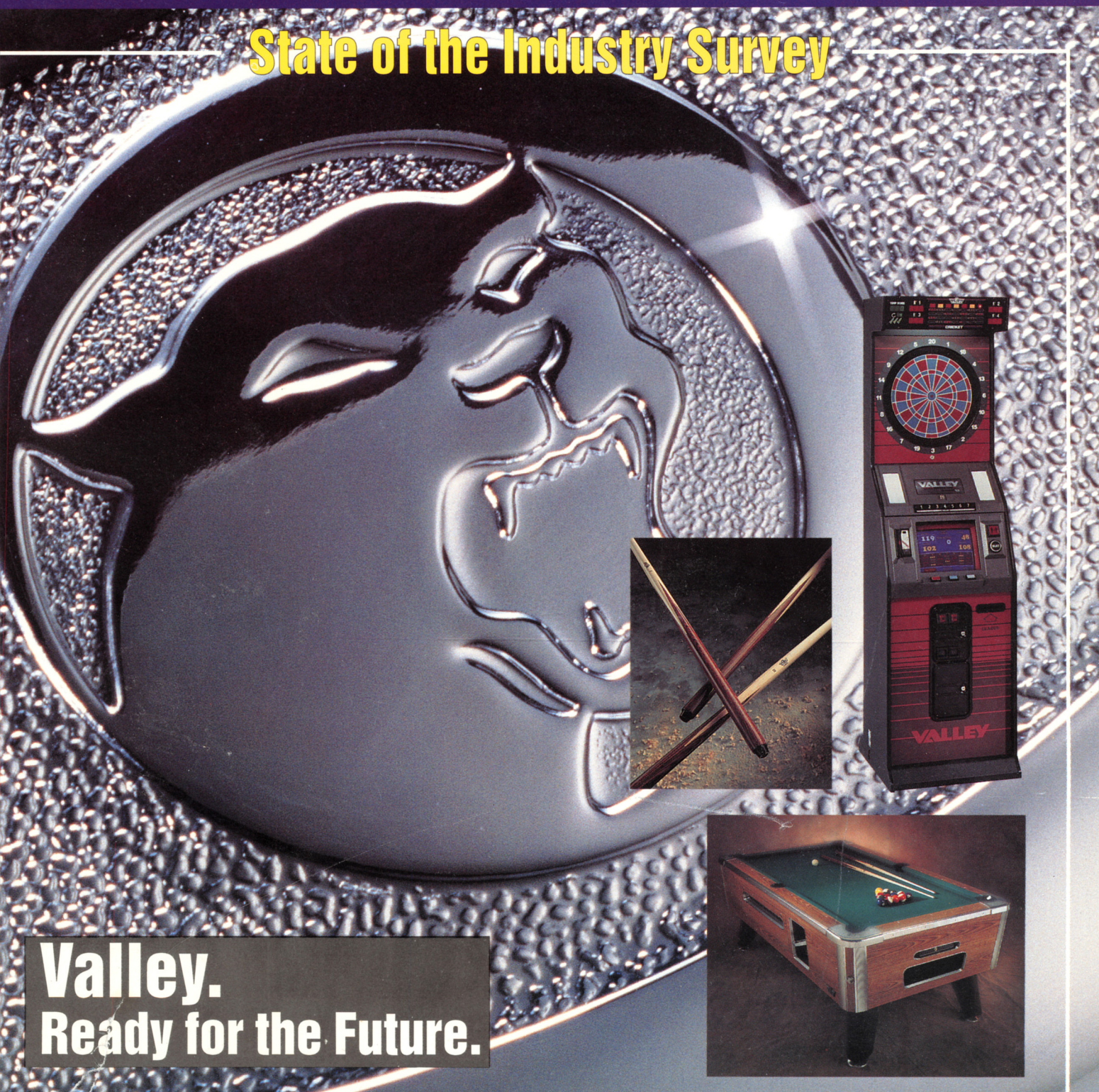
PLAYMETER Magazine

VOLUME 22, No. 1 | FOR THE COIN-OP ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY | JANUARY 1996

State of the Industry Survey



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News Notes

✓ATE AND IMA DRAW INTERNATIONAL CROWD

Europe will play host to two prestigious trade shows this month: ATE and IMA. The Amusement Trades Exhibition International welcomes visitors to London, England, Jan. 20-23 for the new separate Parks, Rides, and Family Entertainment section and the International Casino section on the first floors of Earls Court 1. Immediately afterwards, the international trade fair for amusement and vending machines (IMA) will occupy two halls at the Frankfurt Fairgrounds in Frankfurt, Germany, Jan. 24-27. Hall 1 will house slot machine exhibits while Hall 2 will feature the new Billiards, Sports, and Innovations section.

✓AAMA CHOOSES AD AGENCY FOR MARKETING

The American Amusement Machine Association has chosen DiMeo Rosen Partners of Chicago, Ill., to launch an advertising and promotions plan for the industry. Explained Bob Fay, executive director of AAMA, "The time is right for our industry to get aggressive in marketing itself, and the first step in that direction is teaming up with an agency that understands aggressive marketing."

The first DiMeo Rosen project will be a test market radio campaign during the first quarter of the year, which will probably be tied into a retail promotion in the Minneapolis market. AAMA's objectives are to promote the coin-op entertainment experience and increase the player base and frequency of play.

✓VIRTUAL REALITY COMES TO CALIFORNIA, FLORIDA, OHIO

Virtual Images has installed its Reality+ virtual reality systems in several new locations. In California, the systems are featured at the Wharf Center in San Francisco and the Santa Cruz Boardwalk in Santa Cruz. In addition, two systems are now in the main arcade at Cedar Point Amusement park/resort in Sandusky, Ohio, and four systems are at Church Street Market in Orlando, Fla. Columbus, Ohio-based Virtual Images is continuing a research and development project in conjunction with Synthetic Images of Orlando, with plans to incorporate new technology in the company's upcoming next-generation product, CyberPak.

✓MICRO MFG. ADDS REGIONAL DIRECTORS

Micro Mfg. of LaVergne, Tenn., has added three regional marketing directors to its staff to better serve its customers. Company officials say the move is a direct result of demand for its *Magical Touch* countertop trivia game.

Brian Gorsich takes charge of the Southeast region; he is at the LaVergne headquarters (800-277-6136). Dave Kelly has the reins of the Northeast region; he is based in Londonderry, N.H. (800-793-1520). Dave Winton will direct the Midwest region; he is located in Bloomington, Ill. (800-290-5031). Micro president Larry Hartley continues to oversee the national and international markets and will also handle the West Coast region until a fourth regional director is appointed. Hartley can be reached at the Peoria, Ill., office (800-211-4313) or at the factory (800-277-6136).

✓NICKELS & DIMES INSTALLS LASER TAG

Nickels and Dimes has installed LaserTrek laser tag by Heads Up Technologies of Dallas, Texas, in its West Road Mall location in Omaha, Neb. Called Virtual Laser and located on the ground floor of the mall, it can accommodate up to 30 players at a time in the 5,000-square-foot arena.

According to Heads Up president Rob Harshaw, the company's proprietary Real Time Operation System (RTOS) allows for over 350 adjustable game parameters, which guarantees that LaserTrek is never the same game twice.

Said Ron Kostelny, president of Nickels and Dimes, "Heads Up offers a total game experience, from a movie-quality pre-game briefing to the excitement of the actual game." Nickels and Dimes, which is based in Carrollton, Texas, currently operates over 200 family amusement centers in shopping malls throughout the United States and several locations in Australia.

✓LOUISIANA VIDEO POKER OPERATORS PLAN STRATEGY

The climate has not been good for video poker operators in Louisiana. Allegations of legislative corruption, and other unsavory charges, have given the state's legalized video poker industry a black eye. A new governor and changes in the Legislature may combine to jeopardize the foothold established by the three-and-a-half-year-old industry.

In an effort to gain public support for video poker, operators and locations are banding together to mount a public relations campaign emphasizing the contributions of video poker to the state. In the works are 30-minute infomercials and an intense six-month advertising campaign. While video poker has been a success, some of the state's riverboat operations have floundered. The city of New Orleans and the state are grappling with the recent shutdown of Harrah's temporary casino and the halt of construction on the permanent facility (see "Coin-Op News" page 20).

✓*MK3* THIEVES APPREHENDED BY AUTHORITIES

New England operators report that authorities arrested three suspects in connection with a rash of video game PCB thefts at locations in several states. The alleged thieves were targeting *Mortal Kombat 3* games.

Stanley Halgas of Fun Stop in Springfield, Mass., said the thefts occurred at locations such as FECs and bowling centers. "I don't know of any street accounts that were hit," he said. Halgas, who lost five boards to the thieves, said authorities have not determined whether the games were being sold domestically or overseas. "They have to have a market," he said.

The thefts occurred in early November, and the suspects have been released on bail. Several other companies, including Melo-Tone Vending of Somerville, Mass., T & M Distributors of Willimantic, Conn., and Dream Machine of Boston, Mass., reportedly suffered losses.▲

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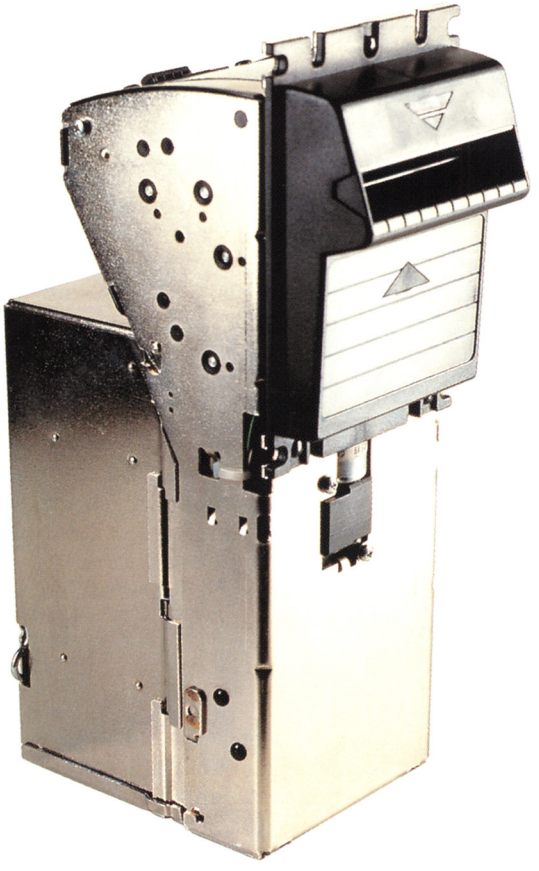
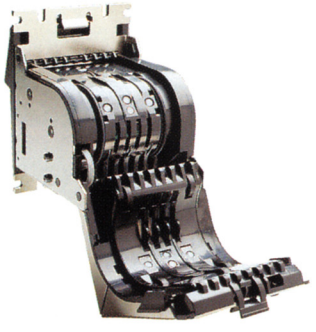
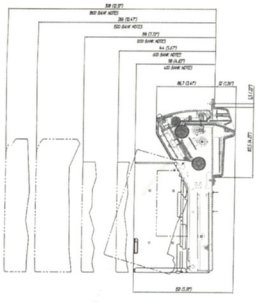
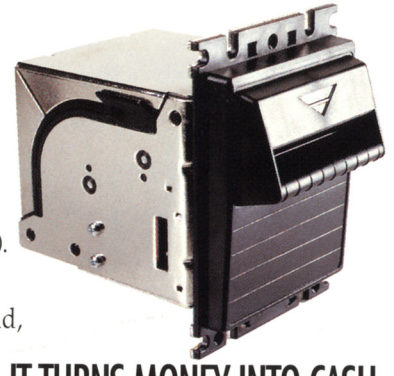




SIMPLICITY IS THE ESSENCE OF GENIUS





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Time to check the pulse of the industry and review its vital statistics: average weekly gross collections, total number of machines on location, commission splits, location agreements, annual license fees, equipment quality, price per play, competition, and much more. Plus, find out what your fellow operators are really thinking, in their own no-holds-barred words.

65 IAAPA Wrap-Up

Two areas of interest defined the 77th annual International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions convention and trade show: international business and family entertainment centers. Exhibits included everything from motion simulator theaters to old-fashioned lemonade. Check out our 14-page coverage filled with quotes, photos, and a close-up on high-tech offerings.

84 FEC Focus

Over 40 informative workshops were on the agenda at IAAPA's annual gathering of amusement facility personnel from around the globe. Emphasis was heavy on the side of family entertainment centers, which had not been the case in the past. Three high-energy sessions are profiled: Trends in FECs, Guest Relations, and Trends in Food Service.

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Cover

Valley begins its 51st year with new ownership and a positive outlook on the future. The new *Cougar IQ* Series promises to be a quantum leap in electronic dart games. Pictured: Valley's famous Cougar logo and the flagship models that bear its name—the *Cougar ZD-6* pool table and *Cougar IQ* dart machine.

Take Your Best Shot!

Introducing the BULLET...

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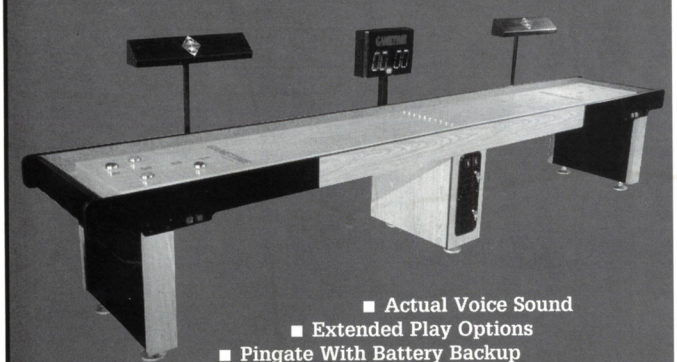

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- We Can Customize Games With Your Logo
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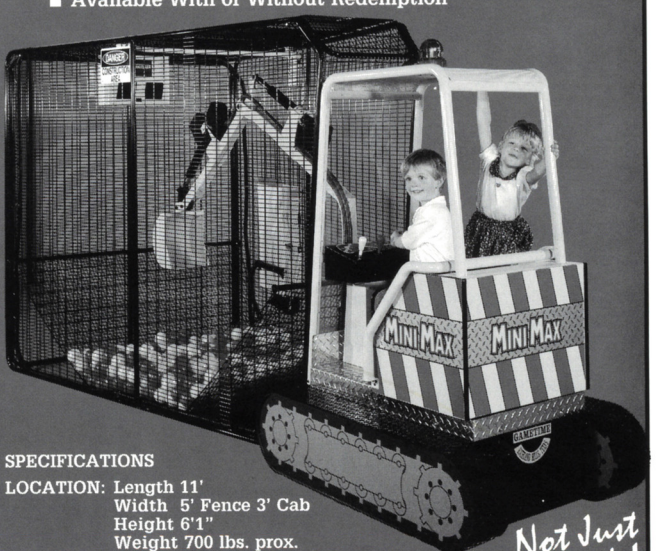

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The facts, mam, just the facts

When we finish up a state of the industry report, we'll often speculate about what we think will happen the following year. Last year we did just that, and some things showed that we were right on the money; others perhaps went in a different direction.

Valerie Cognevich
Editor

Now here we are again presenting our state of the industry report that is asked for and quoted more than any other article we do. We tried to estimate how many calls we get asking for information concerning the industry, and we couldn't even take a stab at it; the number is overwhelming. In her editorial this month, Bonnie talks about some of the numerous calls we get each week. I'd have to say that each of us in editorial average one call a day, five per week, over 20 a month.

We work hard on this survey and have to thank all of you (about 250) who took the time to honestly tell us what's going on in your businesses so we can fairly assess what's going on in our coin machine business. We got responses from every single state with the exception of Rhode Island (go figure), which made us very happy. For the record, the most responses came from California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Alabama, Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Texas.

The completed survey questions show how operators vary in many aspects. But it's precisely those differences that make this survey so vital. We can see that some operators have thousands of games on location, while some have modest numbers. But each has a little piece of the industry puzzle.

The survey made it clear that the FEC trend is continuing. While 35 percent of our respondents said that they are operating one or more FECs, another 11 percent noted that they plan to in the near future. Nearly half those filling out the survey said an FEC had opened in their area within the past year!

There are also some other findings worth looking at: the number of video games on location is dipping, but that's certainly not unexpected. The revenue gap between dedicated and kits continues to widen. What's surprising though is that only about half of the operators claim they are dissatisfied with the equipment being offered. Surprising only because it seems that it's always a major complaint among operators.

Video gaming, legal or otherwise, dominates earnings figures. Is it any wonder that many are willing to take a risk in operating the equipment when average weekly grosses climb to four times what the average video game takes in? In fact, almost half said that a ban on gray area games would significantly affect their businesses. And speaking of gaming, a whopping 66 percent said they'd like to see legalized gaming in their states.

These are only a few tidbits of information taken from this year's state of the industry report. There are facts and figures on video games, pinball, jukeboxes, pool, darts, shuffleboards, air hockey, foosball, gaming, redemption, cigarette vending, and kiddie rides.

I know you are anxious to turn to the first page of the report and begin soaking up all the details. Enjoy! ▲

Unlock the Pharaoh's Treasure

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Players will tremble with delight when playing Pharaoh's Fantasy, the most interactive coin roll down ever produced. Players will get up to 20 rapid firing coins to shoot at the ten target slots in this exciting Egyptian-themed game. The player tries to guide the rolling coins to hit as many of the targets as possible. The more slots they light up, the more they win. For example, if they hit 5 targets the player wins 15 tickets. If they hit 6 targets, they win 20 tickets. The ticket value increase substantially, up to 70 tickets, for getting 9 of the 10 slots. Players can increase their chances of winning big tickets by buying more shots. For example 8 shots for 25¢, 12 shots for 50¢. Up to 20 shots for $1.00.

Pharaoh's Fantasy is made by Lazer-Tron, the makers of the hit games: Spin To Win™, Spin a 21™, Rollin' for Riches™, Ribbit Racin™, Swamp Stomp™, Ring Toss™, Aftershock™, Pirate's Gold™, Super Bank-It II™, and Wheelin-N-Dealin™.

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Equipment Poll

VIDEO & PINBALL COMBINED

	GAME	MO. ON CHART	MO. IN TOP 10
1.	MK3 Ultimate *(Midway)*	1	1
2.	Alpine Racer *(Namco)*	1	1
3.	Daytona USA *(Sega)*	16	16
4.	Cruis'n USA *(Midway)*	14	14
5.	Tekken 2 *(Namco)*	3	3
6.	Marvel Super Heroes *(Capcom)*	1	1
7.	Mortal Kombat 3 *(Midway)*	8	8
8.	Air Combat 22 *(Namco)*	2	1
9.	Cyber Cycles *(Namco)*	3	3
10.	Virtua Fighter 2 *(Sega)*	11	11
11.	Theatre of Magic *(Bally)*	8	8
12.	Area 51 *(TWi)*	1	1
13.	Virtua Cop 2 *(Sega)*	1	1
14.	Tournament Solitaire *(Dynamo)*	1	1
15.	Megatouch *(Merit)*	3	3
16.	Killer Instinct *(Midway)*	12	12
17.	Johnny Mnemonic *(Williams)*	2	2
18.	Indianapolis 500 *(Bally)*	3	3
19.	Viper Phase 1 *(Fabtek)*	2	1
20.	Tekken *(Namco)*	11	11
21.	Virtua Cop *(Sega)*	11	10
22.	The Addams Family *(Bally)*	46	46
23.	Golden Tee 3D Golf *(Incredible Tech.)*	2	0
24.	Star Trek: TNG *(Williams)*	24	23
25.	Zombie Raid *(American Sammy)*	1	0
26.	Sega Rally *(Sega)*	3	1
27.	Ace Driver *(Namco)*	7	0
28.	Solitaire Challenge *(Dynamo)*	18	10
29.	Big Hurt *(Premier)*	2	1
30.	World Cup Soccer *(Bally)*	18	18
31.	Jack-Bot *(Williams)*	2	1
32.	Point Blank *(Namco)*	6	1
33.	Ridge Racer 2 *(Namco)*	13	5
34.	OutRunners *(Sega)*	28	20
35.	Suzuka 8 Hours *(Namco)*	20	18
36.	Batman Forever *(Sega)*	3	2
37.	Ridge Racer *(Namco)*	22	9
38.	Virtua Racing *(Sega)*	38	27
39.	WWF Wrestlemania *(Midway)*	3	3
40.	No Fear *(Williams)*	7	6
41.	Samurai Shodown III *(SNK)*	1	0
42.	Bust-A-Move *(Taito)*	10	9
43.	Bust-A-Move Again *(Taito)*	1	0
44.	The Shadow *(Williams)*	11	5
45.	Suzuka 8 Hours 2 *(Namco)*	20	19
46.	Lucky & Wild *(Namco)*	29	5
47.	Lethal Enforcers *(Konami)*	39	36
48.	Waterworld *(Premier)*	2	1
49.	Lethal Enforcers II *(Konami)*	20	5
50.	T-MEK *(TWi)*	14	3
51.	Stargate *(Premier)*	8	5
52.	Road Show *(Williams)*	13	11
53.	Rescue 911 *(Premier)*	20	11
54.	Raiden DX *(Fabtek)*	12	8
55.	Virtua Fighter *(Sega)*	21	10
56.	Pinball Magic *(Capcom)*	2	0
57.	Desert Tank *(Sega)*	2	0
58.	X-Men *(Capcom)*	11	9
59.	Baywatch *(Sega)*	7	1
60.	Demolition Man *(Williams)*	20	12

VIDEO DEDICATED

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONGEVITY POINTS
1.	Alpine Racer *(Namco)*	9.77	59
2.	Daytona USA *(Sega)*	9.43	950
3.	Cruis'n USA *(Midway)*	9.28	815
4.	Air Combat 22 *(Namco)*	8.25	69
5.	Cyber Cycles *(Namco)*	8.20	162
6.	Virtua Fighter 2 *(Sega)*	8.16	582
7.	Area 51 *(TWi)*	8.06	49
8.	Virtua Cop 2 *(Sega)*	8.00	48
9.	Killer Instinct *(Midway)*	7.77	659
10.	Virtua Cop *(Sega)*	7.48	558
11.	Zombie Raid *(American Sammy)*	7.44	36
12.	Sega Rally *(Sega)*	7.41	102
13.	Ace Driver *(Namco)*	7.18	183
14.	Solitaire Challenge *(Dynamo)*	7.13	758
15.	Point Blank *(Namco)*	7.08	206

VIDEO KITS

1.	MK3 Ultimate *(Midway)*	9.83	60
2.	Tekken 2 *(Namco)*	9.16	174
3.	Marvel Super Heroes *(Capcom)*	8.71	55
4.	Mortal Kombat 3 *(Midway)*	8.41	447
5.	Tournament Solitaire *(Dynamo)*	7.88	47
6.	Megatouch *(Merit)*	7.82	160
7.	Viper Phase 1 *(Fabtek)*	7.57	50
8.	Tekken *(Namco)*	7.50	525
9.	Golden Tee 3D Gold *(Incredible Tech.)*	7.45	57
10.	WWF Wrestlemania *(Midway)*	6.85	98
11.	Samurai Shodown III *(SNK)*	6.80	20
12.	Bust-A-Move *(Taito)*	6.77	360
13.	Bust-A-Move Again *(Taito)*	6.75	18
14.	Lethal Enforcers *(Konami)*	6.63	1564
15.	Raiden DX *(Fabtek)*	6.52	298
16.	X-Men *(Capcom)*	6.33	449
17.	Twin Eagle II *(Seta)*	6.11	4
18.	Raiden II *(Fabtek)*	6.05	746
19.	Super Sidekicks 3*(SNK)*	6.05	19
20.	King of Fighters '95 *(SNK)*	6.03	30
21.	Street Fighter Alpha *(Capcom)*	6.00	127
22.	Aero Fighters 2 *(McO'River)*	5.90	145
23.	Street Slam *(Data East)*	5.90	27
24.	Great 1,000 Mile Rally *(Kaneko)*	5.88	795
25.	Aero Fighters 3 *(McO'River)*	5.88	26

PINBALLS

1.	Theatre of Magic *(Bally)*	8.14	427
2.	Johnny Mnemonic *(Williams)*	7.68	87
3.	Indianapolis 500 *(Bally)*	7.63	129
4.	The Addams Family *(Bally)*	7.46	2524
5.	Star Trek: TNG *(Williams)*	7.44	1247
6.	Big Hurt *(Premier)*	7.13	41
7.	World Cup Soccer *(Bally)*	7.11	732
8.	Jack-Bot *(Williams)*	7.11	31
9.	Batman Forever *(Sega)*	6.89	71
10.	No Fear *(Williams)*	6.82	243
11.	The Shadow *(Williams)*	6.68	343
12.	Waterworld *(Premier)*	6.63	52
13.	Stargate *(Premier)*	6.58	265
14.	Road Show *(Williams)*	6.56	526
15.	Resuce 911 *(Premier)*	6.53	600

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Equipment Poll

REDEMPTION

ALLEY BOWLERS

	GAME	MFG.	POINT VALUE
1.	ICE Ball	*(ICE)*	8.14
2.	Skee-Ball Lightning	*(Skee-Ball)*	7.38
3.	Skee-Ball	*(Skee-Ball)*	7.27
4.	Striker	*(Design Plus)*	7.14
5.	Smartball	*(Smart)*	6.76

SPORTS GAMES

1.	Hoop It Up	*(TWi)*	7.70
2.	Super Shot	*(Skee-Ball)*	7.50
3.	Sonic Blast Man	*(Taito)*	7.29
4.	Around the World	*(UETD)*	7.20
5.	Arm Champs	*(Jaleco)*	7.00
6.	Two Minute Drill	*(Taito)*	6.94
7.	Full Court Fever	*(ICE)*	6.85
8.	Full Court Frenzy	*(ICE)*	6.59
9.	Shoot to Win!	*(Smart)*	6.45
10.	UB-QB Football	*(Skee-Ball)*	6.32
11.	Hoop Shot	*(Doyle)*	5.73
12.	Pitch Hitter	*(Skee-Ball)*	5.70

COIN PUSHERS

1.	Jungle Jive	*(Coastal)*	8.47
2.	Klondike/Gold Coast	*(Fun Merchants)*	7.57
3.	Rock 'n Roll	*(Fun Merchants)*	7.40
4.	Rags to Riches	*(Smart)*	6.80
5.	Starburst	*(CCI)*	6.78

CRANES

1.	Rainbow	*(Rainbow)*	8.20
2.	Watch Box	*(Fun Merchants)*	7.80
3.	Jumbo Crane	*(Grayhound)*	7.50
4.	Candy Crane	*(Smart)*	7.32
5.	Treasure Chest	*(Classic)*	7.29
6.	Candy Shop	*(Grayhound)*	7.20
7.	Clean Sweep	*(Smart)*	7.16
8.	Big Choice	*(Fun Merchants)*	7.14
9.	Candy Man	*(Fun Merchants)*	7.00
10.	Hollywood Crane	*(Maxwell)*	5.94
11.	Action Claw	*(Fun Merchants)*	5.90
12.	Classic Watch Crane	*(Smart)*	5.86

CHILDREN'S GAMES

1.	Shoot to Win! Jr.	*(Smart)*	7.29
2.	1/2 Pint Frenzy	*(ICE)*	6.89
3.	Smart Toss Em	*(Smart)*	6.85
4.	Super Mario Mushroom	*(Premier)*	6.80
5.	Li'l Dump the Ump	*(Doyle)*	6.80
6.	Junior All American	*(UETD)*	6.67
7.	Barnyard Babies	*(Skee-Ball)*	650
8.	Awesome Toss Em	*(Lazer-Tron)*	6.42
9.	Bozo Basketball	*(Design Plus)*	6.38
10.	Hightops	*(Skee-Ball)*	6.00
11.	Toss Em	*(UETD)*	5.91
12.	Godzilla Wars Jr.	*(Namco)*	5.88

ROLL DOWNS

1.	Jungle Rama	*(Lazer-Tron)*	8.17
2.	Spin to Win	*(Lazer-Tron)*	7.81
3.	Spin-A-21	*(Lazer-Tron)*	6.60
4.	Quackers	*(Seidel)*	6.55
5.	Clown Rolldown	*(Bay Tek)*	6.29
6.	Rock N Roll	*(Bay Tek)*	6.20
7.	Tic-Tac-Toe	*(Skee-Ball)*	5.83

COIN DROP GAMES

1.	Smokin' Token	*(Seidel)*	8.14
2.	Super Rock-N-Bowl	*(Bromley)*	8.10
3.	Roll for Gold	*(Benchmark)*	8.00
4.	Screamin' Slopes	*(Midway)*	8.00
5.	Super Wheel 'M In	*(Bromley)*	7.75
6.	Home Run Hitter	*(CCI)*	7.63
7.	Wheel 'M In	*(Bromley)*	7.57
8.	Aftershock	*(Lazer-Tron)*	6.96
9.	Rock-N-Bowl	*(Bromley)*	6.86
10.	Addams Family Values	*(Midway)*	6.62
11.	Pirate's Gold	*(Lazer-Tron)*	6.60
12.	The Mask	*(Data East)*	6.38
13.	Coin Circus	*(American Sammy)*	6.36
14.	Sonic the Hedgehog	*(Sega)*	6.22
15.	Super Bank It II	*(Lazer-Tron)*	6.17
16.	Super Bank It	*(Lazer-Tron)*	5.79

NOVELTY

1.	Cyclone	*(ICE)*	9.13
2.	Colorama	*(Bromley)*	9.00
3.	Dinoworld	*(Planet Earth)*	8.88
4.	Dinoscore	*(Planet Earth)*	8.16
5.	Fling Shot	*(Planet Earth)*	8.00
6.	Spider Stompin'	*(Jaleco)*	7.63
7.	Dino Rally	*(Bromley)*	7.50
8.	Circus Hi-Rise	*(Skee-Ball)*	7.44
9.	Ribbit Racin	*(Lazer-Tron)*	7.30
10.	Killer T-Rex	*(Smart)*	7.17
11.	Flip-N-Win	*(Planet Earth)*	6.94
12.	Robo-Bop	*(Coastal)*	6.89
13.	Swamp Stomp	*(Lazer-Tron)*	6.88
14.	Wacky Gator	*(Data East)*	6.84
15.	Magic Mr. X	*(American Sammy)*	6.80
16.	Feed Big Bertha	*(Smart)*	6.79
17.	Cracky Crab	*(Namco)*	6.75
18.	Dump the Ump	*(Doyle)*	6.73
19.	Triple Play	*(CCI)*	6.60
20.	Ring Toss	*(Lazer-Tron)*	6.55
21.	Hungry Hungry Hippos	*(ICE)*	6.25
22.	Pop-A-Ball	*(Coastal)*	6.19
23.	Wheelin-N-Dealin	*(Lazer-Tron)*	6.17
24.	Simple Simon	*(American Sammy)*	6.15
25.	Pop-A-Tac-Toe	*(Coastal)*	6.15
26.	Pop-A-Slot	*(Coastal)*	6.09
27.	Buddy Bear	*(Smart)*	6.09
28.	Hop-A-Tic-Tac-Toe	*(Data East)*	5.86
29.	Cosmo Gang	*(Data East)*	5.80
30.	Whac-A-Mole	*(Bob's Space Racers)*	5.78
31.	Steer Crazy	*(Fun Industries)*	5.71

Results are based on monthly Equipment Poll ballot returns. Point Value: average of ballot ratings on a scale of 1-10. Longevity Points: determined by standings in Video & Pinball combined column (#1 game receives 60 points, #2 game receives 59 points, etc.)

Indicates new or reappearing games.

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The electronic mailbag and other curiosities

Readers old enough to remember "The Perry Como Show" may recall the weekly segment in which Perry was serenaded with a zippy little tune that said, "Letters, letters, we get lots and lots of letters." Perry would fulfill requests for favorite songs with characteristic enthusiasm, which for him meant a half-smile and a half-turn on the stool he was sitting on. Perry was the king of "laid back" before it became a pop culture term.

Most of our recent letters have been the electronic kind. Four out of five e-mail inquiries involve laser tag systems: "I am considering opening a laser tag arena and would like information on start-up costs, vendors, pricing, dealers, — etc. Can you help me?" Or, "I am interested in opening a laser tag entertainment facility in our small tourist town."

Bonnie Theard
Managing Editor

Other inquiries have included requests for information on kiddie rides, virtual reality, CD jukeboxes, coin and bill readers, touch screens, and the ill-fated dollar coin. The most intriguing inquiry came from a second grade student in Minnesota: "I am doing an independent study project on video games, who makes them (jobs and people), how they are made, how they work. Would you please send information to help me. I want to design video games someday." If we could not respond on the Internet he gave us his "snail address."

Play Meter is now a clearing house of information on the industry, you ask? Actually this is nothing new. The editorial department fields at least a dozen calls a week on a wide range of topics. Most callers tell us they got our name from AMOA. Whether they are college students compiling reports, individuals preparing business plans, or investment firms doing comprehensive studies for clients, they tell us they are immediately referred to the trade press for answers to their questions.

Here's a sample of a typical week's calls:

1. A man considering purchasing a small chain of arcades wanted to know what larger chains would want to join with him on the acquisition.

2. An Australian couple currently residing in the United States sought material on family entertainment center operations to use when they return home.

3. A young songwriter said he was referred to us by BMI for information on how to get his songs published.

4. An entertainment magazine wanted the exact day of the month and year that *Pac-Man* was introduced.

5. A man seeking an old pinball game for his basement was told by the game's manufacturer to contact us.

6. An East Coast business school wanted information on the size and scope of the industry and the outlook for the future.

7. A Texas woman wanted statistics on maintenance costs for an arcade, staff requirements, and the number of games to put in a proposed location near a university that has its own game room.

8. A free-lance writer doing an article on the pinball market wanted statistics.

9. A man who developed an adult-oriented game wanted to find an experienced licensing negotiator to get his product on the market.

10. While conducting a study on total consumer spending on entertainment, Arthur Anderson Consulting wanted to know how much of that pie would be from coin-operated games.

11. A Las Vegas college student wanted industry cashbox figures for the last 10 years.

12. A businessman looking to change careers wanted information on how to start a family entertainment center. (Do you have a few weeks?)

We answer all inquiries as best we can and refer those we cannot help to a source that is more on-point. We are not beyond saying we don't have a clue when the request is far beyond our reach. In the meantime we manage to complete our real job, which is to deliver a first-rate industry magazine to your door.

Since a major share of inquiries involve statistics, the publication of our 1996 State of the Industry Survey in this issue is sure to create an avalanche of requests for the newest data.

Hold on a minute...there is a call on line three...something about annual revenue per game per square foot. Anybody want to take that call? I'm busy writing an editorial. ▲

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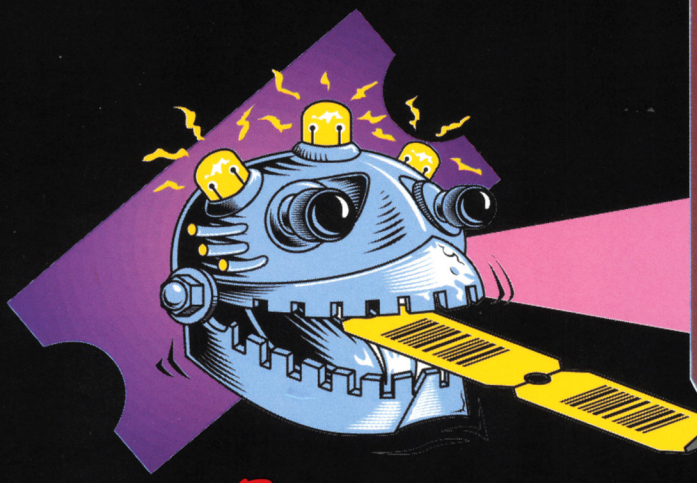

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January / Febuary Issue No. 6

Canada - Blades of Blood
Approximate Collections/Week:
$220.00 for first 5 days = approximatly $44.00/day
Weeks in Operation: *Less than a week*
Type of Location: *Arcade*
Size of Marquee: *Full*
Slot Size: *1 slot 33" monitor*
Game Specifications: 50 cents to start/ 50 cents to continue

SECTIONS

CURRENT NEO GEO HITS
COMING ATTRACTIONS
THE INSIDE TRACK
FEEDBACK
TOMMY'S TECH TIPS

CURRENT NEO–GEO HITS

BLADES OF BLOOD
SAMURAI SHODOWN III
Excellent earnings, please refer to the various earning reports throughout this newsletter.
BLADES OF BLOOD
comes with a full size 4/color marquee, and we've had great response from the playing and game reviewing public.

PUZZLE DE PON
Great mix for your NEO GEO. Puzzle game similar to Bust a Move but with special features and "wild card" bubbles that add to the fun, action and strategy.

(No. CA) **California** *Third week*

Daytona	$622.25
Sega Rally	$467.25
Area 51	$398.75
Tekken 2	$398.75
Virtua Cop	$398.75
Virtua Fighter 2	$371.50
Marvel Super Hero	$370.00
Blades of Blood	$359.00

(So. CA) **Los Angeles - Blades of Blood**
Fourth week's collections
$550.00

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Real Bout
World Tour Golf
Kunio's Dodgeball Game
and much, much, more, but we are not at liberty to tell you just yet. shhhhh, it's a secret.....

NEO GEO

MESSAGE FROM TRACY TATE
NATIONAL SALES MANAGER

I want to start off with my appreciation for the great amount of feed back that we have received from our newsletter and other direct mailers. I am overwhelmed by the number of positive calls and letters that I have had the pleasure to deal with personally. Many of you were satisfied with the simple fact that the communication between Manufacturer, Distributor and Operator has been greatly improved in regards to the SNK product line, while others found the operating and technical tips of great assistance. All in all it was realized that up to date information is valuable in this day and age, and we at SNK are committed to keeping all parties informed in the future.

In the last newsletter I challenged you to do a few things differently in how you operate your NEO GEO system. Without being too repetitive it boiled down to this, a clean fully functioning cabinet, a single slot format, higher coinage and the utilization of our new dedicated marquee. Some of you have adopted this new procedure and contacted us with very positive results. Some of your reply's were " I had no idea that my five year old NEO GEO could perform with the best of them", or " I will no longer ignore the title capabilities of your system". I hope that there are many more of you that we have not heard from who have shared this great success.

READ ON, this newsletter contains information about coming titles, a refreshing new look to our 1-slot kit, our countertop conversion kit that is just around the corner, cranes, and Nationwide, "BLADES OF BLOOD", earnings that you provided!

P.S.- "PUZZLE de PON!" looks like a winner, this is the perfect compliment to your NEO GEO system that adds variety. We will be forwarding you National earnings shortly.

Also, in compliance to public concerns "BLADES OF BLOOD" is SNK's first title to implement the Parental Advisory Warning in the attract mode.

By Tracy Tate - SNK National Sales Manager
Ph. (408) 358-8522 or Fax (408) 358-8524

OPERATOR FEEDBACK

From now on, in this section we will have an OPERATOR CHALLENGE". We will present some comments and feedback that we have received from our survey and warranty cards. We will then propose an OPERATOR CHALLENGE" that pertains to the comment or feedback listed. Everyone is invited to respond. The first 100 responses will receive a new
BLADES OF BLOOD
Samurai Shodown III T-Shirt (Only one T-Shirt per person). Get ready to participate and communicate!

"Would like for you to continue your trade-ins. We are looking for your Samurai III"
-J. Lee
JJJ, Inc. (CA)

Editor's response:
Thanks Mr. Lee for your comment. First of all, Samurai III is NOW AVAILABLE, please contact your distributor and order today. Secondly, the trade in programs we've implemented in the past were not met with much enthusiasm from Operators and Distributors alike. As a result, we decided to discontinue these programs.

OPERATOR CHALLENGE:
Because of comments such as that of Mr. J. Lee, we would like to re-evaluate the possibilities of future trade-in and rebate programs. As a result, please provide any suggestions you may have that will ensure a successful rebate or trade in program.

Please send responses to:
OPERATOR FEEDBACK - January 1996
SNK CORPORATION OF AMERICA
20603 Earl Street
Torrance, CA 90503

*Remember, first 100 responses will receive a Blades of Blood T-Shirt.

