

THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE

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A Critical Newsletter for the Serious Gamesman

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Two Dollars

Those of you who own Colecovisions, we know your frustration in finding new game cartridges (in fact, those of you who want to purchase the master unit are having a tough time finding THAT). Coleco, either through tremendous demand, or poor planning (or a combination of both) has created a tremendous supply problem throughout most of the country. At the time we are going to press (Oct. 23, 1982), there are only FIVE Colecovision cartridges that have shipped (Cosmic Avenger, Smurf Rescue, Venture, Lady Bug, and Zaxxon) - and if you are West of the Mississippi, you are indeed fortunate if you have found all of these titles. Shipping on all cartridges has started on the East Coast and, at that, in extremely small quantities. In checking with several large distributors, we have found that in the case of the most recent release, Zaxxon, they have only received enough to 'ration' their stores to 3 or 4 pieces each! Just enough for Coleco to announce that the cartridge is released just enough to frustrate thousands of would-be buyers. On the other hand, it appears that the Coleco national accounts (J.C. Penny's, Toys R Us, etc.) have received quantities to the frustration of the small 'specialty' dealer. We checked with several distributors in the Western United States and they have not received ONE cartridge of Zaxxon to date! Add to that, they have only received one initial (and very small) shipment of Smurf Rescue and Venture, and they, along with their customers, are tearing their hair out! In addition, games such as Turbo, Carnival, and the Atari conversion module have not even started shipping to the East Coast or to the national distributors, and folks are beginning to mutter 'Mattel, all over again'.

We feel it may be too soon to admonish Coleco for their shipping practices and lack of stock because they DO have a hot, new product that everyone wants; however, we respectfully suggest that Coleco take a hard look at the marketplace beyond the East Coast and the large direct accounts and help get the games into the hands of consumers ALL AROUND THE COUNTRY. Learn from Mattel's errors of the past as there is also life after Coleco!



FOX GAMES has announced future plans for several Atari-compatible games based on 20th Century Fox movies. Among those planned (see Availability Update for scheduling) are **ALIEN**, where you travel through a maze-like spaceship hull trying to crush eggs left by some gruesome creature. But as you try, Aliens come from nowhere attempting to make you an intergalactic snack. In **MEGAFORCE**, Sardour is under attack by enemy forces. You are flown in to save Sardour in your specially designed war machine called the MotoFighter. You must slip past enemy defenses and demolish their desert headquarters. Other movie-related games planned for '83 include **ST. VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE**, **SIX PACK**, **M*A*S*H**, **THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL**, **9 TO 5**, and **THE FALL GUY**.



Atari is running a Fall promotion with their Atari 800 home computer where they will offer two 16K RAM Memory Modules (normally priced at \$99.95 suggested retail each) free with the purchase of the computer. The promotion started October 22 and will run through the end of the year.

The first two Atari-compatible cartridges have been announced for release before Christmas. **GORF** and **WIZARD OF WOR**, both licensed from Bally/Midway, are two of the more popular arcade games to come to the home unit (retail expected in the \$25-\$30 range). **GORF** challenges you to confront the Gorfian Empire in a multi-mission space competition. Repel robot attacks, laser ships, and torpedo-firing fighters! **WIZARD OF WOR** dares you to descend into the labyrinthine dungeons of Wor to outshoot and vaporize monsters, beat the Wizard and emerge victorious. Warriors outwit the monster Worlings in constantly changing dungeons. Special Radar Screen reveals invisible monsters.

CBS has also formed CBS SOFTWARE, a new unit which will develop, license, and market computer software for home personal computers. Concurrent with this formation, CBS has announced a licensing agreement with K-BYTE computer games. The first games to be released under this agreement (available before Christmas) are **K-RAZY SHOUTOUT**, **K-RAZY ANTICS**, **K-RAZY CRITTERS**, and **K-STAR PATROL**, all for the Atari 400 and 800 Home Computers (approx. retail \$5-\$40).



Ultravision, inc. has just announced their entry into the home video game arena with a 2-pronged attack. First, they will be offering software compatible with the Atari 2600 VCS (see review elsewhere and Availability Update). Secondly, they will be introducing a self-contained game system, available in very limited supplies at the beginning of 1983. Touted as the 'real arcade game' experience, the unit has a built-in 9" high resolution COLOR monitor with advanced display technology allowing detailed graphics and special effects found only in coin-op games.

The unit is featured in a unique sound system incorporating advanced electronic circuitry, with musical episodes throughout the game programs creating greater realism and excitement than conventional TV systems, along with dual stereo headphone jacks for silent but dramatic sound effects (one pair of headphones are included). The monitor can be directly connected to computer peripherals and to CCTV Camera to monitor for home security functions. The unit will work on AC or DC current with contained battery power and optional cigarette lighter cord. It will operate on 110 Volt or 220 Volt 50 or 60 cycle power. The unit will play compatible 16K and 32K cartridges (all Atari-compatible games will play in this unit without need for a conversion module) as well as 'advanced' 64K arcade quality games. The unit also includes 2 high powered control panels with dual action firing buttons (front and top of joystick). These are 16-position, detachable joysticks. Ultravision promises detailed graphics and resolution and between 5 to 8 cartridges to be introduced with the unit. The Atari-compatible games being released shortly are, according to the manufacturer, going to look even better when plugged into the Ultravision unit. The 64K cartridges that will be manufactured specifically for the Ultravision unit will eat some of the Atari-compatible titles, along with several new titles (not announced at this time). The unit is expected to retail somewhere between \$450 and \$500 and the cartridges will retail around \$50.

