

THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE

INCLUDES

Computer Entertainer

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TWO DOLLARS

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A Critical Newsletter for the Serious Gamesman

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Intellivision, Odyssey
and more

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WOW!!!

And we couldn't even
fit them all - more
next month, including

Burgertime for 2600
Kool Aid Man for 2600
and many surprises
(including a very special

Interview with Carol Shaw
Designer of River Raid

VIDEO TAKE-OUT'S TOP 10

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10. LONDON BLITZ (AH-2600)

There's alot of news this month, and even more reviews (so many that we couldn't fit them all in!), that we're going to get right to it!

NEW ATARI TITLES??

We've been checking around for any new titles that haven't yet been announced, and it appears that we may have uncovered a few for the Atari 2600 and 5200. Although not confirmed by Atari, it looks as though a 2600 version of Xevious is in the works for the first part of 1984, along with a "3-D" version of Asteroids! We also expect to see the first game coming out of the Chas. Schultz PEANUTS agreement at the beginning of the year. The first MARIO BROS. game under their new license should surface around Christmas (in addition to a 5200 version). There's also talk of a title called TAS, based on TASMANIAN DEVIL. We believe Robotron is planned for the first of the year for the 5200 and could it be that MILIPEDE is being developed for a first quarter release for the 5200???

Atari ColecoVision software

As we reported back in May, it now appears more and more evident that Atari WILL produce third party software for the ColecoVision!! A source within the company indicated that it was very possible that several Atari titles will make their way into the ColecoVision format via Atari's software publishing division! Wouldn't that be interesting!

SEGA FUTURE CHANGES

Gulf and Western, the parent company for Sega, has announced the divestiture of the software division. At first, it appeared that might spell the demise of Sega; however, Bally has stepped in and acquired the coin-op assets for both current and future product. It seems that Sega will continue as a home software company. At presstime we were not able to speak with anyone regarding the titles now on the boards for release over the next 2-3 months. Look for further information in next month's edition.

LIST PRICE CHANGES ON COLECO ADAM

Informed sources have told us that by the time the Coleco Adam reaches the market, the suggested list price will be closer to \$700, not the previously announced \$600!!

HERE WE GO AGAIN!

Other than a very few games which we have listed in our Availability Update, we understand that any titles announced within the past three months by Mattel will not be available for the Intellivision before 1984, and there is a good chance those titles may NEVER be released! If that information is correct, scratch PINBALL (again), MOTOCROSS, ONE-PLAYER BASEBALL, SCOOBY DOO, etc. It would appear that the Intellivision owner, more than ever, will have to rely on third-party software. And there's still nothing new on the horizon for the voice module!! We have been told by a source within Mattel that they are not manufacturing ANY new games other than those they are committed to by previous agreements. They will reassess their manufacturing position after the first of the year.

ECS CUTBACKS ALSO

In addition, peripherals for the ECS (Entertainment Computer System) are being scratched even before the ECS introduction (still slated for the fall). Items that will NOT be released include a printer, data recorder, and program expander. We are told that Mattel will still release the VCS adaptor and Music Synthesizer. This appears to be a dubious start for a system which is going to need all the support it can get!

BATTLEZONE (★★★★ / ★★★½) is a terrific adaptation of Atari's own arcade hit in which a solo player controls a tank facing a battalion of automated weapons. Your view of the beautiful but dangerous countryside is through an electronic periscope equipped with radar screen at the top and a sighter to help in aiming your turret gun. The enemies unleashed by a council of military commanders include tanks, supertanks that move faster than your tank, aerial fighters whose fire is very difficult to dodge, and non-firing flying saucers. The game is playable at any of three difficulty levels, none of them particularly easy.

Beautiful Graphics

When we first popped the cartridge into the slot and turned our Atari 2600 on, we were very impressed with the beauty of BATTLEZONE's graphics. The scene through the electronic periscope offers mountains in the background and excellent use of color in the foreground. The game is very easy to learn, allowing you to jump into the action right away. We found the tanks and supertanks fairly simple to pick off, while the fighters and flying saucers were tricky to line up just right, because they move so evasively. One of the most important techniques to learn is how to evade the enemy fire, or you'll be playing some very short games! Although it may not seem possible to avoid enemy hits to your tank at first, it can be done if your reflexes are quick. The toughest blasts to avoid are those that come from enemy craft that are off the screen. It is imperative that you keep an eye on the radar screen at all times, and just get used to the idea that an ambush may be awaiting you in any direction. This is one of the best games of the combat genre available for the Atari 2600 system. Recommended. (MSR \$31.95)

SPIKE'S PEAK (★★★/★★★★) & **GHOST MANOR** (★★★/★★★★) comprise the two single-player games of a "double-ender," a new and clever way of marketing games from Xonox. For the price of one game, you get a cartridge with one game on each end.

