly assigned missions in five theaters. 1st-person in-the-cockpit realism. And feel-it-in-your-gut aerial maneuvers. It's the best-selling combat flight simulator on the Commodore today.

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"F-14 TOMCAT is one of the best combat flight simulators for the 64. Graphics, sound, and action are excellent, and the framework of a career scenario adds a sense of realism and purpose."
— Compute's Gazette

"F-14 gives you a shot at being one of America's most elite fighter pilots."
— Computer Gaming World

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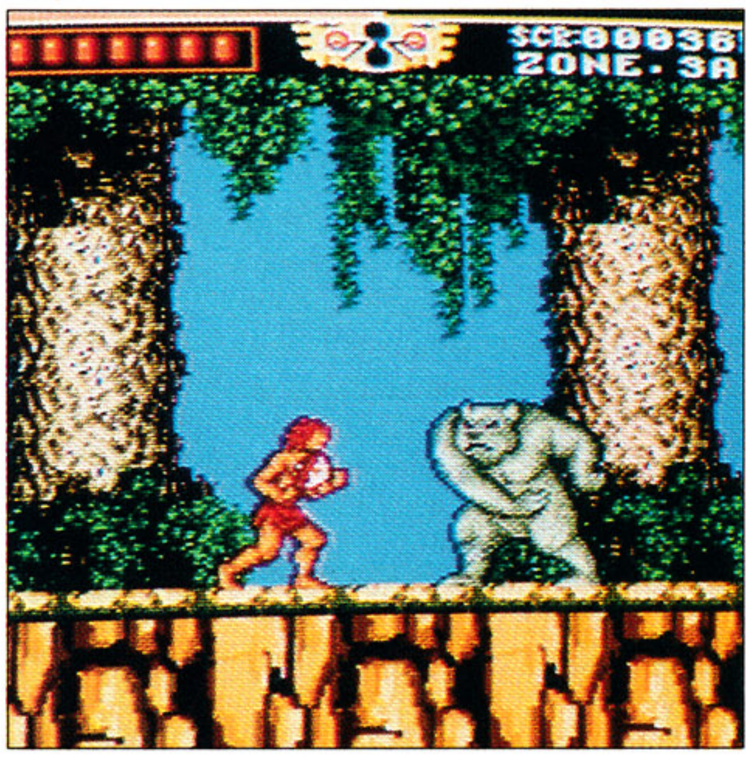
Video Game of the Year



Legendary Axe (NEC for the TurboGrafx-16) has a little of everything: loads of axe-swinging action, layer upon layer of high-quality music and smooth, colorful animation. The combination of these elements brought this action adventure to the top of the video-game heap like rising cream.

This hero's chase to find his missing maiden Flare is finding great popularity with gamers looking for new reasons to say, "Oh, wow!" when they play. And certainly this game tests reflexes like few others do. Whether you are facing the jumping sea-monkey creatures, rockmen or the gigantic Jagu, you'll have to be your absolute best. More important, *Legendary Axe* shows the impact of the next-generation game consoles on the quality of electronic entertainment. There were a number of other games that were close in our voting—NEC's *Blazing Lazers* for the TG-16 and Sega's *Thunder Force II* for the Genesis—but *Legendary Axe* surpassed all other comers to win the title of 1989 Video Game of the Year.

Best Sports-Simulation Video Game

Baseball cartridges have been incredibly popular over the years, and 1989 saw strides in diamond fare with the release of new consoles. Few companies would dare release a game system without at least one baseball game to support it.

Sega not only brought out a baseball cartridge, but used a familiar name as a sponsor. *Tommy Lasorda Baseball* (Sega for the Genesis) takes the national pastime and adds a series of distinctive digitized voices to make umpire calls. Filled with options—such as bunting, player stats, league play, wind effects and password reentry—*TLB* features standard behind-the-batter perspective for during-the-pitch action and direct overhead views for field views. Though this viewpoint is somewhat traditional, *TLB* takes it a bit further by employing enhanced animation and sound.

Honorable Mentions

Like *Tommy Lasorda Baseball*, its little brother, *Reggie Jackson Baseball* (Sega for the SMS), has many of the same features that make *TLB* this year's winner in the sports department. The SMS's quality also helps the representation.

John Elway's Quarterback (Tradewest for the NES) takes the popular *Quarterback* coin-op game and converts it to cartridge format; but it is also a good-quality gridiron simulator in its own right. It gives the control-pad coach the ability to choose from a menu of plays and animates the resulting action amply.

The links are also quite big in video-gaming circles, though not as popular as other, more traditional sports. *Power Golf* (NEC for the TurboGrafx-16) does well in re-creating the strokes, bunkers and putts of the real game, using the TG-16's graphic capabilities to take this TurboChip to the limit.

Best Action Video Game

For some strange reason, the country has been taken by storm in the past couple of years by a group of four unlikely heroes. These superstars that made the natural transition from comic to cartoon to video game appeared on the Nintendo Entertainment System before jumping to arcades as a coin-op. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (Ultra for the NES) brings these pizza-chomping toxic avengers onto screens for a fast-paced slugfest, challenging the player with lots of puzzles and intense confrontations. The varied capabilities of each of the four turtles—along with the ability to switch characters on the fly—gives the player a chance to find the best hero for particular situations.

Honorable Mentions

The 16-bit parade that started in the fall of 1989 brought quite a lot of top-notch action games to the American public. *Blazing Lazers*, *Legendary Axe* (both NEC for the TurboGrafx-16) and *Thunder Force II* (Sega for the Genesis) are extremely capable products filled with multicolored characters and great sound effects.

Best Simulation Game

When NEC rolled out the TurboGrafx-16 in New York in 1989, part of their demonstration was a comparison between Nintendo's *Pinball* for the NES and their own *Alien Crush*. The oohs and aahs from the crowd gave NEC the assurance that their game system had shown a distinct difference in quality—in their favor.

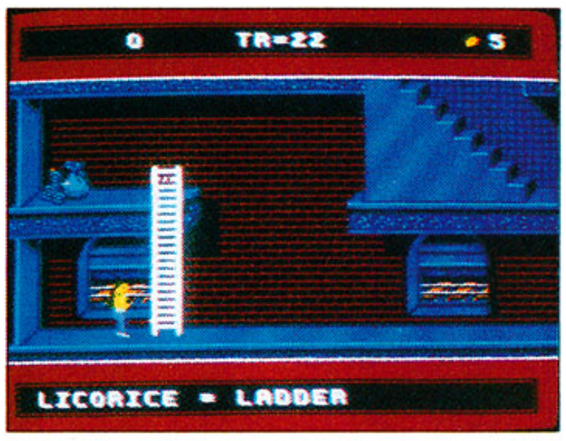
Alien Crush is our choice for Best Video Game Simulation. Few pinball simulators have actually given the player the full feel of a pinball game, but this one succeeds. It features finely detailed creatures reminiscent of the film *Alien*, lots of bonus situations and some of the finest music ever heard in a video game. The first few times you play the game, it's downright eerie.

Honorable Mentions

Stealth A.T.F. (Activision) brings the high-flying flight battle to the Nintendo Entertainment System. Not only does it succeed in its efforts, but it makes strides by not following the somewhat overused scrolling environment that is the cornerstone of most NES games.

The gambling motif is also quite popular, and *Casino Games* (Sega for the SMS) brings you right to the tables for some quality betting action. Poker, blackjack, slots and pinball—we're not quite sure how that last one fits in—are displayed in multihued splendor and stay true to the rules of the casino.

Best Strategy Video Game



David Crane is one of the biggest influences in current video-game trends, given the innovation and popularity of his various games—*Pitfall* was his most popular—during the first generation of video games. Now he is penning a new chapter in his book with his first cartridge outing in some time, *A Boy and His Blob* (Absolute Entertainment for the NES). Though the game sticks to the NES standard of the scrolling adventure, Crane stays away from the shoot-'em-up concept, instead opting for a unique premise: An alien blob follows your young character around, but the main feature is that the blob will mutate into other forms when he eats different flavors of jelly bean. VG&CE expects this one to be on "Best of" lists for NES owners around the country.

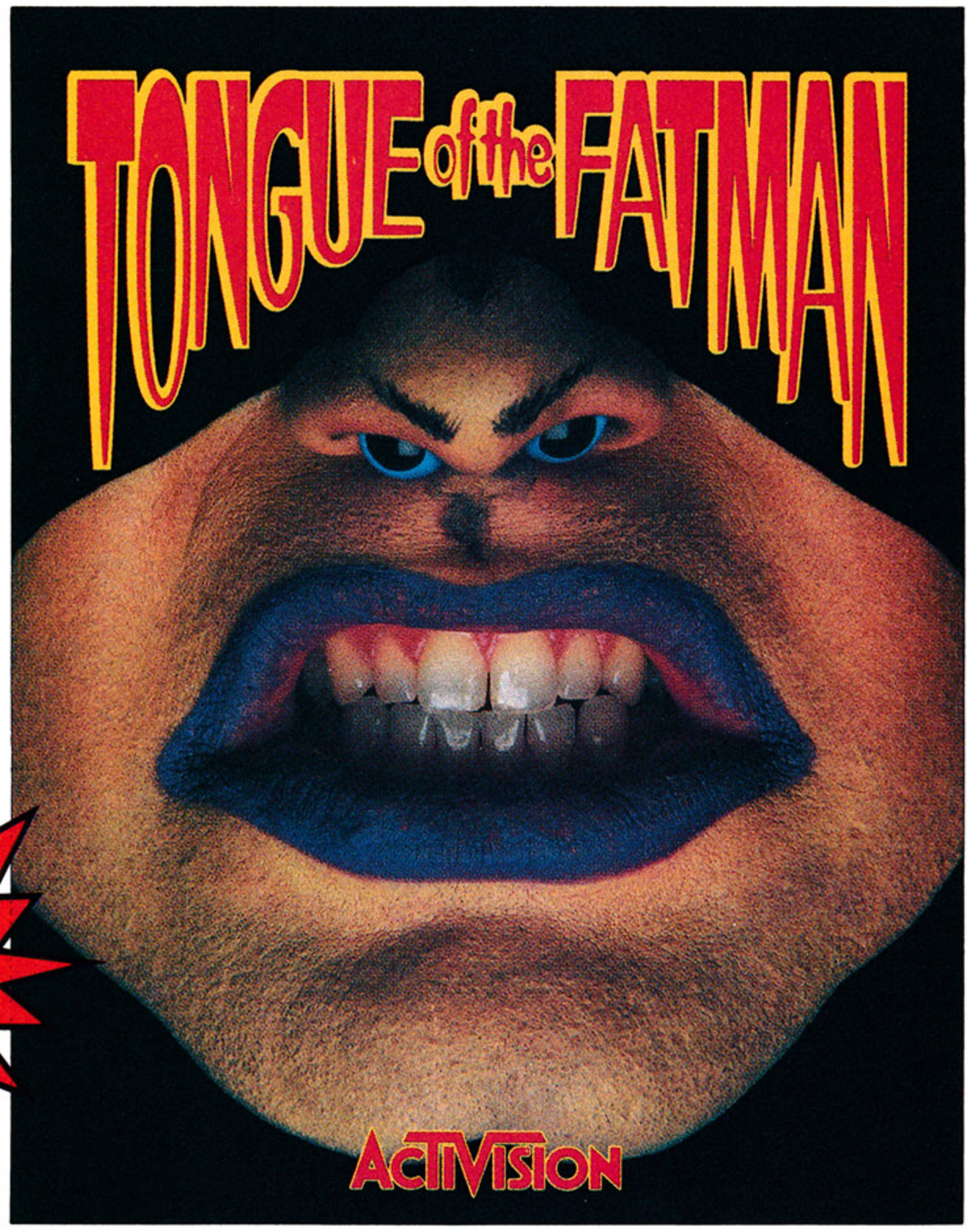
Honorable Mentions

Last year, *Tetris* won kudos for its innovation as a computer game, getting particularly extensive press as the first game to come out of the Soviet Union. This year, Nintendo took Tengen on for their version of *Tetris*, bringing the battle into the courtroom and getting temporary restriction of Tengen's marketing of the product. Oddly enough, the Tengen version of *Tetris* for the NES and Nintendo's version of *Tetris* for the Game Boy come in as runner-ups in the Best Strategy Video Game category.

Both of these games show strong innovation. The Game Boy game is not only a well-paced version, but it also lets two players compete head-to-head over a Video Link connection. The Tengen game skips the colorful backgrounds that were sprinkled through the computer versions and concentrates instead on the gameplay. The pieces are smoothly beveled, making for a nice three-dimensional appearance, and the increase in speed makes for a quality game experience.

Also brought over to the video-game world from the

Welcome to the Fight Palace.



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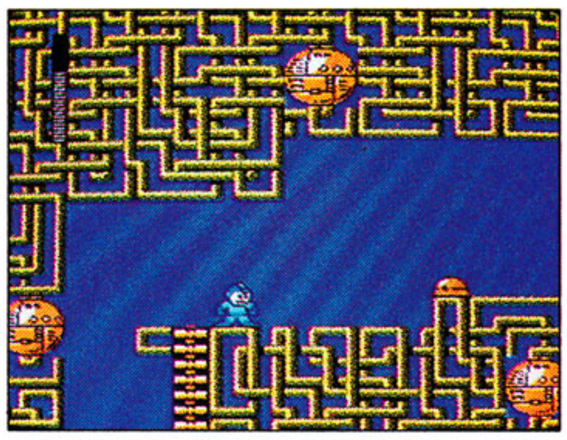
computer domain is *Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?* (Sega/Parker Brothers for the SMS), a series of educational games produced by Brøderbund. This one follows the familiar premise and puts you in the gumshoes of a detective in search of the location of a member of Sandiego's crime gang. You have to use hints and your knowledge of geography to determine a suspect and collect an arrest warrant.

Best Action-Strategy Game



Capcom has been known for its wonderfully designed NES games—*Ghosts 'n' Goblins*, *Legendary Wings* and particularly *MegaMan*. In 1989 we saw a sequel to that *battle royale* with *MegaMan 2*. Strategy games not only have you often moving against myriad enemy creatures, they also stress critical timing of those moves for success. *MegaMan 2* does its best to perfect that challenge and creates a colorful environment for you to hop around in.

As documented in our Strategy Guide for *MegaMan 2*,

Kemco/Seika's *Rescue*

you must battle past a variety of beasties—Quick Man, Wood Man and Bubble Man, for instance—on your way to defeat the evil Dr. Wily. Each step will test your mettle to the maximum!

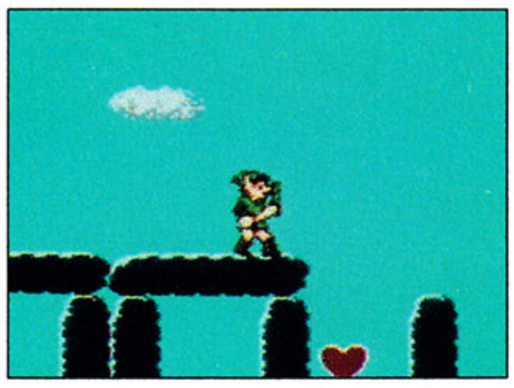
Honorable Mentions

Kemco/Seika is one of the smaller NES licensees in the U.S., but their *Rescue* cartridge should push their popularity somewhat. In a cartridge version of Infogrames' *Hostage* (see the computer awards for more on this), you are the leader of a S.W.A.T. team forced to deploy in order to save a bunch of hostages captured by terrorists. The plan you create is often torn to shreds by the relentless gunfire of vicious captors.

Air Fortress (HAL America for the NES) brought out one of the sleepers of the year with this interesting puzzle game. For most of each level, you battle adversaries so you can build up your energy and bomb supplies. But after you knock out the power supply, you have a limited amount of time to escape before the installation blows up. This game will have you on the edge of your seat.

Finally, it wouldn't be fair to mention the quality of Capcom products without talking about *Bionic Commando*. Though it looks like a standard scrolling shoot-'em-up, the quirky manner of getting your character around—by extending his telescopic arm to grasp, destroy and swing all around the screen—takes it beyond this tiring genre.

Best Adventure Video Game



A few years ago, you could mention the name Zelda and be greeted by nothing but a blank stare. Today the name Zelda sparks interest in the eyes of video-game players worldwide, thanks to Nintendo's featured RPG character. The return of Zelda and Link in Nintendo's *Zelda II—The Adventures of Link* drew lines around video-game sales counters and gave hours of enjoyment to gamers as they sought to traverse palace after palace and defeat a slew of nasty characters in their way. What else can we say except "bring on *Zelda III*!"

Honorable Mentions

Due to the Zelda craze, Sega Master System owners often repaired to the haven of their arcade cartridges, but they finally had their own *epic* in 1989 with *Phantasy Star* (Sega for the SMS), a large RPG that tested players through three-dimensional mazes and puzzles. In fact, the popularity of this game will be tested again when Sega releases the six-meg, battery-backup-equipped *Phantasy Star II* for the Genesis in the coming months.

Formerly a popular computer game from Mindscape, *Shadowgate* (Kemco/Seika for the NES) is an eerie jaunt through a haunted castle. Instead of the tedious typed entry of commands, all commands are available with a simple pointer manipulated by the control pad.

NEC took the graphic action of *Gauntlet* and spiced it up for their TurboGrafx-16 console in the form of *Dungeon Explorer*. The overhead perspective gives a full view of the action as you go into battle against wonderfully animated yet gruesome characters. And if you're equipped with a TurboTap, you can bring others into the assault for assistance.

Best Sound and Graphics in a Video Game

It's not hard to understand why there are no NES or SMS entries in this category: The technological leaps of the next-generation consoles were too much for the older machines to compete with. And this category's winner, *Thunder Force II* (Sega for the Genesis), combined all the elements necessary to thoroughly knock the socks off of anyone powering it up. Particularly if you run the audio through a stereo system or into headphones, the blasts and booms of each explosion reverberate through your ears with incredible clarity. (It's too bad we can't understand what the voice at the beginning of the mission says before the "Good luck.")

What impressed us the most were the graphics, which gave the appearance of your spaceship cruising over the alien landscape and through an enemy installation. This visual effect shows where video-gaming is headed in appearance.

Honorable Mentions

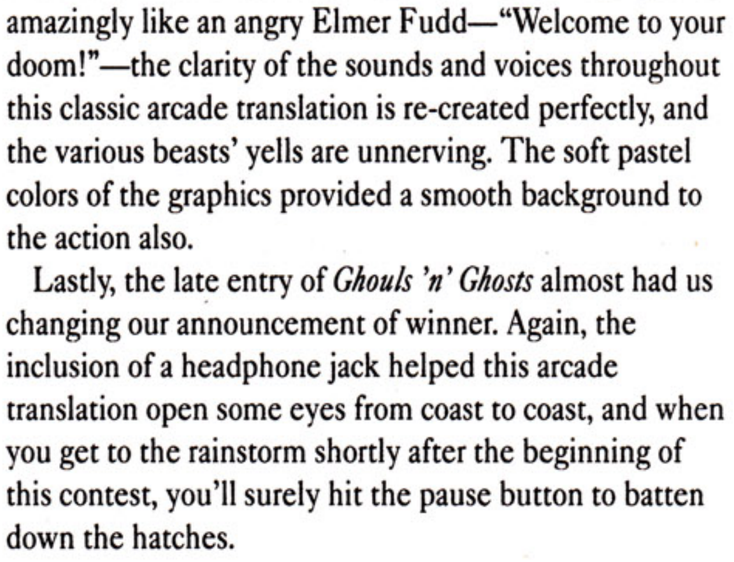
As we mentioned before, *Alien Crush* (NEC for the TurboGrafx-16) has some of the best music you will ever find in a video game. This is especially true when you enter the bonus screens and the tunes begin. And besides, there aren't very many games that let you pick, at the start of a contest, what version of the music you want to hear.

A while ago, Epyx released a computer duel called *Demon Sword* that was best known for a clanging sound of two swords hitting metal-to-metal. NEC's *Legendary Axe* exceeds Epyx's efforts by adding lots of great visual and audio effects. The animation in particular is extremely smooth, right down to the moving muscles of the characters' bodies.

Sega also had a couple of runner-ups in their Genesis camp. Though the voice that greets your every move in the *Altered Beast* cart that comes with the Genesis sounds amazingly like an angry Elmer Fudd—"Welcome to your doom!"—the clarity of the sounds and voices throughout this classic arcade translation is re-created perfectly, and the various beasts' yells are unnerving. The soft pastel colors of the graphics provided a smooth background to the action also.

Lastly, the late entry of *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts* almost had us changing our announcement of winner. Again, the inclusion of a headphone jack helped this arcade translation open some eyes from coast to coast, and when you get to the rainstorm shortly after the beginning of this contest, you'll surely hit the pause button to batten down the hatches.

Best Coin-Op to Video Game Translation

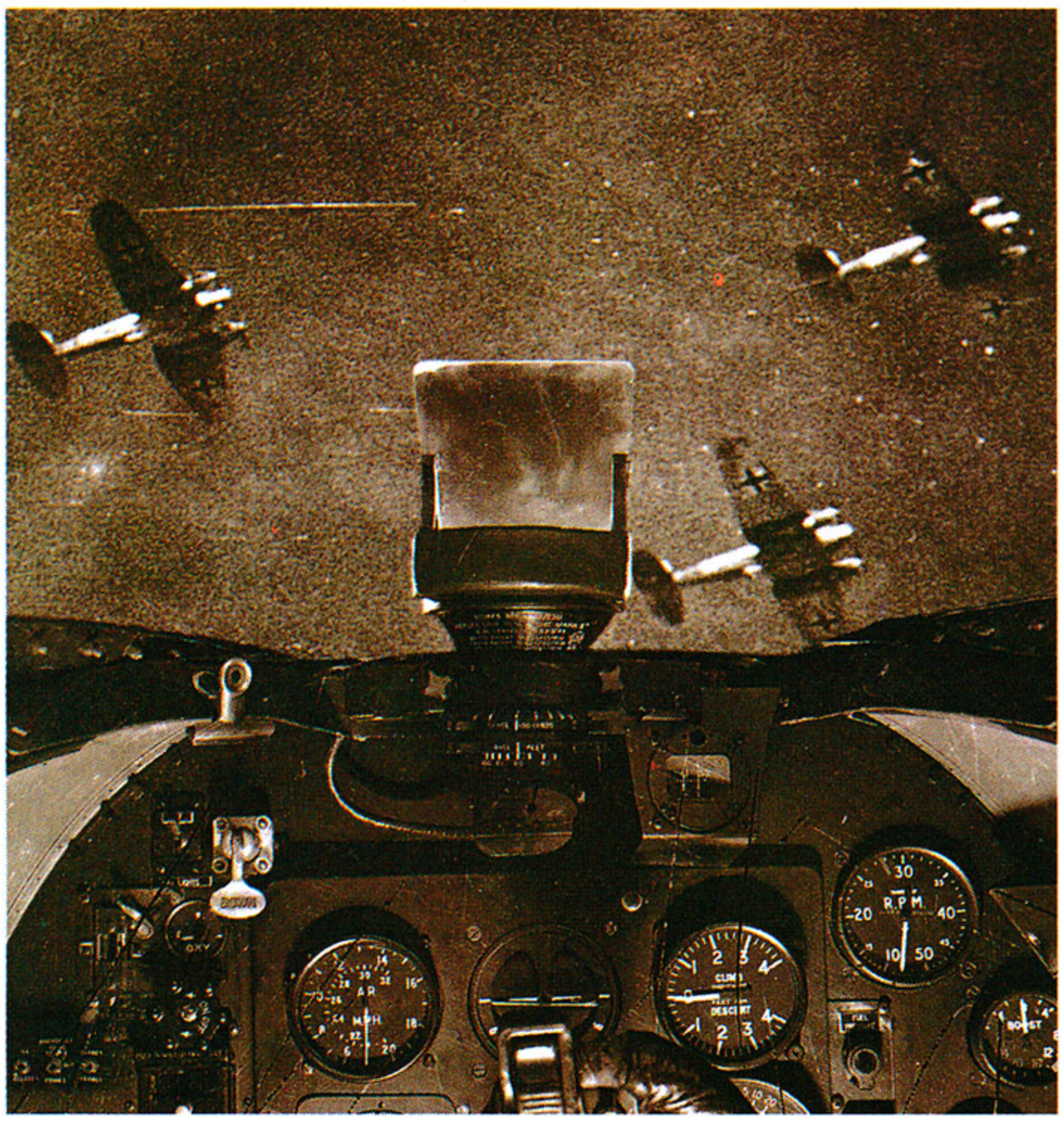


Perhaps the most stunning introduction to the next-generation consoles is to stop by an arcade, then go home to power up the same game. The previously mentioned *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts* (Sega for the Genesis) is an almost perfect replica of the arcade quarter-eater. The fluid motion of the characters, the high-quality sound and ease of play—with the addition of a continue feature—will have you wondering where the coin slot is.

Honorable Mentions

Lots of gamers who were into playing during the first generation of video games are unhappy that the old classics aren't being converted to cartridge form. *Gyruss* (Ultra for the NES) does a great job of bringing this favorite to your home screen. Rumor has it that a lot of the old classics will be coming to the NES in the next year or so.

Taito has also adapted one of their arcade titles to the NES in the form of *Bubble Bobble*. This tale of dinosaurs who destroy their enemies by encasing them in bubbles and popping them was favored by gamers of either gender and all ages. Veteran gamers looking for a challenge also had a good time with this one as it



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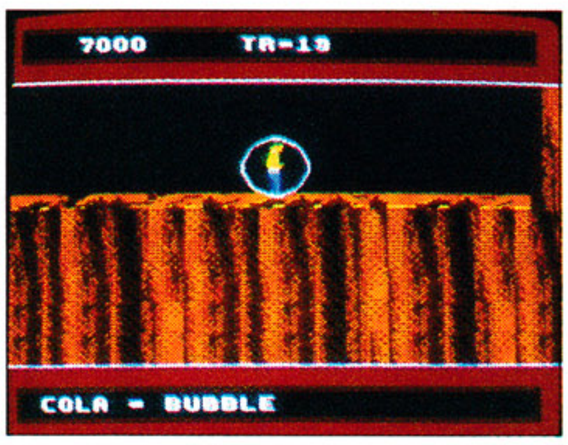
contained lots of different levels, each with a layout that tested the strategic abilities of the player.

Most Innovative Video Game



We mentioned earlier the innovative theme of Absolute Entertainment's *A Boy and His Blob*. It would be a crime not to recognize this cartridge for its trend-breaking concept. The trek—which takes you through underground Earth, rocketing through outer space and past all sorts of obstacles on Blobolonia—will test the arcade and puzzling skills of the NESer.

Honorable Mentions

Again, *Bionic Commando* (Capcom for the NES) has to be recognized for its interesting and unique main character. Similar to Tarzan with a portable vine, the lead in *Bionic Commando* must grapple with vicious soldiers, traps and gaping chasms, using his extendable arm as his primary tool.

Movies have been made of the internal conflict between good and evil, but this is the first time a video game has faced the situation. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Bandai for the NES) deals with this clash of personalities by transforming the character into his alter ego when things get too stressed. Your quest is to not only make it to your wedding in one piece, but you also must balance the negative influences on him in order to keep him in his *good* form.

Players have become *Tetris*ized all over the world, thanks to the Soviet-designed puzzle game; but now that Nintendo has brought out a version for their Game Boy, you can also play *Tetris* as a competitive contest. Using the Video Link cable, two players can go against each other in a contest that can only be called *Blitz Tetris*. The object is to cause the other player to lose, because every line you complete on your board adds to your opponent's bin. A gauge on the left of the display shows the height of your adversary's bin, so you can get an idea of how your pieces stack up next to his.

Best Computer Games of the Year

Computer Game of the Year

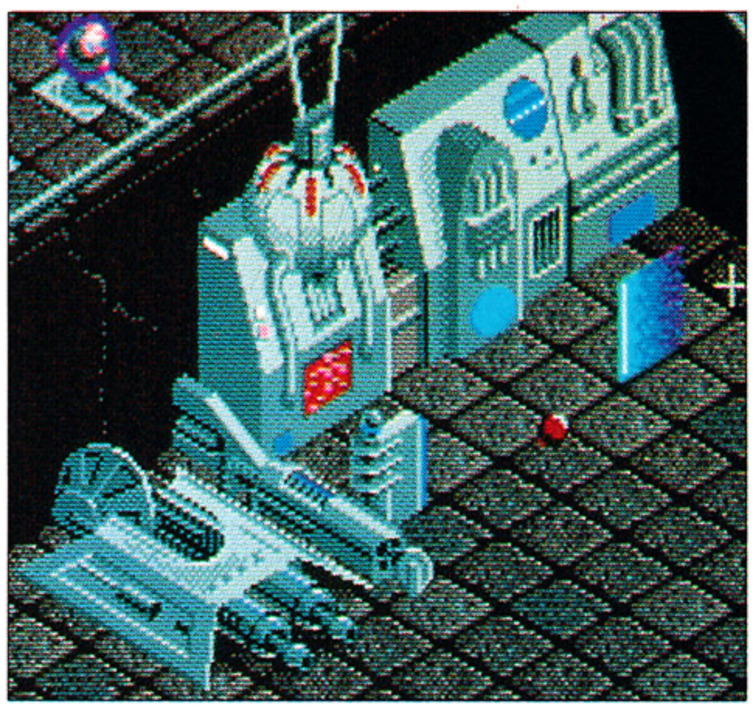
Populous (Electronic Arts for Amiga and Atari ST) is a mind-stretching exception to the absence of field-shaping, seminal new games in 1989. Designer Peter Molyneux, certainly computer gaming's "rookie of the year," leaps into the front ranks of European game-makers with this provocative contest.

One thing's for sure, no one can say Molyneux played it safe. Not many American companies would have risked publishing a game that turned the player into the god of a primitive planet, and Electronic Arts deserves praise for releasing *Populous* here after its success in Great Britain.

Behind the shock value of the theme lies an excellent icon-driven action-strategy game. The player begins as lord over an inhospitable mudball. By raising land and encouraging the few inhabitants to farm and build, the armchair deity fosters the rise and expansion of the civilization under divine protection. Minions of an evil immortal are at work as well, so the player must also create holy warriors to keep evil in check.

Populous is a mentally demanding game, but the interface is so logical that it remains accessible even to computerists who normally prefer "boot and bash" disks. The obvious thought and care of Molyneux and his team has brought forth one of the most impressive and entertaining brain games of this or any other year.

Best Computer Sports Simulation



Baseball took a deserved rest in 1989. The glut of action and strategy games based on the national pastime forced designers and publishers to widen their horizons and look for other forms of athletics to put on the gaming screen. A few outfits tried to ride Epyx's coattails with action-sports anthologies of dubious merit, but most embraced other established team and individual sports.

Zany Golf (Electronic Arts for Amiga and IBM PC), this year's Computer Sports Simulation of the Year, is a triumph of quality over quantity. Author Will Harvey offers only nine meticulously crafted holes, but that's enough to keep mini-putt maniacs glued to the screen for hours.

Each one is a multiscreen extravaganza depicted with beautiful illustrations in two-thirds perspective. *Zany Golf* has a reasonably long playlife, because every hole is so enticing that electronic swingers will want to try each one over and over.

The control system is fittingly simple. After all, this is miniature golf, not the PGA tour. The player need consider only two factors, direction and force.

Harvey introduces a rule that prevents a participant from advancing to the next hole unless he or she gets at least "par" on the last one. This "sudden death" structure keeps the players from racing through the entire course in a single sitting. It also gives the player extra incentive to excel, because everyone will want to see all nine attractions.

Cinemaware's *TV Sports: Football*

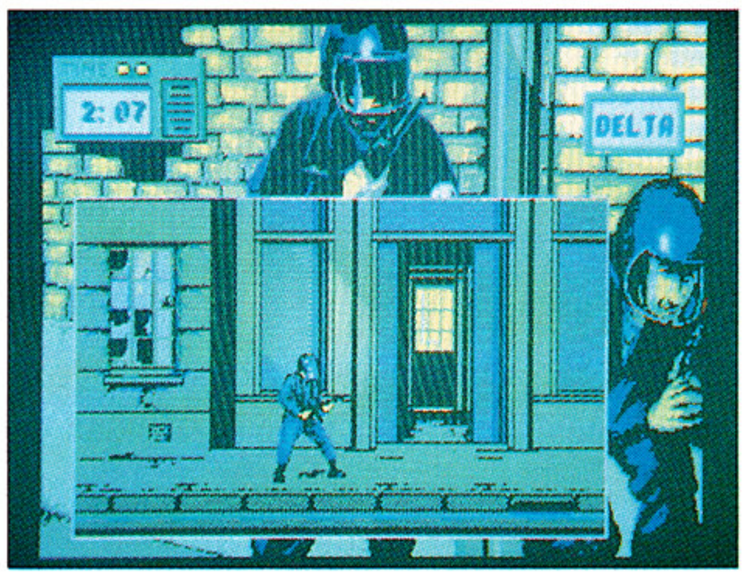
Zany Golf is an amusing tribute to one of America's favorite leisure sports. It deserves an add-on disk.

Honorable Mentions

T.V. Sports: Football (Cinemaware for Amiga and IBM PC) brings the magic of America's most sophisticated game creators to the sports arena. This action-strategy title presents professional football the way the networks broadcast it every Sunday and Monday.

Lakers vs. Celtics (Electronic Arts for Amiga and IBM PC) and *Magic Johnson's Fast Break* (Virgin Mastertronics for most computer systems) are the first of an expected flood of computer hoop titles. The next batch will have to go far to match the quality of these two. The former is an action-strategy simulation of the NBA's playoff ladder, while the latter is an example of arcade-style basketball.

Best Computer Action Game

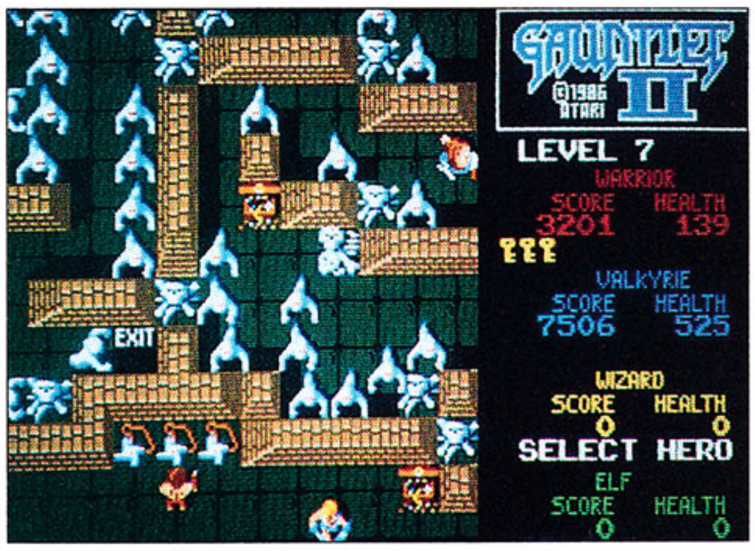


Last year, Infogrames won kudos for the excellent audio-visual effects in *Captain Blood*. This time, the French-based concern earns top honors for computer action with *Hostage* (Mindscape for Amiga, Apple IIGS, Atari ST, Commodore 64, Macintosh and IBM PC). This three-stage assault on an embassy seized by terrorists should silence critics who categorized French software as all sizzle and no steak.

Hostage isn't quite the visual *tour de force* of Infogrames' aforementioned science-fantasy epic, but its graphics definitely rank among the year's best. The colorful play screens depict the tense conflict with multiple viewing angles and drama-building techniques borrowed from the movies.

The three stages of the game give the computerist the chance to control a six-member S.W.A.T. team on a mission to rescue four people captured by terrorists. In the first phase, the player must position three marksmen. The second covers the descent from the roof and the break-in through the embassy windows. The finale plunges the player into room-by-room fighting as the team hunts for the prisoners and fights the captors.

Three distinct difficulty settings make *Hostage* suitable for players of all calibers. Even a novice will be able to



Mindscape's *Gauntlet II*

complete the rescue at the easiest setting in the first couple of tries, yet the top skill level is tough going.

Honorable Mentions

Air hockey meets science fiction in *Shufflepuck Café* (Brøderbund for Amiga, Macintosh and IBM PC). Players contest against some of the meanest-looking characters this side of the *Star Wars* cantina sequence.

Sequels have a bad reputation and, in most cases, deservedly so. Too often, they are cynical, money-grubbing exercises. *Gauntlet II* (Mindscape for all computer systems) is one of the few follow-ups that actually surpasses the original. Its additional strategic elements, especially the objects the warriors can pick up and use, make it absolutely addictive.

Licence to Kill (Domark for Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore and IBM PC) is easily the best electronic game ever based on the James Bond character created by the late Ian Fleming. In this multiphase action-adventure based on the movie of the same name, the player guides 007 through fast-paced mini-games that use planes, helicopters and 18-wheel trucks.

Best Computer Simulator

The most popular category of computer gameware last year was definitely simulators. Flight, naval, tank and automotive simulators have a stranglehold on computerists' imaginations. Real-time action, the immediacy of first-person perspective and fast-paced strategizing have proven to be irresistible.

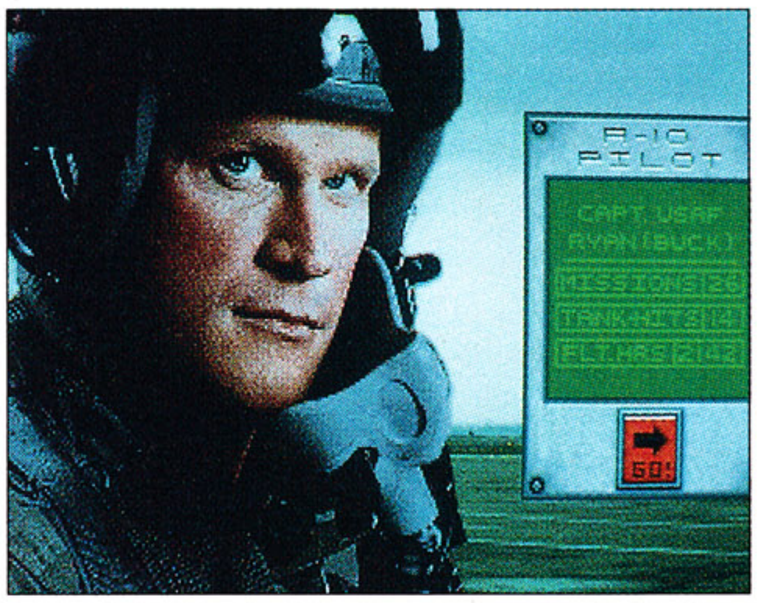
Publishers haven't been shy about courting this loyal and free-spending audience, either. There could have been ten Honorable Mentions in this category without appreciably lowering the judging standards.

Like last year, a driving simulator earns Best Computer Simulator. The 1988 winner, *Test Drive* (Accolade), stresses events inside the cockpit, while the top simulator of 1989, *Vette!* (Spectrum Holobyte for IBM PC), focuses on the scenery around the vehicle.

You'll need a VGA card to get the full impact of the detailed rendition of the streets of San Francisco, but *Vette!* remains impressive even in the less powerful graphics modes.

The visuals are based on the currently popular "polygon fill" technique, but no one has done it better. A wealth of detail greets the driver as he roars along the roads and boulevards.

Honorable Mentions



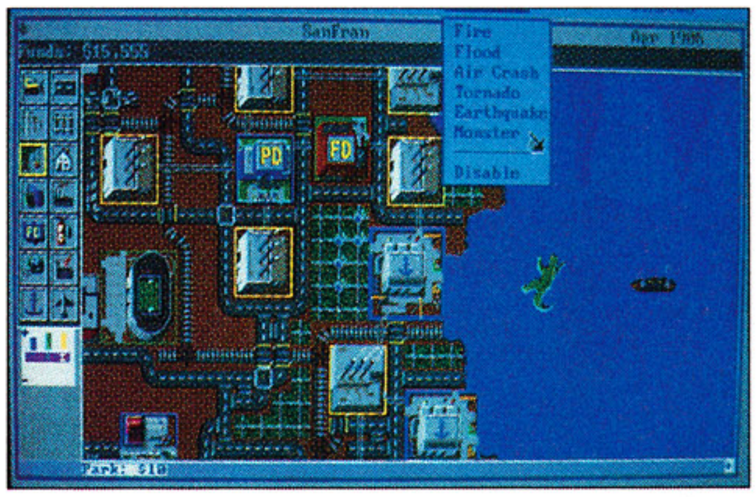
Dynamix's *A10 Tank Killer*

Don Hill's *P-51 Mustang* (Bullseye Software for Macintosh) puts compu-flyers at the throttle of one of the most famous fighter planes in U.S. history. Hill's mastery of the Macintosh has never been more evident than in this slickly executed design.

A10 Tank Killer (Dynamix for IBM PC) straddles the thin line between the combat-simulator and aerial-action categories. Superb sound and graphics, a hallmark of Dynamix, generate nail-biting excitement as planes swoop down on enemy tanks.

Jet Fighter (Velocity for IBM PC) sets the quality standard for combat-jet flight simulators. Its brilliant graphics, classic interface and campaign structure stamp Moses Ma's creation as king of the unfriendly skies.

Best Computer-Strategy Game



No one can dispute the impact of video games on computer software. Most of the year's new computer releases have the ease of play, lively action and sophisticated animation that gamers demand in a video-game cartridge.

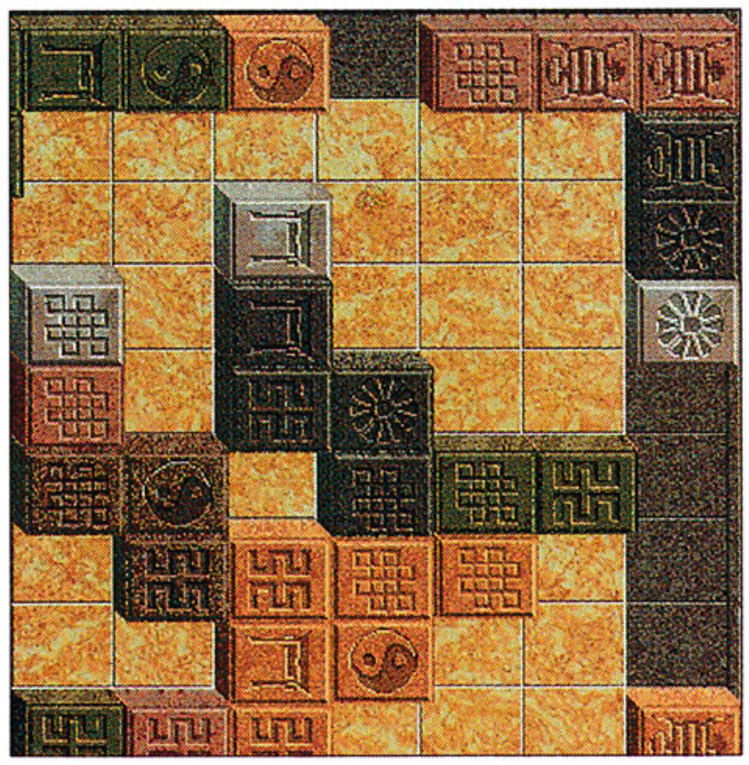
Trends are seldom monolithic. Though action and action-strategy currently represent the software mainstream, strategy contests haven't dropped completely out of sight. There is still plenty of interest in the pure brain games that require fast thinking rather than fast hands. It is always harder to succeed where many before have failed. That's why *SimCity* (Maxis for Amiga, Atari ST, Macintosh and IBM PC) is one of the year's most delightful surprises. Numerous early computer simulations offered the chance to run a city, but this is the first that presents the situation in a lively, engrossing and entertaining format.

The user becomes the newly elected mayor of a simulated city with myriad problems: no people, no roads and no buildings. Working within a strict budget, the mayor must help a thriving metropolis rise from the dust.

Improvements don't come easy. A new structure doesn't just appear out of thin air. The metropolis builder must bulldoze the lot, erect a power plant, enact the proper zoning, set tax rates and construct feeder highways. As civic expansion continues, simulated people begin to move into the empty buildings. If the mayor does the job well, the poky little town grows and can eventually flower into a major city.

SimCity comes with simulations of several real cities from various historical periods. It even permits users to play deity by inducing everything from natural disasters and air crashes to an assault by a monster lizard.

Honorable Mentions



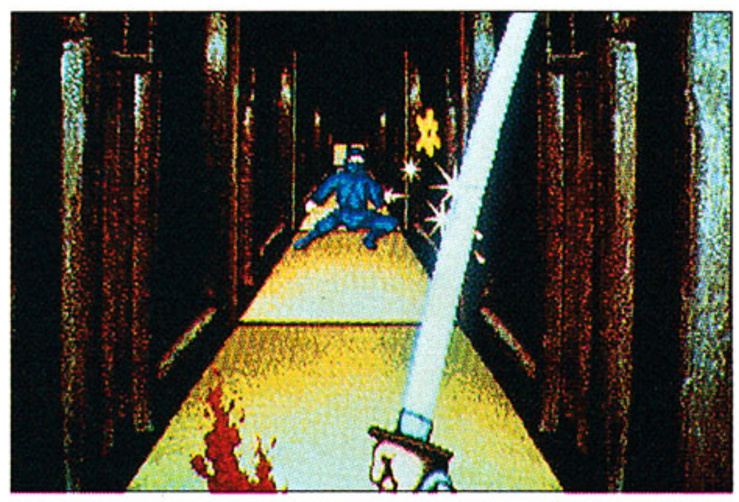
Software Intl's *Ishido Stones*

Strategic Simulations does more fantasy than war games these days, but as long as Gary Grigsby invents titles like *Overrun* (SSI for Apple II and Commodore 64), the company's reputation will stay high with strategists. This advanced-level presentation of small-unit modern combat has incredible detail and voluminous documentation to teach its complex play-mechanics.