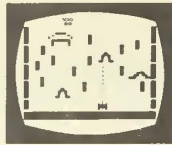


U.S. GAMES is offering the first introductory rebate program available for home video games. Consumers can get a \$3 rebate on the purchase of the games currently available and U.S. Games is offering a full refund to anyone who is not completely satisfied with that game! This program is effective between Oct. 15 and Dec. 31, 1982. Retailers will be provided with rebate coupons which must be returned to the company with the bottom flap of the game for the rebate. For a full refund, the customer must return the game in its original box along with the original dated sales slip to U.S. Games within 5 days of purchase.

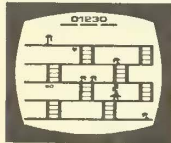
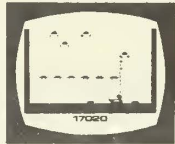


WORM WAR I (★★½/★★) is a vertically scrolling game in which you play the role of master tank commander,

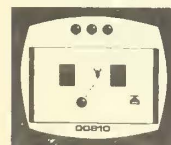
driving through the mythical city of Teriyaki and blasting as many giant worms and blocks as possible without running out of fuel. Actually, it seems more as if the city of Teriyaki is driving through YOU since your tank is mobile only from left to right, while the inchworm-like creatures move inexorably toward the bottom of the screen. If you shoot enough worms, an occasional pagoda gas station will appear. Allow the pagoda to move directly over your tank, and you regain some of your lost fuel. The speed of scrolling can be controlled: push forward on the joystick for faster action, pull toward you for slower play. In both one- and two-player modes, you may choose the 'Obstacle Course' (scattered blocks in the playing field), the 'Straightaway' (clear screen with no obstacles) or 'Invisible Worms' (obstacles on screen, and worms are visible only during brief flashes of light). In addition, difficulty switches allow random or fixed worm movement plus slow or fast brake response from your tank. This is a very easy game to learn, and it should appeal to children. Especially on the 'Straightaway' option, it is ridiculously easy to pile up huge scores. For the video game experts, it will be much too easy to be of interest for long, but the game may well offer a small child his or her first chance to achieve the numbers the older kids reach routinely on many games (retail \$34.95)



DEADLY DUCK (★★★/★★½) is basically a video shooting gallery in reverse--the duck moves horizontally along the bottom of the screen, firing from his beak at crabs, bricks and dragonflies, quacking all the while. The duck must avoid being bonked by the bricks the crabs drop and the bombs from the dragonflies. The player is advised to practice shooting the bricks, and it's a good suggestion, because these bricks 'float on the water' for a short time, temporarily blocking the duck's movement on the pond. The game is fairly challenging at levels 3 and 4, and graphics are good, but we feel the game doesn't have enough staying power to keep the player's interest over a long period of time (retail \$29.95)



FAST EDDIE (★★★/★★★) is a good example of the currently popular climbing theme in video games. Fast Eddie climbs ladders and jumps up to nab prizes which are guarded by little blue Sneakers. The prizes on each level are different (hearts, fishes, tanks, etc.), and each time Eddie grabs one successfully, the number of points earned appears in place of the prize--a very nice arcade-like touch. After Eddie has caught nine prizes, a key appears directly above High-Top, the tall Sneaker at the top of the screen. If Eddie snatches the key, it's on to the next screen with a bonus Eddie. There are five screens in each difficulty level, and the player has the option of starting at any level, or even advancing a level during play by using the Game Select lever on the VCS console. The higher the level, the wider are the Sneakers that Eddie must clear as he leaps about. The Color-B/W lever allows you to pause and re-start the game at any time during play--a feature many will appreciate. We found this an enjoyable variation on the climbing theme, and it's one that has enough difficulty levels to appeal to all ages. Recommended. (retail \$29.95)



BEANY BOPPER (★★/★★) offers you the opportunity to capture Beanies, Bouncing Orange Eyes, and a variety of other falling objects with your Bopper, which is quipped with a stun gun to slow things down. The Bopper is nothing more than a circle, and it is maneuvered around the playing field, avoiding obstacles in the scrolling maze-like field, with your joystick. Except for the Beanies, which must be stunned before being caught, all objects are captured by simply touching them with your Bopper. Although the action can get pretty fast at times, the whole thing seems pointless. Not recommended (retail \$34.95)

TURMOIL (★★★/★★★) is the first release from Fox that doesn't seem to be aimed squarely at the kiddie market. Still another space-theme game, this one offers a series of horizontal alleys, along which aliens zoom in their spacecraft. Your ship navigates a vertical alley through the center of the screen, while your guns spew multitudes of bullets to the left and right in an attempt to annihilate the aliens before they bump into you. In some of the higher levels, the alien traffic lanes occasionally become invisible, making your task all the more difficult. Fortunately for those who may need an occasional breather, the Color-B/W switch on the VCS console operates as a pause control in this game--you'll need it. **TURMOIL** is very uncomplicated to learn, but it's definitely one of the fastest-paced games available. Recommended for speed demons (retail \$34.95)



PARKER BROTHERS

SPIDER-MAN (★★½/★★½) offers some interesting new twists on the now-standard climbing game, and it's bound to appeal to fans of this classic comic book hero. New York City is at the mercy of the Green Goblin who has booby-trapped a skyscraper with Super Bombs. And that's not all--the building is infested with criminals who attempt to keep Spider-Man from reaching the Super Bomb. The most unusual aspect of this game is the method used for Spider-Man's climbing action. You depress the joystick firing button to activate Spider-Man's 'web fluid,' and then push the stick in the direction you wish to shoot his web, quickly releasing the button when the web is long enough. Then Spider-Man can be made to climb the web to scale the building. This can be tricky, due to the fact that the web can't be shot to a window, or else Spider-Man will plunge to the ground. The graphics on this game are disappointing compared to Parker Bros. first two releases, and the game itself is likely to appeal only to real fans of the comic book hero. (retail \$39.95)



FROGS & FLIES (★★★½/★★★½) is a very good VCS translation of the excellent children's game, FROG BOG for Intellivision. The setting is an idyllic pond inhabited by two frogs and numerous insects on the wing, and day gradually turns to night while you play. The game may be played one-on-one against the computer or against a friend. For smaller children, the arc of the frog's jump can be constant, and its tongue can dart out automatically or with a push of the joystick button. Older kids will want to control their frog's arc and run the risk of plopping into the pond--an effect good for a few giggles. A delightful children's game--recommended.