SPIKE'S PEAK is a challenging, multi-screen climbing game in which you must guide Spike to climb to the top of a mountain before he freezes, collecting as many points as possible on the journey. Four difficulty levels are available. The first screen is not actually played, but it returns every time Spike loses a life, showing how high up the mountain he has managed to climb. On the first playing screen, the Meadows, Spike ascends a winding path with scattered caves and canyons where he can hide. Beware—eagles swoop out of nowhere to kill him, and bears have been known to attack from front or rear. Water slides and bears can be hurdled, but Spike must hide from the eagles. Don't let him hide too long, or he'll freeze to death. (All but the best game players will have difficulty clearing this screen.) Next Spike must assault the Rocky Ledges, avoiding rockslides, falling boulders, cactus, or falling to a premature death in the gaps between ledges. On this screen, Spike can collect a piton for protection and gold nuggets for extra points. On the Ice Cap screen, Spike must follow a path of snow and ice, and he'll need the ice axe found there to make the journey possible. The axe can be used to keep Spike from falling too far back when the avalanches hit, and for killing the dreaded Abominable Snowman. Gathering ice diamonds on this screen earns extra points, but you must monitor Spike's body temperature, which falls steadily as he reaches the higher altitudes. If you've gotten Spike this far, the Top of the Mountain screen is relatively easy: just make Spike climb to the very top and plant his flag before he freezes, collect your bonus, and take a brief rest before starting again.

Turn the Cartridge Around

After the chilly rigors of SPIKE'S PEAK, turn the cartridge around to play GHOST MANOR. (4 difficulty levels.) You'll find yourself locked in mortal combat with the evil Dracula, for Drac is holding your friend prisoner in the Manor. Your job—should you decide to take it—is to save your friend and escape from the Manor before dawn (a 4-minute time limit). Watch out for spooks, bats, skulls, scorpions, and that bad old chopping mummy! At the start of the game, there is an introductory theme song, and tombstones will rise from the graveyard. Playing tag with the friendly Rainbow Ghost or Bones the Skeleton, you must scamper from tombstone

to tombstone. Touching both stone and ghost or skeleton while moving earns you a spear needed for the next screen. When you've collected enough spears, you'll be transported to the Gate in front of Ghost Manor. Flying spooks guard the castle entrance, and the chopping mummy is their leader. Hurl spears at the spooks, avoiding the evil mummy's axe. After the spooks are eliminated, kill the mummy quickly, and you'll be admitted to the First Floor of the castle. There is no light here, only lightning flashes in the night to guide you, unless you have the lamp lighted. A maze of rooms and corridors awaits you, and there are caskets which must be touched just right to reveal treasure points and possibly an extra cross. (Without a cross, you cannot hope to beat you-know-who!) Stationary walls are electrified to stun you, and moving walls can crush you to death. Take the stairs to the Second Floor, a more elaborate maze with more caskets and another cross. But time is running out, and you must move on to the top floor, the Prison, where Dracula guards your friend. Trap Dracula by repelling him with crosses until he's safely locked away, then rescue your friend. At dawn, you and your friend are returned to the graveyard. If the rescue was successful, a victory tune will play; if you lost, you and your friend will descend into the ground with the tombstones.

Excellent Value

This cartridge is an excellent value, giving the player two good games for the price normally paid for one. Graphics are colorful and good, offering several different scenes in each game. Both games are challenging, particularly at the higher difficulty levels. SPIKE'S PEAK is a climbing game with different skills required on each screen; serious gamers will have a ball with it because it really taxes a player's abilities. GHOST MANOR has an appealing, horror-story theme and a little bit of everyone's favorite kind of game. Once you get past the spear-gathering first screen, which is the weakest in the game, you have shooting, maze exploring, and some adventure. We also liked the unique character selection in GHOST MANOR. You may play the role of a girl rescuing the boy or the reverse. This first double-ender by Xonox is a good one, and we look forward to their next releases. Recommended. (MSR \$29.95)

DONKEY KONG JUNIOR (★★½/★) is based on the

COLECO

Nintendo arcade game. It is, of course, the sequel to *Donkey Kong*, in which Mario the carpenter turns the tables on Donkey Kong and takes him prisoner.