Brad Fregger is at it again. The producer of the much-honored *Shanghai* (Activision) is the guru behind *Ishido Stones* (Software International for Macintosh). The challenge in this abstract contest is to place tiles on the board next to others that share at least one visual characteristic. This is the kind of program that maintains its lustre through hundreds of hours of play.

Star Fleet II (Interstel for IBM PC) flips the situation 180 degrees. This time, the player commands a Krellan battle fleet on a raid into United Galactic Alliance space. Once the armchair conqueror pinpoints a planet, the game switches to an invasion mode in which the invaders battle the inhabitants for every square mile of territory.

Best Action-Strategy Game



An irresistible blend of mind and body challenge has made the action-strategy game the most enduringly popular category of computer entertainment. These games provide a feast for the senses, a test of hand-eye coordination and a rigorous workout for the gray matter.

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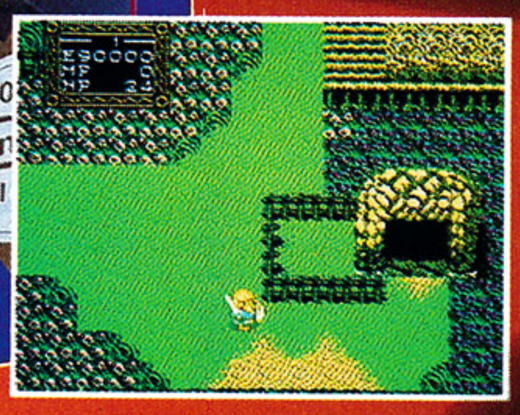

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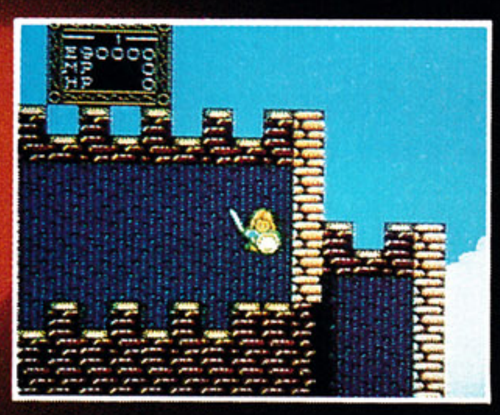

Be on guard for an action-filled battle with Queen Bavmorda.

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CIRCLE #124 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

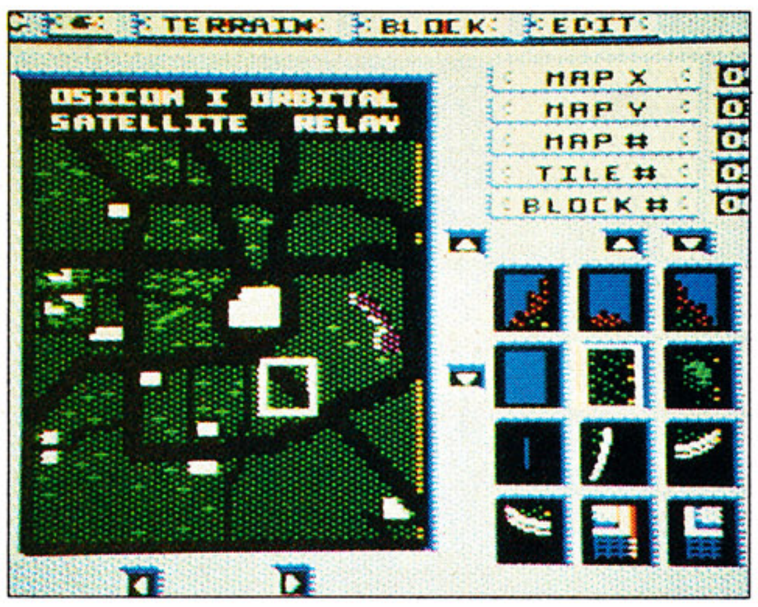
Lords of the Rising Sun (Cinemaware for Amiga and IBM PC) traces its lineage to the celebrated *Defender of the Crown*, but it is a long way from being a rehash. The strategic phase, in which the player seeks to consolidate his power in feudal Japan, is reminiscent of the 1987 hit, but the individual action games that comprise the bulk of the action are wholly fresh and original.

Particularly impressive is the battle scene in which the player views the conflict from a hill at the rear of the army and orders movements of the troops below with well-timed waves of a control wand.

It almost goes without saying that the artwork and sound are unimpeachable. If *Lords of the Rising Sun* had not been a unanimous choice as Best Action-Strategy Game of the year, it would have been a serious contender for the top prize in audiovisual effects.

Honorable Mentions

Young Paul Norman, the designer of many arcade-style computer action games, has grown up. A good indication is *Navy S.E.A.L.* (Cosmi for most computer systems). The computerist learns the various skills needed to be a member of the Navy's elite force, and then uses these skills in four exciting missions.



Origin Systems' *Omega*

Omega (Origin Systems for IBM PC) is a multi-module program that allows the user to design, test and fight futuristic cybertanks. As a member of the Organization of Strategic Intelligence, the gamer gains access to full laboratory and testing facilities in which every phase of the cybertank's operation can be controlled and refined. Origin plans to sponsor a national competition to find the fiercest cybertanks, so it is not farfetched to imagine that this intricate program may spawn a subhobby of its own.

Best Computer Adventure

The nature of computer adventures has changed tremendously in the past two years. Gone are the text-only, parser-driven titles, replaced by interactive graphics and more-responsive interfaces that let the user enter a wide variety of commands without reams of typing.

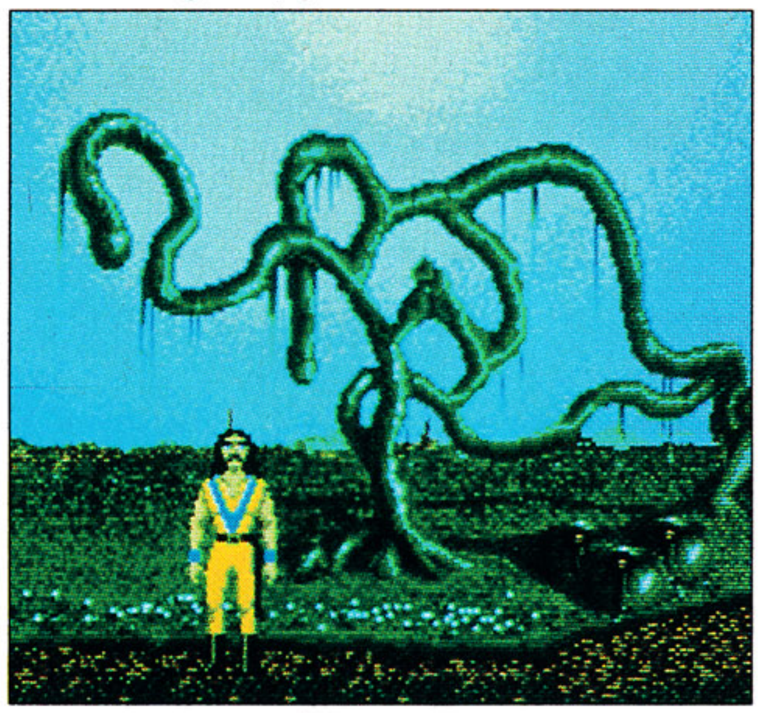
This year's outstanding adventure, *Manhunter: New York* (Sierra for Amiga, Atari ST and IBM PC), shows that the content is mutating nearly as rapidly as the structure. The Murry Brothers spin a chilling science-fiction detective story in which the player is selected by aliens to hunt down and neutralize human rebels.

During the course of the game, however, the naive Manhunter learns the invaders' deepest secrets and must make a moral choice: become a pawn of the Pods or join the revolution to cast them out. Part of the beauty of *Manhunter: New York* is that the game fully supports both alternatives. Even after choosing one road, most computerists will want to play it again, just to see what might have been.

As with all Sierra adventures, the art, music and animation are impeccable. Atmospheric illustration and the use of cinematic techniques create a near-future city packed with menace, mayhem and mystery.

Honorable Mentions

The romance and adventure of America's great western migration is the inspiration for *Gold Rush* (Sierra for Amiga and IBM PC). The armchair pioneer leaves the safety of Brooklyn Heights and goes, by either of two arduous routes, to the golden land of California to prospect for gold. There aren't any demons and dragons in this one, but *Gold Rush* is as exciting as any title in Sierra's catalog. Savvy gamers know that's all the



Cinemaware's *The Kristal*

recommendation any adventure really needs.

When Bob Jacob imports a design from Europe and puts the Cinemaware label on it, bet on something mighty special inside the package. *The Kristal* (Cinemaware for Amiga, Atari ST and IBM PC) is a lavish science-fiction adventure in which the computerist, as lovable rogue Dancis Frake, scours the galaxy for the fabled Kristal of Kronos. This sweeping saga mixes real-time action and mind-stretching puzzles in a rich interplanetary setting.

Tops among the 1989 crop of fantasy quests is *The Magic Candle* (Mindcraft for Apple II, Commodore 64 and IBM PC). If the candle burns out, it will unleash a demon upon the medieval land of Deruvia. The armchair adventurer leads a hand-picked crew through a detailed world that includes 54 dungeon levels in the fantasy role-playing game.

Best Computer Game Sound & Graphics

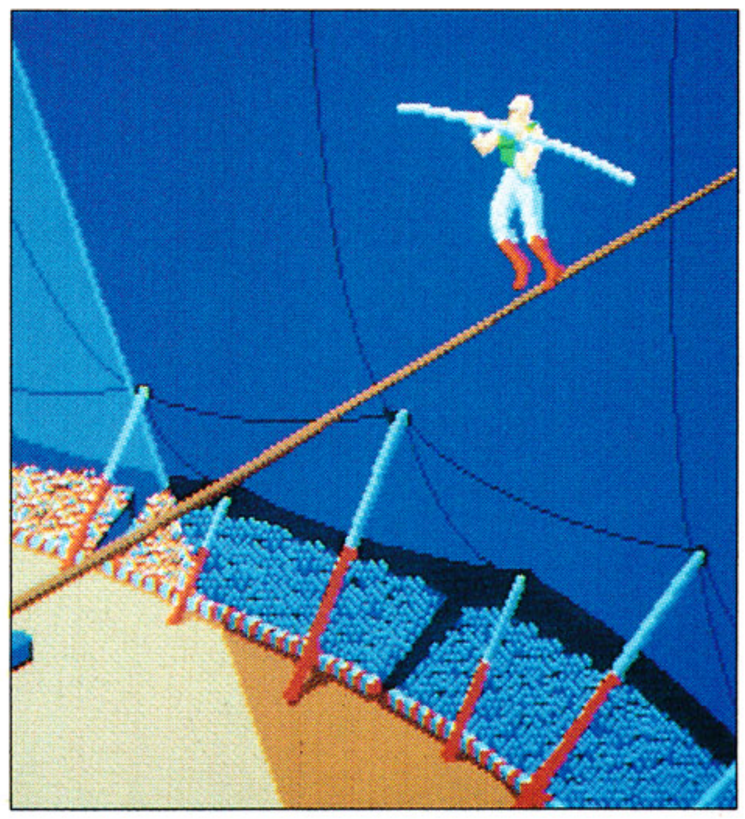
The way a game looks and sounds contributes greatly to its impact on the player. Computer programs lack the tactile feedback of board games and the kinesthetic output of athletes. To engage and hold attention, they must therefore work on the senses of sight and hearing. The audiovisual effects are not the game *per se*, but they often spell the difference between an enjoyable gaming experience and a tedious hour in front of the computer.

There's nothing humdrum about the visuals and sound of this year's outstanding program, *David Wolf, Secret Agent* (Dynamix for IBM PC). This programming house-turned-publisher outcinemas even Cinemaware with this multiphase simulator-adventure.

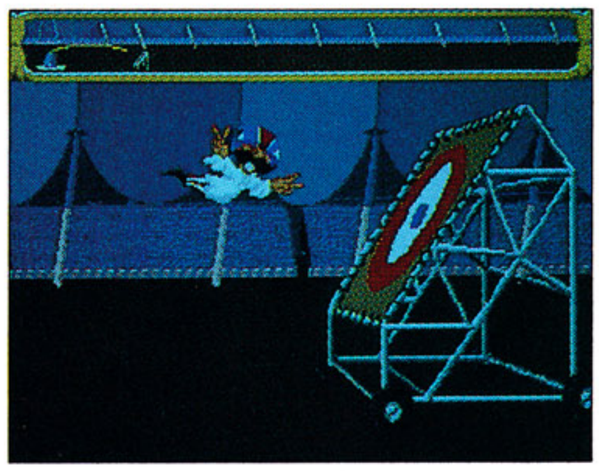
The group filmed 16 real actors on special sets and digitized the footage. They extracted over 400 frames for the scenes that bridge the spectacular action sequences, as well as using movielike effects to enhance the action.

David Wolf: Secret Agent includes four impressive action games. The player flies a hang glider, drives a sportscar, pilots a stealth fighter, and sky dives. All four phases are pictured with panoramic views using visuals that virtually define the state-of-the-art.

Honorable Mentions



Mindscape's *Fiendish Freddy*



Fiendish Freddy's Big Top O' Fun (Mindscape for all computer systems) is a good-natured arcade-style game with a circus theme that would have been fun even with oridnary graphics. But Chris Gray has added wonderful touches, like the panel of clownish judges, to lift this multievent program to greater heights of enjoyability.

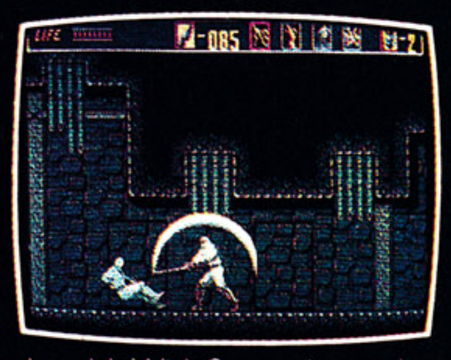
Best Coin-op to Home Computer Translation

The popularity of categories has always moved in cycles, and all-out action is currently on the rise in the home-computer field. The popularity of video games and the rebirth of the coin-op center has renewed players' interest in uncompromisingly action-oriented games.

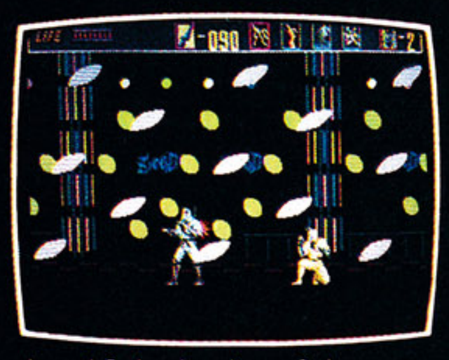
Continued on page 78

NOW YOU CAN FIGHT ATTACK DOGS, MACHINE GUNNERS, THUGS, SAMURAI AND TANKS. ALL IN THE PRIVACY OF YOUR OWN HOME.

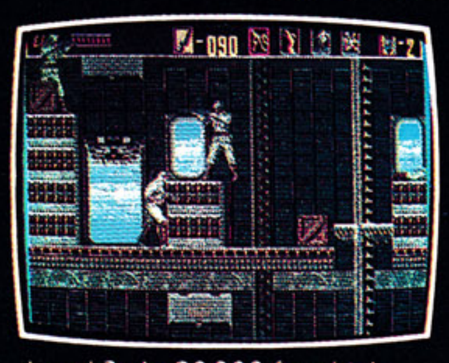
INTRODUCING THE R



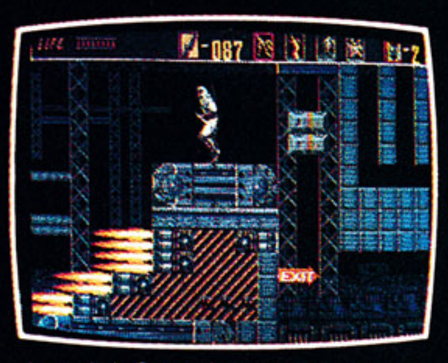
Level 1: With Samurai sword and shuriken, you face somersaulting ninja. Ahead lie explosives and bamboo traps.



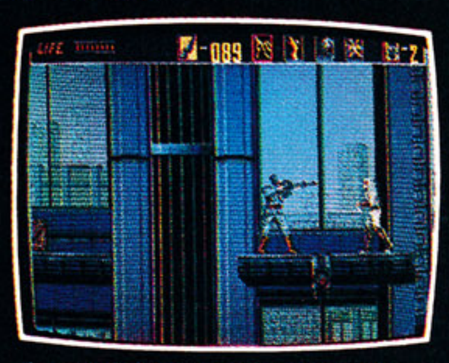
Level 2: In the disco fight, you battle leaping assailants who break into multiple bodies to compound your problems.



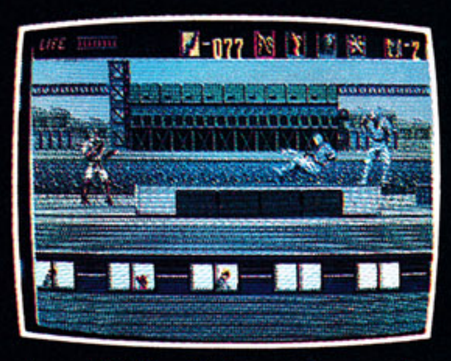
Level 3: At 20,000 feet high riflemen fire as you avoid hidden bombs and risk being sucked out the plane's door.



Level 4: Run along a conveyor belt in the factory dodging falling engines, boxes, chemical flames and molten steel.

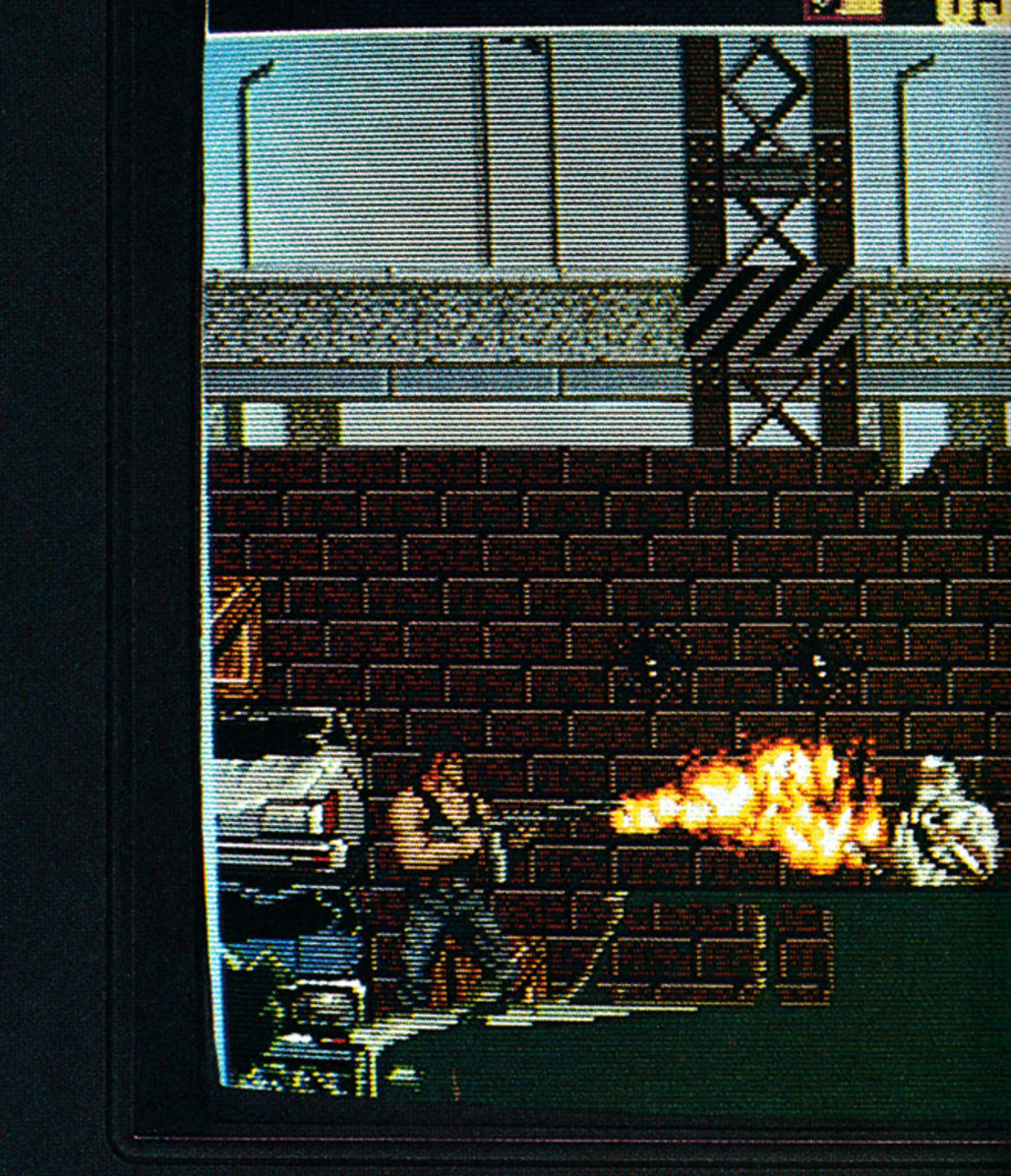


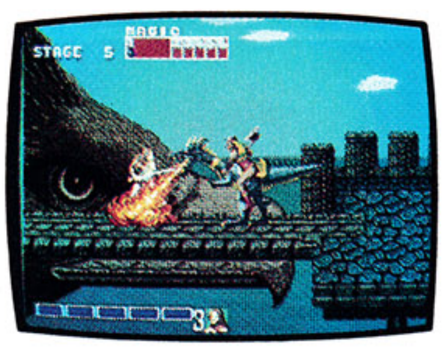
Level 5: Use max gymnastic abilities in the high rise elevator to escape lasers, bombs, riflemen and machine gunners.



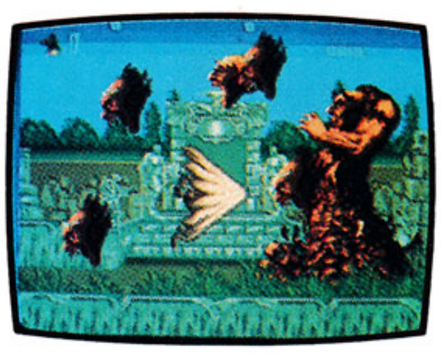
Level 6: You fight on the roof of a speeding bullet train while passengers and possible assailants lurk inside.

Level 7: Leap on buoys over raging water to reach the stronghold of Neo Zeed. As you cross creaky catwalks, the final battle awaits.



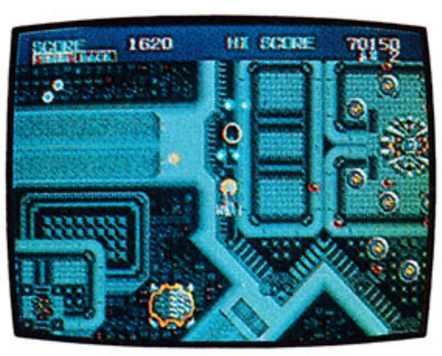


Golden Axe™



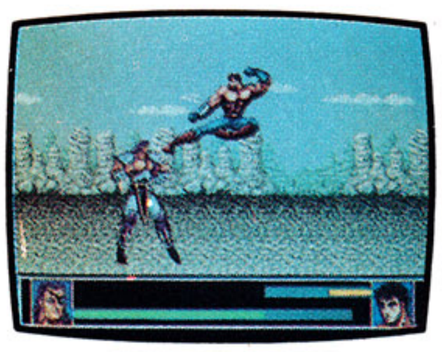
Altered Beast™

Space Harrier II™



Thunder Force II™

Super Hang-On™



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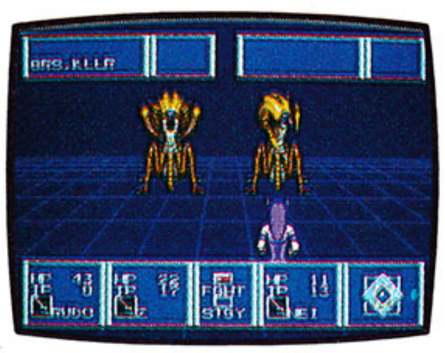

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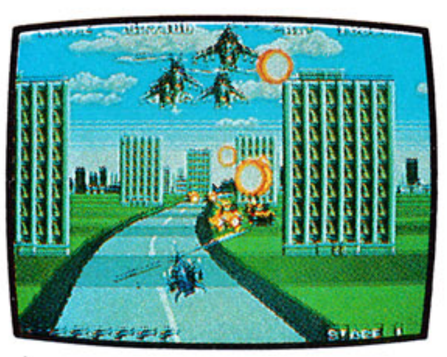

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CIRCLE #125 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

***Yea & Nay** is an inside look at the high and low points in the electronic-game industry. It's an opportunity for the companies that decide what games we'll be playing to be patted on the back or slammed to the mat for what they do.*

If you want to give credit where credit is due—whether the company belongs in the Hall of Fame or the Hall of Shame—send your opinions to VG&CE, *9171 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Beverly Hills, CA 90210, Attn:* **Yea & Nay**. *Let's hear how you feel!*

NAY

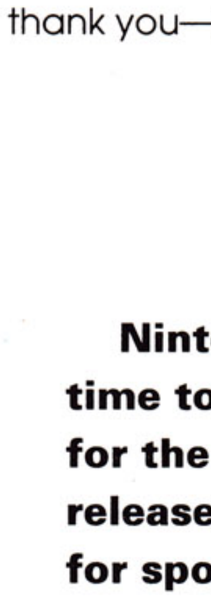
The VG&CE offices are filled with software of all types, but we're disheartened by the quantity of repetition in theme and appearance. We realize that many formulas work and that many players like certain genres, but there are far too many clones appearing on store shelves. For example, far too many games involve the kidnapping of a loved one or royal-family member. And how many times have you seen basic scrolling shoot-'em-ups?

We hope that this situation will change through innovative game concepts and design. While sitting down to a basic blastathon can be nice, it's even better to see entirely new ideas come down the pike. Let's go, developers—put on your thinking caps!

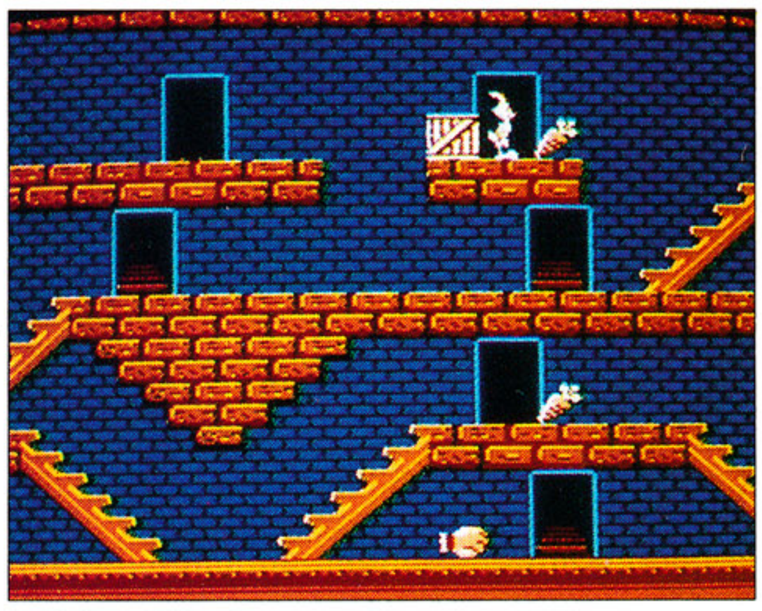
YEA

Charity isn't as common as it used to be, but occasionally someone goes out of their way to lend a helping hand. That's certainly the case with Capcom's Children's Corner, which is being created at various California hospitals (see *News Bits*, page 22, December 1989). Capcom is donating NESes, TV monitors and software in an effort to make hospital stays more comfortable for children.

VG&CE applauds this generous decision. Most of us know how hard it is to spend time in a hospital, especially for young children. Capcom's plan will certainly lighten up kids' hospital visits and maybe even assist in their rehabilitation.



While we're discussing the exploits of Capcom's efforts to help kids in hospitals, let's also recognize the few companies that are creating games with the youngster in mind. We want to congratulate companies like Capcom (*Mickey Mousecapade* and *Duck Tales*), Kemco/Seika (*Bugs Bunny "Crazy Castle"*), GameTek (Fisher Price-sponsored games) and Hi-Tech Expressions (*Sesame Street 1 2 3* and *Sesame Street A B C*) for ignoring the financial risks by bringing out games that are geared for preteens. With most software being developed with the male teenager as the target audience, "kidsware" is rare. We thank you—and our kids thank you!



NAY

Nintendo raced to bring their Game Boy out well before Christmas and in time to beat the Atari Lynx to the store shelves. Unfortunately, new cartridges for the Game Boy were nonexistent for months following the machine's release. Sure, Nintendo started with a good mix of titles—*Baseball* and *Tennis* for sports fans, *Super Mario Land* and *Alleyway* for arcade-game lovers and *Tetris* for strategists—but, as with any system, a new flow of software is needed to keep the player satisfied. This is particularly the case with Game Boy cartridges, which are limited in memory and therefore aren't likely to have the long-term playability that their NES-relative cartridges have.

We understand the enormous undertaking involved in starting a new product line, but we wish that Nintendo had planned better instead of just bringing Game Boy to market in time for the holiday toy-buying season, then leaving the player in the lurch for new games to play.

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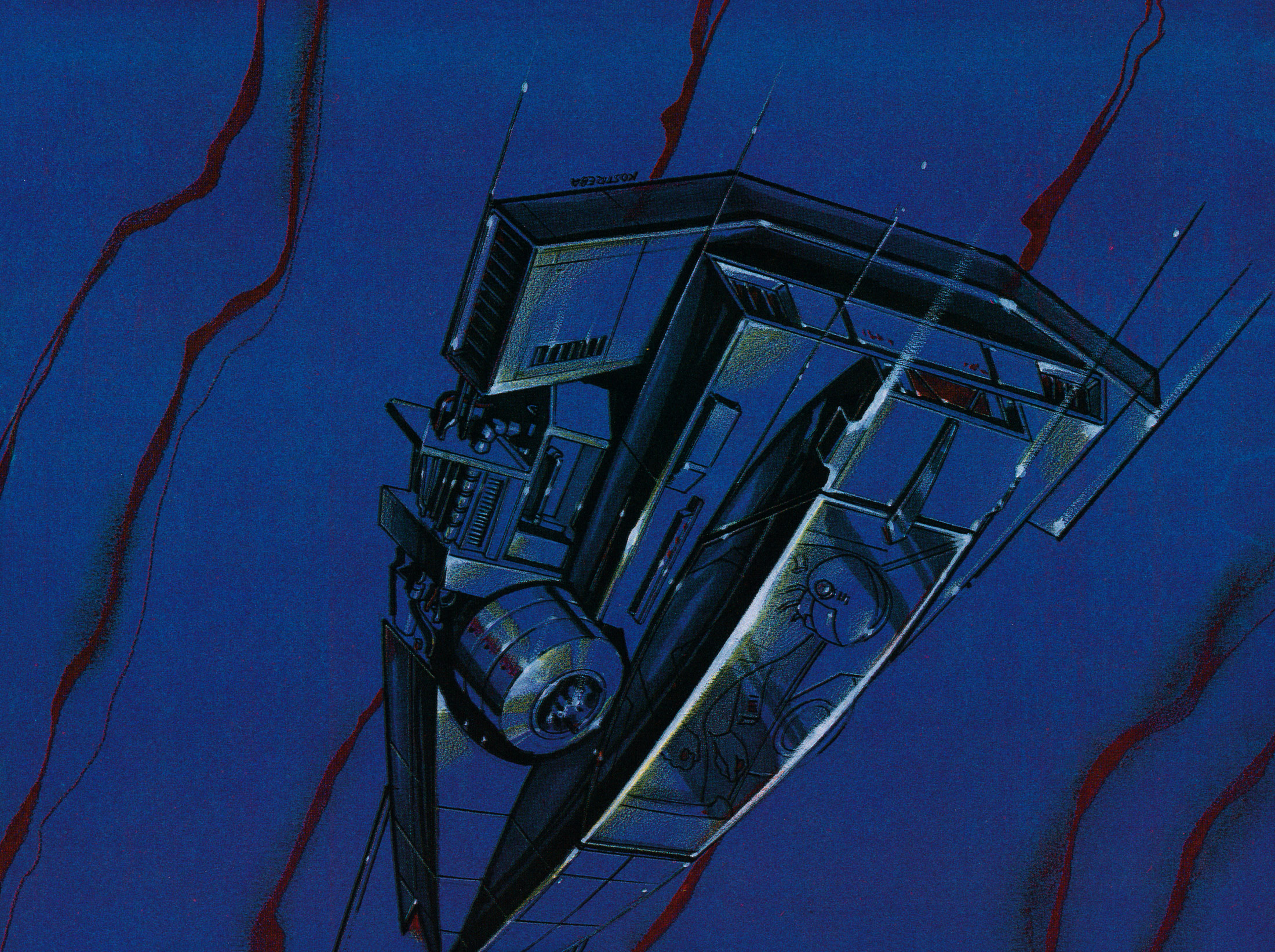

KOSTRE8A

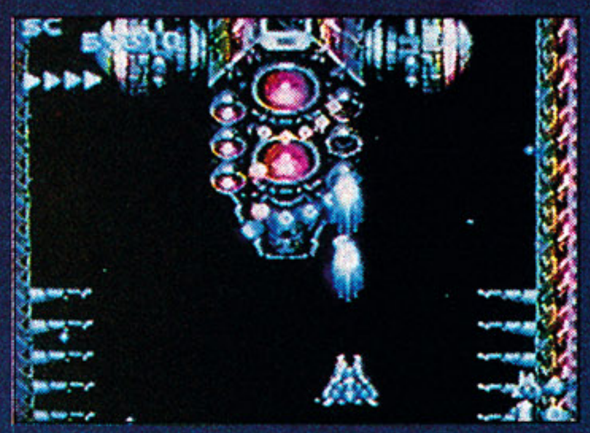
BLASTING THROUGH

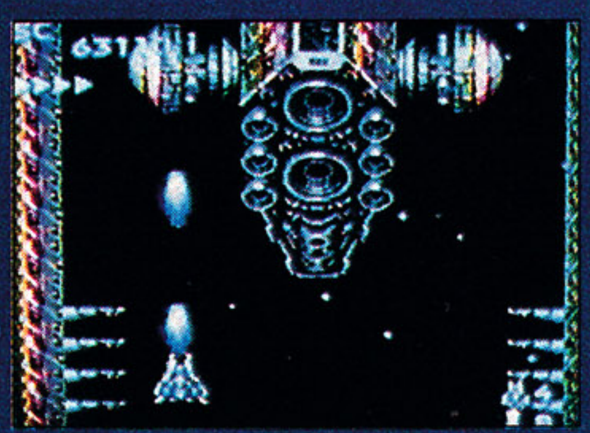
BLAZING LAZERS

by Lee H. Pappas

ONE OF THE FASTEST-PACED GAMES FOR THE TURBOGRAFX-16, *BLAZING LAZERS* WILL KEEP YOU GOING FOR HOURS. OUR GOAL HERE ISN'T TO SUPPLY YOU WITH CHEATS TO CRUISE THROUGH THE GAME, BUT RATHER TO ASSIST IN SOME OF THE MORE TROUBLESOME AREAS. THERE ARE NINE LEVELS, EACH DIFFERENT FROM ONE ANOTHER AND EACH OFFERING AT LEAST ONE MAJOR CONFRONTATION VIA A NASTY CREATURE OR HEAVY-DUTY WEAPON. THAT'S THE BAD NEWS. THE GOOD NEWS IS YOUR GUNHED STAR FIGHTER IS EQUIPPED WITH MEGA WEAPONS. SO LET'S GO!

Illustration by Cathy Kostreba
Spot Illustration by Sean Gallimore

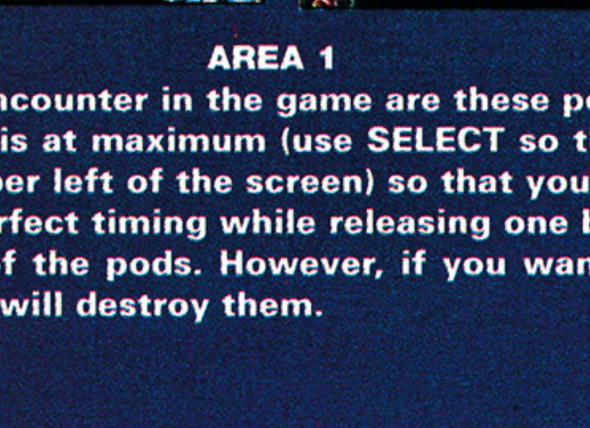


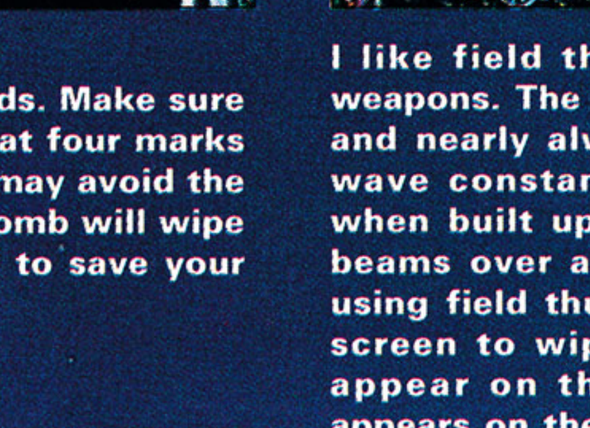


AREA 1

The first major encounter in the game are these pods. Make sure your craft speed is at maximum (use SELECT so that four marks appear in the upper left of the screen) so that you may avoid the bullets easier. Perfect timing while releasing one bomb will wipe out all or most of the pods. However, if you want to save your bombs, shooting will destroy them.

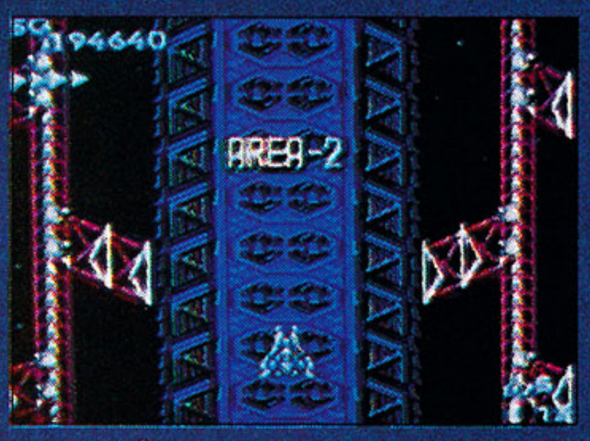
I like field thunder and power wave for weapons. The field thunder is very powerful and nearly always kills on contact. Power wave constantly bombards enemies and, when built up with power gel, spreads its beams over a wide area. In Area 1, when using field thunder, fly near the top of the screen to wipe out enemies just as they appear on the screen. When a capsule appears on the screen that rotates from one weapon to another, it will eventually turn into a solid ball and drift *up to the top of the screen*. Grab it and you will get another ship.





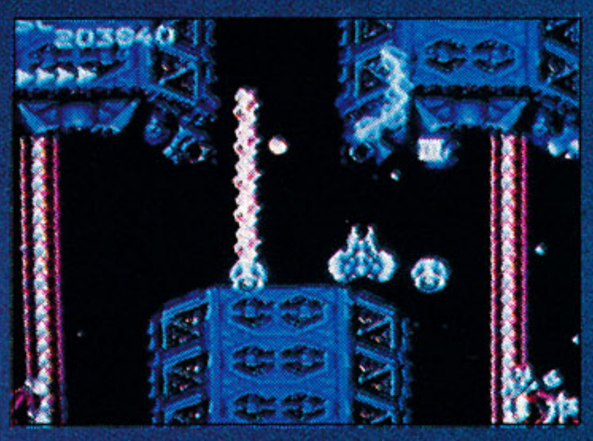
Collecting one multibody capsule gives you another source to shoot from that mimics the movements of your ship. Up to two multibodies are available to you and appear with a bluish tint. Additional capsules turn the multibodies green and give them more power.

Destroying TriClops is easy if you use both multibodies available to you and field thunder. Try not to get hit (wow, that's a thought!), because it's helpful to go into the next area packed with full power.



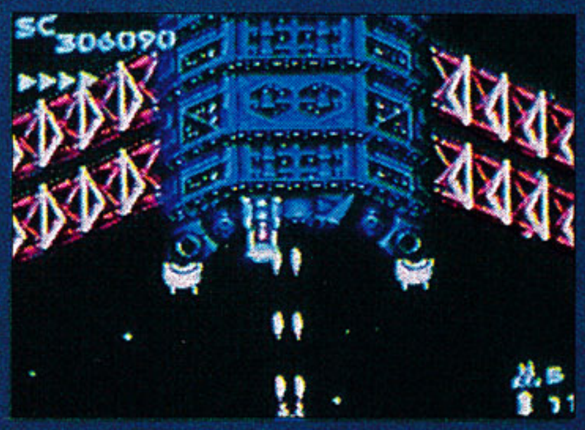
AREA 2

The best weapon in Area 2 is probably the power wave. It's important to have shields in this level, as you will take on hits.

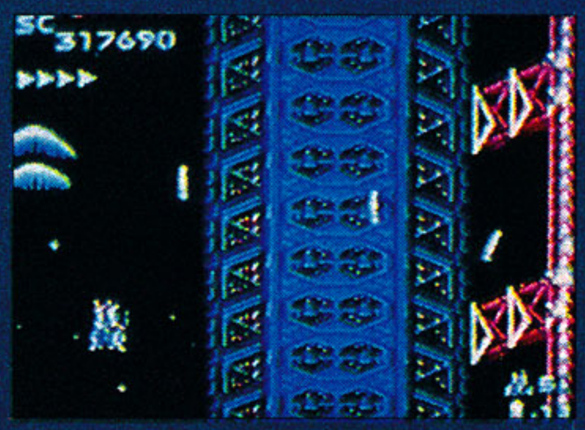


Multibodies help tremendously here, but get shields first so you have both.

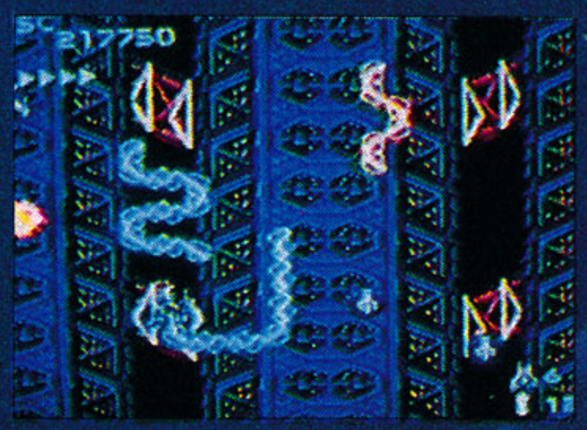
Background by Sean Gallimore



The gun pods on the bottom of the space platform should be taken out first as you approach them. There is one in each corner.



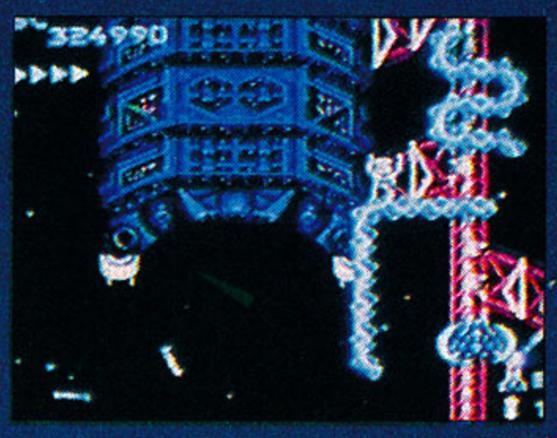
Homing missiles come in handy in this level also, however, make sure you have shields.

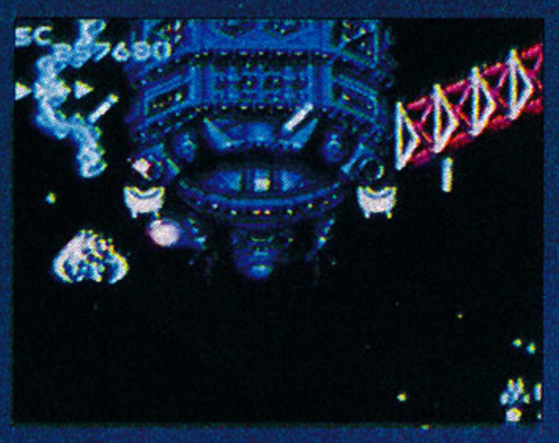


Sweep back and forth to blow away objects as they come onto the screen.