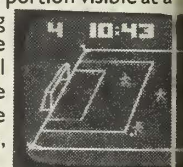
Frogs and Flies™

DARK CAVERN (★★★½/★★★½) is a VCS version of Intellivision's NIGHT STALKER that out-does the original. This is somewhat off-beat maze game in which your man battles for survival in an underground cavern against blobs, spiders and robots. The man's primary defense is his gun, which starts with 20 bullets. Periodically a gun flashes somewhere in the maze--if you can land on it before it disappears, you add 10 bullets to your arsenal. That, however, is not as easy as it sounds, because spiders can stun you, blobs can steal your bullets, and robots (one-headed and two-headed) can shoot you! This is a must for maze game fans--Recommended.



Dark Cavern™

INTERNATIONAL SOCCER (★★★/★★★) is a good two-player game for video sports fans. The field scrolls vertically, with only a portion visible at one time, and this fact can be used in your game-playing strategy. For example, as a team member is scrolling off the screen, you can pass the ball to the point where he will reappear. Those who enjoy soccer will find many game options to their liking, such as the abilities to pass while moving or standing, intercept passes, steal the ball, dribble, and more. Recommended.



International Soccer

Ultravision™, Inc.

CONDOR ATTACK (★★★½/★★★½) is the first entry from a new company who promises that their cartridges "must excite you." challenge your powers of concentration." If you feel a game doesn't meet its promise, you may return it to Ultravision within 7 days of purchase, along with proof of purchase, and they will exchange it for another Ultravision cartridge of equal value. This is a company with obvious confidence in their product. **CONDOR ATTACK** takes place far in the future when a great explosion in space sends time into a warp back to the Stone Age. Prehistoric creatures -- giant Condors, Nirobean Spiders and Vulcanian Bats -- attack your base, which is equipped with the one sophisticated weapon that survived the "Millennium Warp." There are three different games, one against each variety of creature, and they're all tough to survive. The Condor game is the slowest, with its great swooping birds, but they're none too gentle. Before you know what has happened, a more advanced wave is firing from very close range with some very tricky moves. The Spiders are faster, and the Bats in the third game will have you begging for mercy! Although this game shares elements with some existing ones, notably **SPACE INVADERS**, **PHOENIX**, **DEMON ATTACK** and **GALAXIAN**, it's a very singular challenge that will test your skills. We especially liked the change of pace offered from wave to wave, plus the fact that you can choose how soon you want to start up again after you've lost one of your bases. Recommended (retail \$34.95)

- ☆☆☆☆ = EXCELLENT
 - ☆☆☆ = GOOD
 - ☆☆ = FAIR
 - ☆ = POOR
- Any game for a given system is compared only to other games for that system. In other words, all Atari & Atari-compatible games are judged separately from Intellivision & Intellivision-compatible games, etc.

VISION SKYJINKS (★★★★/★★★) is a single-player air plane race with outstanding graphics that give a three-dimensional feel to the game. Your job is to pilot the P41 craft through one of five courses, taking turns as close as you dare to the red and blue pylons, while avoiding trees and colorful hot-air balloons. The difference in the courses is only in the number of pylons (from 25 to 99), and your race is against the clock. As your plane takes off, the shadow beneath it grows, giving you the feeling of gaining altitude. If you fly under a fleecy white cloud, its shadow will cross the top of your plane! As you attempt to maneuver through the course, you'll find yourself running into a few trees at first, and that will cost you time and altitude. Sound effects, too, are very good in this game, as the drone of your engine changes in banks around the pylons. This is a very pretty game that's good for all ages. Recommended. (retail \$22.95).

APOLLO FINAL APPROACH (★★½/★★★) is a two-screen game in which you take on the role of air traffic controller at a busy airport. Your Approach Control Radar screen (ACR) shows all air traffic in the vicinity of the airport (a maximum of two to four aircraft at a time), and the Ground Control Approach screen (GCA) is used to bring any one plane in for a (you hope) safe landing. Both screens are graphically spartan, but they get the job done. The center of the ACR shows a view of the landing strip with the strobes used to line up your aircraft. Direction of all aircraft must be constantly monitored to prevent collisions, so you have to be ready to clear all traffic for sudden emergencies. Once you get a plane in position to land, you switch to the GCA screen. Here you watch the plane's heading on the localizer (watch out for cross winds in some variations!) and guide its angle of descent on the glide path. One note—if you've ever flown a plane, you'll have to get used to the idea that pulling back on your stick will LOWER the nose of your plane. If you've never piloted a plane, don't worry about it—just follow the instructions! Although some will find this game slow, it is a game for thinkers, and Apollo is to be commended for offering the Atari owner something different. (retail \$31.95)

WABBIT (★★★½/★★★½) is an amusing game that's really a lot of fun to play. Billie Sue is an attractive young farmer who is graphically well rendered. She attempts to save her carrot patch from the ravenous Wabbits by pelting them with "wotten eggs." One or two players can defend against one, two or three Wabbits who hop out of their holes into the patch faster than a you-know-what. The longer you stay in the game, the sillier it gets as the Wabbits get hungrier and faster. It's a refreshing change to find a game you can really laugh at and enjoy.—recommended. (retail \$31.95)

The newest items in Wico's 'Command Control' line should easily establish Wico as the leader in home video game and computer controllers, a position they already hold in arcade controllers. The 'Famous Red Ball Joystick' features the same red and black base used for their basic joystick (reviewed last month). Instead of the bat handle design, this joystick offers a steel shank topped with the shiny red ball so familiar to veteran arcade gamers. Once again, the game player has the choice of using the firing button on the base or the one atop the ball—the choice is made by a simple flick of a slide switch on the base.