TOMMY'S TECH TIPS

Eat right, exercise, don't smoke and be healthy! After triple bypass surgery, this is Tommy's best tip. Sorry folks, there will be no tech tips this issue. Tommy is on the road to recovery after triple bypass surgery, and the Doctor told him to stay home! We wish Tommy our best and we hope he gets well soon because we miss him!

NEO-NEWS

MESSAGE FROM JEFF YANTZ
EASTERN REGIONAL SALES MANAGER
"A Model for Success for Your NEO GEO System"

A lot of the conversations I get into with NEO GEO operators consist of questioning them and talking to them about how often they rotate new titles into their systems. Many stay in tune with the new titles and at least try a few new releases, and then there are some who play the "let's wait and see how it does" game. They will check collections from other operators and buy the piece a considerable time after it has been released. They will then put it out on location, and wonder why it's not doing the numbers of when it was released months ago. This is especially the case with some of the fighting games.

(MN) **Minneapolis - Blades of Blood**
Third week's collections
$390.00

One reason the NEO GEO System was developed was for the ease for an operator to switch games without taking the cabinet back into the shop, taking out the old board, installing a new board, cleaning up the cabinet, taking the cabinet with the new kit back out to location, etc.. It also gives an operator the opportunity to put many games in one cabinet, saving space and still offering the players a good mix of games. Doing all of this in a timely fashion and low cost compared to some other kits on the market.

Believe it or not, the Japanese, Latin America and other countries actually rotate to new NEO GEO cartridges (on average) every 5-6 weeks. They have conditioned their player base to look for a new title every 45 days and the players do respond and check out the newest title. Some titles may last longer than others depending on the longevity of the game but it does prove to be a successful model.

Sometimes the "wait and see" attitude deteriorates the collections on your NEO GEO Systems. You are losing out on those "up front collections" on a new release. That is when the game is new and the players want to "check it out" and it usually will pay for itself quite quickly and start making you money. I understand that the U.S. market and players are different than the countries who use the model but wouldn't it be a good idea to start training your players to know that a new NEO GEO piece comes out every 2 months at your location. I think the earnings in your cash box would tell you it would be a great idea.

I know of some operators that have success in the U.S. with the following configuration at a location. They place one 1slot NEO GEO with the newest title and a dedicated header in a location (or maybe in a 33" or 50" cabinet) and they place a 2 slot or 4 slot NEO GEO right next to it for the nearly new titles or steady earners for the location. This configuration conditions the players to check out the new title in the dedicated cabinet and also allows the players an opportunity to play some of the nearly new titles in the 2 slot or 4 slot cabinet. Many of the progressive operators are doing exactly that or just using two 1 slot cabinets (both with dedicated headers) and are being quite successful at it.

My point is that the NEO GEO System has been working for operators for 6 years and continues to be a good return on investment, but not if the cartridges are not up to date. What's your model for success on your NEO GEO System? Do you have one or are you still using that two year old cartridge and wondering why it is not making you great money?

By Jeff Yantz - SNK Eastern Regional Sales Manager
(517) 893-2611 or
E-mail at Jkyaz@aol.com

THE INSIDE TRACK

TAKE SOME WOOD AND MAKE IT GOOD.....
The NEO GEO Counter Top Conversion Kit is closer to reality. Coming soon is a NEO GEO Counter Top Conversion Kit. This conversion kit will enable you to convert many counter tops to a one slot NEO GEO. Each conversion kit will include a one slot board, control panel overlay, side graphics, controls, and of course, installation instructions.

(OH) **Cleveland - Blades of Blood**
First week's collections
$398.75

Virgina - Blades of Blood
Approximate Collections/Week: ***$248.00***
Weeks in Operation: *1st week*
Type of Location: *Mall arcade*
Size of Marquee: *Full*
Slot Size: *1 slot*
Game Specifications: 50 cents to start/ 50 cents to continue

Contact your distributor for more details.

VIVA Las Vegas ...SNK will be exhibiting at the NIGHT CLUB & BAR convention this January at the Bally's Hotel in Las Vegas. We will be showing a counter top crane machine that will be ideal for the tavern market. For those of you that did not attend the AMOA in New Orleans, we had several one and two player cranes, called NEO CARNIVALS as well as capsule cranes, called CANDY CAPSULE on display at our booth. So, if your cruising the NIGHT CLUB & BAR Convention, come check us out, our booth numbers are 1124, and 1025. Currently these cranes are not available just yet in the U.S.... We'll have an update for you in the next issue.

(NC)**Charlotte - Blades of Blood**
Third week's collections
$221.00

Do you ever do NEO GEO Tournaments at your location? Have you ever wanted to do a NEO GEO Tournament at your location, but did not know how?

Florida - Blades of Blood
Approximate Collections/Week: ***$242.00***
Weeks in Operation: *2 weeks*
Type of Location: *Arcade*
Size of Marquee: *Small*
Slot Size: *4 slot*
Game Specifications: 25 cents to start/ 25 cents to continue

We'd like to hear from you.....Depending on the feedback, we may have some tournament packages available to you to make your tournament a success!!!!! Tournaments are a great way to increase traffic and visibility, and you may be able to milk some PR from local papers and radio stations.
With the success of Blades of Blood, this title has tournament written all over it.

New look for the NEO GEO One Slot Kit
NEO GEO One Slot Kit has had a make-over! We've improved our graphics, and we've replaced the current logo plex with 2 pieces of 1/16" clear plex. This plex is provided for you to sandwich the current four color malleable marquees that are now included with every new hit cartridge. We have had tremendous positive feed back on our new malleable 4 color marquees. We have found that installing a full size marquee increases earnings and visibility. Once our current inventory of red kits are depleted, we will begin shipping our sleek updated One Slot kits....Keep a look out.

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Harrah's New Orleans casino closes, declares bankruptcy

In a move that sent shock waves through the local community, Harrah's closed the doors of its temporary land-based casino in New Orleans in late November and halted construction of a permanent facility being built at the foot of the city's major thoroughfare, Canal Street.

The company, along with several other investor groups, punctuated this action by filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. Along with the loss of more than 2,000 jobs, the move has thrown both the city of New Orleans and the state government into a budget crisis with the looming loss of millions in projected tax revenue and concessions.

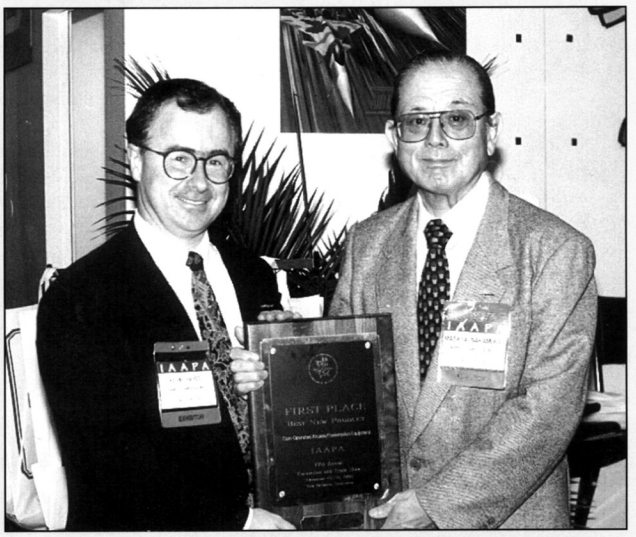
Testifying before state regulators following the closure, company officials said they could reopen the temporary casino early this year if their license is not challenged for four months. Harrah's also said it intended to reorganize within 90 days if it can receive tax concessions from both the state and the city.

Company officials have said the closure, and subsequent court filings, became necessary when they could not guarantee a $175 million line of credit from Bankers Trust to the local operating company, Harrah's Jazz. The guarantee was necessary, according to the bank, because revenues fell so far below earlier projections that it constituted a change in the previous agreement.

Harrah's Jazz is comprised of Memphis-based Harrah's Entertainment, which owns 53 percent of the casino; a group of nine local investors known as Jazzville, which owns 13.7 percent of the venture; and Grand Palais (representing resort developer Christopher Hemmeter), which has a 33.3 percent ownership.

Several lawsuits have already been filed against Harrah's as a result of the closure, and legal and political analysts predict a flurry of litigation surrounding the failed casino venture to ensue. Local media has also quoted outgoing Gov. Edwin Edwards as saying several other casino companies have expressed interest in taking over the project.

Proud Winners



Namco's Kevin Hayes (l) and Mr. Masaya Nakamura show off the company's award for best new game, *Alpine Racer*, at IAAPA '95. Following on that success, the company has announced three new releases: the gun game *Time Crisis*, a fighting kit entitled *Soul Edge*, and the one-player driver *Dirt Dash*. Look for more on the new games next month.

Clinton supports gambling study

President Bill Clinton has expressed support for a Congressional proposal to create a committee that would study the impact of gaming across the country.

"Too often public officials view gambling as a quick easy way to raise revenues without focusing on gambling's hidden social, economic, and political costs," the president wrote to supporters of the proposal. "I have long shared your view about the need to consider carefully all of the effects of gambling, and I support the establishment of a commission for this purpose."

The proposed commission would look at the economic impact of gambling, as well as other issues such as political contributions and their influence, the relationship to crime rates, and the problems of regulating Indian gaming operations, *Businesswire* reported.

House and Senate versions call for different versions of the committee, likely sending the measure to a conference committee for final approval if each passes.

Sega Gaming applies for Nevada license

As part of its effort to apply for a gaming manufacturing and distributing license in Nevada, Sega Gaming recently filed paperwork with that state to become a Nevada corporation.

The subsidiary of Sega Enterprises will be known as Sega Gaming Technology. "This is the next logical step toward pursuing a Nevada gaming license," explained company chairman Joe Robbins. "We headquartered the company in Las Vegas, made application with Nevada state authorities, and now we will be structured as a Nevada corporation."

Sega Gaming markets a number of gaming products, including *Royal Ascot, Golden Night 21, Bingo Party,* and the new *Super Dice* machine. The company distributes games to casinos worldwide with the exception of Nevada.

Said company president Doug Sanderson: "I feel very positive about the way we have shortened our timetable and are ahead of schedule in getting the company to this point. It shows this company is serious about being a major player on the specialty games front in Nevada, the most important gaming market in the world."

Sega Gaming announced its intention to apply for a license in Nevada last fall. The company also has offices in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.; Chicago, Ill.; Glasgow, Scotland; and Sydney, Australia.

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Hogen joins Indian gaming commission

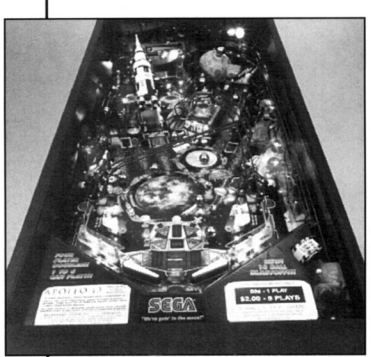
Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt has appointed former U.S. Attorney Philip Hogen as an associate commissioner to the National Indian Gaming Commission.

The commission, which was created by Congress when it passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988, is composed of three commissions, two of whom are appointed by the Secretary of the Interior. The third member is appointed by the President. Commission members are charged with the regulation and monitoring of certain types of gaming activities on Indian land.

Hogen, who is an enrolled member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, was a partner in the law firm of DeMerssemen in Rapid City, S.D. Prior to that, he served for over 10 years as the U.S. Attorney for the district of South Dakota and has extensive experience in law relating to Indian gaming.

"Indian gaming transpires in a very dynamic environment," Hogen said. "While the commission must thoroughly exercise its oversight responsibilities, it must constantly be aware of the needs of Indian tribal governments. Decisions and reviews must be made on a timely basis by the commission and it must recognize the right of the tribes to make business and economic decisions related to gaming which affect the future."

Sega Pinball displays playfield art process



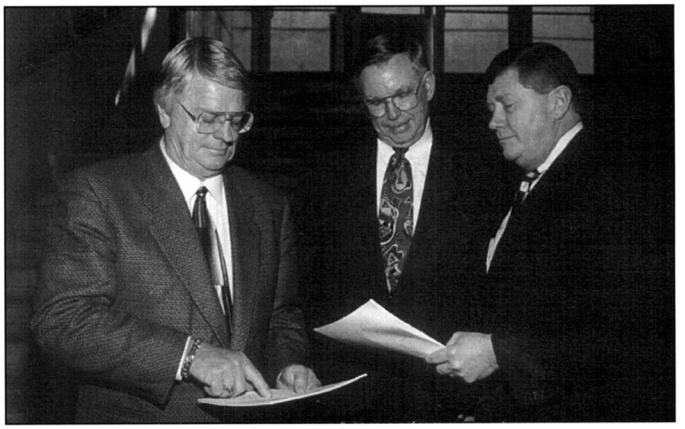
Sega Pinball's new four-color process has opened up the spectrum for pinball art design.

With the introduction of its new *Apollo 13* game, Sega Pinball has unveiled a new four-color playfield and butyrate that is going to make the world of pinball a brighter place.

"We have opened up the spectrum for millions of colors," said the company's art director Jeff Busch. "Never before have pinball machines looked this good."

According to the company, most games have been limited to approximately 12 colors. But the time and money invested in the new process are going to change that picture in the future.

"There is a big difference between the games of old and our new printing process," said executive vice president Joe Kaminkow.



Comparing notes at the NAMA show in Dallas, (l-r): chairman Donald Hesch, senior vice chairman Bill Burch, and secretary/treasurer G. Michael Cronk.

NAMA elects new officers

The National Automatic Merchandising Association elected officers and new directors at its annual convention and trade show, held in October in Dallas, Texas.

New officers are chairman Donald Hesch of A.H. Vending and Food Services in Rolling Meadows, Ill.; senior vice chairman Bill Burch of Burch Food Services in Sikeston, Mo.; vice chairman Robert Muller of Crane Engineered Materials and Crane Merchandising Systems; and secretary/treasurer G. Michael Cronk of Business Services Group, ARAMARK Services Inc. in Philadelphia, Pa.

Directors elected at the annual business meeting include incumbent Burch; Jerry Dunwoody of Valley Vend in Rome, Ga.; incumbent Frank Feist of ABI Food Services in Birmingham, Ala.; incumbent J.E. "Eddie" Hicks of Servomations Intl. in Clifton Park, N.Y.; Stewart Lyman of Polyvend in Conway, Ark.; Devendra Mishra of V.S.A. Inc. in Denver, Colo.; and incumbent Alan J. Suitor of Automatic Products Intl. in St. Paul, Minn.

Thomas Bos of A.D. Bos Co. in Holland, Mich., along with Thom Chafey of Facility Food Service in Phoenix, Ariz., and Terry Collins of TLC Refreshment Vending in Peoria, Ariz., were given NAMA Chairman's Awards for their efforts in Michigan and Arizona legislatures respectively to recognize vending sales as another retail delivery system.

Edison Bros. gets court approval for financing

Edison Brothers Stores Inc. has received final court approval of the company's debtor-in-possession financing agreement, which call for BankAmerica Business Credit to provide $200 million in post-petition financing.

The money will be used for general operating needs during the reorganization period. Edison Brothers filed to reorganize under Chapter 11 on Nov. 3, 1995.

"The agreement will provide more than sufficient financial resources for our merchandising and other operating requirements going forward," said Edison Brothers' chairman Alan Miller.

A company request to close 473 stores has also received court approval. Edison Brothers is based in St. Louis and operates retail apparel and footwear stores and entertainment centers in the United States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Mexico, and Canada.

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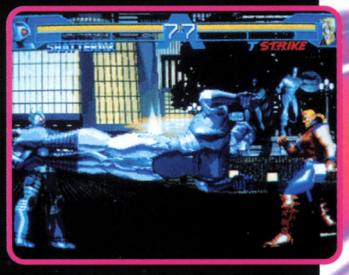

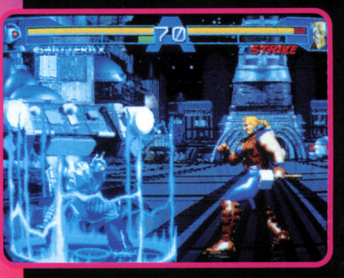

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Asahi Seiko USA broke ground last fall on a new 24,600-square-foot facility scheduled to be completed this month.

Asahi Seiko opens Las Vegas factory

Completion of a new 24,600-square-foot facility being developed by Asahi Seiko USA at the Hughes Airport Center in Las Vegas, Nev., is scheduled for this month, the company reports.

The facility will allow the American subsidiary of Asahi Seiko Co. Ltd. of Tokyo, Japan, to begin producing their products in the United States as early as March.

Heading up the Las Vegas office will be president Chris "Kaz" Abe with the following management team under his direction: sales manager Pamela Hugill-Schaeffer, accounting manager Margaret Green, warehouse manager Baron Schlegel, and production manager Larry Lussier.

The first items to be manufactured will be the company's DH-750 Series gaming hoppers with plans to expand into amusement and vending products and employ an additional 30 to 50 people within the next year. Plans are also on the books to expand the company's engineering department in this country in order to respond to an ever-changing market and provide better design times on custom products.

Asahi Seiko, a leader in coin handling equipment for over 25 years, first opened a United States branch in 1989 to facilitate better distribution of its product in North, South, and Central America. The office has expanded sales from $1 million to $12 million during that time and seen its staff grow from three to 17.

Indian gaming tax derailed

Indian country emerged as one of the few victors in the budget battles between Congress and the Clinton administration.

A tax proposed by the House of Representatives on Indian gaming revenues was left out of the budget reconciliation bill hammered out between House and Senate lawmakers. The proposal would have levied a 35 percent tax on gaming revenue.

"We're relieved House and Senate conferees decided to drop the tax," said Rick Hill, chairman of the National Indian Gaming Association. "The House tax proposal was much more than an Indian gaming issue. It endangered tribal sovereignty at its core. It would have ignored 200 years of federal law and policy and destroyed budding tribal economies in some of the poorest regions of the United States."

While the House pushed strongly for the measure, the Senate did not include the tax in its initial budget draft. Republican Sen. Pete Domenici of New Mexico, who chairs the Senate Budget Committee and has been a tribal ally, played a pivotal role in jettisoning the gaming tax.

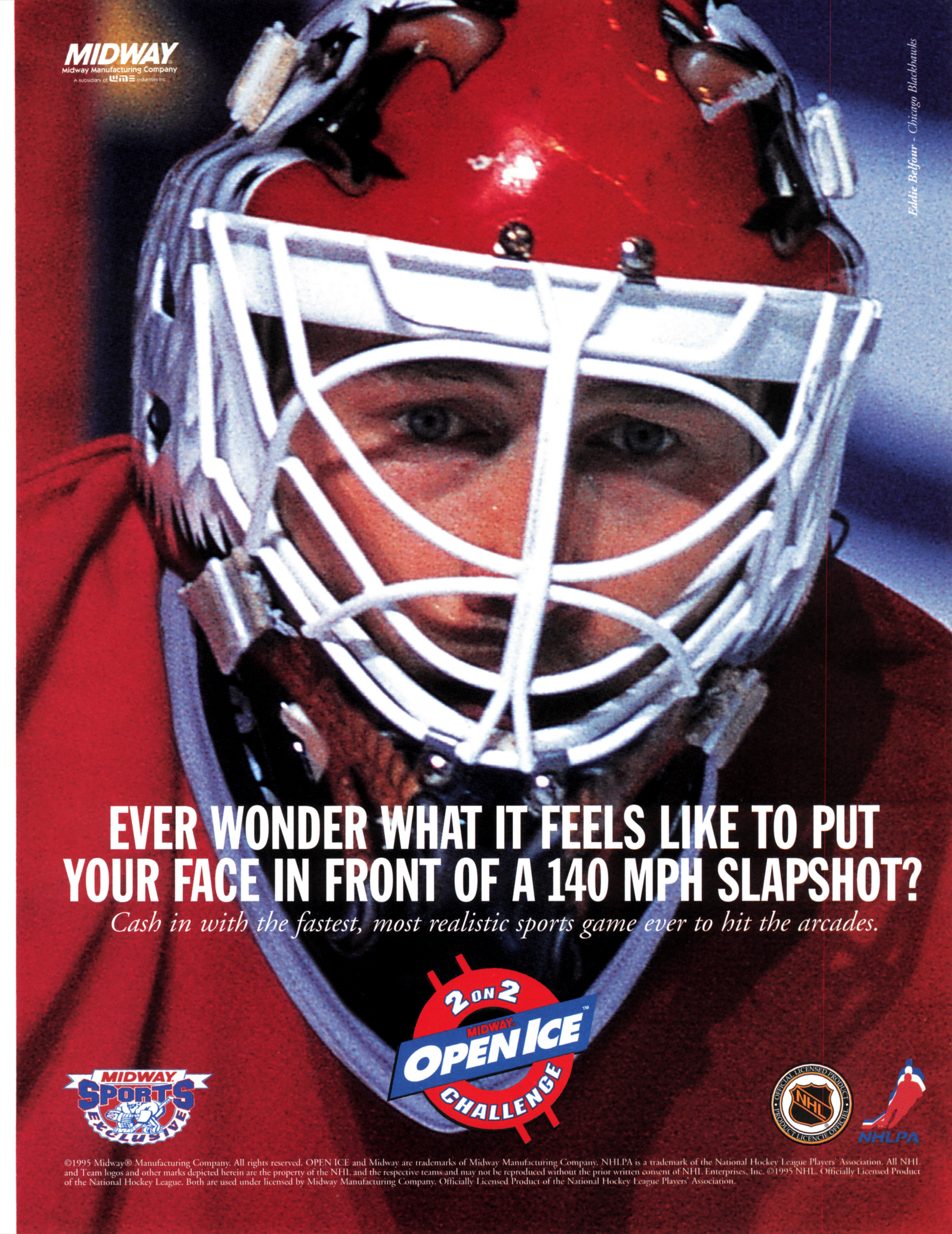
Disney teams with ACME for seminars

When the American Coin Machine Exposition opens at Orlando's Orange County Convention/Civic Center, March 7-9, the magic of Disney will be present via three seminars.

The Disney University Professional Development Program will present the seminars, entitled Management, Service, and Creativity—Disney Style. The cost for all three sessions is $60. Showgoers can also pay $30 for each single session.

"In our 10th anniversary year, adding the Disney name to our educational programs is just one more element that keeps ACME at the leading edge of expositions for the coin-operated amusement industry," said show committee chairman Bill Cravens of Bulldog Amusements.

For more information, contact ACME '96 show management, William T. Glasgow Inc., 16066 South Park Ave., South Holland, Ill. 60473-1500; (708) 333-9292; fax (708) 333-4086.



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Networked tourney on 3D Golf begins

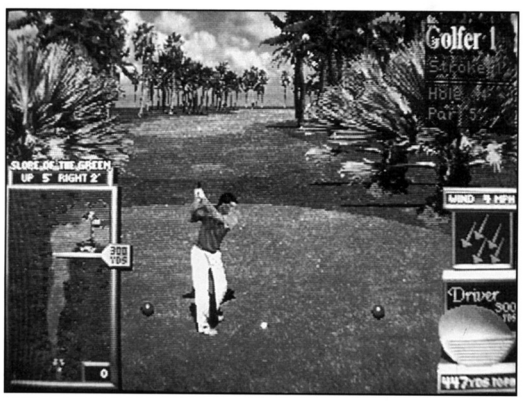
Incredible Technologies recently launched the first public test of it International Tournament System (ITS) with the help of American Vending Sales and six Chicago area operators.

A special tournament version of *Peter Jacobsen's Golden Tee 3D Golf* was put in sports bars and taverns around the Chicago area, and Incredible Technologies is guaranteeing a cash prize of $1,000 to the player with the best score over the three-week tournament period. Second, third, and fourth place will get $500, $300, and $200 respectively.

The test consisted of 24 dedicated games, designed to best accommodate the golf game and tournament features. They are connected to a standard telephone jack at their location, and at night or during off hours the game automatically dials a toll-free number and connects to the ITS central computer. During a short call, tournament data is sent to the central computer and updated information is received by the game.

Early reports indicate that the tournament concept is a big hit with players. "It looks like we've got a real winner," said Wally Jasonowicz of A.H. Entertainers. "The only problem we've heard so far is the cash box filling up too fast."

Incredible Technologies reports that initial test will be used to address such specifics as play formats, pricing strategies, billing procedures, and awarding prizes. For more information, contact the company at (708) 870-7027.



Incredible Technologies has put its International Tournament System into practice, conducting a tournament on *Peter Jacobsen's Golden Tee 3D Golf* at bars and taverns throughout the Chicago area.

The 16th Annual VNEA Championship, being held May 24-June 1 at the Riviera Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, Nev., will utilize 180 Valley pool tables.

Dates set for VNEA pool championships

The 16th Annual VNEA Championship will be held May 24-June 1 at the Riviera Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, Nev., where 5,000 of the world's best amateur pool players will converge to compete for an estimated $350,000 in cash prizes.

Players representing the United States, Australia, the Bahamas, Bermuda, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and the United Kingdom will go head-to-head in 16 different divisions on 180 Valley pool tables.

Festivities will include the ever-popular Suds & Chips Mixer, live performances, and an extravagant Awards Banquet Finale.

A summer date has also been set for the 6th Annual VNEA International Junior Championships. The event will be held at the Sioux City Convention Center in Sioux City, Iowa, June 21-23.

Male and female players will comprise teams that will be competing in one of the following three divisions: Youth Division (ages 9-13), Minors Division (ages 14-17), and Majors Division (ages 18-20).

There will also be the 8-Ball Singles competition, and team members can spawn off on their own and match skills against the rest of the highly talented field of competitors. Also joining forces with the juniors will be adult players in the Adult/Junior Scotch Doubles contest.

For more information on either event, contact VNEA executive director Greg Elliott at (800) 544-1346.

Laser Storm licenses "Stargate" for games

Laser Storm has reportedly obtained the licensing rights to the science fiction movie "Stargate." Utilizing the themes and designs from the movie, Laser Storm will present a series of laser tag games with a movie tie-in.

Designed in a mutlilevel format to become progressively more challenging, *Stargate Laser Tag* includes extensive elements from the action adventure movie.

The first *Stargate* arena opened as a company showcase facility at Funplex in Denver, Colo. *Stargate Laser Tag* was introduced to the industry at IAAPA as well.

"When you step through the *Stargate* you enter a whole new world of fun," said Laser Storm chief executive Bob Cooney.

Stargate comes in three sizes, and packages include electronic equipment, 24-48 player systems, themed arena, computer scoring, lighting, pre-show video, and a fog machine. Arenas are custom fitted to spaces of 2,000 square feet and up.

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IAAPA announces year of the roller coaster

The International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA), in cooperation with the American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE), has dubbed 1996 the International Year of the Roller Coaster.

"IAAPA is proud to recognize the enduring popularity of this magnificent structure designed to produce maximum thrills," said outgoing IAAPA president Ted Crowell. "The roller coaster symbolizes the purest form of fun in our industry."

Added incoming IAAPA president Geoffrey Thompson: "We'd like to celebrate history, charm, and the thrill of the roller coaster. Let's face it, the majority of the world's population both fears and loves a good scream machine."

Although the origin of the roller coaster traces its beginnings to 16th century Russia, the first commercial roller coaster made its debut 110 years ago in New York. In the 1920s, there were nearly 2,000 roller coasters, but many have been destroyed.

Today, there are approximately 260 roller coasters in North America. The states of California, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas have the most. This year the oldest wooden roller coaster in the world, located at Lakemont Park in Altoona, Pa., will be restored as the newest steel coaster debuts at Busch Gardens in Tampa Bay, Fla.

ACE is an all-volunteer, nor-for-profit organization dedicated to the preservation, appreciation, and enjoyment of the roller coaster. Founded in 1978, the organization has more than 5,000 members worldwide.

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Q-Zar launches new concept

Laser tag manufacturer Q-Zar introduced a new concept developed for the untapped pre-teen market, Q-Tag, at the IAAPA show in New Orleans.

"A Q-Tag center will provide kids with a more exciting party venue than the traditional Discovery Zone-style outlet," said the company's Tom Butler. "Q-Tag is more exciting, appeals to a wider market, and capital costs are less than 50 percent of the total required to open a typical soft play center."

Features include laser guns designed for smaller hands, with a protective rubber tip and arena elements designed with particular emphasis on safety. Stationary walls have rounded edges, and a specially trained game marshall supervises the younger competitors.

The company estimates that the new product will generate in excess of $6 million in additional revenue and $3 million in net income in fiscal 1996.

Q-Zar has also filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission to register the common shares of the company for inclusion on the NASDAQ national market with a listing

News Briefs

■ Acclaim Entertainment is backing the launch of more than 50 new interactive home games with a $10 million advertising and marketing campaign. New titles, including *NFL Quarterback Club '96, Frank Thomas Big Hurt Baseball,* and *WWF WrestleMania: The Arcade Game* will be supported by broadcast commercials, print advertising, radio promotions, cross promotions with online services, and direct marketing. In other Acclaim news, the company has also announced a February release of the new fighting game *Rise II: Resurrection* for Saturn, PlayStation, and PC CD-ROM. A later version will be released for Windows 95.

■ Veryfine Products Inc. has received the DuPont Award for innovation in packaging. The company was recognized among entries submitted from seven countries worldwide for its multilayer juice container which maintains product quality by preventing oxygen transfer that causes color and flavor degradation.

■ The Illinois Gaming Board has renewed Bally Gaming's supplier license to sell slots and video product in the coming year. "As a company we are proud that we remain licensed in every legal jurisdiction in the world where licensing is required," said company president Hans Kloss.

■ Konami Co. Ltd. will use Spatializer Audio Laboratories' Spatializer 3-D stereo in its new racing game *Midnight Run.* The stereo will give players the aural sensation of being right in the middle of the action.

■ 3Dfx Interactive Inc. has signed a technical cooperation agreement with Alliance Semiconductor Corp. to provide 3-D graphics compatibility across a broad range of electronic entertainment platforms, ranging from mass market PCs to coin-op/arcade level systems. ▲

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Namco supports ATEI with largest stand

ATEI recently announced that multinational Japanese game manufacturer Namco has taken a 650-square-meter exhibit at its upcoming trade show set for Jan. 23-25 in London.

The exhibit will accommodate all sectors of the European group, including Brent Leisure Sales and Namco Europe. "ATEI is unquestionably the most important European exhibition in the amusement industry calendar and London is the perfect venue to represent Europe on the world stage," said Namco's European director Shane Breaks.

"Namco welcomes this opportunity to combine forces with Brent Leisure in putting on display a spectacular array of state-of-the-art, high-income products including *Alpine Racer, Tekken 2, Cyber Cycles,* and *Rave Racer.*"

According to ATEI, Namco is setting the standard for a broad range of companies that are increasing their stand requirements at the show. Said show sales manager Dawn Millroy: "A significant number of smaller enterprises are taking twice as much space as they did in '95, illustrating the invaluable role the show fulfills in helping businesses of all sizes prosper."

The show will also see important structural changes with the introduction of a Parks, Rides, and Family Entertainment Center section and the relocation of the International Casino Exhibition onto the first floors of Earls Court 1.

In other ATEI news, the show has been recognized by a new British award program, known as the Ambassadors for London, for its role in promoting London as a center for international trade. The award is co-sponsored by British Airways, Hilton Intl. Hotels, and the London Tourist Board.

Namco's Darren Fisher confirms the company's exhibit space, the largest at the show, with ATEI's Dawn Millroy.

ATEI's submission was supported by the government's Department of Trade and Industry, through joint activities between the two groups at the Inward Mission of international journalists. The submission highlighted the 276 percent growth in international buyers attending the show between 1991-95, the 35 percent increase in exhibitors, and the 11,869,239 air miles traveled by non British attendees in 1995.

The total earnings for London as a direct result of the ATEI '95 have been calculated at 1.7 million pounds, or $2.6 million, excluding air fares.

"The economic contributions made by the amusement industry have been documented elsewhere," said ATEI's Peter Rusbridge. "However, the benefits of attracting so many domestic and international visitors to London for ATEI, over and above orders taken at the show, are themselves highly significant. Clearly ATEI is not only a major industry force, but also plays a significant role in the economy of the capital city."

Virtual handshake crosses Atlantic

It's happened! The first deal has been consumated via handshake in cyberspace. Well almost. U.K.-based Division Ltd., which put on the demonstration, described it as the "world's first live demonstration of multiuser, immersive virtual reality over the Internet, using commercially available software."

The event took place on Nov. 28 when two people, one at the Computer Graphics Expo in London and the other at the Virtual Reality World Expo in Boston, came together in virtual space to shake hands.

According to Division, the two saw virtual representations of each other, handed objects back and forth, and worked together in a shared virtual environment. The products used to stage the demonstration, the company said, are currently in use by customers such as Ford, McDonnell Douglas, Bechtel, Glaxo, EDS, and British Aerospace.

Guadalajara show set for summer

The 4th Convention and Expo Diversiones, sponsored by the International Association of Manufacturers of Amusement Equipment for Parks and Fairs, will be held June 4-9 at the Convention and Trade Show Center in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.

A total of 667,400 square feet of exhibition area will be available, with a main hall featuring 154,800 square feet of covered space. Ceiling height is 24 feet, and booth capacity totals 775.

More than 5,000 qualified buyers are expected to attend, where they will see a wide range of entertainment products and services demonstrated.

For more information, contact Expo-Guadalajara, Av. LA PAZ No. 926 S.J., Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, C.P. 44100; (3) 614-30-15; fax (3) 615-14-83.

Tornado Intl. games heading for Siberia

Tornado Intl. Ltd., the U.K. manufacturer of coin and token-operated leisure products, recently announced the sale of five Orbiter bumper cars and one Aqua Blasta water jet game to Intl. Leisure and Arts, which plans to operate the attractions in Siberia.

The sale follows a previous one of 10 cars, two water jet games, and 10 remote-controlled Super Trucks, all of which were headed to Moscow.

"With the progressive changes that are taking place in Russia and the Eastern Block we are delighted with the response and popularity toward our all-age fun products," said Les Howarth, Tornado's sales director. "Our equipment proved to be very successful in an indoor family entertainment area in Moscow, which is also proving to be true in Siberia."

Intl. Leisure and Arts cited the flexibility of Tornado's Ridemaster safety system, which allows the cars to start and stop together as session play or run on individual coin/token operation, as one of the selling points. Tornado will be exhibiting its newly styled Orbiter cars at the 1996 ATEI show in London

AAMA to exhibit at Hotelex/Foodex China

With China being one of the biggest emerging markets for the coming century, the American Amusement Machine Association has decided to exhibit at the show's U.S. Pavilion.

The association has arranged for ACME show organizer William T. Glasgow Inc. to be the pavilion organizer and sole contact point for companies interested in exhibiting. An added incentive for association members will be a $250 rebate, which can be applied to participation in future AAMA-sponsored events.

According to Bill Glasgow, last year's show attracted 20,000 visitors which represented 5,000 amusement related businesses. Other products exhibited included a wide range of food items and equipment related to food service, as well as appliances, bar supplies, cleaning equipment, credit card services, office machines, paging systems, pest control, and refrigeration.

"China is market-ready for amusement products with a consumer base of one billion people who are currently enjoying increased standards of living and more disposable income," Glasgow said. "As China moves toward modernization, so will they move toward outlets for family entertainment. This will present a multitude of business opportunities for coin-operated/amusement business at every level of distribution."

The show will be held at the Intl. Exhibition Center in Shanghai, April 2-5. For more information, contact Professional Trade Show Management, 16066 South Park Ave., South Holland, IL 60473-1500; (708) 333-9292; fax (708) 333-4086.

Miniature golf arrives in China

In the land of the Great Wall, you can now see the Golden Gate Bridge, as well as a number of other American wonders such as the Statue of Liberty, the White House, the Washington Monument, and the Sears Tower.

All of these attractions are part of Spark Miniature Golf's Journey of America theme course. Four of these have been recently sold by the Reston, Va.,-based company's Jack Guo to entrepreneurs in China.

The courses were designed by Guo and Mini-Golf Inc (MGI) of Jessup, Pa., a company which specializes in the manufacture of prefabricated, portable miniature golf courses. China is only one of 16 foreign countries in which MGI courses have been located.

Four MGI's Journey of America miniature golf courses, featuring themed attractions such as the Statue of Liberty, have been sold in China.

Asian Amusement Expo adds day conference

The third annual Asian Amusement Expo will be held May 8-9 at the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre, and this year the program has been expanded to include a full day conference on May 7 as well.

Exhibits, which will be located in the Upper East Exhibit Hall, are expected to double in size in comparison to last year's show. Final attendance figures from last year tallied 1,756 visitors from over 23 countries.

The full day conference will feature concurrent sessions presented by the show's co-sponsors: the American Amusement Machine Association and the Intl. Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions. The two associations say they hope the sessions will serve to create added appeal and broaden audience participation in the show.

Show organizers say that by the turn of the century, Asia will be home to 400 million middle-class consumers and the Asian Amusement Expo offers a cost-effective marketing tool for reaching these potential markets. The coming year is also expected to see a relaxing of laws in Southeast Asia placing restrictions on amusement games.

For more information, contact William T. Glasgow Inc., 16066 South Park Ave., South Holland, IL 60473-1500; (708) 333-9292; fax (708) 333-4086.

Paradigm develops game for Nintendo

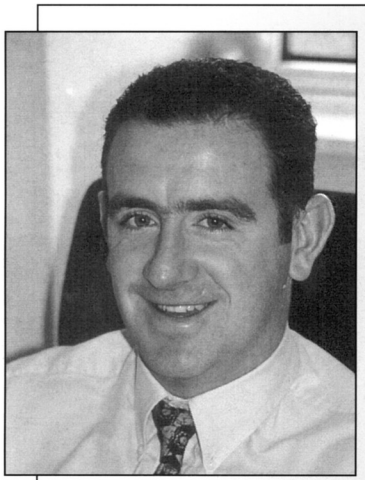
Paradigm Simulation recently unveiled its new game, *Pilotwings 64*, which was developed for Nintendo's new game platform, Nintendo 64. The game was first shown at the Shoshinkai trade show in Japan late last year.

Pilotwings 64 is the sequel to Sigeru Miyamoto's hit game *Pilotwings*, which reportedly sold 2,000,000 copies for the Super NES machines. Paradigm developed the new game with Vega UltraVision, a next generation software tool used for the development of 3-D game applications.

According to Paradigm, the game provides a fully interactive 3-D experience with features that include first- and third-person views, several different aircraft and multiple characters to choose from, ground-breaking animation and special effects, realistic landscapes, and several playing levels to accommodate all skill levels of players.

Paradigm, which is based in Dallas, specializes in visual and audio simulation and virtual reality products for use on Silicon Graphics computers.

"We chose Paradigm Simulation to develop *Pilotwings 64* because of its expertise in the simulation industry," said Howard Lincoln, president of Nintendo America. "Paradigm is producing an incredibly realistic game that is going to appeal to game players worldwide."



Jon Lancaster

Lancaster joins ATEI show team

In order to continue the future development and expansion of ATEI as a full-fledged one-stop show, the London exhibition has recruited World's Fair executive Jon Lancaster to serve as business development manager.

The new addition to the show team will be responsible for identifying new business potential both in the U.K. and abroad and will work alongside the existing staff who are responsible for staging the annual show.

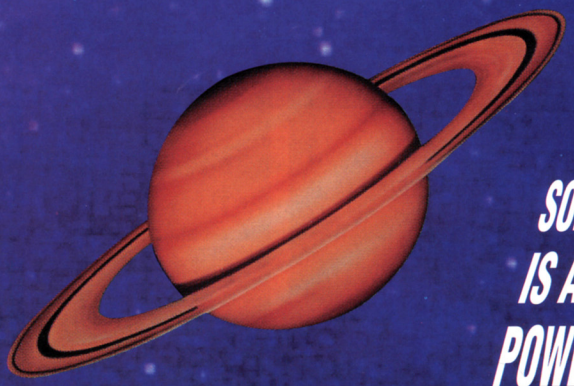
Said ATE chief executive Peter Rusbridge: "Jon brings with him a breadth of experience which will help ATE to continue looking forward whilst guaranteeing the same high level of service to our many existing customers, large and small. The expansion of what is an extremely dedicated team means that Dawn Millroy will now be concentrating exclusively on the vital operational side of the show, which becomes more demanding year by year."