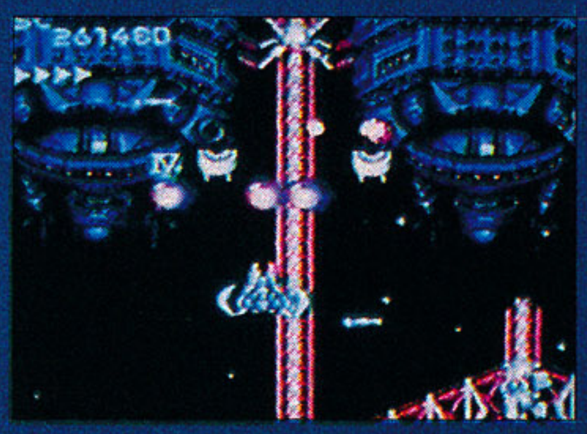
Sweeping here with multibodies will clean things up quickly.

It's important to go after the gun pods on the platform grid. Using ring blaster is an excellent defense against the guns. The ring surrounding your ship absorbs the bullets and also destroys enemy ships. You'll need to collect the full number of gels to boost the ring to high speed, but it's your best defense against the bullets in any of the games levels.





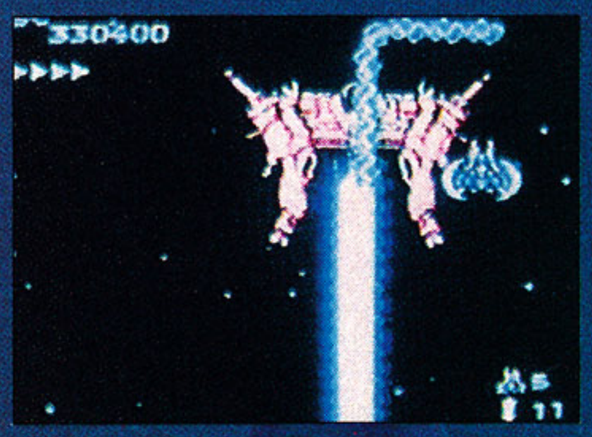
The gun pods are guarded heavily here. Field thunder works best to toast 'em and then destroy the large pods that break loose. Stay close to the bottom of the screen.



When the pods are destroyed, gels are released. Be careful here, as bullets are usually near them.

The Gatling Gun is easy to destroy. Use full speed (SELECT button), and just take your time and avoid its fire while shooting away.

You are now clear of the platform and heading toward your rendezvous with Big Borg.

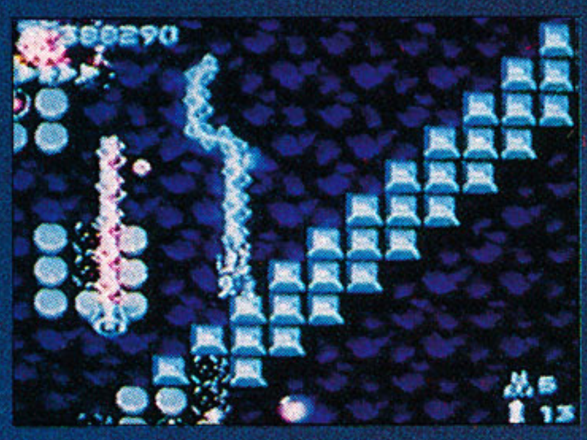


Use field thunder or power wave. With at least a few gels collected, you can hit Big Borg while your ship is off to one side, away from the beam it fires. You won't need to be directly under the enemy ship to destroy it. Go get 'em!

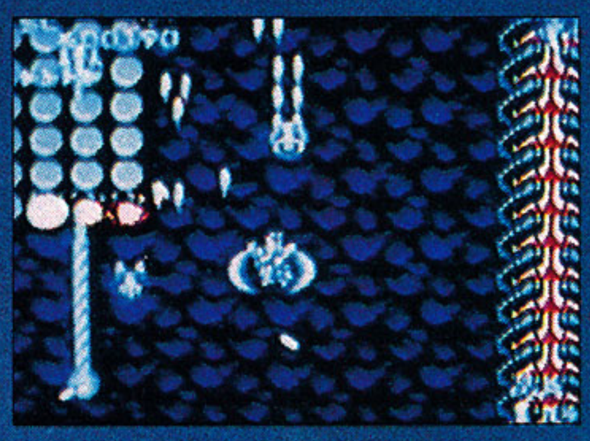
AREA 3
The trick to this level is to keep moving.

Mister Twister is instant death to your ship. Get him as soon as he appears.

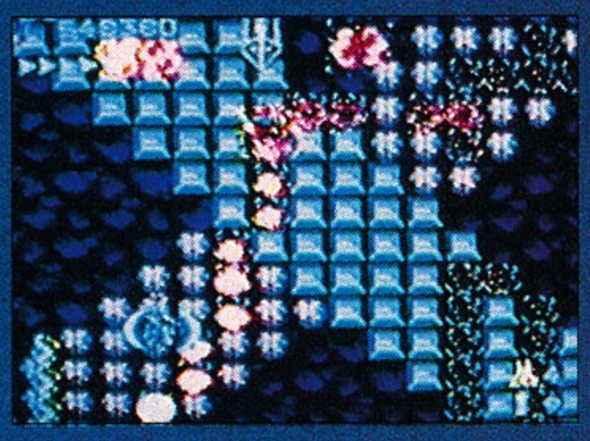
These cubes block your shots. Use your weapons to clear them out as quickly as possible. There are many gels in this level, so collect as many as you can.



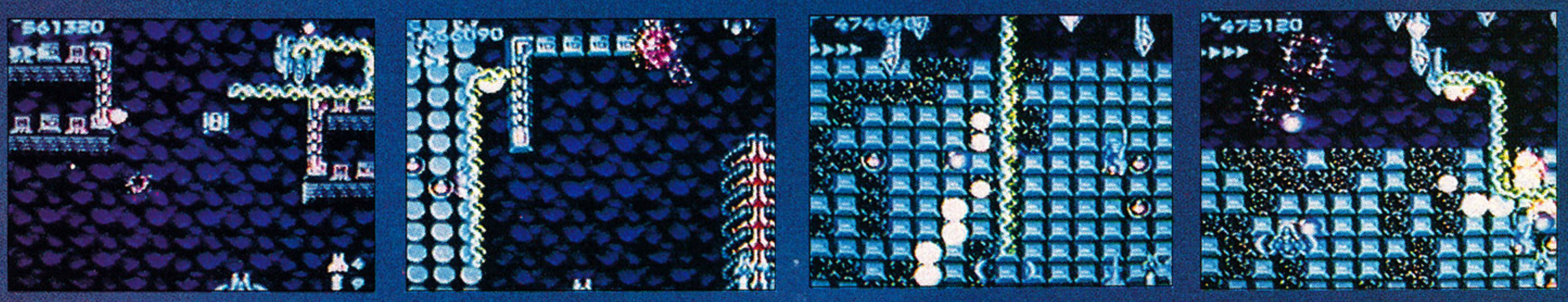
Blast through these quickly too.



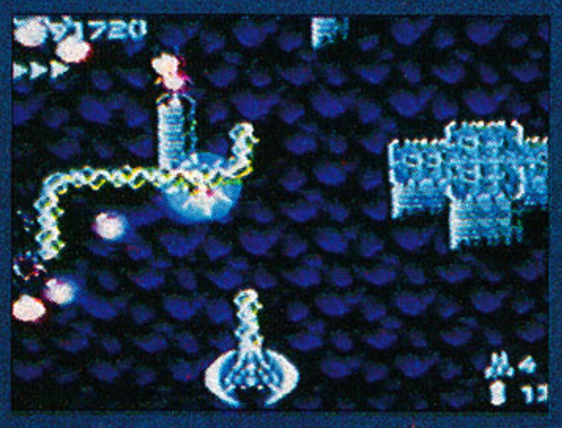
Keep those shields charged! Watch for Mister Twister again.



Clear more blocks. Objects that come down from the top of the screen will not be hit unless the blocks are cleared or the objects get *very* close.



Full fire is good here, but be careful. When too many objects appear on the screen, full fire will miss some and endanger your ship.



Full fire is excellent for destroying the orbiting disks, which normally are difficult to destroy.

Bombs away! Learn to use bombs sparingly. I use one as a panic button when things get nasty. They usually will obliterate everything (except level bosses).

Tarax the Great. He sends out a great quantity of little spiders. With powerful weapons or missiles he is fairly easy to destroy.

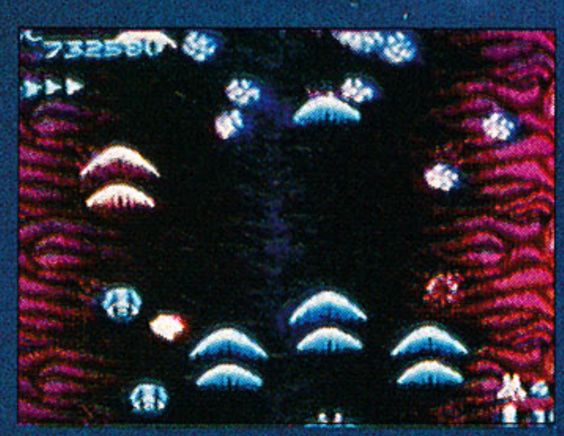
I like using field thunder (built up with gels) on him. Save your bombs.

AREA 4
This is one of the fastest moving levels in the game.

Use the power wave in this level! It is by far the best weapon. Build it up to wide beam by collecting gels.

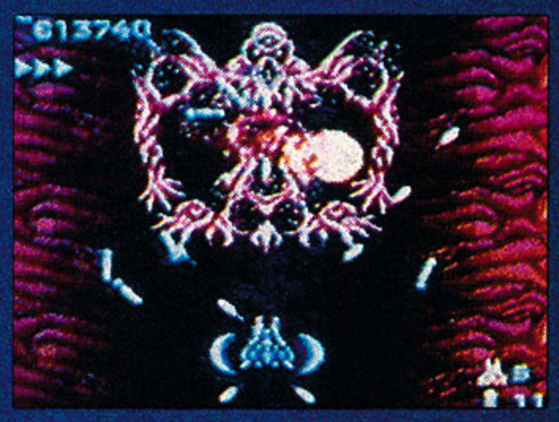
Collect gels to increase shield strength...

...and use multibodies for extra fire power.

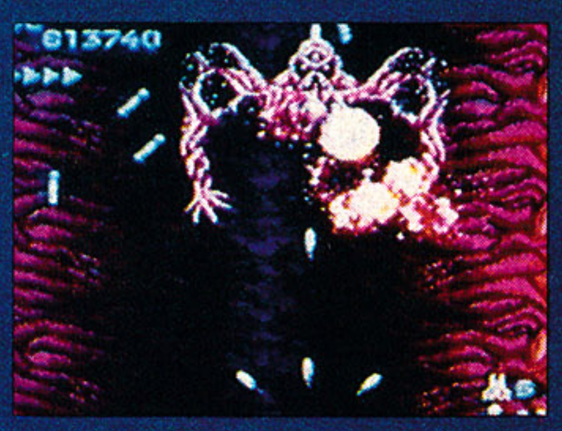


The wide pattern of the power wave helps clear objects on the sides.

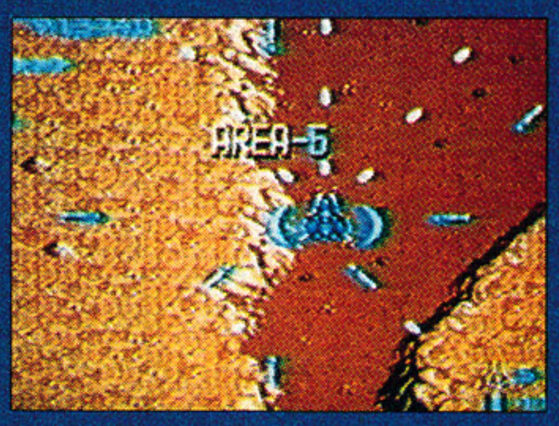
Keep your multibodies spread out to wipe out the eyes that attack you.

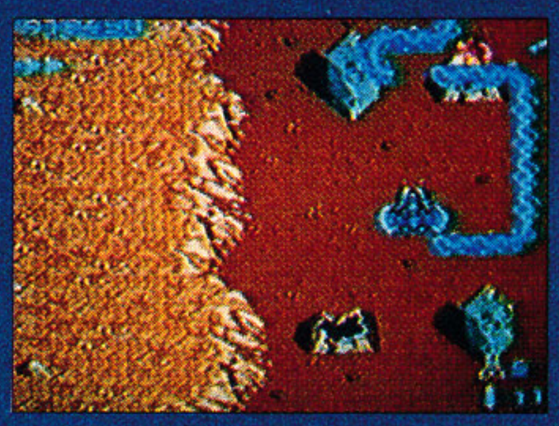


The Space Prowler throws out green parasites that try to hit your ship. Homing missiles come in handy here. Also, keep moving off to the side so your ship won't get hit.



After destroying the lower half of Space Prowler, the top half must be fought. It moves towards the bottom of the screen, so avoid it. It can be killed quickly.



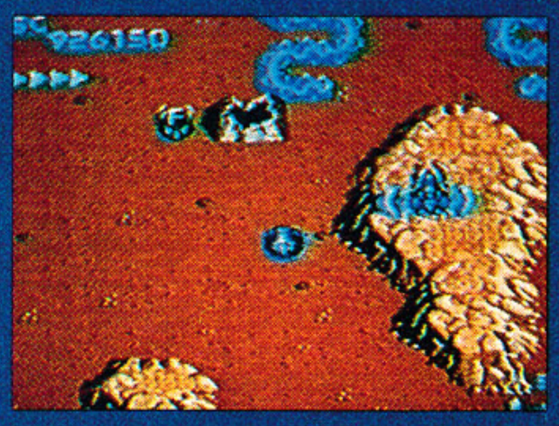


AREA 5

This level is pretty tough. Be careful which weapons you choose.

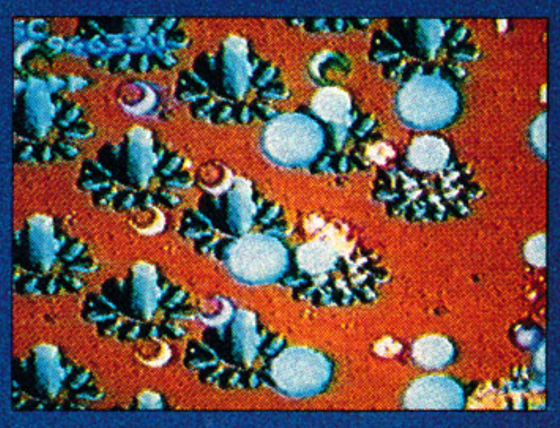
I go for field thunder. Ignore the power-wave capsules *and do not get* the full-fire capsule.

As you proceed, blow off the tops of the small and large pyramids. Also destroy the fire towers immediately as they appear.

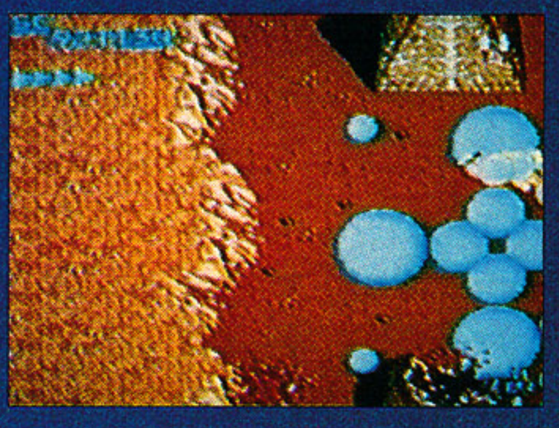


Multibodies are a major help in this level—but keep those shields up!

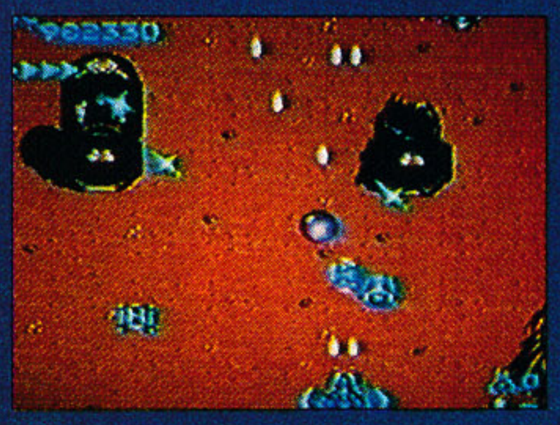
When you encounter all these pyramids...nuke 'em! (Use your bombs.) One or two centralized blasts will get them all.



Do the same on the fire towers.



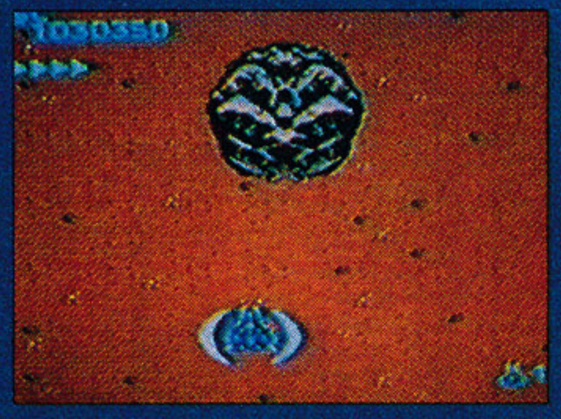
If you miss blowing off the top of a large pyramid, you'll face a myriad of missiles. Either shoot them or nuke them.



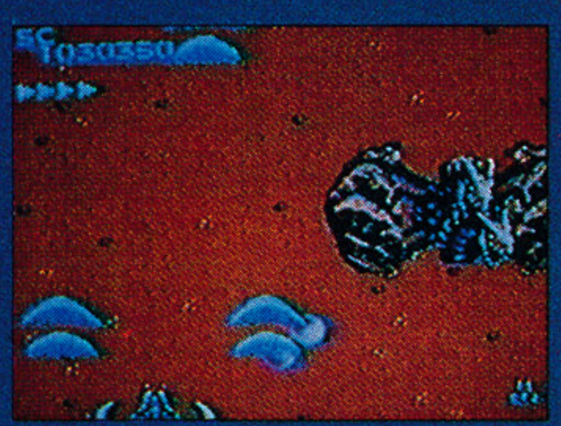
The "Easter Island" heads (which seem to be in every space game from Japan) present the most difficult part of Area 5.

Ring blaster is good here. The rings absorb the bullets and with full-fire rings they will wipe out everything in their path as they proceed toward the top of the screen.

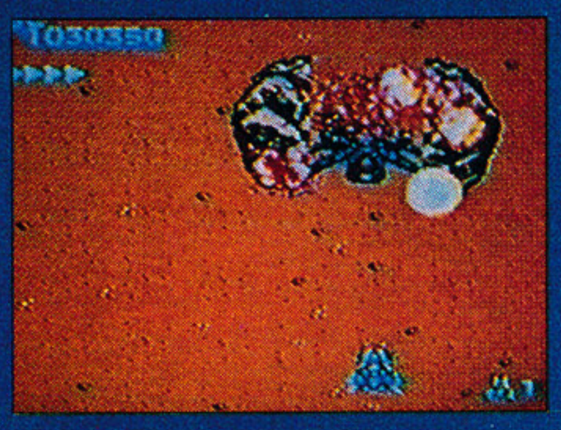
Go for the pyramids. Get those shield capsules!



Demon Rock is an unbeatable shell that contains a two-headed dragon.



Avoid the rock. When it opens, blast the dragon! The globes it sends after you must be avoided, as they cannot be destroyed.



Demon Rock isn't *that* tough, is it?

Next month we'll finish with the four hardest levels, 6 through 9. See you then!

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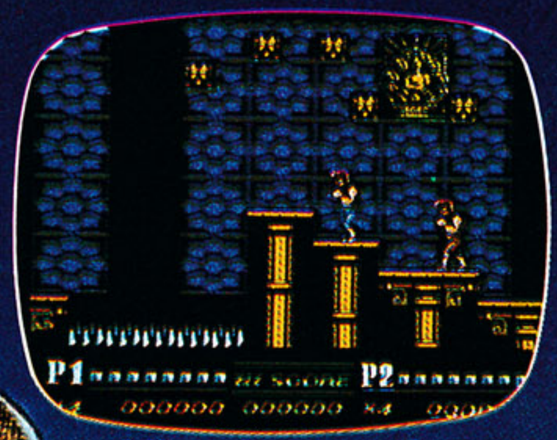

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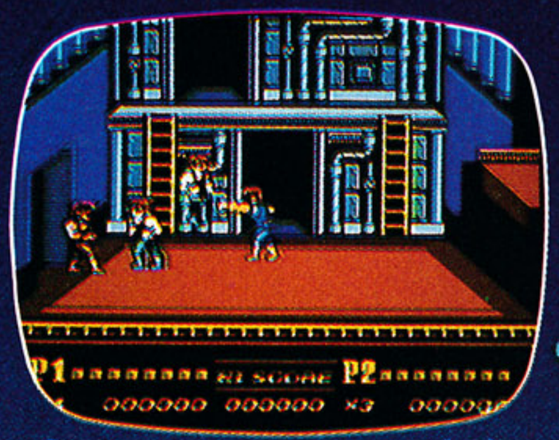

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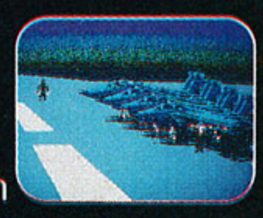

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Going For the Dragons

A Player's Guide to Wonder Boy III, Part 2

by Clayton Walnum

Last month we took our first look at *Wonder Boy III*. This time around we'll examine some of the higher levels and offer a few more clues that will help you master this complicated game for your Sega Master System.

But first, as always, a warning: If you already own *Wonder Boy III*, we suggest you play it before you read too much of the information presented here. If you study our maps prematurely, you may decrease your enjoyment of the game. However, if you haven't yet purchased *Wonder Boy III*, you may browse through this article in order to decide if the game is something you'd enjoy.

Try a Different Form

As you've no doubt discovered by now, there are, hidden throughout Monster Land, several contraptions that let you change your form. Using this transformation ability effectively is an important strategy. Some areas of Monster Land are easier to master while in a specific form; other areas won't even allow you to enter unless you've changed into the appropriate creature.

Each time you add a new creature to your list of changes (that is, each time you defeat a boss dragon), it's important that you spend time getting to know the abilities of that creature. Lion Man, for example, has upward and downward thrust abilities that make it easier to get past ninja and samurai.

When you combine each creature's special features with the large number of weapons, shields and armor available, there is an almost unlimited number of ways you can tackle a specific problem. It's important that you know all the abilities and strengths of your creatures, your enemies and your weapons and other usable items. Only then will you be prepared to win back the Salamander Cross.

When Things Seem Too Difficult

In general, *Wonder Boy III* is not an overly difficult game. With a little practice, every level can be finished with a minimum of frustration and teeth gnashing. If you play the same level over and over without advancing, or if you die quickly in a specific level, chances are you're not yet ready to take on that portion of the game. There may be a number of reasons for this.

Are you using the best creature for that level? Lizard Man, for example, can get through lava easily with no harm done to him. The other creatures, however, must avoid lava unless they're wearing dragon mail.

Are you using the appropriate sword, armor and shield? If an enemy is difficult to defeat, check your equipment screen. Each sword, shield and armor has a set of ratings—AP, DP and CP—that tells you how strong it is. Generally, you should always be wearing the strongest armor, using the strongest shield and wielding the strongest sword, but there are times when you have to settle for less in order to take advantage of an item's special

Illustration by Alan Hunter

characteristics. Dragon mail, for example, won't protect you from attack as effectively as prince armor, but it will keep you safe in lava, something prince armor can't do.

Are you using your special weapons? In the heat of battle it's easy to forget that you've got a number of special weapons at your disposal. The boomerangs, tornadoes, fireballs and other weapons you pick up along the way will help you weaken and defeat a tough enemy. Thunder is especially good, because it will damage all enemies on the screen.

That Little Something Extra

A shop at the end of Area 8 will sell you up to three bottles of life-restoring medicine. When taking on a new level, it may be worth the effort to stop at this shop first. If you don't need the gold you'd get from fighting, you can get to the shop fairly quickly by running through the locations that make up Area 8, fighting only when you can't easily slip past an enemy . Once you buy the medicine bottles, use the transporter to instantly get back to Area 1, where you can heal whatever damage you sustained. Using this method, you can take on a new challenge with full strength and a full medicine bag.

Keep in mind, though, that medicine bottles aren't guaranteed to completely restore your life line. Some of them do, some of them don't. Often only one heart will be filled in. Still, having the medicine bottles gives you a much better chance of success.

Your Goal: The Salamander Cross

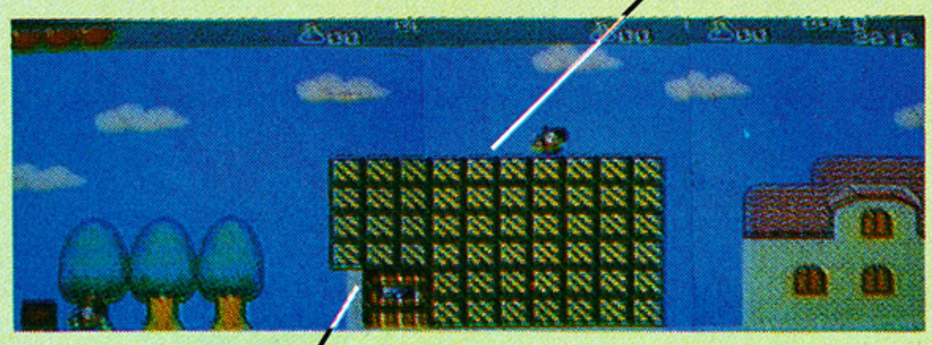
Once you've beaten all the dragons—Meka Dragon, Mummy Dragon, Captain Dragon, Dragon Zombie and Daimyo Dragon—and taken on all five creature forms—Lizard Man, Mouse Man, Piranha Man, Lion Man and Hawk Man—you'll be ready to do battle for the Salamander Cross. This means defeating Vampire Dragon, who hides in Dragon Castle. Only Hawk Man can get to the castle. The entrance is high in the sky, to the left of the tower in Area 1.

Once in the castle, you'll face the greatest challenge of the game. Dragon Castle is filled with many surprises, including hidden doors and dark hallways. You'll need to use the transformer machines to change into the right creature at the right time, and you will have to use special items such as the Magical Saber to discover secret doorways. Good luck!

AREA 1, STRIP 1

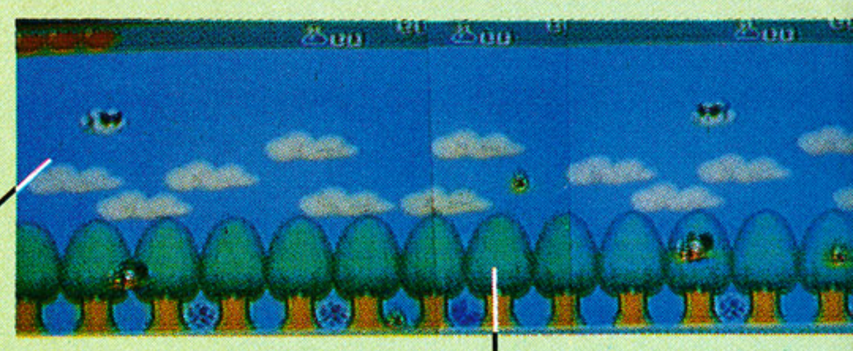
This way to Area 8, Strip 1.

As Mouse Man, you'll be able to crawl over this obstacle.



You'll find a shop behind this door.

AREA 8, STRIP 1



This way to Area 8, Strip 2.

When there are several fuzzballs in a row, you need to jump as early as possible in order to leave enough time to jump over the others before you hit them.

AREA 8, STRIP 2

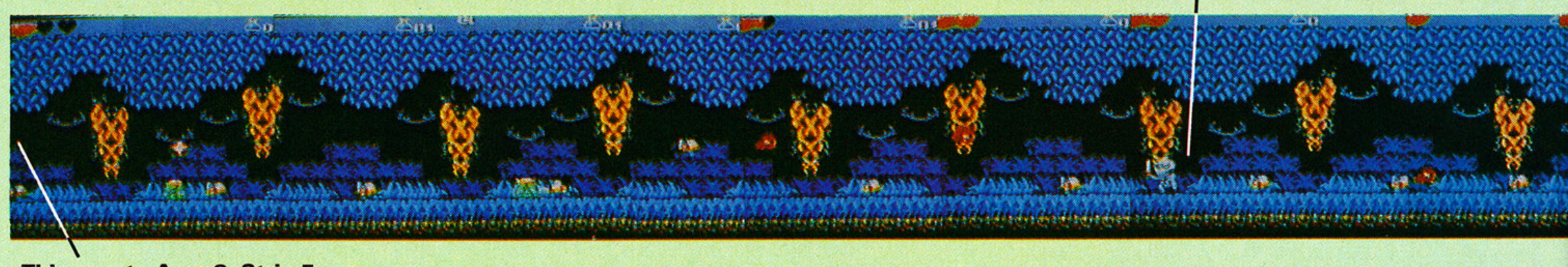
This way to Area 8, Strip 3.

In this area, the hovering smogs drop fire that can slide along the ground. If the fire hits you, it'll do serious damage. To avoid being hit, when a flame starts to catch up to you, turn and block it with your shield. If you're using a strong enough shield, you should remain unhurt.

This way to Area 8, Strip 1.

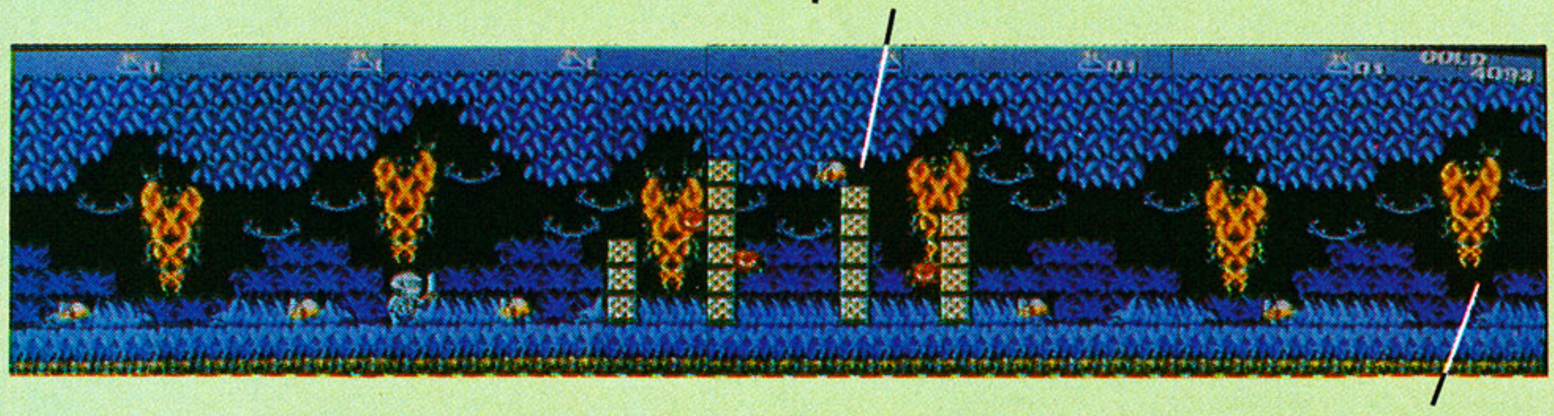
AREA 8, STRIP 4

The skeletons and bats in this area are easy to beat.



This way to Area 8, Strip 5.

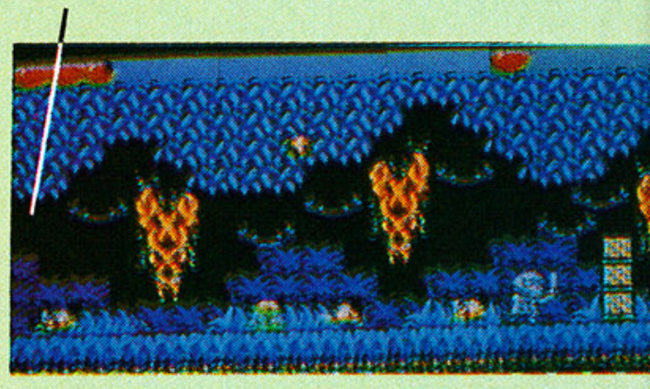
These walls will slow you down a little, but a single swing of your sword will defeat any of the sparks.



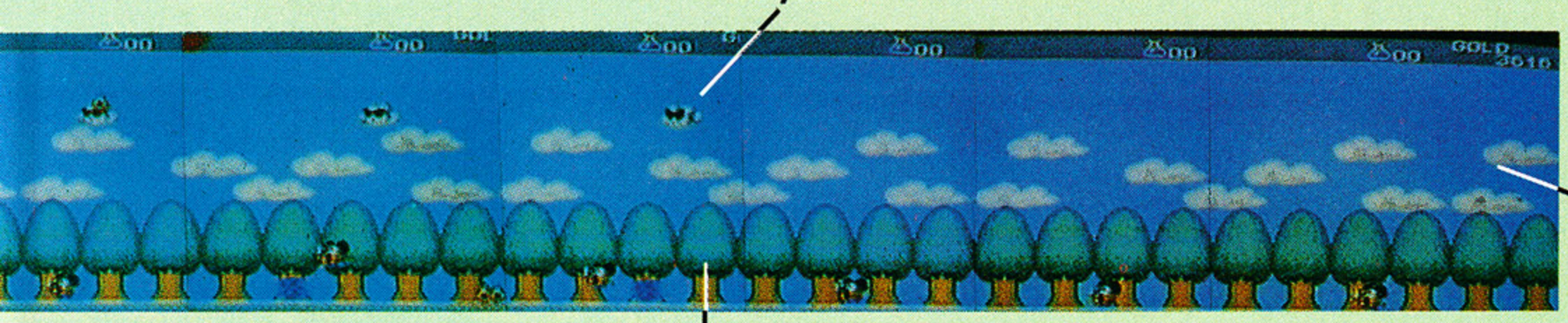
This way to Area 8, Strip 4.

AREA 8, STRIP 6

This way to Area 8, Strip 7.



You have to keep moving or the hovering smog will drop flame on you.

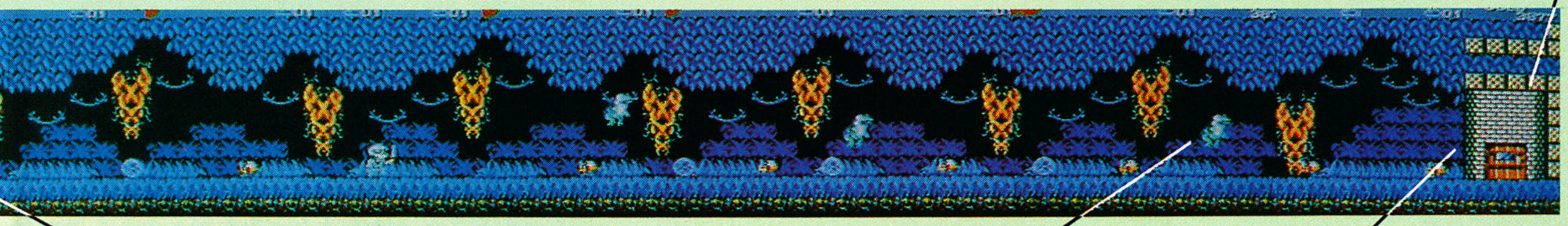


This way to Area 1, Strip 1.

It's possible to destroy the fuzzballs, but it takes so many shots that it's rarely worth the trouble. Just jump over them.

AREA 8, STRIP 3

This way to Area 8, Strip 2.



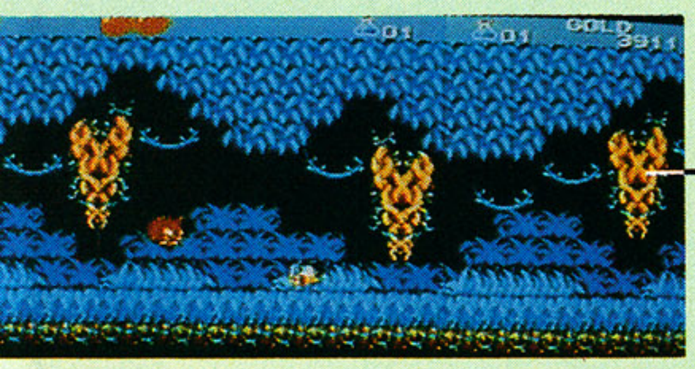
This way to Area 8, Strip 4.

Avoiding the giant toads is easy. Just keep running and they'll jump right over you. But don't slow down!

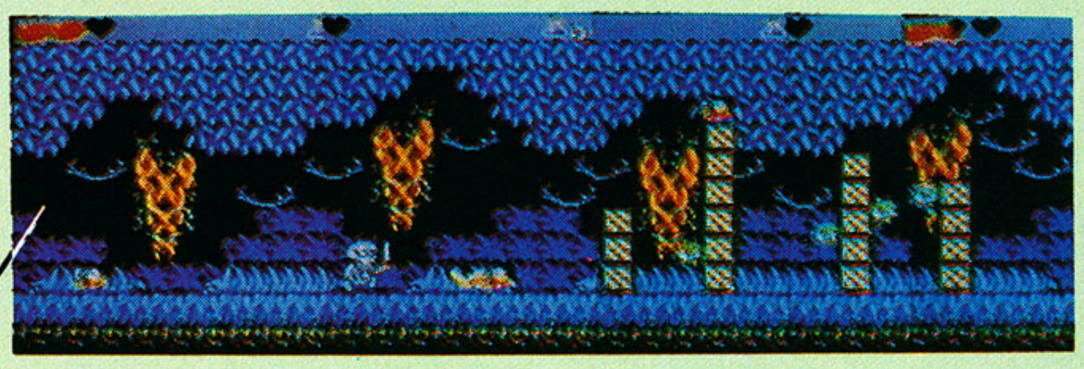
Here you'll find another shop.

Transporter rooms allow you to get back to the village quickly.

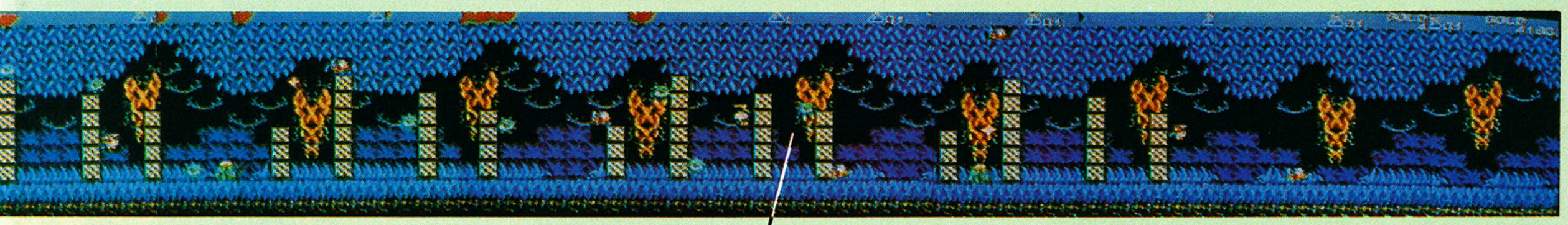
AREA 8, STRIP 5



This way to Area 8, Strip 3.



This way to Area 8, Strip 6.

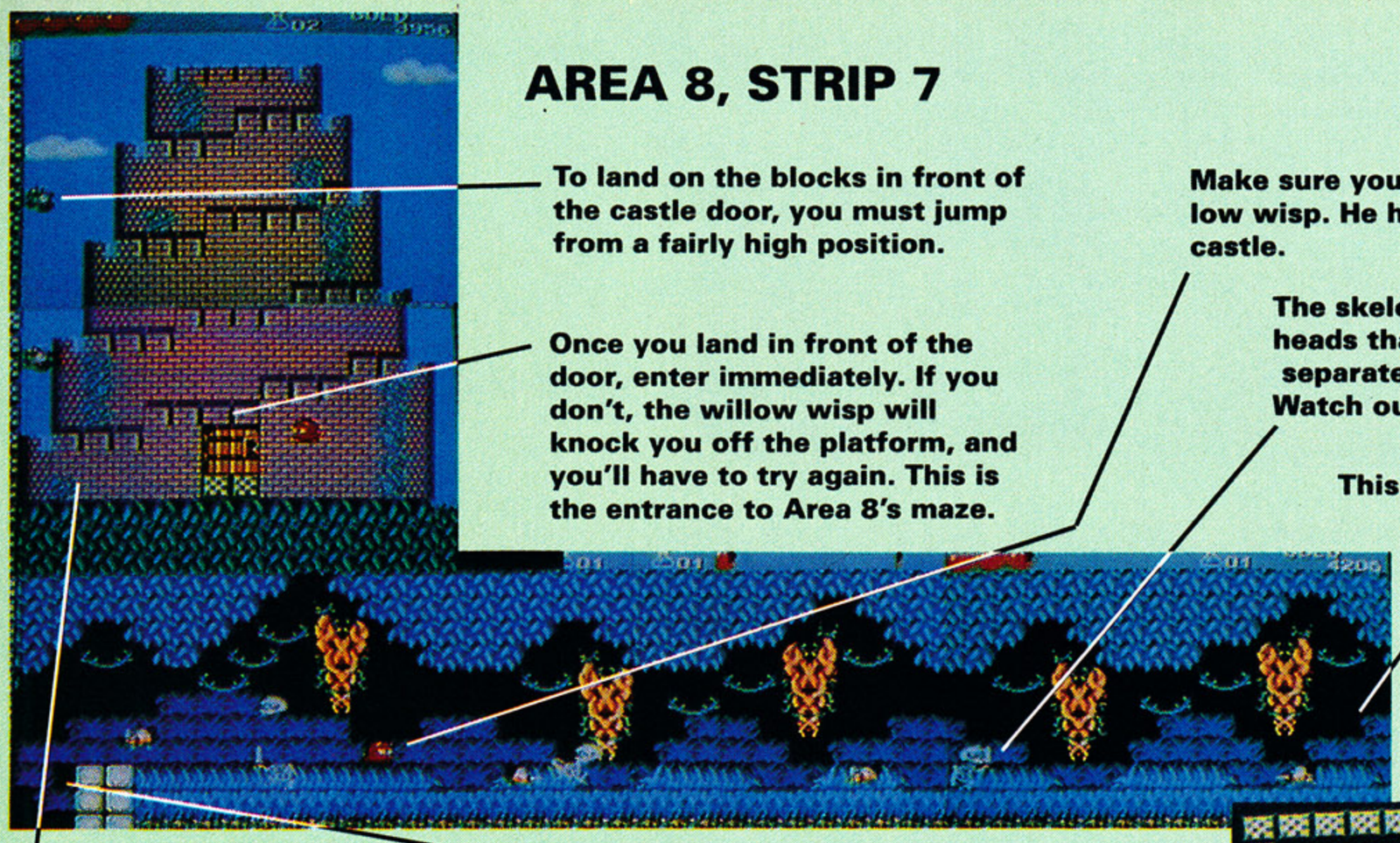


This area is has a few more walls to slow you down, but it's still easy to get by.

This way to Area 8, Strip 5.

AREA 8, STRIP 7

AREA 8, THE MAZE



To land on the blocks in front of the castle door, you must jump from a fairly high position.

Once you land in front of the door, enter immediately. If you don't, the willow wisp will knock you off the platform, and you'll have to try again. This is the entrance to Area 8's maze.

Make sure you defeat this willow wisp. He has the key for the castle.

The skeletons here have loose heads that can attack separately from the body. Watch out!

This way to Area 8, Strip 6.

Climb this wall to get to the castle.

Jump down this hole. In the underwater cavern, you'll find a couple of interesting shops, as well as a transporter back to area 1.

If you position yourself just right in this hallway, the Faeries will keep coming, allowing you to rack up a lot of gold, weapons and life points.

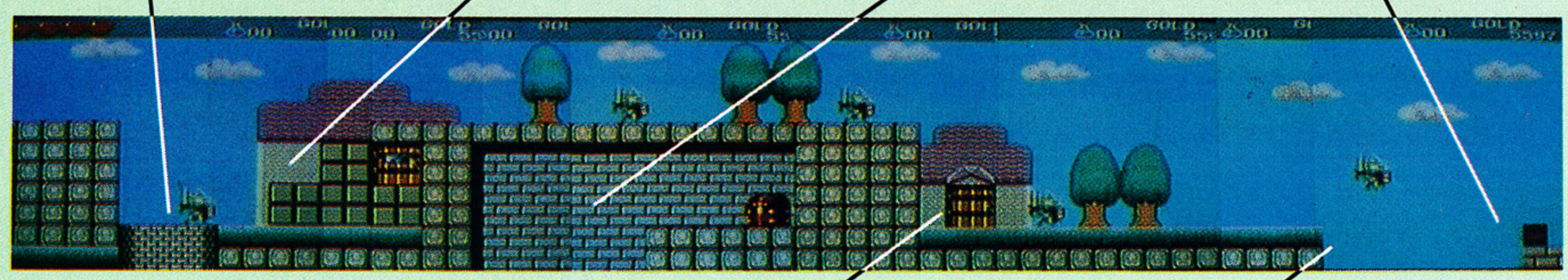
A strong shield will protect you from the fire stone's flame.