The Red Ball is hefty and offers a really solid-feeling grip. In fact, this joystick feels so sturdy that you won't be afraid of breaking it during a really heated session at the fastest and most demanding of games. The Red Ball Joystick is guaranteed for one full year, and we feel it is well worth every penny of the \$34.95 retail price. Recommended.

The Wico Trackball is an absolute first for the home gamer, and it is available in a model for Atari and Commodore game and computer systems, plus models for Apple and TRS80 Color computers and Odyssey video games with plug-in controls (older models). This unit shows the same high-quality construction as the other Command Control products: Wico has mounted a very heavy phenolic ball into a small, rectangular console with a firing button in the upper left corner. The effect on the game play has to be experienced first-hand to be believed! Other than the usual eight directions offered by all standard joysticks, the Trackball allows movement control through a full 360 degrees plus something no other controller can give—the ability to vary the speed of objects on the screen. We put the Trackball through its paces on a wide variety of games, and we found it to be a right on the majority of them. While we still prefer a joy-stick on some games like Chopper Command and Defender, the Trackball offered superb control in others, such as any of the Space Invaders type, in which you have aliens attacking from above while you move your base horizontally below them. Of course, a game translated from an arcade version controlled by a trackball, such as Missile Command, is an obvious use for the Wico unit. Missile Command is one of the better home translations of an arcade game, even with a joystick, but with Wico's Trackball, the feeling of the arcade truly comes home. We noticed immediate improvements in scoring and maneuverability, and we bet you will. (retail \$79.95 for Apple, \$69.95 for other models) Recommended.

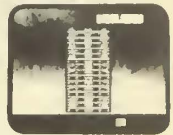


TRACKBALL
ATARI/COMMODORE/
SEARS MODEL

US GAMES

TOWERING INFERNO (★★½/★★½) gives you the chance to rescue survivors from a burning skyscraper. The entire game, if you can make it that far, consists of nine

buildings with nine floors in each building. Each floor is a slightly different maze, burning with Flameoids and Walls of Flame, which can be doused with your fireman's limitless supply of water. Initially, each floor has 4 survivors, and your fireman has a limited time to reach them through the flames. Incidentally, our fireman's corridor to escape each floor is blocked until he reaches the survivors--no coward's way out in this game! While we found the concept of the game interesting, we felt it simply missed the mark in terms of player interest. In addition, the instruction book that comes with the game has some inexcusable omissions. Every single-player Atari-compatible game we've ever seen works from the left controller position. This one not only requires that you plug your joystick into the right side position, but the book makes no mention of this fact. We also felt the player should be warned that his fireman can squirt water only up or down, and not left or right. Not recommended. (retail \$29.95)



COMMANDO RAID (★★★½/★★★) is a graphically attractive combat game in which you control a central gun emplacement and attempt to save buildings on either side of the screen from attack by android paratroopers and an occasional aircraft that drops a bomb. Sinister-looking enemy helicopters drop waves of attackers on both sides of the screen. You angle your gun turret to pick off the paratroopers, but you must work quickly! If 3 paratroopers land on a building, it is under their control, and each successive hit results in an ever-lengthening tunnel working its way underground toward

your gun emplacement. Once the tunnel reaches your gun, you've had it, because the androids will plant an explosive charge under your gun! This is a fun game that has some unique touches. Recommended (retail \$29.95)



COLECO MOUSE TRAP (★★★★/★★★½) is a very good rendering of the Exidy arcade game that will please fans of maze chases. In this one, your mouse nibbles cheese as he races around the maze while avoiding three cats. There are four bones scattered around the maze, which your mouse can "bury" and store once he touches them. When the cats get too close, hit your firing button sharply, and the mouse turns into a ferocious dog who will bite the cats. (This move costs the mouse one stored bone.) The mouse has another ally in the changeable doors of the maze walls which are activated by pushing on the firing button a little longer than the snapping dog act. If your timing is good, you can use this trick to trap one or more cats in a central chamber. Game options include smart vs. dumb and fast vs. slow cats, and for those who are good at memorizing maze patterns, there's even a version of the game with an invisible maze! Typical of these games, you can earn a bonus mouse for every 500 points. We found this one very enjoyable—to the point of mild addiction. Recommended.



K.C.'S KRAZY CHASE! (★★½/★★½) is the first game cartridge designed for use with the Voice of Odyssey², and it's a let-down. K.C. Munchkin makes a second appearance in this maze game, chasing one end of the dreaded Dratapillar while the other end chases him. K.C. also has to watch out for dreadful Drats, which can end the game for him. Despite the ability to program your own mazes with the keyboard, this is just a ho-hum maze game. Odyssey touts this one as 'voice enhanced,' meaning that you can play the game without the voice module--and you might as well. The repertoire of the voice consists of a few phrases such as 'Oh no,' 'Watch out,' 'Run,' 'Incredible,' and a maniacal laugh when K.C. munches all the sections of the Dratapillar. Nothing from the Voice Module is integral to game play. Not recommended (retail \$34.95, game only. Voice of Odyssey², retail \$99.95)

TYPE & TELL (★★★/★★½) is not really a game, although a few rudimentary word games are suggested in the instruction booklet. This one requires the Voice of Odyssey² because the whole premise involves the Voice saying anything that the user types into the keyboard. The primary use of this cartridge would be for small children, and it could be a useful educational tool in their learning the correspondence between letters or letter groups and associated sounds. It's doubtful that any of the suggested games would hold any child's interest for long (retail \$39.95)

NIMBLE NUMBERS N.E.D. (★★★★/★★★) is the best of the cartridges for the Voice of Odyssey², offering a good, wide range of mathematical situations applicable for kids in grades one to nine. Success in math drills earns the player a chance to have Ned jump the numbered scoring stones in a creek--a brief game as a reward for a job well done. The drills offered are 'Name the Shapes', 'Multiplication Run-Through,' and 'Function Machine,' an introduction to algebraic thinking and the concept of solving for unknowns in equations. Each drill is offered at 5 different skill levels, making the cartridge particularly useful in a household with children of different ages. Recommended. (retail \$39.95)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING

ATARI 5200



The Hardware...

