

Computer Entertainer

the newsletter

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SPECIAL FIFTH BIRTHDAY EDITION - Spring, 1987

Entertainment Software: An Eclectic Look at Where We've Been and Where We're Going

This Special Edition of *Computer Entertainer* celebrates the fifth birthday of a newsletter. The fact that everyone (including us) seems to think that five years of continuous publication is something quite special is indicative of just how young the whole home computer/videogame/entertainment software industry really is. When this newsletter began publication early in 1982, the earliest, pioneering games for the Apple II were barely three years old, and most of them were sold in plastic baggies with the simplest of instructions (or even none at all). The Commodore VIC-20 had yet to yield center-stage to its successor, the Commodore 64. Other home computers available were the TI-99/4A and the Atari 400 and 800.

Video Games in 1982

On the videogame side of the aisle in early 1982, it was the time of Pac-Man fever in the arcades, and a home version of the dot-eating game was about to infect millions of Atari 2600 owners. The Atari VCS, as it was known then, was close to five years old, having grown out of Nolan Bushnell's earlier venture with PONG. However, its real success dated back only to 1979. Mattel was challenging Atari with its more advanced Intellivision unit, and the small remainder of the videogame market was shared by Bally's Astrocade and the Magnavox Odyssey. ColecoVision and the Atari 5200 didn't exist yet. Activision, founded late in 1979, was the sole independent producer of games for the Atari VCS, and the company was already doing well with several of its games by early '82. Atari had sued Activision in an attempt to prevent the company from producing games for the VCS. Atari's attempt failed, and the floodgates opened, admitting first a trickle and finally a torrent of new companies marketing games for the VCS.

A Newsletter Is Born

The idea that became the newsletter known today as *Computer Entertainer* occurred in January, 1982. Four people were driving from Las Vegas, Nevada to Los Angeles, California, on their way home after attending the Winter Consumer Electronics Show (CES). Three of the four happened to play video games themselves, and they were principals of a mail-order company called Video Take-Out, which was established in 1979 and sold video games among many other video-related products. The four were excited about what they had just seen: a seemingly vast array of new games in the large Atari and Mattel booths at CES, three brand-new VCS titles shown in Activision's modest display area away from the main show floor (BARNSTORMING, CHOPPER COMMAND, and STARMASTER), plus the first appearance of a start-up company called Imagic in a very small display area with DEMON ATTACK, TRICK SHOT, and STAR VOYAGER for the VCS. Video Take-Out had a mailing list of their videogame customers, so one of the four suggested an informational mailing to these customers to let them know about the wonderful new games that would soon be available. Everyone agreed that it was a good idea, not realizing that those innocent mailings full of lists and informal opinions would soon become a full-fledged newsletter.

The Word Spreads

The first three issues, of which we have but one copy each in our files, were simple, two-sided sheets. They were mailed to everyone on Video Take-Out's videogame mailing list. Then a strange thing happened. The people who received the newsletter without a name told their friends about it, and they told their friends. The mailing list was growing by leaps and bounds, and we began to take ourselves seriously. By the fourth issue, it was a four-page newsletter with a name, *The Video Game Update*. The "star" rating system, still used today, was introduced, and we began writing critical reviews of the games we had seen and played. In order to defray the escalating cost of producing and mailing the newsletter, a subscription charge was instituted. (Many of our earliest subscribers are still with us today.) The fourth issue also carried a statement of policy which remains in effect to this day: we accept no advertising and endeavor to provide our readers with honest evaluations of game products. The fact that the newsletter was (and is) a division of a retail company that sells many of the products reviewed in the newsletter has caused some to question our ability to be fair and impartial. Then and now, our answer is the same: Video Take-Out would prefer to sell a good product over a bad one any day.

Videogame Excitement

As 1982 progressed, and on into 1983, most of the software excitement centered on video games and not computer software. Not very many people owned computers yet, and video game systems were much easier for people to understand than computers were. On the videogame side, the mania of Pac-Man was followed by the introduction of ColecoVision, a new system touted for its graphics and the wide variety of games Coleco promised for the unit. Characteristically cautious, we concluded our review of the new system (September, 1982) with this statement: "The long-term worth of the unit will be measured by the software and add-ons made available." In the meantime, the Atari VCS seemed to gain at least one new game producer a week. The VCS seemed to be the hottest thing around, and everyone wanted a share of all the money that was being made. Activision and Imagic were soon joined by Spectravision, Tigervision, U.S. Games (later Vidtec), Telesys, Fox, Data Age, CBS, CommaVid, Parker Bros., Apollo, and far too many more to mention them all. Total sales of videogame hardware, software, and accessories escalated from \$330 million in 1979 to \$1 billion in 1981 and then \$3 billion in 1982-83. Jim Levy, who was president and CEO of Activision from its inception in 1979 until early 1987, describes the peak period as "incredible--like being tied to the back end of a rocket ship."

Unrealistic Expectations

What was truly incredible was the belief held by many that the videogame business would continue to double or triple in growth each year. Clearly, that was not a realistic expectation. The consumer was faced with more VCS game titles than he or she could hope to play in a lifetime, many of them of very poor quality. Consumers were also faced with too many system choices. Along with Atari VCS, Intellivision, Astrocade, and

APPLE II GAMES 1979-1981

by Jeff Stanton

The Apple II computer was the first personal computer suitable for designing interactive graphic games. It had a distinct advantage over its only competitor, the Radio Shack TRS-80 computer, because it offered high resolution color graphics, paddle control, and sound. Granted that most of the earliest action games were written with low resolution blocky character-size graphics, but some of them were innovative, and all of them were free. One of my favorites was *Chaser*, a game in which a large colored hollow rectangle randomly wandered the screen. You guided the crosshair with two paddles (or a joystick if you had one). If you pressed the button when the crosshair intersected the moving rectangle, the rectangle grew smaller, but if you missed it grew larger. The object was to shrink the rectangle down until it was a single dot, then if you hit the last dot, you won. It sounds easy but it was a diabolical game.

Space Invaders machines took the country by storm in the second half of 1979. It was the first shoot-em-up game to capture the imagination of both adults and children alike, probably because the concept and gameplay was much simpler than that of Atari's earlier *Space War* arcade game. The Apple version appeared on the underground market around Thanksgiving of that year in two versions, regular and one that you had to turn your monitor on end. (Arcade game screens are vertical, unlike the horizontal screen of a monitor or TV.) Apparently, the arcade machine also used a 6502 microprocessor so the conversion was rapid. Creative Software and others eventually obtained the license, but Apple hackers couldn't wait. *Space Invaders* was the first Apple high-resolution arcade game, even if it was only in black and white.

Bill Budge's *Trilogy of Games* appeared Christmas of 1979. Bill would become the first superstar programmer thanks to a marketing ploy used by California Pacific that included his name in the title. The package included *Space War*, a simplistic pinball game, and a crude racing game in which the weaving road markers that defined the course scrolled forward. None of the programs were great, but Bill was one of maybe a half dozen programmers who had figured out how to program the Apple's high resolution screen.

Sargon II, a tough chess program featuring a nice graphic display, was also available that winter. *Dungeons and Dragons* fans could buy a game called *Wilderness Campaign* in which they explored a large island for treasure and encountered dangerous monsters. The classic mainframe text game called simply *Adventure*, which wasted thousands of hours of expensive computer time and at least two weeks out of one's life, was remarkably squeezed onto an Apple disk. Sports fans could bowl in a 3-D bowling alley with a program that won the prize for the best graphics game in 1979. Remarkably, *Apple Bowl* was written in Integer BASIC. And finally Apple owners could operate a nuclear reactor in an excellent simulation called *Three Mile Island*.

The spring, summer, and fall of 1980 were exciting times. A new game debuted every week or so. While many games were simply computer versions of board, card, and war games, new ground was broken on several fronts. Automated Simulations (known today as Epyx) developed a series of fantasy role-playing games (e.g. *Temple of Apshai*) that would endure to the present. Ken and Roberta Williams (Sierra On-Line) improved on Scott Adams' series of short but challenging text adventure games with a graphics adventure called *Mystery House*. It was a classic mystery where people were being killed throughout the house. You had to find the treasure and the killer before he or she murdered you. The software team followed it up several months later with a much more complex and full color adventure called the *Wizard and the Princess*.