The player controls Donkey Kong Junior in a three-screen mission to rescue his papa. (8 skill levels.) In the first screen (similar, but not identical to the game screen shown below) Junior begins his climb-and-jump quest for the key at the top of the screen to the accompaniment of a standard bit of horror-movie music. (We thought this was supposed to be *DONKEY KONG JUNIOR*, not *King Kong Junior*. What's wrong with the coin-op theme music?) Chattering Snapjaws chase Junior as he climbs up and down vines and jumps to platforms. The second screen is the chain mission: Junior must push three keys to the tops of parallel chains to unlock papa's cage while avoiding Snapjaws that patrol the chains and Nitpicker Birds that fly across the bottom of the screen. Mario's Hideout is the final screen, requiring Junior to zig-zag back and forth across the screen on coils and vines to reach papa at the top.

High Hopes Dashed

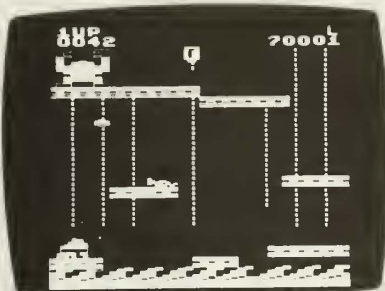
We had high hopes for this adaptation of *DONKEY KONG JUNIOR* when we saw that it had three screens, instead of the

EXPLANATION OF RATING SYSTEM:

- ★★★★—EXCELLENT
 - ★★★—GOOD
 - ★★—FAIR
 - ★—POOR
- First set of stars—Quality of graphics
Second set of stars—Quality of play action

Any game for a given system is compared only to other games for that system. In other words, all Atari and Atari-compatible games are judged separate from Intellivision and Intellivision-compatible games, etc. The same system is used for computer software reviews.

two in the Atari 2600-compatible version of DONKEY KONG. The graphics are very colorful, even if rather sparse and simplified. (The stationary character of Mario is the single exception—he looks quite good.) However, our hopes were dashed when we started playing the game. Not only is this not a very good simulation of the original coin-op, but it's also not a good climbing game, period. Joystick control is so terribly sluggish, requiring real physical effort to move Junior, that we began to think our joystick had gone bad on us. Not so—every joystick we tried yielded the same results. We find it hard to believe that any game this difficult to control could survive a single round of pre-release player testing. We handed the joystick to one of our young testers, a 13-year-old arcade whiz, who proclaimed, "If I ran into something like this at the arcade, I'd ask for my quarter back." Save your money—there are far better climbing games available.



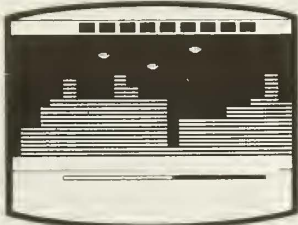
Not recommended. (MSR approx. \$30.00)

SUPER COBRA (★★★/★★★) is a single-player, horizontally scrolling game licensed from Konami. You must fly your helicopter at any of three speeds through ever-changing terrain loaded with igniting rockets, heavy ground artillery, flying fireballs and falling mines. Fortunately, not all



the weaponry is active at once in any of the eleven levels of play. Each of the levels—1,000 miles of the obstacle course—is represented by a block at the top of the screen. (The level currently being played plus all completed levels are shown as filled-in blocks; thus, the player knows exactly how many levels have been completed at all times during the game.) Incidentally, the levels are all different air routes, unlike the typical arrangement of having the player repeat the first level over and over again with a few more enemies added each time.

With a limited supply of fuel, you must maneuver your chopper through the horizontal maze at each level, shooting at the weapons installations for points. (When fuel runs low, you can shoot at fuel tanks to replenish your supply.) The firing mechanism in this game is unusual—the first time you press the firing button, your helicopter will fire straight ahead; the second firing releases a bomb. Since you're flying over skyscrapers and through caverns, there are some pretty tight spots where you'll have very little clearance for your chopper. This maneuvering can be difficult at the slowest speed, but it calls for nerves of steel at the fastest speed! If you devote lots of hours of practicing SUPER COBRA and make it to Level 11, you'll find the object of the whole game, The Booty. This prize is captured by causing your chopper to swoop down and land on it.



Extremely Challenging

The graphics in SUPER COBRA are reminiscent of the vector graphics found in some arcade games. The look is crisp and clean, though a bit sparse. The quality of play action varies, depending on the initial speed chosen for your helicopter. We found the slowest game just a little too slow, but it fulfills the necessary purpose of providing a "get-acquainted" level of game play. The

medium and fast speeds are extremely challenging, especially when your helicopter must be maneuvered through some of the narrower passages. One aspect of this game that we particularly liked was the continuous play feature. This allows you to continue at the beginning of the level you had reached when you lost your last chopper, although your score will begin again at zero. For players more concerned with exploring the levels of a game than amassing huge point totals, this is a nice addition. SUPER COBRA is a good game with more than enough challenges for shoot-em-up fans.