GameNet acquires Ace, JPM, Crystal

The British firm Games Network Ltd. recently announced the acquisition of three related companies: JPM Intl. Ltd., Ace Coin Equipment Ltd., and Crystal Leisure Ltd.

"We believe that the gaming and games markets will grow substantially over the next few years and GameNet is positioning itself to capitalize on this growth," said financier Martyn Rees, who arranged the funding for the acquisition.

"It is our intention that these three proven companies be operated autonomously, with the long-term aim of firmly cementing their positions as strong and successful independent brands," a spokesperson for the newly formed group added. ▲



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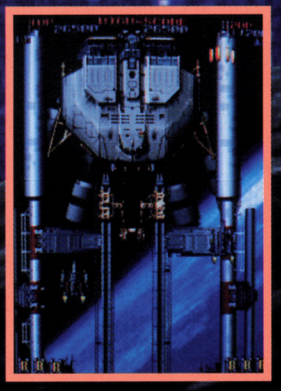

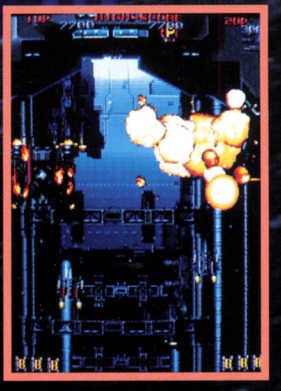

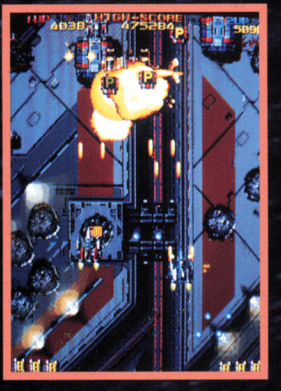

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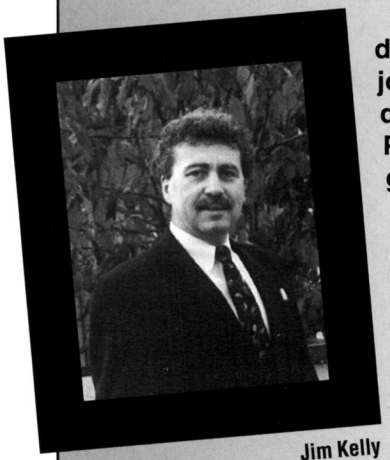
Kelly joins Mondial



Jim Kelly

Jim Kelly, a 19-year industry veteran, has joined the staff of Mondial Distributing Inc.'s Philadelphia office as game sales manager.

Said Chris Vecchione, general manager of the Mondial branch: "Jim's street and arcade knowledge will strengthen the MDI sales group. We are excited to have Jim as part of our team and are confident in his abilities. His honest reputation and vast product knowledge will provide a refreshing presence for Philadelphia operators."

Kelly was previously with Merit Industries, where he was responsible for marketing, sales, and customer service. His coin-op career includes a stint at Banner Specialty Distributing, and ownership of an amusement service company.

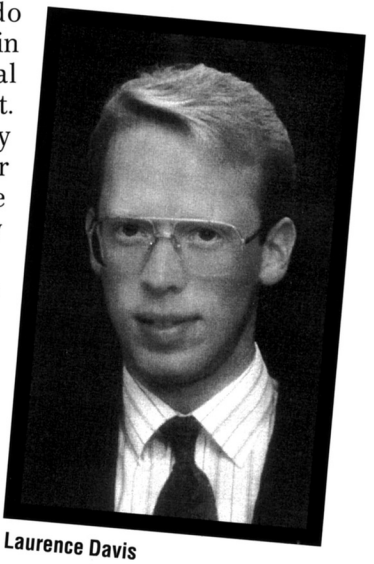
Bally Gaming promotes Mottes

Bally Gaming of Las Vegas, Nev., has promoted Julie Mottes to the post of director of marketing. Formerly marketing manager for the company, she will now oversee and direct all marketing functions including advertising, promotional materials, publicity, and trade show events.

Julie Mottes

Mottes, who has 10 years of experience, worked in publicity for another major gaming equipment manufacturer and was a reporter for a Reno, Nev.-based newspaper.

Tornado appoints four



Laurence Davis

Rapid growth at Tornado Table Sports has resulted in promotions and additional staff appointments at the Ft. Worth, Texas-based company known for its table soccer game, *The Standard*, and the new *Tornado Aire* air hockey table.

Vice president Dave Courington will retain overall supervision of national sales; he is now assisted by four sales directors.

Laurence Davis has been named international sales director. He has 19 years of experience as a pro tour foosball player and tournament director, and 15 years experience as an arcade manager and owner. Davis will also assist with domestic sales and promotions.

Steve Murray, the company's resident promotions specialist and 17-time World Foosball Champion, has been promoted to sales manager and national promotions manager. Murray has 22 years of experience as a pro player, promoter, and route operator.

Mick White, veteran exhibit manager and coin-op salesman, has been named national sales manager for the home market. He will take an aggressive role in this expanding area. White has over 10 years of experience in the field of table sports.

Dave Radack, a seasoned pro foosball player and pro tour staff member comes on board in the promotions department. Radack will provide added support to meet growing sales and promotional events for table soccer and the Tornado Aire.

Acclaim taps Weiner

Acclaim Entertainment Inc. has named Michael Weiner as senior manager of quality assurance. He will be responsible for quality assurance and testing of Acclaim's CD- and PC CD-based titles, as well as the evaluation of all new products.

Noted Col Stone, director of product development, "Michael brings years of experience and a broad understanding of our industry to Acclaim. I am confident the caliber of our products will continue to rise."

Prior to joining Acclaim, Weiner was product development test manager at Sega of America, where he supervised nearly 150 game testers. During that time he was responsible for the standardization of that company's quality assurance department's training and reporting procedures.

We are traveling into another dimension

Why can't we simply say that we expected to be in 1996 about now, instead of expressing mock surprise that it came so quickly? Perhaps for the same reason we study the calendar on the off chance that April 15 mysteriously vanished!

But it's tradition to say, "I can't believe it's 1996 already!" so consider it said. We dragged ourselves through 1995 trying desperately to figure out where the industry was headed. Gaming, oft the topic of conversation and the subject of seminars, seemed to take a nose dive in popularity. Redemption became the golden boy and FECs, well there were a lot of them.

We asked our operator readers to take their valuable time to fill out a lengthy survey chock full of pertinent industry questions. To the 250 who sent the survey back to us, we offer a huge thanks. We can speculate about the industry and all the facts that go along with it, but it's only by taking a close look at those working within the industry that we can truly understand it.

We take the responses we receive, tabulate and average the answers, and then expand those numbers out using 4,500 as the total number of operators. Possibly there are more people earning money on games of some sort, but we're not taking them into consideration in this survey.

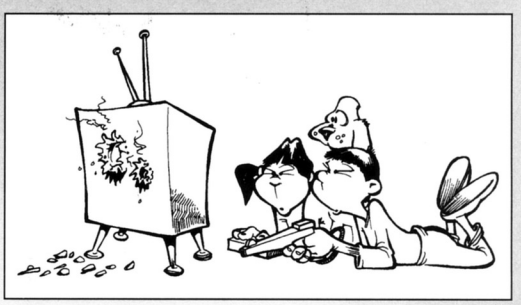
GENERAL BUSINESS

The first thing we like to find out is how long the average operator has been in business. This time the average was 20 years; 32% have been in the industry 10 years or less. About 19% operate arcades only, and 36% operate street locations only; 45% operate both, and only 8% operate FECs only. We estimate that there are about 15,400 arcades, 382,000 street locations, and 3,870 FECs.

While 17% said they've opened an FEC in the past year, another 11% said they plan to. Over 48% said an FEC has opened in their area this past year. Nearly 62% of operators expressed concerns that there is a threat of manufacturer-owned FECs squeezing out the independents.

We've seen the percentage of operators who use location contracts continue to rise; this time 67% said they use them. When asked about their share of the revenue from games in their locations, 68% said they still get the tradi-

Video voices:



- *Video games are becoming less and less profitable to operate. Most games take two years to pay for.*
- *Manufacturers have gone direct to home sales and now cable. They follow their best sales and forget the rest.*
- *Video games are too expensive, have a short life, and are difficult to make a good return on investment.*
- *Companies should wait longer before new software titles are put out for the home version.*
- *They are grossly overpriced. The cabinets are junk and it is too difficult to get to areas that need work.*
- *Manufacturers are making and releasing games to the home market before I can pay off my hardware. Why should I spend $4,000 when in four months a kid can spend one percent of that for the game at home?*
- *Videos are a dead issue until manufacturers do more research and development.*
- *The cost needs to come in line with today's economy.*

JUKEBOXES

CDs	
Average weekly gross:	$108
Average per operator:	46
Total # on location:	130,000
Total annual revenue:	$730 million
New purchases:	17,000

45s	
Average weekly gross:	$42
Average per operator:	23
Total # on location:	53,000
Total annual revenue:	$115.7 million

VIDEO GAMES

Dedicated	
Average weekly gross:	$97
Average per operator:	109
Total # on location:	500,000
Total annual revenue:	$2.5 billion
New purchases:	37,000

Kits	
Average weekly gross:	$60
Average per operator:	90
Total # on location:	385,000
Total annual revenue:	$1.2 billion
New purchases:	45,000

PINBALL

Average weekly gross:	$66
Average per operator:	40
Total # on location:	160,000
Total annual revenue:	$546 million
New purchases:	24,000

KIDDIE RIDES

Average weekly gross:	$56
Average per operator:	13
Total # on location:	19,000
Total annual revenue:	$55 million
New purchases:	5,000

8-LINERS

Average weekly gross:	$407
Average per operator:	26
Total # on location:	37,700
Total annual revenue:	$797 million

GRAY AREA

Average weekly gross:	$264
Average per operator:	34
Total # on location:	42,800
Total annual revenue:	$587 million

tional 50/50. The good news is that 30% are getting more than 50%, and just 2% are getting less than 50% of the income.

We've tracked the progression of operators turning to computers in their businesses; this time we see 75% saying they are using a computer while another 13% said they will soon add one to their operation. Another 12% said they don't use one and have no plans for one.

For the first time we asked operators if they subscribe to an on-line service. Predictably only 18% answered yes, but we're certain that number will be much larger next year.

And while we're on the subject of computers, we asked operators if they were using any of the new league software available. About 76% said they were not, while 24% are. Of that 24% who are using the software, 65% are using it for darts, 34% for pool.

Just under half of the operators are familiar with NANI and of that 63% say it will be good for the industry. Still 61% said that they plan to look beyond the industry for software for the network of the future.

We asked operators about their competition: 33% said it had increased, 18% said it had decreased, and 49% said it was about the same as before. As far as their local economy, 42% said it had not changed; 21% said it had improved, and 37% said it had gotten much worse.

Over half (54%) of operators belong to AMOA, 44% belong to their state association, and 33% admit to not belonging to either. We inadvertently left off the relatively new IAFEC but we'll certainly ask who belongs to it next time.

While operators are paying license fees ranging from $10 to several hundred dollars, 57% said they'd prefer a master license fee; 43% said they'd rather keep things the way they are.

There was a major push followed by major disappointment over the efforts to pass legislation allowing a new dollar coin. Naturally, we were curious to know how many operators personally know their legislators and how many used that relationship to push for a dollar coin: 41% said they know their state representatives; 34% know their state senator, and 37% know their councilmen. Interestingly, just 29% said that they contacted their representatives concerning the dollar coin. And they wonder why it doesn't pass!

Did we say dollar coin? About half of the operators surveyed said that they believe we will one day have a new dollar coin; 51% said we probably won't. However, 63% admitted that a dollar coin would help them increase their price per play on equipment; 37% said a dollar coin would have not effect on price per play.

Video voices:

- *I bought only the necessary games for the past five years. Now I am buying big pieces like **Cruisn'** and **Alpine Racer** and putting them out on minimum.*
- *Manufacturers need to come up with adventure games that can have many different endings.*
- *Even though video games are getting a lot of negative press, they still make money if you utilize them correctly.*
- *Manufacturers must produce more games for the adult bar market. They must be different from the home video market.*
- *Allow us to compete directly with home systems by letting us use home PCBs in street locations. Also, charge us the same for software that the home consumer pays for a new title. I feel that the manufacturers are using us as an advertising tool to promote home sales. They should pay us to place games as advertisement.*
- *Video games are coming back. We need street product at affordable prices.*
- *We need better engineering backup from manufacturers to correct problems, and weekend support from the distributor or manufacturer. Games always break down on weekends.*
- *Keep supplying low-cost system games for variety.*
- *The price is too high for the amount of revenue produced and the length of time the play holds up.*
- *I would like to see a lot less fighting games and more games of a non-fighting nature.*

It's refreshing to note that 60% of the operators surveyed said they are confident in the coin machine industry and 46% are satisfied in the equipment in general being offered. We asked how many used auctions to dispose of used equipment: 30% said they do.

AIR HOCKEY

Average weekly gross:	$83
Average per operator:	6
Total # on location:	16,000
Total annual revenue:	$70 million
New purchases:	6,500

FOOSBALL

Average weekly gross:	$29
Average per operator:	6
Total # on location:	12,400
Total annual revenue:	$18.7 million
New purchases:	6,200

CRANES

Average weekly gross:	$107
Average per operator:	13
Total # on location:	43,500
Total annual revenue:	$242 million
New purchases:	9,400

REDEMPTION

Average weekly gross:	$130
Average per operator:	56
Total # on location:	120,000
Total annual revenue:	$811 million
New purchases:	31,000

CIGARETTE MACHINES

Average weekly gross:	$97
Average per operator:	35
Total # on location:	48,825
Total annual revenue:	$246 million

SHUFFLEBOARD

Average weekly gross:	$28
Average per operator:	6
Total # on location:	6,400
Total annual revenue:	$9.3 million
New purchases:	2,000

POOL TABLES

Average weekly gross:	$85
Average per operator:	27
Total # on location:	122,000
Total annual revenue:	$535 million
New purchases:	23,000

ROTARIES

Average weekly gross:	$133
Average per operator:	5
Total # on location:	5,000
Total annual revenue:	$34.5 million
New purchases:	1,000

DARTS

Average weekly gross:	$51
Average per operator:	41
Total # on location:	98,000
Total annual revenue:	$260 million
New purchases:	14,000

Here are some other ways operators dispose of used games: sell to the public, take to the dump, rehabilitate to kits, private sale, international bulk sale, dumpster, home sales, junk them, trade, Christmas sales, retail, donations, second-hand store, other operators, donate to charities, casual sales, give away, axes them, export, consignment, bulk sales to other operators, destroy, burn them, landfill, ads in Play Meter, refurbish, sledge hammer, mall sidewalk sales, take out parts and destroy cabinet, and finally, make plant holders and sell in California.

VIDEO GAMES

We often sum up the industry by the status of video games; if video revenues are up, the industry's good. This time we find that the gap between revenues on dedicated games and kits continues to widen, $97 average weekly gross on dedicated and $60 for kits. On the last survey $96 for dedicated and $66 for kits was reported.

The number of video games on location has dropped significantly, 500,000 dedicated games and 385,000 kits compared to 765,000 and 500,000 respectively last year. One interesting number culled from the results is that although the average number of dedicated video games per operator is 109, we found that 8% of those responding to the survey had an average of 1,300.

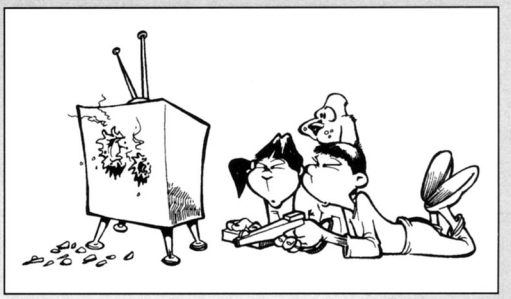
Operators reported about 37,000 new dedicated video game purchases and 45,000 kits. The prices paid for these new games ranged between $12,000 and $3,000 for dedicated games and between $2,800 and $600 for kits. On the new games more than 82% of the operators said they are getting 50 cents per play; 3% are getting over 50 cents; and 15% are still charging 25 cents per play. On older games 97% said they are charging 25 cents per play.

The issue of the legality of parallel games was brought to the forefront in late 1995 when the original agreement was set to expire. Manufacturers (through AAMA) and operators (through AMOA) reached an agreement that would make all parties happy. We asked our readers if they were confident that the manufacturers would abide by the agreement. Some 15% said they were confident, 28% said they weren't, and 57% admitted that they didn't know details of the agreement.

Here are a few other answers to questions posed to operators about video games: just over 61% said they have a surplus of video game cabinets; 53% said they'd buy more video games if manufacturers and distributors collaborated on some creative financing; 31% admitted that violence in video games was a concern in their communities; a mere 10% said they'd seen effects from the video game rating system; only 1% said they were using or had used the rating stickers provided by AMOA; and although 46% said they were satisfied in general with the equipment being offered, 78% said they were not satisfied with games for street locations.

We asked operators for their comments on video games,

Video voices:



- *I buy mostly driving games, gun games, and vertical scrolling shooters. Give players something they can't get on their home systems.*
- *Except for a very few, videos seem to get less play every year.*
- *I bought a new video title and before I turned around there was another version plus the home game. Why are manufacturers trying to kill the street operators?*
- *Manufacturers are not making any new kits for bar locations.*
- *Excellent fighting games are out. But if they lose their appeal, my collections will be down significantly.*
- *Video games are overpriced and released to home systems too quickly. There are no good videos for street locations except for* **Pit Boss**.
- *Make a video game that earns money, but not with blood and guts.*
- *Manufacturers should hold games longer before releasing them to the home market. We would all benefit from that.*
- *Too costly; very little profit; they are obsolete before they are paid for.*
- *Thanks to Midway on the* **Mortal Kombat III** *kit. We could then buy more units. Thanks for the no-cost update!!!*
- *People are sick of fighting games. They are boring.*

Total number of locations

Arcades: 15,440

Street Locations: 382,000

FECs: 3,870

Have you registered your jukeboxes?

YES: 94%

NO: 6%

What association are you a member of?

AMOA: 54%

STATE: 44%

NONE: 33%

Which of your legislators do you know?

STATE REP: 41%

COUNCIL-MAN: 37%

STATE SENATOR: 34%

How has your local economy been the past year?

IMPROVED: 21%

GOTTEN WORSE: 37%

UNCHANGED: 42%

Do you use location agreements?

YES: 67%

NO: 33%

and while we got many responses, "We need new themes, "The home market is destroying my video business," and "They cost too much" were echoed over and over.

PINBALL

Pinball sales and play paralleled that of video games this time. The average weekly gross per machine dipped to $66 from $72, and the number of machines on location shrunk to 160,000 from 195,000 last time. Operators still bought about 24,000 pinballs, paying an average of $3,000 apiece. A mere 2% said they are running pinball leagues, but another 6% said they plan to give it a try.

There was good news on price per play: 63% said they are getting 50 cents per play while 28% said they're still getting 25 cents. Another 7% are getting three plays for $1.

Comments like these were given repeatedly: "The market is getting soft," "There is a ceiling on earnings," and "Prices are way too high, players are fickle."

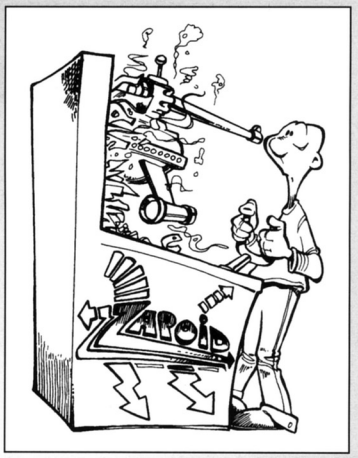
JUKEBOXES

We've been predicting that the 45 rpm jukebox was becoming an extinct breed. Each year that prediction seems closer as fewer operators include 45s in their equipment mix. This time just 52% said they are operating 45 jukeboxes, while 63% operate CDs. If nothing else convinces operators that 45s are outdated, the revenue should tell the tale: CDs are averaging $108 a week (down slightly from $114 last year) and 45s make a meager $42.

We estimate that there are about 53,000 45 jukeboxes on location, down considerably from the 96,000 we reported last time. But CD jukeboxes on location have increased from 120,000 last year to 130,000. No one reported buying any new 45 jukeboxes although 9% said they bought some used ones. Operators said they bought 17,000 new CDs, and 25% said they bought some used ones. The annual revenue from CDs is a hefty $730 million while 45s account for $115.7 million. I think we'll see another decline in 45s next time.

Here are some other facts concerning jukeboxes that we found from the survey: 94% said they have registered their jukeboxes, but 58% said that they know of some unlicensed jukeboxes in their area. Just over 60% said that they felt that enforcement of unlicensed jukeboxes had not been aggressive enough. Here's what one operator had to say about it: "I've tested ASCAP and they are not doing their job. I do not feel it is right. I pay and someone else does not. I do not care if it's one or 100 jukes. Everyone should pay!"

Video voices:



- *New games are released to the home systems way too fast, and it does affect the games in the arcades.*
- *Cost exceeds reasonable return on investment. The current market will die due to the inability to adapt to the future.*
- *Home versions come out too soon. We have been purchasing only sit-down and redemption games lately.*
- *Yes, Neo-Geo. There should be more similar offerings.*
- *What will happen when Ultra 64 Nintendo and M2 300 come out next year?*
- *The big boys make the rules. I can play any way the game goes!*
- *Shorten all cabinets; they are hard to load. Bulky and high cabinets get damaged too easily.*
- *It is a dying business for small operators and a booming business for the well-funded corporate stars like Mc Donald's, Las Vegas casinos, riverboat operators, and big corporations.*
- *NANI will save videos; otherwise, this market will dry up further.*
- *We'll be deeply hurt by on-line and cable video games to be offered in 1996.*
- *Manufacturers are putting better games in the home market than they give us.*
- *It is a software business. Sell software at a reasonable price.*
- *Networkng is the next step in competing with the home market.*

REDEMPTION/NOVELTY

Now here's a category of equipment we've seen grow and it hasn't let up. While 46% said that they are currently operating redemption equipment, another 11% said they will soon. The average weekly gross is $130 (last year it

What has the competition in your area been like the past year?

INCREASED: 33%

DECREASED: 18%

UNCHANGED: 49%

Do you use a computer?

YES: 75%

WILL SOON: 13%

NO: 12%

Would a dollar coin help increase price per play?

YES: 63%

NO: 37%

Do you think we'll ever see dollar coin legislation pass?

YES: 49%

NO: 51%

Are you confident in the coin-op industry?

YES: 60%

NO: 40%

Is there a threat of manufacturer-owned FECs squeezing out the independents?

YES: 62%

NO: 38%

was a bit higher at $135). There are about 120,000 redemption pieces on location with new purchases reported at 31,000.

Even though we often think of redemption as strictly FEC equipment, 55% of those surveyed said they felt there was a place in street locations for redemption. Some 62% noted that they were in the process of expanding their redemption operations, and 23% said they are using a special computer program to track their prize inventory. Another 12% are considering various programs for the task.

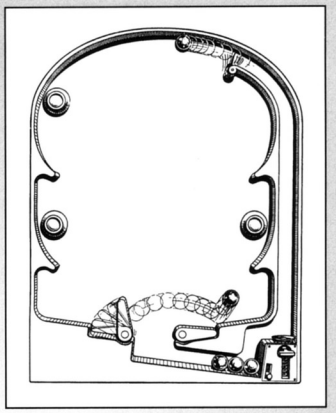
We often hear of attempts by states or communities to make redemption games illegal, but only 20% of those surveyed said that was the case in their areas. Over 60% reported their win ratio between 25% and 30%, while the other 40% reported win ratios from 12% to 72%.

And last but not least we asked operators how they dispose of their used tickets. Here are some of their answers: soak in water, shred, trash can, ticket eater, location does it, burn them, throw away, Deltronic ticket counter, trade with distributor, cut up, dumpster, tear by hand, punch hole through number, and recycle.

Here are two comments about redemption: "We need redemption," and "I think redemption will keep this industry going. I don't think the industry will survive on the strength of video and pinball alone."

And this operator gives us food for thought: "I own an FEC that opened an arcade with approximately 65 video and redemption games in May of this year. I have been involved in trucking, boat, and furniture industries over the last 20 years, but I have never seen an industry, particularly the redemption side, with such poor quality control, lack of standard components, and poor warranties. Over 50% of the new redemption pieces I received had defects which put the equipment out of service in the first 30 days. We are still debugging and in some cases rebuilding some of the equipment."

Pinball pulse:



- *Pinballs take too much capital, and there's not enough return on investment to be lucrative. There are also too many breakdowns and repairs compared to video.*
- *Rotation and upkeep is a must. There's a slower return than video, but the play appeal lasts longer.*
- *New pinballs do not earn much more than good used ones.*
- *The playfields are becoming too cluttered, and the technology is too great to operate profitably considering the public abuse involved.*
- *I used to buy five a year; now I buy only two.*
- *Pinballs are better than video, but there is plenty of room for improvement.*
- *I wish they would make more* ***Addams Family****-type pinballs. That game runs great and is an excellent moneymaker with long appeal.*
- *Small gross, but pinballs are good novelties.*
- *Pinball games should be more reliable. They shouldn't break on the first day.*
- *The return on investment is very slow.*
- *Pinballs are a lot of trouble to keep working.*
- *Pinballs are too expensive to maintain.*
- *Pinballs are too expensive. Quality is poor and interest among players is low.*

CRANES AND ROTARIES

It is interesting to see that 70% of the operators surveyed said they operate cranes; last year the percentage was the same. About 21% operate rotaries (we did not ask about rotaries as a separate category last year). There are about 43,500 cranes on location making an average weekly gross of $107 (down just $1 from last year). There are about 5,000 rotaries raking in a weekly gross average of $133, one of the highest averages reported in all categories of equipment.

Operators reported buying 9,400 new cranes and 1,000 rotaries. Of those who operate cranes, 81% said they operate the standard type crane; 26% operate watch/jewelry cranes, and 50% operate candy cranes. Over 64% of the operators listed their win ratio on their cranes between 25% and 35%; 39% have a win ration of between 25% and 30%.

POOL TABLES

We always ask how many operators operate pool tables with leagues. This time, of the 76% who operate pool tables, 26% said they are involved with leagues. The average

Have other FECs opened in your area in the past year?

YES: 48%

NO: 52%

Are you satisfied with the quality of new equipment?

YES: 46%

NO: 54%

What types of locations do you operate?

ARCADES ONLY: 19%

STREET ONLY: 36%

BOTH STREET & ARCADE: 45%

Do you subscribe to an on-line service for access to the internet?

YES: 18%

NO: 82%

Are you familiar with NANI?

YES: 49%

NO: 51%

63% feel it will benefit the industry

Do you want legal gaming?

YES: 66%

NO: 34%

weekly gross has remained steadfast at $85 on the 122,000 tables on location. Operators reported buying 23,000 new tables. While the average operator reported having about 27 tables on his route, we found that 9% of those surveyed had an average of 136 tables on their routes.

With the FECs and newer upscale locations, about 19% of the operators said they are having more requests for upscale pool tables for those locations. The price per play on pool tables is higher than most other equipment and has been for some time. About 50% said they are getting 50 cents per play; 34% said they get 75 cents, and 15% reported $1 play. Just 1% are still asking for a mere 25 cents per play. Those who charge by the hour for play get an average of $5.62.

ELECTRONIC DARTS

Electronic darts lends itself better than any other type of equipment to leagues and tournaments, and the numbers we have reflects that: 53% of the operators operate darts, 44% of that use leagues. The average weekly gross on the 98,000 dart games on location is $51, down from $60 last year. Operators bought about 14,000 new games. Only 2% noted that they also have steel-tip darts on their routes.

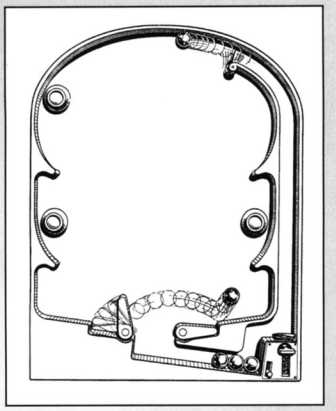
AIR HOCKEY/FOOSBALL/ SHUFFLEBOARD

Last year 55% of the operators said they have air hockey on their routes; this time 59% do. Of those, just 7% are involved in some sort of tournaments. The average weekly gross is down to $83 from the $93 reported last year, and the number of tables on location is down also, 16,000 from over 17,000 last year. Operators bought about 6,500 new tables. About 42% said they are getting more requests for air hockey tables.

While 46% said they operate foosball tables, only 11% operate them with tournaments or leagues. Operators bought 6,200 new foosball tables that earn them an average weekly gross of $29, down just $1 from last year's numbers. There are 12,400 tables on location, and 74% report getting 50 cents per play; 9% receive 75 cents per play, and 13% are still getting 25 cents.

Although only 24% said they operate shuffleboards, 20% of them do so with leagues or tournaments. The 6,400 shuffleboards on location are averaging $28 per week; operators bought about 2,000 new ones this year.

Pinball pulse:



- *New pins are way too expensive. Then the distributors sell their last few off cheap, making the ones bought new depreciate too fast.*
- *It is very difficult to make money on new pinball game purchases.*
- *Pinballs are too expensive and there's a 75 percent decrease in income. They break down all the time, and I can't get parts on weekends.*
- *The pinball market is soft right now. It seems to go in two year cycles: up two, down two, up two, down two.*
- *Pinballs are dropping dead fast!*
- *We are oversaturated with new models. Good older machines earn 75 to 80 percent of a new one costing twice as much.*
- *Too much service on pinballs. They are only five percent of my total game business, making it insignificant.*
- *Pinballs just don't have the earning potential that a video game has.*
- *Good games, high prices, and 50-cent play kills the income in most cases.*
- *Pinballs are holding up their share of the total weekly gross.*
- *We need something to rejuvenate interest.*
- *I plan on updating my pinball machines.*
- *There is a ceiling on earnings. The price of pins is too high for that ceiling.*
- *The pinball market is just fair, but some locations are seeing good, constant revenues. Others have their pick during certain months.*

KIDDIE RIDES

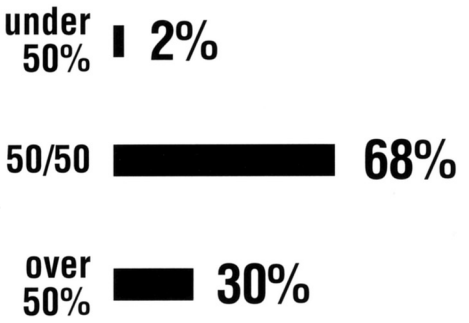
Kiddie rides showed a healthy increase this year. The average weekly gross of $56 topped last year's $42, and there were 5,000 more of them on location, 19,000 to be exact. Last year 30% said they operate kiddie rides; this time it's 33% with another 4% saying they plan to soon.

Operators bought 5,000 new kiddie rides this year, and 40% said they are buying more licensed themed rides.

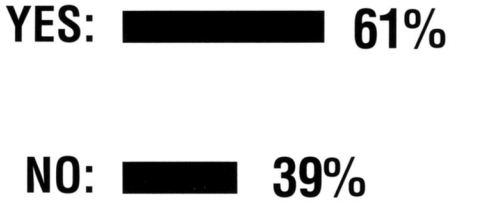
Operators also reported operating all of the following

Is violence in video games a concern in your community?

What is your share of the commision split?



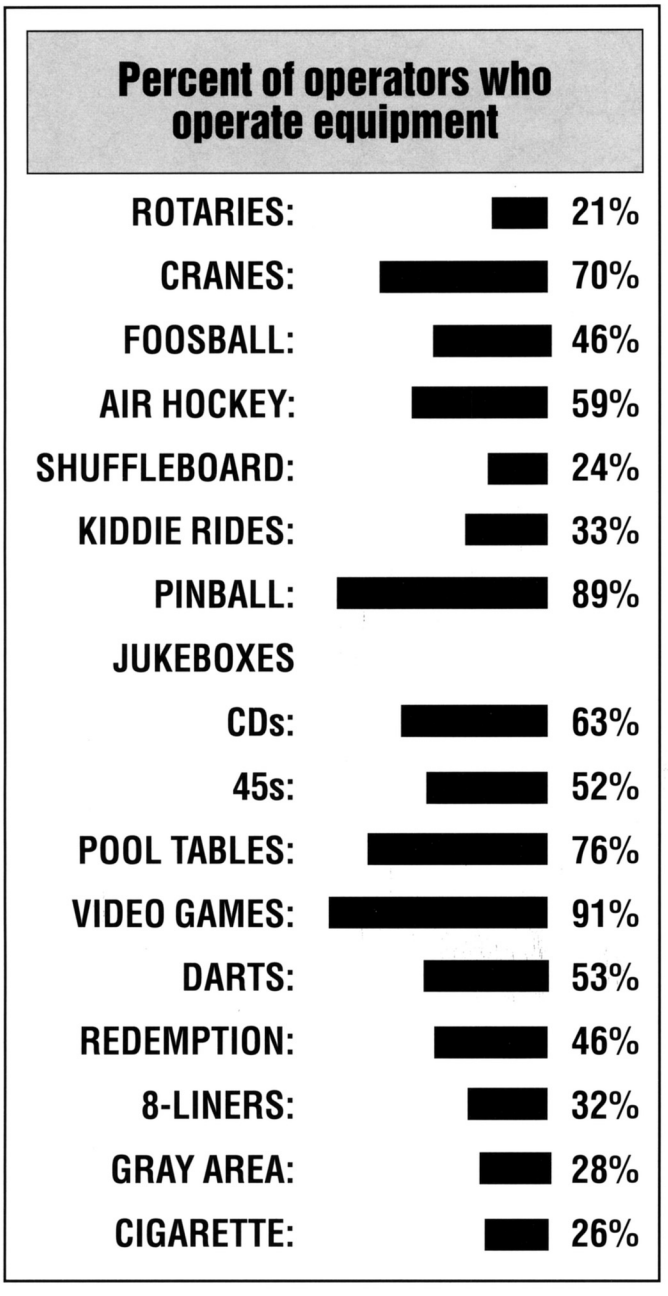
Do you plan to look beyond the coin machine industry for software to be used in the network of the future?

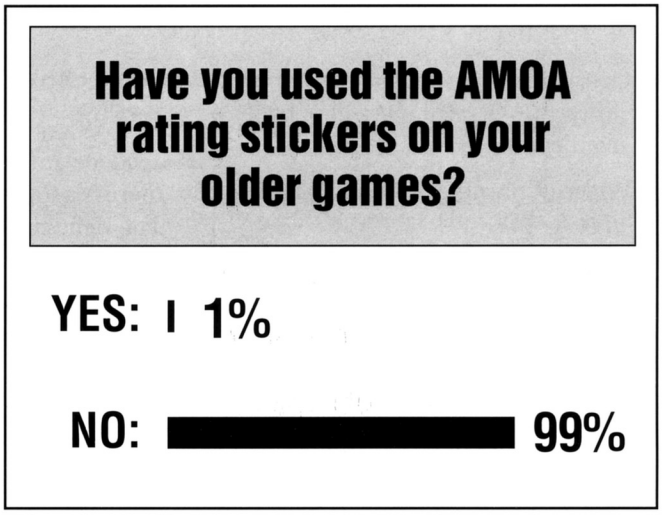


Have you seen the effects of the rating system?

Have you opened a family entertainment center in the last year?

Did you contact your congressman in support of this year's proposed dollar coin?





equipment: go-karts (3%), bumper boats (3%), miniature golf (7%), food services (10%), batting cages (3%), bumper cars (3%), laser tag (4%), soft play (7%), party rooms (9%), and virtual reality games (1%).

VIDEO GAMING

It's hard to ignore the numbers reported on video gaming. About 32% of those surveyed said they operate 8-liner games and earn a weekly gross average of $407! There are about 37,700 8-liners on location, and 39% said they operate them as redemption. Operators bought about 12,000 new ones this year.

About 28% said they operate gray area video poker games. There are nearly 43,000 of them on location averaging $264 per week gross. Nearly half (49%) said an outright ban on gray area video poker would hurt their businesses.

Naturally, we asked how many wanted to see legalized gaming in their states, and 66% said they would.

VENDING

Though we asked questions about many forms of vending, the one most associated with our industry is cigarette vending. About 43% of those answering our survey said that cigarette vending is a profitable part of their business. Another 33% said that they operate cigarette vending machines but they are not a profitable part of their operation although they used to be. Coin machine operators have close to 50,000 machines on location making an average weekly gross of $97.

Interestingly, while the typical operator has an average of 35 machines, 13% have over 200 machines on location. When asked if a ban on cigarette vending machines would hurt their businesses, 47% said it would. Although lock-out devices are available as a preventative measure to keep kids from buying cigarettes from the machines, only 14% said they use them.