Apple action games reflected popular coin-op games in the arcade since they were a direct ripoff by unlicensed programmers. Perhaps the most prolific was Nasir Gebelli, who produced a game a month, on the average, for a company called Sirius Software. His first hit, *Space Eggs*, was based on the coin-op *Moon Cresta*. He followed it with *Cyber Strike*, a slow, unimpressive attempt to imitate Atari's *Star Raiders* computer game, and then *Star Cruiser* based on the coin-op *Galaxian*. At first the latter game was impressive, especially to budding assembly language programmers, but by Christmas the Japanese invaded with Apple *Galaxian*, a faster and more faithful color translation of the arcade classic. Coin-op games like *Asteroids* and an eat-the-dots driving game called *Head-On* were popular in the arcades that summer. Clones of both games soon followed, and I became addicted to the game *Smash Up*, which was a paddle-controlled copy of the latter. The challenge was to collect the lane dots while you attempted to outwit the opposing computer-controlled cars that tried to enter your lane from the opposite direction. You could only switch lanes at one of the four gaps.

Bill Budge's *Tranquility Base* copied the coin-op *Lunar Lander* game, but I thought *Voyager Excursion* was a better version of the simulation. Other arcade translations included *Clowns and Balloons*, *Stunt Cycle*, and of course the ever popular *Breakout* clone called *Breakthru*, all by Programma. Dave Gordon started Programma in 1979 by offering many of the public domain programmers a chance to receive money for their efforts. He packaged his disks and tapes (only a few people had disk drives then) in plastic baggies and made his

rounds to the Apple dealers. The company had one very amusing and addictive sports simulation called *Dart Room*. The player controlled a stick figure's arm with a paddle. If you turned the paddle at the proper speed and released the dart at the right time, you could score a bullsseye. Often the result was a dart thrown at the ceiling or even the ground.

Three-dimensional games got a boost when Bruce Artwick brought out his *Flight Simulator*. That early version, featuring a grid of vector lines defining the ground, two airports, and a mountain on one side for reference, was impressive. Coupled with a full bank of cockpit flight instruments, it was the first realistic simulation in which players felt like they were flying a real airplane. Bill Budge wasn't far behind in the field for he released *Space Album*, a trilogy of 3-D vector graphic packages that summer and fall. Several of us in a local Apple club became very involved with Artwick's package. I reworked his flight simulator database and turned it into *L.A. Flight Simulator*, complete with the Marine del Rey harbor and the Palos Verdes hills. Other attempts at a 3-D commercial game eluded me because I could never figure out if a laser beam hit another object in real 3-D. However, the Budge 3-D package allowed me to fake things, and that winter I designed a ski slalom game with the viewpoint 25 feet behind the maneuvering skier. The slalom gates constantly moved forward as you skied the course.

Dozens of new arcade games, including my 3-D *Skiing*, debuted at the exciting March 1981 West Coast Computer Faire. Perhaps the most addicting was a game called *Sabotage*. The player had to defend a paddle-controlled, stationary gunbase against planeloads of paratroopers attempting to descend safely to the ground and capture the base. Sierra On-Line also had a football game that used X's and O's to represent the players. There were several *Missile Command* clones also at the show. Sirius Software released *Gorgon*, Nasir's version of *Defender*; Bill Budge showed *Raster Blaster*, an astonishing recreation of the *Firepower* pinball machine; and Jim Nichtals marketed perhaps the definitive *Asteroids* game called *Asteroid Field*. Jim was just finishing *Bug Attack*, a *Centipede* clone, and at my urging began work on *Star Thief*, a *Ripoff* coin-op clone. Many of the programmers spent their evenings scouting the local waterfront arcades for new ideas. *Phoenix* was the local hit, and it took only three months for a virtual clone to appear under the name *Falcons*.

Fantasy role-playing games were the rage too. Sir-Tech introduced a sophisticated and addictive multi-character game called *Wizardry*. Synergistic Software introduced *Odyssey*, an epic expansion of *Wilderness Campaign*, and Lord British (Richard Garriott) produced *Ultima*, a huge game for the time that began the popular series.

Pac-Man fever spread that summer with Apple product appearing immediately afterward. There were no fewer than four versions of the game in the stores that fall. The best was *Hungry Boy* from Japan with *Snoggle* a close second.

The company that I programmed for was very impressed with a new scrolling coin-op shoot-em-up game called *Scramble*. Since none of use had even mastered programming a non-scrolling shoot-em-up game in machine language (Apple computers are notoriously difficult to scroll), Sierra On-Line naturally beat us with their version called *Pegasus II*. The first release, even in the joystick mode, used the A and Z keys to control firing and dropping bombs. I was so addicted to the game that I rewrote the code so that the two joystick buttons were used instead.

By fall, Atari Corp. began applying legal pressure to many of the software houses to obtain licenses for their coin-op clones, particularly those of *Pac-Man*, *Asteroids*, and *Missile Command* that Atari owned the rights to. Most buckled in to the royalty payment, but Sierra On-Line decided to defy them and go to court. While Jim Nichtals decided to release his *Star Castle* clone in the public domain rather than pay a stiff royalty (they spent most of December making copies for the over 4000 people who sent them blank disks and return postage), other small companies couldn't afford to bid on the rights to market any of the new coin-op games.

This new development caused a profound change in the game business. Small companies now had to rely on the ingenuity of their programmers for new game ideas, while big companies like Parker Brothers, Atari, Coleco, and later Sega and Fox could bid for the newest coin-op titles at prices in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Sierra On-Line obtained the first and last reasonably priced game rights. They paid only \$40,000 to Sega for the home computer rights to *Frogger*.

The years 1979 to 1981 were maturing years in the computer game business. The Apple home computer software market was the test market for new ideas and product. Most of the programmers were young, quick learners, and full of innovative ideas. Companies could afford to take chances, for marketing expenses were in the thousands of dollars rather than the tens of thousands that they would be only a year or two later. Programmers were paid well in royalties, and at least several dozen were making in excess of \$50,000 a year. The period was marked by steady growth in contrast to dizzying times of boom and bust that would occur from 1982-1985.

COMPUTER ENTERTAINER & VIDEO GAME UPDATE

AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE 1982 - 1986

1982 Awards

#1 Selling Videogame: Pitfall (Activision for Atari 2600)
Most Consistently Innovative Company: Imagic
Best Overall Graphics
Single Game: Zaxxon (Coleco for ColecoVision)
Game Mfr: Imagic (for Cosmic Ark, Atlantis, Demon Attack for 2600)
Designer of the Year: David Crane of Activision for Pitfall (2600)
Most Faithful Adaptation of an Arcade Game for the Home:
 Missile Command (Atari for Atari 5200)
Best Adaptation for a Home Game (Other than from Arcade):
 The Empire Strikes Back (Parker Bros. for Atari 2600)
Best New Concept: Swordquest Series (Atari for Atari 2600)
Most Innovative Home Game: Turbo (Coleco for ColecoVision)
Best New Accessory: Wico Joystick ("Bat Handle")
Comeback of the Year: Mattel for IntelliVoice & games
Best New Adventure Game: Escape from the MindMaster (Starpac for Atari 2600)
Best New Space Game: Encounter at L-5 (Data Age for Atari 2600)
Best New Maze Game: Jawbreaker (TigerVision for Atari 2600)
Best New Educational Game: Word Zapper (U.S. Games for Atari 2600)
Best New Sports Game: RealSports Volleyball (Atari for Atari 2600)
Most Promising Arcade Game Targeted for Home Adaptation:
 tie between Dig Dug and Phoenix (Both by Atari)
Special Award to Telesys for their "Fun in Games" theme, showing videogames can be fun without destruction and shoot-'em-ups.