Recommended. (MSR \$39.95)

FATHOM (★★★★/★★★★) is a very unusual single-player



game with stunning graphics and a rescue theme. Alternately playing the roles of dolphin and seagull, the player is given a limited amount of time to search sea and sky for the three pieces

of the magic Trident. Once the Trident has been assembled, the dolphin swims to the bottom of the sea to rescue the mermaid, Neptina, from her cage. In the first part of the game, the dolphin swims down into the sea, avoiding the sting of octopuses and the touch of seaweed. Friendly seahorses are contacted for points and possible revelation of a starfish. Touching the starfish will cause a piece of the Trident to materialize. After a certain number of seahorses are touched, a bird symbol appears. At this point, the dolphin can turn into a seagull when it surfaces. Once airborne as a seagull, the player keeps pressing the firing button to make the bird's wings flap and using the stick to direct its flight. The seagull must avoid black birds and then touch a certain number of pink clouds to make a star appear; touching the star will cause another piece of the Trident to appear. The seagull also encounters volcanoes after the first rescue of Neptina, and it must fly very carefully over the crater to avoid being fried by the fireballs. Once the fish symbol appears and all three sections of the Trident have been found, Neptina can be rescued, and new screens will be added to the game in every direction for the next level of play.

Unusual Game

In the Imagic tradition, FATHOM was designed with truly beautiful visual effects. (Designer Rob Fulop collaborated with an artist on this game.) In the underwater scenes, the dolphin moves fluidly and gracefully, while seaweed undulates and octopuses and seahorses swim around. Above the sea, the gull has its own airy grace, flying among pink clouds and dodging the volcanoes' fireballs. Both dolphin and seagull move against backgrounds of different colors for each new level reached. Play action is unlike any other video

game we've seen. Searching for Trident pieces becomes more and more difficult after each rescue of Neptina, because there is more territory to be covered in a limited time. This aspect gives the game the feeling of an adventure, with new screens to be explored at each level. The whole game has a feeling of tranquility about it, despite the timed rush to find the Trident. For the player with lots of time and patience, freeing the mermaid seven times will end the game and reveal a special surprise. (There's another surprise that can be uncovered earlier in the game. The designer and his cohorts have left their mark on one of the volcanoes.) This is a delightful, original game.



Recommended. (MSR \$34.95)

THE GRADUATE IS CANCELLED

Atari has cancelled plans to release the Atari Graduate computer (an add-on unit for the 2600 VCS). A source within the company has indicated that "in light of the turmoil in the under \$100 home computer market" Atari will re-evaluate the unit's viability.

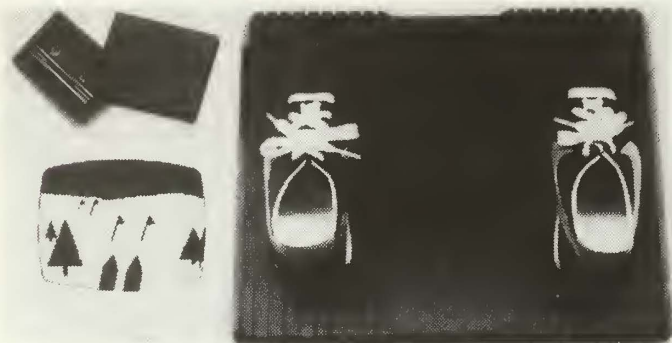
STARPATH™
CORPORATION

RABBIT TRANSIT (★★★½/★★½) is another hopping game on cassette tape for the Supercharger, but you play the role of a rabbit in this one. The rabbit's ultimate goal is to reach the Bunny Bushes, start a family, and make it grow. First the rabbit must hop across the Mysterious Meadow. Using only diagonal jumps, the rabbit makes its way through openings in fences while avoiding snakes, butterflies, choppers and other meanies. If the rabbit reaches the turtle in the river at the bottom of the screen before time runs out, he hops onto the turtle's back, and it's on to the Land of Ledges. On this second screen, the rabbit has a limited amount of time to hop onto all the ledges, changing their color to the magic color indicated at the top left corner of the screen. Periodically, a man appears at the top, dropping rocks toward the rabbit. In the earlier stages, it's enough to simply avoid the rocks, but later on the rocks will reverse the colors of ledges that have already been changed, making more work for the poor rabbit. If the Land of Ledges screen is completed in time, the rabbit will reach the Bunny Bushes, find a mate, and hop across the screen with four baby rabbits. Since these are rabbits, after all, subsequent completions of the two play screens will lead to rapidly multiplying numbers of baby bunnies in the Bunny Bushes!