No doubt about it--the new Atari 5200 is a sleek, futuristic-looking game console. Now available in very limited quantities from some major department stores, this unit has a lot of desirable features. The game switch provided is automatic. Connect it to your TV and incoming antenna lead as directed in the owner's manual and you'll never have to touch it again--if your TV set is turned on, you need only touch the power button on the front of the Atari 5200 console to begin game play.

Another nice feature is the fact that cartridges can be inserted and removed from the unit while the power is on, and the TV screen will go blank and silent. Storage space is provided for the controllers in a well at the back of the unit which is covered with a smoke-gray plastic door, and a spot for wrapping the cord underneath the unit is also a nice touch. The controllers pack a lot of functions into a slim combination unit 12-button keypad and joystick, four firing buttons (two on each side), plus separate buttons for start, reset and pause functions. The multi-function controllers eliminate the need to have the main console where you can reach it during game play, except for changing cartridges. The keypad buttons perform game option selections plus special functions in certain games. (Overlays are provided with cartridges.) The 360-degree, non-self-centering joystick is smaller than the one for the Atari 2600, and it has a different "feel" that may take some getting used to. Unlike all the standard eight-position joysticks, this one allows maneuverability in every possible direction, and therefore offers a greater degree of control in game play. Because it is not self-centering, you do not need to hold it to keep an on-screen object in one spot away from the center of your screen. We feel this controller is one of the best available as "standard equipment" on any game unit currently available. Incidentally, controllers for the Atari 5200 are not compatible with any other game or computer system because pin configuration of the plug is a new one. Good news for VCS owners who may be thinking of stepping up to the Atari 5200--there will be an adapter so that VCS cartridges can be played in the 5200, but it will not offer any improvement in graphics (available 1983). (retail \$269.95)

The Software...

SUPER BREAKOUT (★★★★/★★★★) is the game that comes with the Atari 5200 unit, and it should be familiar to most game players in either its VCS or arcade versions. Variations include standard Breakout, Progressive Breakout, Double Breakout, and Cavity. With the new analog joystick standing in for the more familiar paddle controllers in this game, you'll have to resist the urge to twist the stick--the stick will turn, but there will be no effect on the on-screen paddle! When the Trakball is made available by Atari for the 5200 next year, it can also be used in this game. While this is a good version of SUPER BREAKOUT with an interesting "melting" effect to the graphics when the blocks are hit, we would rather have seen a newer title packed with the unit.

DEFENDER (★★★½/★★★★) is a superior home rendition of the well-known arcade game by Williams Electronics. The 5200 version of the game is so close to the arcade version that it's bound to be a best seller. This is the familiar battle between your spaceship, Defender, and the aliens attempting to take over the planet Humanis to turn its Humanoids into dangerous Mutants. You must attempt to rescue the hapless Humanoids while doing constant battle with the alien Landers, Mutants, Swarms, Baiters, Bombers and Pods. The game is colorful, full of great sound effects, and your spaceship doesn't disappear every time you fire the way it does on the VCS version. Because of multiple firing buttons on the controller, there are separate buttons for Smart Bombs and going into Hyperspace. This game will also work with the Trakball to be available in 1983. Recommended. (retail \$39.95)

CENTIPEDE (★★★★/★★★★) will delight fans of the arcade game, also by Atari, because this version plays exactly like the original, even to the sound effects. The game takes place in an Enchanted Forest subject to attacks from the evil Centipede, deadly Spiders, venomous Fleas, and a poisonous Scorpion. You are equipped with three magic wands with which you can turn sections of the Centipede into harmless mushrooms. Spiders get in the way, bouncing in from the sides of the screen and eliminating some of the mushroom they touch. If too many of the lower mushrooms are eliminated, Fleas start dropping straight down, creating mushrooms as they fall. This game, too, will work with the Trakball available in 1983, which will be a real plus for those used to playing CENTIPEDE in the arcade. This is a charming and different game with a lot of appeal. Recommended. (retail \$39.95)

SOCER (★★★★/★★★★) is one of several sports games to be made the 5200. (FOOTBALL, BASEBALL and others will be available later). As you might expect, this game can be played by two people, but it may also be played one-on-one against the computer, which is unusual in this type of game. There is even a computer auto-play version which is great for seeing how the game works. The scrolling play field is rendered with perspective that gives a three-dimensional look to the game, and the figures are very well animated. The ball is realistic, complete with curved seam, and it casts a shadow that makes it easy to tell how high in the air it has been passed or kicked. There are enough optical levels are Beginning, Novice, Intermediate, and Expert, and you can choose height and distance of kicks, speed of soccer player controlled, plus ball control options like trapping, dribbling and intercepting. It's all there--the noise of the crowd, the referee's whistle, the excitement of a real game. Recommended. (retail \$31.95)

GALAXIAN (★★★★/★★★★) brings the Bally Midway arcade game to the home TV screen in all its glory. Once again, this is an excellent version of an arcade game that will save you a lot of quarters! The Intergalactic Warrior attacks from above, a la SPACE INVADERS, but individual members of the warrior will peel off, sometimes in groups, to bombard your ship at the base of the screen. This version provides a total of 32 waves of aliens (Atari claims you can be a real pro if you can make it past the 16th wave) and ten skill levels. In the first wave even the neophyte can do a creditable job, since the Galaxians don't fire at the base (good for small children and adults new to video games.) The game may be played by one or two players, and it will be adaptable to the Trakball controller. Recommended. (retail \$39.95.)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING...