This well leads down to Area 2.

Make sure you check behind this door.

This area is accessible to Hawk Man, who can fly up through the opening found below in Area 2.

Hawk Man can fly right across this gap and get to the rest of Area 1.



There's more surprises behind this door.

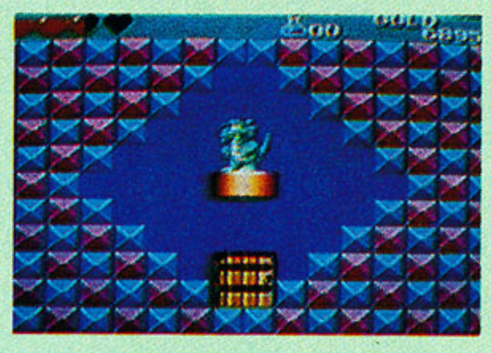
At the bottom of this cliff, you'll find Area 3.

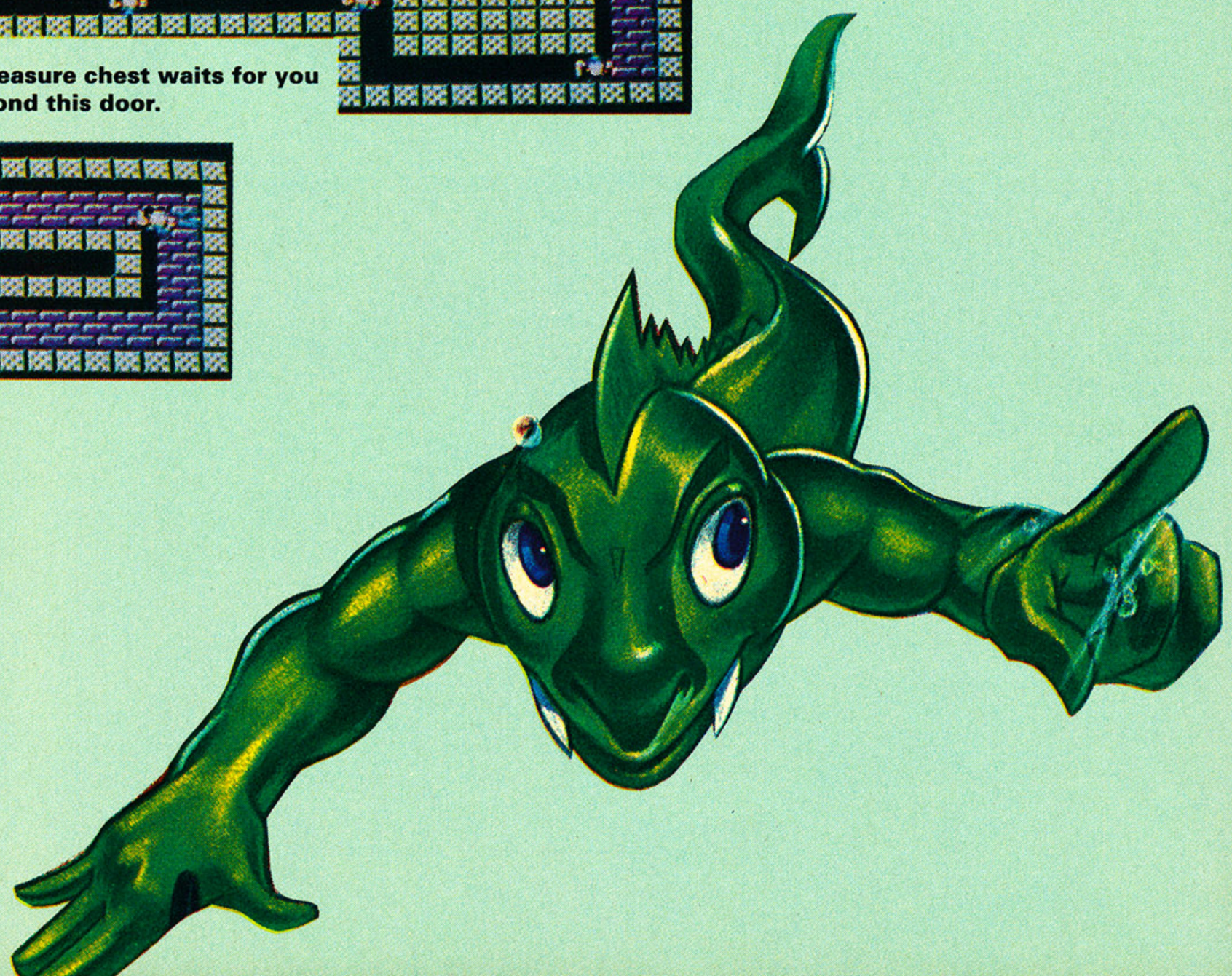
Beyond this door, the dragon zombie waits. You can't hit him when he's down inside the floor. When he's down, keep jumping over him as he moves. When he rises, hit him in the face. Once you defeat him, you'll be changed to Piranha Man.

Make sure you find all the hearts. They increase your chances of victory.

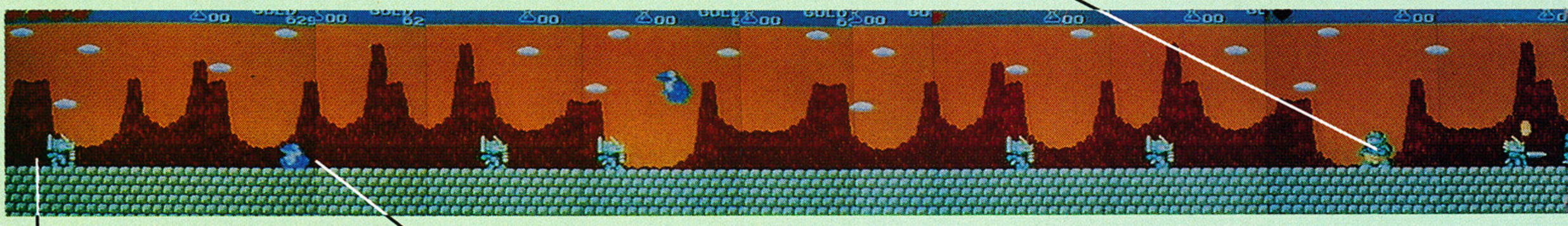
A treasure chest waits for you beyond this door.

These transforming machines will let you change from one creature to another.





AREA 9, STRIP 1

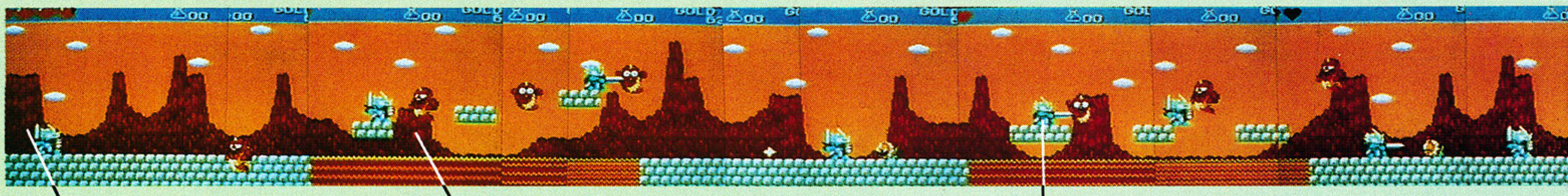


The Cyclopes take a few hits to defeat. Each time you hit one, quickly move forward for your next strike. If you don't give them a chance to recover, they won't get a chance to throw rocks at you.

This way to Area 5.

These giant toads can do a lot of damage if you don't have good, strong armor. To defeat the toads, stay out of their way until they stop jumping. Then quickly run up and hit them. Each time they get hit, they'll stay stunned for a moment, giving you time to hit them again. Depending upon the strength of the sword you're using, it may take four or five hits to kill them—with a strong sword, less.

AREA 9, STRIP 2

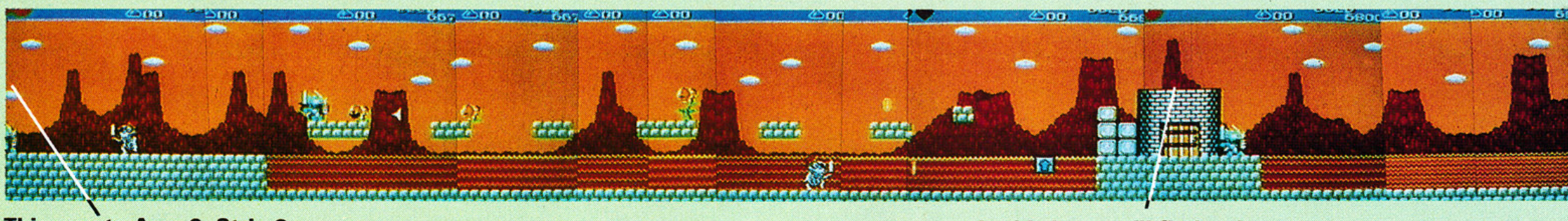


This way to Area 9, Strip 1.

You may find it easier to don your dragon mail and make your way past these areas by walking through the lava. That way you avoid having to fight the air giants.

If you have a strong enough sword, you can defeat the air giants with one swing.

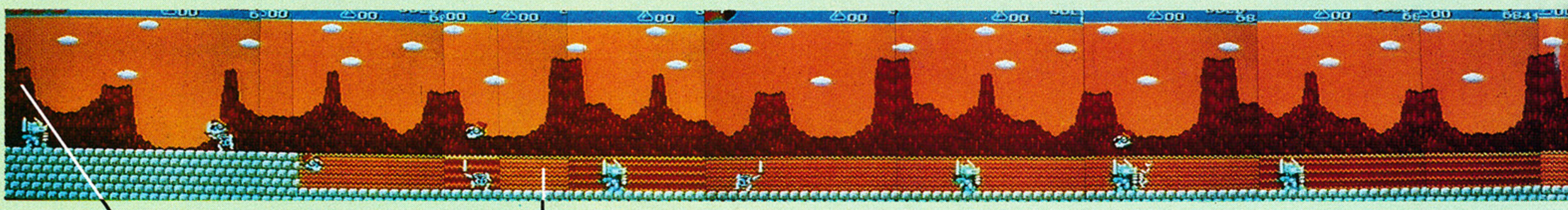
AREA 9, STRIP 4



This way to Area 9, Strip 3.

In this hut you'll find a shop. There's also a nurse who'll restore your life points.

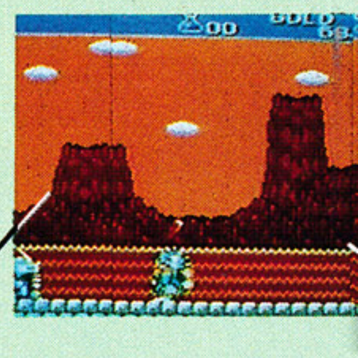
AREA 9, STRIP 5



This way to Area 9, Strip 4.

You'll never make it past this huge lava pit unless you are wearing the dragon mail (or you're Lizard Man). Even with the right equipment, this area will be a challenge. If you find that the skeletons kill you too easily, you may not be strong enough yet.

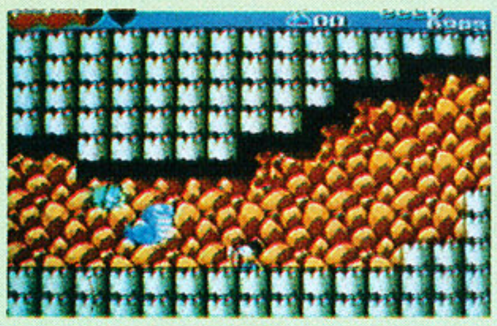
AREA 9, STRIP 6

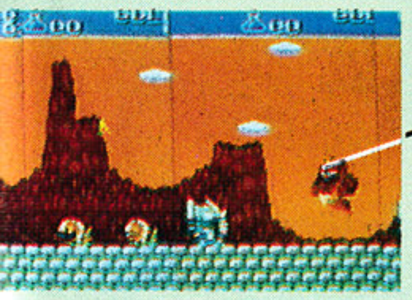


This way to Area 9, Strip 5.

This way to Area 9, Strip 2.

You'll find much more excitement in Areas 17 and 18.





This way to Area 9, Strip 3.

AREA 9, STRIP 3

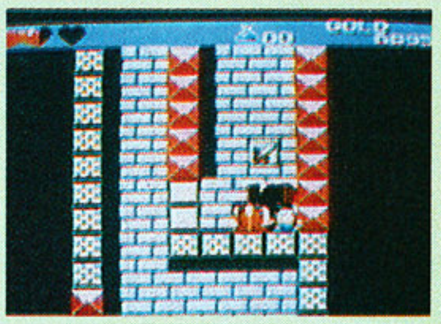
This way to Area 9, Strip 4.

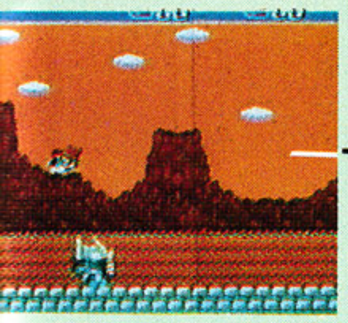
This way to Area 9, Strip 2.

Once again, the easiest way past this area is to walk through the lava. Just make sure you have your dragon mail on.

This way to Area 9, Strip 5.

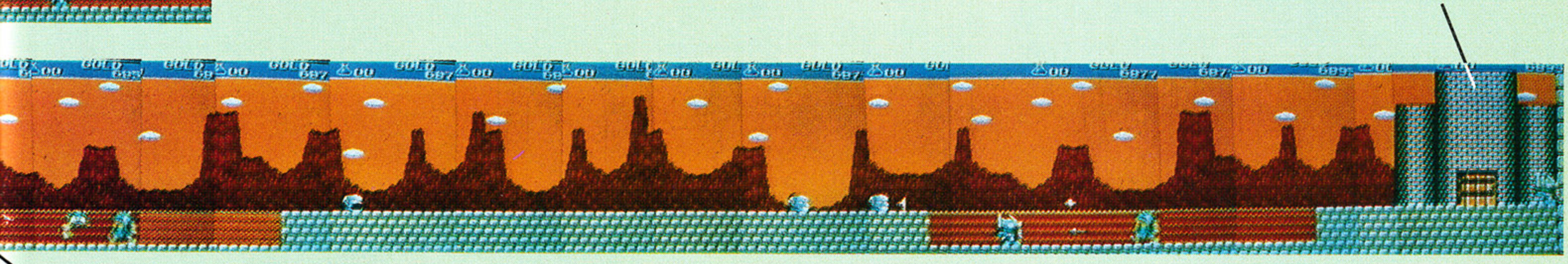
The thunder sword can be found in the tower at the end of Area 9.





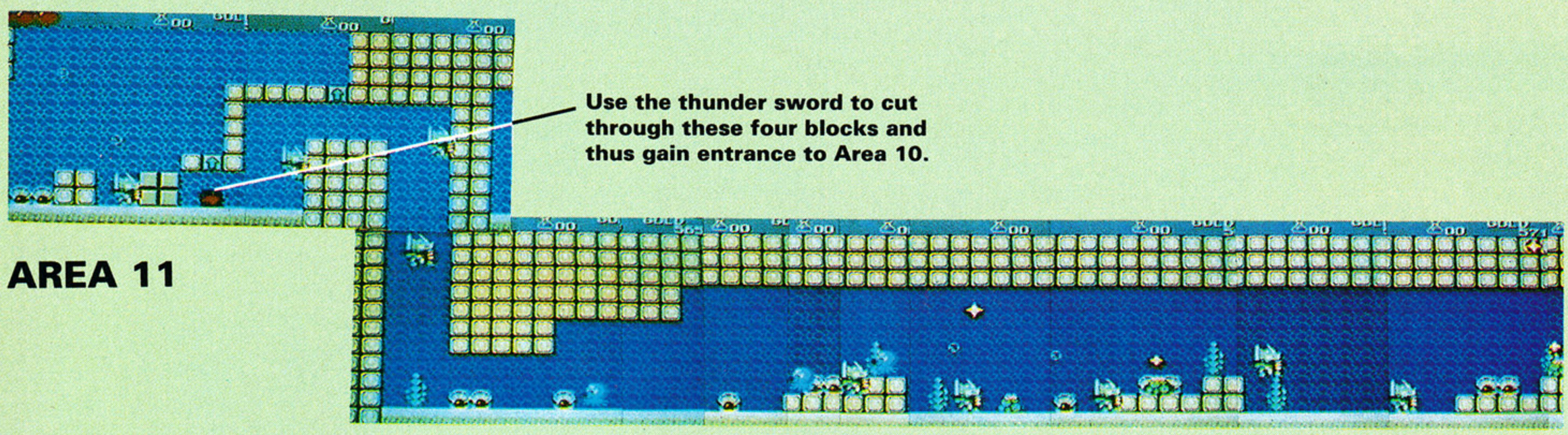
This way to Area 9, Strip 6.

In this tower (Area 10, not shown), you'll find lots of nice surprises, including the thunder sword (hurray!) and a transformer machine that'll let you switch to different forms.

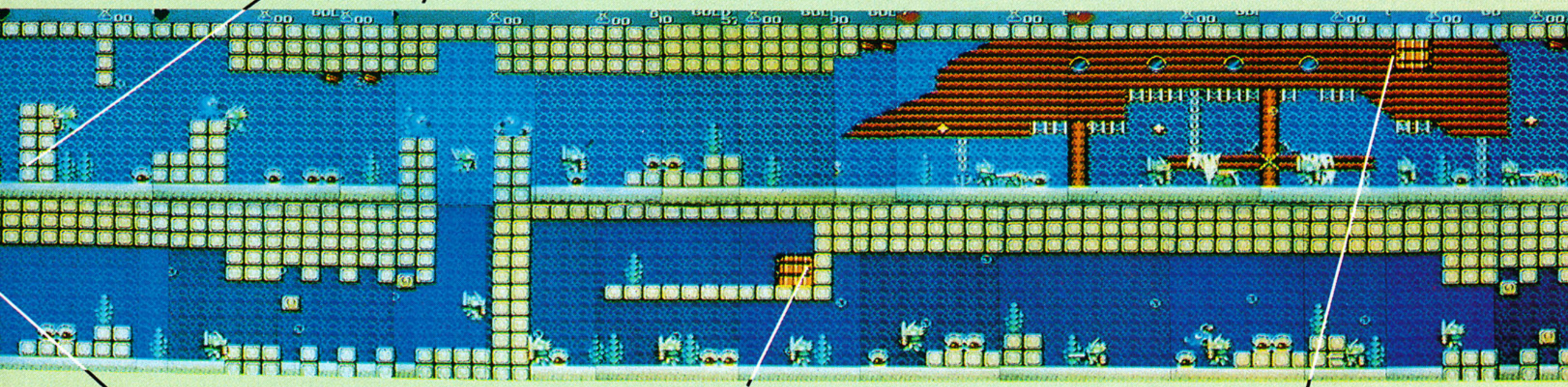


If you have a sturdy shield, you can easily block the goblin's arrows. Otherwise, you should jump over the arrows. As with the previous strip in this level, if you find yourself dying too easily here, you're probably not yet strong enough.

AREA 11



AREA 12



AREA 14

Drop down here, and you'll find a door.

This well will give you access to Area 17 (not shown).

This block contains a key. Hit it with the thunder sword and you'll be given a doorway into another shop.

This well leads to a door behind which is a transporter that'll return you to Area 1.

Lion Man can cut through these blocks and thus make it into Area 16 (not shown), where he'll find a heart to add to his life line.

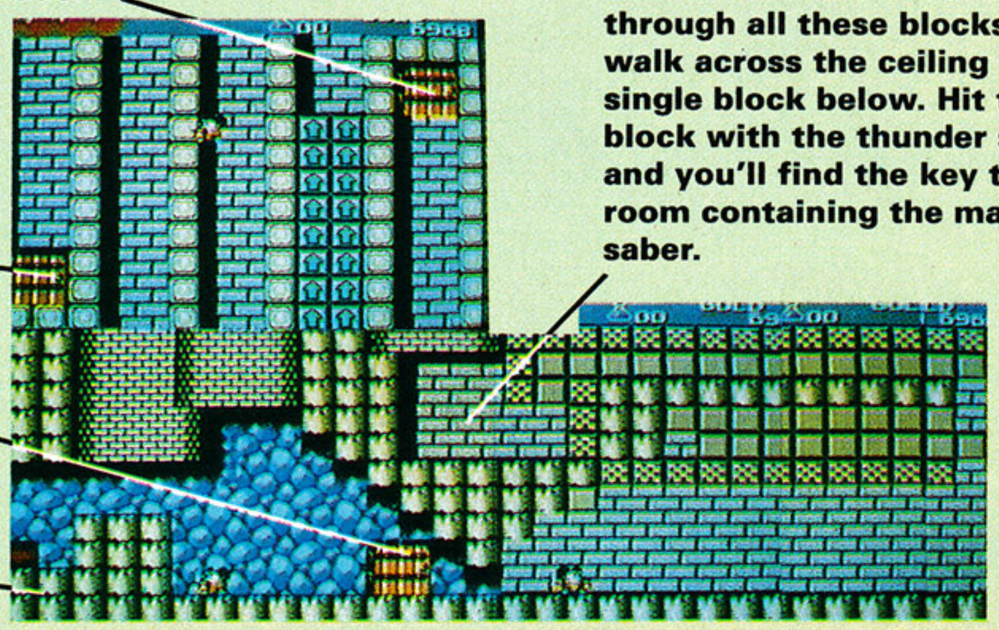
This well leads to Area 1. To get here, you must use the thunder sword to cut though the block bridge to the left of the tower.

Jump down this well, and you'll come springing up high into the air. This makes it easy to hit the block with the thunder sword, or, as Mouse Man, stick to the ceiling in order to walk across to any of the wells.

This door will bring you to the area where the magical saber is hidden.

Use the thunder saber to cut through all these blocks, then walk across the ceiling to the single block below. Hit this block with the thunder saber, and you'll find the key to the room containing the magical saber.

This door will bring you to the door in the upper right of this photo.



Behind this door is a transporter that'll return you to Area 1.

This way to Area 17 (not shown).

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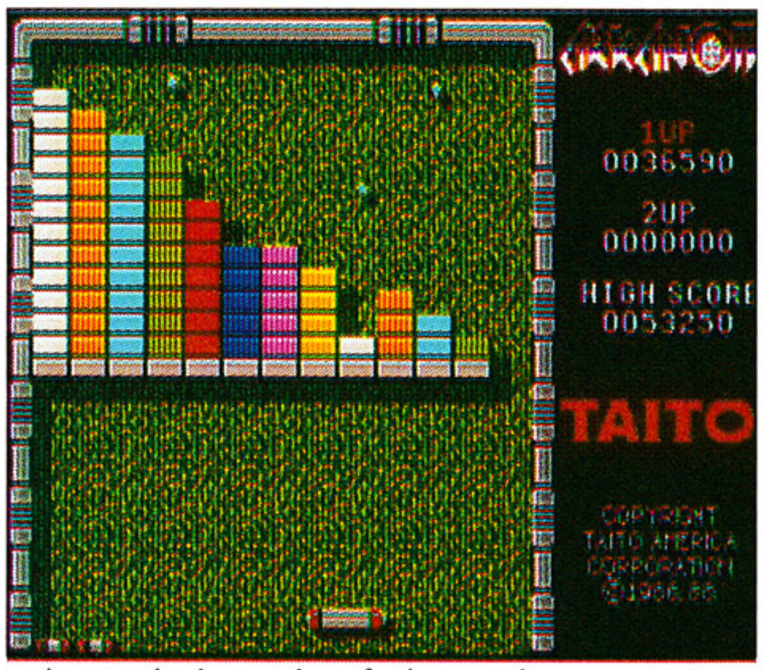
Patent Pending

continued from page 52



As a result, the number of coin-op-to-home-computer conversions is at a three-year high, and more are on the way for 1990. Publishers are careful to pick titles that stress timing, angles and on-the-fly planning, because the dulled reflexes of the typical thirtysomething computerist often can't cope with some of the superspeed shoot-outs that arcade aces love so much.

The roots of *Arkanoid* (Discovery and Taito for Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore-64, Macintosh and IBM PC) can be traced back to the classic *Breakout*. It builds on the original with lots of additional play elements and a compendium of diverse and challenging playfields. The coin-op was an addictive action-strategy triumph, and the home versions are every bit as colorful and exciting.

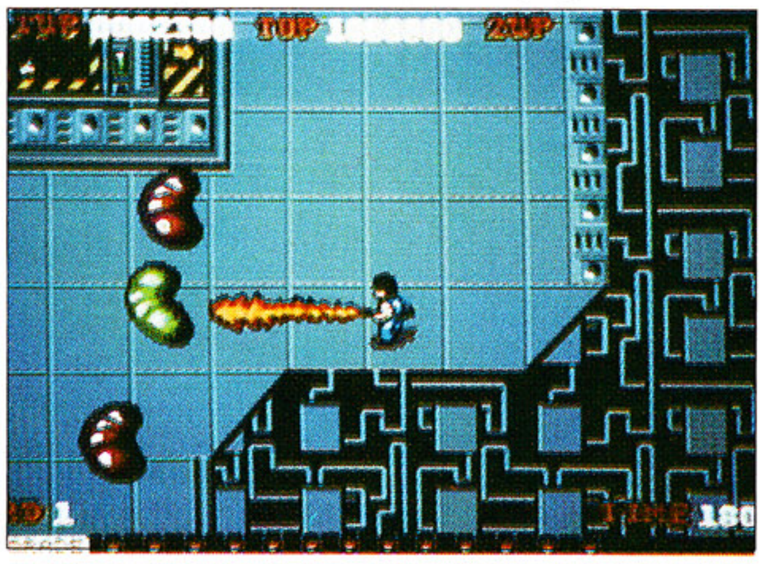
Besides the multiple screens, the most important innovations in *Arkanoid* are the tokens that drop from certain bricks after the ball destroys them. By capturing one or more of these, the gamer endows the on-screen paddle with special powers. Canny utilization of abilities like rapid fire, the enlarged paddle and speed retarder make it possible to clear some playfields that would otherwise be nearly impossible to clear.

Arkanoid II has now reached market and, if anything, is even better. The judges decided, however, that it was unfair to salute the sequel without honoring the original. Action gamers are guaranteed to want them both.

Honorable Mentions

Alien Syndrome (Sega for Atari ST, Amiga, Commodore 64 and IBM PC) is more cerebral than most of the Sega coin-op translations. It's a sophisticated maze chase in which users move through high-tech labs while being pursued by several fairly disgusting alien lifeforms.

Shinobi (Sega for Atari ST, Amiga, Commodore 64 and IBM PC) is a scrolling action contest that casts the player as master ninja Joe Musashi. The deadly fighter must



Sega's *Alien Syndrome*

advance, rescuing hostages and defeating the army of evil assassins guarding them. In a year in which few excellent games appeared for the C-64, the brilliant Commodore edition is especially welcome.

From movie to coin-op to computer game, *RoboCop* (Data East for Commodore 64 and IBM PC) continues to glisten. The home-computer version, by Ocean Software, faithfully reproduces the arcade's scrolling action as cyborg Officer Murphy fights crime in a future Detroit.

Most Innovative Computer Games

Though publishers, as previously mentioned, generally stuck with the tried-and-true, 1989 did see some notable breakthroughs. If there were fewer such landmarks than in 1988 or 1987, the ones that did premiere are no less fresh and exciting than previous years' winners.

Where in the world is Andrew Greenberg? Gamers have been asking that question since 1981, when he shook the gaming world by co-authoring *Wizardry* (Sir-Tech) and then faded into anonymity. Andy proves he's more than a one-shot wonder with the first title from his own company, *Star Saga One* (Masterplay for IBM PC).

The only word that fits this multiplayer science-fiction role-playing simulation is "awesome." One to six participants can explore and interact in one of the largest game universes ever put on disk.

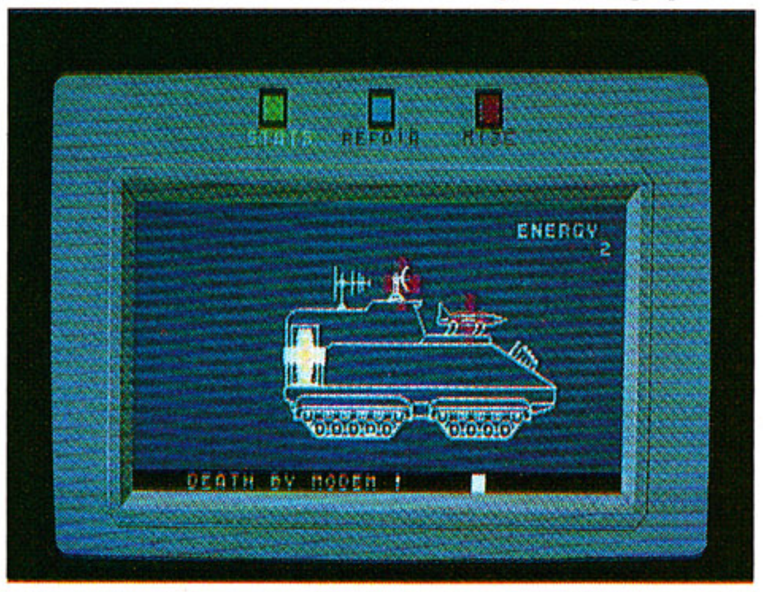
A computerized gamesmaster keeps the pot boiling as the six characters, each fully elaborated on in special booklets included with the game, pursue their various—and often contradictory—goals in this hybrid board for computer game.

Any brief description can only hint at the stupendous craftsmanship that went into the design of this amazing product. The only way to truly gauge the magnitude of Greenberg's achievement is to assume one of the six identities and starting living it.

Honorable Mentions

Modem Wars (Electronic Arts for Commodore 64 and IBM PC) is the latest from one of the most consistently creative designers in the home-computer field, Dan Bunten. This cross between war and football is the most enjoyable and playable contest yet published for direct play over telecommunication equipment.

Beyond the Black Hole (Software Toolworks for Commodore 64 and IBM PC) takes *Pong* into outer space. More importantly, this action contest adds an amazing 3-D effect that works with or without special glasses and many physical puzzles. *Beyond the Black Hole* is innovative from both a programming and design point

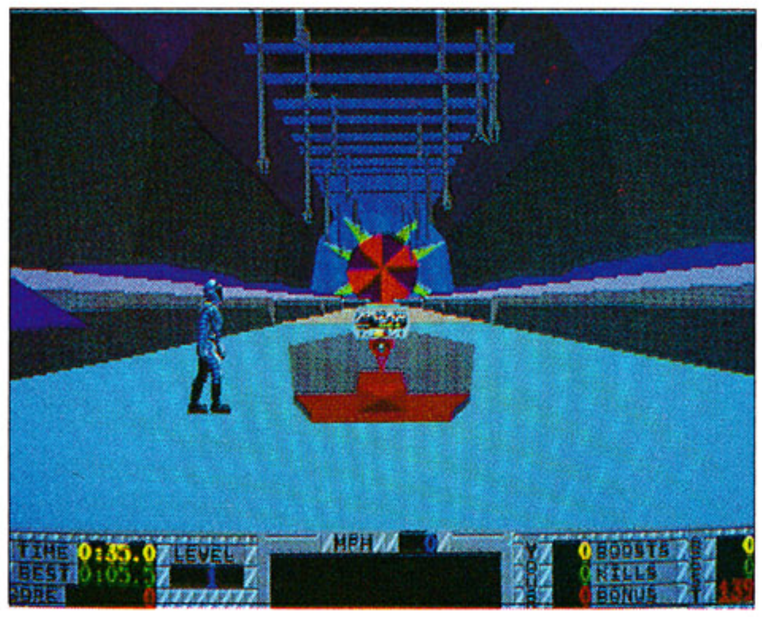


Electronic Arts' *Modem Wars*

of view. It ingeniously recycles a classic play-mechanic while breaking new technological ground.

BEST ARCADE GAMES OF THE YEAR

Best Arcade Game of the Year



Atari's *S.T.U.N. Runner* takes the award for top dog in the arcade category by virture of being not only the most exciting, but most addictive of all the games. Put yourself at the controls of a 21st-century version of today's racing

car, the S.T.U.N. Runner. Your task is to pilot this billion-dollar marvel through a variety of terrains and obstacle courses in timed heats. Straddling the game like a racing motorcycle, you rocket through landscapes at over 900 mph. Besides gathering speed points, you must destroy moving targets and roadblocks with your laser guns or "shockwave" cannon. *S.T.U.N. Runner*, with its smooth polygon-generated 3-D graphics is not for the weak of heart or slow of reflex. A definite groundbreaker.

Most Innovative Arcade Game

We went wild over this one! Atari's *Escape From the Planet of the Robot Monsters* is one of the most humorous and original arcade offerings to come along in some time. Take command of your choice of heroes as they blast their way through a maze of robots and biomechanical bosses to save Earth. Your destination is the artificial asteroid Planet X, seized by the evil, zombie-making Reptilons. If you don't blunt the Reptilon invasion force, their next stop may be your downtown mall! With graphics designed to emulate those cheesy rocket operas of days gone by, *Escape* is a little mini-movie all by itself. Lots of exciting gameplay, backed up by top-notch animation and varied scenarios, makes *Escape* a game to play again and again.

Best Driving Simulator

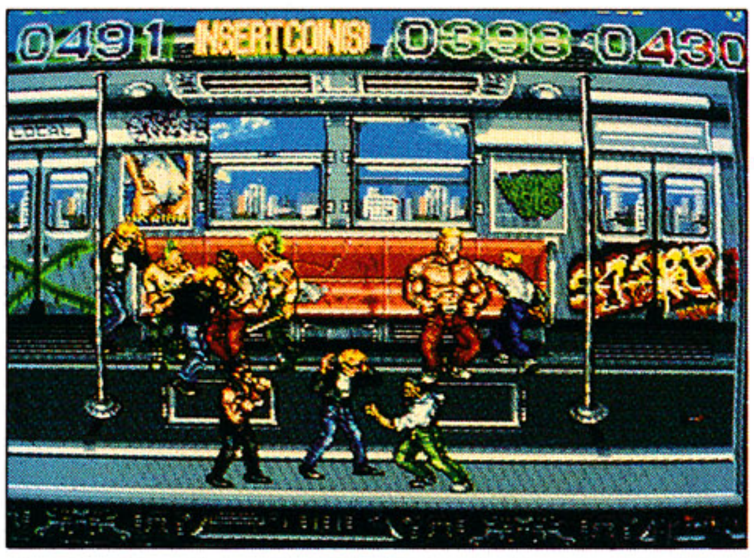
Who out there hasn't wished for the chance to take *just one* lap in a high-performance racing machine? The roar of the engine, the squeal of rubber on pavement, passing car upon car as you blast down the road? Sigh.... Well, for a few quarters and a few minutes of your time, Atari's *Hard Drivin'* is glad to oblige. This driving simulation offers you uncanny realism and driving thrills as you power your way through crowded roads or death-defying stunt tracks. Graphic design is excellent, as are the actual ergonomics of the game machine itself. Watch out, Alain Proust!

Best Flying Game

We were quite smitten by the exciting *Metalhawk* by Namco. Picture yourself behind the stick of the Metalhawk, an ultra-sophisticated attack helicopter, as you strike deep behind enemy lines and become the envy of your fellow gamers. The graphics

on *Metalhawk* are remarkable, allowing you to bank, zoom and climb with breathless grace and speed. This is the first game to "zoom in" with you as you dive or climb, creating a realistic feeling of chopper combat and giving you that little extra thrill for your money. The attack scenarios are also detailed above and beyond the average call of duty.

Best Multiplayer Game



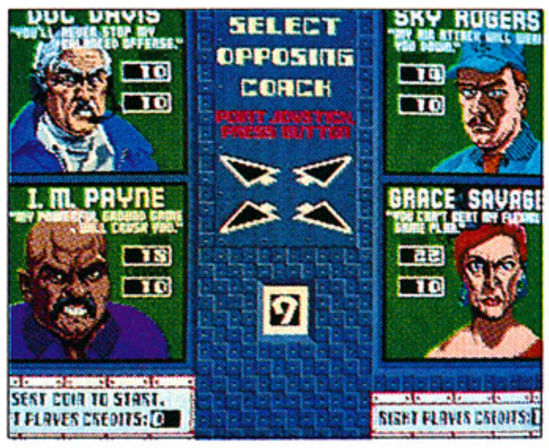
Although most games are played solo against the computer, it's always fun to enlist the aid of a few friends to vanquish a pixelated foe now and again. Konami's *Crime Fighter* is the best example we've seen of the kick-punch genre and a darn fun game to play with your friends as well. Venture into the dank subways of an unnamed metropolis in search of kidnap victims, and sharpen your martial-arts skills on the villian's henchmen. The variety of characterization in this game is its strongest point, pitting you against a rogue's gallery of hoods that is both funny and challenging. The teamwork aspect of *Crime Fighter* comes into play in later levels, providing you with unmatched excitement and a feeling of

satisfaction—as well as some beads of sweat on your brow—when you're done.

Best Combat Game

Among the myriad combat simulators and blow-'em-ups released this year, Fabtek's *Dynamite Duke* rises head and shoulders above the rest. Take command of the cyborgian Duke on his quest for revenge against the scientists that made him what he is today—a bionic weapon. The actual gameplay of *Duke* is enthralling, giving you plenty of worthy adversaries to butt up against on all levels and great background graphics to boot. You also see the action through a unique viewpoint: a hole in Duke's back. Use the fabled "Dynamite Punch" to get you through some of the game's tougher sections and enemies. Pow! This is another game that earns its laurels by having a great concept, a great sense of humor and a hero that looks like a big surfer dude.

Best Sports Simulator (Futuristic)



Want a little variety in your video sports? Try *Atari's Cyberball 2072* on for size. The year is 2072, and the game of football as we know it is very, very different. Gone are the Joe Montanas and Boomer Esiasons and Herschel Walkers. In their place on the gridiron are robots—high-tech machines programmed to sack each other and toss a titanium pigskin. Game graphics are smooth and detailed, and the characterizations for the jet-powered jocks are priceless! The level of play complexity is somewhat off-putting for the beginner, but *Cyberball 2072* is a consummate simulation game that grows better each time you play.

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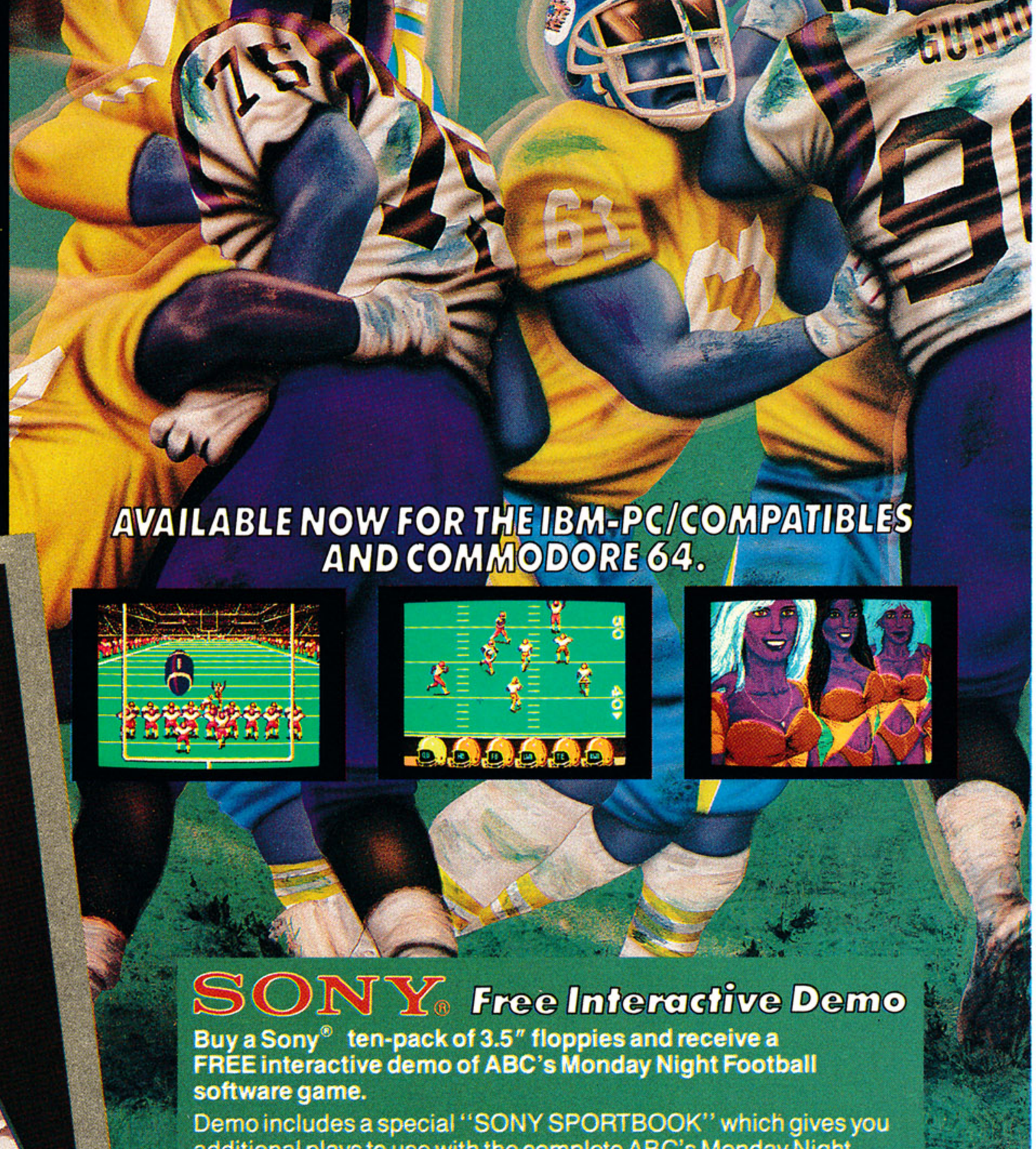

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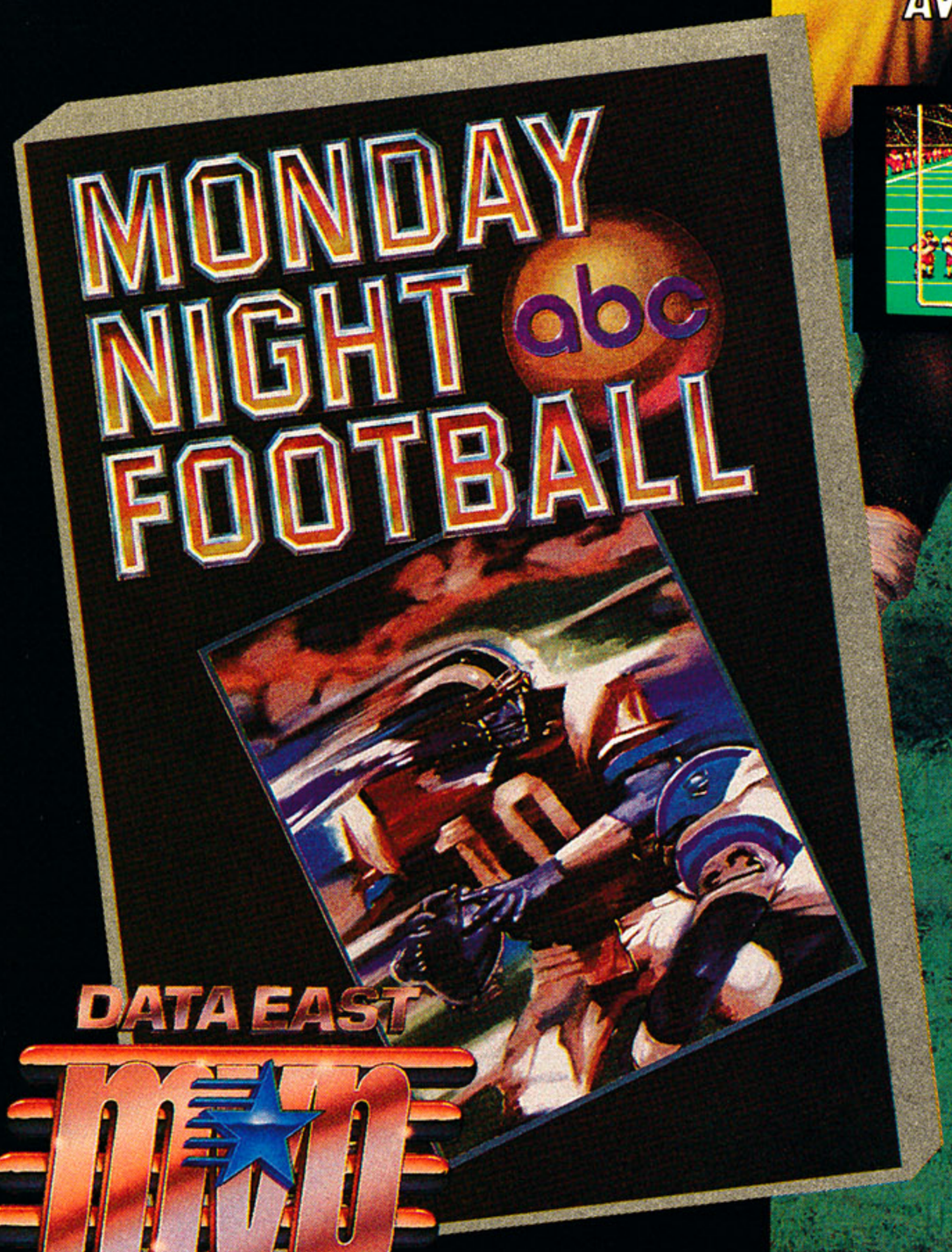

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CIRCLE #127 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Coin-Op Goes "Turbo": Bridging the Gap Between Home and Arcade

by Patrick J. Kelley

It's been said that there's "nothing new under the sun" today. Imitations and repetition seem to be the order of the day in almost all forms of entertainment. Look at the movie section of your local newspaper if you need any further proof. Sequels, "pre-quels" and redux items are all the rage, and the line between who's who and what's what gets fuzzier every day.