Graphics Are Well Done

Graphics are quite well done in this cute game. The rabbit is especially endearing, with ears that wiggle every time it hops from place to place. The theme of this game is likely to appeal more to children than to teens or adults, although it's the kind of game some parents will play with their children. The challenges in RABBIT TRANSIT escalate quickly, demanding good video game skills to advance much beyond the first couple of screens. This fact would seem to make it more suitable for older kids and adults, but we doubt that the game will interest them for long. We feel the game is best suited to young children with fairly well-developed video game skills.

Recommended for children. (MSR \$14.95)



THE JOYBOARD & MOGUL MANIA (★★½/★★★★)

must be reviewed together because they're packaged together and designed for use with each other. The Joyboard is the first controller for feet and body rather than hands—you stand on it and rock in any of eight directions. Probably the ultimate application of "body English," this allows the player to get thoroughly involved in a game, both physically and mentally. MOGUL MANIA allows the player to become a downhill racer on any of 9 different ski trails, from Bunny Hill to Taos. While the graphics are pretty sparse and simple, play action is a delight in this game. The timed race doesn't begin until you've stepped onto the Joyboard and leaned forward to ski through the starting gate. Then you take off through the field of white, doing your best to ski between the open gates and around the staggered poles that form the closed gates. If you stray from the course, you'll find yourself skiing through pine trees. The game can be set so that leaning left will cause the screen image to move to the right (as in real skiing), or you can choose joystick mode, in which leaning left will move the screen image to the left. Those who already know how to ski will prefer the former, but the joystick mode will be easier for non-skiers. Other options include the presence or absence of moguls (small bumps all over the course) and disqualification or 5-second penalties for missing a gate.

Fun-Filled Game

We had a great time trying out all the ski runs at various speeds both with and without moguls. Despite the simplicity of the graphics, we found MOGUL MANIAC a fun-filled, involving game to play. We also tried it with a standard joystick, which was not nearly so much fun as using the Joyboard. The physical involvement afforded by this unique controller adds a whole new dimension to video game enjoyment, and Amiga is to be congratulated for coming up with a genuinely new idea. Fortunately, more games are planned to take advantage of the Joyboard's special qualities.

In the meantime, most gamers will want to try the Joyboard on some of the games in their libraries. Since many games require a firing button, there is a place to plug a standard joystick into the Joyboard. We tried this arrangement on a few slide-and-shoot invasion games such as Imagic's *Demon Attack*—they were like brand-new games! Driving games such as Activision's *Enduro* and Atari's *Pole Position* were a lot of fun, too. *The Activision Decathlon* is quite an experience with the Joyboard, especially for anyone wanting the benefits of aerobic exercise. Instead of pumping a joystick back and forth to build up the Decathlon athlete's speed, you must rock your body back and forth to achieve results on the screen. (The 1500-Meter Run is a real killer with the Joyboard!) Not everything works, though. When we played Atari's *Ms. Pac-Man* with the Joyboard, the lady muncher had a tendency to move right through the walls of the maze! A word of warning: it takes practice before your eye-body coordination can earn the same level of scoring you usually achieve with eye-hand coordination! Do place the Joyboard on a hard surface; response tends to be sluggish on carpeted surfaces. (Additional versions of the Joyboard designed for compatibility with Atari home computers and ColecoVision are coming soon.)

Recommended. (MSR \$49.95)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..ASTROCADE-COMPATIBLE

SOLAR CONQUEROR (★★★/★★★★) is finally available for

Astrocade™

long-suffering Astrocade owners! This game for one to four players offers the usual Astrocade options of ten difficulty levels and a choice of one to nine ships in your mission to conquer the solar systems of the Natis galaxy. Each solar system has two or four planets to be vanquished, each of which will assault your ship with a wide range of weaponry. Your triangular ship is highly maneuverable as you fire away at kamikaze combat ships, ground-to-air missiles and killer satellites launched from the planet at the right edge of your screen. Dangerous asteroids also float around in space—as if you didn't have enough to worry about already! Naturally, the higher the difficulty level, the more aggressive the planet's defenses. You must also deal with the gravity of each planet: the closer your ship is to the planet, the more difficult it is to control your ship.

Good Game

SOLAR CONQUEROR is a good game that is somewhat reminiscent of *Asteroids* in style, though it offers more varied enemy attackers than that classic game does. Graphics are colorful, with especially good effects as you travel through hyperspace to reach the next solar system. Astrocade owners hungry for something new to play would grab this even if it were a not a really good game. Fortunately, though, this action-filled space game is a worthwhile addition to the Astrocade library.