The hardware...

The **VECTREX** Arcade System by GCE is something brand-new and exciting in the world of video games—a self-contained game unit with its own nine-inch vector monitor.



If you've played Asteroids, Tempest, or other arcade games with vector graphics, then you're already familiar with this type of display. For those not familiar with arcade games, the vector screen offers brilliant, fine-line graphics in black and white. Color is introduced through the use of special plastic overlays which fit into tabs in front of the screen; the effect is very good. Staying with the arcade theme, the VECTREX controller (only one is included) consists of a small self-centering joystick on the left and four action buttons in a row on the right of a horizontal panel, which is connected to the unit with a coiled cord. An additional controller can be purchased separately, but it's not absolutely necessary since two players can pass the single controller back and forth in two-player games. Despite its small size, the joystick is very responsive on most games, and the four buttons allow lots of good optical effects from the unit's built-in speaker are of arcade quality and include some musical effects. You can purchase the unit without buying cartridges for it right away, because it has one resident game, MINE STORM (★★★½/★★★½). This game is similar to Asteroids in play action, offering Mine Field which must be cleared by your spaceship. The game starts with the appearance of the enemy Minelayer to the accompaniment of eerie music. In different Mine Fields, there are four types of mines: Floating Mines that follow you wherever you go, and Magnetic Fireball Mines. When the action gets a little too wild, you can thrust to a different part of the Mine Field or hit "cape" (hyperspace) to mysteriously disappear for a few seconds. This is a good version of what is now a classic space game. One feature gamers are sure to like is that the unit holds the current high score for the game in memory for as long as the unit is turned on. This feature also works with the games on cartridges. The VECTREX unit, including MINE STORM, is available for about \$200.

The software...

BERZERK (★★★/★★½) is the VECTREX version of the Stern Electronics arcade game. It is fairly good, but not as exciting fare as your Humanoid attempts to avoid being electronically fried by robot fire or contact with the maze walls or Evil Otto, the bouncing ball who will follow you anywhere. Not recommended.



SOLAR QUEST (★★★½/★★★★) features a rotating, pulsating sun in the center of the screen which must be avoided while your spaceship does battle with alien vessels. When you destroy an alien ship, its survivor remains and floats to the sun, and you earn extra points by rescuing the survivor or shooting the game features Thrust, Hyperspace, standard firing, and "Nuke" in limited quantities. The Nuke is a broad wave of destruction that keeps moving on the screen until it hits something. An enjoyable game for video space cadets. Recommended.

Vectrex
ARCADE SYSTEM



LEAN SWEEP (★ ★ ½ / ★ ★ ½) was our least favorite of the games we saw for the VECTREX. This one is a maze chase game set in a bank that has just been blown to smithereens. You are the president of bank, attempting to recover the money in a vacuum cleaner before the robbers return to destroy you. Since your vacuum cleaner bag has a limited capacity, you must periodically empty its contents in a central vault where you are temporarily safe from the robbers. If you enter one of the four special rooms in the corners of the bank, you become "supercharged" and can suck up robbers in your vacuum cleaner for a few moments. We found this to be a pretty standard maze game with not much to make it really different or exciting. This was also the one game in which we weren't thrilled with the response of the joystick because it seemed too sluggish. Not recommended.

GRAMBLE (★★★★ / ★★★★★) is a terrific translation of the Konami coin-op hit in which your spaceship flies over the surface of a planet, shooting laser missiles ahead and bombs below. You must traverse the Mountains, Caverns, amoids (an avoidance section because your lasers have no effect), the City, and the very tough Maze. This is a great home game with all the excitement of the arcade game—think of the quarters you'll save! Recommended.

HYPERCHASE (★★★★ / ★★★★★) is a superb auto racing game with far more control over the car than most home video games allow. The joystick is used for steering, while the four buttons control up-shifting, down-shifting (four gears), braking and accelerating. The course is a curving roadway with excellent perspective effects for a real feeling of depth as you travel past trees, telephone poles, street lights and through tunnels. The game may be played by one or two against the clock or for maximum point score. In the race against the clock, you are allowed an unlimited number of crashes, while in the race for points, you have five cars at your disposal (and you will dispose of a few—guaranteed!) Even Mario Andretti would be challenged by this game, because there is very little margin for error. Recommended.

ACTIVISION PITFALL (★★★ / ★★★★★) is not just a translation of the extremely popular game first made for the Atari VCS, it's EXACTLY the same game in every detail. Pitfall Harry, the jungle adventurer, sets off in search of gold, silver and precious jewels in a setting full of dangers such as scorpions, crocodiles, cobra rattlers, tar pits and water holes that occasionally appear and disappear at will. The object is to amass as much treasure as possible before time runs out or Harry loses all three of his video "lives." This incarnation of the game is every bit as much fun as the same game for the Atari system, but somehow we expected more complexity and superior graphics to be possible with the Intellivision system, and it's not there. Owners of Intellivision will definitely want this game, but not if they already have an Atari VCS and the A/C version. Recommended. (retail \$31.95)

RAMPEDE (★★★ / ★★★★★) is another direct translation of a game first made for the Atari VCS. You play the role of a cowboy on horseback who uses a lariat to rope stray cows and nudges the cows to keep them in line. This is a horizontally scrolling game with different types and speeds of cows worth different amounts of points when roped. If a cow scrolls past your cowboy without being lassoed or nudged, it becomes a stray—three strays and the game is over. Variations offer you slow or fast cows that move in predictable or random fashion. All variations include occasional black angus cows which cannot be herded by nudging, but must be quickly roped. The sound effects of your horse's up-clopping hooves are particularly good, and the game gets progressively faster the longer you can keep it going. Again, we really expected more than an exact copy of the Atari-compatible version, but this is still a desirable addition to the catalog of games available to Intellivision owners. Recommended. (retail \$31.95)

COLECO DONKEY KONG (★★ ½ / ★★★★★) is something of a disappointment because everyone was expecting the Intellivision-compatible version of this game to be significantly better than the Atari-compatible, and it's not. We hardly need to go into the details of the game itself, but suffice it to say that the I/C DONKEY KONG offers only two screens, ladders (girders) and rivets, and there is less detailed graphic rendering of some figures, such as Mario, than the A/C version. On the positive side, the ape actively rolls the barrels on the first screen of the I/C version, bonus scores are tallied, and the "prizes" (hat, purse and umbrella) are offered on the second screen. Even though we feel Coleco could have done more with the capabilities of the unit, this is still a fun game to play, and it does offer the Intellivision owner a version of the extremely popular arcade game to play at home.