1983 Awards

#1 Selling Videogame of 1983: Miner 2049er (Microfun for ColecoVision)
Designer of the Year: Bill Hogue of Big 5 Software for Miner 2049er (Atari computers & 5200)
Most Innovative Game: Space Shuttle for Atari 2600 (Steve Kitchen for Activision)
Game of the Year
Atari 2600: River Raid (Carol Shaw for Activision)
Atari 5200: Space Dungeon (Atari)
Intellivision: Swords & Serpents (Imagic)
ColecoVision: Quest for Tires (Sierra On-Line)
Atari Computer: Zeppelin (Synapse)
Apple: LodeRunner (Broderbund)
TI 99/4A: Burgertime (Texas Instruments)
Best Educational Program
Game Systems: Kid Vid for 2600 (Coleco)
Computers: Koala Pad w/Microworld (Koala Industries)
Best Sports Game
Game Systems: RealSports Baseball for Atari 5200 (Atari)
Computers: Star League Baseball for Atari computers (Gamestar)
Best Adventure/Strategy Game
Game Systems: London Blitz for Atari 2600 (Avalon Hill)
Computers: Infidel for multiple systems (Infocom)
Best Arcade Adaptation
Game Systems: Q*Bert for Atari 2600 & 5200, Intellivision, ColecoVision (Parker Bros.)
Computers: Donkey Kong for Atari computers (Atari)
Best New Accessory: Wico Analog Joystick w/ Keypad for Atari 5200

1984 Awards

#1 Selling Program (All Systems): Flight Simulator II (SubLogic)
Designer of the Year (All Systems)
 David Crane for Ghostbusters (Activision)
Most Innovative Program
 Relax Stress Reduction (Synapse)
Program of the Year
Atari Computers: Boulder Dash (First Star)
Commodore 64: Raid Over Moscow (Access)
Apple: The Print Shop (Broderbund)
Coleco Adam: SmartLogo (Coleco)
ColecoVision: Fortune Builder (Coleco)
Atari 5200: Montezuma's Revenge (Parker Bros.)
Atari 2600: Pitfall II (Activision)
Best Sports Program (All Systems)
 TIE
 Julius Erving & Larry Bird Go One-on-One (Electronic Arts for multiple systems)
 Summer Games (Epyx for multiple systems)
Best Educational Program (All Systems)
 Charles Goren: Learning Bridge Made Easy (CBS/multiple systems)
Best Action/Arcade Program (All Systems) - TIE
 Skyfox (Electronic Arts for Apple)
 Impossible Mission (Epyx for C64)
Best Adventure/Strategy Program (All Systems)
 Dragonworld (Trillium/Spinnaker for C64 & Apple)
Best Arcade Adaptation (All Systems)
 Pengo (Atari for Atari computers & 5200)

Special Award of Merit:

Ballblazer and Rescue on Fractalus (Lucasfilm)
 (Although unreleased, these titles were recognized for their state-of-the-art graphics, sound, and gameplay.)

1985 Awards

Program of the Year--Entertainment
Atari XL/XE: Koronis Rift (Epyx/Lucasfilm)
Apple II: Fantavision (Broderbund)
Macintosh: VideoWorks (Ilayden)
Commodore 64: Beach-Head II (Access)
IBM: The Ancient Art of War (Broderbund)
Program of the Year--Productivity
Atari XL/XE: HomePak (Batteries Included)
Apple II: The Works! (First Star Software)
Macintosh: ClickArt Effects (T/Maker Software)
Commodore 64: Cal-Kit (Batteries Included)
Designer of the Year (All Systems) - TIE
 Garry Kitchen for GameMaker (Activision)
 Stuart Smith for Adventure Construction Set (Electronic Arts)
Most Innovative Program (All Systems)
 Little Computer People (David Crane for Activision)
Best Adventure/Fantasy (All Text)
 Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (Steve Meretzky for Infocom)
Best Adventure/Fantasy (W/Graphics)
 King's Quest II: Romancing the Throne (Roberta Williams for Sierra)
Best Action/Arcade-Style Game (All systems)
 Kung Fu: Way of the Exploding Fist (UXB Software)
Best Strategy/Wargame (All Systems)
 Kampfgruppe (SSI)
Best Educational Program (All Systems)
 Bank Street Storybook (Mindscape)
Best Sports Program
Apple II: Competition Karate (Motivated Software)
Macintosh: Sierra Championship Boxing (Sierra)
Commodore 64: Super Bowl Sunday (Avalon Hill)

1986 Computer Awards

Program of the Year--Entertainment
Amiga: ArcticFox (Dynamix for Electronic Arts)
Apple II: Airheart (Broderbund)
Atari ST: The Pawn (Firebird)
Atari XE/XL: Alternate Reality: The City (Datasoft)
Commodore 64: TIE - Ace of Aces (Accolade) & Aliens: The Computer Game (Activision)
IBM: Balance of Power (Chris Crawford for Mindscape)
Macintosh: Ferrari Grand Prix (Bullseye)
Program of the Year--Productivity
Amiga: Deluxe Paint (Electronic Arts)
Apple II: Animate (Broderbund)
Atari ST: Paintworks (Audio Light for Activision)
Atari XE/XL: Blazing Paddles (Baudville)
Commodore 64: GEOS (Berkeley Software)
IBM: Term Paper Writer (Personal Choice Software)
Macintosh: ComicWorks (Mindscape)
Designer of the Year (All Systems)
 Silicon Beach Software: W.C. Appleton & Charlie Jackson (World Builder for Macintosh)
Most Innovative Program (All Systems)
 Alter Ego (Peter Favaro for Activision)
Exceptional Achievement in Graphics & Sound
 Master Designer Software for Defender of the Crown
Best Adventure/Fantasy (Text only, all systems)
 Trinity (Brian Moriarty for Infocom)
Best Adventure/Fantasy (With Graphics, all systems)
 Moebius (Greg Malone for Origin Systems)
Best Action/Arcade-Style Game (All systems)
 Marble Madness (Elec Arts)
Best Strategy/Wargame (All Systems)
 Roadwar 2000 (SSI)
Best Educational Program (All Systems)
 Donald Duck's Playground (Sierra)
Best Sports Program
Apple II: Sierra Championship Boxing (Sierra)
Commodore 64: TIE - GFL Championship Football (Gamestar)
 GBA Championship Basketball Two-on-Two (Gamestar)
IBM: Mean 18 (Accolade)
1986 Video Game Awards
Game of the Year
Atari 7800: Food Fight (Atari)
Intellivision: Super Pro Football (INTV Corp.)
Nintendo: Super Mario Bros. (Nintendo)
Sega: World Grand Prix (Sega)

The Systems You Own...

One of the benefits of our Fifth Birthday Software Sweepstakes and Reader's Hall of Fame voting was that we got an updated survey of the computer and game systems that you own. The results confirmed one thing that we already knew: you are an interesting group of extremely avid gamers, most of whom own more than one system. While we did not ask you to specify whether you are actually using all the machines you listed (as opposed to letting them languish in a closet), we know from past questionnaires that you tend to use most, if not all, of the systems you currently own since you have one or more favorite games on each. Approximately 40% of our readers entered the contest at least once. (Each entrant's system ownership data was counted only once, however.) The level of participation from readers in the U.S., Canada, and several other countries (including France, England, Germany, Mexico, and Australia) was high enough that we think we have a representative cross-section of our readership for this survey.