Fortunately, not *everyone* is following the trend toward imitation these days. Witness an exciting new breakthrough in the concept of arcade gaming, spearheaded by L.A.-based coin-op distributor United Amusements and aided by NEC (manufacturer of the TurboGrafx-16 home system).

Sound unusual? Those familiar with the politics of home-vs.-arcade gaming will find it even more so. Arcade owners and machine distributors have regarded the burgeoning home market as a *threat* to their sales and damaging to their market standing. Traditionally, even companies with home- and arcade-gaming divisions found themselves at odds internally over the same issues.

However, this may all change with the introduction of United Amusements' new TurboGrafx-16-based "TurboCard" system, which employs the best of both worlds. By combining the arcade "stand up" cabinets with the NEC internals and interchangeable game cards, this new machine promises to take arcade gaming into the '90s in style.

Behind the Scenes

After making the short drive from the VG&CE offices, I was greeted at the Los Angeles offices of United Amusements by President John Hibbs and his partner, Bob Ipson. Both men were friendly and eager to tell me about their newest product for the arcade operator.

Hibbs is no stranger to the video-game industry. His company has been a leading distributor of arcade products for many years. Hibbs has seen a number of companies try to market "new" arcade systems before and all with the same result. Companies, he feels, must have a secure "hardware foundation" before they can consider tackling the arduous task of bringing a new product to fruition. NEC, he feels, is just such a company. Hardware problems, costs and dealer support must all factor into any product launch. A dedication to engineering excellence is just half the battle.

"United Amusements is taking a leadership role in the fight to merge classic gaming with today's advances," Hibbs began as we discussed UA's future plans over coffee. "We have to convince arcade operators that we're not the enemy, but are in fact an important ally."

Studying the components that make up the heart of the new system, I'm amazed at how compact and well engineered they are. The internals are mostly NEC's PC Engine parts, modified to fit the arcade format that the coin-op machines must operate under. The data card that holds the game's EPROM (erasable programmable read-only memory) "brain" is small and well laid out. The entire unit, which fits on a metal card no bigger than 7 by 12 inches, is offered to arcade operators in kit form, at a cost of $900 per unit.

(The standard kit includes the aforementioned data cards and PC Engine internals; a one-player control panel, fully assembled with Lexan protective sheet; all wiring harnesses; a 24-by-24-inch, smoked-monitor Plexi-piece; a title sign and a marquis sign.)

An entire machine can be converted to the United Amusements format in a little under two hours and using existing arcade cabinetry. The initial investment in the "guts" of the system is the only major cost operators must incur. Changes in game software are made quickly and easily, requiring only the "snap-out-and-snap-in" method to change the TurboCards—simple as punching up your favorite game at home! In fact, at the recent AMOA show, the quickest time to convert from one game to another in a contest held by UA was a mere 33 seconds. This included not only the changing of game cards, but also the attract panel and other artwork too.

The sheer difference in size alone from conventional arcade components is staggering. The UA board is less than half the size of its contemporaries and uses fewer chips. The standard-sized arcade board is almost one foot square. (In case you're wondering, the game cards from your home NEC are *not* compatible in this format. The arcade design must be obtained directly from UA at a cost of between $100 and $200 each.)

A tour around the plant was the next order of the day. Hibbs and I walked through the operation, stopping to chat briefly with some of the people who work behind the scenes to make UA tick. In the lobby, various monitor screens and video-game consoles display such games as *Blazing Lazers*, *Keith Courage in Alpha Zones* and *Alien Crush.*

In another part of the plant, various technicians are testing and performing minor repairs on damaged kits (no major assembly of the components is performed at their site). The working areas are bright and clean, maintaining an atmosphere of efficiency. In the shipping department, the kits are prepared for shipment to their divergent destinations, packed away in tidy silk-screened boxes, each bearing the NEC TurboGrafx-16 logo.

Everyone, including the support staff, had an air of purpose about them and seemed to mesh well together. Hibbs showed me the unit and its cabinetry in various stages of completion. Construction quality is high, and fit and finish on the units is some of the best I've seen.

Industry Watch

I marveled at just how economical this could be for the average arcade

operator, but Hibbs explained that some operators are still reluctant to go with this new system—afraid to spend money on a revolutionary but untried venture.

"There's a certain amount of cynicism still out there among the 'old timers' in this industry toward this type of format," he laughed. "It's just a resistance to change in an industry that has, for the past 50 years or so, remained pretty much the same. The general feeling among some is that, 'We know the software industry better than you [Hibbs] do.'" When pressed on this point, Hibbs explained that some of the arcade businesses have been small-scale "Mom and Pop" institutions for the better part of three generations and as such are more than a little set in their ways.

Hibbs also commented on the dichotomy that currently exists between the styles in the video-gaming business. Traditional arcade owners tend to be generally more grass roots in approach, while those companies that market primarily to the home market are more "high tech in approach, generally faster to move and more amenable to changes." Unfortunately, the animosity and rivalry that exists between the two groups is deep-rooted and won't vanish overnight. [Arcade and home-game manufacturers] don't like to sit at the same banquet table," Hibbs sighed.

Moving along, we discussed the choices of games for the UA game machines, both present and future. One of Japan's most popular PC Engine games, *Blazing Lazers*, is among UA's early offerings. *Lazers* is a high-energy, vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up based on the billion-yen Japanese sci-fi film, *Gunhed*. (The game goes by the name *Gunhed* in its Japanese incarnation.)

Many games, Hibbs explained, just weren't "right" to make the cut from home to arcade play. Others, despite good format, just weren't graphically sophisticated enough to have the makings of an arcade megahit. "To beat the skepticism that we've been encountering concerning UA's viability, we've decided to only go with the best possible choices. The arcade customer is the toughest customer to please. Great graphics are part of quality, and for us, quality will mean success."

Hibbs also alluded to the fact that the arcade industry is a "fashion" business, where the flashiest and brassiest games must strut their stuff to beat their competitors to the punch. A game with *glamour* can not only rake in huge profits, but help the collections of an entire game company's lineup as well.

Also discussed was a very ambitious release-schedule plan to take UA through 1990: six to ten new releases by the end of 1989, with 15 to 20 more planned by 1991.

Calling All Developers

All those games are going to need plenty of game developers, and UA is wasting no time in wooing third-party licensees to boost interest in their arcade system. NEC is apparently making overtures on UA's behalf to some programmers who are submitting games for NEC's consideration. For example, if the game is test-marketed by UA and plays well at the arcade, the game designer could then reapproach NEC for home-licensing rights. "Leadership in the coin-op field," Hibbs said, "is essential for success in the crossover phase."

And what are the stakes? "This year alone, arcades across the country will bring in $4 billion from as few as three million machines," explained Hibbs. "That's approximately *12 billion* choices made each time a machine or game is selected." As impressive as that may sound, the industry as a whole is doing rather poorly today. "The high replacement cost of equipment vs. poor collection returns are crippling some arcade operators," said Hibbs. "That, plus the shorter earning potential of new games. Many people are no longer staying in the business because of these and other factors."

I asked Hibbs what his plan was to curb some of the slipping market share. "We have an aggressive posture right now as far as sales go," Hibbs explained. "We have three full-time sales representatives, as well as telemarketers and other reps. We're trying to go the direct-sales route." Direct sales can be difficult, but rewarding as long as consistency is applied in dealing with the customers. Salespeople must also double as educators, instructing others in the innovation and value inherent in the system. This approach will take UA's message to the more than 3,000 potential arcade customers out there.

During the visit, Hibbs also mentioned that his firm had entered into a partnership with United Artists Theatre Amusements (UATA), which operates games in nearly 700 United Artists' theatre lobbies across the nation. According to UATA President Jon Daughery, "UA's TurboGrafx-16 system will revolutionize the coin-op business through a constant flow of fresh new games at affordable prices." Others are also jumping on the bandwagon, including the Just Games company of San Diego, California. Just Games plans to place UA's machines at locations including military PXs, college-campus game rooms and bowling alleys.

All in all, United Amusements has come up with an innovative and cost-effective way for arcade owners to expand upon their earning capacity. It's hoped that by bringing out games in an organized fashion, a smooth—and fair—schedule will be determined similar to that which occurs with movies and home videos. That way, the arcade will be able to *preview* a title to the gaming public before it comes out for home purchase, and everyone will have a chance to garner their share off the product.

Like anything else, only time will tell if this grand experiment will work. All of the factors are in place for it to do so.

"We will live or die on the quality of our games," Hibbs emphasized. "That, and we must find good game developers. Only then will we make any inroads to success."

Photography by Luc Ekstein

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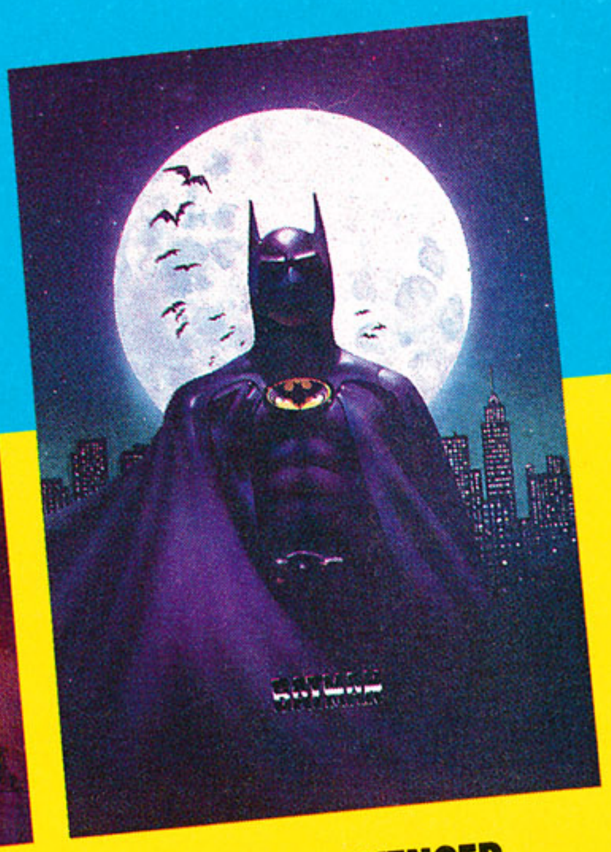

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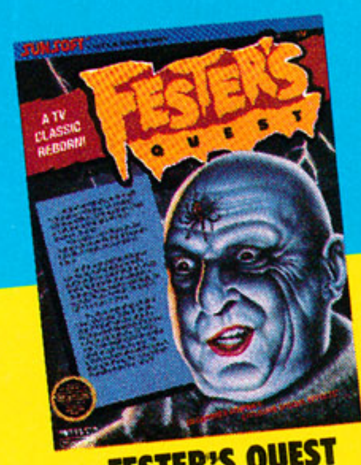

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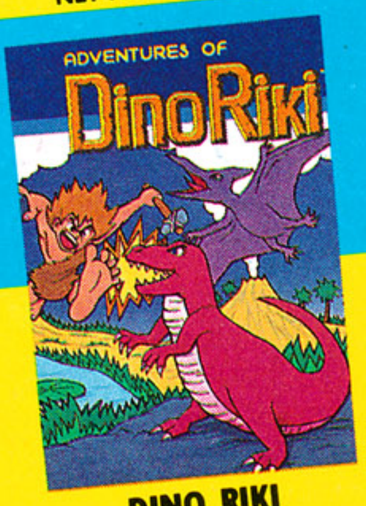

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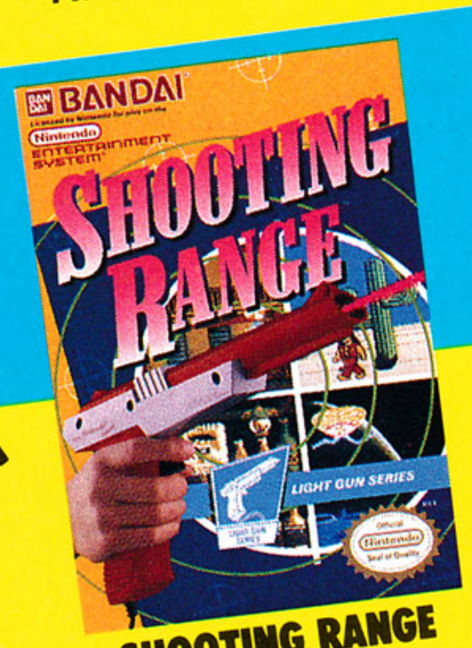

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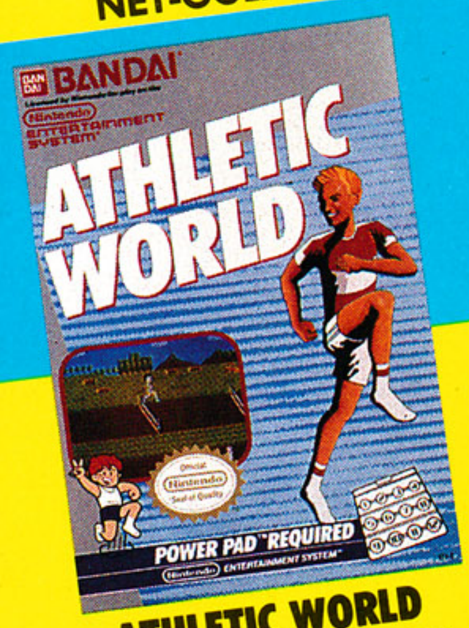

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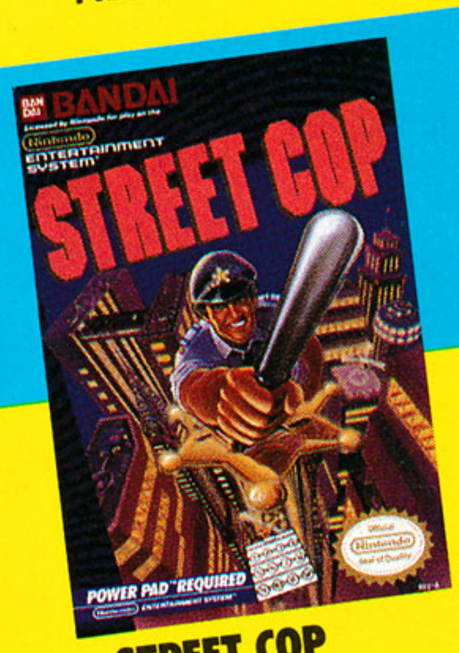

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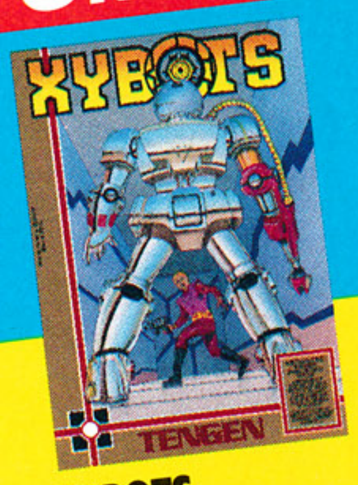

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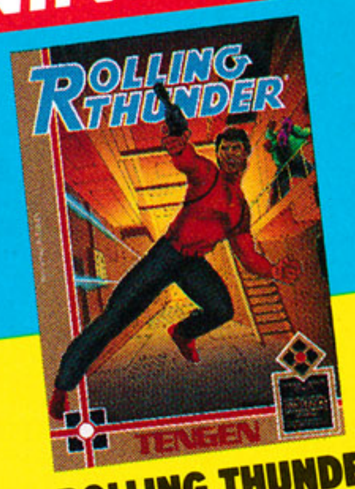

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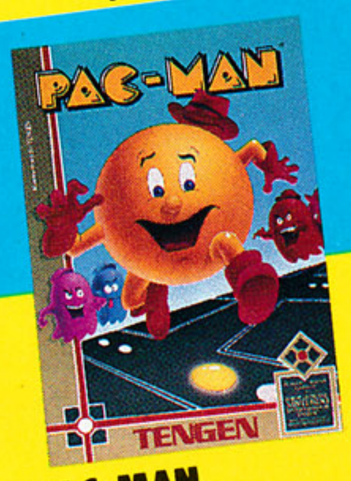

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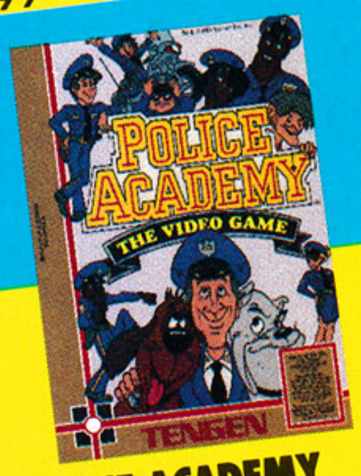

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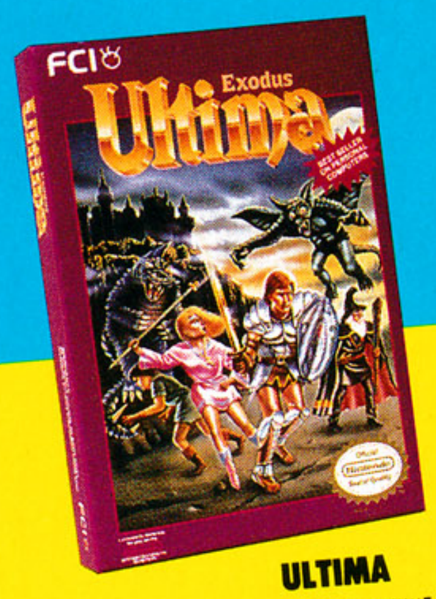

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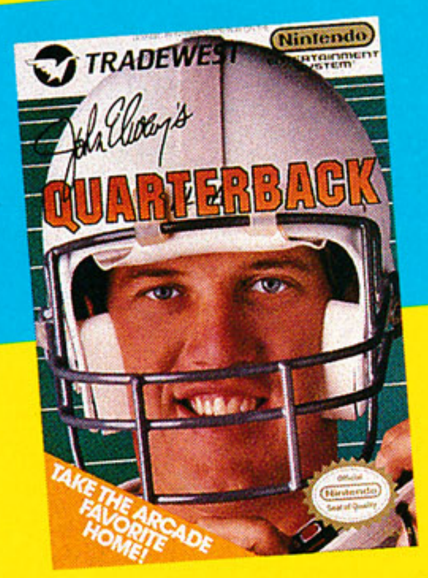

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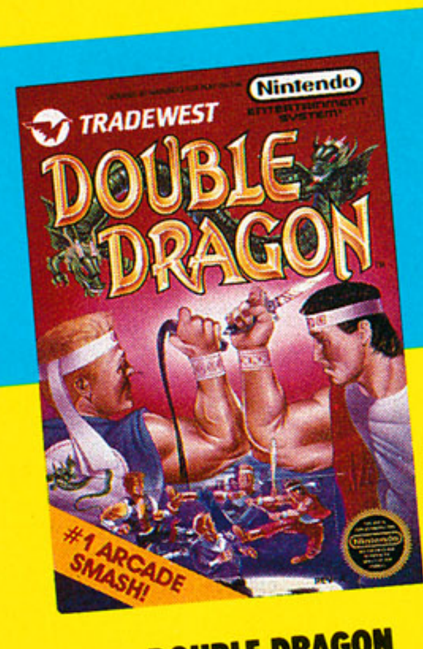

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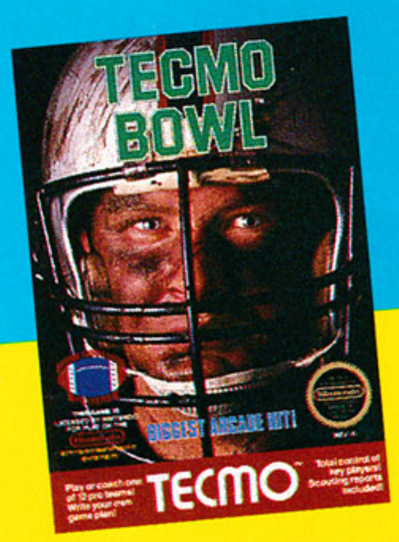

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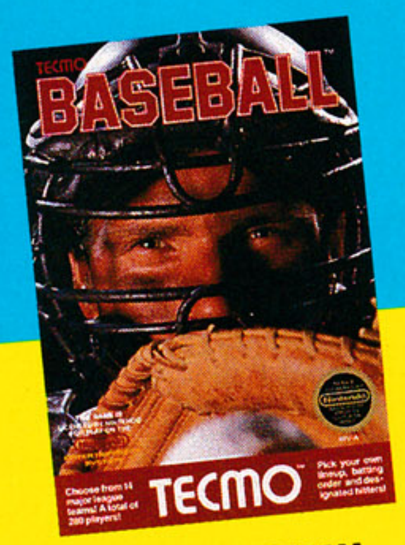

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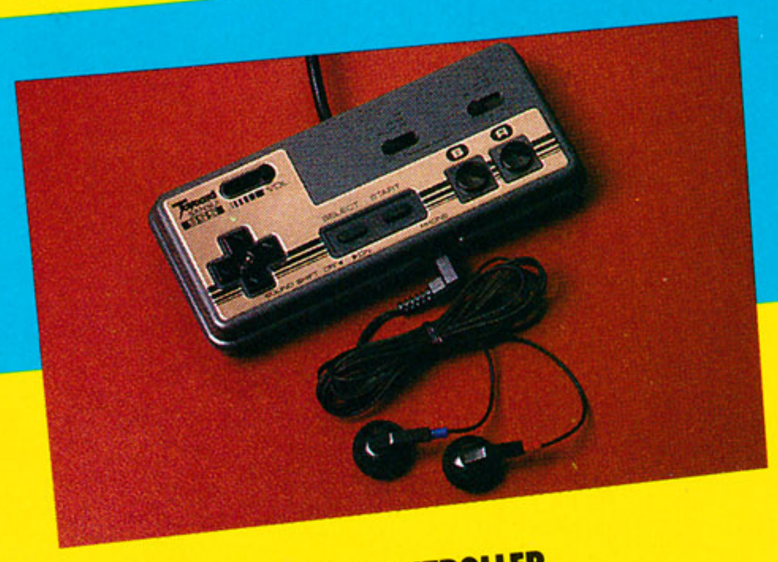

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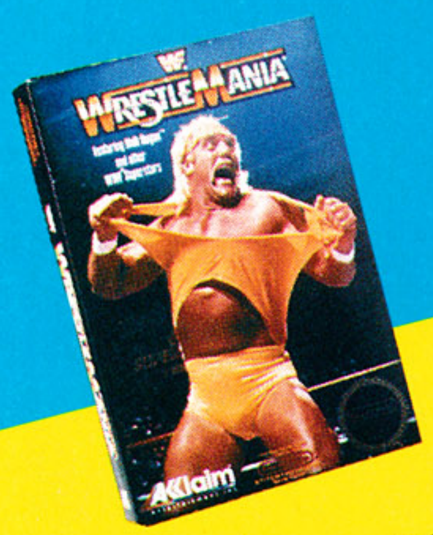

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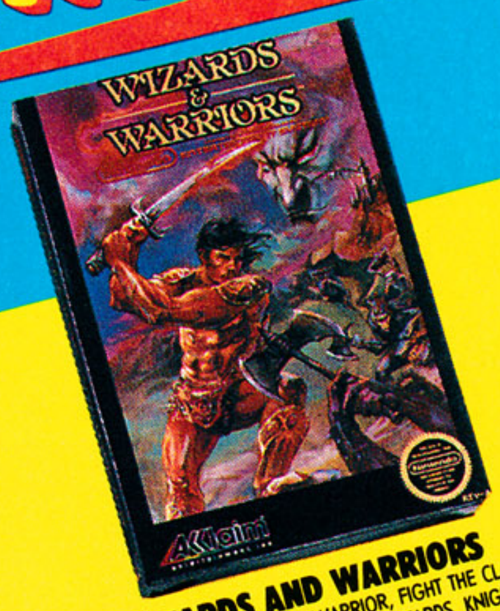

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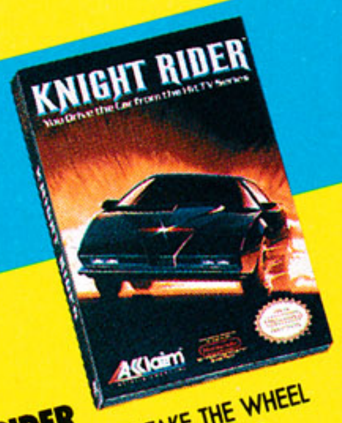

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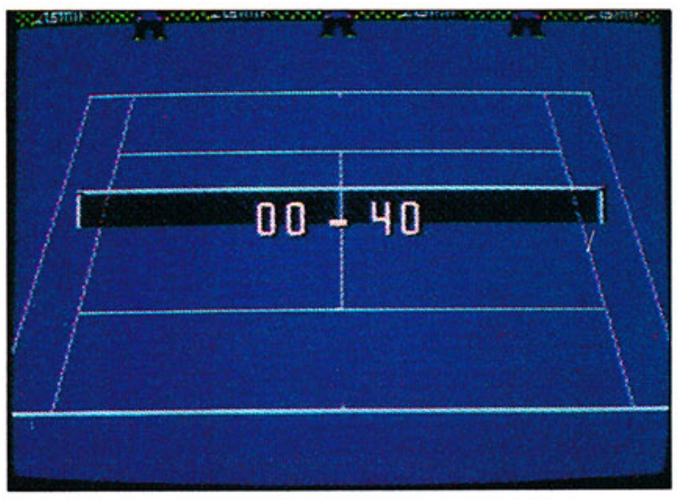
continued from page 40

and a real pain in the neck to enter every time.

Overall, *Evert & Lendl Top Players Tennis* is a good game that will challenge you. It doesn't just depend on hand-eye coordination, but requires judicious allocation of your skill points, real skill with the control pad and taking some chances. The instructions are sometimes confusing, but it is still one of the better video-tennis tournaments around.

—David Plotkin



Test your skill and tactics in the sports-simulator *Evert & Lendl Top Player Tennis* from Asmik.

Asmik Corporation, Wells Fargo Building, 444 South Flower Street, Suite 1600, Los Angeles, CA 90071-2975; (213) 627-4783.

Truxton

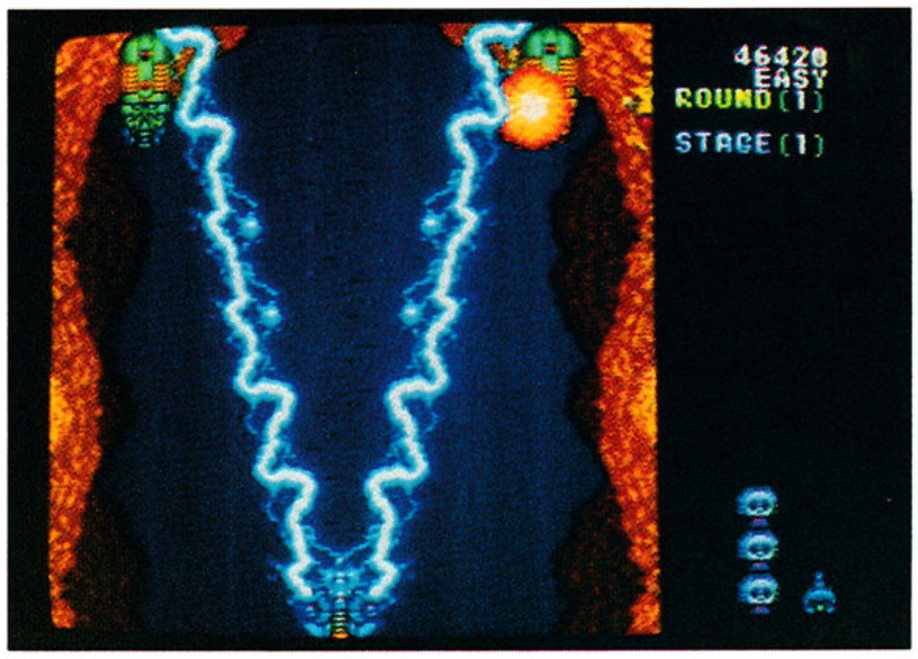
SEGA

For the Sega Genesis ($54.95)

The Genesis is still a young machine, with arguably the greatest potential of any dedicated video-game system on the market. For Genesis to capture a wide audience, its games will have to exploit the machine's superior capabilities. We've seen this extra measure of quality in *Ghouls 'N' Ghosts*, *Tommy Lasorda Baseball*, and in small details in a few other carts. *Truxton*, unfortunately, is not one of these breakthrough games.

Based on the arcade game, *Truxton* is a standard slide-and-shoot with high-quality graphics and above-average sound. There are a few different strategic options, but far fewer than in *Thunder Force II*, the first—and still the best—shoot-'em-up for the Genesis. While *Truxton* is fast-paced, tough and visually captivating, it'll also remind you of dozens of other games that all offer the same qualities.

The plot concerns a peaceful race (the Borogos) and evil, powerful invaders (the Gidans). The Gidans have created a weapon that allows them to turn barren asteroids into heavily armed floating fortresses. The Borogos launched a freighter to their allies; this freighter carried a load of special weapons. The Gidans destroyed the freighter, leaving the special weapons scattered all over the galaxy. Now the Gidans have eight asteroids functioning as fortresses. Your mission is to destroy these fortresses, which you'll have to do five times (no explanation for that)! Fortunately, all those special weapons are drifting about in space, just waiting to be used. Naturally, use of these weapons is essential to your victory.



Blast your way to galactic adventure and high scores in the Sega game *Truxton*.

There are three basic weapons available, each of which has advantages against certain attackers. Power units are available to increase the strength of your chosen weapon; it takes five power units to raise the weapon to a new level of effectiveness. With other found items, you can increase the speed and maneuverability of your fighter, and you can also find bombs scattered about. The bombs destroy everything on the screen, including bullets, so they're great in a jam. Extra fighters can be earned by accumulating a certain number of points or by picking up 1-ups and 2-ups along the way.

Truxton has three difficulty levels; these control the number of continues you receive at the end of the game and the strength of the attackers. On the easy level, your continues are unlimited. Even with that advantage, *Truxton* will take a long time to master. Fortunately, you can collect an infinite number of bombs, power-up units and extra lives, as long as you can find them.

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	6
Graphics	6
Playability	5
Overall	5

The graphics scroll vertically throughout the game. There's a lot of variety in the appearance of the asteroids and enemies, but none of the 3-D effects that make *Thunder Force II* so remarkable. And your weapons, when powered to their fullest extent, make a very flashy light show on-screen. Oddly, the varied rock 'n' roll soundtrack is plagued by background static—a problem I haven't experienced with any other Genesis cart. I was disappointed to find that the playfield is only three-quarters of the screen width; the remainder of the screen is used to show the number of remaining ships, bombs and power-ups.

Genesis carts are more expensive than carts for other systems, and *Truxton* is no exception. If you're a fan of the arcade game or if you love slide-and-shoots, *Truxton* will give you a good challenge for the money. But if you're looking for something new and exceptional, try *Thunder Force II* or wait awhile longer.

—Joshua Mandel

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HERE COME THE BATTLETANKS!

A Guide to Computer Tank Games

by Bill Kunkel and Arnie Katz

Back at the dawn of video gaming, the most frequently heard sound effects, after the beeps and boops of ping-pong simulations, were the grinding of tank treads. These old-fashioned contests invariably focused on a one-on-one confrontation between a pair of tanks seen from a simple top-down perspective, with options including mazes and ricocheting ammunition.

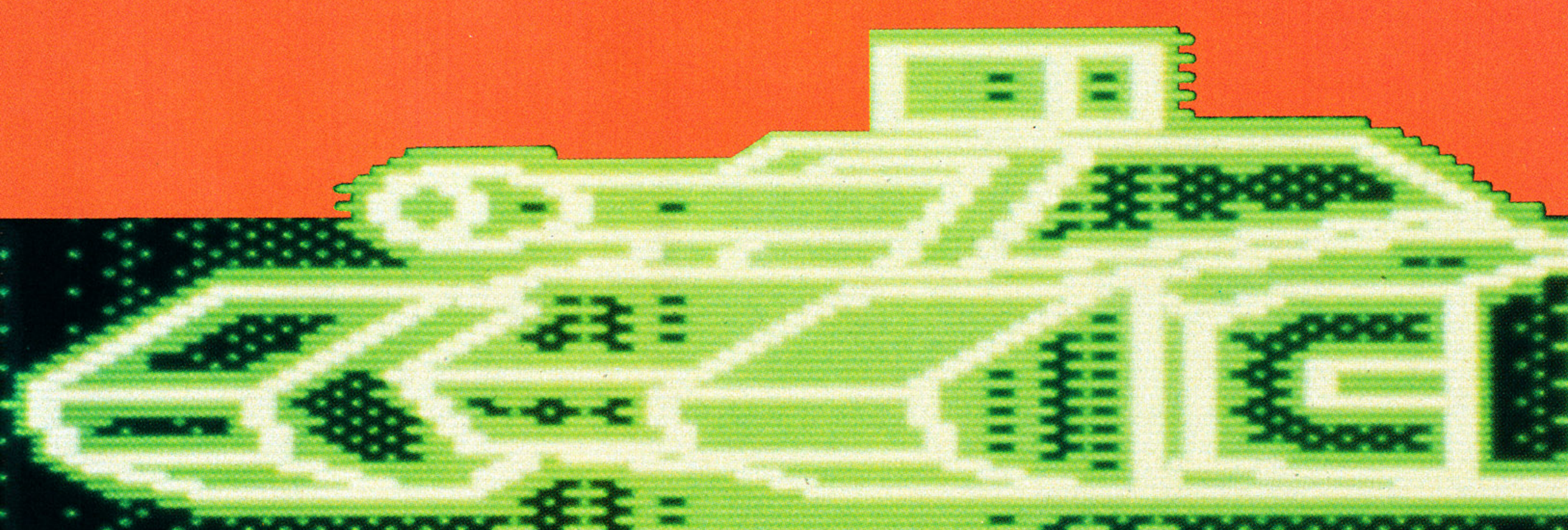
Since that prehistoric era, tank simulators have evolved in fits and starts, much like Patton's fabled advance on Berlin at the close of World War II; either blazing ahead crushing all opposition or getting hopelessly bogged down in bureaucracy and politics.

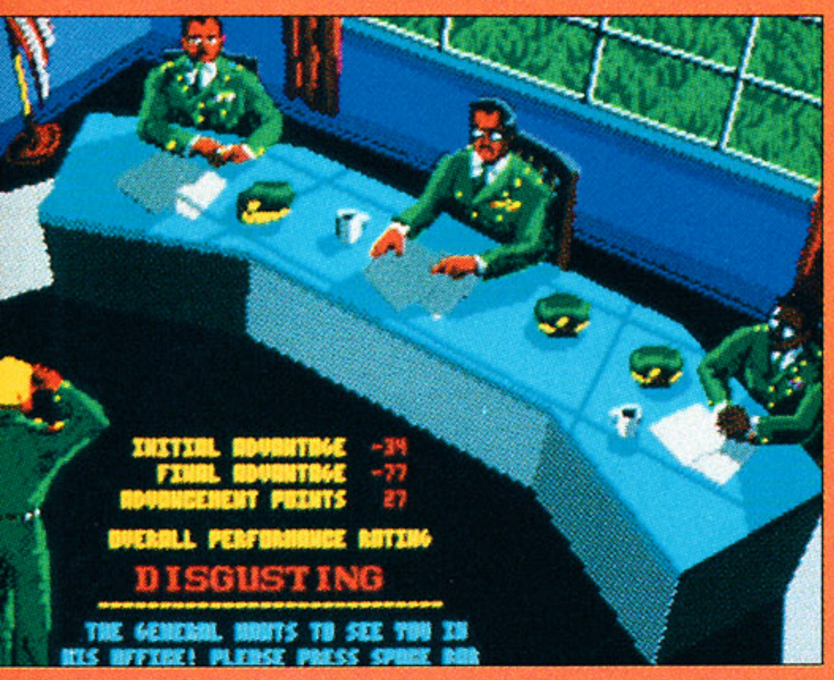
Through most of the '80s, tank games were only a footnote in electronic-gaming history when compared to the squadrons of flight simulators and fleets of naval combat re-creations. However, that footnote may yet be expanded to a chapter. Recently the industry got hot on armored warfare again, and tank simulators have been steadily rolling off the production lines ever since.

Battlezone and Company

The first modern tank simulator was Atari's *Battlezone*, the game that blazed the path for the vast majority of subsequent simulations of tank warfare. In its original coin-op format, *Battlezone* employed "Quadrascan," Atari's vector-graphics system that rendered all objects as three-dimensional line drawings. Set in the year 1999, *Battlezone* pits the player, piloting a World War II tank, against a fleet of robotlike war machines that include tanks, supertanks, missiles and flying saucers.

What made *Battlezone* a classic, however, was its visual perspective: a never-before-seen cockpit viewpoint that put the player inside the tank. This perspective has been reprised many times





***Heavy Metal* for the IBM PC from Access Software**

since and is likely to remain the standard for tank simulators.

The next game to exploit the ground broken by *Battlezone* was Dynamix's excellent *Arctic Fox* (Electronic Arts). In many ways, *Arctic Fox* is an update of *Battlezone*; the player pilots a sophisticated tank on an ice world, where aliens are setting up a network of machines that will drain the planet of every last erg of energy. Once again the user has a cockpit viewpoint, but this time the tank is equipped with all manner of special equipment and weapons.

Arctic Fox blends first-rate graphics, solid-play values and a user-friendly, icon-based interface to produce a truly compelling game experience. It includes such special features as camera-mounted missiles that can be tracked, first-person style, from the cannon launch all the way to the point of impact.

Real Tanks

Neither *Battlezone* nor *Arctic Fox* was intended to be a tank simulator. Strictly speaking they are arcade games that employ vehicles based on real tanks.

The most recent upsurge of interest in tank games has centered around detailed simulators that reproduce every dimension of tank warfare. Tom Loughry's *Steel Thunder* (Accolade) and Dynamix's *Abrams Battle Tank* (Electronic Arts) are sophisticated re-creations of modern, mechanized combat vehicles set in the world's number-one hotspot for potential tank warfare: Germany.

Steel Thunder actually offers users several possible missions (based on difficulty) as well as a choice of tanks: the M1A1 Abrams, M60A3, M48A5 Patton and the hybrid M3 Bradley Fighting Vehicle. Each tank has advantages and drawbacks, depending on which scenario it is deployed in.

The M48A5 Patton is the ultimate version of the old standby, the M48 Patton Tank. Built in the '50s by Chrysler and Ford, they were used extensively in Vietnam. Approximately 2,000 mothballed M48s were refitted in the '70s into the M48A5 variation and received high marks from the Israelis, who sent them up against the Syrians' Russian-built tanks during the 1973 Yom Kippur War. This 54-ton monster cruises at 30 mph and has a 300-mile range and 4.8-inch cast-steel armor; its main cannon is a M68 105mm UK-built rifled gun.

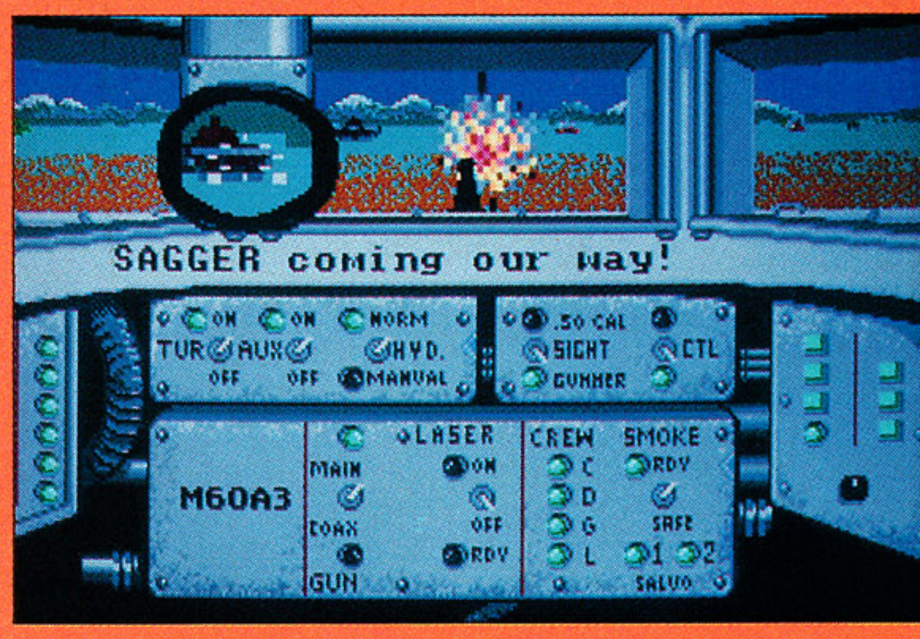
The M60A3 is also a modernized version of the M48 Patton, with similar specs to the M48A5, while the M1A1 Abrams is the current top gun in tank warfare. The Abrams is the hottest piece of mechanized artillery in the history of tank warfare. First built this decade by Chrysler,

***Steel Thunder* by Accolade**

the Abrams Battle Tank cruises at 45 mph, carries an XM256 120mm smooth-bore cannon as its main weapon and boasts ceramic-and-steel Chobham armor that can shrug off small rounds as if they were pebbles. It can even deflect shaped-charge warheads (HEAT rounds), making it all but invincible against infantry weapons. The M1 also features an incredible thermal-imaging system (for night vision) and excellent fire-stabilizing systems that allow it to fire while on the move (something that's all but impossible beyond point-blank range with other tanks).

The M3 Bradley Cavalry Fighting Vehicle (along with its sister tank, the M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle) was originally developed in 1972 to replace the M-113A1 armored personnel carriers. The M2/M3 series represents a new type of combat vehicle, part battlefield taxi and part lightweight tank. It cruises at 44 mph and has a 300-mile range and an M242 25mm Bushmaster chain gun.

These tanks feature an impressive variety



***Steel Thunder* by Accolade (IBM PC version shown)**

of weapons and defense systems. In addition to the main guns already mentioned, there are TOW-2 missile launchers, heavy machine guns, air-filter systems, smoke-screen generators and Halon fire-protection systems.

Before being entrusted with the sensitive task of defending the vital East-West German border, the player will have to prove himself by successfully negotiating a series of less crucial scenarios. *Steel Thunder* offers over 20 different missions in three major theaters of operation: Cuba, Syria and West Germany.

Steel Thunder breaks play into three stations: driver, gunner and commander, any of which may be assumed by the gamer at any time, with each station assigned specific functions and operations. There is also a crew member designated as a loader, but this station is always computer-operated. Of course, the user is only one person, so it is necessary to pick one's crew wisely. Crew members are therefore rated in vital skill areas.

Much of *Steel Thunder*'s on-screen display—each station has a similar but unique display screen—deals with the tank's extensive command consoles. Gauges, lights, switches, toggles and other controls and status indicators take up two-thirds of each screen, with the final third allotted to a trio of periscope windows through which the battlefield can be viewed.

Abrams Battle Tank offers a larger visual display and generally superior graphics, but is otherwise similar to *Steel Thunder* (after all, both simulate modern tank warfare). Again the user is placed in command of a state-of-

After class, Sam Bushnell will duel with a Ninja, defend his honor, become Shogun and rule feudal Japan.

Just for fun.

Sam's trying to keep his head. Literally. But in Sword of the Samurai, he's up to his neck in trouble.