Intellivision-compatible

Intellivision

TRON DEADLY DISC (★★ / ★ ½) is based on the much-ballyhooed Disney movie last summer, "Tron," and the game is a bigger disappointment than the initial critical reaction to the movie. The game scenario will be familiar to anyone who saw the film—Tron is a grid-like gray room, and Attacking Warriors converge on him. Everyone is armed with flying discs, surely the slowest and most cumbersome weapons ever used in a video game. (The instruction book is a dead giveaway—play this one at "slow, slower or slowest" speed.) Tron throws discs in six directions, controlled by six buttons on the keypad, and he can block Warrior discs or duck to avoid them. The good news is that action does heat up a little as different types of Warriors enter the fray,

and the appearance of the giant horseshoe-shaped Recognizer offers the chance for bonus points if you're quick and accurate with a single shot of the disc. This is a game that will appeal only to Tron fanatics. Not recommended.

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS (★★★★ / ★★★★★ ½) was a long time coming, but most will feel it was worth the wait for the first adventure game available to Intellivision owners. You control an expeditionary force of three adventurers in search of the two halves of the ancient Crown of Kings, hidden within the caverns of the legendary Cloudy Mountain. The game opens with a strategy map showing two types of mountains (passable and impassable), forests, a river, walls with gates, and the Cloudy Mountain. As you explore near the first mountain range, you learn where to find quivers of arrows, boats, axes and keys in the caves beneath each cluster of mountains. Unlike many adventure games in which you must discover where the helpful objects are to be found and how they are to be used, most of this information is spelled out in the instruction booklet. Once you've chosen a mountain by the color key that reveals its contents, you enter its subterranean cave system full of rooms and passageways, monsters to be fought, and necessary objects to be acquired. Portions of the cave light up as the adventurer moves into them, and they remain lit behind him. Because of the varied characteristics of the monsters, you must be constantly alert and ready to shoot one or more arrows to fell the horrible creatures such as snakes, bats, spiders, demons and dragons. Even leaving the cave is fraught with danger because there is one exit only, and it is guarded by a monster. If you can pass the tests of the quest, you'll find that each half of the Crown of Kings is guarded by one of the deadliest monsters of all, a Winged Dragon. This game is definitely up to Mattel's high graphic standards, and it is very enjoyable to play. Our only complaint is a minor one—we would have preferred that the game require more in the way of thought and deductive reasoning from the player, at least in the more advanced levels, than it does. The fan of adventure games often plays for the challenge of discovering where things are and gradually learning how to use the objects he finds. This type of player may feel that Mattel has spoiled his fun by providing that information in the instructions. Nonetheless, this is a very good game in a Medieval setting that is full of exciting moments. Recommended.

BOMB SQUAD (★★★★ / ★★★★★), designed to be used with the IntelliVoice, is a unique, well-executed game for those who especially enjoy mental challenges. The game opens with the skyline view of a city overlooking the water, while the sounds of a police siren grow nearer and then fade away. Boris, the evil terrorist, has planted a bomb that threatens to destroy your city. With the aid of Frank, the demolition expert, your job is to disarm the bomb under the pressure of a thirty minute time limit. You can disarm the bomb immediately upon deciphering the one- to three-digit code, but it's no easy task. Switch to the first circuit board of the bomb, and Boris chortles, "They'll never do it in time!" while another voice hurriedly begs, "The code, the code, figure out the code!" the colorful circuits contain components that flash as Frank tells you the order in which they must replace. Each piece, in order, must be cut out with wire cutters, removed from the board with pliers, and the correct replacement component must be soldered in place. You'll be expertly coached every step of the way, as Frank tells you which way to move your tool or when you've soldered in the wrong part. If you can successfully replace the two, three or more components per board, Frank will say, "You did it!", and a small portion of the code will be revealed. Once enough circuits are replaced, the code can be guessed with certainty, and you're a hero—fireworks will be set off over the city in your honor. But if you fail, you'll hear a dismayed "Oh no," the image on your screen will shake, and the buildings of the city will shatter as the sky turns to flaming colors. We think this is the best IntelliVoice game so far and one of the best best in the entire Mattel catalog. Recommended.

THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE is FIRST with the information YOU need!!

AVAILABILITY UPDATE

(based on projected release dates by mfrs. May change without notice)

ATARI-COMPATIBLE

NOVEMBER

- AMIDAR (PB)
- CARNIVAL (Col)
- CONDOR ATTACK (UltraV)
- COSMIC CREEP (Tel)
- DARK CAVERN (M Ntwk)
- ENHANCED VOLLEYBALL (At)
- INTL SOCCER (M Ntwk)
- KARATE (UltraV)
- MISSION OMEGA (CoVd)
- RAIDERS OF LOST ARK (At)
- SKY JINKS (ActV)
- SPIDERMAN (PB)
- TURMOIL (Fox)

DECEMBER

- ALIEN (Fox)
- CHIPS (UltraV)
- ENHANCED FOOTBALL (At)
- E.T. (At)
- FANTASTIC VOYAGE (Fox)
- GORF (CBS)
- MEGAFORCE (Fox)
- QUEST for the IDOL (UltraV)
- REACTOR (PB)
- SMURF RESCUE (Col)
- SPIDER KONG (UltraV)
- SUPER COBRA (PB)
- WIRED BIRD (USG)
- WIZARD OF WOR (CBS)
- ZAXXON (Col)