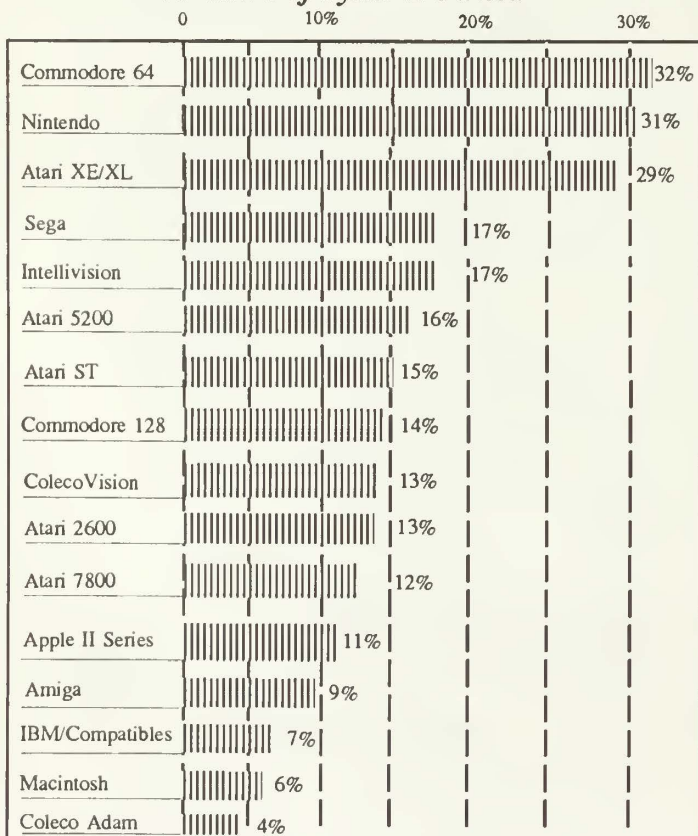
You've Made the Switch

A few years ago, more of our readers owned game systems than computers. There are now 87.5% of you who own at least one computer, with the average number of computers per household running at just under two. But you certainly haven't abandoned game systems, because 50% of you own at least one game system, with the average number of game systems per owner at barely under three. There are 50% of you who own only computer(s) (one or more), while 37.5% own both computer(s) and game system(s) (sometimes several of each). The remaining 12.5% own only one or more game systems, apparently believing that the best gaming value and graphics are still to be found with a dedicated game system.

The Chart Tells It All

The chart below gives you a detailed look at what our readers own. (Total percentages add up to more than 100% because of multiple system ownership.) Systems owned by fewer than 1% of our readers are not represented. For the most part, these are long-discontinued systems, such as Odyssey, Vectrex, TI-99/4A, VIC-20, Halcyon, and Bally Astrocade. Ownership of the brand-new Apple IIGS is also in the 1% range at this time, so it was included in the Apple II family. Some of our readers have such an incredible collection of machines that they must devote a whole room to their storage! A few of you must be classified as true gaming fanatics, with a representative list of your machines looking something like this: Commodore 64 or 128, Atari XL or XE, Atari 2600, 5200, and 7800, Vectrex, TI-99/4A, Intellivision, and a recently acquired Nintendo or Sega--and you're thinking of buying an Amiga or Atari ST!

Breakdown of Systems Owned



The COMPUTER ENTERTAINER READERS' HALL OF FAME Awards

While *Computer Entertainer* reviewers have chosen their favorites among new software programs introduced each year for the year-end Awards of Excellence, we thought it was time to have our readers vote on special awards of their own. After all, our readers are devoted and serious game players! We settled on the idea of a permanent COMPUTER ENTERTAINER READERS' HALL OF FAME, with five programs to be inducted this year in honor of *Computer Entertainer's* five years of continuous publication. (We plan to make the induction of additional programs a yearly event.) Our readers were asked to vote for their three all-time favorite entertainment programs, regardless of system, on their entry postcards for our Fifth Birthday Software Sweepstakes. (While multiple entries were allowed for the purposes of the contest, each entrant's vote for a particular program was counted just once.) Each first-place vote was given three points, each second-place vote two points, and each third-place vote one point. Votes were tabulated by adding the points earned by each of the 300+ programs cited by our readers as all-time favorites. In order of points earned, these are our readers' choices for the "Best of the Best."

HALL OF FAME

1. SUPER MARIO BROS. (Nintendo for NES)
2. GUNSHIP (Microprose for Commodore 64/128)
3. FLIGHT SIMULATOR II (SubLogic for all systems)
4. ALTERNATE REALITY - THE CITY (Datasoft for Apple II, Atari ST, Atari XE/XL, Commodore 64/128)
5. ZORK TRILOGY (Infocom for all systems)

HONORABLE MENTION

6. M.U.L.E. (Electronic Arts for Apple, Atari, Commodore)
7. GRADIUS (Konami for NES)
8. ULTIMA IV (Origin Systems for Apple, Atari, Commodore)
9. HARDBALL (Accolade for Atari and Commodore)
10. ULTIMA III (Origin Systems for Apple, Atari, Commodore)
11. LODERUNNER (Broderbund for Apple, Atari, Commodore, IBM, Macintosh)
12. Dr. J & LARRY BIRD GO ONE ON ONE (Electronic Arts for Amiga, Apple, Atari, Commodore, Macintosh)
13. WIZARDRY (Sir-Tech for Apple, IBM, Macintosh)
14. STAR RAIDERS (Atari for Atari XE/XL and Atari ST)
15. ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: TREASURE OF TARMIN (Mattel for Intellivision)

About the Hall of Fame Award Winners

SUPER MARIO BROS.

More Hall-of-Fame votes were cast by our readers for SUPER MARIO BROS. by Nintendo for the Nintendo Entertainment System than for any other program. Starring the familiar Mario character in a whole new adventure so loaded with surprises and discoveries that it could take months to experience them all, this action-adventure game has proven to be universally popular with owners of the NES. SUPER MARIO BROS., the only video game to be elected to the Computer Entertainer Readers' Hall of Fame, has all the marks of a classic game: charming graphics, gradually increasing difficulty levels, new features to discover after many repeated experiences with the game, and great depth of play.

GUNSHIP

GUNSHIP by Microprose for Commodore 64/128 is the newest of the five programs elected by our readers to the Hall of Fame, which is a great credit to the excitement it has generated among its many fans. This totally accurate simulation of flying an AH-64 Apache Helicopter has let many a Commodore owner experience something he or she would not likely be able to do in real life: fly combat missions without a helicopter pilot's license! Fortunately for owners of other systems, additional versions of GUNSHIP are planned for Amiga, Apple II, Atari ST, Atari XE/XL, and IBM.

FLIGHT SIMULATOR II

There are no surprises in FLIGHT SIMULATOR II's election to the Hall of Fame, because this SubLogic title has long been a best-seller for every system. (This includes the Microsoft FLIGHT SIMULATOR for IBM, which was created by the same author.) Many an armchair pilot has learned enough about flying from this program that Ground School for a private pilot's license has been a snap. Often imitated but never equalled in realism or popularity, FLIGHT SIMULATOR II remains the Rolls Royce of airplane flight simulators.

ALTERNATE REALITY - THE CITY

Datasoft's three-dimensional graphic role-playing adventure, ALTERNATE REALITY - THE CITY, has captured the imagination of many Atari ST and XL/XE, Apple II, and Commodore 64/128 owners.

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And it will soon have a chance to gain new fans among owners of Amiga, IBM, and Macintosh computers. The program is a classic role-playing game in which your character is kidnapped by an alien spaceship and dropped into a mysterious city where his ultimate goal is to escape to his home planet. **THE CITY** is planned as the first of an ambitious seven-game series, so there is a lot more of **ALTERNATE REALITY** to look forward to.

ZORK TRILOGY

Three perennially best-selling text adventures (**ZORK I: The Great Underground Empire**, **ZORK II: The Wizard of Frobozz**, and **ZORK III: The Dungeon Master**) are included in the **ZORK TRILOGY**, which helped to establish Infocom's reputation as **THE** purveyor of fine interactive fiction. Originally created as a mainframe computer adventure in the late 1970s by Marc Blank and Dave Lebling, this sprawling tale of the Great Underground Empire has enthralled many a computer owner to the point where meals and sleep were ignored. Proceed at your own risk!

FAVORITE GAMES OF INDUSTRY INSIDERS

Everyone has their favorites. We know what our staff members like, and we've heard from a large number of our readers as they voted their favorites for the *Computer Entertainer* Readers' Hall of Fame. We thought it would be fun to ask a few "industry insiders" about their personal favorites. After all, these are the people who have a lot of influence over what kind of programs are developed and marketed. And so we give you our completely random sampling of favorites among people in the software industry:

Terry Valeski, President and founder of INTV Corporation, loves Mattel's **BURGERTIME** for Intellivision, "even though I still can't play it as well as my kids do."

Mike Dornbrook, Director of Marketing for Infocom, admits being addicted to Activision's **SHANGHAI** for the Macintosh. And the addiction is shared by much of the Infocom staff, often keeping the company's four Macintoshes so occupied that "you can't get to the machines to do anything else."