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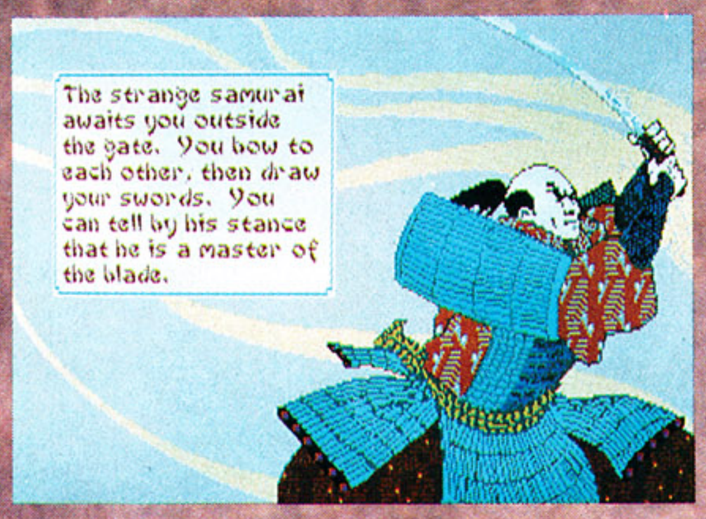
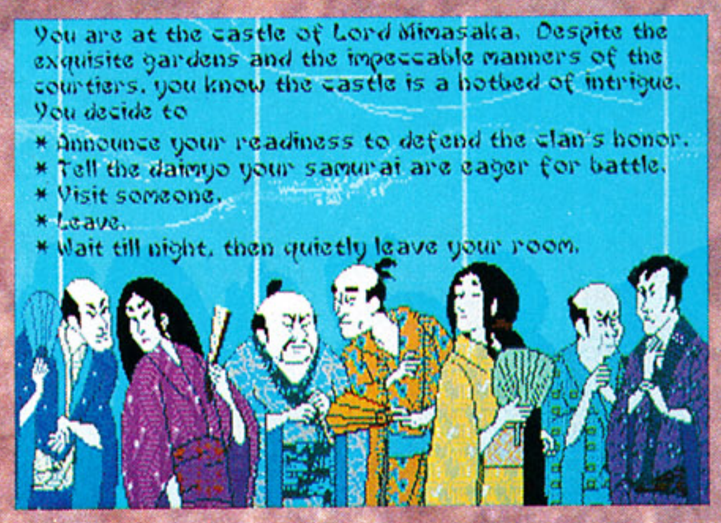


to achieving your ultimate goal: to become Shogun, ruler of the realm! But every step of the way, you'll be opposed by ambitious enemy Samurai, each of whom employs a different scheme to deceive and destroy you.

To survive, you'll need your wits as well as your weapons. You must outsmart clever political rivals who smile to your face, then work behind your back to blacken your reputation, kidnap your family or raise armies against you.

The action is fast and furious as you take on multiple warriors in darkened castles and remote villages. You'll also defend your honor one-on-one, using authentic Samurai swordplay against skilled opponents.

Sword of the Samurai has starting options for new players and four skill levels. A unique



system of menus and text windows will guide you in travel and bring each adventure to life. There's even a detailed political map to show you different provinces, each ruled by its own warlord.

All with authentic Japanese graphics and music, the smoothest animation, as well as the quick thinking and heart-racing action you've come to expect from MicroProse.

Remember, in Sword of the Samurai, there's more than your life at stake. There's your honor. So draw your sword and sharpen your wits!

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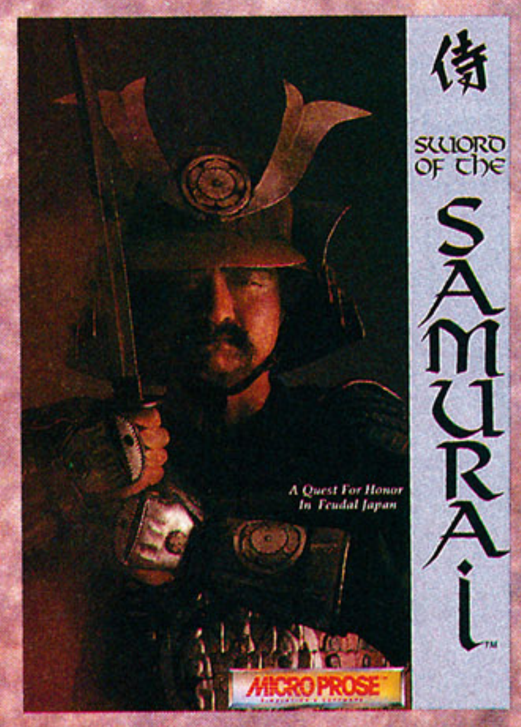

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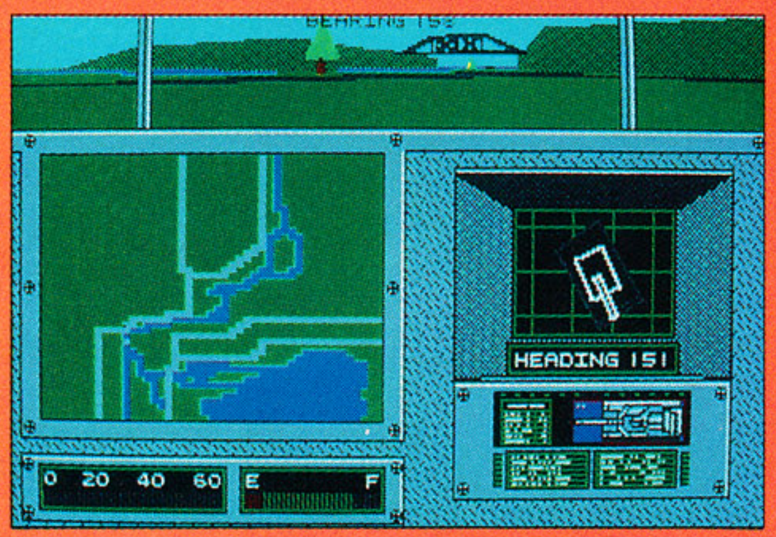
the-art armored combat vehicle and charged with a vital mission: Keep the Russian tanks from advancing on West Germany!

As the excellent documentation points out, when evaluating the relative merits of



Abrams Battle Tank on IBM PC

NATO vs. Russian tanks, it is a simple matter of quantity vs quality. Russian tanks outnumber NATO's by approximately 95,000 to 32,000, but NATO's war machines are far superior. Soviet tanks have inferior armor, poor weapon stabilization and no thermal-imaging equipment for night combat. On the other

Heavy Metal by Access

hand, their tanks are lighter and require only a three-man crew.

Abrams Battle Tank offers eight missions within the overall German scenario. In "The Moselle Defense," waves of Soviet tanks break through NATO defenses and head right for the Moselle River, the player's position. "Siegen Infiltration" deals with critical supply convoys from Essen that turn up missing in the Siegen area, leading to the conclusion that one or more Soviet bases have been established in the Siegen hills. In another scenario, a NATO base along the "Nuremberg Highway" has been cut off by Soviet interdiction forces, and the player must reopen the supply route.

"Mass Destruction" features the M1 base near the Ems River, which is surrounded on three sides by Soviet bases, leaving the M1 base open to attack. It's up to the player and his trusty M1 to take out all three Soviet bases. In "The Road to Bonn," the situation looks grim. Frankfurt has fallen, and intelligence reports a massive Soviet armored convoy on the way to Bonn. Needless to say, they must be stopped. "Hanover Push" pits the Abrams against a Russian base in Hanover; "Convoy" is an escort detail; and "The Moselle Intercept" is a rescue mission.

The missions can be conducted individually (with the user maintaining control over difficulty—novice, moderate or expert—and time of day) or as a campaign.

As in *Steel Thunder*, *Abrams Battle Tank* breaks down the action into three stations: gunner, driver and commander, each with its own separate screen. Users also have numerous options regarding armament and ammunition. The three basic types of tank ammo are all available: Sabot, HEAT and AX. Sabot rounds are armor-piercing and fin-stabilizing, with the sabot shell discarded upon firing, leaving a lethal, dartlike weapon to open up Russian tanks like sardine cans. HEAT (High Explosive Anti-Tank) rounds are explosive warheads shaped around a hollow cone. They're very effective against infantry, constructions and

FOR TANK STRATEGISTS. . .

Simulations of armored-fighting vehicles boast first-person perspective and real-time action. There's another group of tank-oriented games that appeals more to armchair Pattons than action aces.

Most games of this type take a little longer to learn, but they give computerists a chance to command large formations of lethal-tracked dreadnoughts in a wide variety of battle situations.

War gamers love tanks more than any other type of weapon, so it's not surprising that there are lots of military simulations in which AFVs are in the thick of the fire.

The North African campaign of World War II is a feast for compu-tankers. The wide open spaces put a premium on swift movement, cunning strategy and secure supply lines. The battles on the sands are often seesaw slugfests in which the player's forces will make rapid advances only to get pounded back by vicious counter attacks.

***Rommel* (SSG for all computer systems) has one of the best war-game interfaces ever designed, though it's by no means a simple game. Those with little or no previous war-gaming experience may find the streamlined rules of *Decision in the Desert* (MicroProse for Commodore 64), and *Tobruk* (The Software Toolworks) more attractive. The former title's fight-and-move play mechanic offers more of the visual excitement action gamers like than do orthodox military simulations.**

***Patton vs. Rommel* (Electronic Arts for Macintosh and IBM PC) is also a good bet for the casual war gamer, because Chris Crawford's outstanding design work makes the detailed simulation surprisingly simple to learn and play. The computer expertly handles either side in this D-Day re-creation, and George Patton and Erwin Rommel are available to counsel confused commanders.**

A pair of Gary Grigsby's tactical games, *Panzer Strike* and *Typhoon of Steel* (both SSI for Apple II and Commodore 64) cover tank combat involving all the major armies of World War II. These are essentially hex-grid-type war games for home computers and are definitely not for first-timers. Both share a feature hard-core war gamers always love: They can be used as construction kits to develop an endless array of variant and "what if?" scenarios.

Fans of Avalon Hill's nonelectronic *Panzerblitz* and *Squad Leader* will find the same microscopic accuracy in *T.A.C.* (Avalon Hill for Atari 8-bit and Commodore 64). This exhaustive simulation of small-unit combat offers tanks from the United States, Great Britain, Germany and the Soviet Union in five absorbing battles. Features like hidden movement, overruns and indirect fire help make this advanced simulation a "must have" for fans of military simulations.

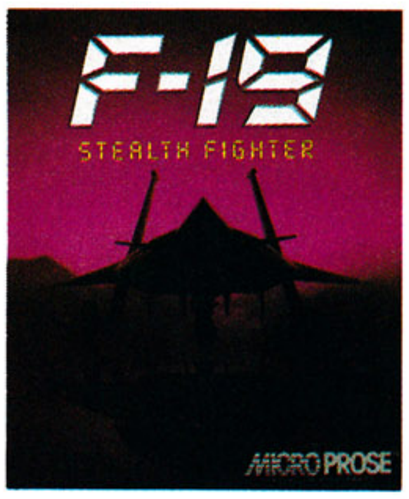
Treading the Future

***Ogre* (Origin Systems for all computers) is a brilliant translation of one of the decade's landmark military board games to the home computer. Outstanding artificial intelligence for solitaire sessions and an unusual assortment of weapons with which to counter the super-tanks of the future make *Ogre* a genuine classic in its field. It can challenge any compu-war gamer, but the introductory scenarios involve few units and are appropriate for less experienced generals.**

Stuart Marks' *Omega* (Origin Systems for all computers) is one of the most intellectually demanding games published in the last few years, but it's worth the study time if you're really hooked on tanks. As a member of the Omega project, the player must design the ultimate cyber-tank and then put it to the test in the heat of battle. Voluminous documentation, which is also profusely illustrated, leads users through the construction and testing process.

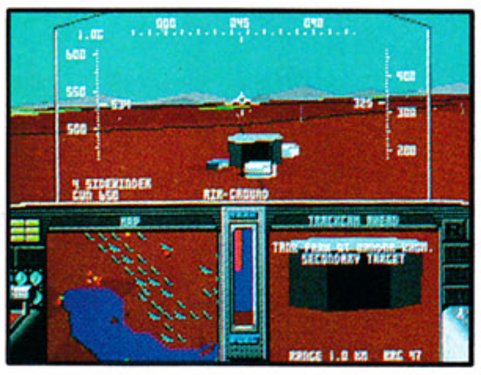
***Firezone* (PSS for Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64 and IBM PC) chronicles combat in the 22nd century between four warring superpowers. Tank weapons from the maneuverable grav tank to the mammoth leviathan fight for total domination of the Earth. There are other weapons besides AFVs in this hex-grid simulation, but they generally take the brunt of the battle.**

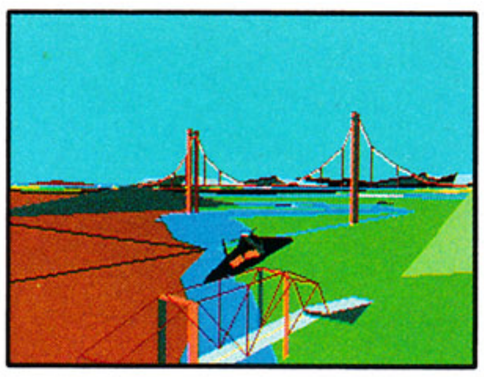
Press Escape.

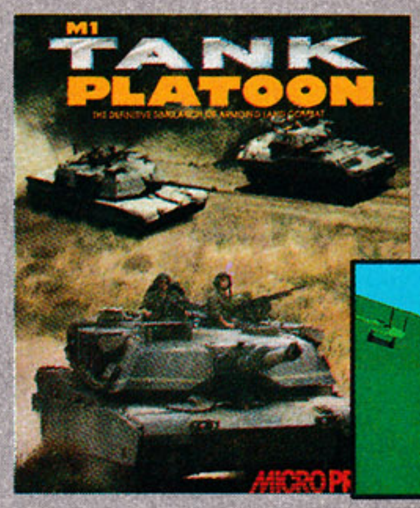


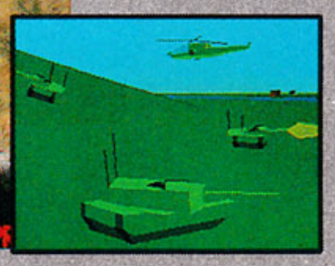
MicroProse builds the world's most reliable getaway vehicles. While other companies take you on dead-end trips to little fictional rectangles in the middle of nowhere, MicroProse authentically simulates the real-world places American forces might one day have to go.

Clandestine Getaway Vehicle: F-19 Stealth Fighter re-creates 250,000 square miles of Libya, Central Europe, the Persian Gulf, and the North Cape of Scandinavia. Real geography is one of the reasons the Software Publishers Association voted it Simulation of the Year.

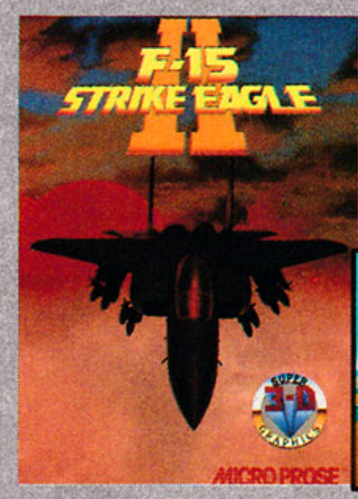


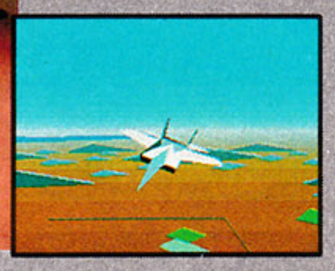




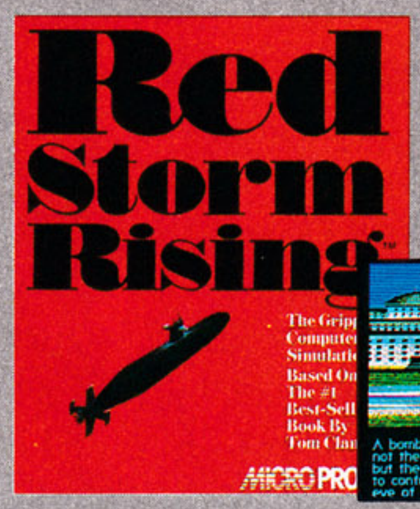


Armored Getaway Vehicle: M1 Tank Platoon puts you in charge of four Abrams tanks right where they were designed to be used — the rolling countryside of West Germany.





Dogfighting Getaway Vehicle: F-15 Strike Eagle II gives you the Middle East, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf and Libya. Plus, if you have F-19 Stealth Fighter you can transport F-15 II's dogfighting action to Central Europe and the North Cape of Scandinavia.



Underwater Getaway Vehicle: Red Storm Rising plunges you into the North Atlantic in a modern nuclear submarine. You'll stalk Soviet subs and surface ships from your base in Scotland, along the coast of Scandinavia, to the Soviet ports on the Barents Sea.

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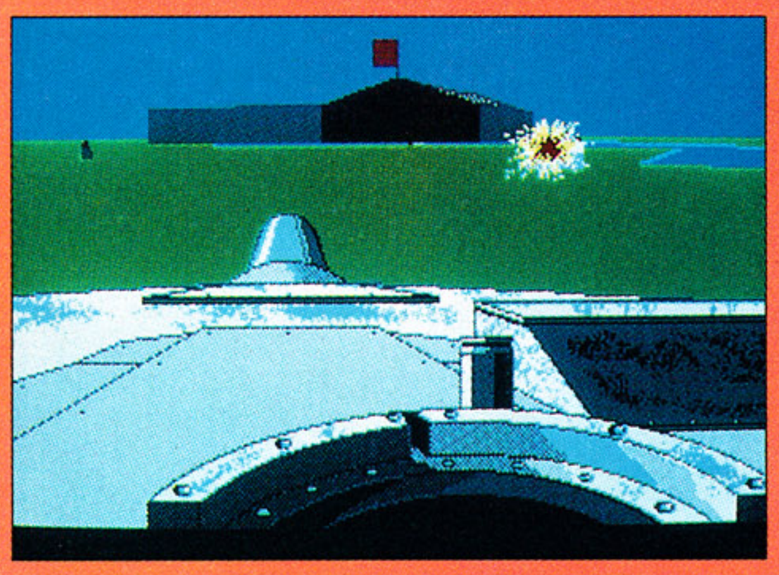


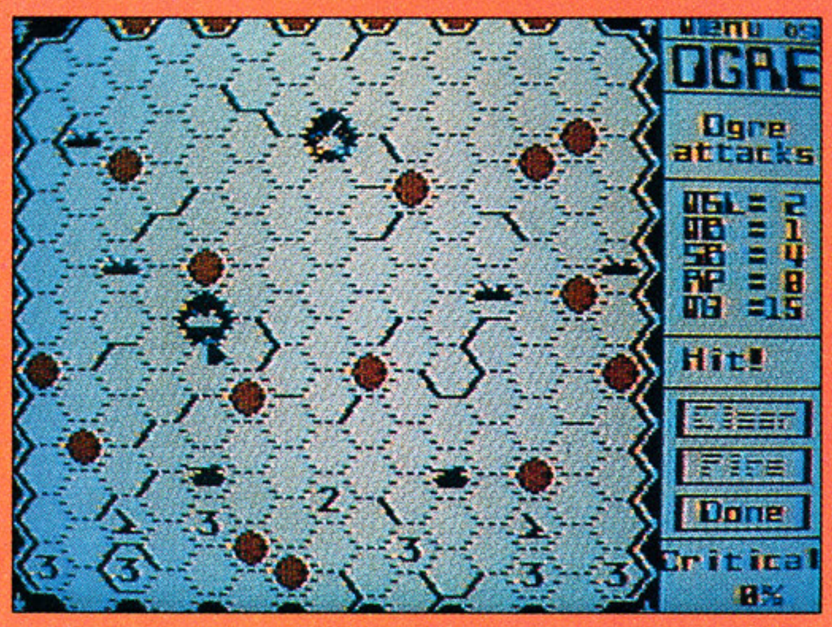
Abrams Battle Tank on IBM PC

armor. AX rounds are experimental anti-helicopter and anti-armor weapons that are useful against aircraft. They have some long-range effectiveness against armor, infantry and constructions, but they load slower than other types of rounds.

Other Tank Games

Some players may get off on the idea of driving an armored combat vehicle and blowing things up, but would rather not get into the minute details of mastering a tank simulator. These users have several programs to choose from .

Heavy Metal (Access) by Brent Erickson, Roger and Bruce Carver (design) and Doug Vandergrift (graphics) is a satisfying compromise between the arcade-style action of games like *Battlezone* and detailed simulators, such as *Abrams Battle Tank* and *Steel Thunder*. *Heavy Metal* begins by sending players to Officer's Training School (OTS) where they must qualify for a tank command by scoring a minimum of 5,000 points on each of three tank combat simulators. On this level, strategy and tactics are eschewed in favor of teaching the player how to operate the basic system and sharpen their aiming

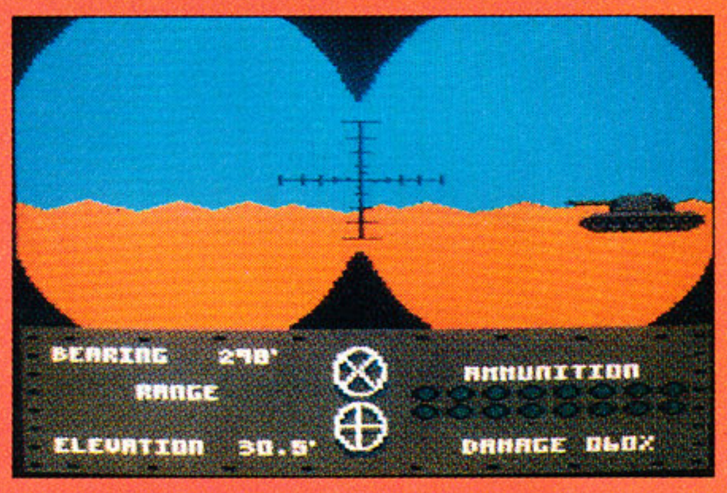


Ogre by Origin Systems

skills. The combat simulators offer basic arcade action, but once the user is promoted from cadet status, tactical commands become available.

At the Tactical Command level, the user has access to the Tactical Command Center (TACC). Here he can practice field command and advance in rank. The TACC screen offers crucial data on player and enemy strength, remaining ammo (the player has unlimited ammunition in the nontactical mode), fuel, etc., in addition to a topographical area map.

Heavy Metal again puts the user in command of the now-familiar M1A1 Abrams Main Battle Tank (MBT), complete with thermal imaging, laser range finder, a periscopic view (where targets are magnified and displayed), ammunition



Screens from *Tobruk* by Datasoft

options, smoke generators and other popular features. The visual display is devoted largely to the landscape, with only a small strip across the bottom of the screen taken up by the control console.

The game has one unique feature: the option of operating a Fast Attack Vehicle (FAV) instead of the M1A1. The XR311 FAV is basically a dune buggy armed with a TOW missile launcher. Though it possesses only modest armor protection (for the radiator and fuel tank), it can travel at speeds of nearly 100 mph and can climb a steep grade without losing momentum!

Other games that streamline the tank command process include MicroIllusions' *Fire Power* and SNK's *Tank III*. *Fire Power* is basically an updated version of capture the flag, with players selecting among several vehicles. The objectives are to rescue downed allies, capture enemy fuel depots and destroy anything else that stands in the way. *Tank III* is a pure arcade game, with the player's tank and scrolling landscape seen from a top-down perspective.

Coming Attractions

The popularity of tank simulators continues with two new major releases that may already be available by the time this issue appears. Combat-simulator kingpin MicroProse has the first tank-squadron simulator ready to roll. In it, the user will be able to jump from tank to tank during battle. Three-Sixty Software will introduce a World War II tank simulator in which the user can go up against the war machines of Rommel, the German army's vaunted Desert Fox.

Additionally, strategy-based games like Stuart B. Marks' *Omega* (Origin) [see sidebar] remain a viable gaming genre.

As everybody knows, once a tank gets rolling, it's tough to stop. Similarly, now that the trend toward simulated mobile-armored combat is moving forward, its momentum may make this genre unstoppable.

Sands of Fire, the entry from Three-Sixty Software, is different from most tank simulators in that it is set during World War II, allowing the user to engage in either a strategy or arcade re-creation of such classic North African battles as Tobruk and the Casserine Pass. The game, which offers users multiple viewpoints, will be available on both the Macintosh and IBM PC systems.

As usual, however, MicroProse should quickly move to the head of the class with its excellent _M1 Tank Platoon_. In it the user commands not just one tank, but a platoon of _four_ tanks, with free movement from tank to tank available throughout the game. Besides that, the user can personally command any of several support vehicles (such as helicopters) or simply call in air strikes from the ground.

Produced for IBM PC systems, the VGA version features stunning graphics (as does the EGA version, which uses dithering to overcome the visual limitations of that mode) and supports the Ad Lib sound board with a wide variety of sound effects.

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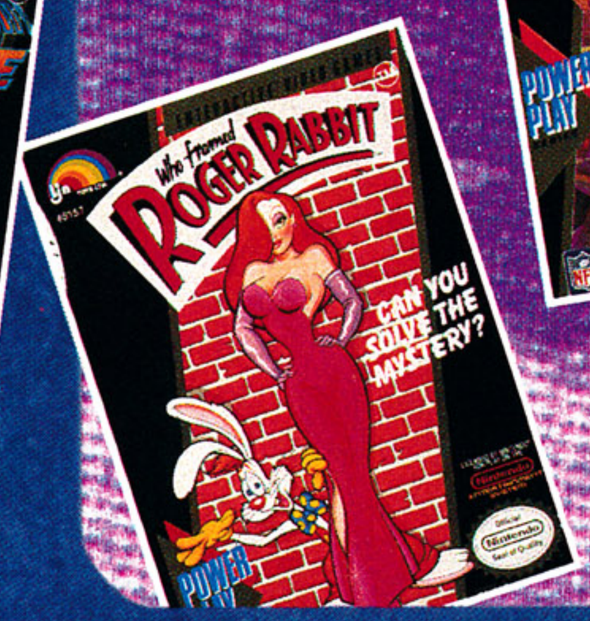

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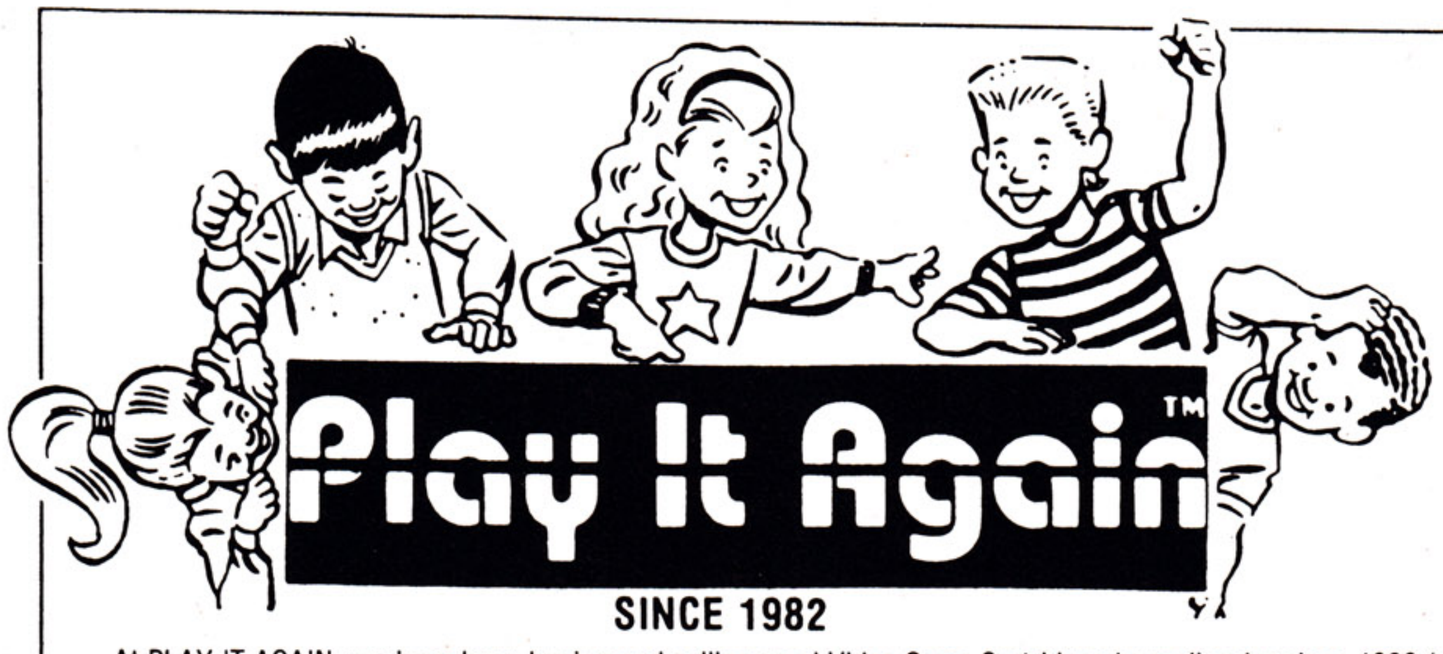

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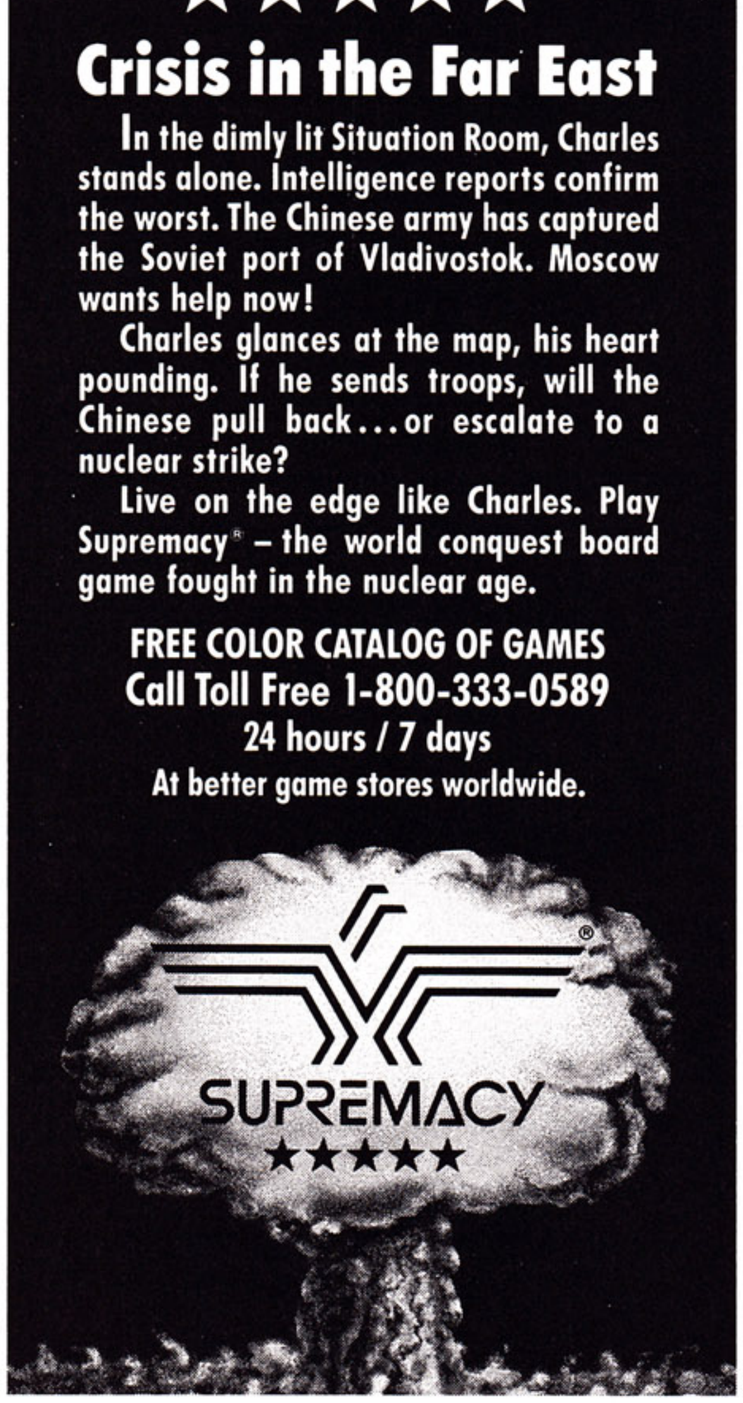

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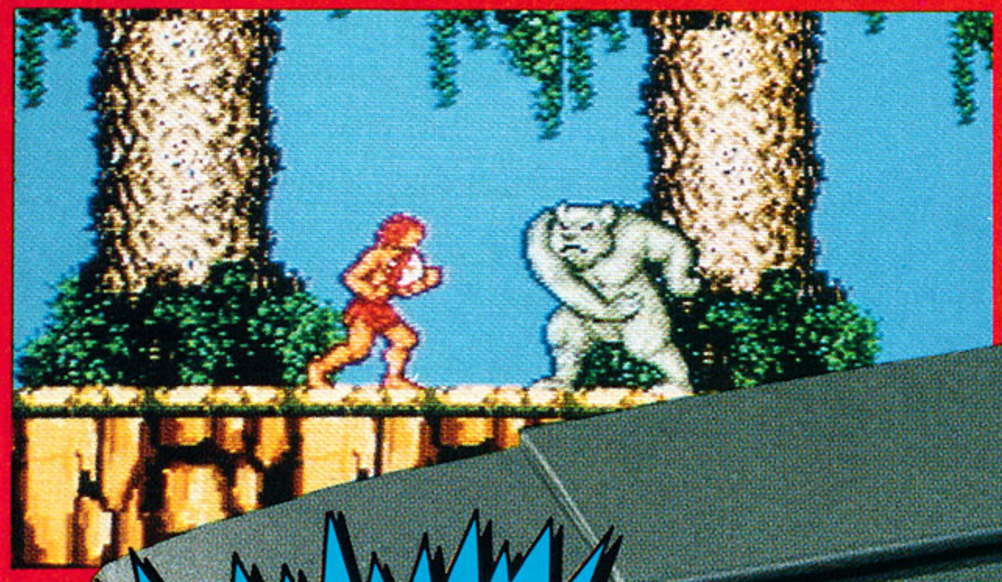

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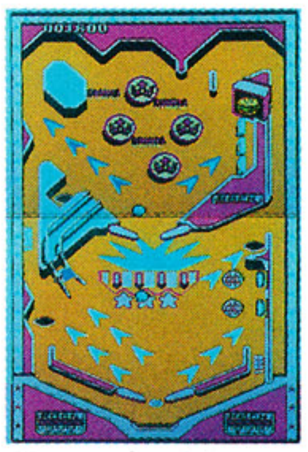

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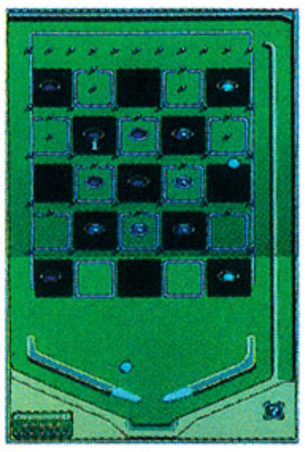

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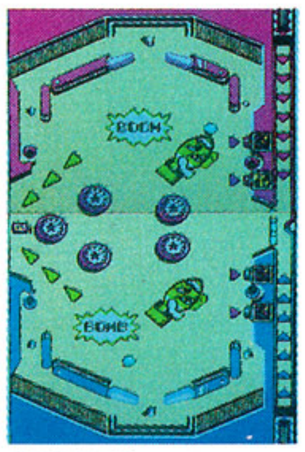

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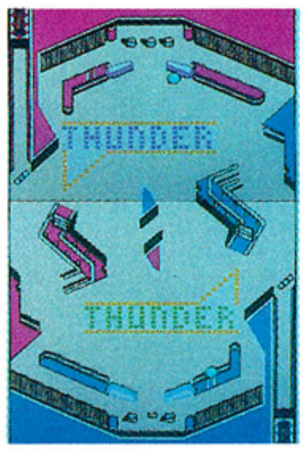

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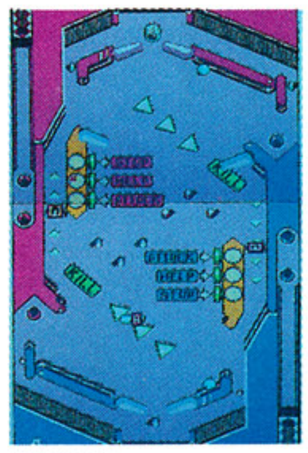

ATTACK
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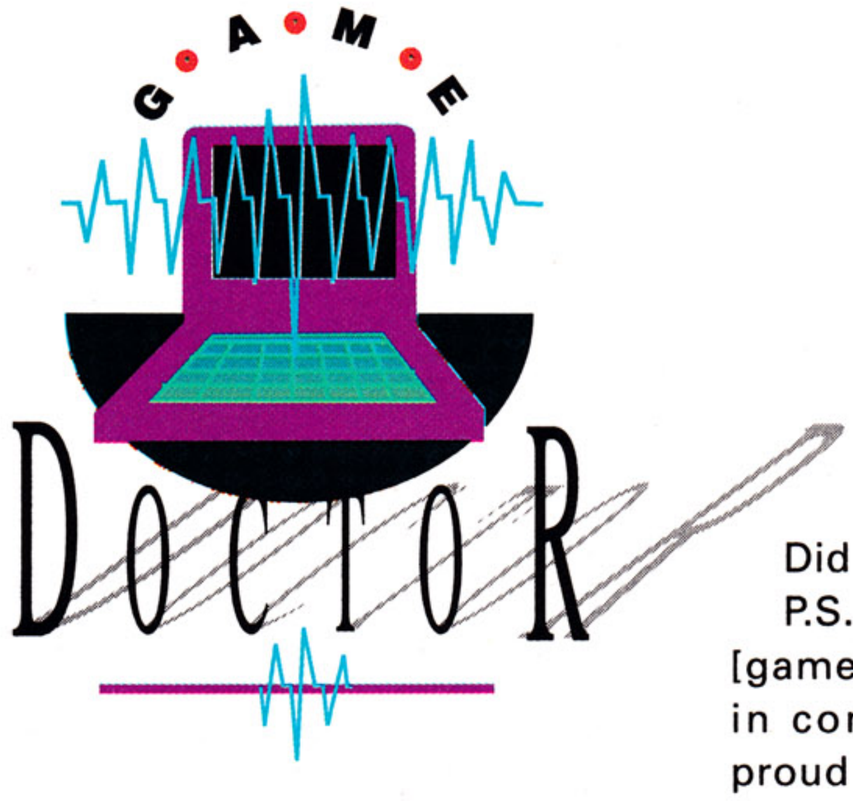

The Old Desert Rat Solves Your Gaming Problems

by
The Game Doctor

Greetings folks, from fabulous Las Vegas, new home of yours truly, the Game Doctor. Yes, the move is over, and I now find myself in the world of neon lights, showgirls and missing paychecks, enjoying the marvelous weather and frittering away my retirement money on slot machines and keno.

But don't worry, I haven't forgotten old business: specifically, we have a winner in that Name-the-Missing-Video-Game-System contest mentioned a few issues back. In case you missed it, the Doctor named every video-game system his no-longer-nimble brain could recall. At the time, however, one system was intentionally left out in hopes that some historically minded reader would fill in the gap.

The response to this little competition was, to say the least, overwhelming. Literally hundreds of entries have poured into my new office. I quickly decided that I would read the mail as it arrived, and the first reader with the correct answer would win the unstated prize. Believe it or not, of all the entries that have swamped us here in the game suite, so far we have only gotten one correct response. We'll continue to read all entries, of course, and mention any other correct guessers in future installments of *Game Doctor,* but the winner is, and will remain, Jayson Hill of Knoxville, Tennessee (one-time home of the Magnavox Odyssey!).

Jayson correctly tabbed the RCA Studio 2 as the missing system. This long-forgotten machine came up short when compared to the competition (for one thing, it was only a black-and-white system) and quickly disappeared from the scene. But Jayson remembered it; so he has won himself several pins, buttons, etc., from the Doc's own collection of video-game memorabilia.

Jayson also mentioned several other systems in his letter, and we'll discuss why those were not correct.

question

I'd like to undertake the challenge to name the video-game systems that you failed to mention in reply to a letter in your September 1989 column.

The RCA Studio 2 was released about the same time as the Channel F. The Emerson Arcadia was released around the time of the Atari 5200 and ColecoVision. The system known as Ultra-Vision was supposedly released, but I never saw it. The Atari XEGS, though really an 8-bit computer, was released as a game machine.

The last and most glaring omission was the Vectrex system by GCE/Milton Bradley. That system was truly outstanding and deserved a bigger following than it had.

Did I forget any?

P.S. I've enclosed a listing of my [game] collection. I'm sure it pales in comparison to yours, but I'm proud of it.

—Jayson Hill
Knoxville, Tennessee

answer

And the Doc is proud of you, Jayson. But let's take care of some of your other guesses, which reflect the answers given by the majority of other contestants.

The Emerson Arcadia was originally released as the Arcadia 2001, which I mentioned, and as you say, the Atari XEGS was really just the XE computer in a slightly revamped package. The Ultra-Vision system was never even built, to my knowledge. The Doc personally attended both the New York press conferences scheduled to announce this dream system (which included a built-in chair equipped with joysticks, stereo headphones, etc.), and at both shows the Ultra-Vision was a no-show.

Now to the system most frequently mentioned by contestants, the GCE Vectrex. The Vectrex was/is, as Jayson notes, a marvelous game system. Unlike other video games, the Vectrex does not use raster-scan technology (which all television sets employ), but a system known as "vector graphics." Vector systems produce incredibly bright and evenly illuminated lines but don't fill in areas with color. Instead, objects take on a crystalline, three-dimensional look. Classic coin-op games that used this technology include *Asteroids*, *Star Hawk*, *Star Castle* and *Battlezone*.

However, using the standards

and categories created back in *Electronic Games* magazine earlier this decade, the Vectrex is not considered a video-game system for one simple reason: It doesn't hook up to a TV set. It is therefore classified as a "stand-alone" or self-contained system, just like a Fidelity Chess Challenger or a hand-held system like Nintendo's Game Boy (which would be further subclassified as a "hand-held stand-alone").

Let's also look at some other systems that might have been included. The View-Master Interactive Vision system uses a combination of videotape and video-game technology to create a different kind of game system, similar to the *Captain Power* game of a few years back. Adventure Vision was, like the Vectrex, a stand-alone. The Coleco Gemini was an Atari 2600 adapter for ColecoVision. Other systems, like the Famicom (Japan's version of the Nintendo Entertainment System), don't count until they're actually released in this country.

In any case, Jayson was the first reader to name both the Vectrex and the Studio 2, so he's our winner. Your prize package is on the way, Jayson—and that's some collection of games you've got there!

question

In regards to the multitude of *Pong*-type game systems made in the early to mid-'70s, did you ever see the Atari Video Pinball Model C-380 that not only played an early version of Atari's *Video Pinball*, but also played the first home version of *Breakout* that I'm aware of?

I hope my list jogged your memory. The old days of video games are still the best!

—Robert Burtt
Annandale, Virginia

answer

Loved your letter, Robert! The list Robert is referring to contained several systems that I've already dealt with (Vectrex, UltraVision, Coleco Gemini, Atari XE, etc.) and one that I haven't: the Coleco Telstar Arcade, which used triangular cartridges and also boasted, as I recall, a light gun and steering wheel.

To the best of my knowledge, however, despite its use of cartridges, the Telstar was a dedicated, rather than a programmable, game system. I'm certainly willing to listen to other opinions on this subject and, at least provisionally, I'm going to give Robert an honorable mention. If he sends me his T-shirt size, I'll send along something from the Doc's collection. Same deal goes for Jayson.

As for that Atari Video Pinball system, the Doc did indeed have one—got it on sale after the dedicated systems were all dumped for around $12—and it was great! Played the best home video-pinball game of its era and did indeed boast the first home appearance of *Breakout.*

The Doc also got tons of letters from people begging him to set them straight on which of the new 16-bit video-game systems is "best." As you should all know by now, different systems are "best" for different people, and both the TurboGrafx-16 and Genesis systems have strengths and weaknesses. There are, however, several wildcards in this deck, and the Doc will be very surprised if at least one new player doesn't enter the market by summer with yet another 16-bit game player.

That player is not likely to be Nintendo, however. Nintendo made the decision to hold back their 16-bit system, the Super Famicom, from the U.S. market, though it is already available in Japan. Remember, the NES was around for quite a while in Japan before it crossed the Pacific, and Nintendo is not looking to cut the throat of this still vastly profitable system, especially with Game Boy doing fairly well. Then again, if either or both of the new 16-bit systems really takes off, will Nintendo sit by idly and risk losing a foothold on the next generation of gaming technology?

The Doc has never had much patience with the wait-and-see mentality that keeps so many people from enjoying electronic entertainment. In cutting-edge, technology-driven fields like this, there is always a better, cheaper system waiting around the corner, but what about all the great games you're missing now? Nevertheless, this 16-bit video-game market is still in flux; so if after checking out the existing systems you don't feel a great affinity for any, it might pay to stick with your existing system for another month or two and see what shakes out.