Other types of vending mentioned in this survey are cold drinks (25%), coffee service (11%), snacks/candy (24%), and bulk vending (13%). ▲

Candid comments on the industry

■ Operators need street games to be different. We need more than fighting themes. –UT

■ **Without gaming I could not survive. —LA**

■ I think we've turned the corner. It will take some time and a lot of work. I've learned a lot these past two years –OR

■ **The industry is competitive. If you have a strong music and pool route you should be able to stay in business. —NJ**

■ There is still money to be made. You have to cut expenses and put out service with a smile with less resources. Only the strong and persistent with selective buying will survive. –HI

■ **It has seen better days. I hope it will see good times again. — CO**

■ A basic living can be made, but the big money days are gone. If not for my 8-liners, my mental financial interest would be very low. Distributors have it rough these days, but why must he make $1,500 on a $1,500 piece if I pay him immediately, and he does not carry any parts for the item. –TX

■ **We need more improved software with multiple possibilities for endings. Consider the CD-Interactive systems. Keep the prices down, manufacturers, or you'll choke your own market. —MT**

■ If video games are run correctly there is a lot of money to be made. The right mix and effort is essential. Spend time at your sites! –CA

■ **Indian gaming and state-run Quick Draw has hurt. Darts, music, and cigarette vending have fallen off along with all other games. —NY**

■ For the professional operator who is willing to change his methods the business is still giving excellent return on investment.–AR

■ **Unless manufacturers, distributors, and operators get into bed with each other there is no future. —FL**

■ The manufacturers are using us to sell the home market. We are their best advertising and we pay for it– all of it, in the mark up. –CA

■ **This business is too cutthroat!! —AZ**

■ Williams allowing distributor monopolies is very bad for operators. Manufacturer willingness to sell to locations is increasing and is also very bad for our industry. –NY

■ **Our industry does not have the respect we are due for the service we provide, low-cost entertainment. We pay too much for a license to operate. —AL**

■ The industry is in very serious trouble. We need more cooperation between industry segments, affordable games, innovative equipment, professionalism among operators, and discretion among distributors. –GA

■ **Street locations are becoming harder to please and to make a profit. They always want new games, but cannot earn enough money to justify them. —TN**

■ We are in a lull, but it will get better. I worry about cable companies taking over. Jukebox and game prices are too high. Even with 50-cent play my gross revenue is still the same. –WI

■ **Pinball income dropped this year by 75% and as a result they are depreciating at a more rapid rate than previous years. I have seen more equipment for sale and at lower prices than ever before. I think this says a lot about what is going on in this industry. —CA**

■ In Louisiana legalized video poker has cut into amusement machine revenue. Some routes have been neglected but overall I think that the amusement business is off 20%-40%. –LA

■ **Proliferation of FECs is scary. Many fail, yet many new ones are built with little regard for**

available market and competition. —LA

- It is ok as a second income, but bowling is my life. –MI
- **I love the coin-op business. — CA**
- No integrity.–CT
- **It is about as bad as it can get. There is really no new type of equipment to draw customers in, like cranes did at first. —AR**
- We have to spend too much money to keep up with customers and competitors. We're looking to diversify. –OH
- **It is really changing! With a few exceptions, the video game industry is in its death throes. There are too many FECs in my area, and I foresee many casualties. Two have closed in my area in the past three months and a new one is being built. — CA**
- The games are getting too expensive and the same games are on home computers. –MI
- **I am very negative on the industry. Each year it gets worse and less profitable. I don't know whether this industry will sustain itself in the future. —NY**
- I see too much emphasis on video, which is a declining area of our business. As a street operator I would like to see more equipment and programs for taverns. –OH
- **The price of equipment goes up, however the quality does NOT!! —WI**
- Get the Indians out of gambling. – MI
- **Manufacturers are getting into the operating business and it hurts. —FL**
- The industry is looking up, but the time from arcade to the home is getting way too short. It is a problem when you've barely plugged in your $4,000 new game and the kids are asking about home version release dates! –AZ
- **There are too many new games coming out too fast with too much hype. You can't buy them all. —MI**
- We need redemption and video lottery. –NJ
- **It's normal, with the usual ups and downs. The price of equipment is too high. There is too much emphasis on video and redemption while pins and other equipment are forgotten. Videos all have the same basic theme. It's a shame that no one can come up with something new and different. —PR**
- Customers are not approached from a business point of view. Success is not acknowledged. –CA
- **It doesn't look good. —WI**
- It is excellent if you are progressive, imaginative, and committed! –NY
- **I like short production runs of games and pinballs because of length of earnings and resale value. —CA**
- We'd better watch what is coming over the horizon or we'll be telling our grandkids what game routes and music routes were. –CO
- **I'm concerned about the new games that will be available for the home market. —FL**
- Too much competition. –CA
- **I am bitter. Get the distributors out of the street, arcade, family centers, cinemas, etc. I DO NOT buy new equipment from distributor/operators. —OH**
- I sold my route in December 1995. The return on investment was too tough on videos and pins. –FL
- **Average gross doesn't mean a thing. I have eight *Daytonas* grossing $700 to $1,000 per week and *Ms. Pac Man* doing $60 per week, so what good is an average number? —CA**
- New games are just too expensive. I am concerned about the "info highway" replacing jukeboxes. –CA
- **I think the industry is in bad shape. —VA**
- Video games need to be more creative and less violent. They should be more affordable so you can make money giving a 50/50 split. –OH
- **Get out if you're not a large corporation. —CA**
- We need stronger leadership from AMOA and local trade associations. –WI
- **It is sick, it is poor, and it is declining. But for us I see it steady and slowly growing. We are cautiously optimistic! —MN**
- We need less expensive equipment with much better return on investment to survive. Lowering the location commissions is a good way to lose business at this time. –TN
- **It is tough to make a profit be-**

cause you never run out of things to spend money on. —LA

- Innovations and events over the years have brought either great joy or deep depression. Having seen this, we feel coin-op equipment will remain a good source of income. You have to shed yourself of games losing popularity and shift to categories that are hot and profitable. You must be willing to change. –PA

- **I'll feel pretty confident about the industry, until gambling comes to Kansas. Then I'll readjust my thoughts. —KS**

- I think it is a good industry but I feel that the big companies can only hurt it. –NY

- **Gambling is taking our industry over. —WI**

- If we can continue to have distributors on our side, we can survive! We are on the brink of disaster or the edge of a boom. People with mega bucks can destroy small operators in the blink of an eye. –ME

- **The games are too costly considering that many such as *Mortal Kombat III* came out to home systems so quickly. Redemption is now a big part of the dollars. —OH**

- I am worried about uncontrollable expenses such as travel, insurance, and taxes eating into our profits. I see something really wrong with no answers at this time. –AL

- **Big business is swallowing up the small guys and soon the coin-op industry will be run by a few very large corporations.**

- We need more bang for the buck. Delay the release of games to the home market. The manufacturers have forgotten who got them where they are in the first place. –WA

- **The Florida Department of Revenue is making it harder to survive. Thirty dollars per machine sticker is a travesty. —FL**

- I wish the manufacturers would make things more for the operator and not so much for home use. – ID

- **We need to be separate from the home video as in later release dates and differences in game play. —TX**

- The home market will destroy street routes as we know it. End of story. –CA

- **Work hard and reinvest. —CA**

- It is very competitive. I hate having to compete against manufacturers and distributors. Things are tough right now, but I think they will get better. –OH

- **Texas state and local permits cost the same for a $200 game as it does for a $20,000 game. What is wrong with this picture? —TX**

- I am waiting for the down cycle to end. I think things will get better. – VA

- **Operators are getting screwed by several manufacturers. We pay for research and development and then the home market gets the price breaks. —NE**

- Distributors need to be regulated more. If you sell a piece of equipment you need to know how to service it. –TN

- **Some operators are offering better than a 50/50 split with extra bonuses to get location owners to switch to them. —NC**

- Some manufacturers only care about sales and refuse to show support.

- **It would be certain death for me except for pool as a staple. — AL**

- Manufacturers are turning into distributors as well as operators. They want the whole pie. –AL

- **We need to keep improving our games and our locations to stay ahead of the home market business. We need more affordable games. We need more kits. We need more than fighting-themed games. —TX**

- It sure is hard to make a living if you pay $3,500 per game and can only charge 50 cents to play it. – CO

- **The distributor network is eroding to larger operators manufacturing and selling direct. Distributors are often the largest operators in the area they are selling to. —AZ**

- We no longer have a level playing field, with what the foreign manufacturers are doing and what some of the American distributors are doing. –NV

- **It sucks. The operator can't afford the high price of new equipment. They must operate older pieces. —CO**

▲

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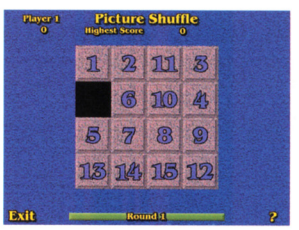
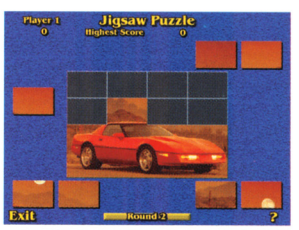
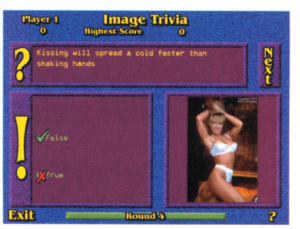
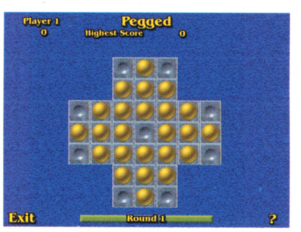
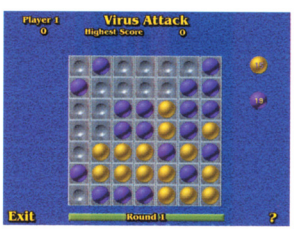






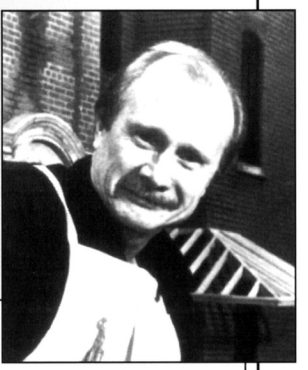




Beyond the Playfield

Nostalgia buffs were in heaven recently as they walked aisles filled with items such as classic jukeboxes, Williams' *Space Mission* ('76) and *Flash* ('79) pinballs, and restored Coke machines and Texaco gas pumps. The occasion was the fall Orlando Nostalgia Show at the Central Florida Fairgrounds. Of particular interest: two Wurlitzer *Model 1100* jukeboxes (one pictured) displayed by Jim Reid of Tampa, Fla., and a restored Rock-Ola *Model 1462* and a Wurlitzer *Model 1050* shown by Charles Godwin of the Jacksonville Jukebox Co. Another event featuring similar items and other memorabilia was held early this month. For more information on upcoming shows, contact Chip Nofal, (904) 928-0666.

Themed cityscape artist Michael Garman of Colorado Springs, Colo., has turned his attention to the 50th anniversary of the Wurlitzer *Model 1050* jukebox and created the All Americana sculpted cityscapes that depict detailed scenes from the '40s and '50s. Garman is working with Wurlitzer Corp., whose president Joe Pankus planned a year of events to celebrate the anniversary. The kick-off was the introduction of the commemorative jukebox stamp issued by the U.S. Post Office on March 17, 1995.



The Pinball Expo/Flip-Out Tournament in Rosemont, Ill., again proved to be a drawing card for collectors and players with a passion for pinball. Over 1,000 attendees crowded into the Rosemont Ramada Hotel to see exhibits of old and new games and pinball-related items from the past. Visitors came from Belgium, Canada, England, Germany, Italy, Japan, Switzerland, and the Netherlands.

The annual fall gathering saw a wide range of games, from Stern's *Nugent* ('78) (top) to Bally's new *Who Dunnit* (bottom), which premiered at the Expo. *Who Dunnit* was featured in semi-final tournament competition; finals were conducted on Capcom's *Pinball Magic*. As always, thanks are extended to Mike Pacak and Rob Berk for a splendid job of organizing the event. Dates for the '96 Pinball Expo are Nov. 14-17, again in Rosemont. For more details, contact Rob Berk, (216) 369-1192.

The James Industries crowd appears happy sampling Cuban Cohiba cigars while deciding on whether to follow the thinking of Rudyard Kipling ("A woman is only a woman, but a cigar is a smoke.") or Sigmund Freud ("Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.") From the looks on their faces, these are no ordinary cigars. From left: Michael Martinez, international sales manager for James Industries South; Josebias Vitorino of Embrasom; Jim Roberts, chairman and CEO of James Industries Inc.; an Embrasom associate; Gabriel Alba, sales and marketing director for James Industries South; and Aldo Andreu, president of James Industries South.

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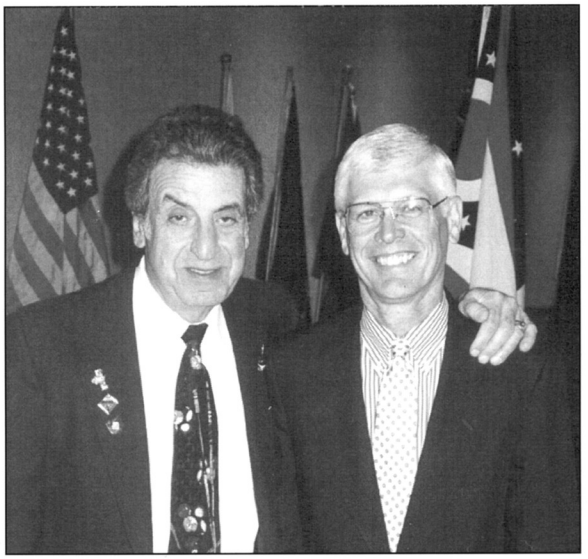
A bright future in the basics

While this issue of Play Meter focuses on the industry from the operator's perspective—with the results of our comprehensive annual survey of operators—we're balancing the editorial content with a manufacturer's outlook as well.

We asked representatives from Valley Recreation Products Inc. their views on the industry. After all, Valley has been in business for 50 years, surviving any number of cycles the industry experienced. The company has been in business long enough to develop long-term growth strategies and has been able to evaluate its success over time.

Beginning its 51st year, Valley has found itself with a new owner. A division of Hanson Industries for several years, last September Valley was purchased by New York-based Fenway Partners Inc. Even though the company has new owners, current management foresees only positive changes. Valley president and CEO Dick Shelton and marketing director Scott Schroeder are excited about the company's new ownership, viewing it "in a totally positive light."



Chuck Milhem (l), chairman, and Dick Shelton, president and CEO.

One of the biggest changes is that Fenway Partners is a small, privately-held company, unlike the corporate structure of Valley's prior owner. Shelton is clearly enthusiastic that the new owners are genuinely interested in the coin-op business and are eager to find new growth opportunities either through new products or acquisitions or both.

"Fenway's interest in Valley and the coin-op market is very encouraging to us," Shelton explained. "Our experience in pool and darts is comprehensive. On top of that we've grown close to operators with the league programs we continue to enhance. With this solid base, we are in an excellent position to build a bigger and even more vibrant business in the future."

Pool: a continuing opportunity

Valley continues to see a rosy future for pool table operators, especially if they are VNEA charter holders. This enthusiasm emerges from Valley's experience building and marketing pool tables and its relationship to pool leagues.

It's impossible to talk about Valley and not think about the VNEA (Valley National Eight-Ball Association), the pool league program Valley started over 15 years ago. Chuck Milhem, Valley's partly-retired chairman, was the driving force behind the VNEA. He came to Valley from Brunswick where he saw firsthand the popularity and success bowling enjoyed once league programs were established.

Chuck believed that the same success could be found for operators and locations with pool leagues. He reasoned that if there were more pool players playing pool more frequently, there would be a larger market for the top-notch pool tables Valley built.

The strategy paid off. The VNEA has grown from humble beginnings to an organization with over 70,000 sanctioned pool players! The best part is that they are all playing in leagues on operator-owned pool tables during league competition. There are over 350 VNEA charter holders.

"When Valley started the VNEA concept, pinballs and video games were big and cash flow on this equipment was high," Shelton affirmed. "It was hard to convince operators that the effort to build and manage a pool league program would have an attractive payback."

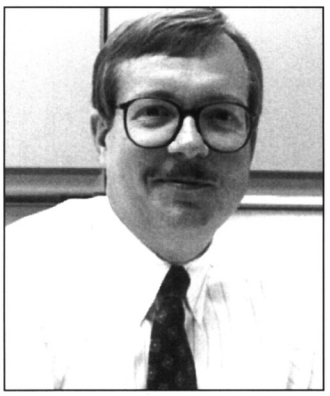
Valley persevered and eventually many of the country's largest operators became VNEA charter holders. Most now have vibrant and growing league programs. When video games went bust a few years back, VNEA operators quickly appreciated the strong, steady revenue stream their pool leagues provided. "It made them sensitive to the fact that they need a cross-section of product," Shelton said. "It was clear that pool leagues provided the operator with a steady cash flow and a high return on their pool table investments."

Pool and promotion

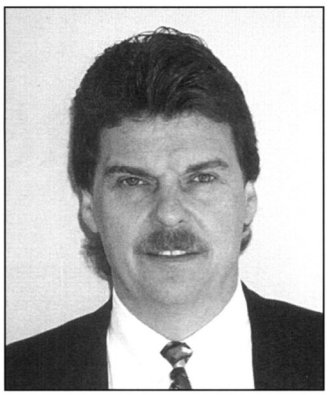
Marketing director Scott Schroeder pointed out that most operators are convinced that managing pool leagues and operating pool tables is a solid business. Part of this is due, no doubt, to the strong commitment that Valley makes each year in promoting pool leagues for the charter holders.

"We spend about as much time promoting the league concept as we spend selling product," Schroeder quipped, "because we know that operators are not going to buy new product unless they are sure that players will spend their money playing. Our role is a supportive one, to assure operators that the environment is right for the product we are selling."

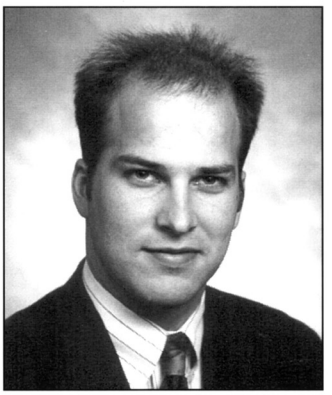
The strongest promotion for pool leagues comes directly from the VNEA, a non-profit organization under the direc-



Bruce Allen
vp-manufacturing/engineering

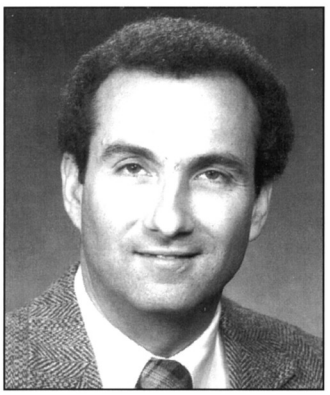


Doug Blair
vp-marketing/sales

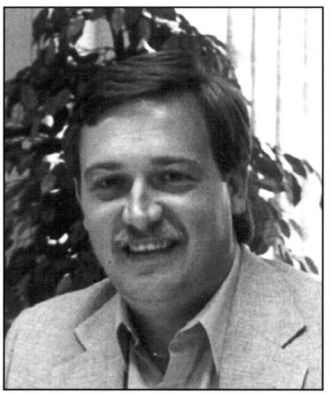


Mark Boehman
international sales

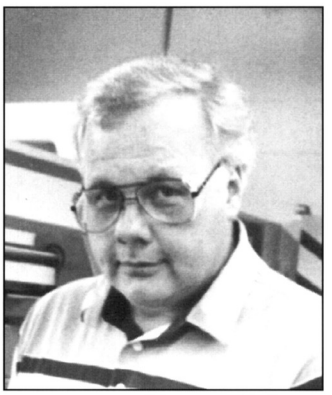
Team Valley



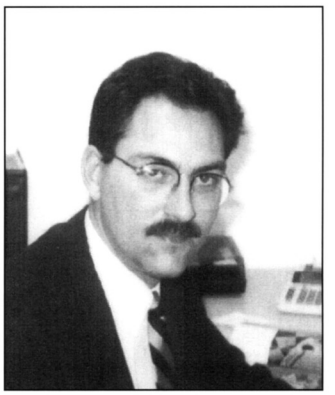
Bob Corrigan
National service manager



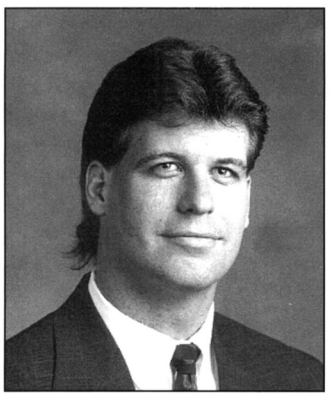
Gregg Elliott
VNEA director



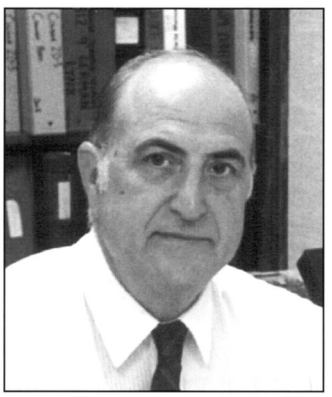
Bob Gatza
plant manager



Don Grivetti
Eastern sales

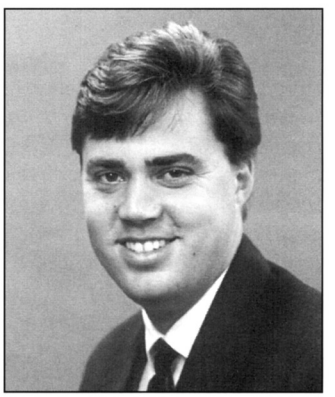


Jim Hall
Midwest sales

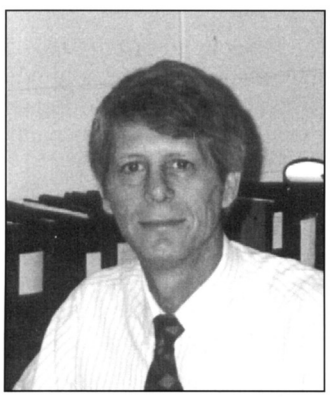


Don Kreil
purchasing director

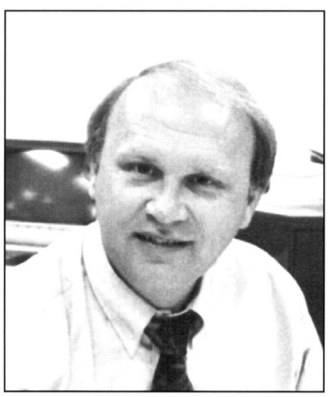
Jim Roe
Western sales



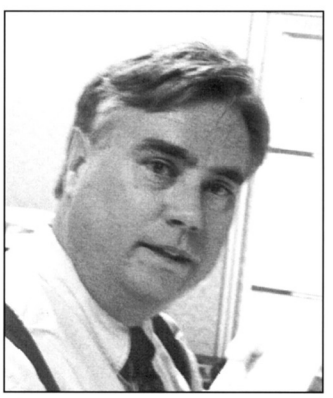
Scott Schroeder
marketing director



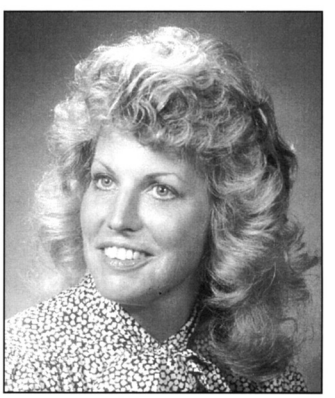
Tom Shelton
plant manager



Bob Shepard
controller



John Spenser
human resources manager



Melody Sutkowi
customer service manager

Now you can get a dart machine that has even more than a Valley Cougar ...

Even More
scoreboard flexibility.
New overhead scoreboard now has a combination of fixed LED's and variable

7-segment displays so it can post scores for all kinds of different dart games.

Even More features.
Player-selectable Bullseye values, NDA S.P.R.E. handicapping system ("spots" players extra darts), ADA "Neutralizer" (automatically translates ADA handicaps to 301 or Cricket), Team Play, and new front-entry league slot.

Even More games.
Exciting new Cricket choices. There's "Chance it" (the internal computer, Ernie, picks the numbers). "Wipe Out" (If a player hits the same score as an opponent during any 01 game, the opponent has to start over). "You Pick It" (players pick the numbers). And "Masters Cricket" to challenge the most skilled players.

Even More
game-selection ease.
Simplified 3-button selection system.

PLUS ...
Valley upgradability.
Our new standard Cougar machine can always be upgraded to our forthcoming "smart" dart machine, the Cougar IQ.

AND ...
Incomparable Valley reliability.
With 7AM to 7PM service to back it up.

NRTL LISTED MET.
Complies with UL 22 Listing No. SAF 1022

Introducing the NEW
"Even More" Valley Cougar.

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tion of Gregg Elliott. The VNEA generates its own revenue, has its own management and publications, and sponsors the VNEA National Championship tournaments as well as international competitions.

All of this promotion and market development effort continues to show solid returns as the sanctioned player base continues its climb. Last year, a record-setting 5,000 VNEA sanctioned players competed in Las Vegas at the VNEA National Championships. Because pool is hot among players, it's hot among pool table operators too!

Schroeder says that operating pool tables and managing pool leagues is an attractive combination for coin-op. In fact, the VNEA requirement that VNEA leagues be played only on operator-owned tables has helped keep tables from becoming location-owned. "Because of the VNEA, operators are winning back some of the locations they lost to location-owned tables just because the players have pressured locations for leagues and a sanctioned status," Schroeder noted.

The "Most-Played" pool table

It's not just the pool leagues that help operators; it's also quality product. Valley pool tables have a long tradition of quality. Valley boasts about its superb craftsmanship. Its tables are built to take the use—and abuse—they get in bars and taverns, the most likely place to find Valley tables. This reputation is reflected in Valley receiving AMOA's "Most-Played Pool Table" award every year since 1982.

Shelton observed that Valley tables have a consistency that operators can rely on. "Regardless of model, almost all parts are interchangeable, the result of consistent manufacturing processes, precision, computerized cutting, and routing of all wood components. The same can be said for the metal and other non-wood components. This means that operators only have to understand one type of Valley table to understand the full line; and this characteristic of Valley tables makes service easy and quick for the operator."

Although Valley uses only the finest quality Italian slate in every one of its tables, it still conducts rigorous inspections for the flatness that Valley requires. Therefore, every slate top is checked for flatness to 10/1000th of an inch before it will be used in a Valley table. Any high spots are ground down so that every table Valley sells is perfectly flat.

In addition to its mainstay *Cougar ZD-6* model pool table, the company has also introduced its Image Series, an upscale collection to complement the specific decor of locations. There are the *Country, Contemporary,* and *Traditional* versions.

"The Image tables have opened up new opportunities to place tables at different types of locations. Plus, the new styles have sparked more enthusiasm for playing pool and playing in league programs," Schroeder said.

New pool opportunities

The popularity of pool has given rise to a few new pool concepts like the VNEA-initiated Junior program for younger players. As a result there are more pool tables being placed in FECs, bowling alleys, and recreation centers, all places where younger players have access to pool tables.

In addition, the VNEA is embarking on a program of state tournaments since many of the sanctioned players want to compete but find it difficult to spend several days in Las Vegas for the national tournaments. "While these programs are being promoted under the VNEA banner, we see them as exciting and promising new initiatives for Valley," Shelton contended.

The service department, (l-r): Bob Corrigan, Craig Schroeder, Mike Gannon, and Frank Corsanos.

Darts ready for quantum leap

In much the same way as pool, electronic darts has become a success story with many operators, especially those who have ventured into the world of leagues. These operators are experiencing consistent revenues from the dart machines and league management. And the locations are reporting higher sales of food and beverages because league players come in more often, stay longer, and are likely to bring their friends with them to watch. Electronic darts can be a good business; add leagues and the operator has a going enterprise.

Valley sees a significant, long term role for its *Cougar HB* dart machine. Sales will continue to be strong, the company predicts, especially to operators who need a highly-reliable machine that meets all of the standard safety specifications. This model has all of the most popular games; '01 Wipe Out continues to be a player favorite, and the three-button, menu-driven game selector makes the game easy even for novice players.

The *Cougar HB* features high-quality electronics, a hallmark of other Valley dart games; expanded ADA (American Dart Association) handicapping features for 301 and spot Cricket; the NDA (National Dart Association) handicapping which can now report statistics for four Cricket players who are playing in two positions; and the new overhead display that can accommodate additional Cricket games.

The *Cougar IQ* Series

Valley recently introduced its *Cougar IQ* Series of electronic dart games reflecting present and future needs of operators. After acquiring Idea Inc. in 1986 and spending 10 years making some major improvements to the line of electronic dart machines, Valley has taken a quantum leap with this new series.

The company calls the *Cougar IQ* Series the technology leader as it introduces totally new innovations in electronic

The most beautiful coin-op table ever made.

Beauty that isn't just laminate deep.

To really appreciate our pool tables, you have to look a little deeper. Yes, there are now other tables that look almost identical. But *only* from the outside.

The "inside" story.

Peel away the decorative laminate on a Valley table and you'll find all "Marine Tech - Ultra Core" plywood behind it, a high grade fir plywood. And you'll see that the laminate itself is .050" thick.

Take the cloth off the cushion rails and you'll find hardwood Poplar. Same with the top rails, corner bracing, and other structural components where extra strength is important.

Look inside the cash door and you'll find soft Banak wood door stops, designed to break away for a determined vandal ... minimizing damage to the table itself.

Put simply, we use just the right wood for the job.

Look a little deeper yet.

You'll find things like 5-pound die-cast corners with a triple plating of copper, nickel and chrome ... and compression-molded fiberglass legs that can withstand just about anything patrons or an operator's moving crew can give them.

Precision-measure our slate and you'll find that it's "professional play" flat ... no more than 10/1,000ths of an inch difference anyplace on the playing surface. We know because we check and flat-grind them ourselves.

We haven't even begun to tell you about all the quality features unique to our tables. But here's the biggest.

We know they work.

Because we've studied each and every feature for going on 40 years now. We know what stands up and what doesn't. What'll require service and what won't.

A Valley table may cost a little more up front but, as the years pass, you'll find that it really cost you a lot less. Why not give your Valley Distributor a chance to show you how "deeply" beautiful our tables are.

And good-looking too.

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Commitment To Excellence

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darts. The series is comprised of three electronic dart machines, all featuring the same target; games; and high-resolution, 14-inch VGA color monitors. The base unit is the *Cougar IQ-Single Display.* A second model, the *Cougar IQ-Single Display with Card Reader*, has all of the base model's features plus a bar code and an electronic strip card reader. The third model, the *Cougar IQ-Dual Display with Card Reader*, adds an overhead scoring option for spectators. All are M.E.T. tested to comply with U.L. 22, the amusement game safety standard. All can be upgraded as the need arises.

Central to the *Cougar IQ* Series is the capability to communicate via a paperless fax modem. Through a game-to-game network, each unit at a location can share information with the other units. Plus, all of the units can be optioned to communicate via the fax modem with Valley's proprietary League Machine Automated Scoring System.

"Our goal is to give operators a series of electronic dart games that will help them be more productive and more profitable with electronic darts and their league programs," said Shelton.

Card readers

Two of the three *Cougar IQ* models have bar code and magnetic strip card readers that accept a bar-coded card prepared by the operator for each registered league player to activate league play. The player swipes the card to establish team player orders and scoring procedures in the game's electronics. Players' names and teams become part of the operator's database.

The card reader helps create special promotions to attract players and encourages frequent play. Operators who use the card reader as a promotional device will be able to judge quite accurately the effectiveness of certain promotions just by counting the swipes of the card.

The card reader with its ultra-versatile magnetic strip reader specified by National Amusement Network Inc. (NANI), may be tapped in the future to accommodate electronic debit cards, redemption features, and not-yet-thought-of applications of player cards and electronic dart games.

One overall effect of NANI is that operators will be able to have more information about their players and promotions. The *Cougar IQ* Series also has the resident technology for enterprising operators to offer frequent player programs and other business-building promotions using player cards.

Card readers also enable leagues to be played without score sheets; the player cards identify players and teams automatically. Using its communications option, the *Cougar IQ* eliminates score collecting and data entry. Its communication option allows league scores to automatically transfer by fax modem or via PDA (personal digital assistant) to the shop computer where Valley's League Machine software takes over to perform statistical analysis and reporting. Because the *Cougar IQ* games accommodate NDA and ADA handicap systems, handicapping is performed easily.

Automated scoring for VNEA too

Another exclusive feature of the new *Cougar IQ* games, if optioned to communicate with Valley's League Machine Automated Scoring System, is that they can be used to input VNEA pool league scores as well. Operators will give VNEA players special player cards that can be used to access the pool scoring screens on the *Cougar IQ* game. This will eliminate the collection of score sheets and the manual input of data into the operator's computer system.

Elaine Mitchell at the Sycamore, Ill., plant.

While the industry has focused its attention on the new *Cougar IQ* machines, Valley's League Machine Automated Scoring System has also been upgraded to work seamlessly with the new game units. The new League Machine software, called League Machine for Windows, has added features and is more flexible. While the League Machine software is designed for electronic darts and pool leagues, it will work well with any league-type sport. League Machine for Windows software includes the ability for operators to create bar coded player cards that can be used with *Cougar IQ* Series dart games.

Players are also enthusiastic about the improvements in actual play. The most pronounced new feature is the color monitor, the screen where the game and team information is presented and where selections are made. With all information presented on the screen, players need only highlight the selections they want to begin play. These features encourage casual play or new players as there are only a few, simple directions to read. And to help players along the way, there is an enriched Ernie, Valley's cockney computer figure who is part entertainer, teacher, competitor, and advocate.

Valley Gold

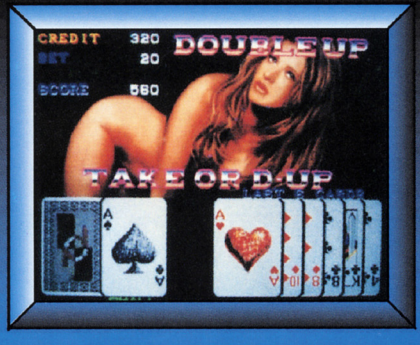
Valley Gold was established in 1986 as a way to have dart league players compete at national and international levels. The Valley Gold Tournaments are to electronic darts what the VNEA Tournaments are to pool. Currently, over 100 operators in the United States operate electronic dart leagues on Valley dart games. Each year the Valley Gold draws more competitors at all levels. And in the same way that VNEA encourages play on operator-owned pool tables, the Valley Gold encourages dart players to join leagues and compete on Valley-manufactured dart machines.

The Valley Gold tournaments begin at the local level with qualifier tournaments. Winners in these operator-run competitions become regional champions who are awarded free trips to compete in the Valley Gold North American Championship tournaments which are held annually in Las Vegas. Winners from this tournament are appointed to TEAM U.S.A. and go on to compete in the Valley Gold World Cup, the international electronic dart competitions held in Europe.

What's next? Electronic darts is a far different game than it was when Valley entered the market 10 years ago. The wide and thick target webs and the erratic operations of the early models are all history. For proof, just take a look at Valley's *Cougar IQ!* ▲

An Electrifying 5 Card Poker Game From Pal

MAJOR POKER



CARD FEVER

If You Draw 3 Of A Kind With Aces, Threes, Or Sevens, 10 Fever Spins Are Awarded. Draw 4 Of A Kind And Win 15 Fever Spins.

NUMBER WINDOW FEVER

If A Winning Hand Is Achieved, The Number Window Will Begin To Spin. If Three 1's 3's or 7's Appear In The Number Window, 10 Fever Spins Will Be Awarded. If Four Of Any Other Number Appear In The Number Window, 5 Fever Spins Are Awarded.

Video Screen Colors Can Be Changed To Coordinate With The Arcade's Color Scheme. Colors Available Include Red, Blue, Orange, And Others.

Operator Adjustable Features Include Number Window And Video Dealer

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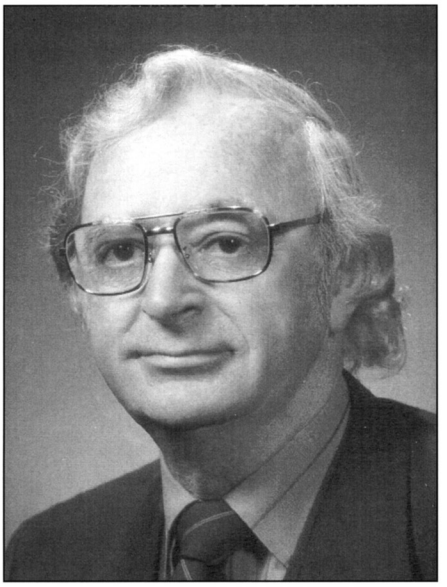
International markets prove to be growth areas



James Griffiths

From Bay City to Barcelona and beyond, Valley Recreation Products continues to make steady gains outside this country. Today, Valley pool tables and dart games are sold in about 56 foreign countries, and these sales contribute a substantial portion to the company's relentless sales effort.

Some countries, of course, have developed more quickly than others. Canada is one example, where, in 1994, Valley's distributor sold more pool tables than any other distributor in the world. Another is Germany. The company's European distributor, NSM, has taken delivery on more than 80,000 dart games.

Such growth in export sales has earned Valley high recognition. In 1990, the company was awarded the U.S. Department of Commerce "E-Award" for export expertise. This was followed in 1995, by the highest recognition a company selling overseas can receive, the "E-Star Award" for sustained growth in export sales.

Such recognition is a source of much pride for James E. Griffiths, Valley's Vice President of International Operations, who has lived in more than thirteen countries. He joined the company in 1986, just as it entered the electronic darts field, after 23 years in international marketing with Brunswick. Griffiths was responsible for the establishment of much of the offshore distribution network and works hard to strengthen it still further. Griffiths extensive overseas experience makes him uniquely qualified to evaluate the future for further Valley growth.

Griffiths is supported by Mark Boehman, Valley's International Sales Manager, and Connie Krause, the International Sales Coordinator. The international team works together to overcome the unique challenges that overseas markets pose. One such challenge are the tariffs on foreign imports that add to the cost of American-made products. Another is the local character of some markets, where sales can suddenly cease for a time with no discernible reason. "But Valley's reputation for quality and integrity precedes us overseas," Griffiths added, "so we never hesitate in going up against products made in most countries." ▲

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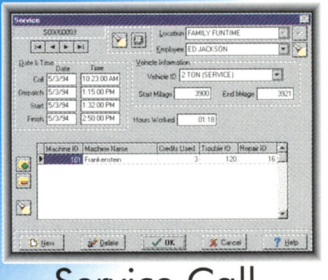
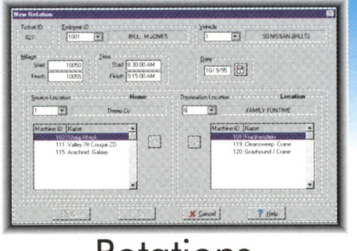
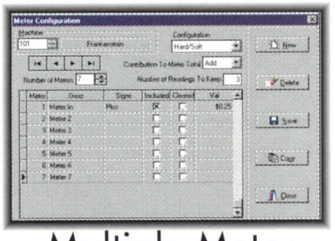


Service Call Tracking

Collections



Rotations



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Guest Commentary

The politics of blame

The press has written much about the current political climate called "The Politics of Blame." Who is responsible for our country's current difficulties? Democrats? Republicans? Blacks? Whites? Hispanics? Illegal immigrants? Legal immigrants? Overseas competition? Failure to modernize? Super strict environmental laws? Lenient environmental laws?

Everyone wants a scapegoat and far too many of our current leaders are more than willing to help you find one. Why try to understand and repair a problem when it is so much easier and more convenient to simply find someone to blame it on? Fixing the blame is not only the ultimate exercise in futility, it is also the ultimate avoidance mechanism. If I can blame a problem on you, then I can avoid any of the responsibility of having to fix it, even though it may be to my own personal advantage to do so.

Apparently this unfortunate national attitude has also permeated our own industry. Every segment of our industry—manufacturers, distributors, and operators—is willing to blame the other for the current slow market conditions. In truth, we all have only ourselves to blame. In reality, we can only look to ourselves to solve the problem.

Let's take a look at what we are doing. Manufacturers blame the operator and distributor for slow sales. But do manufacturers blame themselves for poorly designed, shoddily-built, practically untested, and uncreative equipment? Who hires sales representatives who would rather talk to each other and play golf than deal with their ultimate customers—operators? Who regularly makes statements about home market release dates and then violates them again and again?

Distributors blame the manufacturers for poor product and the operator for low sales. But who will sell practically anything, regardless of merit, to practically anyone who can write a check regardless of who they are or who they represent? Who often competes with their own customers and uses their position to stock their own routes first while delaying and denying their customers/competitors? Who will not take in a trade unless a quick buck is to be made? Just where do these biz-ops get their equipment?

Operators blame both manufacturers and distributors. But who has dirty, broken, obsolete equipment on the street? Who spends as little as possible on new equipment and only when absolutely necessary? Who offers unrealistic location splits and prices 1995 equipment at 1960 prices? Who fails to obtain location contracts? Who refuses to join their state associations? Who places equipment in unprofitable locations and leaves it there forever? Who expects to pay 1960 prices in 1995?

Oh yes, there's plenty of blame to go around. Do you see yourself in here? If so, you have helped to find your own scapegoat. Let he who is without sin cast the first stone. To be fair this is not an attempt to splash mud on everyone. There are many fine reputable manufacturers, distributors, and operators. These people do their best in an imperfect environment to practice the highest ethics and perform in their business to the best of their abilities. Yet this industry has more than its share of spoilers.

What are the solutions? Here's a start:

Manufacturers, if you want to sell your product, try giving it a thorough testing including maintenance and repair. A few weeks in a hot arcade doth not a test make. Try using those high paid sales reps to actually try to get some feedback from your customers. It's been years since a factory rep called on our company. If you are going to lie about home release dates, don't expect people to believe you in the future. I for one have a long memory and it definitely affects my purchase decisions.

Distributors, beware of those you sell to. As an operator, if you sell to biz-ops who try to place equipment in my locations, I won't buy from you. We have enough problems in this industry without fly-by-night operators who muddy the waters. You can't expect operators to have much loyalty to you if you are their major competitor. When you represent a machine to me I expect you to stand behind it with parts, service, warranties, and trade-ins. If you have no confidence in a product, don't sell it. If you sell it, back it.

"Everyone wants a scapegoat and far too many of our current leaders are more than willing to help you find one."

Operators, you are in the novelty amusement business. Novel means new. If you won't buy new equipment for your accounts, someone else will. If your equipment is dirty, broken, and obsolete, it will not earn money. If you fail to obtain contracts, price your equipment too cheaply, and continue to give away the lion's share of the earnings, you will fail. You will not be able to remain in the business. If you don't band together in your state association then you deserve the fate the state legislature deals to you.