Alan Miller, veteran game designer (formerly with Atari and then Activision) and founder of Accolade, lists two venerable coin-op games as favorites: **BREAKOUT** and **DEFENDER**. When it comes to home games, Miller says he currently spends "entirely too much time playing **HARDBALL**" by fellow Accolade designer, Bob Whitehead.

Marty Herzog, Director of Creative Services at Batteries Included like to replace his 8-bit computers with a newer 16-bit design, but he thinks "the Atari and Commodore 64 still have the best games," including his all-time favorites: **STAR LEAGUE BASEBALL** by Gamestar, **LODERUNNER** by Broderbund, **FORTRESS** by Strategic Simulations, and **BOULDER DASH** by First Star.

Bing Gordon, Vice President of Marketing at Electronic Arts, was a fanatic game player even before he got a job in the software business. He lists three Electronic Arts titles as his all-time favorites: **THE BARD'S TALE**, **STARFLIGHT**, and **SEVEN CITIES OF GOLD** (on which he claims "a record score--Viceroy by the year 1504").

John Williams, Director of Promotions and Public Relations at Sierra, has been involved in entertainment software since the very earliest Apple games. He votes for SirTech's original **WIZARDRY** as "the best designed game" he has ever played. But his "all-time favorite game ever, even though it's graphically horrible" is the 1980 Eduware game for Apple, **THE PRISONER**, which kept him "frustrated but trying" for more hours than he cares to remember.

Anita Sinclair, who created "The Pawn" for Magnetic Scrolls in England (released through Firebird Licensees in the U.S.) says, "My favorite game of all time is **SPELLBREAKER** by Infocom. And my favorite arcade game--and it's embarrassing because it dates me--is a game that came out on the Apple II called **CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN** by Muse. I couldn't stop playing it. It gave me nightmares. I used to wake up in the middle of the night going 'Achtung!' That used to be my favorite, but over the past couple of years I've played **SPELLBREAKER**, and that just did me in."

When asked for his all-time favorite games, **Jim Levy** (former president and CEO of Activision) said that he had successfully avoided answering this question many times during his tenure at Activision from 1979 to early 1987, but he agreed to "go on the record" for this *Computer Entertainer* Special Edition. "I love some of the sports games because I'm a sports fan," he said, citing Gamestar's **CHAMPIONSHIP BASEBALL** as a current favorite. Like many others we asked, Levy has also been bitten by the **SHANGHAI** bug. And he said, "Going back in time, some of the video games are just a kick to play, like **KABOOM!** and **PITFALL.**" Levy describes his taste in entertainment software as "eclectic and broad-based." Not surprisingly, he says that he "liked most of what we [Activision] put out, or we wouldn't have put it out."

Russell Sipe, editor of *Computer Gaming World* had no trouble naming a group of favorites. He said, "On the arcade side, I would have to say **LODERUNNER**. I still go back to that from time to time. On the simulation side, probably **COMPUTER BASEBALL** from Strategic Simulations because we've had a league with that for three years. I would also add **ROBOT WAR** by Muse Software, which unfortunately is no longer available. For a programmer, it's the ultimate game because you program your robot and then send him off to do battle. It's just new, but I would have to put the Amiga version of SubLogic's **FLIGHT SIMULATOR II** on my top-five list. You know, what's so great about **FLIGHT SIMULATOR** is that it has gone along with the technology. What simulation or game do you know that came out in the late 70s or early 80s, that was on the Apple II with only 48K, that's still coming out with the Amiga technology, and that's still new and vibrant and different. And the Amiga version of **FLIGHT SIMULATOR II** just blows me away."

Charlotte Taylor, Public Relations Manager at Electronic Arts quipped, "Trip will kill me [Trip Hawkins is president of EA], but my favorite game is **SHANGHAI** on the Macintosh" (by Activision). Although it's not a game, Electronic Arts' **DELUXE PAINT II** on the Amiga is Charlotte's other favorite program because she enjoys the fact that it allows her to express her creative side without requiring the artistic talent she says she does not have.

"**Hollywood**" **Dave Anderson**, avid game player and Infocom author of the zany spoof of "B" movies, "Hollywood Hijinx," says that his favorite is **SEVEN CITIES OF GOLD** by Electronic Arts. "It's the kind of game that I like because it's an adventure, and yet it's strategy, too." He plays challenge games against one of the Infocom testers. They use the "create a continent" option, and compete by playing their own copies of the same game. "Another game we played like crazy last Christmas--about 12 hours a day--was **HEART OF AFRICA** (Electronic Arts), which is basically the same type of game. Another one I really like to play is **SHANGHAI** (Activision), the one with the tiles--very addictive game. The Mac magazines keep saying, 'Don't let this get into your office, or it will be the end of productivity,' and we couldn't get people off the Macs at Infocom. We just started calling the Macintoshes 'the SHANGHAI machine,' because that was all that was ever on them."

Interplay Productions is an independent design firm responsible for "Mindshadow" and "Tass Times in Tonetown" for Activision and both "Bard's Tale" programs for Electronic Arts. When asked for his favorite entertainment program, **Troy Worrell**, programmer and Vice President of the company, didn't hesitate a moment and answered, "**STELLAR 7** for Apple."

Brian Fargo, President of the company and also a programmer, says that one of his "all-time favorites is **STARFLIGHT**" for IBM by Electronic Arts. "Another game I've had a lot of fun with is **INFILTRATOR**" for C64 by Mindscape. Fargo added, "It's an off-the-wall kind of game."

Trip Hawkins, President of Electronic Arts, says, "Even to this day, my all-time favorite is **M.U.L.E.** Aside from the fact that it's a multi-player game--and there are still far too few of those--I've always really liked the game because it's a terrific blend of thinking and a really good economic model, and at the same time a lot of action and teamwork and back-stabbing." Hawkins believes that a truly classic game must have elements of luck, dexterity, strategy, and skill. He adds, "M.U.L.E. has a nice blend of all four of those elements, where most games only deal with one or two of those elements. So that's probably my all-time favorite. Another one--and I'm really not trying to just plug our own products--is **DR. J & LARRY BIRD GO ONE ON ONE**. That's something that I was intimately involved with, and it's still a game that I love to play anytime." Hawkins says that he is partial to sports games, and that he still plays the original **STAR LEAGUE BASEBALL** from Gamestar that's about four years old. Quick to return to his own company's products, he added, "Of course there's a new baseball game that's going to replace it, our new **EARL WEAVER BASEBALL**, which is destined to become one of my favorites because I am a true baseball junkie. And one of the really obscure ones that I wanted to mention is **STAR THIEF**. It was an Apple II version of an arcade game about six years ago, but I forget the name of the arcade game. At that time it was the only game on the Apple II that two people could play cooperatively, which is why I liked it." Hawkins completed his list of favorites with Broderbund's **CHOPLIFTER**.

Steve Hanawa, Research and Development Manager at Sega, has a lot to do with the new games released for the Sega Master System. As a programmer who has done three space games himself, Hanawa is especially fond of playing space games. (He was also responsible for much of the programming on **TURBO**, the Sega auto racing coin-op of five years ago.) His all-time favorite is **DEFENDER**, followed by **HEAD-ON** (both coin-op games). Next in his line-up of personal favorites are **FANTASY ZONE** (both arcade and home versions by Sega) and a real golden oldie among arcade games, **STARFIRE**. By the way, don't go crazy looking for **FANTASY ZONE** in your neighborhood arcade, because the coin-op version has only been released in Japan!

OUR REVIEWERS RECOMMEND...

In compiling a group of mini-reviews representing what our reviewers feel are the very best of the entertainment programs released during our first five years of publication, we have limited ourselves to titles which are still available. (No sense in telling you how fabulous a program is if there is no way you can buy it from your local software store!) These are the programs that our reviewers would recommend as an ideal "basic library of software" for the new computer owner interested in entertainment software. As much as possible, we've tried to give equivalent coverage to all systems. However, there just aren't as many titles from which to choose for the newer computer and game systems, so there are fewer mini-reviews for those systems. In five years of publication, we have published a little under 1,800 reviews. That sounds like quite a lot, and it is, but we haven't reviewed every piece of software that was released during those five years. And our "recommended" list of programs has been limited to those actually reviewed by our staff during that five-year period. (All programs are listed alphabetically within categories.)