Quickie Q&As—**Numerous readers from both the U.S. and abroad have asked about the wisdom of purchasing game systems from another country. The Doc doesn't advise it for several reasons, primarily the difference between conventional U.S. broadcast standards and the superior European PAL system. As for those VG&CE readers just dying to buy a Super Famicom: Even if you could play it, it's going to be mighty tough buying new games. And unless you can read Japanese, deciphering the instructions may prove more challenging than the game itself. Then of course there's the question of servicing and repairs. On the whole, it'd probably be easier to move to Japan.**

On a similar front, several readers, including Eric Jolley of West Valley City, Utah, wonder why video-game consoles tend to get larger when they come to the U.S. This is a very intelligent observation, but the difference in the casings between the original PC Engine and its U.S. incarnation are, for the most part, cosmetic. With the exception of the different video output and the possible exception of the CD interface, the innards of both machines are basically identical. Unpredictable marketing and manufacturing considerations led to the alterations in the external presentation.

And as the sun sets behind Mt. Charleston, it's about time for the Doc to wander over to the hot tub and soak his cramped typing fingers. Remember to keep sending all those Qs: The Game Doctor, 330 South Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107.

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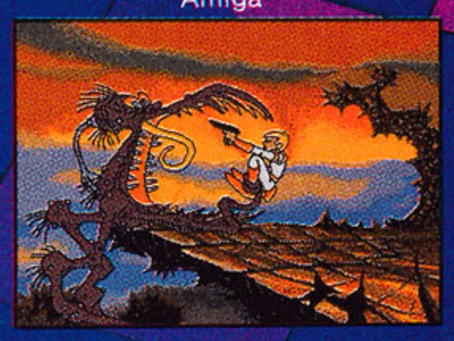

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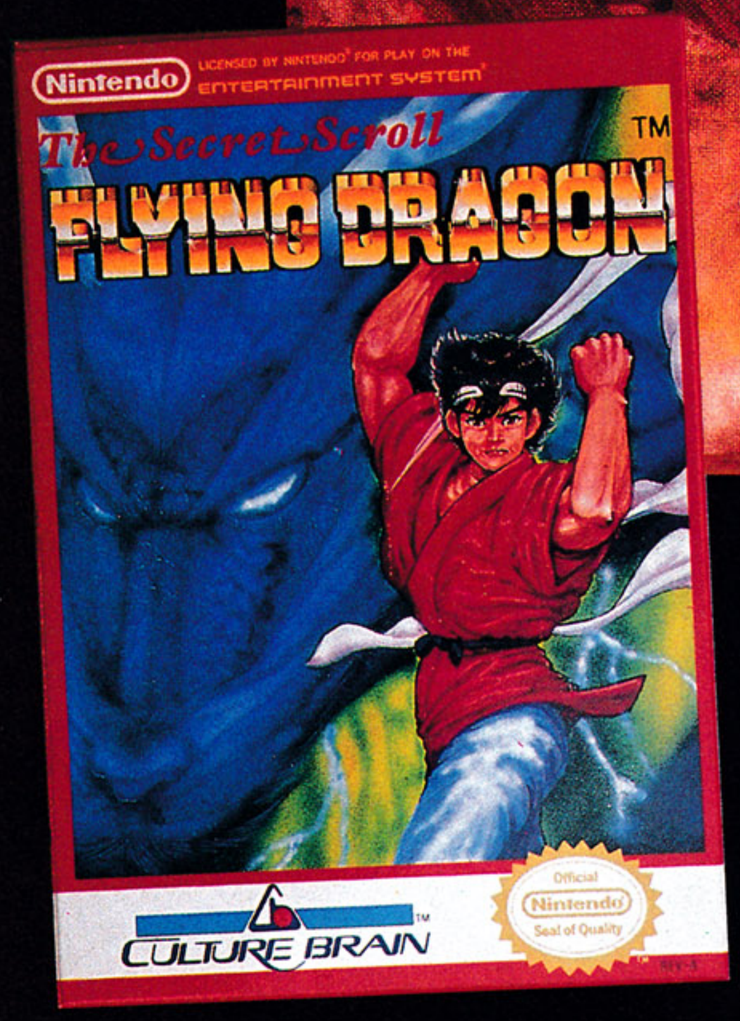

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INSIDE

GAMING

Calling All Gamers!

by Arnie Katz

(Writer, editor, lecturer and game designer Arnie Katz knows the field from every perspective. Each month, his column takes readers inside the world of video and computer games. This month, Arnie tackles the question of why computer gaming isn't growing fast and what typical gamers can do about it.)

Did you see the big network TV special about computer games last night? How about that best-selling book? Get the autograph of your favorite designer at the national electronic-games convention? It's safe to say that your answer to all of these questions was most likely an unhesitating "No!"

There's a good reason for my certainty. None of this stuff has happened yet nor is it likely to materialize in the foreseeable future. This news probably comes as no surprise to the knowledgeable readers of this esteemed publication. On the other hand, the current state of the entertainment-software universe would shock a compu-gaming Rip Van Winkle.

Someone who passed out after a heavy New Year's Eve party in 1980 and revived just in time to attend one of 1990's end-of-the-decade bashes would want to ask the computer community some embarrassing questions that all boil down to one big stumper: Why don't more people love computer games?

The future of home-computer games looked so promising at the start of the decade. There has been progress, to be sure, but where is the much-predicted breakthrough to the mass market?

The public's interest in computer games rose, fell and rose again during the decade and it's been more like a back-and-forth shuffle than a steady climb to higher ground. The percentage of Americans who regularly play computer games is only slightly higher today than it was in 1981 when Bill Kunkel, Joyce Worley and I assembled the first issue of *Electronic Games* magazine.

The easy answer is that playing electronic games is a sophisticated pastime that only a sliver of the population can understand, appreciate and enjoy. We heard this reasoning quite often at industry meetings in the mid-'80s. It was bull then and it is bull now. Thankfully, no one has been able to say it with a straight face since Nintendo ignited the video-game renaissance. It took that Japanese gamemaker about two-and-a-half years to match, and then surpass, the market penetration of home computers. And that doesn't even count the sales garnered by Atari, Sega and now NEC. It's enough to give an avid computer gamer an inferiority complex.

What's Wrong With Home Computing?

A book could be written to explain the slow growth of computerized entertainment, but there are five factors that stand out as the major reasons for the lack of mass acceptance:

- *Computerphobia*—Before someone can become a computer gamer, they first must have a computer. Despite the widespread use of computers in every phase of society, there is still a surprising number of people who have no personal hands-on experience with a desktop machine. They have not made the leap from owning a microwave oven with microprocessor control or using a computer at work to the idea that having a machine at home would be worthwhile, even fun.

Frankly, this is something that's outside the control of the leisure-software publishers. The hardware can't win wide acceptance until a manufacturer offers a truly user-friendly appliance unit at a reasonable price. The Macintosh satisfies the first condition, the IBM PC and compatibles fulfill the second, but no brand covers it all adequately. Until they do, don't expect to find a computer in 50% or more of U.S. homes.

- *Lack of customer support for hardware*—Tried to get a Commodore disk drive repaired lately? Or how about an ST? Macintosh and IBM PC service facilities are plentiful, at least in major metropolitan areas, but too many computers gather dust for want of skilled repair. When a computer can be repaired as conveniently as a television or refrigerator, the public may start to feel differently about computers.

- *The dominance of form over content*—Technology is so important in computing that publishers frequently give super-techies free reign in the design and development

of games. Many aren't really gamers--they want to show how well they can make those chips dance the polka. The goal of creating a compelling interactive-play experience is easily lost in a miasma of bells and whistles.

• *Piracy*—The software black market undermines the industry's economic base. By keeping paid sales artificially low, program theft prevents publishers from spending money on research and development. It also depresses the return to game creators, making it harder for designers to earn enough to keep them working full time. George Lucas couldn't have done *Star Wars* if he had had to divide his energies between filmmaking and a full-time job.

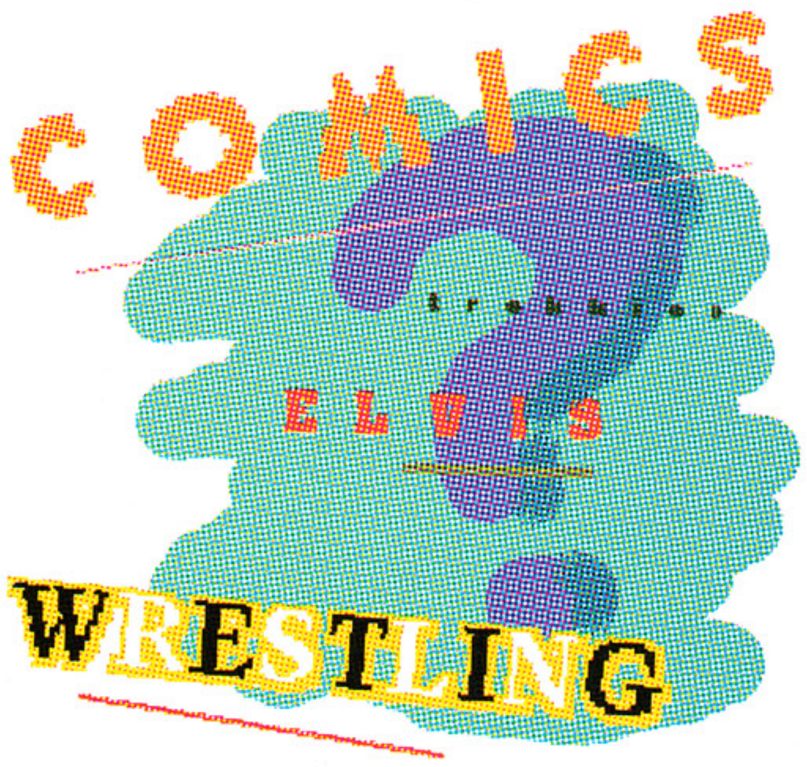
• *Stone-Age retailing*—Stores merchandise software better than they did five years ago, but there's still a long way to go. Computer specialty stores in particular ought to check out how similar outlets in other fields conduct business. Where else can you buy an item for $50 and not even get an advance peek? I can understand why store owners don't want to pay clerks to show off budgetware, but surely someone buying "top shelf" products ought to be able to see a little of what's inside the box.

We Can Make It Better

Now is the time to come to the aid of your hobby—and have a lot of fun doing it. If we stop being the silent minority, our increased visibility will excite the interest of many who simply haven't been motivated to try electronic gaming yet.

Game-lovers can't manufacture friendlier computers in their basements or directly solve the other problems. However, a vocal hobby group could focus the attention of those who can do something about serving the needs of gamers.

Let's look at what other groups do to promote and strengthen their hobbies. Don't imagine that computer gaming's growing pains are unique. This story has been told, with minute variations, many times. Science fiction was once a sliver of trash literature read by a few grubby bohemians. Today, science fiction permeates every aspect of the arts and media. Comic books were once branded the passion of dullwitted children and the cause of juvenile delinquency. Now, graphic novels like *Watchmen* chalk up megasales, and *Batman* is on its way to becoming the most-watched movie of all time.



Computer gaming is in roughly the same position today that science fiction held in 1930 or comic books in 1950. A lot of people write regularly to the professional computer magazines, but there is no mechanism for these people to contact each other. The answer for these two interest groups was to get people writing and talking about their hobbies, meeting each other in clubs and conventions, and generally creating rallying points for like-minded individuals.

And don't tell me about user groups. These are fine organizations to be sure, but they are not gaming groups. User groups are for computer hobbyists; we need ways for electronic gamers to express their enthusiasm and feel others' excitement.

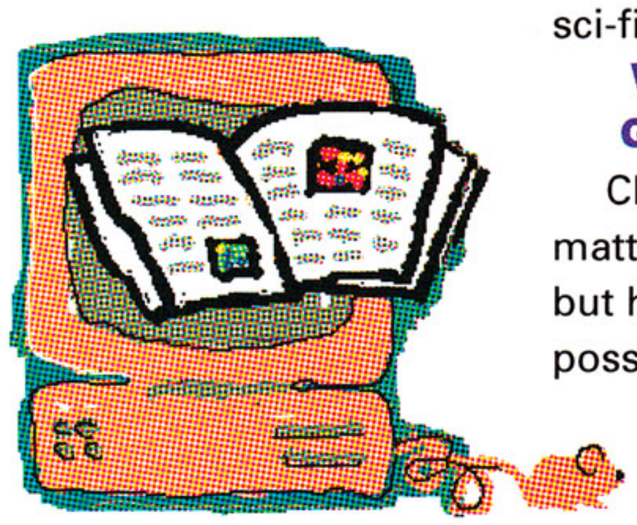
Computer-gaming fandom does not exist, but we—all of us who love these games—could make it happen almost overnight. No hobby group has ever been in a better position to build a fandom than computer gamers. Consider our advantages:

• We are all literate. Anything pro-wrestling or monster-movie fanatics can do, we can do better.

• Unlike science fiction and other hobbies previously mentioned, computer gaming is interactive; we aren't a passive audience. That ought to make it easier for fans to break out of their isolation and do something positive.

• Computer gamers all own or have access to a computer, which can be used to write, duplicate and distribute materials to other hobbyists.

• Desktop publishing, available to every computer owner, removes the drudgery of doing small-circulation publications. Try writing on a manual typewriter and reproducing the publication with a hectograph if you want an idea of how things stood in sci-fi fandom in 1935.



What Do Computer Gaming Fans Do?

Choice of activities is a matter of personal taste, but here are a couple of possibilities:

• *Publish an electronic-gaming fanzine*—Ever wish you could share your thoughts with other gamers? You can, by producing a small newsletter or magazine. Sure, it won't look as fancy as VG&CE or have a six-figure circulation, but presenting your ideas to 50 to 200 hardcore, knowledgeable gamers can be very rewarding, and it isn't prohibitively expensive, either. You can review games, talk about your favorites, interview designers and programmers, print cartoons about gaming and anything else you want. After all, it will be your magazine.

You can also trade your fanzine for other publications, written contributions from other fans or

Continued on page 111

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COMPUTER GAME REVIEWS

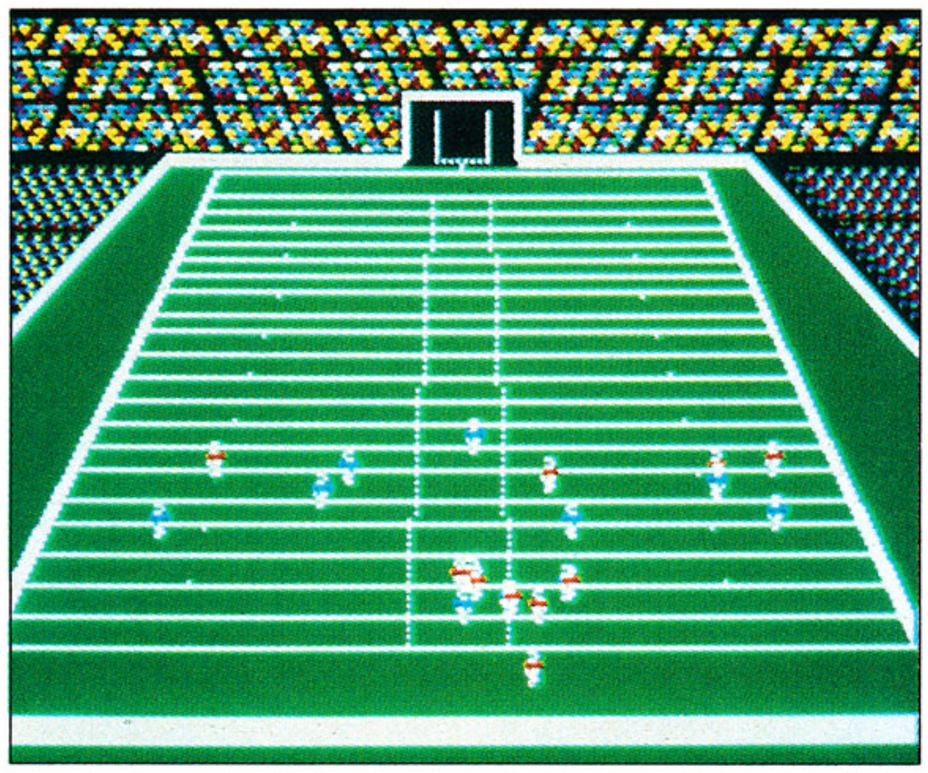
John Madden Football

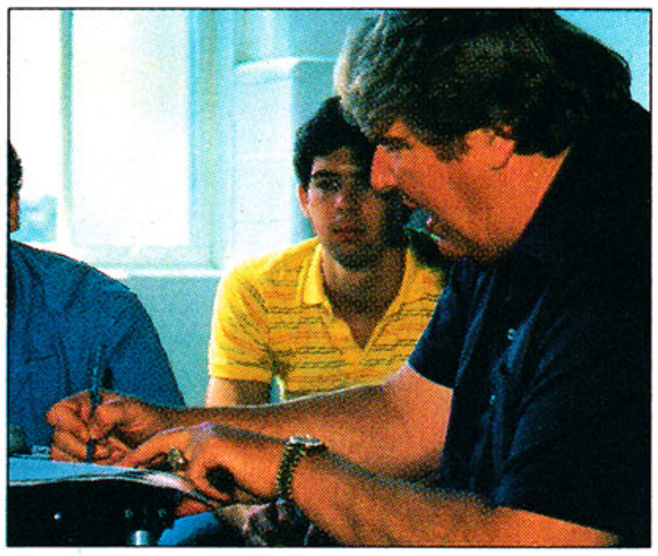
ELECTRONIC ARTS
Versions: Apple II Series, IBM PC ($49.95)
1987-88 NFLPA Players Disk for IBM PC ($24.95) and Apple II Series ($29.95)

John Madden Football, by Robin Antonick and John Madden, is an expert-system gridiron simulation that gives the user a unique insight into pigskin strategy and tactics. The IBM PC version represents an extensive redesign from the Apple II version of the same game released last year. The new program is much easier to play, but will still present a major challenge to all but the most hard-core football fanatics.

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	6
Graphics	8
Playability	7
Overall	7

John Madden Football contains loads of options to increase your gridiron enjoyment.



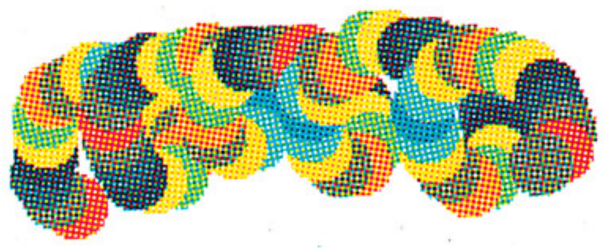


Positioned as a companion piece to Eddie Dombrower's *Earl Weaver Baseball* (EA), it is immediately obvious that, despite their comparable popularity, there is a major difference between baseball and football. Whereas anyone who grew up watching and playing baseball is intimately familiar with its rules and protocols, very few people really understand the intricacies of the gridiron. Even regular viewers often miss the distinction between the 3-4 and 4-3 defenses, which side is the "weak" side and what the "chalkboard" really means. Football professionals study thick playbooks full of variations, flexes and red dogs, but most gamers will not want to commit similar amounts of time to playing a football simulation.

None of this is intended as criticism of *John Madden Football*, which is actually something of a dream program for pigskin partisans. But this complex simulation is simply far beyond the skill or interest of the average sports fan and sports gamer. And unlike *Earl Weaver*, which is satisfying even when played in an arcade mode, as an action football game, John Madden still demands a tremendous amount of strategic input from the user. The only difference is that the gamer enters the "H" or "Hero" command just before the snap and thereafter takes direct joystick or keyboard control over the ball carrier. There is also an "umph bar" which gives players a sudden, but brief, burst of speed. Otherwise, the game operates in a default statistical/strategic mode.

That said, this is a football simulation that takes everything into account. The 11-on-11 contest includes: field conditions, weather, injuries, fatigue, substitutions, player ratings and much more. Strategic options include such subtleties as ordering the strong safety to "cheat up" in order to be stronger against the run-on defense and post-snap audibles when in possession of the ball. The coach can even assign "group tasks" like run blocking, pass blocking, traps and kicks, for example. *John Madden Football* allows users to practice individual plays in isolation and offers a chalkboard mode with editing functions plus a play editor that lets the user/coach see how a play will look against any given opposition.

Madden's distinctive personality is also on view and not just in the chalkboard feature. Even the selection of available teams, show the coach's unique tastes and predilections. There are the All-Maddens, fictitious all-stars based on John's favorite models; the Ringers, based on the '70s Steelers; and Oakland, inspired by Madden's '69-'78 Raiders). The entire game shows Madden's fingerprints, and serious fans will delight in many of them.



Continued on page 112

Computer art by Cameron

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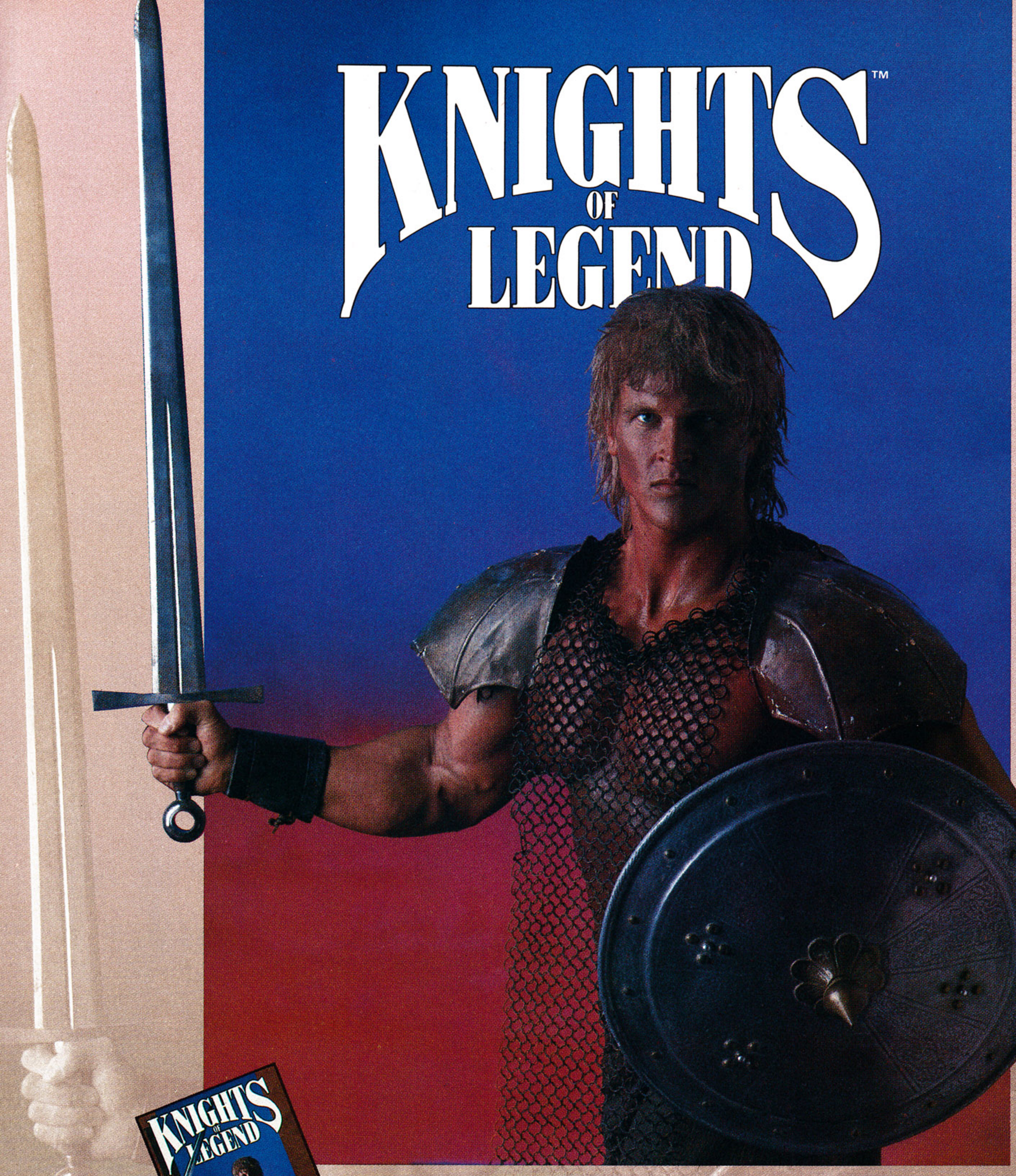

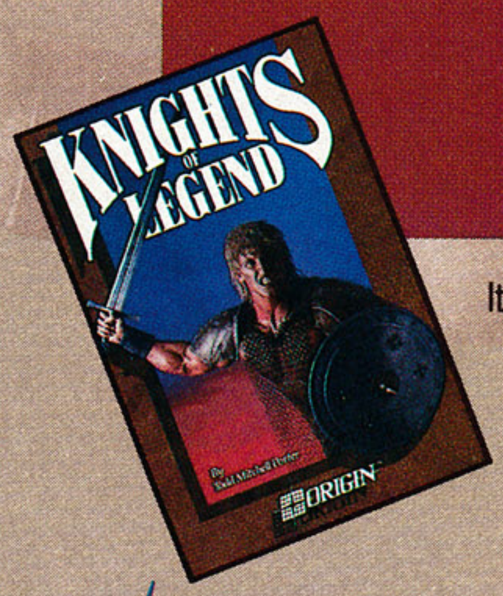

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Continued from page 106

readers' letters of comment. Most fanzines for other hobbies even sell a few copies to partially offset postage costs.

There's no reason for video gamers and arcadiacs to feel left out of the fun. All electronic gamers are siblings, and fandom is big enough to accommodate everyone with an interest in electronic gaming. A fanzine can be written on a typewriter and copied using cheap photocopying or offset.

• *Start an electronic-gaming club*—Put notices on BBSs and your school, college or local area. You'll meet a lot of interesting people and get into some good gaming. A club can do things that are beyond the reach of solo gamers, like invite guest speakers to meetings, stage competitions and hold conventions.

Once there is a network of local clubs and fanzines, the hobby can look into such goodies as a Gaming Amateur Press Society and even a National Electronic Gaming Convention, complete with company-sponsored exhibits. Every other hobby has these things, and ours can too.

Let's Get Started

The first step is always the hardest. With the permission of my esteemed Editor, I'd like to make the first one a little easier. Here's what I propose:

If you produce an electronic-gaming fanzine, send it to me and I'll review the ones I get in a near-future issue so other fans will hear about your effort. Remember, VG&CE has a three-month lead time—the time it takes to get an issue to the newsstands—so please be patient.

If you start a local club, send me the information. I'll announce any clubs and pass the data directly to anyone in your area who's looking for one to join.

Send those fanzines and club announcements to: Arnie Katz, 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107. If you have questions, I'll try to answer the most frequently asked ones in a near-future issue of VG&CE.

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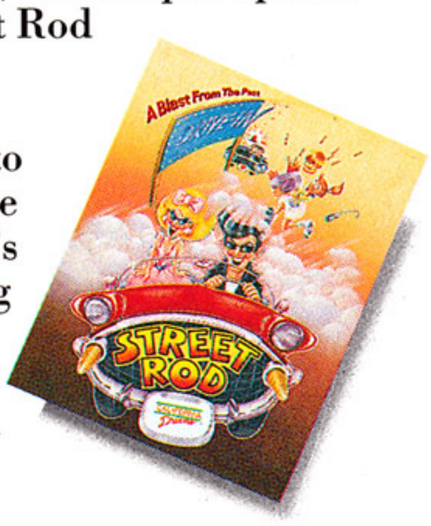

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Continued from page 108

The area where the game skimps, however, is in sound and graphics. The visual display is a crude, top-down view appearing at the bottom of a screen that would've looked dated five years ago. Obviously, Madden's personal priorities were with the meat and potatoes of strategy and tactics, but from the user's point of view, the game has a bleak, almost remote look that simply does not invite more play.

Well, as Madden himself has said about this game: "It should be sophisticated. When someone's afraid of something, they always use the words, 'Keep it simple.' All that means is, 'Man, I'm scared to death.' If you're doing it for simple people, then others are going to be bored. It has to be challenging."

Okay, Coach, I'll admit it: Man, I'm scared to death! For real he-man football fans, however, *John Madden Football* is the tightest, most accurate strategic simulation available.

(1987-88 NFLPA Players Disks will soon be available for both the MS-DOS and Apple II versions.)

—Bill Kunkel

Electronic Arts, 1820 Gateway Dr.,
San Mateo, CA 94404; (415) 572-ARTS.

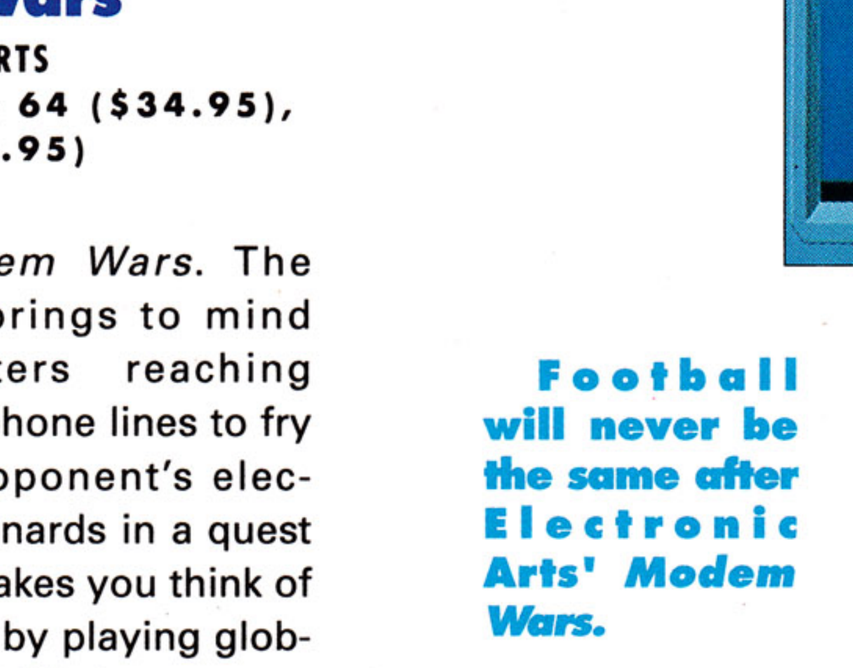
Modem Wars

ELECTRONIC ARTS
Versions: Commodore 64 ($34.95), IBM PC ($39.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	6
Graphics	8
Playability	7
Overall	7

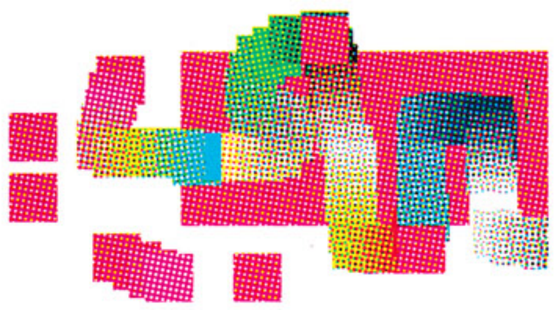
Modem Wars. The name brings to mind computers reaching across phone lines to fry their opponent's electronic innards in a quest for victory. Or maybe it makes you think of a teenager starting WWIII by playing global thermonuclear war with his home computer, as seen in the movie *Wargames*.

These ideas are a little far out, but playing by modem is daily becoming more popular, and Electronic Arts is trying to tap this new genre with their latest release by the veteran Dan "*Seven Cities of Gold; Robot Rascals*" Bunten.

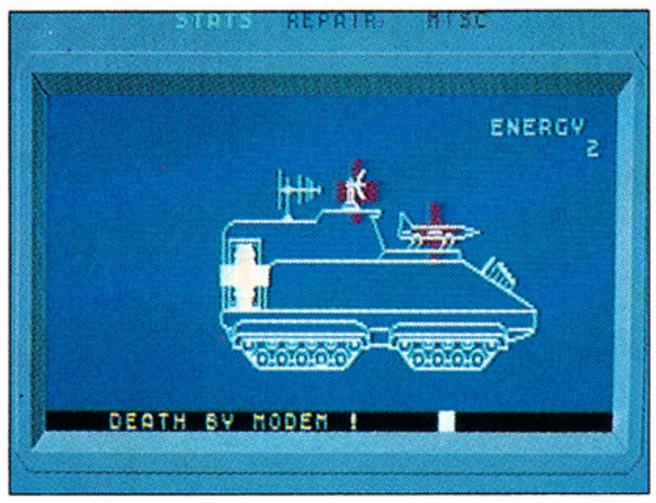


Modem Wars has its roots in the modern-day game of football.

According to the documentation, the end of the 21st Century finally saw the signing of the Global Peace Agreement banning all forms of violence. To "take up the slack," football became more intense. Armor and bionics replaced helmets and pads, penalties for personal fouls were removed from the rule books and knocking out the quarterback became the real way to win.



In response, the Global Football League replaced all the players except for the quarterback with armed robots and renamed the game "The Sport of War." This high-intensity violence drew more people than all the other sports combined, and soon the Global War League constructed massive stadiums with multiform turf to allow larger battles on a wide variety of terrain. Elite quarterbacks could make outrageous salaries for successfully directing their troops from inside the relative safety of high-tech mobile command centers.



Football will never be the same after Electronic Arts' *Modem Wars*.

Each game begins with the initial setup phase. Seven predesigned scenarios are available, ranging from the football-like scrimmage, all the way up to the massive full war. Each player sets up on his own half of the field, and the fast-paced game begins. There are no breaks between plays, and time marches on. This isn't too much of a burden on the computerist, however, because only the final destination of a unit needs to be set. The units move and fight automatically.

The game continues until the pre-specified timer runs out or one of the opposing ComCens is destroyed. While destroying an opponent's command center produces a great feeling, most games are determined by the actual points scored. The post-game period features an option to watch the game film, which shows the actions of both sides during the game. It provides a good insight into what the other side was doing during play and can be very enlightening.

Various scoring strategies exist, and the

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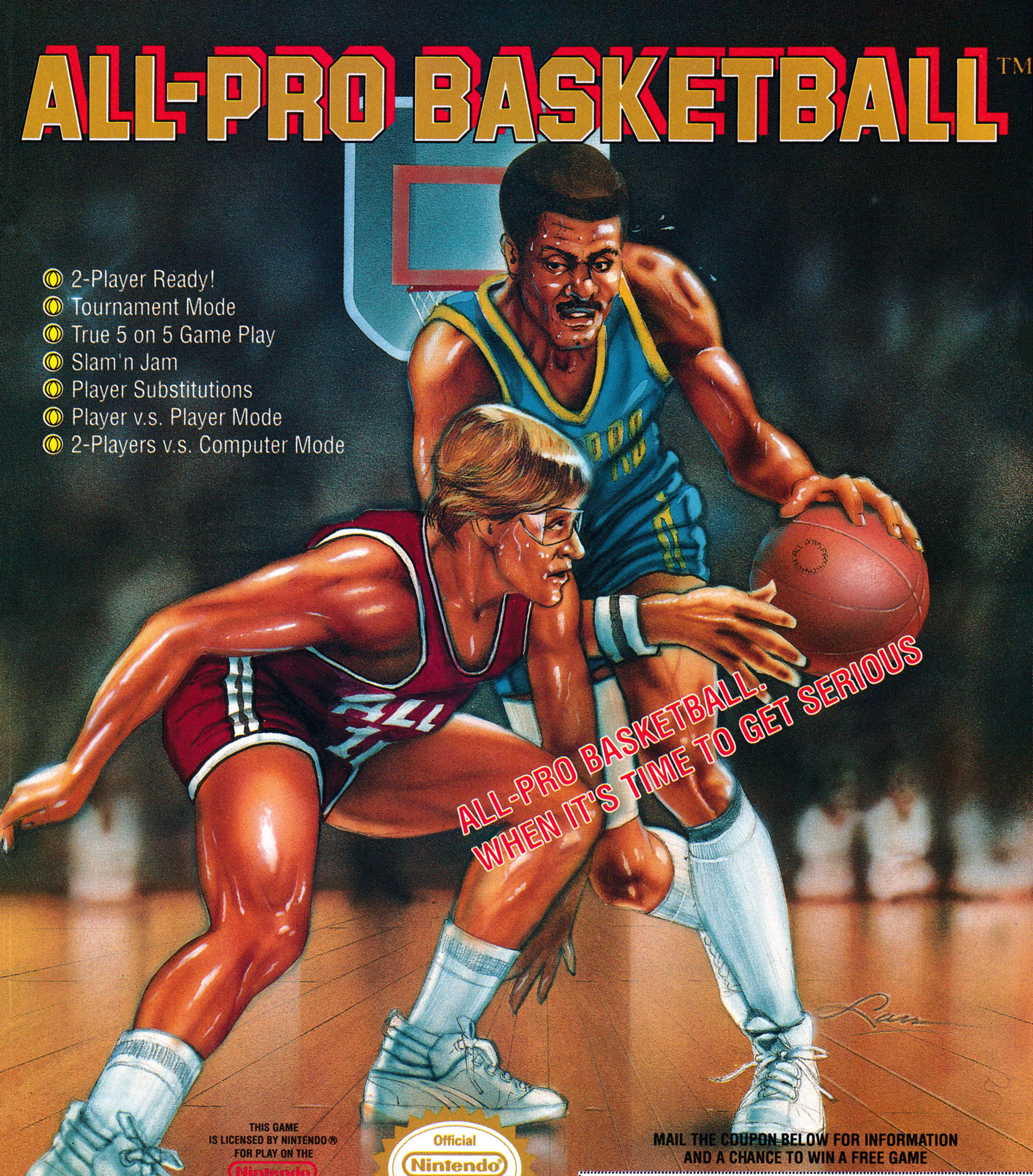

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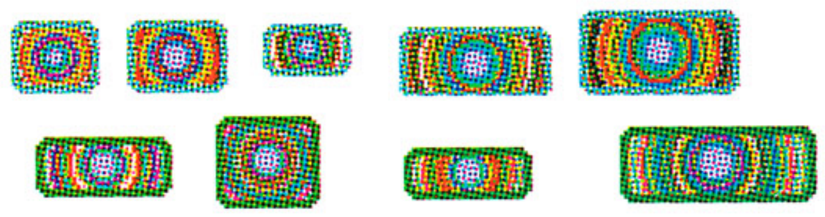
one chosen should depend on both the scenario being played and the playing style of the quarterback. Sometimes it is best to go for an end run behind the opponent's back line, while at other times a direct attack on the opponent's ComCen will reap better results. Whatever course the player chooses, the important thing is to continue scoring points at all times. The hardest thing about a lead is keeping it.



The units come in several varieties. grunts are basic foot soldiers and perform many of the mundane tasks. Because of their speed, riders act like cavalry and can quickly sweep from place to place. Boomers are big and slow, but as the name implies, they pack quite a punch. Spies are the recon units, invisible to all enemy robots except other spies. They provide real-time intelligence on the enemy's movements and disposition. Finally, the ComCen is the player's base of operations; if it gets knocked out, the game is over.

Modem Wars is very flexible, and many play options are adjustable to suit a player's preference. These include features affecting both the setup and the actual play of the game. One game may recycle lost robots back onto the field or another may be designed to give the less experienced player a point bonus to even the odds.

The game can be played against a solo trainer built into the computer, but it really shines when played against another opponent over the phone lines. Establishing a phone link is fairly straightforward, though some tweaking may be required to get the game working with certain PC-clone setups.

The main screen shows an overview of the entire playing field along the left-hand side of the window. A close-up view of the area around the current unit is shown in the upper-right corner of the screen, with that unit's information displayed in a box just below. Finally, a text message area occupies the bottom of the screen to allow communication between the players during play.

The game features an overhead perspective for all map views. While the graphics themselves will not win any major awards, they are adequate for the task and crisp and clear enough to support game play.

Modem Wars effectively combines both elements of strategic planning and quick reaction. While the steady tick of the clock may scare away some traditional board-gamers, the flow of play is fairly easy to pick up. It will take some time, however, for a player to become an outstanding quarterback.

Unfortunately, the necessity of a human opponent for truly good play may limit the potential market for *Modem Wars*. But those with telecommunications equipment have a new source of high-tech entertainment that can occupy many of their future gaming hours.

—R. Bradley Andrews

Electronic Arts, 1820 Gateway Drive,
San Mateo, CA 94404; (415) 571-7171.

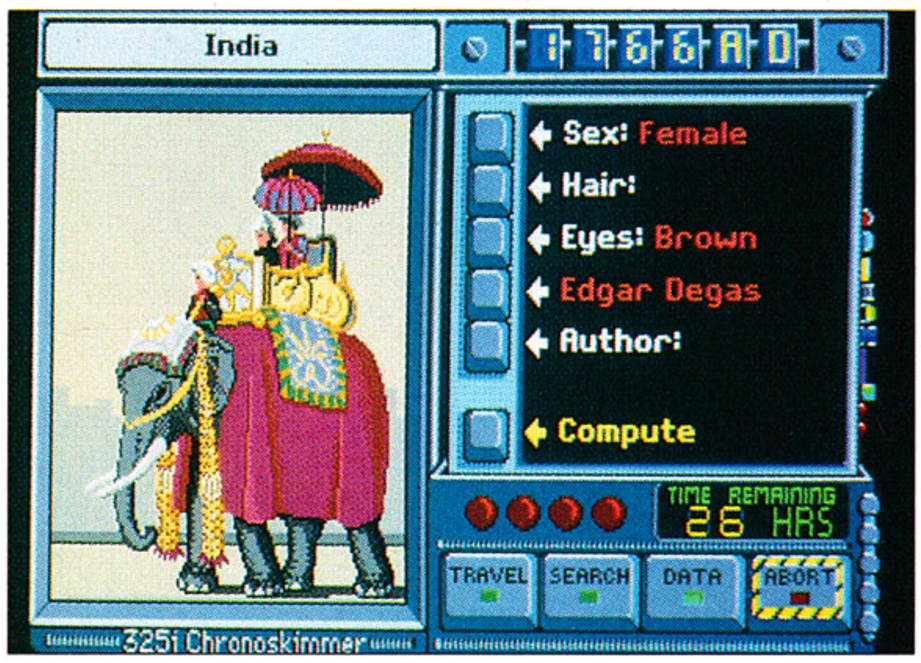
Where in Time Is Carmen Sandiego?

BRODERBUND

Versions: Apple II ($44.95), Apple IIGS ($44.95), IBM PC ($44.95)

With the help of your chromoskimmer, you'll have to piece the clues together to find the criminal in *Where in Time Is Carmen Sandiego?*

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	6
Graphics	8
Playability	7
Overall	7



This probably won't come as a big surprise to you, but Carmen Sandiego is at it again.

Yes, Carmen and her gang of thieves (made famous in *Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?*, *Where in America Is Carmen Sandiego?* and *Where in Europe Is Carmen Sandiego?*) are back, this time pilfering rare objects and escaping into the mists of antiquity. That's right, time; more specifically, the past. Fortunately, the game is set in the future, so the user, as a member of the Acme Detective Agency, has access to the company chronoskimmer. This extremely helpful invention is all the gamer needs to run Carmen and company to Earth, somewhere between the years 400 A.D. and the 1950s.

Continued on page 125

Continued from page 10

THE DOCTOR IS IN

Dear VG&CE:

I just love reading your magazine! I've bought all of your issues so far, and plan on buying everything to come. Your maps and strategies on video games are excellent as well.

In your latest issue, you mentioned the fact that you were expanding. I was wondering if you might consider doing a question-and-answer section from the readers on computer and video games.

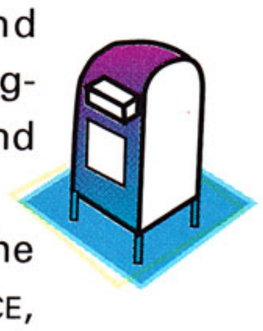
—Jesse Mann
Edinburg, Virginia

Always glad to hear we've got fans out there, Jesse. As far as the suggestion goes, check our monthly Game Doctor *column. The good doctor is always available to answer your questions on games or gaming, as long as you catch him between house calls.*

POWER UP!

Dear VG&CE:

I just wanted to write and say how much I love your magazine. Your feature stories and reporting are top-notch.



Thanks for writing about the Color Dreams company (VG&CE, July 1989) and its products, which operate on the present NES machine. Your magazine was the only one to report on this exciting new invention. As far as I'm concerned, it would be fantastic to see this enhancement on my NES. In fact, I think that most people would rather upgrade their existing systems than buy new ones every time they are improved. Many thanks and keep up the good work!

—Mark Marshall
Evansville, Indiana

Glad to see you enjoyed our feature, Mark. We try to stay on top of all the latest developments within the world of gaming, especially one so potentially exciting as this.

Stay tuned for more information!