JANUARY

- CRYPTS OF CHAOS (Fox)
- ENTITY (Fox)
- GOPHER ATTACK (USG)
- GUARDIANS of TREASURE (USG)
- HIGH SEAS (M Ntwk)
- MAZE CHASE (USG)
- SAVE THE WHALES (Fox)
- SQUEEZE BOX (USG)
- SURFING (Fox)
- TRON DEADLY DISC (M Ntwk)

INTELLIVISION-COMPATIBLE

NOVEMBER

- MOUSETRAP (Col)
- PITFALL (ActV)
- STAMPEDE (ActV)
- SWORDS & SERPENTS (Imgc)
- TRON MAZE-A-TRON (Mat)
- VENTURE (Col)

DECEMBER

- ROYAL DEALER (Mat)
- U.S.C.F. CHESS (Mat)

JANUARY

- TRON SOLAR SAILER (Mat)

ODYSSEY

NOVEMBER

- S.I.D. THE SPELLBINDER
- SMITHEREENS

COLECO

NOVEMBER

- CONVERSION MODULE/ATARI TURBO

DECEMBER

- BLACKJACK (HORSE RACING & SKIING HAVE BEEN BUMPED TO '83)

Company Name Codes:

- ActV - Activision
- Ap - Apollo
- At - Atari
- CBS - CBS Games
- Col - Coleco
- CoVd - CommaVid
- DA - Data Age
- Imgc - Imagic
- Mat - Mattel
- MNtwk - M Network
- PB - Parker Bros
- SpecV - Spectravision
- Tel - Telesys
- TigV - Tigervision
- UltraV - Ultravision
- USG - U.S. Games
- Vec - Vectrex

IN THIS ISSUE...

- Activision for Intellivision
- Zaxxon (Col)
- Spider-Man (P.B.)
- The new FOX Games
- Advanced Dungeons & Dragons (Mat)
- Bomb Squad (Mat)
- New Apollo Games
- Odyssey Voice Games
- Atari 5200 & Games
- GCE Vectrex & Games
- Wico Trackball and...
 - The First Information on
 - CBS Games
 - Ultravision

...and much more!!

VIDEO TAKE-OUT'S TOP 10 SELLERS

This month	Last month	AC/=Atari-comp. I/C=Intellivision-comp.
1	1	Pitfall (Activision A/C)
2	—	Donkey Kong (Coleco I/C)
3	—	B-17 Bomber (Intellivision)
4	—	Megamania (Activision A/C)
5	—	Space Spartans (Intellivision)
6	7	Star Raiders (Atari)
7	—	Frogger (Parker Bros. A/C)
8	—	Empire Strikes Back (PB A/C)
9	8	Frog Bog (Intellivision)
10	—	Cosmic Avenger (ColecoVision)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING... ColecoVision



ZAXXON (★★★★★★★★) is unquestionably the best game yet for the ColecoVision system, and probably THE space game of 1982 for any home video game system—it's that good. Coleco's design team has captured all the intriguing three-dimensional feel of the Sega arcade game that blew more than a few minds when it was introduced. You control your space fighter, climbing over fortress walls on the surface of an enemy asteroid and blasting away at gun emplacements and fuel tanks. Climb and bank to avoid the turret fire and missile base explosions. Watch your fuel supply! You can't avoid trouble by simply flying high to avoid the obstructions—stay at a high altitude too long and a missile homes in on your fighter and tracks it relentlessly. If you can survive the first asteroid, you'll meet the squadrons of ZAXXON's fighter planes. Shoot them down if you can, avoid their fire and forge on to the next asteroid fortress. The Mobots will track you, shooting to keep you from reaching ZAXXON, the mighty robot warrior who guards the edge of the asteroid. Once you get the feeling of flying through the diagonal, three-dimensional playing field, try a more difficult game option—each moves faster than the last. Our only complaint is that the Coleco controller knob doesn't offer quite the feel of piloting a plane that a true joystick does. We tried the game with one of the Atari-compatible joysticks with a firing button on top of the stick, and we liked it a lot better. If you have ColecoVision, you will want this game. In fact, this game may just sell a few game units for Coleco. Recommended. (Retail \$59.95)



ACCESSORY UPDATE



The POINTMASTER COMPETITION JOYSTICK from Discwasher, a company best known for audio care products, is one more in the recent deluge of alternatives to the basic joystick available for Atari and Commodore game and computer systems. PointMaster is an attractively designed unit of shiny black plastic with a comfortable, contoured hand grip topped with a soft-touch firing button. The cord is just over 5 feet long, making it more than a foot

longer than the cord on the standard Atari joystick. In actual game play, we gave the PointMaster a real workout on several of our favorite Atari-compatible games. We found this joystick quite light and easy to hold, and we found the contoured hand grip a good one. For those accustomed to the standard Atari model, this joystick will feel different because there is no firing button on the base, but we really like the one-handed type of control. (Lefties will really appreciate this design) The handle itself is extra long, which might make it subject to breakage if treated roughly. The internal spring construction is similar to that of the Atari joystick, so it should be just about as durable. In game play, the PointMaster was neither more nor less responsive than the Atari model, so a decision to purchase this model at \$16.95 retail over the Atari at \$10.95 retail should be based on the appeal to you of the hand grip and firing button position.

COMING NEXT MONTH...

Year-end Index & Top 10

Reviews of...

- Turbo (Col)
- Alien (Fox A/C)
- Megaforce (Fox A/C)
- Fantastic Voyage (Fox A/C)
- GORF (CBS A/C)
- Karate (UltraV A/C)
- Details of the First Annual

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.....and Much, Much More!!

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