Action and Arcade-Style Games...

KUNG FU: THE WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST by Melbourne House was a best-seller in Great Britain. Available in the U.S. from UXB, a division of Spinnaker Software, this is a game of intense martial arts combat set against backgrounds of serenely beautiful Oriental scenery. Playable by one against the computer or by two in fierce competition, the game allows your character to advance in rank by winning matches, which are scored by a referee. The action is punctuated with the piercing screams of the fighters and the realistic sounds of their punches and kicks as they connect with their opponent. Beautifully drawn and fluidly animated, the characters execute each of their 16 moves with poetic but deadly precision. Joystick response is quick and nearly effortless. This is one of the very best of all the martial arts games available. (Available for Commodore 64/128 only.)

LODERUNNER from Broderbund is one of the all-time classic climbing games, and it even offers the bonus of being able to design your own playing screens. Of course, with 150 game screens already provided, there's more than enough to keep most gamers busy for months. Your character is a Galactic Commando deep in enemy territory, who must raid the treasury rooms and evade the Bungeling guards. The Commando scampers across platforms, climbs ladders, and uses his laser drill pistol to make pits and passageways through the brick floors. If a Bungeling guard falls into a pit and gets stuck, it becomes safe for the Commando to run over him. **LODERUNNER** is characterized by good animation, fast-paced action, and lots of variety. (Available for Apple II, Atari XE/XL, Commodore 64/128, IBM, Macintosh.)

MARBLE MADNESS from Electronic Arts, based on the Atari coin-op, is everything that an arcade-to-home translation should be. The designers have maintained the look, the sound, and the feel of the coin-op game beautifully. Simple to learn, but devilishly tough to master, this game has marbles rolling through a surrealistic landscape of platforms and ramps, tight turns and traps, barrier walls and steep drop-offs into the great void. There are strange enemies everywhere, including Marble Munchers, Steelie the Bumper Ball, and suction-mouthed Humming Hoovers. There are six screens of raceway madness (plus a "secret level" in some versions) guaranteed to test your gaming skill to the maximum—but at least you'll be saving your quarters! (Available for Amiga, Apple II, Commodore 64/128; also planned for most other systems.)

SUPER BOULDER DASH is an Electronic Arts reissue of the classic First Star game, **BOULDER DASH**, paired with the sequel, **BOULDER DASH II**. Altogether, there are 32 action-packed screens in this package which stars the endearing little hero, Rockford, as he tunnels his way through caves to gather sparkling diamonds. The caves are full of boulders that behave according to their own slightly warped laws of physics. Strange things happen when Rockford digs passages near them. They roll, they tumble, they bonk him on the head. And the caves harbor odd fireflies that explode on contact with a boulder, butterflies that turn into diamonds, and amoebas that can turn a whole cave into solid boulders. Great fun, this one! (Available for Apple II, Atari XE/XL, Commodore 64/128, IBM.)

TRIPLE PACK from Access includes three of their most popular best-sellers in one package: **BEACH-HEAD**, **BEACH-HEAD II**, and **RAID OVER MOSCOW**. All three are action-oriented war-games played in stages. **BEACH-HEAD** begins with aerial reconnaissance of the enemy's fleet, then moves on to naval warfare, and finally takes you to the beach-head itself for a tank assault on the enemy fortress. **BEACH-HEAD II** is more violent and contains four game sequences: paratrooper assault on the enemy position, hostage rescue in enemy territory, chopper escape with the hostages, and a one-on-one knife-throwing duel to the death between the opposing commanders. **RAID OVER MOSCOW** takes you to a world on the brink of nuclear war with your mission to fly a stealth bomber from the U.S. Defense Space Station to knock out Soviet launch sites and then the Moscow Defense Center itself. All three games feature realistic graphics, superb sound effects, and a variety of action sequences. (Available for Apple II, Atari XE/XL, Commodore 64/128.)

Adventure and Strategy Games...

KAMPFGRUPPE from Strategic Simulations is wargaming at its classic best: platoon-level tactical combat on the Eastern Front from 1941 to 1945 featuring armored vehicles, pitting Germans against Russians. When it comes to strategic wargaming, no one does it better than SSI. (Available for Amiga, Apple II, Atari ST & XE/XL, Commodore 64/128, IBM.)

KING'S QUEST by Roberta Williams for Sierra introduced gamers to the wonders of 3-D animated adventuring: fully animated characters capable of moving naturally within a three-dimensional environment. The story is one of seeking after lost treasures. Sir Graham must recover a magic mirror, an invincible shield, and a magical chest in order to be crowned King of Daventry. (Available for Amiga, 128K Apple II, Atari ST, IBM.)

MOEBIUS by Greg Malone for Origin Systems stretches the limits of adventuring with its innovative approach. At one level, **MOEBIUS** is an Ultima-style adventure. It is a quest for the Orb of Celestial Harmony in which the adventurer attempts to restore peace to the land of Khantun by defeating the Warlord of the East wind and recovering the Orb. The setting is Oriental, so the magic of the game has undertones of Eastern mysticism, and your character's weapons are the Ninja's metal stars, shurikens. This is completely in harmony with the other level of the game, a beautifully animated martial arts contest. Combat, always a necessary part of adventure games, takes on a new and more satisfying dimension in **MOEBIUS** because the battling figures nearly fill the screen when they fight with sword and karate. (Available for Apple II and Commodore 64/128.)

SHANGHAI by Brodie Lockard is based on the centuries-old oriental game of Mah-Jongg. The game is simplicity itself: 144 intricately decorated tiles are stacked in a five-level, dragon-shaped pyramid, with the object of the game to remove the tiles in matching pairs until all are gone or no further moves can be made. It is playable as a solitaire game without time limit, as a cooperative game for teams of players, in tournament mode with individual players all working on the identical Dragon formation, or as a timed challenge game for two players taking turns removing tiles from the same Dragon. It sounds simple, and it is, but this simple little game has hooked many thousands of players who just can't stop playing! (Available for Amiga, Apple II & IIGS, Atari ST, Commodore 64/128, IBM, Macintosh.)

THE BARD'S TALE is a graphic role-playing adventure by Interplay Productions for Electronic Arts which lets you take a band of six adventurers into the land of Skara Brae. Under the spell of an evil wizard, the town needs the help of you and your crew, including that singer of magical songs, the Bard. The game features nicely animated graphics, fast-moving action, lots of magic, speedy combat resolution, and enough on-screen information to keep your nose out of the manual. (Available for Amiga, Apple II & IIGS, Commodore 64/128.)

TRINITY by Brian Moriarty for Infocom achieves the improbable goal of weaving a text adventure from an unusual combination of elements: historical events surrounding the development of nuclear weapons, fantasy elements drawn from Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland," plenty of challenging puzzles, and the usual leavening of Infocom-style humor. The game takes you to the sites of various nuclear explosions, allowing you to interact with history. The experiences are thought-provoking, but the game is neither heavy nor depressing. We think this is the most original and daring of all the Infocom works of interactive fiction. (Available for Amiga, 128K Apple II, Atari ST, Commodore 128, IBM, 512K Macintosh.)

ULTIMA IV is the most recent installment of the epic Ultima series of graphic role-playing adventures by Lord British for Origin Systems. Like its predecessors, it is a game of great scope filled with battles, exploration, and magic. Unlike the earlier Ultima games, this one emphasizes the spiritual side of your adventuring character, who is seeking inner peace along with the destruction of evil enemies. This is the first Ultima game with heart and soul. (Available for Apple II, Atari XE/XL, Commodore 64/128; coming for IBM.)

Sports Games...

GBA CHAMPIONSHIP BASKETBALL TWO-ON-TWO from Gamestar for Activision is the first basketball simulation with real teamwork options. With four players on the court, you can choose a variety of strategies for offense or defense. And your players can be chosen from group with widely varying skills, giving this game more strategic depth than previous basketball games. **CHAMPIONSHIP BASKETBALL** also includes a practice session that gives you a chance to try out your hook shots, jump shots, dunks, inside and outside shooting, and more. (Available for Amiga, Apple II, Atari ST, Commodore 64/128, IBM.)