Sounds so simple. Believe me it's not. The truth is that all we can do as individual companies is try to do our very best and do what we know in our gut is the right thing. We're in this together. To roughly paraphrase Martin Luther King, "We must all learn to live together as coin-op people or to die as fools." ▲

Steve Bodenstein

Show Wrap-Up

It's a small world after all

That famous phrase, which sprung from the creative genius of the amusement park industry's father Walt Disney, could just as easily be used to describe the annual convention and trade show held by the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions.

The word international in the association's name has become key for members of the coin-op entertainment industry, who say that overseas business has become a primary focus for exhibitors at the IAAPA show.

In fact, at IAAPA '95, held at the Ernest J. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans, La., Nov. 14-18, exhibitors placed international business at the top of their list of reasons for being at the show. However, a solidifying domestic FEC market ran a close second.

Convention organizers say they hosted approximately 20,000 attendants and close to 900 exhibitors over the four days the show floor was open. And just a quick glance at the exhibits revealed a range of products beyond even the most imaginative child's wildest dreams, with state-of-the-art motion simulation theaters competing for space with hot dog retailers.

"Coming to IAAPA should motivate everyone; there is so much to see," said Karyn Gitler of Discovery Zone. "Don't be overwhelmed. You have to weed through and see what works for you."

When asked about prospective sales, a number of exhibitors said their dreams were also being met and even exceeded at the show.

"We got more leads in a couple of hours this morning than we got in two days at the last show (Fun Expo) and that was a great show," said J.R. Fishman, president of crane manufacturer Advanced Games and Engineering, on the first day of the show.

"It gets so busy in the booth that you can't talk to everybody," exuded Greg Kania of Innovative Concepts in Entertainment.

"We feel we have a very strong line this year based on response to our new items: licensed Tweety and Foghorn Leghorn, Duke the great dane, and the Doozy Bird walking puppets," observed Rorie Keller of Ace/Acme.

But others in both the buying and selling category were not so assured in their assessment of the show.

"I'd say I'm happy but this is not a real writing show for plush," said Mel Posin of Mel Posin Associates Inc. "Ask me next year and I'll tell you. When the sun is out things are great. When it's not you can't give it away."

"On the operations end we have to be very selective in what we buy in today's economy," noted George Smith of Namco operations. "If you make a mistake you just add to your depreciation."

IAAPA also got high marks from traditional distributors and operators who attended.

"I feel that it's important to be at this show," said Marty Shumsky of Nevada Game Sales in Reno, Nev. "At ACME and AMOA my time as a distributor is spent in meetings with manufacturers. I barely have time to walk the floor. At IAAPA I can see more than I can see anywhere else, talk with people, and see my customers and future customers."

One street operator who attended said he had been questioned about why he came to IAAPA. "I'm branching out, perhaps into the FEC business, and I need to see what direction I'm going to take," he explained.

Another operator said that the parks show was a way of looking to the future. "The coin machine industry has come a long way in a few short years, but a show like IAAPA only demonstrates how much farther it can go," he commented. "I have been coming to this show for many years, but it has only been the last two or three that I see so many from our industry. Is that good? Of course, it shows that operators are working with open minds more than they have in the past."

A third operator noted that while there is an overabundance of trade shows, IAAPA is not likely to suffer from any fallout. "There are too many shows and it's getting harder to go to all of them," he said. "Pretty soon everyone will have to make some radical choices about which shows to spend time and money going to. I think we'll see some major changes in the shows, but I know IAAPA is going to continue to draw people from our industry."

The only note of controversy sounded at the five-day show came from indoor exhibitors who were placed in the convention center's second-floor ballroom. Larger outdoor exhibits also occupied space outside the rear of the convention center.

After the first day, a number of the second-floor exhibitors complained that they were getting almost no traffic and that many attendees were not even aware of their presence.

"The traffic has been terrible but the quality is better," noted Debbie Gonzalez of Hannaho Games, who was exhibiting the company's new product in Turnpike Amusement's ballroom booth. "The people who really want to buy check out everything."

IAAPA responded rapidly to the complaints, making general announcements from the second day on that reminded attendees of the upstairs exhibits. The association also provided free coffee on the second floor, put up a number of additional signs downstairs, and told unhappy exhibitors they could leave free-of-charge if they packed up after the second day. Several ballroom exhibitors said they were also assured good placement at next year's show.

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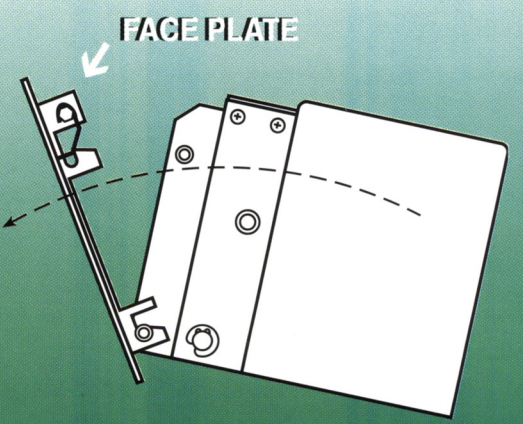

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AMOA's Doug Minter (l) of Tip Top Amusement Co. and Glenn Anderson of Microworlds by Just Kiddie Rides' *Tom & Jerry*.

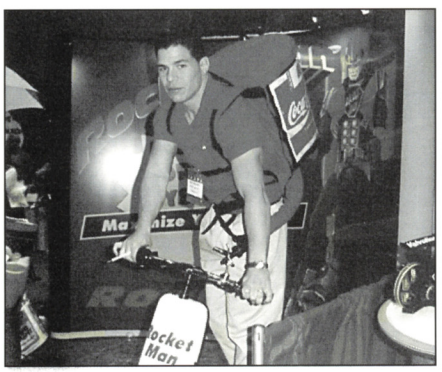
Giant characters like this bandido from Signs & Shapes Intl. had attendees stopping for a closer look.

Entertainer "Miss Mardi" stops to check out the Play Meter booth, manned by Steve White and Renee Pierson.

From left: Xavier Simon (Dinaplast), Ricardo Delcampo (Magic Games), Jay Friedman (Turnpike), Jaime Simon (Dinaplast), with Carolina Banrevy, Lorraine Maro, Rich Bartlett, and Steve Yanosk (Turnpike).

Sue Watkins (l) of Carousel Novelty Co. checks out the new *Dual Revolution* with Danny Wollmann of West Coast Mfg.

Operators Greg Florer (l) and Don Jackley (r) talk with Jerry Foote of Touch It Software Solutions.



Ken Tarquinio of Rocket Man Inc. and his unique dispensing unit was featured on NBC's "Today Show" with the Gadget Guru on opening day.

At the LAI Group booth, (l-r): Brian Swanson of DAEMCO, operator Ken Gomes, and Frank and Pensri Minnella of LAI.

Play Meter's Steve White took his *Ghosthunter* instructions seriously from Debbie Gonzalez of Hanaho Games.

By *Colorama*, (l-r): Benchmark's Roland Berrios and Al Kress, Bromley's Marty Bromley and Joe Bundra, and American Vending's Ron Bolger.

Enjoying a Creole dinner, (l-r): Monica Felix-Diaz, Moise Viloa Perez, Mike Kessler, Valerie Cognevich, Ernesto Felix-Diaz, Kim Kessler, Ignacio Carral Kramer, and Steve White.

From left: Nickel & Dimes' Ron Kostelny, Sega's Al Stone, Nickel & Dimes' Craig Singer, and American Vending's Frank Gumma Jr. by *Indy 500*.

"Business is good!" says Quick Silver's Paul Scribner (l) and Greg Malavazos by the new *Lucky Stars*.

FKL Kartworld's Pete Crumb (kneeling), goes over go-kart specifics with a band of interested attendees.

FunTunnel's Bill Stone (r) discusses electronic accounting with Data Eye's Steve Brittner (l) and Matt Elliman.

From left: Brian Ross (A&A), Mark Yound (That's Entertainment), Michele Greenstein (A&A) and John Himmaugh (That's Entertainment).

Patty White of She Inc. talks redemption with Northeast Imports' (l-r): David Diambrosia, Robert Vittitoe, and Peter Quinn.

All smiles at the ARMS Intl. booth, (l-r): Rhonda Fletcher (l) and Lou Cappetta with Fannie Farkle's Marion Paul.

Laser Star's Dr. David Peretz (r) and Randy Grinter show off their laser gun hardware.

Next to the Fun Merchant *Top Choice* crane are Fun Merchant's Neal Rosenberg (l) and Robert Betti.

The Play Smart crew, (l-r): Leeta Weaver, Darrell Weaver, Melissa Campbell, Sandy Bailey, and John Dickey.

From left: Bruce Haber (HMS Monaco), Jack Campbell (Seno), Ira Erstling (HMS), Lenora Rivera (Preston Amusements), David Rubenstein (HMS), Fred Milner (Bondeal), Maureen Wallace (Jungle Land), and Steve Schulman (HMS).

Discovery Zone's Steve Thomas (c) samples *Steer Crazy* with Fun Industries' Mel LaForce (l) and Bud Johnston.

From left: NECO's Rick Kirby stops to see Coin Concepts' Mike Pszcola, Stacey Martin, Gary Warner, and Jeff Lankiewicz.

"Once they started making the announcements traffic definitely picked up," added Michael Homas, president of Phoenix Games & Amusements.

An international extravaganza

With the domestic market in the doldrums, the coin-op industry has looked to international buyers in recent years to make up revenue, and the IAAPA show is touted by many as the place to be when looking for South American, European, and Asian customers. Redemption manufacturers, in particular, have found international clientele extremely receptive to their product.

"The most potential is in the international market, South America, and Europe in particular," said Jeff Lankiewicz of Coin Concepts. "Taiwan is flooded from years past and is looking for secondary markets for their used equipment so they can replace it with new product. We're seeing more interest at recent shows from Europeans and that tells us that the market is opening up."

Added Brad Danielson of Meltec: "We see a lot of international buyers here including a lot of new faces. The domestic market has flattened out, in part because FECs going out of business are causing new/used equipment (maybe only one year old) to come on the market and soften things. There were a lot of people who wanted to make investments who walked into an FEC with their families on the weekend and saw hordes of people. They went into the business without doing the proper research, from training employees to basic operations to surviving during the week."

"The international market has been very good for us in the last few years," said Gordon Smart of Smart Industries. "We are attending more international trade shows, from Dubai to South America to Australia."

Mel LaForce of Fun Industries said the majority of his games are going overseas as well. "We're going to exhibit in Asia this spring because that's where our market is," he noted.

"This show has a good aura; AMOA was so flat with so many doom and gloom folks," commented Joe Bundra of Bromley Inc. "We have met a lot of new international buyers at this show. The Asian market is really a growth market and will be even better when China opens up. Less so for Europe because of gambling there. Whenever there is a crackdown on gambling, the next alternative is redemption."

The international boon has not been lost on other segments of the industry either. "I wish my domestic business was half as good as my international business," one sales representative from a major video manufacturer said at the show.

"For us it is great to see international customers you usually communicate with by fax," said Michael Kubin of Data East, who was demonstrating product in the AAMA booth. "This show has been really good."

"Even if you are doing 25 percent of your business overseas, you are still doing 75 percent of your business domestically, but the international market is brand new, like adding another quarter to your business," said Dynamo's Mark Struhs. "We really are an international industry. That's the good thing. You can put an air hockey in Shanghai or Chicago, and the results will be the same."

Clara Fernandez of Falgas USA said they were receiving good response from international buyers for their kiddie ride products, such as *Carousel 1900, Canada/Space Train,* and *Police Motorcycle.* "I've talked with people from South and Central America, the Orient, and the Middle East," she said. IAAPA is always a good show for us."

The FEC market

While international buyers may have been the darlings of the industry at IAAPA, an ever-growing number of current and potential FEC operators was not to be left out of the mix for redemption or video manufacturers.

"We're showing product to people who probably never knew it existed," said Tom Siemieniec of Namco-America. "Even though we sell primarily through distributors, these people are going to see something and go home and call a local operator and say 'I want that.' Even though there are some locations that don't warrant spending the money on one of our big pieces, there are going to be 20,0000 people through here over four days and they represent a lot of locations that do warrant the costs."

Another question to be debated, with so many potential buyers from the FEC market, is whether traditional coin-op distribution is fulfilling the needs of redemption manufacturers and their potential customers.

"Most larger distributors, whether domestic or international, are training specialists in redemption," said Brad Danielson of Meltec. "It's to their advantage to educate their customers because when they succeed the distributor sells more equipment."

But Al Kress of Benchmark Entertainment disagreed. "Domestic distribution has not supported redemption," he quipped.

With such a large mix of equipment and services represented on the show floor, other related industries were also catching the FEC craze this year at IAAPA.

"The trend with everyone is the FEC concept," noted Doug Spray of Automated Batting Cages. "If they are not going with a total FEC they start with batting cages and work their way up from there. There are still many communities with a population of 100,000-200,000 within a 20- to 50-mile radius that don't have anything like an FEC in the area."

"We are seeing a lot of FECs adding on or changing attractions," commented Larry Reed of OMNI play equipment. "The trend is to put soft modular play in an enclosed building to maintain a year 'round staff instead of a seasonal one. Outside venues come and go with the weather.

"Skating rinks and bowling centers are expressing interest in soft play. Mom and dad can skate or bowl more often if their children are in a safe, secure environment."

Added Danny Byrd of Pentes Play

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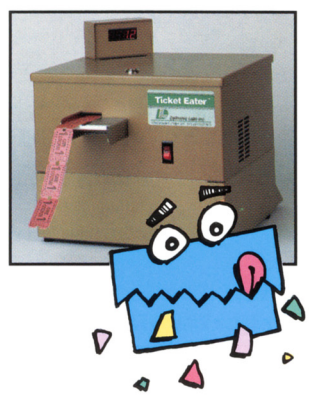

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IAAPA '95

Looking over remote control boats, (l-r): Mondial's Steve McCaul, Bruce Kawut, Roger Harris, and Bruce Sarkisian.

At the Shaller go-kart booth, (l-r): Ken Syrinek, Denise Hewitt, company president Roger Shaller, and Jimmy Koenig.

From left: AGE's J.R. Fishman, Game House Rio's Felipe Regino, S&B Entertainment's Marty Luepker, and AGE's David Hodge.

Sinco Group's Christine Lemery (l) and Stephanie Klose talk with Soft Play's Ken Schober.

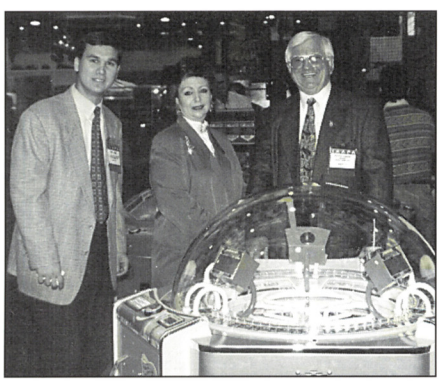
From left: Lazer-Tron's Kelley McDonald and Susan Jessee, Play Meter's Carol Lally, Lazer-Tron's Ron Carrara, and Play Meter's Carol Ann Longacre with daughter Kristin.

At the Bob's Space Racers' monster redemption booth, (l-r): W.G. Watts, Judy Tenison, Bob Cassata, and Victor Dirichina.

With *Skee-Ball Lighting* behind them, Skee-Ball's (l-r): Mark Kane, Lynn Horton, Tom Kane, and Joe Sladek.

The proud Horniak family from Deltronic Labs, (l-r): Stephen, Molly, and dad Steve.

Century Vending's Jerry Monday (l) with Grey-Stone Technology's CEO Richard Smith next to his *MagBall* VR pod.



ICE's Greg Kania (l) with Jan and Royce Green of Green Distributors by the popular *Cyclone*.

In front of *Time Crisis*, (l-r): Namco's Tom Siemieniec, Lucinda Bender, Emilio Cabrera, and Frank Cosentino, Birmingham Vending's Gary Gouse, and Namco's Jerry Momoda.

From left: Mick White (Tornado), Alexandra Donnelly (TWi), Darren Decatoire (Konami), Angela Orlando (AAMA), Tom Keil (TWi), Jim Jarocki (ALG), Louie Rummenigge (Konami), and Rachel Davies (Williams).

Doing some cooperative marketing: GaMCO's Ron Yaffe (standing) and Design Plus' Mike Seibert next to GaMCO's *Clown Dancers*.

From left: Planet Earth's Cindy Faith, Val Bechtold, and Bob Sullivan with the new *Grand Treasure Falls* redemption game.

A great looking booth and staff at Oriental Trading, (l-r): Gary Lauber, Ron Turner, Sondra Doyle, Aaron Graves, and Meg Bonnichsen.

The EMT ladies "ride" in to New Orleans, (l-r): Michaela Zeiss, Alicia Sadoff, and Maureen Coyle.

Easy Street's David Passingham (l) looks at BWB Newark's *Sunset Skillstop* with BWB's Jean and Don Tunstall.

Kiddie Rides USA's Stuart Heller (r), shows his *Blue Ribbon Carousel* to Peter Piper's Larry and Phyllis Landini.

Cavemania is still hot at Meltec, according to, (l-r): John McEwan, John McFall, and Brad Danielson.

Both battery- and man-powered kid cars are the stock and trade of the Mason Corp.

The staff of Bay-Tek, (l-r): Larry Treankler, Dean DeKeyser, Lisa Basten, and Becky Weber.

S&B Entertainment's Diane and Bryan Riggles by a crane filled with their candy and prize assortment.

Firestone Financial's Ed Yaffe (l) with Williams Amusements' Dale Williams, and Smart's Gordon Smart by the U.L. listed *Candy Crane*.

Great American Toy's John Mincove (l) and Cliff Brechner (c) with American Amusement Arcade's Norman Pink, Daniel Hellichher, and Mark Meyer.

Inc.: "The more sophisticated soft play modular systems blow the fast food systems away. We keep coming up with good play events that have value. Almost every facility now wants our ball fall in the configuration."

And even the performing rights societies were fielding questions from the burgeoning FEC industry. "This is a mature industry; people know who we are," said Bill Lee of ASCAP. "Most of the inquiries at this show have been from FEC owners."

New products

A host of new products had their first public viewing at IAAPA. This is a partial list of available items:

Coastal Amusements showcased the new *Park Ranger* two-seater kiddie ride from Whittaker Brothers, which features a baby tiger on top and a giraffe in the back. Also new from Whittaker, *Old Mac's Van* with barnyard characters. The company's *Penalty Shootout* soccer-themed game was shown for the first time with a jackpot winner feature.

Coin Concepts debuted *Double Top*, a four player dart-themed novelty game that affords players one chance per token or coin to skillfully drop a giant dart on a rotating dart board marked with varied point value spaces; 50 tickets are awarded for hitting the spot marked double top.

ICE brought its new *Hitting Streak* baseball-themed skill redemption game housed in a stadium-style cabinet. It delivers three pitches: change-up, knuckleball, and fast ball, each with a progressive jackpot.

American Sammy showcased the new *Bandits* redemption game with a pachinko-style playfield. Players must eliminate seven Old West bandits to win tickets.

Lazer-Tron introduced the final version of its *Miner's Revenge* video, the *Safari Roll* kiddie version of its *Rollin' for Riches* roll down (this one features animal characters), and *Pitch It,* a redemption unit styled after old-fashioned coin pitching games.

Skee-Ball happily displayed its *Sittin' Ducks* redemption unit that asks players to hit spinning and rotating targets, plus the *Operation Vortex* 10-station midway game.

Seidel Amusement Machine Co. followed its successful *Smokin' Token* coin drop game with the debut of *Goin' Rollin'*, a coin drop model with neon graphics and hip sounds that reflect teen interest in rollerblading.

Smart announced the imminent shipping of its *Redemption Center* and *Prize Center* units, while Eurolink took its penny press machine up a notch and introduced a new quarter press model. And XCP took the occasion to show its *Cash Vend* drop-safe changemaker to meet market demand for a secure on-site change dispenser.

Coin-op giants Namco and Sega were also on the show floor with new product. Namco debuted the fast-paced redemption game *Swing Swung*, in which players attempt to throw as many balls through three rings as fast and accurately as possible, and the video gun game *Time Crisis* with an innovative foot pedal that allows players to switch from a defensive to an offensive position. Namco also continued its winning streak, begun at AMOA, with a nod from IAAPA deeming *Alpine Racer* as the best new product.

Sega made a splash with its *MANX TT Super Bike* motorcycle race simulator with 3-D texture-mapped graphics, a five-speaker sound system, and the action motion slider that delivers the true feel of the course. Also shown: *Fighting Vipers* video, *Funky Head Boxers* and *Super Major League* kits for the Titan System, and the long-awaited *Apollo 13* from Sega's pinball division.

IAAPA awards

Each year IAAPA awards prizes in a wide range of categories for exhibits and new products, and this year's lineup of winners included both industry veterans and a few new faces.

In the exhibitor category, the winners were:

Family Entertainment Center Rides/Attraction: 1st Place—Q-Zar; Honorable Mention—Creative Engineering.

Coin-Operated Kiddie Ride: 1st Place—Zamperla Inc.; Honorable Mention—Jolly Roger Amusement Rides.

Food Service: 1st Place—Perky's FoodService Concepts; Honorable Mention—Lil' Orbits Inc.

Games: 1st Place—Bob's Space Racers Inc.; Honorable Mention—Hampton Co. Inc.

Virtual Reality: 1st Place—Virtuality Entertainment Inc.; Honorable Mention—GreyStone Technology.

Coin Operated Arcade and Redemption Equipment: 1st Place—Bob's Space Racers Inc.; Honorable Mention—Skee-Ball Inc.

Merchandise: 1st Place—Play By Play Toys & Novelties; Honorable Mention—Lexington Scenery & Props Inc.

In the product category, the winners were:

Family Entertainment Center Rides/Attraction: 1st Place—Laser Storm Inc. (*Stargate* Theme Laser Tag) ; Honorable Mention—Creative Engineering (Rock-A-Fire Mini Show with Karaoke).

Coin-Operated Kiddie Ride: 1st Place—Coastal Amusements Inc. (*Sante Fe Sam*); Honorable Mention—Coastal Amusements Inc. (*Old Mac's Van*).

Food Service: 1st Place—Perky's FoodService Concepts (Perky's Food Service Snack Bar/Concession Program); Honorable Mention—Fruit Shocker (Raging Raspberry Shocker).

Games: 1st Place—Bob's Space Racers Inc. (*Frog Song*); Honorable Mention—Conklin Shows USA Inc. (*Tic-Tac-Toe Roll-O-Ball*) and Denny's Electronics Inc. (*Spyr-O-Mania*)

Virtual Reality: 1st Place—Virtuality Entertainment Inc. (*Total Recoil*); Honorable Mention—GreyStone Technology (*MagBall* Software on Andromeda Platform).

Coin Operated Arcade and Redemption Equipment: 1st Place—Namco-America (*Alpine Racer*); Honorable Mention—Seidel Amusement (*Smokin' Token*).

Merchandise: 1st Place—Misty Mate (Misty-Mate); Honorable Mention—Play-By-Play Toys & Novelties (Playlaces Stuffed Toy Pillows). ▲

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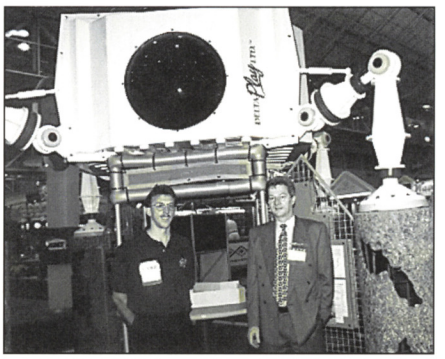
By American Sammy's *Keroppi's Playground*, (l-r): Jim Miskell, Maria Fotinopoulos, and Mr. Gen Ozeki.

Playground Concepts' soft play gurus, (l-r): Michael Brickler, Kenji Kuboto, and Jack Abi-Fadel.



High-tech gym and soft play designs were shown by Delta Playgrounds' Steve De Marco (l) and Dan Buchanan.

David Taylor (r) of Texas Smokehouse Foods serves Ben McElmurry and Ruty Fuhrmann of the Club Car.

Classic's Bill Luni (l) and Dan Dinnebeil stand next to their *Water Works* crane.

Gametime's Jim McIntire (l) and Kelly Stites got great IAAPA response to the *Mini Max* digger.

Dynamo's Mark Struhs (l) and Chris Brady stand behind the new Dynamo *Striker* foosball table.

From left: Andree Rodas of Equador's Aseinco talks debit cards with XCP's M.J. Machael, Jim Watts, and David Swan.

By *Kaleidoscope*, (l-r): Coastal's Len Dean, friend and customer Don Zaino, and Coastal's Bob Keelyn and Sal Mirando.

Katie Kogos (l) checks out Falgas' *Carousel 1900* with, (l-r): Clara Fernandez, Eddie Sanchez, Pedro Soberon, Ignacio Mateo, and Jose Saus.

From left: Ben Vaughan, Tom Milks, and Allison Ellis, all of Virtuality Entertainment.

The Namco group, (l-r): Debi Olivero, Dicky Adams, Kevin Hayes, Bill Pelafas (behind Kevin), Masaya Nakamura, Keiji Tanaka, Tsugio Kinoshita, and Kenji Hisatsune.

Play Meter food fest becomes party central

In a city known for its parties, Play Meter's pre-IAAPA Cajun food fest at Mike Anderson's Seafood Restaurant on Bourbon Street ranked among the best. Exhibitors and attendees rubbed elbows as they sampled red beans and rice, jambalaya, crawfish etouffee, and bread pudding with rum sauce. The timing was perfect: display setup was nearly complete, and it was time for a little relaxation.

Sheila Dellacona of Roger Williams Mint and her husband Brian visit with Play Meter ad director Ron Kogos.

The British invasion: Dawn Gillroy, John Slattery, and Peter Rusbridge of Amusement Trades Exhibition Intl.

From left: Mardi Gras Games' Jeff Seligman, Barbara and Don Hansen, and Play Meter's Carol Lea LeBell.

Play Meter publisher Carol Lally (l) joins Kevin Hayes of Namco, Carole Sjolander of the IAFEC, and Ray Sjolander of O.D. Hopkins.

The Coin Concepts crowd on the balcony, (l-r): Gary Warner, Art Warner, and Jeff Lankiewicz.

Neal Rosenberg (r) of Fun Merchants with Bonnie Theard of Play Meter and Chuck Weiner of Weiner Dist.

The Play Meter gang, (l-r): Valerie Cognevich, Ron Kogos, Renee Pierson, Carol Lea LeBell, Bonnie Theard, Carol Ann Longacre, Carol Lally, and Steve White.

From left: Mary Hermanson of Jaleco, Mike Kubin of Data East, Louis Rummenigge of Konami, Steve White of Play Meter, and Tracy Tate of SNK.

Debbie Gonzalez of Hanaho Games and Mick White of Tornado Table Sports are having a good time.

Hi-tech: huge profits or hype

The old adage is true—if you build it they will come. But the more important question for FEC operators looking at costly high-tech equipment is will they come again. The answer depends upon whom you ask.

With an abundance of so-called high-tech product on the IAAPA show floor in New Orleans, there were plenty of assurances that family fun centers could capitalize on the draw of such attractions. Some even argued that while operators might not get their return on investment for a particular high-end piece, its sheer presence would draw the numbers and income for a location to make the purchase pay off through additional overall revenue.

But others contend that a lack of software available for the dazzling hardware platforms makes such equipment unfeasible for centers drawing on local, repeat customers. So where does this leave the FEC operator who is trying to compete with larger, corporate fun centers that are springing up across the country. In fact, this question was the subject of one of the show's first seminars entitled Hi-Tech in the Family Entertainment Center.

Arguing in favor of the utilization of high-tech equipment in FECs, panelist Matt Walton of Illusion Inc. said that the platforms of the future will be more affordable and rugged, equipped with standard components, and reconfigurable.

"You can do a racing car one day and a speed boat the next; if you can do that all of a sudden the economics become a hell of a lot more attractive," he said, explaining later that such attractions could even include playing a Prodigy on-line game in a larger format with teams. "They will come if we can offer a higher value experience than one can get in the home. We need to rip out this conception that high-tech has to be too expensive. I'm not saying high-tech is the panacea...but in a small envelope of space you can deliver a high-impact experience."

Cindy Aylward of Imax and publisher of the *The Basix*, a journal covering high-tech attractions, agreed, saying there is a whole range of products that can work in an independent FEC. "The big guys are going to bring in the big toys," she said. "But there is a wide range of technology available. It's software that makes the industry work. The key is to come up with products and software so there is always a reason to come back."

Science fiction writer Steven Barnes bolstered this notion, claiming that new high-tech games take the basic notion of entertainment to a higher level. "What games have always tried to do is tie into those native instincts like hunting skills," he said. "The more we can lose ourselves in what is happening, the more people are willing to pay for it."

A different view

But not all the panelists were sold on high-tech as the answer for FECs. Most vociferous in his skepticism was Bob Rogers of Imagination Arts, who self-admittedly will "do anything for money" but still doesn't believe it will work for smaller fun centers.

"A lot of people want you to pay for their expensive hobby and there is a lot of hype about it at IAAPA," he said. "I think we are asking the wrong ques-

At their new *Stargate* entrance is the gang from Lazer Storm, (l-r): Pete Schwartz, Maria Schenk, Gene Beuth, and Al Watson.

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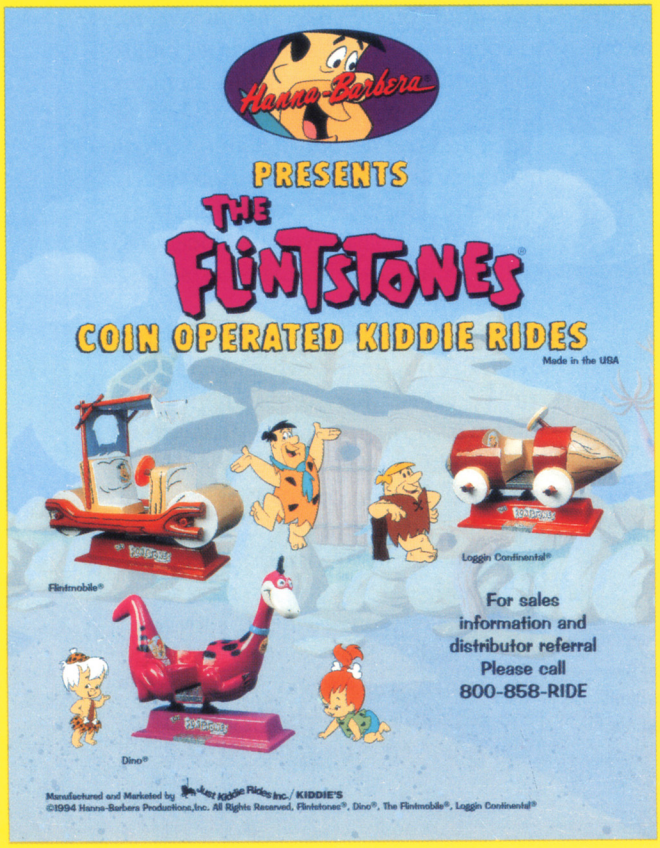

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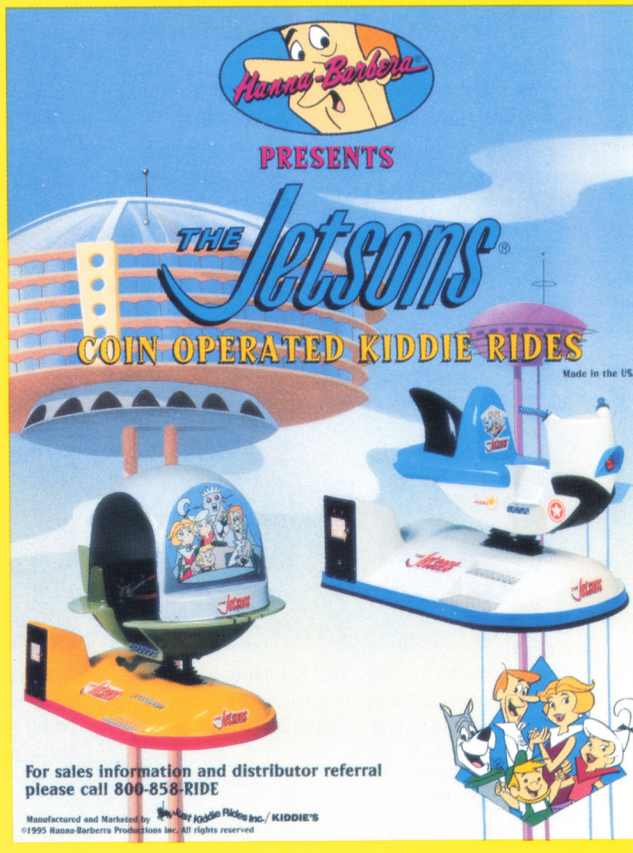

tion. I don't know for the middle to small FEC if high-tech is the answer. I'd say pizza is a good experience that customers would like to repeat."

Big, expensive, high-tech equipment will "soak up your money, add to your staff, and after two weeks all of your customers will have seen it," added Rogers, who advocated styling an FEC after a favorite restaurant instead of trying to compete with large theme parks.

Operator Michael Getlan of Recreational Amusement Inc., who moderated the talk show-style seminar, also questioned the development of high-tech equipment and software availability necessary to sustain profits in an FEC.

"I don't see that happening," he said, adding that small FECs have other ways of competing with larger chains. "My customers come back every two weeks. You can tailor your facilities (to their needs). That's your strength. That's what makes you distinct and different."

Getlan said he also doubted whether current virtual reality equipment would work in an FEC. "Virtual reality is not going to take off until FEC attractions have ports...and kids can buy their own HMDs at Radio Shack and come and plug in," he said.

On the other hand, Getlan noted that he had been operating laser tag for almost three years with a high level of success. The customer base ranges from boys and girls under 12 who play as part of a party package to males between 17 and 30 whom he labeled a "serious core group of obsessives."

"It's like yin and yang," Getlan said. "Everybody concentrates on the yin, the equipment. Don't forget the yang, the arena. It's just as important."

The debate over high-tech notwithstanding, what all panelists agreed upon was the need for independent FEC operators to create a unique and marketable identity for their locations. "Anybody can buy your same equipment and open up across the street," said Rogers. "If you can create that (identity) for your center, you will be prepared when Disney shows up. The machine won't save you, you will save you."

This is particularly important, according to panelist Roberta Perry of Edwards Technologies, because studies show guests make a decision about whether they are going to enjoy their experience during the first 10 seconds at a location. "They will spend the rest of the time with you rationalizing their decision," she said.

But while the debate may have raged in the seminar room, there was little question of the promise of technology on the show floor which was littered with high-end products ranging from laser tag and virtual reality machines to enclosed simulators and motion theaters.

Kaiser Electro-Optic's Chuck Bragdon (l) and Benedict J. Mall take Eric Griswold through their Virtual Odyssey version of *3-D Orbatak*.

Laser tag

This year's IAAPA show saw an explosion of smaller laser tag equipment manufacturers hitting the market to challenge industry stalwarts, and predictions of a shakeout abounded. Nevertheless, there were some new innovations apparent on the show floor.

Ascension Productions unveiled its new *Battle Station* fixed arena system, to complement its *Battle Cruiser* inflatable game station. The new system requires at least 1,000 square feet of space and can accommodate up to 50 participants in the competition which uses actual lasers. The operating company, which boasts over 100 locations, just got into the business of selling equipment last year.

Another first was the *Bumpertron* by L.T. Equipment, which manufactures laser tag equipment for LaserTron. *Bumpertron* is a Raceway USA bumper car modified with laser tag guns, and the company is opening a 24-car installation at its corporate headquarters in Amherst, N.Y., outside of Buffalo.

The laser tag veterans at Ultrazone introduced a new scoreboard, and Laser Storm was showing its new *Stargate* adventure. Heads Up Technologies displayed a new, lighter vest for

Showing off the new Lazer Runner Battle Station for Ascension Productions were, (l-r): Tina Toups, Salis Phillips, Robert Martineau, and Stephanie Rutherford.

Cybermind's Cobra VR machine was one of the show's most popular. The company's president Israel Ellis (c) and Patty Singal answer questions for this young player.

younger and beginning players, as well as a large central target for arenas and a video briefing system which can be customized for particular locations.

But even as the industry appears to be growing by leaps and bounds, questions about the staying power of laser tag as an attraction continue to linger.

"I think we are going to see the industry grow but there is going to be a big fallout," said Heads Up founder Robert Harshaw, noting that many new companies are undercapitalized.

Virtuality's Pete Everitt shows off the company's new *Total Recoil* game.

Thompson Training & Simulation's *Venturer Motionride* drew crowds each day of the show.

Ferris Productions' virtual reality Xperience pod features smell along with sight and sound. Young Cory Cowan tries it out as Kathleen Rhoten and Wyeth Ridgway, both of Ferris, look on.

"There are also a lot of people who are not manufacturing the equipment they are selling. There's going to be a lot of market confusion."

Others contend that no matter what the fate of laser tag, it still stands as a profitable enterprise in the current market. "Even if it is a fad, return on investment is so good you will get your money back," said Jeff Schilling of Virtual Concepts Inc., a firm that designs and builds themed laser tag centers and provides consulting on equipment purchasing. "So many people in the FEC market come to us dying to get in the laser tag business."

Among the other companies showing laser tag-related equipment were Actual Reality Intl., Dream Park Corp., Intersphere U.S.A., Laser Star Technologies, Q-Zar, VCI-Laser Tag, and VeQtor USA.

Virtual Reality

Virtual reality equipment, once seen as the cutting edge of the game market, has become commonplace on trade show floors, and this year's IAAPA was no exception. Show attendees were privy to a wide range of VR attractions featuring more advanced technology at lower prices.

VR heavyweight Virtuality debuted three new software titles at the show including *Total Recoil*, an immersive sport shooting simulator that allows players to fire a replica shotgun that acts, operates, and feels like the real thing; *Missile Command*, a VR version of the classic arcade game by Atari; and *Ghost Train* in which players race to escape the depths of the underworld while traveling on a roller coaster in a clattering mine car. The latter two games were developed for the company's 2000 Series. Virtuality also introduced its new Get EnvironMental marketing program which includes a colorful line of apparel and elaborate on-location displays.

Ferris Productions showed its XLR8 series of sit-down VR machines, which are both hardware and software upgradeable, and CGC MetaMedia displayed its RealWare VR arena in which players are immersed in a virtual world, projected on a large screen, and compete in games such as *CyberPong*, moving around the play area to respond to on-screen action.

Straylight's newest addition to its stand-up 3D-XTC system was a complete microphone network, which allows players to speak to each other during cooperative game play. For a single unit, this standard feature lets the operator communicate with players to help them through their missions.

Kaiser Electro-Optics premiered a licensed version of American Laser Games' *Orbatak* for its Virtual Odyssey platform, and GreyStone Technology displayed its *MagBall* adventure in which players pilot circular levitation vehicles in a futuristic game that combines elements of ice hockey, rollerball, and bumper cars.

Other new HMD-based VR systems included the Orion Game System by Dynamic Visions, which uses standard Pentium-based computer hardware; Orbotron's X-O-Tron VR that utilizes a circular-shape motion-based platform that provides 360-degree movement; and the Adam I by Virtualistix with its Arnold Schwarzenegger-themed *Terminator Future Shock* game.

Cybermind, a Canadian LBE operator which has been running VR centers for several years, featured its new Cobra Virtual Reality stand-up unit, which the company designed on its own to meet operator needs. The game features six-degrees of movement and can be converted to a sit-down unit.

And neither last nor least (because this is a small sampling of all the product shown) was the Vivid Group with its Mandala system that uses a video camera to put players in a virtual world projected on a television screen. Attractions include going one-on-one with NBA Hall of Famer Bill Walton.

Motion simulators

For the operator with deep pockets there was also a large offering of motion simulation experiences, ranging from single-person units to enclosed pods that could handle an extended

family and samples of the technology used in full-scale motion theaters.

The most-talked-about attraction was Enhanced Simulation's ES-360, which can handle 16 people and features 360-degree rotation. It showcases an interactive motion control system, which allows each individual rider to make a decision during the ride that affects the outcome for the whole group.