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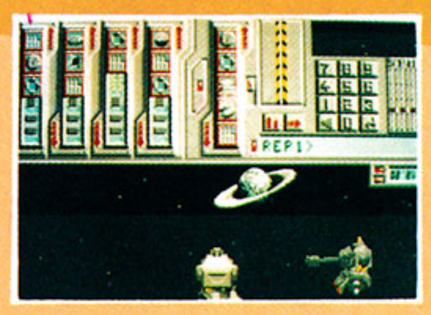

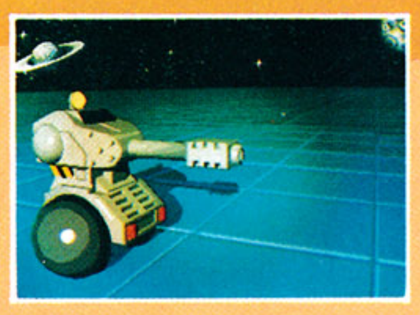

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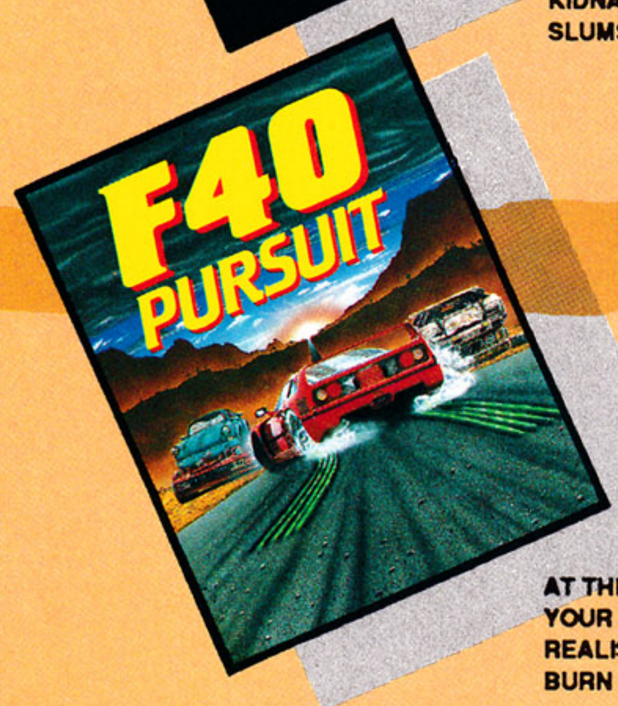

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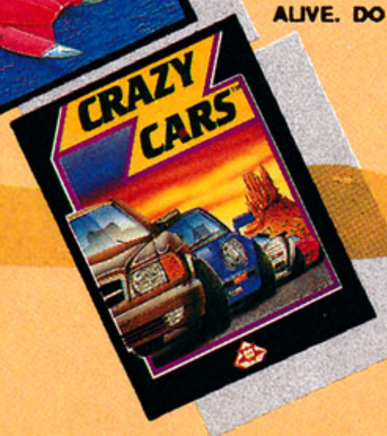

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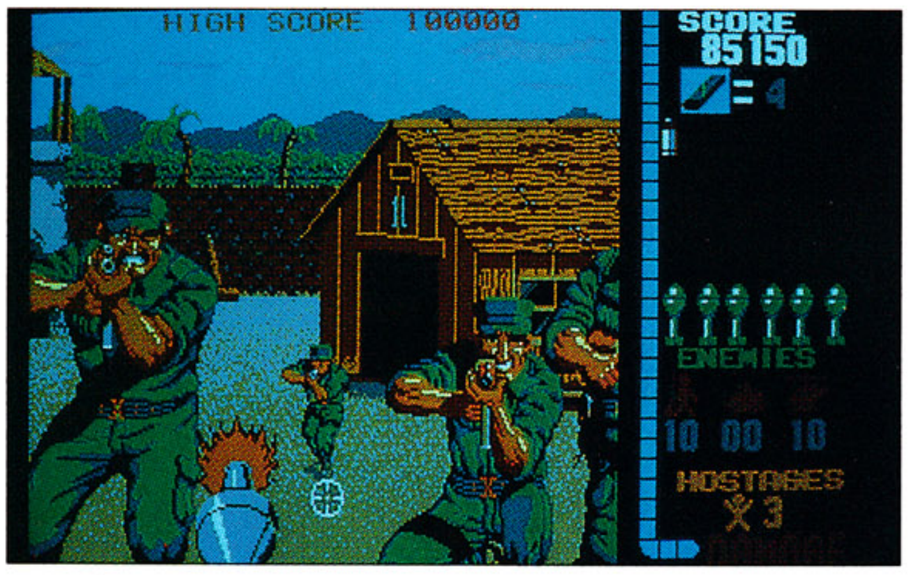
Get Ahead of the Pack With Operation Wolf

TAITO

Versions: Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64, IBM PC

Operation Wolf is an arcade shootout in which players try to blast their way through an enemy fortress as they try to rescue civilian captives. During the game's six missions, the player must destroy all of the enemies while sustaining minimal damage. Victory is accomplished by escorting the hostages to an escape plane waiting on Level 6.



The secret to *Operation Wolf* lies in aiming the gun. The cursor is not as quick as on the arcade version, and the bullets seem to lag a split second behind the moving crosshair. This must be compensated for by leading all moving targets slightly. This isn't so important when firing at a wide object, such as a tank or gunboat, but it becomes crucial when shooting enemy helicopters due to the narrow target they provide.

Try not to fire the machine gun continuously. This wastes a lot of valuable ammunition that will be sorely missed later on in the game. More important, however, is that continuous fire causes the game to slow a bit and become choppy. This makes the crosshair jump slightly, throwing off a player's aim.

Telling you to avoid the enemies' shots is simple, but *Operation Wolf* isn't that easy.

Always shoot the most dangerous enemies first. The tanks that come across the screen at close range are the most dangerous. Each one should be shot immediately, before its turret can turn and fire. Next, aim for the gunboats and enemy helicopters. They are also deadly but, due to their distance, are more likely to miss a few shots.

The next enemy to concentrate on are the soldiers in gray and the commandos who fall to the ground and roll. The guys in gray are more accurate sharp-shooters and can cause substantial damage. They usually absorb two or three shots before they go down, so make sure they have disappeared before moving on. The soldiers who roll require only one shot to kill, yet they also seem to have better aim, so they should be wiped out as early as possible.

Dealing with hostages correctly is a very important element in this battle. The instructions warn the player not to shoot any innocents at all. This is sound advice, most of the time.

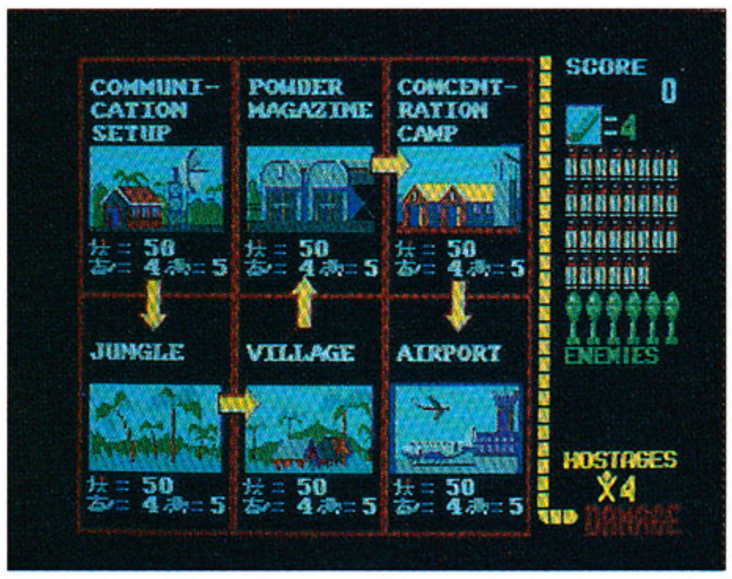
Morbid as it may sound, it's sometimes better to kill an innocent if they are running in a pack of enemy soldiers. As the old saying goes, "Better him than me!" However, this should only be done in the first two screens, where shooting

civilians does not penalize the player in any way. In the later levels, killing the hostages costs the player points and maybe even the game if there are none left alive to board the escape plane.

HIGH SCORING

The way to rack up high scores in *Operation Wolf* is to learn the tricks of the trade. First off, try to hit any of the bonus items that may appear, since maintaining a constant supply of ammunition is crucial in this game. Shoot at all animals, for they will often drop something of value when hit.

If things get thick, toss a grenade to clear the battlefield.



Another object to master is the dynamite. While it may seem smart to wait until a bunch of men appears before detonating, this is not the case because the ones who are there will be firing! Instead, set off the dynamite right away. It's worth 500 points and will take out any bad guys in the immediate area. To earn extra points, try to hit the paratroopers before they touch ground. Hitting a man in midair earns the player twice as much as waiting for him to land.

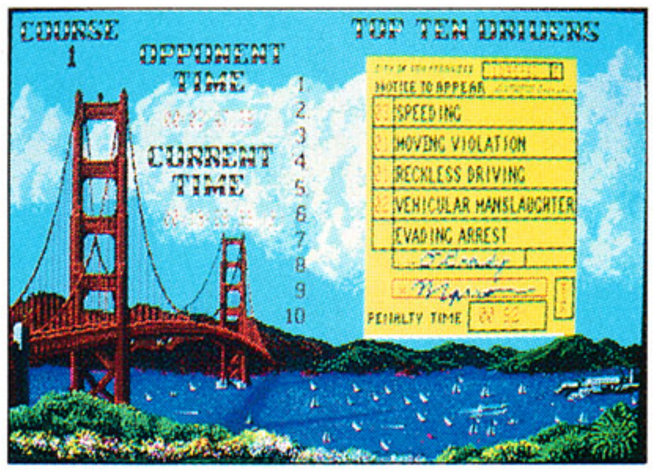
A big bonus can be obtained by firing at the coconuts on the palm trees on Level 2. Fire once to knock them loose, then shoot again as they fall to earn 5,000 points or an extra grenade.

Save the hostages at all costs in Levels 5 and 6. They are worth big points, and killing them will damage the player's chances for a high score.

Finally, remember to use the grenades with care; they will be needed later on in the game. When using grenades, wait until two or three enemy vehicles are present and take them all out at once. Don't wait too long, though, because once a vehicle's gun turns toward the screen, it's curtains for *Operation Wolf*!

—Frank Tetro, Jr.

Hop in your *Vette* and take the San Francisco streets with Spectrum Holobyte .



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THE BASICS IN DRIVING

The only way one can be successful in *Vette!* is by mastering the simple yet fine art of driving a sportscar. Start out the first few races slowly, getting a feel for the way the car handles. Use the center-lane key to keep the car in a lane. Players may avoid oversteering by holding down this key while driving, releasing it only to switch lanes. Although the game defaults to the "in-car" view, this is not the best angle to see upcoming cars from any great distance. Instead, switch to the helicopter view and adjust the angle to about 45 degrees. This will give the player a bigger jump on cars coming up on the Vette.

In the event of a collision, immediately hold down the accelerator while pressing the center-lane key in order to get the car back up to speed as fast as possible. If the damage was to the car's engine, note the top speed that the car now travels at. If it's below the top speed of the competition, seek out a gas station and pull in-between the building and the pumps to initiate repairs.

THE COURSES

Once you're comfortable with driving the car, the next strategy is mapping the course. The competition will always take one of the shortest paths to the finish, so players must be ready with a

Continued on page 122

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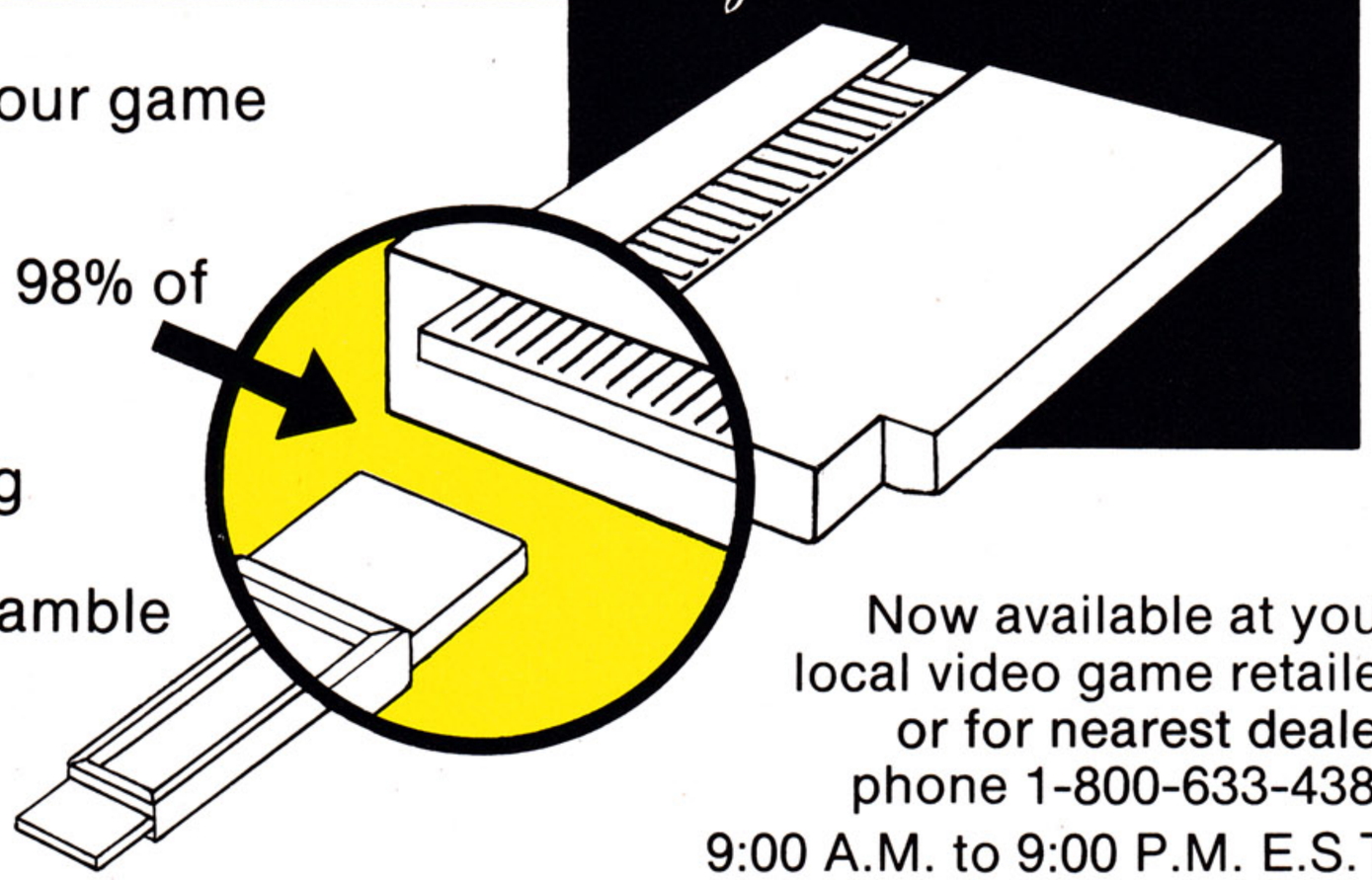

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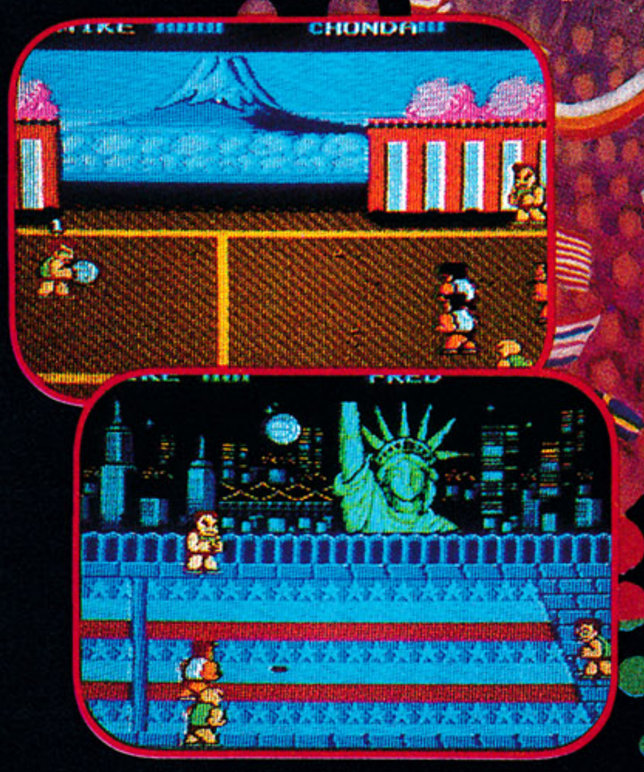

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Continued from page 118

course of their own. The trick here is to plan the routes so as to stay on freeways whenever possible.

There are far fewer police cars and traffic signs on freeways, allowing a player to make up time in a hurry. Traveling through city streets can be almost completely avoided in the first two courses, while the other two do require the player to navigate the urban terrain somewhat.

Course 1 starts off at the San Francisco Zoo and heads north to the Golden Gate Bridge. Players should start off traveling fairly slowly because there are a lot of police cars in the first section of the course. As you approach the park, floor it and travel along the straightaway at full speed onto and past the Presidio. Once the bridge appears, slow down. The police will be here also. If full speed was maintained earlier, a player will have enough of a lead to go 65 mph over the bridge and cross the line a winner.

Course 2 goes from the Golden Gate Bridge to the Bay Bridge. Again, head over the bridge at moderate speed, accelerating when the road turns into Lombard Street. From here, burn rubber east until the intersection of Van Ness Avenue. Travel south on Van Ness to Broadway and make a left. This will take the player right to Embarcadero and over the bridge. Here you should be careful to obey the city rules while traveling on Van Ness and Broadway.

Course 3 is an all-out speed war from the instant the player gets on the freeway. This course is all freeway as the player travels west on Interstate 80, 101 and 280 back toward the zoo. Just remember to slow it down at the beginning and end, where the police are lurking.

The final course is a round-trip course from the zoo to the Golden Gate, out to the Bay Bridge and finally back to the zoo again. Use the strategies and course routes laid out earlier as a guide. Remember, too, that this is more of an endurance race. Don't panic if the competition gets a bit ahead while driving slowly through the city—there is plenty of freeway time to catch up. If the competition is out of view, remember to hit 'H' to display the on-board map, which will show both cars' positions. Once satisfied, remove the map. Otherwise, it blocks the view of the oncoming streets and traffic signs.

Finally, if sirens begin to wail, a policeman is upset and wants the violator to pull over. Never do so. Floor it and the police car, if it is behind the Vette, doesn't stand a chance. However, if the police car appears in front of the Vette, he will get you whether the car is floored or not. If this happens, pick an excuse that sounds valid and hope he's in a good mood!

—F. T. Jr.

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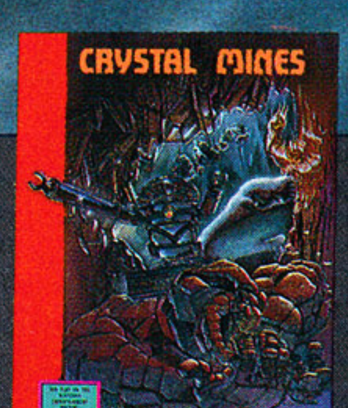

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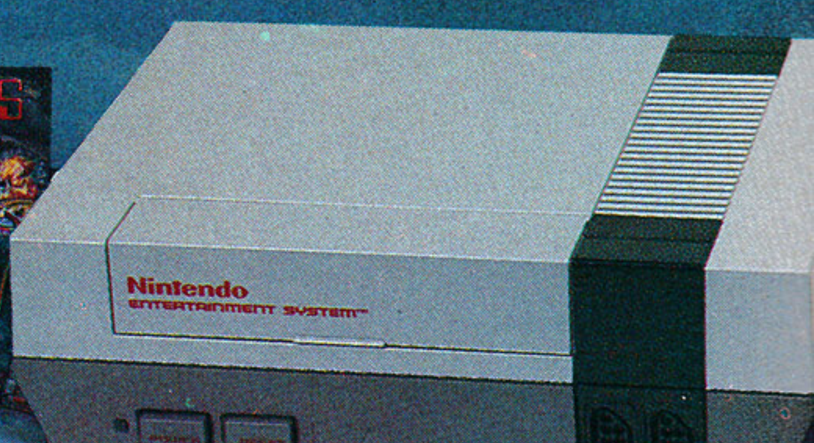

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Continued from page 114

Where in Time Is Carmen Sandiego? implements many of the protocols and conventions established in the previous *Carmen* games. Playing the game requires only a cursory look at the instructions because everything the user needs is displayed on the screen through the chronoskimmer's interface. If the user wants to jump through time, click on the time leap (on the Apple version) or travel button. Once in a new location, the search button allows the player to interrogate witnesses or check out the crime scene for valuable clues. The data button lets the detective enter evidence or view dossiers through the chronoskimmer. Once the player has accumulated sufficient evidence, hitting the "compute" button (in the evidence database) applies for a warrant, which, if issued, activates a capture robot to make the pinch. If the detective hasn't put together a strong enough case, the warrant will be denied, and it's back to the drawing board.

The various chronoskimmer screens feature numerous attractive visuals, devoted mostly to scenic depictions of the different locales visited by the player/detective. *Where in Time Is Carmen Sandiego?* includes over 1200 clues, 12 countries, historic personalities, objects, events and 15 new Carmen henchpeople to chase through 1,500 years of history.

As has become traditional with this series, a reference volume, *The New American Desk Encyclopedia*, is enclosed with the package, just as *Fodor's USA* came with *Where in America Is Carmen Sandiego?* and the *Rand McNally Concise Atlas of Europe* was packed with *Where in Europe Is Carmen Sandiego?*

Over the course of several years, this series has proven to be the most successful blend yet of entertainment and education. This latest entry, designed by Gene Portwood and Lauren Elliott and programmed by Lance Goody (IBM PC) and Rod Nelson (Apple), lives up to the high standards set by its forebears.

Having now pursued Carmen and her V.I.L.E. assistants over the entire planet and through time, one can only wonder if she will escape yet again.

My money's on Carmen.

—Bill Kunkel

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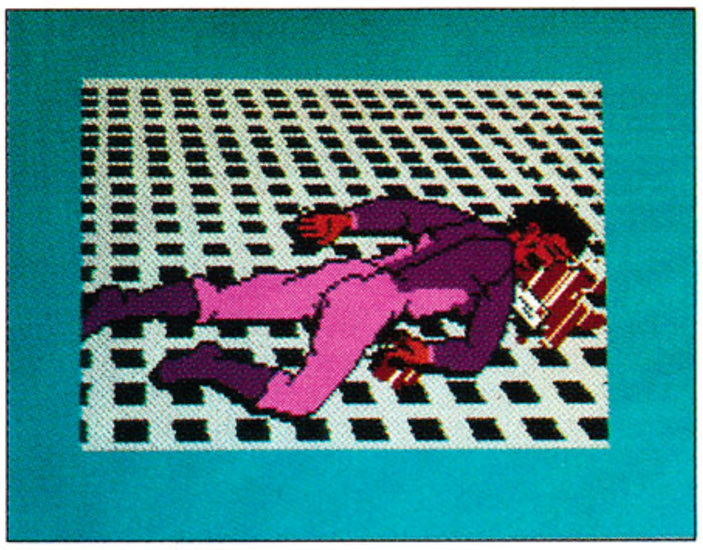
Universe III

OMNITREND

Versions: Amiga ($49.95), Atari ST ($49.95), IBM PC ($49.95)

In Omnitrend's *Universe III*, you're in control of a starship and must patch relations in a distant colony.



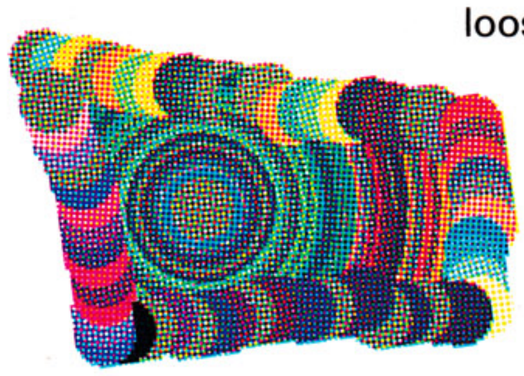
RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	6
Graphics	8
Playability	7
Overall	7

As a veteran of both of the previous releases in the *Universe* series, I gleefully stripped the wrapper from *Universe III*, strapped on my hyperspace booster and prepared for the best. Unfortunately, something was lost in the preparation. Although *Universe III* advances the plot line established by its predecessors, it's so unlike the previous games that players might be forced to pull the disk back out of the drive to check the label. The game would have been good two or three years ago as the first of the series, but now it is a disappointing sequel.

The game has as its basic premise a diplomatic mission to reestablish ties with a colony world. The player assumes the role of the starship captain and soon finds himself facing saboteurs, plus a hostile reception from the locals. Obviously, there is a lot going on behind the scenes that wasn't included in the mission briefing. To discover these secrets, it is necessary to thoroughly explore every area and manipulate the objects you find to solve puzzles.

Interaction with nonplayer characters (NPC's) is strictly one way. When the onscreen hero first encounters a NPC, a canned speech delivers all the information that person will ever divulge. This is frustrating and a step backward in the art of gaming. Even some of the earliest adventures allowed the player to converse with NPC's and learn new facts when the proper question was asked.

The original *Universe* games gave players a great deal of choice in the manner in which objectives were achieved, holding a loose reign as it were. By contrast, *Universe III* is so tightly linear that you will soon feel the bit in your teeth (or the ring in your nose if you prefer) while sitting at the keyboard. To worsen the situation, once an area is left behind, the player cannot return to it. Consequently, if an important item was missed the first



time around, it's necessary to reboot a saved game.

The main screens of *Universe III* feature satisfactory, if unspectacular, overhead views of each of the four complexes. Scrolling, as the player explores from area to area, is smooth. The main screen shows objects and characters in profile. They look good enough, but, unfortunately, an object will sometimes disappear when moved behind another.

The system of icons is much more handsome, very usable and definitely the most exciting innovation in the game. On-screen arrows direct character movement within each area. Similarly, icons permit the player to pick up, drop and even use some objects, check inventory, move between levels and consult the menu of verbs without resorting to the keyboard.

There are actually three additional ways to move through the rooms. If the player prefers mouse movement to the icon arrows, it's possible to click on the character and drag the pointer to the desired destination. This produces a series of lines marking the path. Releasing the button moves the hero. The character can jump from room to room by selecting an arrow icon and holding down the shift key. Occasionally the enter command must be used to move the character through some doorways.

The inventory holds up to ten objects and will also magnify objects with a zoom command. An icon of a stepladder makes level changing automatic, and the status box keeps track of health, the weapon in hand, hit points and moves so far.

A fair amount of humor is included in the plot, and some of the graphics reflect this with cartoonlike closeups of encounter results. These appear from time to time at key points in the plot, when the player has accomplished certain tasks.

The design by William Leslie III and coding by Thomas Carbone are greatly enhanced by Maurice Molyneaux's graphics, and the system of icons for interaction with the game is modern and easy to understand. Yet despite the ease of movement and pretty graphics, the negative aspects of *Universe III* far outweigh the positive. The game just does not deliver on the promise contained in its two predecessors. It was too short, too easy to solve and much too linear in its plot development. This might make it a good bet for new adventurers or players who want a simple challenge. But for the experienced gamers, it doesn't offer enough new ingredients to the mixture that made the two previous games so enjoyable.

—Ed Dille

Omnitrend, P. O. Box 733,
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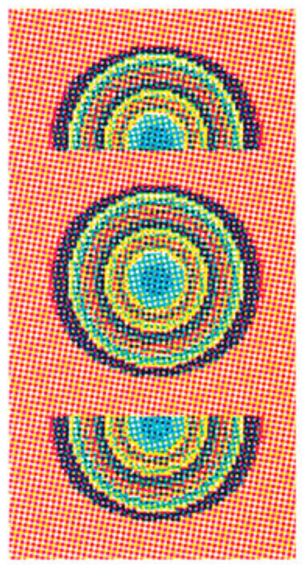

Hop on your dirt bike and take on the other racers in Gamestar's *Motocross*.

Motocross

GAMESTAR

Version: IBM PC ($39.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	6
Graphics	8
Playability	7
Overall	7

Motocross (Gamestar), from the prolific and extremely hot software-development house, Dynamix, is a real revelation for IBM PC systems. It boots right out of the box (although data can only be stored on backup versions), offers high-speed arcade thrills and looks great in CGA, Tandy or EGA graphics mode.

The racing action in *Motocross* employs the pseudofirst-person perspective made famous by games like *Pole Position*, in which the player's vehicle appears on-screen in the center foreground. The player controls and even modifies a high-powered dirt bike, competing on the 250cc Motocross Circuit.

The racetrack is inside several large arenas displaying not only the crowd in the background but advertisements along the boards. This goes a long way to enhance the game's color. The graphics, especially in EGA mode, are excellent and visually recreate the mud, grit and grinding gears of racing in a big-time dirt-bike circuit.

The player sets the difficulty level and determines the number of laps and other riders. The player can compete on the practice level as warm-up or training or start an actual racing season. The user also customizes or fine-tunes his bike before a race by messing with the fork angle, tire pressure, suspension or gear ratio or by making adjustments to the engine.

Motocross includes ten tracks, each set in a different city, from Seattle to Los Angeles with stops in between at Philadelphia, Sacramento, Houston, New Orleans, Eugene, Pontiac, Orlando and Anaheim. The user must master all ten courses in order to move to the top of the standings.

Solid, slickly programmed arcade-action games are a rarity on the IBM PC and compatibles. *Motocross* is an especially welcome addition to the system's library.

—Bill Kunkel

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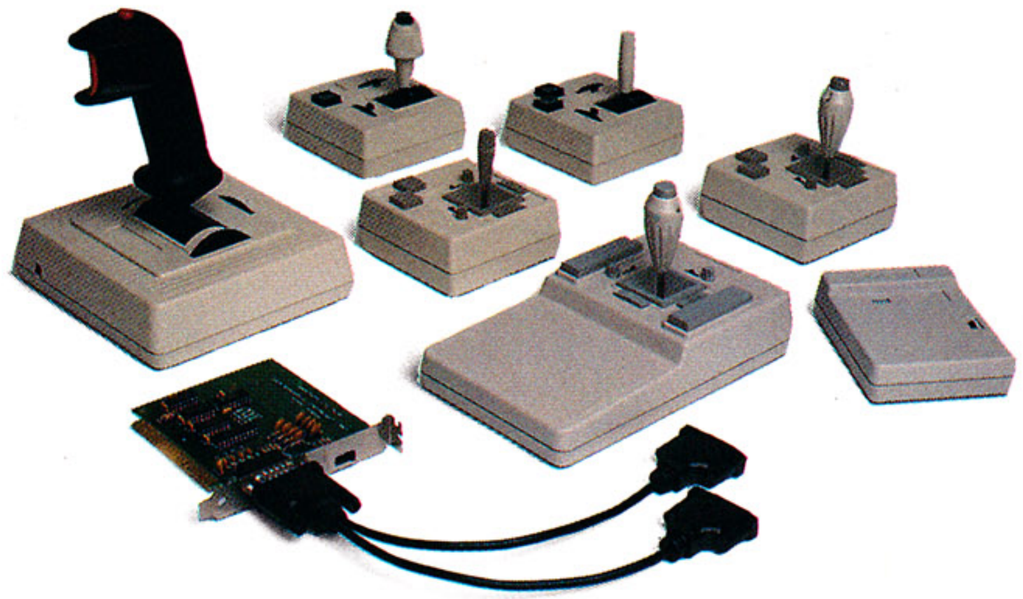

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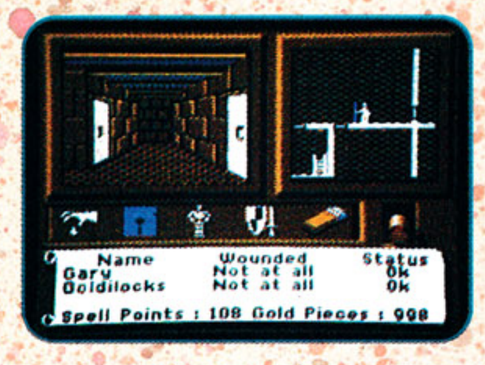
Tangled TALES™

Myth, Magic and Mirth



Screens shown are for Apple II.

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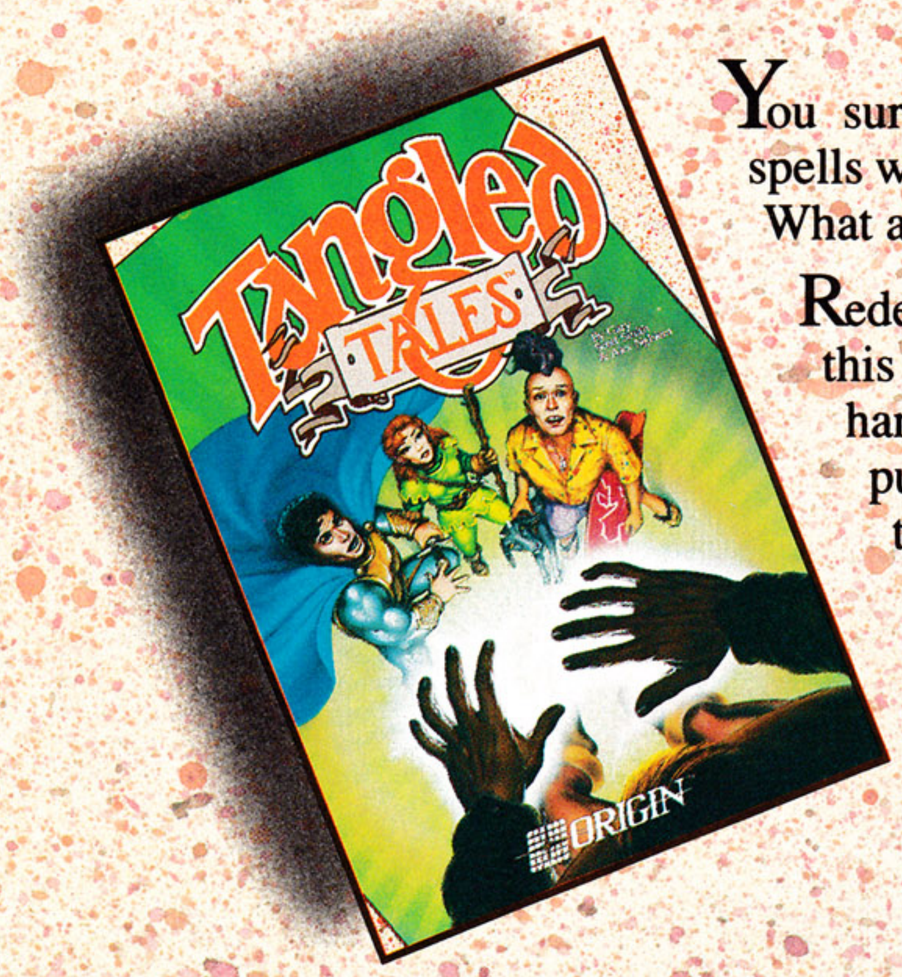

You sure aren't the wizard's star pupil. In fact, he took away your spells when you spilled his precious adamantite dust on the squirrel. What a mess that turned out to be!

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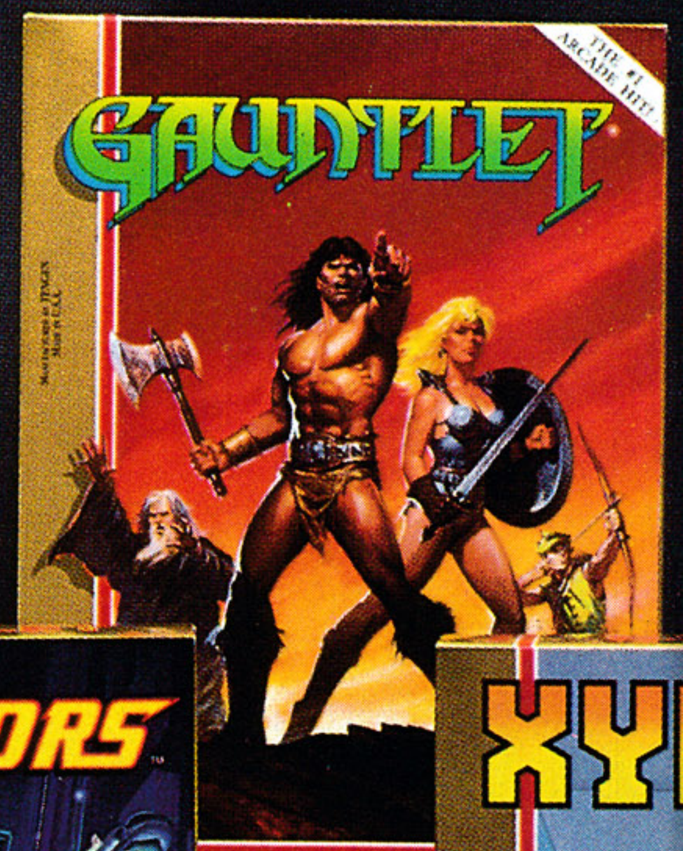

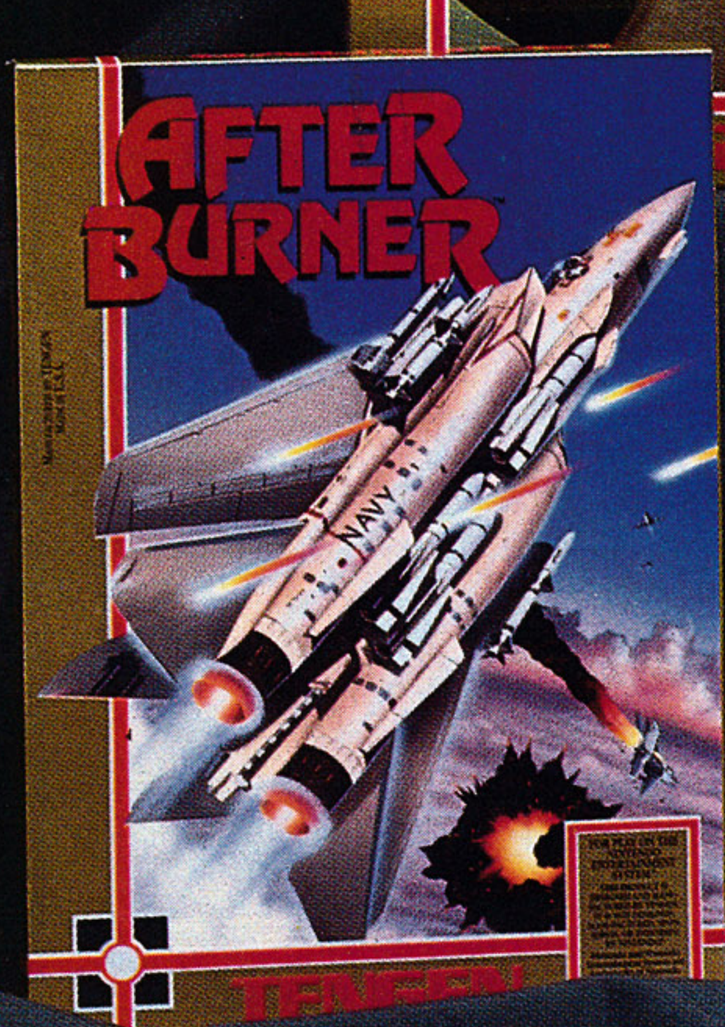

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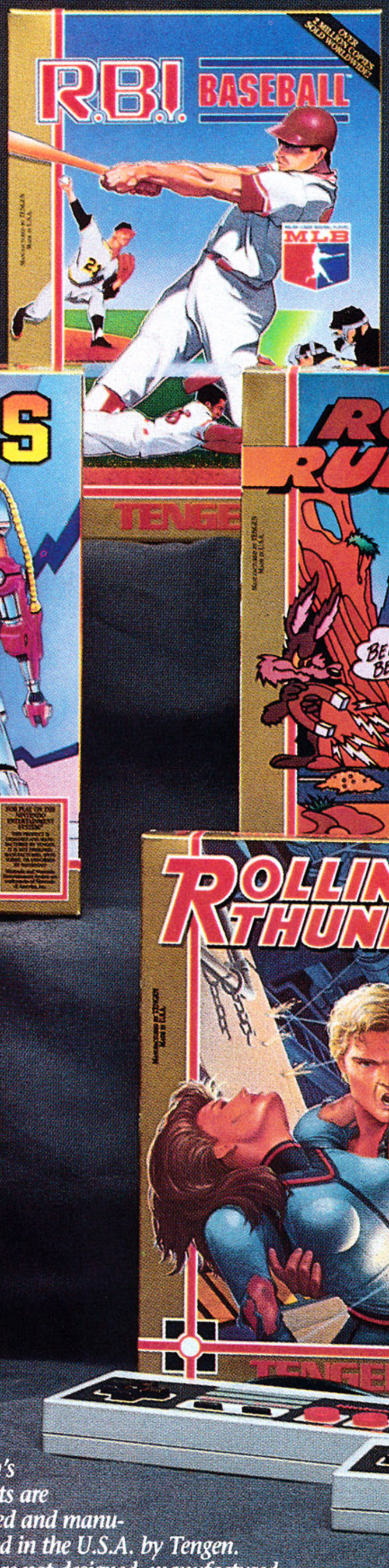

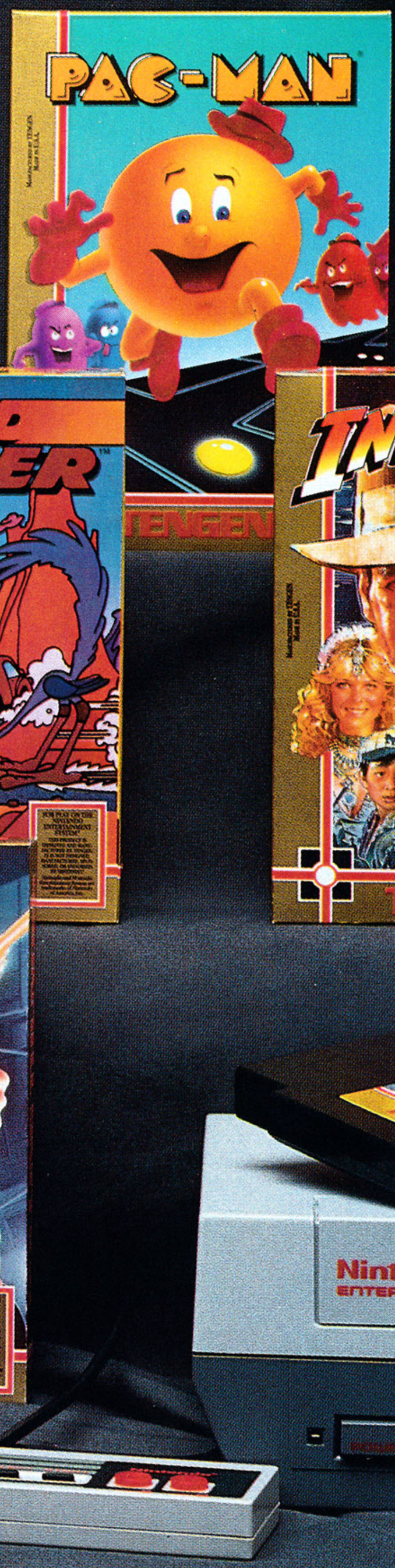

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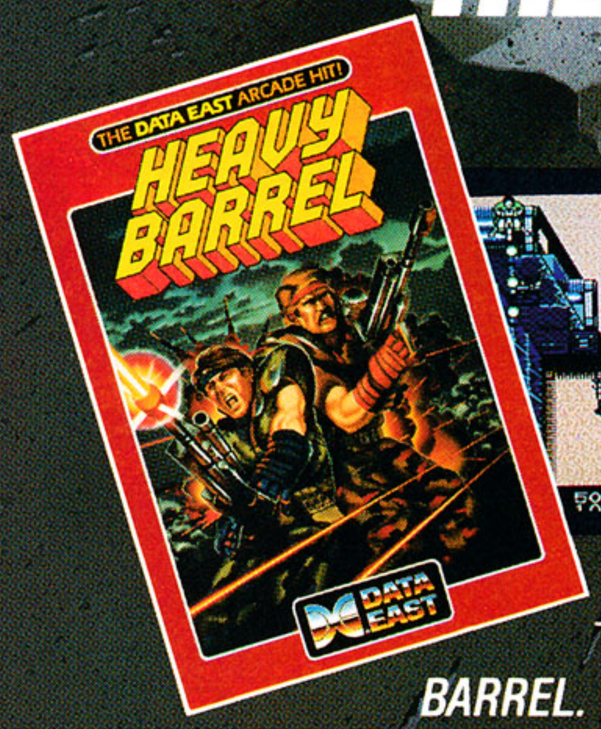

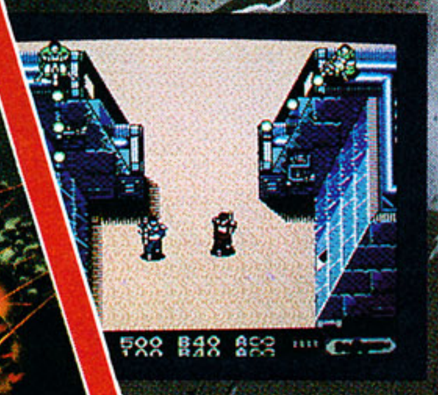

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