GFL CHAMPIONSHIP FOOTBALL by Gamestar for Activision is the first football simulation to put you right on the field and into a helmet, immediately giving it a different look and feel from the other football games available. Aside from the rather startling perspective, it's a fine game with lots of options on both offense and defense—definitely up to Gamestar's high standards for sports simulations. (Available for Apple II, Commodore 64/128; coming for other systems.)

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Entertainment Software: An Eclectic Look at Where We've Been and Where We're Going

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Odyssey, there were ColecoVision, Atari 5200, Emerson Arcadia, and Vectrex. There was no way that all of them could survive. And all of these videogame systems were faced with a degree of competition from the newest computers, of which the Commodore 64 proved to be the strongest entry--and it's still going strong today. Late in 1982, we felt that computers would become more and more important as a medium of home entertainment. Introducing our first computer coverage in the December, 1982 issue, we asked the question: "Today a videogame, tomorrow a computer?"

Computers Rise As Video Games Fall

In February, 1983, we began a section of *The Video Game Update* which we called "Computer Game Update" for two issues. Videogames continued releasing at a heavy pace, and we covered computer items such as the first entertainment titles from CBS, Activision, and Zimag; hardware from Spectravideo, Commodore, Atari, Mattel, and Texas Instruments. By the April, 1983 issue, the "Computer Game Update" section became "Computer Entertainer," featuring reviews of computer games for Atari and TI. Computer games were becoming more important to our readers, as reflected in the new mast-head debuted in the June issue. For the first time, the *Computer Entertainer* heading appeared on the front page, right under *The Video Game Update*. Our computer-owning readers expressed happiness at the increased coverage and importance of computer games, but our videogame owners were getting nervous. Not only were the dates of new releases slipping badly (especially so in the case of Mattel and Coleco), but our video gamers feared that we were going to abandon coverage of their systems. 1983 proved to be a pivot year, during which the fortunes of computers and entertainment software for them rose sharply, while those on the videogame side were showing problems. Words like "shake-out" and "dumping" were used often in articles about the videogame industry, as companies went out of business and vast quantities of games started selling for bargain-basement prices.

Ups and Downs

As the computer side of the home business increased, many thought they could catch the next roller-coaster ride up as the videogame ride was on the way down. By 1984, it became clear that the computer business would not mirror the meteoric growth of the videogame business, and that it would grow much more slowly. This was the year of the introduction of IBM's PCjr, which eventually turned out to be a Big Blue disappointment. The period of strong IBM penetration into the home market wouldn't come until 1986, and then it would come at the hands of Tandy and a number of other IBM "clones," rather than from IBM itself. 1984 also marked the debut of Apple's Macintosh, "the computer for the rest of us" and the computer that gave birth to a whole market segment that never before existed: desktop publishing. (We joined legions of desktop publishers when we started producing *Computer Entertainer* entirely in-house on Mac and AppleWriter in May, 1985. We upgraded to LaserWriter in January, 1986.) 1984 was also the year of the last big promises of massive additions to Coleco's Adam, most of which never saw the light of day due to the demise of the system in early 1985. And it was the year in which Jack Tramiel left Commodore and bought a badly ailing Atari from Warner Communications. Growing (and shrinking) pains troubled many a company in 1984 and later. Our newsletter changed with the times in 1984 and became *Computer Entertainer*. Although they had to face reality, many of our video gamers who had steadfastly refused to buy a computer were upset to have *The Video Game Update* relegated to a small section within the newsletter. As promised, we continued videogame coverage until there were no more video games to cover, which finally happened with the final *Video Game Update* in May, 1985. However, the very next month we carried the first look at the new Nintendo Entertainment System, which would eventually provide the impetus for re-introduction of the *Video Game Update* in February, 1986. No wonder that Bruce Davis, president of Activision, recently remarked, "You were the only ones who never gave up on video games."

Video Games Make a Come-Back

We may have been the only publication that never gave up on video games, but nearly everyone agrees that the public never did. Dan Stout, marketing vice president of INTV Corp. spoke for much of the industry when he said, "The trade, the media, and the retailers may have turned their backs on video games, but the consumer never did. Nothing has captured the universal imagination of consumers as well as video games, [because] the consumer thirsts for good home entertainment." Jim Levy, former president of Activision, offered this analysis of the 1983-1984 slump in games: "The market for video games at prices that made it profitable to produce them disintegrated because there were enough at low prices to absorb the demand." He went on to say that in the last couple of years "the latent demand for video game systems has been re-ignited by the efforts of Nintendo and

Atari, proving that there is still a market for selling a couple of million new machines a year." Levy believes that all it took was for "someone to have courage on the hardware side."

The New Computers

While video games were standing in the wings awaiting their second entrance, the computer hardware side suddenly became more exciting in the last two years with the debut of a new generation of computers whose effect is only beginning to be felt in the home market: Commodore Amiga, Atari 520 ST, and Apple IIGS. Citing the nearly 10-year period it took for programmers to "wing the best out of the Apple II," Electronic Arts vice president of entertainment, Bing Gordon, feels "we probably have five to ten years of development in front of us [with the new machines] with the prospect of many new things for the programmers to wing out."

New Directions in Software

As to the directions that new entertainment software is likely to take in the next few years, there is general agreement among several veteran industry insiders with whom we spoke. Most seem to feel that there will continue to be a strong interest in several general categories, including sports games, vehicle simulations and simulations in general, and fantasy role-playing. There was some disagreement over the likelihood of continuing strong interest in arcade-style action and interactive fiction. No one was able to predict a new genre of entertainment software that might emerge. Jim Levy, formerly of Activision, said that "it's not important whether you can see a new genre. When it's there, it will be there, because it's a creative process." Bing Gordon of Electronic Arts was the only one to mention the future technologies of CD-I (Compact Disk-Interactive) and interactive video. When it comes to CD-I, he feels that the software industry has a better understanding of the power of interactivity than some of the people working on CD-I because "we as an industry have learned a lot about bringing new vitality to making choices in games." Gordon also believes that we are just starting to explore audio-visual technology with an aim to exploiting it fully for entertainment software.

Thanks to All

We leave you with a hearty thanks--to our readers for praising us when we do well and for keeping us humble when we make mistakes. To our many friends in the industry for extending us kindnesses over the years, for providing the mountains of software and information we require, and for accepting both good and bad reviews with equal grace. To the designers and programmers, without whom we could never have had all this fun, for surprising us with their endless creativity. We look forward to the next five years!

Favorite Games From More Industry Insiders

Bruce Davis, new president of Activision, says that his current favorite is Sierra's SPACE QUEST because "it's hilarious, a really great game." Among sports games, he thinks that Gamestar's GFL CHAMPIONSHIP FOOTBALL is "the most interesting sports game I've seen." He said that he first saw the game in its very early stages three years ago when he was president of Imagic. "All my technical people told me not to be deceived by the [designers'] presentation, because the game wasn't possible to do. And so we [Imagic] passed on it. (In the software industry, there are many such tales of "the one that got away.") Obviously a man who appreciates role-playing games, Davis also cited two Macintosh programs from Icon Simulations as favorites: DEJA VU and UNINVITED. And he appreciates Infocom's LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS because it is a "masterful job of putting together a product that includes a program." He likes the way the program is enhanced by the packaging of scratch'n'sniff card, 3D glasses, and comic book with it. Finally, Davis teased us with his new favorite, Activision's THE LAST NINJA, which hasn't even been released yet!

Bob Jacob, president and founder of Master Designer Software, was very quick to respond to our request for his favorite games. He said, "No one will give this answer: ON-COURT TENNIS (Gamestar). I think it's the best sports game ever done, because it has an absolutely perfect feel--it just feels right. And the feel of a game is the hardest thing to do right, especially in a sports game." Other personal favorites Jacob cited were M.U.L.E. by Electronic Arts, KARATEKA by Broderbund ("a really interesting game"), and DAMBUSTERS ("very well done"). Adding one more favorite to the list, Jacob also told us that his wife and business partner, Phyllis, is "absolutely addicted to SHANGHAI."