Another new offering was the

Discussing high-tech in FEC's were a panel of experts in the field, (l-r): Michael Getlan, Matt Walton, Cindy Aylward, Bob Rogers, Steven Barnes, and Roberta Perry.

Showing off the company's Bumpertron to industry veteran Frank Ballouz (l) were LaserTron's Richard Long and and Chay Samudrala.

MaxFlight Corp.'s VR2000 single-person flight simulator, which has just been completed for release. The game features a fully-interactive flight training program in which players fly through rings to get the feel; this program can then be used as part of an air race competition against other fliers. The experience also includes taking off from and landing on an aircraft carrier deck.

Additional innovations on the show floor were ViRtogo's Cyber Air Base motion-chair-based system with a two-person unit that interacts with action on a large screen, and both active and passive one-person HMD-based games; and Virtual Dynamics Quantum Motion two-person simulator which rotates around a center axis in addition to simulating flight motion in order to produce the feeling of G-forces.

Included among the many other companies presenting motion-based entertainment experiences were: CineMotion, Doron Precision Systems, Iwerks, McFadden Systems, Showscan, SimEx, and Thompson Training & Simulation. ▲

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Randy Chilton, AMOA President

Visit to IAAPA prompts evaluation of FEC market

It was against my better judgment, but on Nov. 15 I went back to New Orleans, the scene of the AMOA Expo just a few weeks before. This time it was for the IAAPA show. I am glad to announce that, as far as I know, the Louisiana State Police did not close down any booths. There was a close call however, with a cotton candy booth that was reportedly over the legal sugar limit in a single serving. It passed without incident.

The show was as impressive as ever. Last year was the first year I attended the "parks" show as it is known, and I was overwhelmed. I do not know the total size of this show, but it must be at least double the size of any other industry trade show that we typically attend.

A number of amusement machine manufacturers exhibited, particularly the larger ones. Manufacturers that specialize in large simulator games had the biggest booths for coin-op members, such as Sega and Namco. However, many redemption manufacturers were there, as well as plush and prize merchandise suppliers.

It is a good show for the typical coin machine operator to attend. I find it interesting to see what other segments of the entertainment industry are up to. I would go to this show every few years just as I would attend the Nightclub & Bar Convention and Trade Show or the Consumer Electronics Show, primarily for the education. In this industry, if a person wanted to, they could go on the expo circuit and be gone every weekend. I sympathize with many of the manufacturers who do exactly that.

One thing I noticed was the proliferation of new trade magazines. (There were 13 according to the IAAPA Convention Program and Directory.) Many of the new magazines are targeted to family entertainment centers. This is probably useful, from an education standpoint, for many of these new entries into the industry.

The questions of the day are: What is the state of the FEC market? Is it growing, and is that growth going to sustain itself? Did the IAAPA and AMOA miss an opportunity by only lately focusing on FECs? I can get dramatically different opinions depending on who I talk to. Myself, I'm really not sure. Read on for what I hear.

Argument #1: This is all too similar to the late '70s when everyone who had a savings account, or who could convince a distributor to finance them (which wasn't difficult at that time), became game operators. The economics didn't work then and won't work now. This new operator, unless very savvy, won't last.

For the new FEC trade show attendee wanna-be's, a few will be and then won't be for long. The math didn't work in 1980 and won't work now. All you have to do to confirm this is to read The Wall Street Journal. FECs are having a difficult time. If you want to make a good living in this business, it is in dart leagues, pool leagues, pinball leagues, etc.

Argument #2: The amusement industry is no different than the grocery store business, the banking business, the medical profession, etc. Big is better. Consolidation, buy-outs, mergers, venture capital investment, expansion, and vertical integration, are all taking place in the amusement industry today.

Look around! Everything is changing at warp speed. Our industry is going through the same changes as every other industry. The old game room in the corner is gone. Today's game room is 20,000 square feet, costs $2 million and up to build, and has an additional $1 million investment in amusement games. Today's customer is much more sophisticated than yesterday's customer and this is what today's consumer demands. This industry is more lucrative than ever, but to be a player it takes a very large investment and a new level of professionalism.

My spin on this is pretty simple: amusement games today are no different than the National Enquirer tabloids at the grocery store. They sell very well, I'm told, because they are positioned at the cash registers. The publishers and grocers know that no one goes into a grocery store to buy the National Enquirer. They have accepted the fact that their product is strictly an impulse item. Would anyone on Earth go into a store that only sold the National Enquirer?

Whether it's one game in the foyer of a Wal-Mart or 100 games in an FEC, the formula doesn't change. The games are not a primary draw, and will not bring customers into the business. However, if you find out where the people are (Wal-Marts, FECs, shopping centers, bowling centers, theaters, etc.), then your job as an operator is to set the games in a highly visible place within the location, and through offering attractive, clean, and popular games, motivate customers to play them.

To me, an FEC fits the mold just fine. The product that draws customers in is the total entertainment center concept, a destination point that offers games as a complementary product. As long as FECs don't depend on the games as the primary draw and income source, they should do well. When they go to the vendor, or manufacturer, and complain that their customer count is down because they are missing a particular game, they are in trouble.

The question for me is: Where are all the people? That's the business I want. This has been our new customer criteria for the last 10 years; even more today. In the late '70s people would come to your business just to play the games. Not today they won't, in my opinion.

As we come into the new year it is a good time for us to put some real thought into where we think we are going in this industry. The AMOA spends a lot of time asking this very question. Depending on your opinions regarding FECs, new technologies, and the role various forms of gaming plays in your industry, the effects are far-reaching. This determines who you target as trade show exhibitors and attendees. It has an effect on where you conduct your annual exposition. These are all issues that the AMOA will be dealing with in the upcoming months. ▲

Randy Chilton can be reached at (316) 262-3538; fax (316) 262-6200; E-mail, rchilton@in.net

SRO crowds are standard fare at IAAPA workshops

Broadway producers would envy the crowds at IAAPA workshops that routinely played to packed houses, an affirmation that current and aspiring members of the amusement industry not only want but need more information to remain competitive.

Many sessions were conducted in a talk show format, a style that makes the audience feel as if it is listening in on a conversation of friends sharing thoughts and swapping war stories.

Following are highlights from three high-energy presentations.

After Trends in FECs, (l-r): Andrea Hain of Hollywood Park, Steve Dooner of E2000, Harold Skripsky of The Enchanted Castle, and Chris Paliga and Mark Picard of Hollywood Park.

Trends in FECs

Meg Hartman of the WIT (Whatever It Takes) Agency moderated the session, which featured panelists Steve Dooner of E2000, Court Huish of Huish Family Fun Centers, Tom LeBouf of Knott's Camp Snoopy, Donna Lloyd of Putt-Putt Golf Courses of America, and Terry Weerts of Celebration Station.

Contrary to the let's-wow-them-with-technology line of thought came these comments:

"We are learning that technology is not the answer; it is merely a tool."

"Thruput is the problem with virtual reality. How many can use it per hour and at what price?"

"This is still a family business. It's about delivering a fun experience and encouraging repeat plays. If we don't deliver, customers won't come back."

"Gone are the days of 'plug it in and collect the money.'"

"You can't be in the FEC business for just this year. It's not a quick buck type of business."

Instead of individuals giving formal presentations, the group covered a wide range of FEC-related topics, with panelists putting in their two cents worth.

They took time at the outset to define the difference between a trend and a fad, agreeing that a trend is not just what happens now but what is going on in the society.

Lloyd recommended, "Rather than be big, be you. Don't be afraid to be original. Family entertainment is not fast food. Know what's going on in the neighborhood—that is what will drive your center."

Panelists acknowledged that while FECs were the fastest growing industry two years ago, today they may be the fastest growing type of business to declare bankruptcy. "At least we're still number one," came the reply.

"Rather than be big, be you. Don't be afraid to be original. Family entertainment is not fast food."

Weerts brought an interesting statistic to the table: currently there are 68 million people in the country between the ages of zero and 17. "Our market share is there," said Weerts, "but you can't think this is easy money. There will be ups and downs, just like a roller coaster ride."

Added Huish, "FECs are a victim of overbuilding and overspending. Expansion may come not through new markets but by picking up an FEC in bankruptcy. If you know how to operate it you'll be OK. I'm personally excited about the professionalism and sophistication in our business. It's part of the growing up process in the industry."

On the future

Dooner: "The number of people on the Internet doubles every two days. Our country and world are computer literate. I see an evolving marriage of technology and entertainment."

Lloyd: "The future is in entertaining customers in an environment that is safe and interactive. The real bread and butter is offering activities that all family members can do together."

Huish: "What we're offering is actual reality, as in actually driving a go-kart."

Weerts: "We're about a variety of entertainment that can't be done at home. As we design future FECs we have to keep in mind they must be safe places, especially for women. If they are clean, fun, and safe, customers will come back."

Hartman: "There is a need for a common space with spectator ability."

On food

Weerts: "We are a place to have fun

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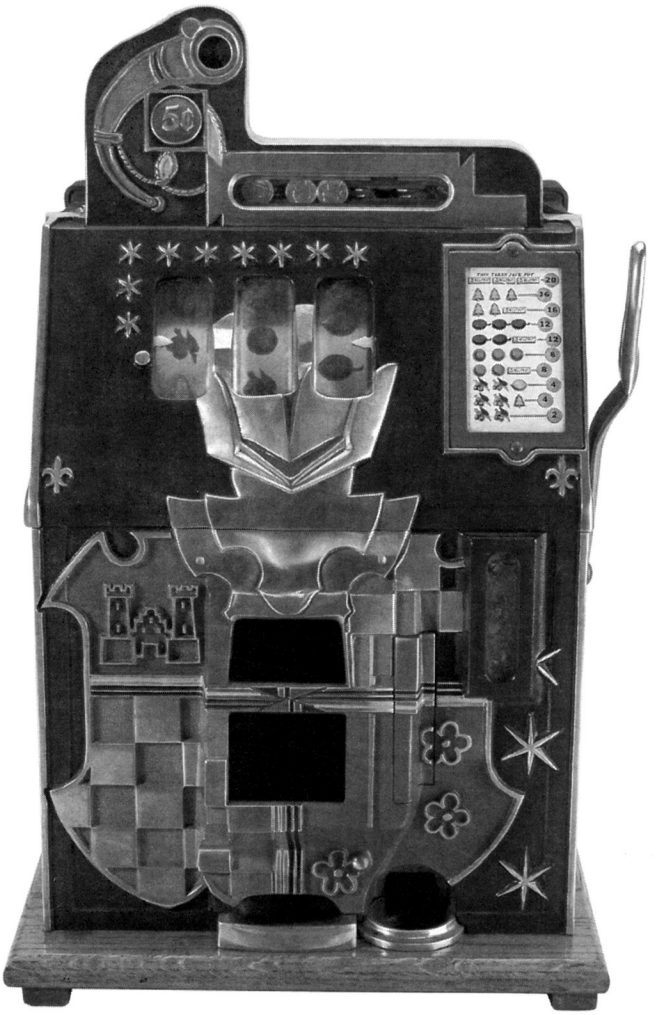

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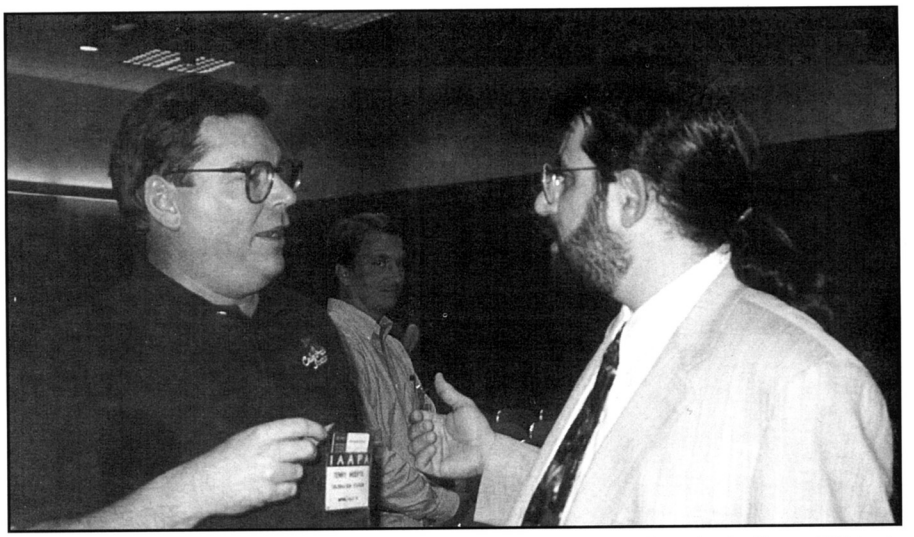


Terry Weerts (l) of Celebration Station and Michael Getlan of Amusement Consultants discuss FEC business trends.

and eat while you're there, and that's not just a concession stand. Food prolongs the length of stay and adds to per capita spending."

Huish: "We do think the themed eating experience should be part of the overall package. We don't want customers to leave to go eat at a fast food outlet. That's unacceptable. Food service is an opportunity to increase revenue."

Lloyd: "Food had better be good and hot, served in a clean area or you'll be better off without it. People remember bad food longer than anything else they remember as bad. The food industry requires research and creates more demand for labor; its scope depends on your location and competition. You need to know how it fits in your market."

LeBouf: "We've made food in the park part of the package. We took the slowest night and made it a family fun night that has been well received."

On alcohol vs. no alcohol

Weerts: "We decided that beer and wine did not go with go-karts and batting cages. Now we're looking at it again. We go on a market by market basis, identifying what the local market wants."

"You can't be in the FEC business for just this year. It's not a quick buck type of business."

LeBouf: "People have come to expect beer and wine; it has not been a problem."

Dooner: "People want a beer with their pizza."

Lloyd: "We pride ourselves on not having any type of alcohol. It's hard to pass up that extra money. I don't want the responsibility. There are other places that patrons can go to get alcohol."

On the value of games

Huish: "Games are here to stay, in one format or another. I see games as part of the industry. I like prize redemption because customers love those tickets."

LeBouf: "When we opened three years ago our game mix was 30 percent redemption and the rest video. Now the redemption is 50-55 percent. We did this because video has been in a downturn."

On security

Huish: "Security is absolutely critical."

LeBouf: "We get a mix of youth. You have to have a set of posted rules and enforce them."

Lloyd: "Light is a major component for a secure atmosphere."

When asked to name the best improvements in the FEC industry, cited were the Americans with Disabilities Act adjustable putter with an extended shaft, longer-lasting batting cage nets, and redesigned go-kart rail systems.

Closing comments

If you are in a quandry about what type of attraction to add, follow LeBouf's advice: "It doesn't take a rocket scientist to hit a home run. We observed customer preferences at the Minnesota state fair before deciding to add a kiddie coaster."

Panelists agreed it's a delicate balancing act, providing attractions for all family members. But when you tilt the mix too much one way you can get into trouble. Weerts concluded, "A good FEC does not attain balance by accident."

Guest Relations

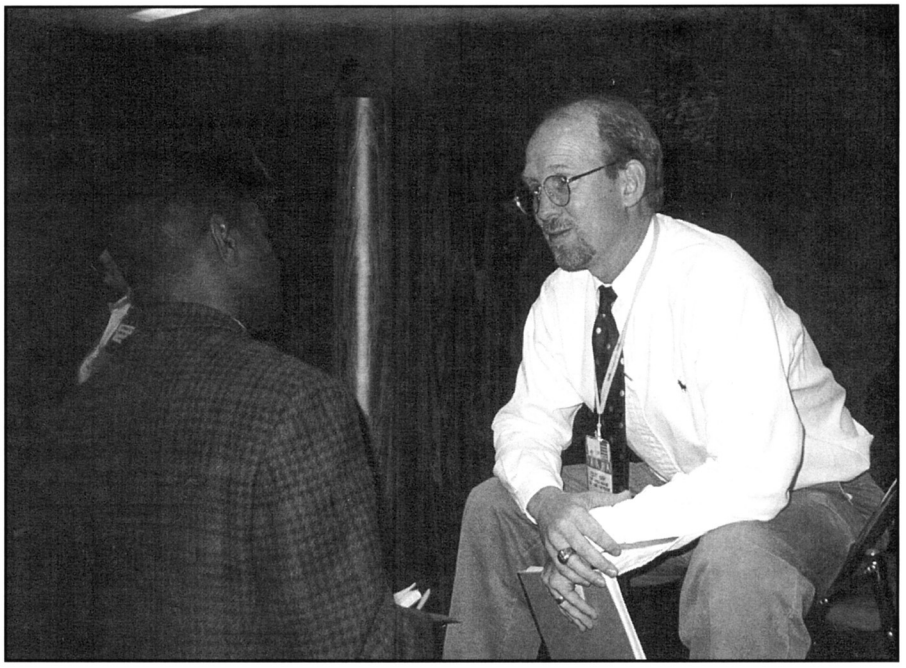
An old Japanese proverb reminds us that even monkeys fall from trees. This is important for employees to remember when dealing with unhappy customers because ensuring their satisfaction depends on how we climb back into that tree.

"One of the things that leads to challenging customers is our approach to them," Douglas Lipp of G. Douglas Lipp & Associates told a packed house at IAAPA 95's Guest Relations seminar. "Usually they are not upset with the product they bought. They are upset with little bits of neglect."

In a witty, one-hour monologue, Lipp, a former training developer for Disney, demonstrated the need to satisfy an unhappy guest's emotional and practical needs. The second hour of the seminar saw a supercharged, high-energy presentation by Michael Getlan of Recreational Amusement Inc. and Ben Jones of Recreation and Entertainment Consultants on motivating front-line employees to ensure repeat business.

In a dramatic presentation of the need for giving customers the correct amount of attention, Lipp began his presentation by adjusting an out-of-focus overhead projector and mumbling his introduction while staring at the floor. Then, in a flash, he shifted personas, asking: "How many of you are ready to leave right now?"

"If you neglect your customers and cause them pain, it always comes back to haunt you," he said. "You've got to



Court Huish (r) of Huish Family Fun Centers confers with an attendee following the workshop Trends in FECs.

get the numbers through to make the profit, but you don't want people to feel like cattle."

Lipp advised attendees to beware of stock phrases, such as "I understand" and "let me explain," noting that these statements can connote an attitude of insincerity. It is better, he said, to address their feelings and problems in very personal ways. "When the pot is ready to explode, the last thing they want to hear is logical, rational responses. They need their emotions taken care of."

Service employees should put into practice a system Lipp calls R.A.P.S. in which they verbally reflect on the customer's state, advise them on what can be done, probe further about what is bothering them, and support their egos through apologies and assurances. In this way, employees can provide both the information and emotional attention the angry customer desires.

In following up on Lipp's presentation, Getlan and Jones put on a second-hour spectacle that incorporated a dramatic skit on being out of touch with front-line employees, rock-and-roll music and video footage for motivation, and props that included plastic glasses, slinkies, and noise makers. Their resounding theme throughout the seminar: "The front line is the bottom line."

"The purpose for these glasses is so you can see all the way to the front line," Jones told an invigorated crowd. "We want you to see for miles and miles."

The presenters outlined a phenomenon they dubbed the circle of satisfaction in which a motivated staff will invariably facilitate positive guest experience which will in turn lead to return visits and a more profitable bottom line. They suggested motivating employees by acknowledging their achievements, maintaining an open door policy, and showing an interest in them personally.

According to Getlan, 68 percent of lost guests are dissatisfied with poor customer service and an attitude of indifference. Unfortunately, statistics also reveal that only four percent of unhappy customers actually complain. "96 percent of them just go away," said Getlan, "and the worst statistic of all is that 91 percent of them will never come back. What we're telling you is you can't afford to be indifferent."

"Only 4% of unhappy customers actually complain; 96% just go away, and 91% of them never come back. You can't afford to be indifferent."

This means that a heavy burden is placed on those employees who come in contact with the customers. "The lowest level of authority is your highest level of priority," Jones said. "I like to say the best decisions I make are the ones I don't make."

Ways to increase the level of service at the front line, according to Jones, include letting employees correct their own mistakes, involving them in company decisions, implementing good suggestions from the staff immediately, planning social events for them, and letting management take the heat for problems every so often.

Trends in Food Service

Ira Blumenthal, columnist, consultant, food service correspondent for USA Today, college instructor, and president of Co-Opportunities addressed a packed house on Trends in Food Service.

Blumenthal dotted his seminar with meaningful quotes like "You can't score unless you shoot," a basketball quote; and "You miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take," a hockey quote. Both applied to food service. His point, obviously, was that you'll never succeed unless you try. And combining food service with FECs is something many will be trying.

He explained that food service providers are after your location for its traffic. Wal-Mart, with its heavy traffic, has invested in its food service, featuring such favorites as SamWich (named after founder Sam Walton) and the Happy Jalopena. It has gone from the paper plate with magic marker printed prices to four-color signs with luscious photographs. The combination of ex-

isting traffic with a name like Wal-Mart created credibility.

Blumenthal expounded on the idea of brand names when considering food service. He illustrated the point with pizza served in schools. "The cafeteria lady made pizza and it was probably pretty good. But there was not much participation among the kids. When Pizza Hut began delivering pizza into the schools, suddenly there was an 85 percent participation," he said. "It's the brand recognition."

Dinosaurs didn't adapt

Blumenthal asked the question, "Why don't dinosaurs walk the earth?" Of course, the answer is that they didn't adapt and change. Howard Johnson, he noted, went from hundreds of locations to less than 90 because they did not change with the times. "The reality with food service is adapting to change," he said.

Another example is Home Depot. Home Depot and food, you ask? Yes, and quite successfully. They noticed that their early morning customers would buy their building supplies and then stop somewhere else for coffee and donuts. When Home Depot began offering the popular morning duo, the response was overwhelming. They had to step outside of their main business, but it worked.

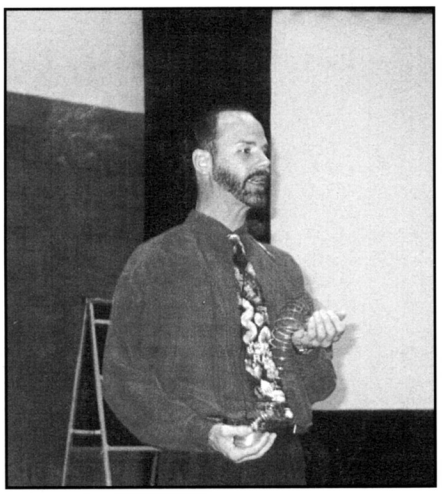
Blumenthal advised FEC owners and other attendees that the hardest thing is fighting traditions. Your business is entertainment, not food service. But food service could be a vital profit center if you are willing to take a chance. "When people leave your park, they still have to eat," noted Blumenthal. "Why not offer them a menu so they'll eat at your place instead of leaving?"

"Change is inevitable, growth is optional," Blumenthal said. "What we all need to say is that growth is not an option. Anyone going after the recreational dollar is competition. We need to offer something the competition is not offering."

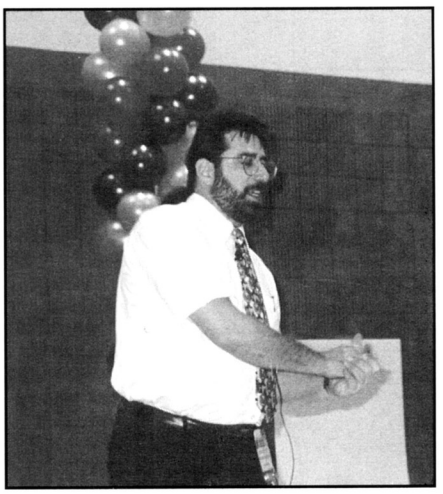
Blumenthal added, "We are in a culture of convenience at any cost. We are time-poor consumers. We're seeing the graying of America. The majority of the population is older. They are savvy, sophisticated consumers with more disposable income. They'll demand relevant food service.

"MacDonald's has catered to its customers in many ways. In California, for instance, MacDonald's removed the playground and put in a MacShuffleboard. In India there is no beef in the burgers. and in Israel no dairy products.

"If you are saying 'but it's always been done this way' then it's time to change. In your food service think change. Think aggressive marketing programs for families," he advised.



Ben Jones uses a slinky to discuss the need for flexibility in motivating employees.



Michael Getlan stresses the need to concentrate on front-line employees to increase a location's bottom line financially.

Name brands in FECs

Blumenthal told the audience that name brands expand sales, customer satisfaction, and build or increase traffic. Many of the well-known hamburger chains like Burger King have modular units that can be set up in as little as 40 feet of space. "If you have an FEC, food is going to be an important part of your profit center. The family is back and your FEC will be the host with the traffic."

He added that the best formula for success in combining your FEC with food service is to develop strategic alliances. "Great ideas don't work if they are poorly executed," he said, relating this story: "At a popular hotel there was a convention of Japanese businessmen. While USA Today was the traditional newspaper slid under doors, an aspiring hotel employee devised a plan to provide a Japanese newspaper to the businessmen. Unfortunately, the great idea was plunged into failure because somehow the newspaper ended up in all the wrong rooms. In fact, I got one and was puzzled. It's an example of a brilliant idea with poor execution."

At the conclusion of the seminar someone asked what were the hottest food items. The answer: coffee; ethnic food like Mexican or Chinese; dessert items; and healthy products. ▲

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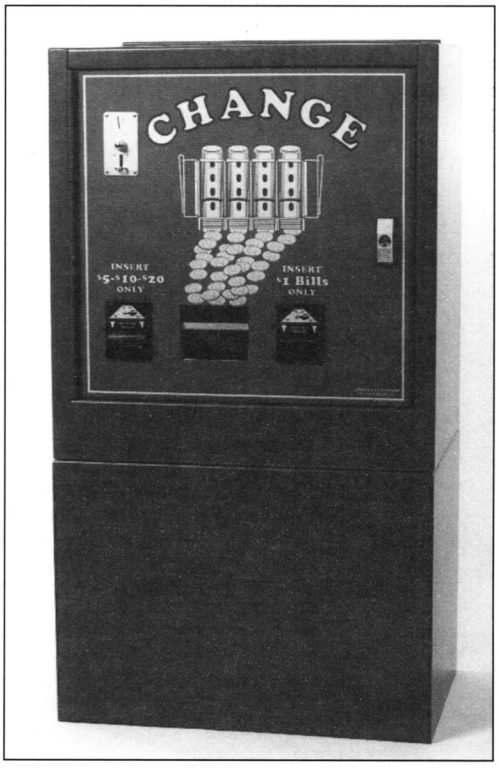

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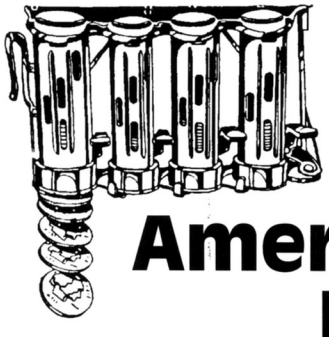

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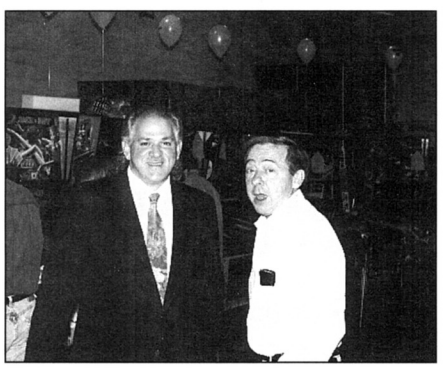
Betson/Pittsburgh features champagne and games

Mort Ansky of JVL demonstrates the *Concorde 1* countertop. Behind, (l-r): Jim Wittler of Betson/Pittsburgh, Kim Bittner of Bittner Vending, and Mike Surma and Leslie Szwarl of Keys Music.



Lou Larson (l) of Betson/Pittsburgh and Dick Boehm of CRS Game Room.

Over 85 operating companies attended a recent champagne brunch open house at the Betson/Pittsburgh Distributing office for an opportunity to see new equipment showcased at the AMOA Expo and the NAMA convention. New product availability determined the time of the event.

A discount parts certificate was given to each company, good toward purchases made throughout the day. According to Jim Wittler, division vice president and general manager of Betson/Pittsburgh, "Operators came away with an optimistic attitude as they evaluated their future needs and the quality product shown. In addition, a good time was had by all."

Bob Busche (l) of Betson/Pittsburgh with Tom Deleo of Deleo Amusements and Mark Raye of Uncle Bill's Amusement by Williams' *Johnny Mnemonic* and *Jack-Bot.*

Bob Busche (l) of Betson/Pittsburgh and Jake Nikituk of Pro Vending by Lazer-Tron's *Ring Toss.*

Bob Busche (l) of Betson/Pittsburgh and Dwayne Kunes of P & D Games by the Rowe *LaserStar CD-100 E.*

Brady/ Orlando welcomes operators

It was something new for Brady Distributing's Orlando office, the first open house to welcome operators from Florida and Georgia for a day of socializing and product scrutinizing.

Among the games on display were Midway's *Ultimate MK3*, Namco's *Alpine Racer*, NSM's *Performer Grand 2000* and *Digital Thunder*, BWB's *Sunset Skillstop*, Sega's *Cool Riders* and Sega *Rally*, Lazer-Tron's *Ring Toss*, and Micro Mfg.'s *Magical Touch*.

Brady officials extend sincere thanks to everyone who attended, from loyal customers to factory representatives, and promise the beginning of a new tradition. ▲

From left: Jack McKinney of Brady/Miami, Brian Duke of Lazer-Tron, Jon Brady of Brady headquarters in Charlotte, N.C., and Enzo Celani of Brady/Miami.

Ken Erickson of Hallmark Vending takes to the slopes via Namco's *Alpine Racer*.

Ron Mogerman and Renee Paris of Arcade Gaming join Jon Brady.

Brian Gorsich (r) of Micro Mfg. explains the *Magical Touch* countertop to Phil Jaworski of Four Jay's.

TWi's *Hoop It Up* and *Area 51* garner their share of play.

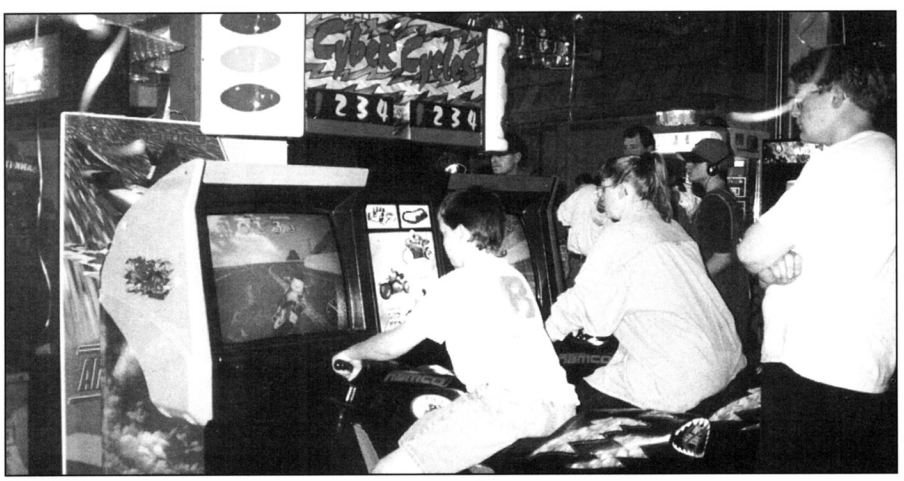
Music-Vend hosts a triple play

Music-Vend Distributing Co.'s three offices in the Northwest invited customers and their families to autumn open houses in Seattle, Wash., Portland, Ore., and Spokane, Wash.

In Seattle, a top-notch mix of equipment generated enthusiasm as factory representatives and operators met to discuss what was termed "the best lineup of equipment in recent years." Music-Vend staff reported good orders.

Top-quality products were also the focus of attention in Portland, where Music-Vend/Dunis manager Mike Damtew spent the day meeting with operators and demonstrating new products. A heavy turnout resulted in substantial orders for all types of equipment.

In Spokane, operators turned out in large numbers for Music-Vend's Rowe Music School that was part of the open house. Charlie Galante and Steven Levy, along with factory representatives, greeted operators and their support personnel. Jody Kerley and his staff deserve a special thank-you for their courteous assistance. ▲



Young players tackle the curves on Namco's *Cyber Cycles*.

BullShooter tour takes action to the Midwest

Men's Doubles winners Ray Terronez (l) and Marvin Bowles (r) with Arachnid tournament director John Hasset in Davenport, Iowa.

Shae Schroeder and Kathryn Hinerichsen with John Hasset in Hopkins, Minn.

At the qualifier in Boise, Idaho, Jennifer Mitchell and Ian Kerr (r) were presented with top honors in the Mixed Doubles Cricket contestby John Hassett.

Three recent Arachnid BullShooter Tour qualifying events, held in Davenport, Iowa; Hopkins, Minn.; and Boise, Idaho, drew dart players from nine states who were hoping to make the BullShooter finals.

The BullShooter World Challenge of Champions finals will take place over the Memorial Day weekend, May 24-27, in Chicago, Ill., with over $100,000 in prize money up for grabs.

Moss Distributing, with offices in Des Moines, Iowa, co-sponsored the Davenport event, and Magnum Air Darts ran a blow-gun dart event with Aaron Petit of Bloomfield, Iowa, taking first place. Players came from Illinois and Indiana as well.

Co-sponsoring the Hopkins event was Lieberman Music Co. with offices in Minneapolis. The event drew competitors from Iowa, North Dakota, Illinois, and Minnesota to compete for $8,000 in prize money. Magnum Air Darts held a blow-gun tournament on two separate days for both men and women.

Mountain Coin Machine and Struve Distributing teamed up to co-sponsor the qualifier in Boise with players from Utah, Oregon, and Washington also travelling to the event to test their skill. Magnum Air Darts was played on Saturday and Sunday as well.

Here's a look at the full results from each event:

Davenport

Women's Doubles: 1st—Cindy Burns of Rock Island, Ill., and Ellen Langley of Milan, Ill.; 2nd—Jerri Ryan of Clinton and Julie Wilson of Davenport; 3rd—Ruth Shepherd of Des Moines and Kelly Oaks of Davenport.

Men's Doubles: 1st—Ray Terronez of East Moline, Ill., and Marvin Bowles of Cordova, Ill.; 2nd—Ron Levings of Davenport and LaVerne Madison of Rock Island, Ill.; 3rd—Tony Rivera of Camanche and Jim Balk of Clinton.

Pro Singles: 1st—Ray Terronez of East Moline, Ill.; 2nd—Dave Read of Clinton; 3rd—Mick Ragon of Galesburg, Ill. of Eden Prairie

Open Doubles Cricket: 1st—Bob Cox and Dave Gajeski of Davenport; 2nd—Jody Minor and Dave Read of Clinton; 3rd—Marvin Bowles of Cordova, Ill., and Ray Terronez of East Moline, Ill.

Women's Singles: 1st—Kelly Findley of Port Byron, Ill.; 2nd—Donna Brunken of Burlington; 3rd—Wendy Williams of Freeport, Ill.

Men's Singles: 1st—Rich Brownless of Alexis, Ill.; 2nd—Jim Brown of Stevens Point, Wis.; 3rd—Keith Hoing of Mendon, Ill.

Mixed Triples: 1st—Wendy Williams of Freeport, Ill.; Ray Terronez of East Moline, Ill.; and Marvin Bowles of Cordova, Ill.; 2nd—Jodi McCaw of New Windsor, Ohio; Mick Ragon of Galesburg, Ill.; and Rich Brownless of Alexis, Ill.; 3rd—Ruth Shepherd, Steve Shepherd, and Brent Poller, all of Des Moines.

Mixed Doubles Cricket: 1st—Mary Bowles of Cordova, Ill., and Rhonda Vogel of Rock Island, Ill.; 2nd—Jodi McCaw of New Windsor, Ill., and Mick Ragon of Galesburg, Ill.; 3rd—Wendy Williams of Freeport, Ill., and Ray Terronez of East Moline, Ill.

Hopkins

Women's Doubles: 1st—Shae Schroed-

er of Morrison, Ill., and Kathryn Hinerichsen of Clinton, Iowa; 2nd—Lois Piepkorn of Maple Grove and Carol Holmes of Minneapolis; 3rd—Michell Steady of Crystal and Kathy Jackson of Plymouth.

Men's Doubles: 1st—Butch Milbrandt of Rockford, Ill., and Julio Huerta of Genoa, Ill.; 2nd—Bob Halt of Brooklyn Park and Russell Burgoyne of Pine River; 3rd—Gary Sands and Jim Luebke, both of Eden Prairie.

Pro Singles: 1st—Russell Burgoyne of Pine River; 2nd—Julio Huerta of Genoa, Ill.; 3rd—Butch Milbrandt of Rockford, Ill.

Open Doubles Cricket: 1st—Jeff Matrious of Sandstone and Rick Espinoza of Roseville; 2nd—Butch Milbrandt of Rockford, Ill., and Julio Huerta of Genoa, Ill.; 3rd—Steve Miller and Ray Trent of Appleton, Wis.

Women's Singles: 1st—Sandra Bohn of Plymouth; 2nd—Shae Schroeder of Morrison, Ill.; 3rd—Karen Paskett of Bloomington.

Men's Singles: 1st—Scott Schwerin of Maple Grove; 2nd—Harold Fown of Apple Valley; 3rd—Todd Prois of Oakdale.

Mixed Triples: 1st—Kathi Prois and Todd Prois, both of Oakdale, and Tom Tanberg of Stacy; 2nd—Karen Paskett of Bloomington and Jim Luebke and Gary Sands, both of Eden Prairie; 3rd—Kathy Hinerichsen of Clinton, Iowa; Butch Milbrandt of Rockford, Ill.; and Julio Huerta of Genoa, Ill.

Mixed Doubles Cricket: 1st—Jacquelin Procknow of New Hope and Bob Haft of Brooklyn Park; 2nd—Scott Schwerin of Maple Grove and Karen Paskett of Bloomington; 3rd—Jodi Dugal of Bloomington and Jime Luebke of Eden Prairie.

Boise

Women's Doubles: 1st—Jennifer Mitchell and Linda Grant of Idaho Falls; 2nd—Sheryl Van Houten of Boise and Lisa Bronson of Huntington; 3rd—Tammy Ragland and Jo Colombo of Boise.

Men's Doubles: 1st—Sean Downs of Eugene, Ore., and Dan Johnson of Spokane, Wash.; 2nd—Ian Kerr of Salt Lake City, Utah, and Steve Estey of Murray, Utah; 3rd—Del Forguson of Caldwell and Greg Brock of Boise.

Pro Singles: 1st—Sean Downs of Eugene, Ore.; 2nd—Ian Kerr of Salt Lake City, Utah; 3rd—Dave Bills of West Jordan, Utah.

Open Doubles Cricket: 1st—Trent Fortney of Clarkston, Wash., and Terry Proubeck of Lewiston; 2nd—Ian Kerr of Salt Lake City, Utah, and Steve Estey of Murray, Utah; 3rd—Dan Johnson of Spokane, Wash., and Sean Downs of Eugene, Ore.

Women's Singles: 1st—Tasha McPherson of Payette; 2nd—Lissa Bronson of Huntington, Ore.; 3rd—Lee Anne Buchanan of Nezperce.

Men's Open Singles: 1st—Mike Toal of Boise; 2nd—Mario Martinez of Payette; 3rd—Tom Gaul of Vancouver, Wash.

Mixed Triples: 1st—Sean Downs of Eugene, Ore., and Marty Wilking and Danielle Ulrich of Boise; 2nd—Tasha McPherson and Mario Martinez of Payette and Steve Stewart of Boise; 3rd—Merri Ann Savage of Boise, Terry Porebek of Lewiston, and Trent Fortney of Clarkston, Wash.

Mixed Doubles Cricket: 1st—Jennifer Mitchell of Idaho Falls and Ian Kerr of Salt Lake City, Utah; 2nd—Tracy Holly and Casey Wyseng, both of Boise; 3rd—Tasha McPherson and Mario Martinez, both of Payette. ▲

APA hosts amateur pool championship

From left: APA's U.S. Amateur Pool Champion Richard Ross, APA founder Larry Hubbart, and runner-up John Stire.