Superb Detail

The designers at Starpath have done their best job yet on the graphics in this charming game. Colors are brilliant, and detail is superb. The familiar FROGGER musical theme plays at the beginning of the game, but Starpath has added a few other tunes, too. Play action is faithful to the coin-op original, with very few departures. FROGGER was one of the first of the cute, character-oriented games, and it holds up amazingly well. Nudging Frogger across the dangerous course is still lots of fun, and this version certainly captures all the whimsy of the original. Joystick control is particularly smooth.

Recommended. (MSR \$14.95)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING...INTELLIVISION-COMPATIBLE

ZAXXON (★ 1/2 / ★ ★ 1/2) is an adaptation of the popular three-dimensional arcade game from Sega. Unfortunately, this version compatible with Intellivision I and II does not look anything like the arcade game. The

COLECO

original three-quarter perspective has been "straightened out," so that you fly your fighter directly up the screen rather than diagonally across it. The game screen accompanying this review was provided by Coleco, and it shows the perspective used in the game. However, the side walls of the asteroid that appear in this picture do not appear in the final, packaged version of the game.

Altitude Judgement Is Tricky

The game begins in black space with an altitude indicator on the left side of the screen. Fly your ship through the opening in the wall, and you'll enter the first portion of the asteroid base. The various enemy objects are of different colors, depending on their altitude above the asteroid. By watching their hues and the changing colors of your altitude indicator, you'll have some clues regarding your vulnerability to the objects you encounter. (This is an improvement over the Atari 2600-compatible version.) Even with the color cues, it takes considerable practice to know when you're flying at the same altitude as one of the objects. All ships, gun turrets, radar towers, etc. can be shot for points, and fuel tanks can be destroyed to replenish your fuel supply. At all but the easiest of the four skill levels, many of the objects will fire at your ship, so you must avoid enemy fire while trying to earn points.



If you survive the first asteroid, you must meet ZAXXON's ships in space for a sequence that reminded us of an invasion game. Here, too, it is difficult to tell when an enemy ship is flying at your altitude. Following the space battle, the second asteroid has more deadly enemy forces and electronic barriers at most difficulty levels. It is here that you will encounter the robot ZAXXON, which can be destroyed only by repeated hits to the missile under its arm. Once the robot is eliminated, your fighter can move on to the next asteroid.

Disappointing Graphics

Graphics in this game are disappointingly blocky, bearing little resemblance to the original coin-op version. Play action is unusually fast for an Intellivision-compatible game, which is one of this game's few positive attributes. Basically, this is just an average space-themed shoot-em-up in which the attempt at three-dimensional effects doesn't quite make the grade. There are shadows under airborne objects over the asteroid, and the color coding offers some help, but we still found it overly difficult to judge our fighter's altitude in relation to the enemy objects. Players looking for a faithful translation of ZAXXON to play at home should avoid this game. If you don't frequent the arcades and want a shooting game in space for your Intellivision, don't choose this one without trying it first.

Not recommended.

STAR WARS: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ 1/2)

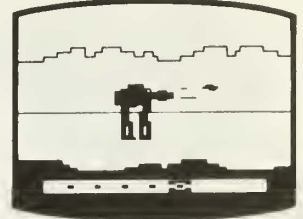
PARKER BROTHERS

is a video game version of the movie's battle between one of the Rebels' tiny Snowspeeders and the gigantic Imperial Walkers. One or two can play Luke Skywalker at any of four difficulty

levels. A radar overview of the entire battlefield at the bottom of your screen lets you know where your Snowspeeder is and just how close the first of the Imperial Walkers is to the generating station. The Walkers move relentlessly from left to right, and it takes multiple hits to each of the giant creatures' bodies to fell them. (They have to hit your Snowspeeder more than once to destroy it, as well, so the odds aren't quite as bad as they look!) The Walkers raise and lower their prehistoric-looking heads, and they can fire both forward and backward. The battle continues until one of the Walkers finally reaches the generating station, because their forces are replenished each time you eliminate one. This is a battle for points, since it's impossible to actually save the generating station from all the Imperial Walkers.