MEAN 18 from Accolade has become one of the most popular of the golf simulations for its graphic realism, its Course Architect for designing your own golf courses, and its fidelity to the real game of golf. It comes complete with four famous courses including St. Andrews and Pebble Beach, with additional famous courses available on a data disk sold separately. (Available for Amiga, Atari ST, IBM.)

SIERRA CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING offers boxing fans the opportunity to choose from a list of all-time great boxers and set up matches that can be fought directly (arcade-game style) or strategically (instructions are given to the boxer from the manager's point of view). Great depth, variety of play, and long-term re-play value characterize this excellent simulation. (Available for Apple II, Commodore 64/128, Macintosh.)

WINTER GAMES is an Olympics-style, multi-event sports contest from Epyx that accommodates up to eight players representing any of 18 countries. The events test your skill at Hot Dog Aerials (ski jumping plus acrobatics), Biathlon (cross-country skiing and rifle shooting), Figure Skating (short program), Ski Jump, Speed Skating, Free Skating (your own choreography), and the grueling Bobsled Run. Non-scored practice sessions are possible in all events, but actual competition is judged by a panel of "international experts" who award points in standard Olympics fashion. **WINTER GAMES** is a perfect example of the type of game at which the Epyx designers excel: a wide variety of challenges to your dexterity with the joystick, elements of strategy and finesse, and some of the most beautiful graphics you'll ever see. (Available for Amiga, Apple II, Atari ST, Commodore 64/128, IBM, Macintosh.)

Entertainment and Creativity...

ADVENTURE CONSTRUCTION SET is an ingenious piece of programming by Stuart Smith for Electronic Arts which actually comprises a whole set of programs. You get a variety of full-length and mini-adventures, a short adventure tutorial, and a wonderful set of tools to unleash your creativity and build your own adventures. No programming knowledge is required to build even the most complex adventure imaginable. Your adventure can contain as many as 240 "rooms" and 7500 props--a variety of terrains, portals, magic spells, text, music, and a truly mind-boggling array of creatures and things. Even if the exact creature or thing you want cannot be found in the master lists, you can design your own or modify one that's already there. Adventure gamers will think they've died and gone to adventure heaven when they get their hands on this gem of a program. (Available for Amiga, Apple II, Commodore 64/128.)

GARRY KITCHEN'S GAMEMAKER: THE COMPUTER GAME DESIGN KIT is a product of Activision and the talents of Garry Kitchen. It is a wonderful creativity tool for the action gamer who has yearned to create his or her own original games. Even without programming experience, it's possible to turn out a very respectable game in a relatively short time. With practice and imagination, great things are possible. The program is well organized and easily learned, despite its immense scope. It gives you tools to create or animate characters, add music and sound effects, choose or modify backgrounds, and bring your ideas to life. And there's a bonus: using **GAMEMAKER** teaches you about programming. To get even more from the program, be sure to look into the **GAMEMAKER SCIENCE FICTION** and **SPORTS LIBRARIES** available separately. (Available for Apple II and Commodore 64/128.)

WORLD BUILDER from Silicon Beach gives you the very same powerful tools that the company used to create the game "Enchanted Scepters." For adventure gaming fans who own a Mac, this is the ultimate creativity kit. **WORLD BUILDER** makes it possible for you to bring your ideas to life, even without any programming knowledge. The program includes sections for scene-building, adding text, creating sound effects from digitized sounds on the disk, creating characters, and adding objects. It's a dream-come-true for those who love adventuring. (Available for 512K Macintosh/Macintosh Plus only.)

For Dedicated Video Game Systems Only...

FOOD FIGHT by Atari for the Atari 7800 ProSystem is based on a coin-op game with an irresistibly silly theme. Because your on-screen hero, Charley Chuck, just loves to eat, he heads for the food fight contest at a carnival. In order to win, and to get the ice cream cone on the left of the screen, Charley must race to the cone before it melts, avoiding manholes, chefs, and flying food being tossed by the chefs. The game turns into a real food riot as the chefs try to pelt Charley with assorted edibles. Charley can pick up the food items and use them as missiles against the chefs as he runs for the ice cream. This one sounds a little ridiculous when described, but it turns out to be lots of fun to play.

GRADIUS by Konami for the Nintendo Entertainment System is a fiendishly challenging, fast moving space game that's guaranteed to test your reflexes. Cast in the classic mold of horizontally scrolling shoot-outs, this one has more options, more enemies, more speed, and more entertainment value than most other games of its type.

SOLARIS for the Atari 2600 was designed by Douglas Neubauer for Atari. It will surprise anyone who hasn't played a 2600 game in a while, because it is strong enough to hold its own in an era of game systems with far greater capabilities than the modest little VCS. Calling on both joystick and strategic skills, the game sends the player on a quest through 16 space quadrants, battling Zylon enemies, to find the planet Solaris and rescue stranded Atarian Federation pioneers. Smoothly animated graphics, lots of play options, and a high degree of repeat playability make this one a winner.

SUPER PRO FOOTBALL for Intellivision by INTV Corporation finally lets gamers take on the computer in a single-player game. (The original football game for the system by Mattel only allowed for a two-player game.) This alone would be enough to make the game better for many players, but INTV has also re-worked the entire game and added more options and greater control on both offense and defense. This is now the ultimate Intellivision sports game.

WORLD GRAND PRIX by Sega for their Master System serves up the familiar car racing game with a few new features, including the ability to design your own courses or customize your car. It's a realistic racing simulation with twelve built-in courses and the ability to shift gears--plenty of action, lots of speed, and enough racing variety to please fans of car racing games.

Programs That Don't Fit Standard Categories...

ALTER EGO from Activision is described as a "life simulation" by its author, psychologist Peter J. Favaro, Ph.D.. Available in both male and female versions, the program takes your "alter ego," the character whose traits you can determine, from birth to death. The many stages of life are presented as choices to make and situations to which you can react in several ways. The program can be experienced differently each time you pass through life's stages, depending on personality traits, life choices, and random events. It's an experience that never fails to be fascinating. (Available for Apple II, Commodore 64/128, IBM, Macintosh.)

LITTLE COMPUTER PEOPLE is an entertaining program by David Crane for Activision that isn't a game, and in fact, absolutely defies categorization. The purpose of the program is to introduce you to the Little Computer Person (LCP) living inside your computer. It provides a house-on-a-disk for your LCP and lets him communicate directly with you for the first time in his (and your) life. Once your LCP moves in with his dog, he goes about his daily routines, writes you letters, tirelessly plays games with you, and accepts your gifts of food, water, books, and records. Just don't neglect him, which can cause him to become ill. This unique program has entertained many thousands of computer users of all ages. (Available for Amiga, Apple II, Atari ST, Commodore 64/128.)

PORTAL: A COMPUTER NOVEL by Brad Fregger and Rob Swigart for Activision is another example of the risks the company has been willing to take in trying out new--even radical--ideas for entertainment software. Although it contains text, **PORTAL** is not a role-playing adventure, for

it has no puzzles to solve, characters to develop, or battles to win. The aim was to create the "first true piece of computer literature, in which the player is in large part the author." The player becomes a character in a gradually unfolding story of the future, when all people seem to have disappeared from the planet. As the last human, you establish contact with Homer, a sentient computer who needs your company as much as you need his. Together, you unravel the mysteries whose ultimate solution is your joint obsession. **PORTAL** is a computer experience unlike any other. (Available for Apple II, Atari ST, Commodore 64/128, IBM, Macintosh.)

SOFTWARE GOLDEN OLDIES VOLUME I from The Software Toolworks is the only software anthology-on-a-disk that lets you own a piece of computer entertainment history. It's a trip down a memory lane that happens to be paved with computer chips and contains four landmark programs: the original all-text game of **ADVENTURE**, **ELIZA** the computer psychotherapist, the mesmerizing cell-multiplication display of **LIFE**, and several variations of **PONG**. The package also includes excerpts from a number of books and articles that fill in historical and anecdotal details about the programs and their place in the history of computers and software. Everyone who owns a computer should have **SOFTWARE GOLDEN OLDIES**. (Available for all computers.)

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