Over 100 amateur pool players gathered in Warren, Mich., Nov.3-5 to compete in the second annual U.S. Amateur Championship conducted and produced by the American Poolplayers Association.

The double elimination event featured a combination of 8-Ball and 9-Ball, with each match a race to seven and the championship round a race to 11.

After hard fought matches, Richard Ross emerged the champion. Ross, an APA member from Wilberaham, Mass., was sponsored by the Bud Light Pool League of Massachusetts. He beat out John Stire from Mandeville, La., who was sponsored by Ivory Palace Billiards.

Ross commented, "It feels great to have taken first place and accomplished this. At first I was nervous, but very excited. Everybody here was wonderful, and I will definitely be back to defend my title."

"We're very impressed with the quality of play, enthusiasm for the game, and the sportsmanship."

Ross and Stire will receive free admission to all Pro Billiard Tour sanctioned events through November 1996 and paid entry, lodging, and travel to the Pro Tour's U.S. Open, compliments of the APA. They also receive a marble and bronze trophy and a one-of-a-kind U.S. Amateur Championship jacket.

The championship is open to everyone, whether they are members of APA or not. Terry Bell of the APA board of directors said, "We've seen almost twice as many participants this year and we're very impressed with the quality of play, enthusiasm for the game, and the sportsmanship that every one of them demonstrated."

In other APA news, the association announced the increase in guaranteed annual prize money from $500,000 to $800,000 for 1996 events. Increases will be reflected in the Camel 8-Ball Classic, the Dynamo 9-Ball National Team Championship, and the Bud Light 8-Ball National Team Championship.

According to APA officials, one of the keys to the success of the association is The Equalizer, a unique handicapping and scoring service that allows everyone to compete. For more information, call 1-800-3RACKEM. ▲

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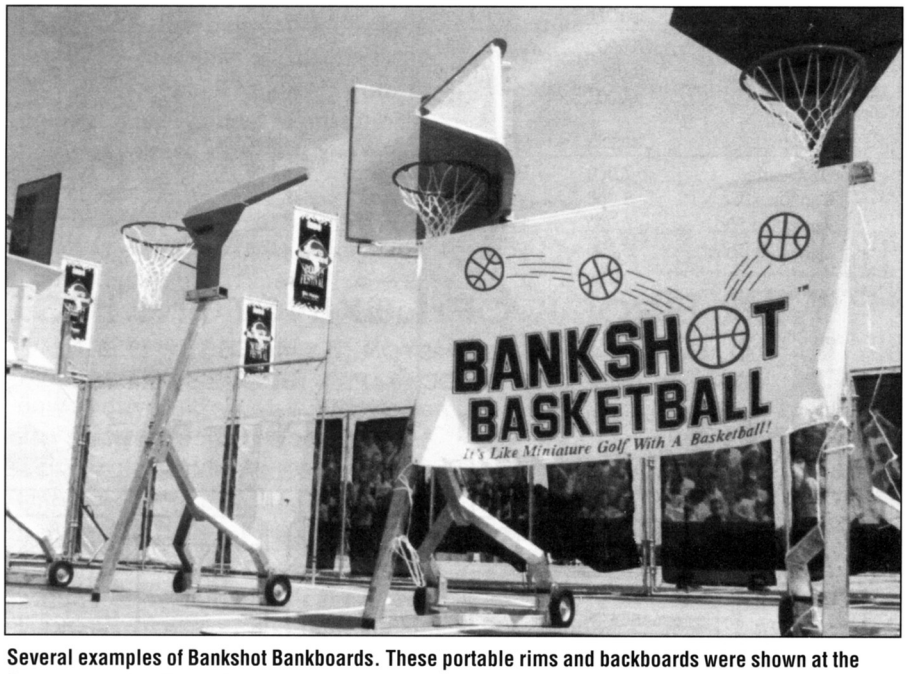
Bankshot champ proves unbeatable in finals

The competition was heated at the 1995 Bankshot National Tournament in Glenville, N.Y.



Several examples of Bankshot Bankboards. These portable rims and backboards were shown at the Sports Illustrated Sports Festival.

The Glenville Mini Sportsplex was the site of the 7th Annual Bankshot National Tournament, which featured eighteen competitors who made their way through regional qualifying.

Players came from around the country, and a large contingent of non-competing fans also traveled hundreds of miles to support their favorite contestant.

Bankshot Basketball is a basketball game that eliminates running and jumping and combines elements from amusement park games like miniature golf. The concept behind the game is to make shots by banking the ball off uniquely shaped backboards, known as Bankboards, into the net. The game's accessibility, which includes the physically challenged, provides an equal opportunity for all participants.

At the championship a fierce rivalry developed between the three top opponents: Brad Ziemer, 20, of Indiana; Craig Washo, 12, of Pennsylvania; and Angelo Raga, 12, of Tennessee. Exchanging leads throughout most of the course, the title came down to the final two shots at the Double Glance station.

Three-time champion Ziemer came from behind to score a total of 177 points and become victorious for the fourth consecutive year, making him the first fourpeat winner in the history of this relatively new sport.

Bankshot Basketball creator Dr. Reeve Brenner, dubbed the Rabbi of Roundball by Sports Illustrated, honored Ziemer as the "most unrecognized national sports champion." Brenner is also the founder of the National Association of Bankshot Owners (NABO).

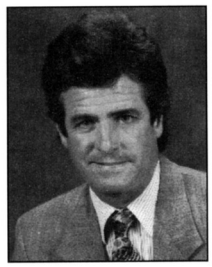
Standing about two feet shorter than Ziemer, Washo fell just two points shy of the national title and won the Junior (12 years and under) Division title.

In the auxiliary events held during the National Tournament, Ziemer continued his dominance by winning the Bank-Against-the-Clock competition with a time of 2:09 minutes. This event involves players making their way through the Bankshot course in the least amount of time possible.

The winner of the Black Ghoul Challenge was Matt Wolf, 14, of New York, who also claimed the Teen (13-19) Division title. The Black Ghoul Challenge requires a player to bank the ball off one Bankboard and through three rims, one of which is positioned in bucket form on the ground.

"We here at NABO and the Bankshot National Office are excited about the direction the NABO-sponsored Bankshot Championship is taking," said Erik Swain, marketing associate of the Bankshot Organization. "Every year more kids and adults travel from all over the country to represent their regions. The level of competition continues to increase and the media attention the event attracts is always on the rise."

For more information, contact the Bankshot Organization at (301) 309-0260. ▲



Kenny Rogers and video games

Richard P. Holley

> ***"Video games were transformed, almost overnight, from Pong to Space Invaders to Galaxian."***

Once upon a time, many years ago, the coin-op industry was suddenly kindled by technology when the first video game appeared on the scene. Before that, route operators went about their business with pretty much a workaday attitude operating games that had not changed much in decades.

Video games were transformed, almost overnight, from *Pong* to *Space Invaders* to *Galaxian.* From simple black and white graphics to full color with exciting sounds. Coin-op would be changed forever. The media attention given to this phenomena stirred the public's interest in the coin-op business, which for years otherwise went unnoticed. The spinoff was tremendous, and many new companies were born.

Video games were responsible for luring many newcomers into coin-op with what appeared to be an opportunity to make some easy money without having to know much about the industry. It was the video game that paved the way for arcades to be accepted in the shopping mall environment. The public viewed arcades in an entirely different light, and the arcade concept was to begin a new phase.

Existing route operators started including video games in their inventory, and gamerooms began popping up on every street corner. No matter where a video game was placed, it did its magic. Investors and new operators emerged everywhere and started routes consisting of only video games, while the oldtimers warned that survival depended on staples such as music and pool. Some chose to ignore that advice while others heeded it.

We all know what followed, and some of us are the survivors of the boom which was followed by the bust. While the dust has not completely settled as yet, what we have today is a situation where the video game is finding its own place and purpose in this industry. Gone are the days when they could be placed in almost any location and do well. They do, however, still play a very important role in coin-op.

I communicate with many operators and listen to their bitter complaints regarding video games, and I read countless articles on the same subject. While I am in total agreement in terms of the cost of new videos and don't like the situation with the home games, I am still able to operate them profitably and have my own assessment on the role of video games in this industry.

It seems to me that any operator should have no trouble in determining what location would support a dart game or, let's say, a jukebox. These

pieces, along with pool and countertop games, have their own purpose and place in the pecking order of amusement machines, a fact well-accepted by anyone who operates them. However, when it comes to the lowly video game, it is expected to be universal in appeal to everyone no matter where it is placed. Operators who believe that theory are clinging to the good old days when you could put a video game in a cocktail cabinet and leave it in a closet and still it would be played. They refuse to believe that those days are over.

The fact is that video games can and will still produce a very good return on investment if a few guidelines are followed. As a matter of fact, this is not top secret stuff, and these guidelines, when applied to any category of game on the route, will make it produce. Recognize that the vast majority of video game players are teenage males, and the bell curve of players and what they play is extremely narrow and steep. Move away from this demographic segment in any direction and you will see a drastic drop in earnings.

Video games can be divided into several groups, and this is only a generalization to make apoint. For example, the driving games appeal to a broader base of players as do the shooting-type games. Everyone knows how to drive and shoot, but only a few can master the many buttons and 8-way joysticks of most fighting games. Once we accept this the trick becomes finding the types of locations where these players are concentrated. We want to first get the lion's share from the principal players and then the leftovers from other video players that are a little to the left or right of that bell curve.

In the right location where there are video game players, put in the top games, and forget the stupid concept of "filler games." If you want it filled, then fill it with plants or ornaments. About 10 percent of all video games make 90 percent of all video income. I have never heard of a filler jukebox or a filler shuffleboard, have you?

To illustrate my point, let's assume you are operating two very profitable accounts: one a bar with darts, pool, foosball, and music; the other, let's say, is a Q-Zar where you have the top 10 videos and an air hockey. Every game is showing a good ROI, and all the numbers are where they are supposed to be. Now switch the games from the bar to the Q-Zar and the Q-Zar to the bar. I think I've made my point.

Someone new to the business may suggest that all the games are terrible. Match the game and the player base, and success will follow. There are far too many instances where operators are bullied into putting video games in locations where their better judgment tells them otherwise. This further reinforces their negative attitude toward video games.

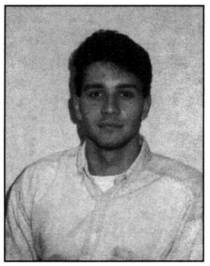
You will often hear that video games are too much work and they constantly have to be rotated and replaced. Aren't leagues a lot of work? What about redemption? That has to be the most work-intensive sector of the amusement business. It certainly is true that video games become obsolete quickly and have to be replaced. Just keep a careful watch on the numbers and take action at the appropriate time. The notion that a game must first pay for itself before you get rid of it is absurd.

For example, if you paid $4,000 for a game (video or otherwise), and its net lifetime-to-date earnings minus purchase price is $3,000, your distributor will take it on trade for $2,000. You complain, but you still are $1,000 in the black. Sometimes, especially with videos, it is better to break even or take a loss than to go on operating a hopeless piece. Just make sure you win more times that you lose, that's all that counts. Yes, all of this is a lot of work, but who said that this was a passive business?

Some routes, in my opinion, can do just fine without any video games. However, operators all too frequently succumb to the pressure of the proprietor or bartender. It is not the video game's fault that it was put in an environment where it had no audience. This problem has nothing to do with good or bad video games, it has to do with the bartender pouring the drinks and operator operating the games.

I take the attitude that I will operate any kind of coin-op amusement equipment as long as I can do it profitably. That means I must have locations with customers who will play that equipment. I don't necessarily agree with many things that have happened over the years, especially the high cost of equipment, but that is the way it is. So in addition to my complaining, I acknowledge that I must also make some adjustments and deal with the changes as they come.

Video games put me on the map and have been a big contributor to my route, although to a lesser extent now than initially. Accordingly, I felt obliged to point out the positive side of this great invention that is responsible for many success stories. The trick is to use them wisely and gain their benefits. As the song says, "know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away, know when to run." ▲



New year, new games, and new challenges

Midway's *Ultimate MK3* features codes that call forth hidden warriors.

Taito's B*ust-A-Move Again* harkens back to the days of *Pengo* and *Arkanoid*.

What a way to begin the new year! Games showcased in the fall of '95 are starting to pour into the arcades. Here are the first three I sampled since my initial look at the AMOA Expo.

Ultimate MK3/Midway

Theme: Instead of offering version update boards, Midway decided to create an entire package to upgrade *MK3* to *Ultimate MK3*. By adding four new characters and accompanying scenery, along with new combo moves and game-customizing codes, *Ultimate* increases the scope of the original theme: Shao Kahn's Outworld has broken through to Earth's realm, and Kahn has stolen every soul on the planet, leaving deserted streets occupied only by warriors too strong-willed to be captured.

Players maneuver their favorite character through bleak landscapes and demonic temples, battling the competition until reaching Kahn in his downtown fortress.

Graphics: Most people are familiar with *Kombat's* digitized graphics—that of real actors filmed and transferred onto the screen over texture-mapped backgrounds—and Ultimate retains all of *MK3*'s visuals but now with four new background sceneries.

The waterfront locale shows buildings in the distance under an ominous purple sky that casts reflections onto a small enclosed body of water. The desert scene, by stark contrast, is a dry, arid dune sea marked only by the platform where fighters meet. The new stage dubbed "hell," which displays columns of dead bodies and skeletons rising out of glowing lava, is disturbing at first glance.

Finally, the cavern stage resembles an unholy meeting place for demon worshippers. Each new level has an accompanying fighter with it, returning from past games. Scorpion, Reptile, Jade, and Kitana all sport new combat attire along with improved battle techniques. The *Mortal Kombat* series finds itself virtually alone with this graphics package that appears quite different from Capcom and SNK's lateral computer renderings, or Namco and Sega's polygon three-dimensional images.

Controls: The panel configuration remains unchanged from *MK3*. Players use high and low punch and kick buttons, a block, and a run button for speedier confrontations. Needless to say, combining joystick and buttons produces special attacks, finishing moves, babalities, friendships, and the new animalities. An added feature is the combo system which may require six or eight taps of the joystick/buttons to pummel the opponent with a series of hits.

Game Play: The game allows customizing of play features by using the

Greg Reeves

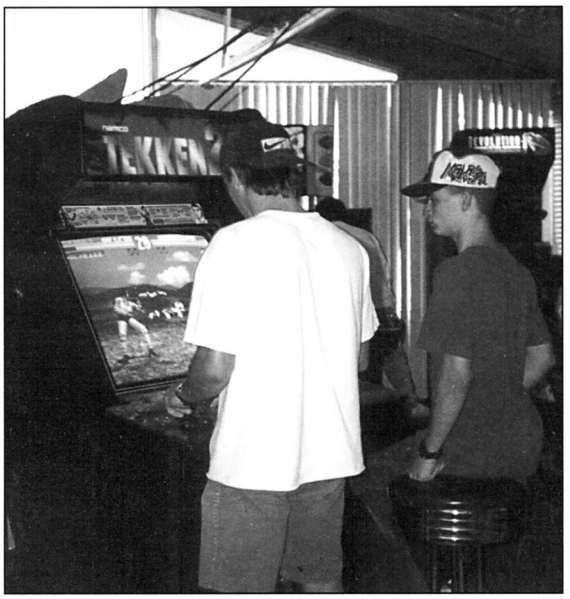
input of secret symbol codes. These lines of codes appear as dragon heads, MK logos, skulls, and other symbols, and can be manipulated in the few seconds given to change certain features during the battle.

Besides altering attack strengths or colors of the combatants, the Ultimate codes call forth hidden warriors such as Smoke and Ermac as playable characters. As in *MK3, Ultimate* offers a choice of difficulty level which determines the number of opponents to vanquish before reaching the end of the game. The rounds proceed as usual with the winner of two matches progressing to the next level.

Each character has at least four vicious special attacks on their roster, as well as four or more ways to finish off the opponent. *Ultimate* also brings back a feature not seen since the first *Mortal Kombat*—the endurance match. Furthermore, besides the game-end story given for each character, the player can select a more fitting completion after defeating Shao Kahn.

Overall: Rarely does a video game transcend the amusement game industry to become a feature film, comic book series, toy line, and direct-to-video cartoon, but *Mortal Kombat* has done it all.

An update kit obviously makes a game more noticeable with a new marquee display instead of just a version upgrade. Better than that is the exclusion of the new characters and concepts from the home game release, in effect urging players to leave the control pads and come back into the arcade.



Namco's Tekken 2 has a unique character control panel.

Tekken 2/Namco

Theme: Namco releases a sequel to its polygon-rendered fighting format game *Tekken. Tekken 2* brings back previous combatants and introduces new ones in a unique fashion. The "character timed release" feature debuts here; it automatically introduces a new warrior into the selection roster once a week for 10 weeks after the first month on location.

Returning characters such as Law, King, or Yoshimitsu may be mastered quickly by game experts, but entirely new secret bosses released weekly will challenge even the most experienced players.

"Rarely does a video game transcend the amusement game industry to become a feature film, comic book series, toy line, and direct-to-video cartoon."

Graphics: The visuals have taken a jump as well, much as Sega's *Virtua Fighter 2* made its prequel obsolete. The polygon dimensional shapes used make distance perception very realistic, not to mention facilitating the transition of views taken by the camera.

The true advancement in graphics for this sequel comes in the "glow shading" texture-mapped coating on characters and backgrounds. Objects appear dirty and more true to life than the pristine computer images of the first *Tekken.* Along with new characters comes new scenery of lands around the globe. Furthermore, these battlegrounds are not limited to the amount of space to fight, and boundaries are not present.

A true joy is the cinematic "throw" or "hold" moves each character posseses. For example, in Hong Kong action style, Law runs up the body of his opponent, jumps off his head straight up in the air, and lands flat on his body for a pin.

Controls: Another game first is Tekken's unique character control panel. Instead of just punch or kick, the player can use their warrior's right fist/left fist or right foot/left foot to attack. This opens up even more strategy as one must quickly decide which side of the body will connect to the opponent. The original special moves have been saved, along with new ones and the now standard combo system. The correct series of control taps will cause higher damage in succession.

Game Play: Other than the enhanced graphics, play is nearly identical to the original. These polygon games are perhaps the most lifelike, not just in terms of depth perception but also with the omission of unrealistic distance energy attacks or teleportation. And unlike Sega's *Virtua Fighter* series, there are no ringouts or boundaries, only knockouts.

Overall: As evidenced by the Play Meter Equipment Poll, *Tekken 2* and other games of this sort are gaining in popularity all the time. I think the appeal is that each round is completely different from the last, unlike the two-dimensional graphics of non-polygon fighting games.

Bust-A-Move Again/Taito

Theme: The newest addition to the library of Taito's Cybercore system is a sequel to last year's surprise hit *Bust-A-Move*, which can be traced back to the *Bubble Bobble* characters. With slightly improved features, the addictive puzzle game returns to allow players control of a bubble firing mechanism in order to clear a field of multicolored bubbles before being squashed by their descent.

Graphics: A beautiful digitized scene takes up the entire screen, topped by a smaller field or platform stacked with bubbles. Overall visuals are simple, but the true beauty is in the multithemed background images. Some levels feature cosmic scenes or underwater photos; other rounds display historic themes or Jurassic paintings. Bubby and Bobby are gone, replaced by a set of hands that manipulate a steering wheel that responds to the player's joystick motion.

Controls: Only a trackball could be more simple than this. A two-directional joystick pivots the gun arrow right or left to correctly place a certain colored bubble on the field, and one button fires the bubble itself.

Game Play: Three modes of play are offered: puzzle, a simple one-player game which requires emptying the field of all bubbles before they cross the boundary line; one player vs. the CPU, which is new to the game and allows a player to compete against the computer and clear his field, or survive long enough for the opponent to lose; and two player, the most challenging and enjoyable round that permits head-to-head action in a fast-paced game.

The puzzle mode begins with a choice of level that determines the size of the bubble field and the type of background scenery. The player will notice that special bubbles randomly appear to help or hinder game play. The star bubble eliminates all of the same color it comes in contact with first, regardless of location. The metal bubble is needed to easily clear unwanted obstacles and carve a path through any colors.

Finally, the obstructive bubble does not have a color and can only be removed by attaching it to a hanging cluster. As rounds are completed, the rate of descending bubbles increases, demanding quicker thinking. Bonuses are given for speedy completions and for eliminated rows longer than three bubbles.

Overall: Not only does it harken back to early '80s games like *Pengo* or *Arkanoid,* but the surprising simplicity of play with beautiful graphics make this game viable in any location. Most importantly, it's basically fun, which means it appeals to anyone who likes video games. As a sequel it doesn't change all that much, but is a perfect purchase for game rooms without the original *Bust-A-Move.* ▲

Walk the floor

Many problems encountered during the day with redemption (and other coin-operated games) can be eliminated by simply walking the game room floor with all of the games turned on before you open for business.

Of course, there are things that are mandatory and need to be completed and (hopefully not) repaired each and every day. But it's the little things that happen only so often that require the "walk around the floor." When you walk the game center floor, you need to look at everything. Don't just look at a *Skee-Ball* alley and say, "Oh, this game looks fine to me!" You need to play it, grab some tokens (or quarters) and play a game.

First look at the overall game. In the case of *Skee-Ball*, ask yourself these questions: Are all of the scoring and ball display lamps lit? Is there any loose trim or metal on the game? Are any screws missing from the front coin entry plate? Does the coin reject button work? Is the metal front plate for the coin entry and the knock off button plate locked or do they just look like it?

Insert the coin. Did you hear the "game start" sound? Did nine balls (three balls for a four-player *Skee-Ball*) roll toward you? Roll the ball, try to land the ball into the 50-point scoring pocket. Did the game score correctly? Do the white (yes, white, not beige or brown) rubber scoring rings look round or are they bent or "tweaked" so balls can get stuck? Did the ball count number display decrease by one ball? Did you hear the scoring sound made by the game?

Roll the other eight balls. Did you get the proper number of tickets for the score you made? Double check the ball scoring and ball count switches for proper operation. Do you have fewer balls than the ball count number displayed allow?

I have listed over 12 things you should look for each time you walk the floor. Obviously, you can't play every game before you open but stretch the whole process out over the entire month. Play between two and four games a day. When the game center is open, the players will play the games for you. All you have to do is watch them play to make sure the game is functioning properly. Don't let your customers tell you about the game's problem. It's your job to play, find, and fix any problems fast and first!

I walk my game center floor at least twice a day. When a game does have a problem and the problem is not fixed right away, word of mouth from the game players travels fast. Players will avoid that game until the problem is fixed.

The worst thing that can happen is that no one will tell you that there is a problem with a game. The only way you can tell if a game has a problem is by the weekly collections. By looking at the weekly game collections and comparing them to the previous week's collections, you can see from the lower collections which game has a problem. A week is much too long to let a problem go.

With pen and paper in hand, I note the name of the game and the things that need to be repaired right away. To mark the problems and when they must be repaired I use a numbering system; 1 for fix now, 2 for fix today, and 3 for fix this week. The games marked with a 1 get first priority. The games with 2s are next and so on. The list you make for yourself regarding game problems is over and above any list you may have for your game attendants to write any game problems down.

Any game technician who sits in the tech room, reading a magazine and eating a snack, and says that there are no game problems is not doing his job. I would like to meet a game technician that has every game in the game center working 100 percent!

Below are two example of things you should be looking for when you walk the floor.

Roll down games:

Are the scoring or ball count lamps lit?

Are there the correct number of balls in the game?

Are the correct number of balls dispensed to be played?

Is there anything sticky inside the game?

Are there straws or food wrappers inside the game?

Is the coin door lamp lit?

Are there missing screws on the cover plex or game?

Is the plex scratched with someone's initials?

Is the stool top or floor mat torn or ripped?

Does the stool squeak when turned?

Are there tickets in the game?

Does the game score properly?

Are any front or back doors loose or open/unlocked?

Does the sound work?

Does the winner light illuminate when a player wins?

Is the game's plex, sides, top, and chrome clean?

Wacky Gator:

Are all the score, timer, and skill lamps lit?

Is the hammer in good condition?

Do the coin lights work?

Do ALL of the gators score properly?

Is the game's top, swamp, and front clean?

Can you hear the game's sounds?

Will the hammer be attached tomorrow?

Do the gators have their eyes (decals)?

Does the front edging of the game need to be repainted?

Is the top score box screwed together with four screws?

Do ALL of the gators move without strange noises (gear grinding)?

Again, this is only a partial listing of things to look for. Each game has different requirements; you can make your own list for each type of game. If you have any questions or comments you can reach me by phone (619) 322-4000, fax (619) 322-5616, or e-mail TICKETVIC@AOL.COM

▲

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Flyback derived power supplies

Randy Fromm

At the heart of a monitor's high voltage unit is the "flyback transformer." Like all transformers, the flyback consists of many turns of copper wire wound around a core. Instead of the heavy, laminated iron core that is used in an isolation transformer, the flyback transformer uses a lightweight material called "ferrite." Ferrite is a type of iron-impregnated, ceramic material. We can get away with this lighter core material because the flyback transformer operates at a much higher frequency than the 60-hertz operation of the isolation transformer. The flyback transformer in the high voltage unit is driven at approximately 15,750 hertz. That's more that 260 times faster!

Like many transformers, the flyback has more than one winding. The primary winding (the input winding) is used to drive the transformer. This primary winding is also "tapped" at one point to obtain approximately 175 volts. This high frequency AC output is then rectified with a diode and filtered with an electrolytic capacitor to obtain a +175 VDC power supply. This supply is used to drive the video output transistors on the neck board, which in turn control the electron guns in the CRT.

There are some really high voltage output windings on the flyback transformer. One is the "screen voltage." The screen voltage comes from a high voltage winding on the flyback and is rectified within the EHT unit by a special diode. You cannot see this diode as it is sealed with the flyback in epoxy plastic. The screen voltage is adjustable (generally around +200 VDC - +900 VDC) by a high voltage potentiometer unit that is usually built-in to the EHT unit itself.

Another high voltage output is the "focus" voltage. Like the screen voltage, it is derived from a flyback high voltage winding and diode combination. The focus voltage is also adjustable.

The highest voltage output of all is the "second anode" or "EHT." This can be as high as 25,000 volts or more and is created through a series of secondary windings and diodes within the high voltage unit. The EHT output is connected through a heavily insulated wire to the second anode of the picture tube.

Low voltage power supplies

Although failure in the high-voltage output windings are a common cause of flyback destruction, there are some low voltage outputs that, while not common failures in and of themselves, are often involved in other monitor failures.

For example, the cathodes in the electron gun assembly in the CRT must be heated. The orange glow you can see in the neck of the picture tube is the "heaters" at work. The heaters are powered by a low voltage winding on the flyback transformer. Just a few turns of wire are all it takes to get enough voltage. The CRT heaters are designed to work on 6.3 VAC RMS. (To put it in perspective, that's the same voltage rating as a #44 lamp.)

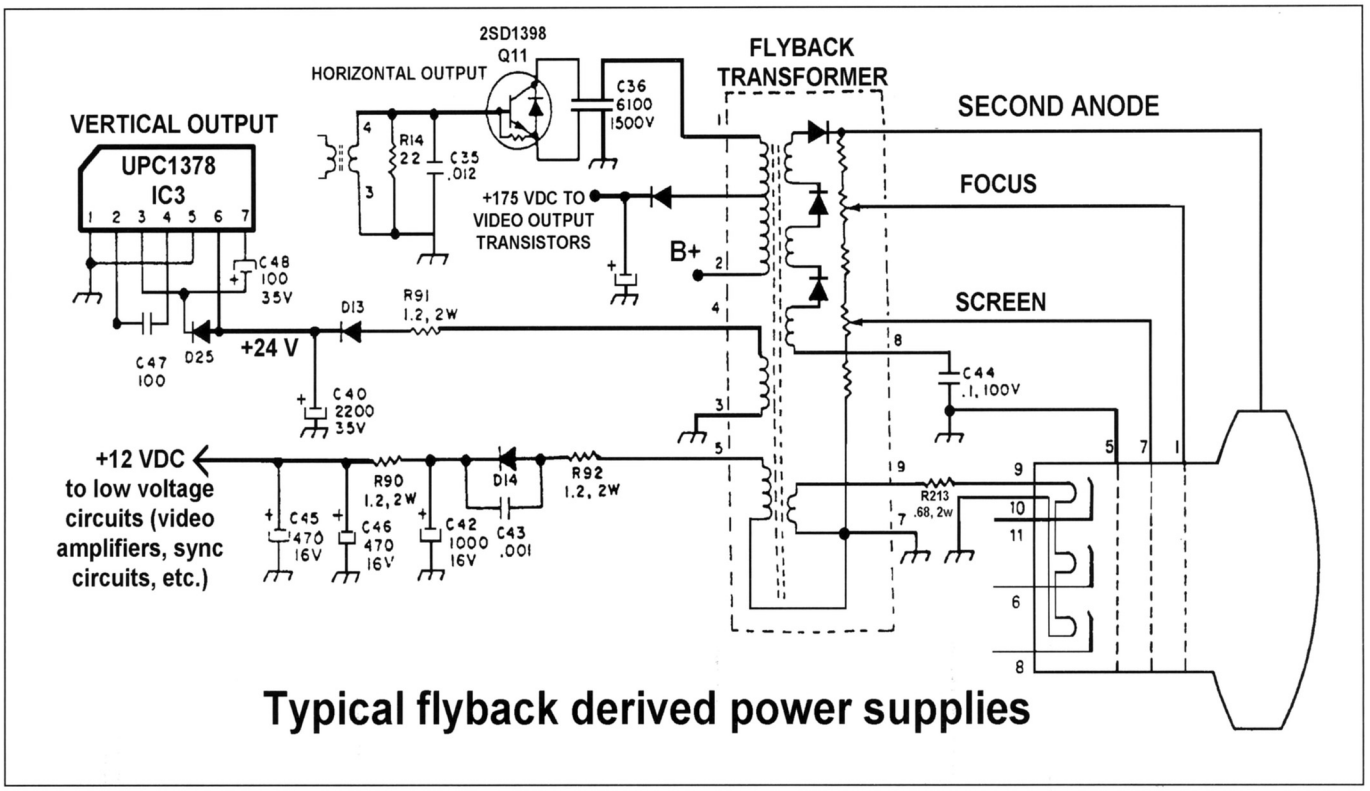
There are one or two other low voltage windings on the flyback transformer that are rectified and filtered to create low voltage, DC power supplies. These power supplies are generally used by low voltage transistor circuits such as the video amplifiers, the sync amplifiers and the blanking circuits. They are often used to drive the vertical deflection output circuitry as well.

A good example of this is the Wells-Gardner K7000 series that uses the flyback transformer to create two, separate, low voltage power supplies. One is a +12 volt DC power supply that provides power to IC1 and most of the discrete transistor circuits. The other is a +24 volt DC power supply that powers IC3, the vertical output integrated circuit.

Notice the resistors in series with the output side of the power supplies? In the CRT heater circuit, it's R213 (.68 ohm, 2 watts.) In the +12 volt power supply there are two, series resistors. Follow the output of the flyback transformer from pin 5 to the first of the two resistors, R92. After passing through R92, the current is then "rectified" (changed from AC into DC) by diode D14 and "filtered" by capacitor C42. This DC is then passed (in series) through another resistor, R90. The value is the same for both, 1.2 ohms, 2 watts.

The +24 volt DC power supply is much the same. In this case, the flyback output is at pin 4. The AC output of the flyback transformer passes through resistor R91 first before being rectified by diode D13 and filtered by C40 to create +24 volts DC. From there you can see that the output of power supply connects to pin 6, the power input pin of IC3.

So what's the point of these resistors? It's simple, really. The low voltage power supplies are created from just a few turns of wire wound around the ferrite core of the flyback transformer. One turn of wire (or even a fraction of a turn, really) will create a substantial difference in the output voltage. In order to insure sufficient output voltage, there's always a little more on the secondary winding than will actually be needed. A series resistor is added to drop the voltage down to what it should be.



Typical flyback derived power supplies

IMPORTANT SERVICE TIP: It is common for these resistors to fail, not just in the example given above but in all types of monitors. When resistors fail, they "open-circuit," cutting off the power to the circuits they're supposed to be driving. It's something that novice technicians often overlook, but it's actually one of those simple failures that are a snap to diagnose once you know what to look for.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT SERVICE TIP: Sometimes these resistors fail on their own, and all you need to do to fix the monitor is to replace the resistor. However, an open resistor may be indicative of a shorted or otherwise faulty component somewhere else in the circuit. Logical deduction will often lead you right to a shorted component. Any component (other than a resistor) that's connected to the open resistor on one end and ground on the other is a candidate and should be checked out.

You can easily check for a short circuit by setting your meter to the lowest resistance range, grounding the black meter lead and probing the output side of the power supply with the red lead. A short circuit will be obvious. Naturally, if there's more than one component on the supply line that might cause the short, you must isolate the faulty part. There are usually only one or two components that might be shorted, so I generally unsolder and remove the suspected components one at a time and re-check for the short as above. When the short goes away, I know I've found and removed the bad part. Alternatively, some technicians will "clip & lift" an IC pin or unsolder a component leg to isolate the short.

High voltage unit failures

Well, regardless of how the EHT unit works, the important thing for the service tech is "how does it fail?" Fortunately, that's simple. It usually burns up or melts! You will often see the plastic bulging or melted. You also may see the shell of the unit cracked and/or burned.

A bad EHT unit will often take out the horizontal output transistor as well. If you replace a bad horizontal output transistor and the monitor still doesn't work, you may have a bad EHT unit (regardless of whether or not you can see any apparent signs of failure by examining the unit.)

Troubleshooting shortcut to finding a bad EHT unit

After replacing a bad horizontal output transistor, listen carefully for the sound of the high voltage coming on when you first fire up the monitor to test it. If you do not immediately hear the high pitched squeal of the high voltage unit or the crackling, static buildup on the picture tube, turn the monitor off at once and touch the horizontal output transistor with your finger. If it's at all hot, the high voltage unit is probably bad. If you turn the monitor off right away, you probably will not damage the transistor.

Author's note: There's a lot happening on the Internet's World Wide Web. Play Meter Magazine is on-line as well as an extensive technical library. If you have any questions about getting connected, please feel free to contact me. See you at the Arcade School! ▲

Randy can be reached at Randy Fromm's Arcade School, 1944 Falmouth Dr., El Cajon, CA 92020-2827; phone (619) 593-6131, fax (619) 593-6132, e-mail aim@thegroup.net http://w3.thegroup.net/~aim

Replacement seat slides and more leg room on Daytona Twin

When I started this project I intended just to replace the seat slides. But after removing the seat, I came up with the idea of getting some additional leg room for my 6'3" frame.

Although the second part of this piece is not necessary for the replacement of the seat slides, I highly recommend it so you may accommodate your taller cliental. If you would like to build this project, or any other project, a measured drawing... Wait a minute, different program. If you would like to replace the seat slides on your Daytona Twin, you can order the replacement kit through your local Sega distributor. The set part number is 999-0443. This kit is for one seat only.

The set includes:
1 - 6011-7942 Seat Rail Left
1 - 6011-7981 Seat Rail Right
4 - 1/2" thick Washers
4 - 1/8" thick Washers
(See fig. 1)

Replacing seat slides

The first thing you need to do is to gain access to the underside of the seat assembly:

1. Remove the two tamper-proof screws that hold down the rear seat assembly. They are located next to the locks securing the seat assembly.

2. Next unlock and lift the seat assembly.

3. Disconnect the speaker wire.

4. Remove the four 3/16" Allen head screws with a 1/2" socket wrench holding the lower nut.

5. Remove the metal base and seat assembly from the game. (See fig. 2)

6. Mark the front of the seat's steel base with a small piece of tape or remember that the speaker points towards the front for re-assembly.

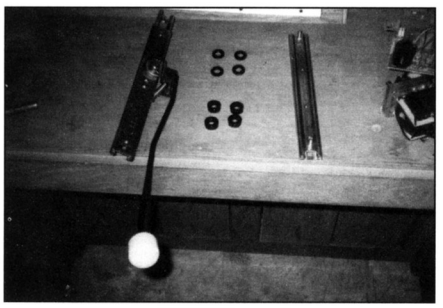


Figure 1

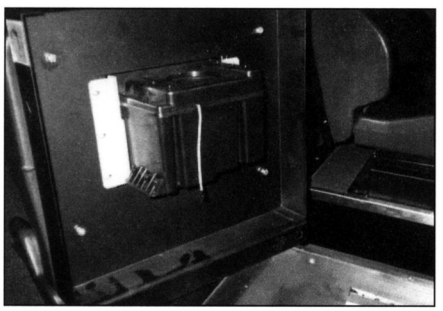


Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

7. Remove the four bolts from the under side of the steel base with a 1/2" socket wrench and separate the steel base from the seat. (See fig. 2 for bolt location)

8. Turn the seat upside down and remove the four 1/2" bolts that hold the plastic seat bottom to the seat frame. (See fig. 3)

9. Remove the four lock nuts holding the slides to the seat frame and remove the old slide rails.

10. Discard the old slide rails, the four stop brackets, and four lock washers. Save the four 1/2" bolts and nuts. (Fig. 4 shows the old parts in the top portion of the photo and the new and saved parts in the bottom portion.)

11. Install the new slide rails placing the large 1/2" thick washers between the slide rail and the metal seat frame.

12. Attach the plastic seat bottom to the seat frame.

13. Attach the seat frame to the steel metal base with the 1/8" thick washers between the seat frame and steel base. Make sure that the speaker in the steel base is pointing towards the front of the seat.

14. If you would like to make more leg room, skip to 'Making More Leg Room'. If not, go to step 15.

15. Return seat to game and re-fasten with the four 1/16" Allen head screws.

16. Lock the seat assembly and replace the two tamper-proof screws.

Making more leg room

1. While the seat and base unit is removed, cut the speaker hole back 3-3/4". Fig. 5 shows the hole after it has been cut. The original hole went from the 4" mark to the 11" mark on the tape measure

2. Measure back from the four bolt

Larry Munday

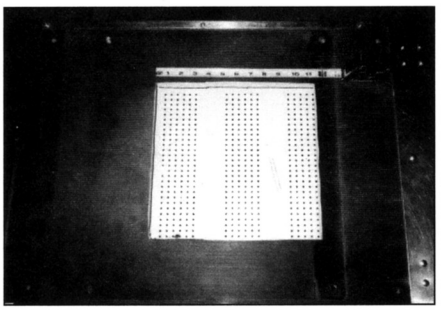


Figure 5

Figure 6

holes 3-3/4" and drill new holes or place the seat and base over the hole for the speaker and mark the new position of the bolts and drill new holes. The seat base should sit up against the stainless steel bracket on the rear of the game. (See fig. 6)

3. Return seat to game and re-fasten with the four 1/16" Allen Head screws.

4. Lock the seat assembly and replace the two tamper-proof screws.

Fig. 7 shows the seat after modification. Notice that the far seat has not been modified. If you compare the two you can see that you pick up a lot more room and yet the seat can still slide forward enough for children to play.

If you don't like the modification, you can always move the seat back to the original bolt holes without exposing the larger speaker hole. So give it a try. What do you have to lose except for the money from your local basketball team.