Imperial Walkers Look Great

Good graphics combined with the Star Wars musical theme make this a better movie-to-game translation than most. The Imperial Walkers look great, and the David vs. Goliath feeling of the movie scene comes through quite well. This is essentially the same as the Atari 2600-compatible game that was released over a year ago, so those who own the earlier version won't want to purchase this one. Unfortunately, after a year of great strides in video game design, this game doesn't have the impact that it once did. In comparison to all the space-themed games now available for Intellivision, this one seems a bit plodding and repetitive. However, diehard Star Wars fans will find it of interest. (MSR \$42.95)



Q*BERT (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★)



is the latest Intellivision-compatible arcade translation, and Parker Brothers has done a superb job of bringing the look and feel of the whimsical Gottlieb coin-op to the home screen. The playing field is a pyramid of brightly colored cubes, and Q*bert must change the color of the cubes by hopping onto them. Playable by one or two, this version offers most of the familiar villains: red and purple balls, Coily the Snake, Ugg and Slick. Red and purple balls bounce randomly down the pyramid, and a purple ball hatches into Coily the Snake when it reaches the bottom of the pyramid. Coily will chase Q*bert all over the pyramid, but he can be

tricked into jumping off the edge by jumping Q*bert onto a flying disc when Coily is nearby. Ugg appears later in the game, and he travels along the vertical surfaces of the cubes, starting at the bottom of the pyramid. Whenever Q*bert runs into one of these nasties, he grumbles and a "swear bubble" (!#!?) appears above his head. Slick can't catch Q*bert, but he wreaks a special kind of mischief: he changes the colors of cubes back to their original color, making extra work for Q*bert. (He can be stopped by running Q*bert into him.) The only "good guy" is the green ball; contact with this ball causes all the characters to freeze momentarily, and Q*bert can then change cube colors for bonus points. As in the coin-op, one of the biggest dangers is hopping Q*bert right off the edge of the pyramid into oblivion. In learning the game, you'll lose quite a few Q*berts that way!

Delightfully Frustrating

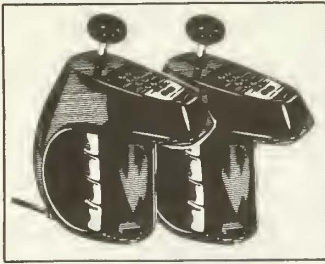
This is the best arcade translation for the Intellivision since Matel's *Burgertime*, and it's a must for owners of this system. The colors are bright, the graphics crisp, and the characters are just as cute as they can be. The diagonal-only movements of Q*BERT are a nice change in playing style, too. And those who love a challenge will definitely find one here. There are nine levels, each consisting of four different pyramid screens. While Q*bert needs to jump on a cube only once to change it to the proper color on Level One, subsequent levels require changes to intermediate colors first. One jump too many can change cubes back to their original color at higher levels, making poor Q*bert start all over again. This is one of those delightfully frustrating games that gamers love to play.

Recommended. (MSR \$42.95)



OOPS!!!

In our review of DREADNAUGHT FACTOR for Intellivision (August issue), we inadvertently used the wrong company logo. ACTIVISION is the manufacturer of this game, NOT IMAGIC! Our apologies to both companies!

SUPER ACTION BASEBALL WITH CONTROLLERS

(★★★★ / ★★★★★) is finally shipping and it was worth the wait! The game begins with "Spring Training" (for those of you seasoned players, you can skip to the actual game) where you can work on batting practice and fielding skills. Believe us, you will need a few sessions with the fielding practice just to master the Controllers! Once you feel comfortable with all the options, field your team

and "Play Ball!" One player will take the field, the other will be up at bat (the one big drawback for some players is that you cannot play an actual game in the one-player mode. You will have to find a friend to play with you).

Pitcher Options

As the pitcher, you have 16 pitching options—from straight, to curve-in, curve-out, and knuckle ball, all with four speed options.

When the batter hits the ball, you direct your field players with the four action buttons and the joystick. Once your man gets the ball, he has the option to throw it to any of the four bases with the action buttons in order to get the batter out. And, if you catch a fly, any opponent on base must tag up before trying for another base, just like the real thing.

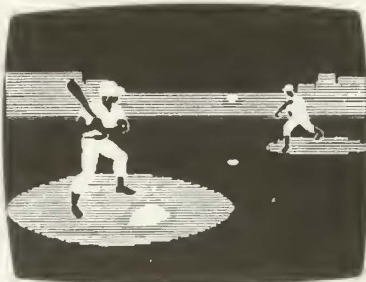
You can also try and "pick off" an opponent who has wandered too far from base.

Batter Up!