If you have and questions or commits, I can always be reached via fax (208) 376-6372 or e-mail BATLE TEC@AOL.COM ▲

Figure 7

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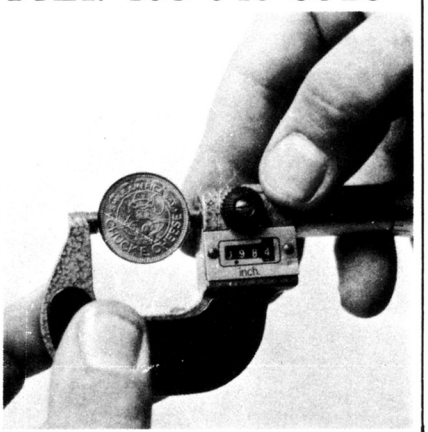

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Three from Benchmark

Benchmark Entertainment announces the release of three new machines to add to its growing line of skill redemption games: *Spin For Tickets, Super Roll For Gold,* and *Camelot.*

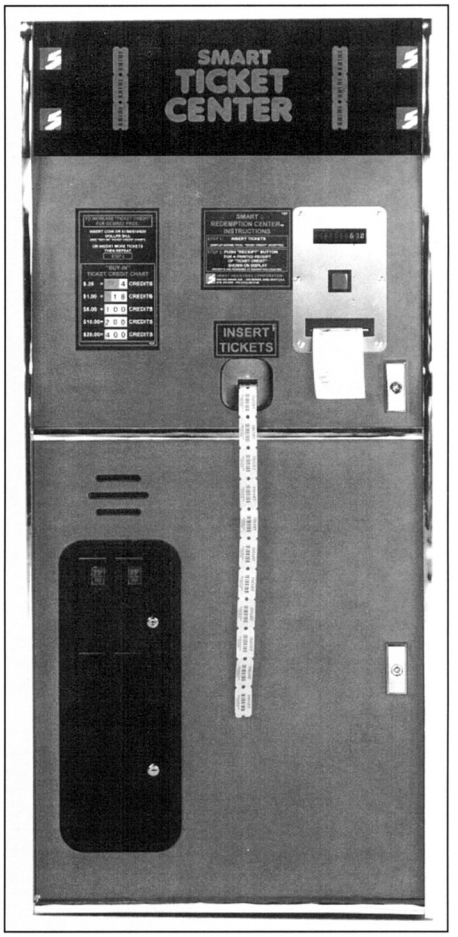
Spin For Tickets is a one- or two-player game that pays out tickets on every spin. Timing and skill are the key as players attempt to drop the token while the flashing, bonus light is at its highest value. Though skill drives the game, a winner is guaranteed with every spin.

Super Roll For Gold is the follow up to the popular *Roll For Gold.* It offers a progressive build-up feature that increases with every token until a progressive jackpot is obtained. Another feature offers a jackpot when "Hit the Clown" is hit four times in a row. A unique double pay feature allows players to drop two tokens at the same time to double their ticket payout.

Camelot is a new roll-down game that features six different flashing lights, each offering a different payout. Skill and persistence are needed to capture the 500-ticket light.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Benchmark Entertainment, 2071 N. Dixie Hwy., Pompano Beach, FL 33060; (954) 781-8080; fax (954) 781-7900.

Smart Centers



Smart Industries announces its new line of amusement center machines: the *Smart Redemption Center, Ticket Center,* and *Prize Center.*

The *Smart Redemption Center* offers a way of getting into the redemption business without having to open an attended redemption counter. The high-security vending unit is totally self-contained, allowing patrons to redeem tickets for merchandise automatically, featuring two ticket shredder/counters using bar-coded tickets for total security.

It is equipped with one vending unit with a capacity of up to 800 pieces containing totally adjustable vending trays and two bulk vendors. A second vending unit is optional. The machine also includes an alpha/numeric keypad, a receipt printer, rope lights, and an illuminated marquee sign.

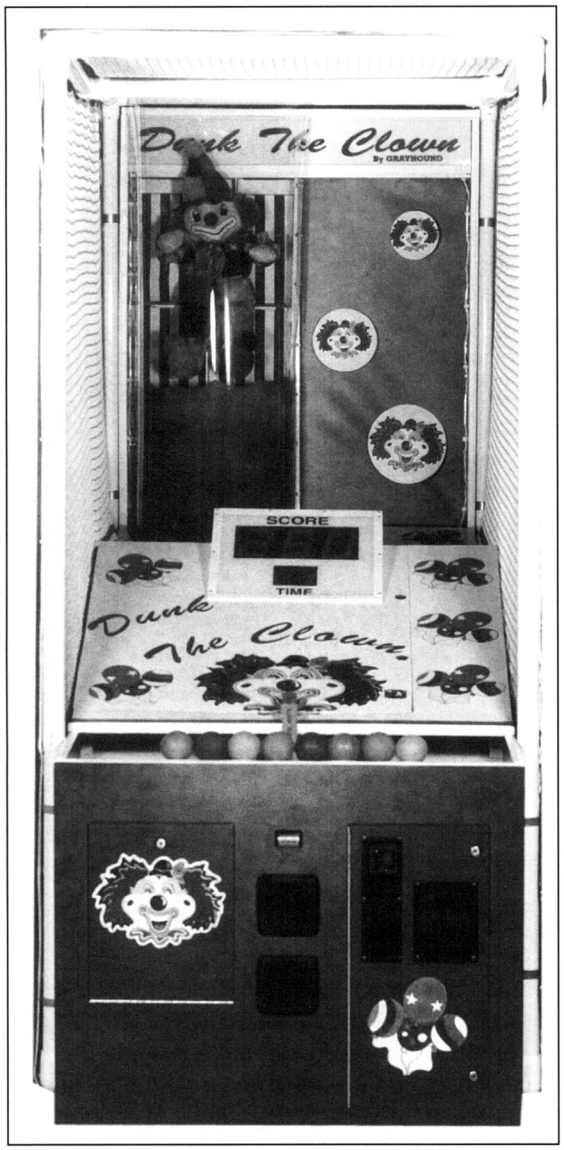
The *Smart Ticket Center* is designed to help cut labor costs, eliminate ticket theft, and increase customer service. The machine has one ticket shredder/counter, allowing players to count their own tickets automatically and print out a receipt for use at the redemption counter. Included as a feature is a bar code, printed on the receipt, for identifying ticket value and vendor location.

The *Smart Prize Center* is the perfect solution for locations with limited space. This unit has the ability to be linked to as many as four redemption games and replaces tickets with ticket credits to be used toward purchase of merchandise from the center. This unit also features a bulk vendor holding up to 2,000 pieces, a vending unit with the capacity of up to 800 pieces, completely adjustable vending trays, an alpha/numeric keypad, and a rope light.

All three machines include standard features such as double coin mechs, vacuum fluorescent digital display, voice messaging sound system, complete bookkeeping mode, and a self-diagnostic program.

The dimensions of the *Redemption Center* are 31" wide x 36" deep x 78" high; the *Ticket Center* is 27" wide x 27" deep x 60" high; the *Prize Center* is 41" wide x 36" deep x 78" high.
For more information, or distributor referral, contact Smart Industries Corp., 1626 Delaware Ave., Des Moines, IA 50317; (515) 265-9900 or (800) 553-2442; fax (515) 265-3148.

Dunk The Clown



Grayhound presents its newly patented skill redemption game *Dunk The Clown*, which challenges players to throw soft rubber balls at three different sized clown face targets.

Each time a target is hit the seat supporting the colorful circus clown collapses and the clown is dunked into his watery tank. Scoring for tickets and pricing is operator-adjustable.

Carnival music, as well as carnival barker-style phrases are heard in the attract mode. Special sound effects are heard in game play. When the game is over the player receives his tickets uniquely through the mouth of the clown located under the extra large score display. Dimensions are 3' x 7' x 6-1/2'.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Grayhound Electronics, Lakewood Industrial Park, 1915 Swarthmore Ave., Lakewood, NJ 08701; (908) 370-8500 or (800) 222-0491; fax (908) 370-7884.

VideoFoto

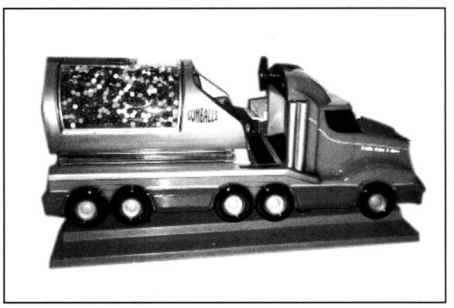
IRATA announces its new *VideoFoto*, a self-selection computerized laser imaging photo booth which produces a customer's picture integrated into a customized background.

The pictures are produced on a 8/1/2" x 11" sheet of 24-pound laser printer paper, and the product stays fresh as the background mattes are changed through timely software updates.

Photos can be customized to specific locations, time sensitive events, or cross promotions within a location. All that is needed for setup is a 110 volt outlet.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact IRATA Inc., 920 Davis Road, Suite 300, Elgin, IL 60123; (708) 608-0300; fax (708) 608-0494.

Gumball Tanker



Astro Distributing announces the availability of the new *Gumball Tanker* kiddie ride from Kiddie Rides & More. The ride is designed for high-end indoor locations.

It holds gumballs that are dispensed after every 50-cent ride, and also dispenses them directly without a ride for a quarter. This allows operators to purchase two pieces of equipment in one.

Features include a gel-coated fiberglass body, see-through plexiglass tanker, and 10 free cases of gumballs at the time of purchase.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Astro Distributing, P.O. Box 3442, Rock Island, IL 61204; (309) 786-7066 or (800) 797-7066; fax (309) 786-7067.

Big Top Mini Pinball

Mayoni Enterprises has redesigned its *Big Top Mini Pinball* game and prize dispensing unit to accommodate gumballs, rubber balls, V-1 capsules, V-2 capsules, and eggs.

The company also has relocated the coin box to the front of the unit for easy servicing. In addition, it has enlarged the prize area to increase the product capacity to 2,500 gumballs or rubber balls, 2,000 V-1 capsules, 325 V-2 capsules, and 400 eggs.

Big Top Mini Pinball features steel construction, mechanical operation, and colorful artwork. Each play affords youngsters a game of pinball with the bonus of a vended prize.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Mayoni Enterprises, 10340 Glenoaks Blvd., Pacoima, CA 91331; (818) 899-2488; fax (818) 899-0152.

Hitting Streak

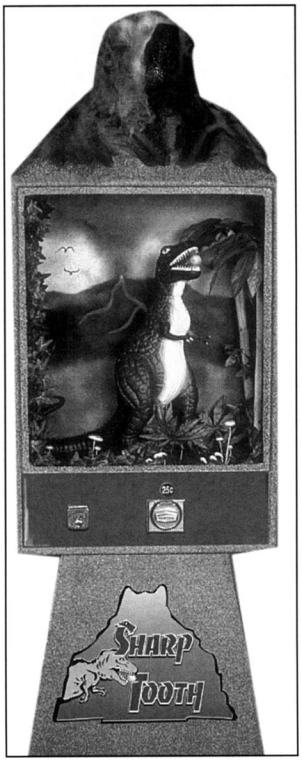
Innovative Concepts in Entertainment hopes to extend its winning streak of popular skill redemption games with the introduction of *Hitting Streak,* a baseball-themed unit housed in a red, white, and blue stadium-style cabinet.

Hitting Streak features three pitches (change-up, knuckleball, and fastball) with separate progressive jackpots. Players use a large button to hit balls as they travel down the playfield toward home plate. When they hit all three pitches for home runs they can win the grand slam progressive. A grand slam marquee that looks like a blimp is available as an option.

ICE has attended to every baseball detail, down to labeling the ticket dispenser as the ticket office. When the light is on, tickets are sold out.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Innovative Concepts in Entertainment, 1501 Kensington Ave., Buffalo, NY 14215; (716) 833-0481; fax (716) 833-1342.

Sharp Tooth and Switch Back



Premier Mfg. adds to its extensive line of bulk vending machines with the debut of *Sharp Tooth*, a prehistoric-themed unit, and *Switch Back*, a 5' high giant gumball vendor.

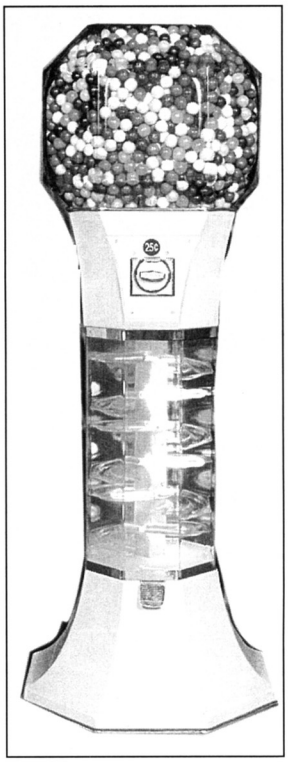
Sharp Tooth entertains youngsters with a dinosaur who comes to life and plucks a gumball from a tree before delivering it into the chute. The device has a single coin mech, volcano atop the machine, and dinosaur graphics at the bottom.

Switch Back is a fiberglass-molded gumball vendor that holds 3,200 gumballs in an acrylic, octagon-shaped globe. It features Chicago locks, a Beaver coin mech, and one-year factory warranty.

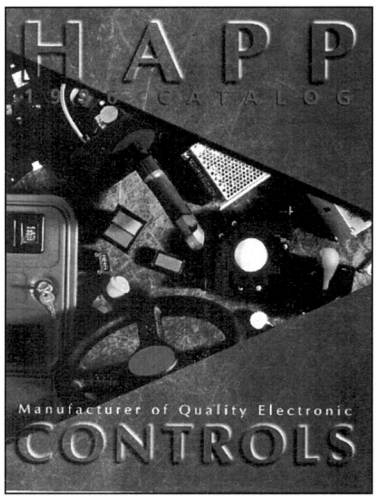
Unlike the company's *Spinner* unit that has gumballs traveling down a spiral, this one finds gumballs following a zig-zag pattern as they wind their way down to the customer.

The 60-pound machine is UPS-shippable; neon is available.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Premier Mfg., 715 N. Golden Key, Bldg. A, Gilbert, AZ 85233, (602) 926-7479 or (800) 526-0566; fax (602) 926-0881.



Happ Controls catalog



Happ Controls has published the newest, and largest, edition of its product catalog for the 1996 buying season. The 60-page catalog is a compilation of the company's products for the amusement and gaming industries presented in a user-friendly format.

New products, as well as industry standards, include various joysticks, push-buttons, trackballs, driving controls, meters, coin doors, bill acceptor doors, electronic coin acceptors, power supplies, pinball parts, and other accessories.

To receive a free copy of the catalog, contact Happ Controls, 106 Garlisch Drive, Elk Grove, IL 60007; (708) 593-6130 or (800) 593-4277; fax (708) 593-6137.

Coin machine book, pinball catalog

Marco Specialties announces the release of a catalog containing a wide range of products for pinball lovers, as well as the availability of a new collector's guide to vintage coin machines.

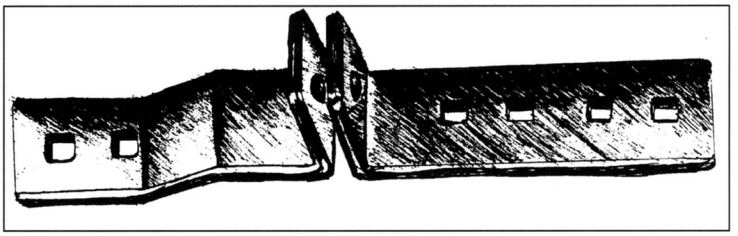
Included in the free catalog are other collector's guides and books, pinball software and paraphernalia, parts and parts catalogs, and technical books on both electromechanical and solid-state pins.

The new book, "A Collector's Guide to Vintage Coin Machines," written by Richard Bueschel and put out by Shiffer Publishing contains collecting tips, resources, and a price guide.

It features hundreds of captioned color photos of slot machines, jukeboxes, pinballs, arcade games, vending machines, and scale coin-op devices from the early 1900s to the video game era. The book sells for $38.95, plus $3 for shipping.

For more information, or to receive a copy of the catalog, contact Marco Specialties Inc., 5290 Platt Springs Rd., Lexington, SC 29073-9252; (803) 957-5500; fax (803) 957-6974.

Hasp for soda vendors



Capital Vendors introduces a custom made hasp designed to protect Dixie Narco and Royal Vendors machines. The hasp is curved to fit over the machines' existing anti-vandal pry guards.

This ensures quick and easy installation, which should typically take about 20 minutes and can be done with the machine still on location.

For more information, contact Capital Vending Inc., 13581 Virginia Manor Road, Laurel, MD 20707-6515; (301) 419-3189; fax (301) 419-3661.

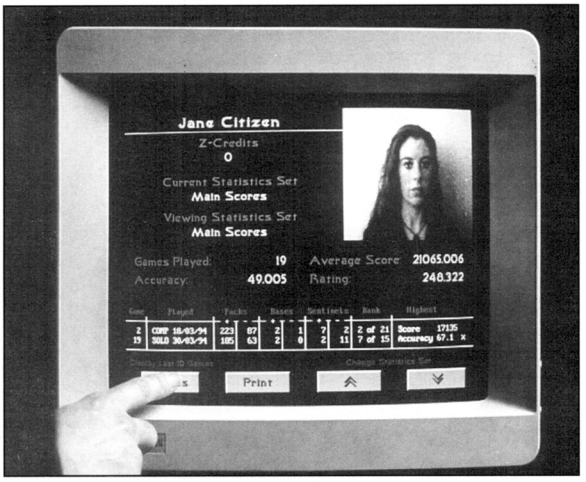
Bill reader cleaning card

KIC Products announces its new Opaque Presat brand dollar bill reader cleaning card. With a lot of new dollar bill readers, acceptors, and validators incorporating optics, the company has created an opaque cleaning card that can bypass optics to get to the reader head, belts, and rollers.

The card combines exceptional quality with a new innovative concept which allows it to be a one-step, on-the-spot solution to most maintenance problems. It removes deposits dirty bills leave on read bills, rollers, and belts, and keeps money flowing through the bill validators, readers, and other currency handling equipment.

For more information, contact KIC Products, 24 Pine St., P.O. Box 56, Peterborough, NH 03458; (603) 924-6205; fax (603) 924-7663.

Ultrazone touch screen



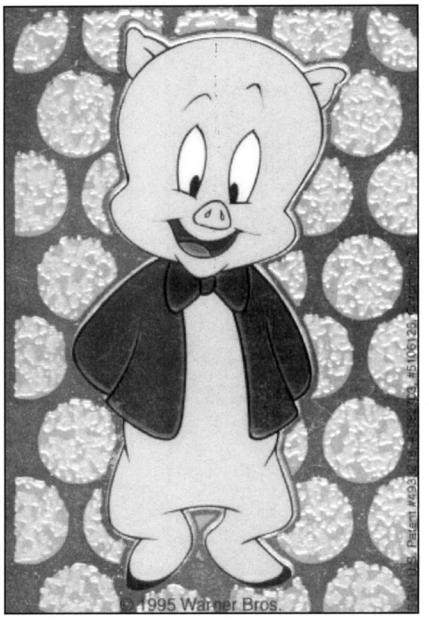
Ultrazone laser tag manufacturer presents a new touch screen monitor which gives players instant access to current scores as well as several specialized databases of statistics.

In addition to basic information, such as total games played, highest score, rating, accuracy, and overall average, players can track average scores by month and review statistics for leagues, tournaments, and special game formats.

With a high volume of repeat play, the ability to track average scores by month is a real plus for operators because vastly improved scores tend to get lost in an average that includes hundreds of games played over several months.

For more information, contact Ultrazone, 2880 E. Flamingo Road, Suite E, Las Vegas, NV 89121; (702) 734-3617; fax (702) 734-3617.

Toy footballs, Looney Tunes stickers



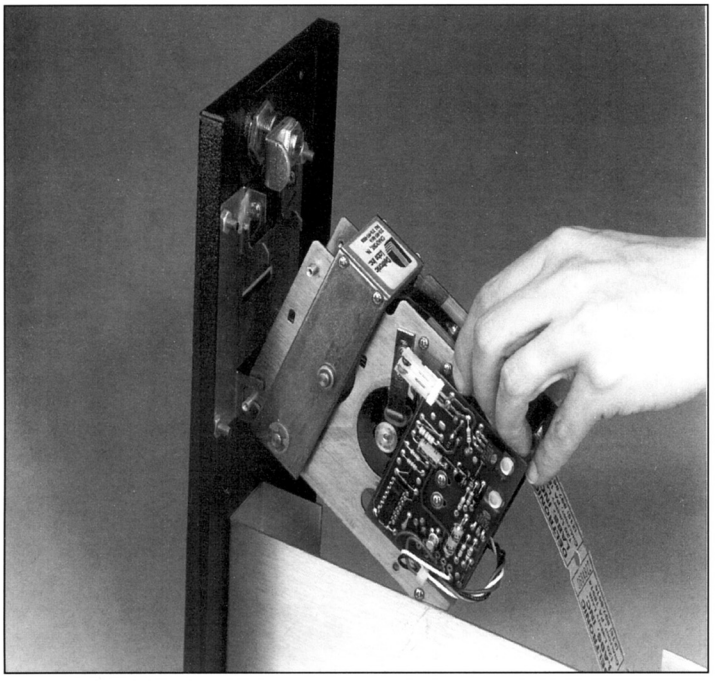
A & A Co./Parkway Machine Corp. introduces two new products for the vending industry: toy NFL footballs and a whole line of stickers featuring Looney Tunes characters.

The footballs, which are clear plastic and feature the logo of an NFL team on the inside, can be used in a wide range of vending machines.

The Looney Tunes stickers feature color images of such memorable characters as Speedy Gonzales, the Tasmanian Devil, Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig, and Sylvester the Cat.

For more information, contact A & A Co./Parkway Machine Corp., P.O. Box 5618, Timonium, MD 21094-5618; (410) 252-1020; fax (410) 252-0094.

Quick Release Ticket Dispenser



Increases in the use of Deltronic Labs' Ticket Dispenser machine have prompted the company to introduce the new Quick Release Ticket Dispenser which offers improved serviceability and reduced maintenance.

The dispenser's new quick release faceplate allows the user to identify and fix problems so the machine is up and running within seconds.

In the past, this was more difficult because the front of the dispenser is inaccessible. But with the new faceplate, operators simply snap the unit in an out of the cabinet and quickly dislodge obstructions to the ticket exit. No tools are needed.

Other features include a metal bottom guide that extends through a larger opening, a new braking system that will eliminate brake slippage and reduce wear and tear, and the addition of an optical sensor cover to protect against dust build-up.

For more information, contact Deltronic Labs, 120 Liberty Lane, Chalfont, PA 18914; (215) 997-8616; fax (215) 997-9506. ▲

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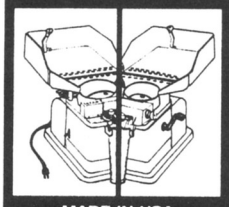

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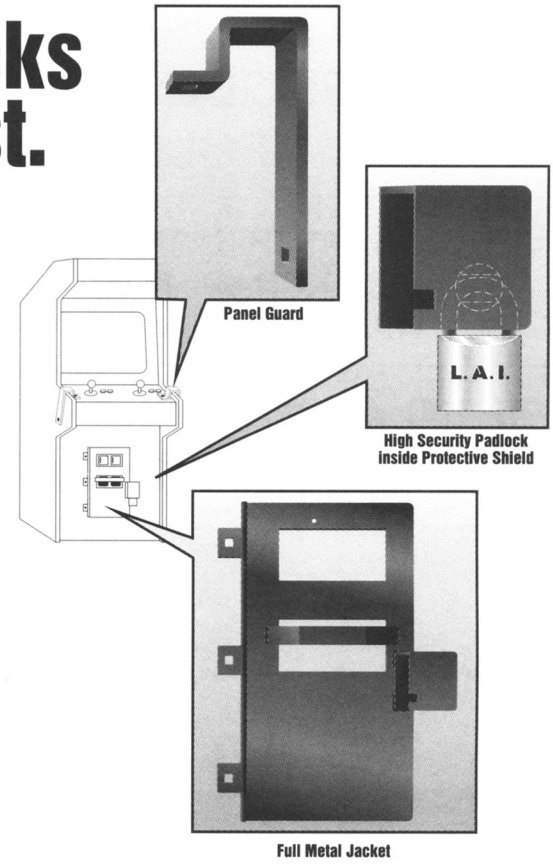

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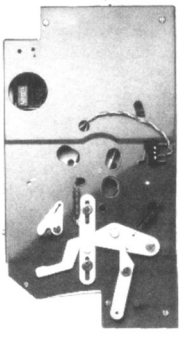

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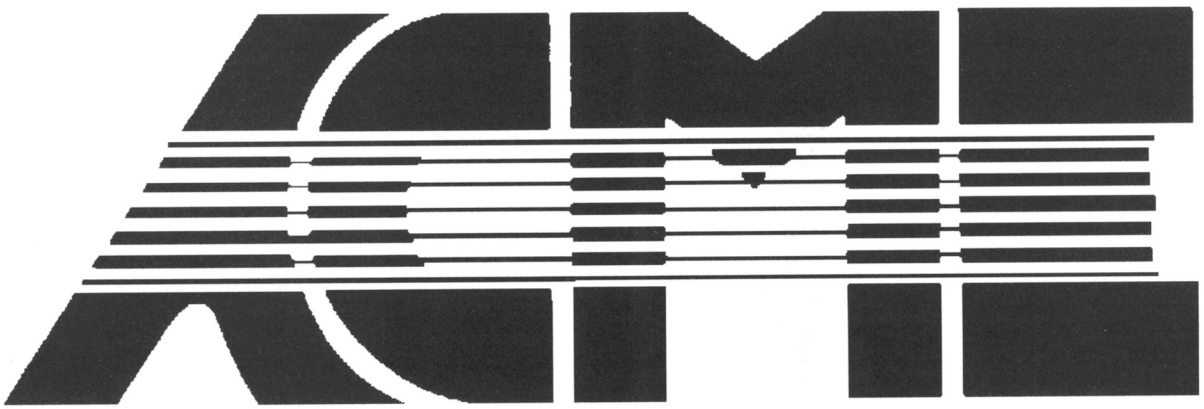

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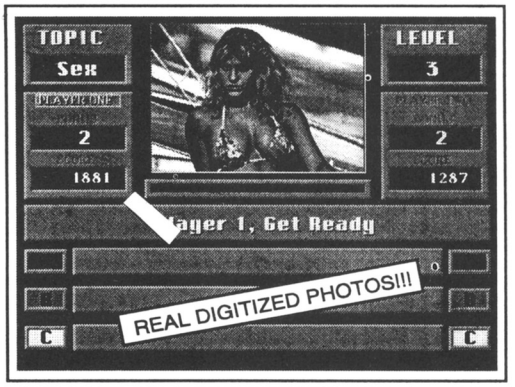

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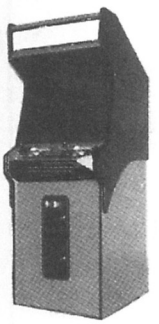

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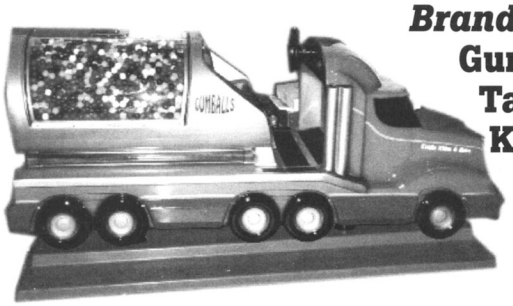

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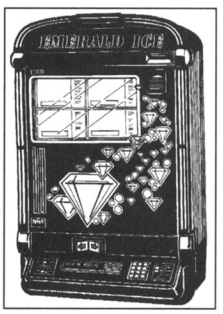

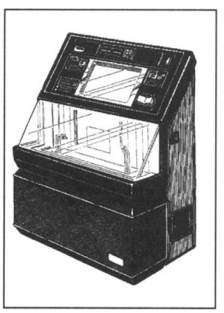

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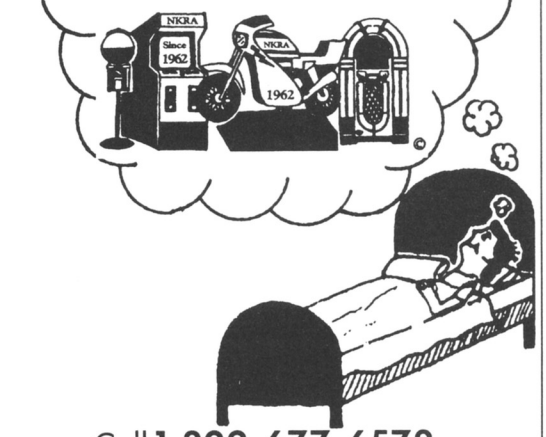

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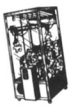

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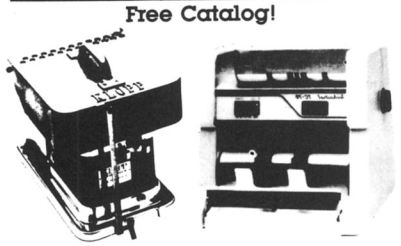

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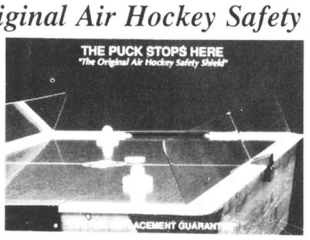

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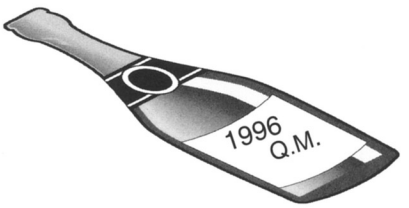

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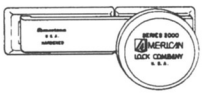

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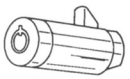

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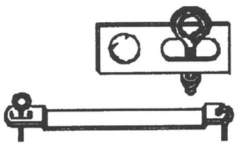

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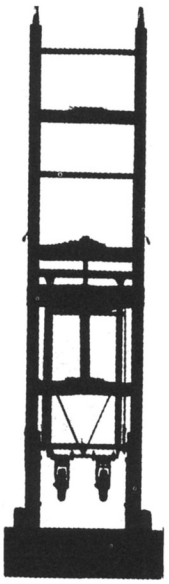

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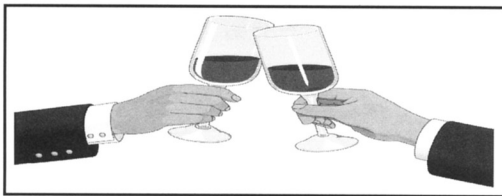

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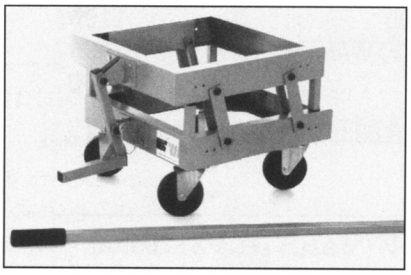

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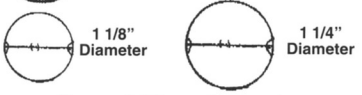

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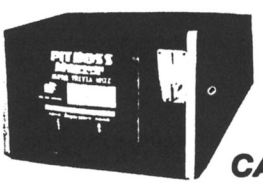

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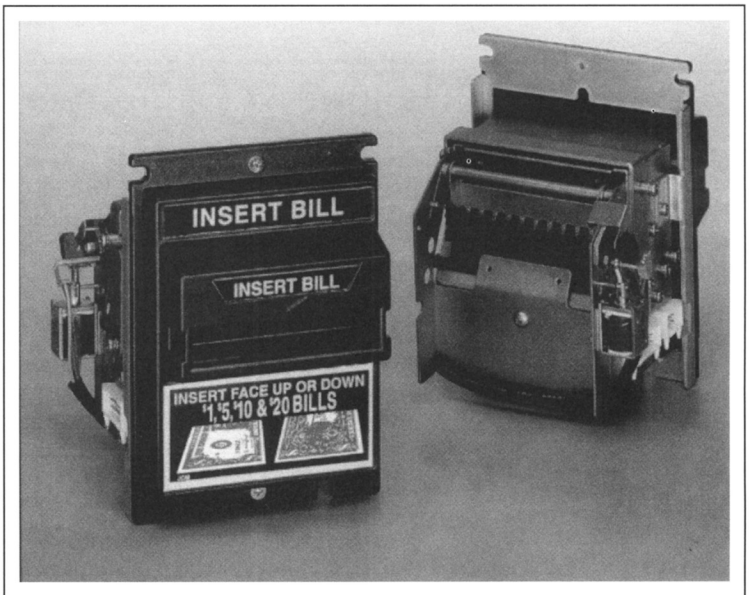

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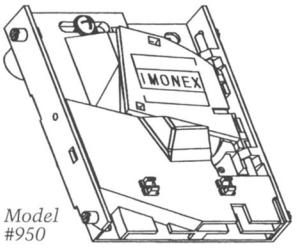

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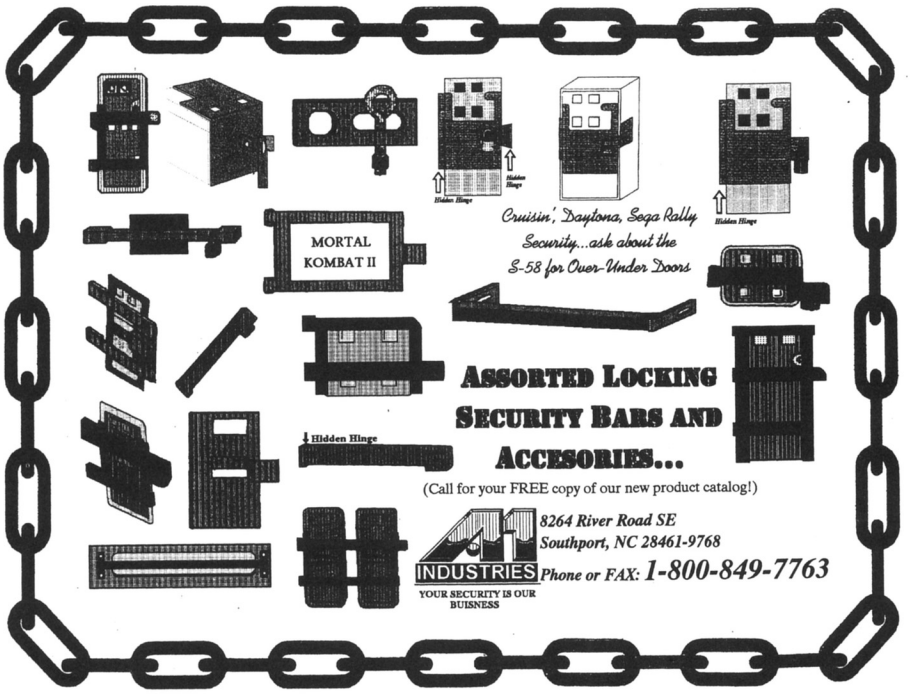

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February 15-17
Leisurexpo '96, Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Fla. Contact Al Barry, (305) 448-7976; fax ((305) 448-4630.

February 16-18
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February 20-23
International Pizza Expo, MGM Grand Hotel, Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact Gerry Durnell, (812) 949-0909.

March 7-9
American Coin Machine Expo, Orange County Convention/Civic Center, Orlando, Fla. Contact William T. Glasgow Inc., (708) 333-9292; fax (708) 333-4086.

April 11-13
National Automatic Merchandising Association Western Convention and Trade Show, Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, Calif. Contact NAMA, (312) 346-0370; fax (312) 704-4140.

April 18-21
Bulk Vendors Expo, Radisson Hotel, Scottsdale, Ariz. Contact Morrie Much, (312) 621-1400.

April 29-May 4
AMOA-National Dart Association International Team Championships, Sahara Hotel, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact Mike Smythe, (800) 808-9884 or (317) 387-1299; fax ((317) 387-0999.

May 2-3
Riverboat Gaming Congress & Expo, New Orleans Convention Center, New Orleans, La. Contact Alan Liebensohn, (212) 594-4120; fax (212) 714-0514.

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January 20-23
Interschau '96, Munich Trade Fair Center, Munich, Germany. Contact U.S. representative Jerry Kallman Jr., (201) 652-7070.

January 23-25
ATE International, Earls Court 1 Exhibition Hall, London, England. Contact ATE Ltd., 0171-713-0302; FAX 0171-713-0446.

January 24-27
IMA '96, Frankfurt Fairgrounds, Frankfurt, Germany. Contact Petra Lassahn, +49(0)211-90190-83-33; fax +49(0)211-90191-83-27.

February 21-22
AOU '96, Makuhari Messe Exhibition Centre, Japan. For more details, fax +81-3-3253-5688.

February 29-March 3
TAE '96, Taiwan Amusement Expo, Centra Exhibition Hall, Taipei, Taiwan. Contact Alice Sung, 886-2-746-6860, ext. 29.

March 18-20
Indonesian Theme Parks & Leisure Development Conference '96, Hilton International Jakarta. Contact Riza Andre, AIC Conferences, Jakarta, 62-21-521-3423; fax 62-21-521-3423.

March 21-23
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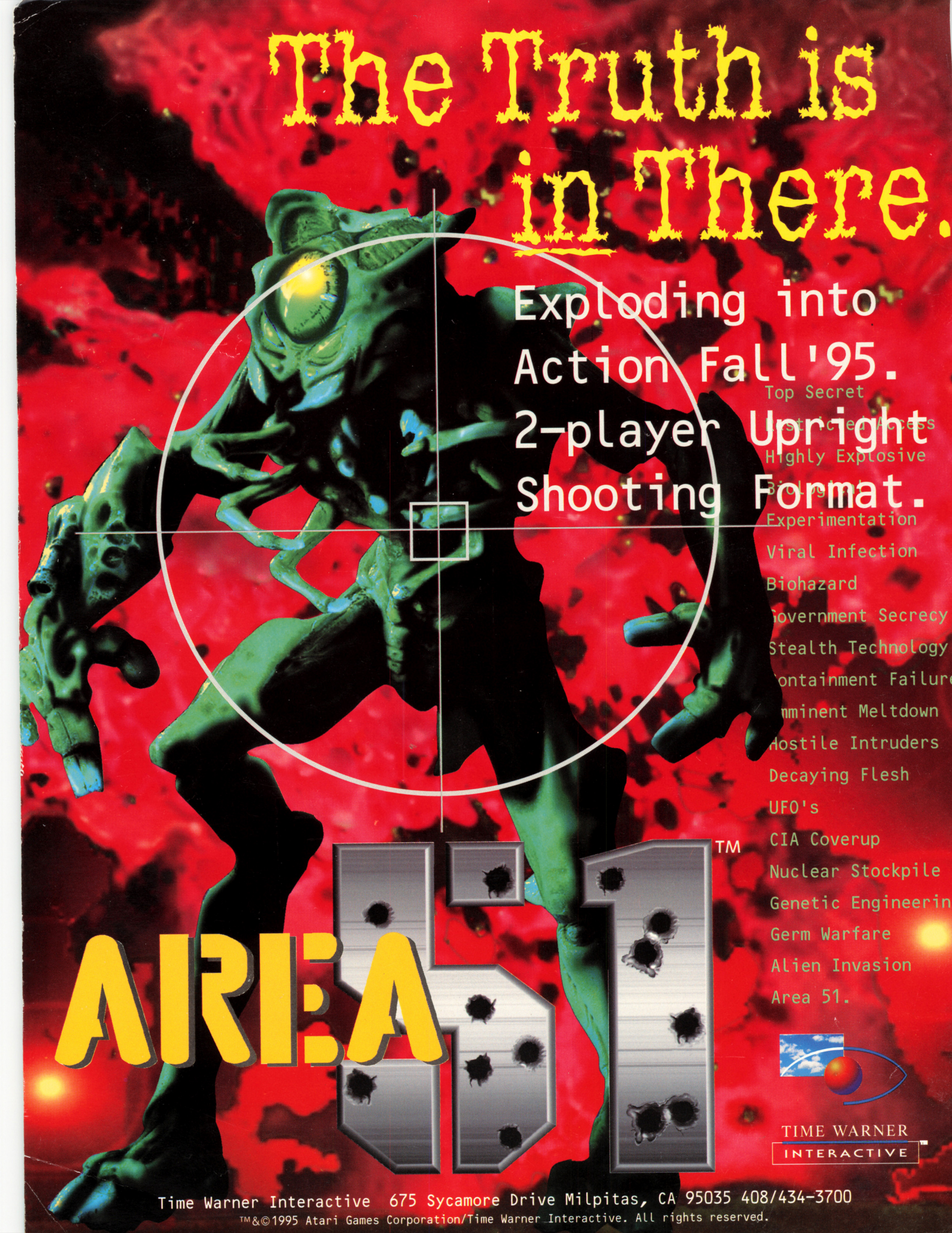

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