As the batter can also have a lot of fun, right from the time you step up to the plate. A little finesse with your Control Stick will enable you to swing high, low, or hit those balls thrown right at your belt buckle. Once you hit the ball, the race is on. You make your batter run by rolling the Speed Roller mounted on top of the Super Controller. Spin fast and hold down the Blue Action Button and race for first base. You must release the button when you want him to stop (watch out for overrunning a base). It really gets fun as you start filling the bases with your men. Each Action Button controls one of the men, so you must use the various buttons in conjunction with the Speed Roller to keep all your men going and watch out for bad base running! Don't let your player running from first to second overrun your player going from second to third! As you get better with the Controllers you will really be able to control when and where your players go. One other feature that adds excitement to the game is the "Steal" feature. You can move off base and attempt a steal, once again using the Speed Controller and Action Button. But watch out for the pitcher's pick-off play!

A Total Winner!

Graphically, this game is everything Coleco has promised. The three-quarter view when the batter is up is terrific, and there is an added feature which does not show in the game screen provided by Coleco. Above the batter and pitcher there are three insert pictures which give you a view of first, second, and third base, showing any runners who may be on base! We found it was a great way to keep close track of the game. Once the ball is hit, the graphics change to a more typical field overview where you can see the entire field. Throughout the game, there are crowd noises, but we particularly enjoyed the occasional "Charge", "organ playing", etc. The only thing missing was the smell of peanuts! (You'll have to have your own "Seventh Inning Stretch" too). The gameplay is absolutely terrific (we even managed to get a "non-baseball" person playing—and then couldn't get him away from



it!) and will provide many hours of fun and strategy for a couple of sports fans. The Controller is very innovative and allows for many options not found on sports games before. We are most anxious to see follow-up Super Action games for these Controllers. Recommended.

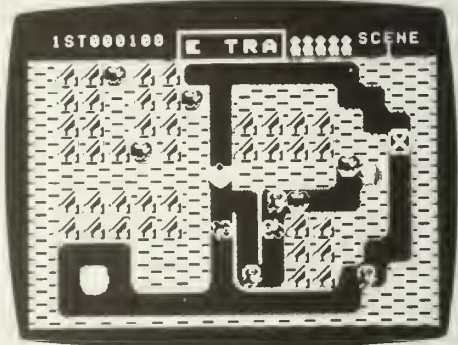
MR. DO (★★★^{1/2} / ★★★★★) is the translation of the arcade game by Universal and it's a good one.

COLECO

In this version, you guide Mr. Do as he tries to harvest his orchard before the Badguys can catch him. You mow a

path to the cherries and begin picking, all the while trying to avoid the Badguys. If they catch up to you, you have a Power Ball which you can use in defense. You can also push apples on top of the Badguys to squash them. Then you can dash to the middle of the screen and capture the treat for extra points. Although that will freeze the Badguys for a few seconds, three Blue Chompers and an Alphamonster enter the scene. The Blue Chompers will come straight at Mr. Do so you have to move fast! If you can eliminate all five Alphamonsters to spell E-X-T-R-A, you earn an extra Mr. Do. You can work strategically as the Badguys cannot mow - they can only follow your open paths. The Badguys can also transform

into Diggers if they want to get to Mr. Do in a hurry. You have to watch for that change. Occasionally a diamond appears in the orchard (it can appear any place where an apple breaks.) Capture the diamond and you immediately go to the next orchard.

**Fun and Challenging**

We had a great deal of fun with Mr. Do and found that using strategy in our path digging added hours of enjoyment. Graphically, the game looks very much like the arcade version; however, the graphics are not quite as colorful and the characters just a bit more blocky. There was a slight blinking problem with the Badguys, and the apples looked more like oranges. One note regarding the music...we thought the music was very cute but it DOES run throughout the game. We found the music became annoying to people around us. You may find that to keep peace in the house you will have to turn down the sound on your TV! Recommended

ROBOT NEWSLETTER DEBUTS!

For those of you who are into Robots, there is a brand new newsletter just for you! PERSONAL ROBOTICS NEWS is only for the serious as it's \$125.00 per year. The editor promises detailed articles on new technology, interviews with industry experts, and in-depth reports on leading personal robotics companies. For further information contact Personal Robotics News, P.O. Box 10058, Berkeley, CA 94709. Telephone 415-524-7115.

Editors note: Video Game Update does not endorse or recommend, in any way, the above publication but is merely passing on information for those who may be interested in this new field.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..COLECOVISION-COMPATIBLE

TIME PILOT (★★★/★★★½) pits your aircraft against enemy aircraft of four eras. You begin in a dogfight with biplanes in 1910. Shoot them down, attempt to pick-up the parachutists for extra points, avoid the fighter's bombs and face the dirigible before being time-warped forward into 1940. There you will battle a squadron of monoplanes and bombers which come at you from several directions. Before you may move on, you must shoot down the red bomber. The next stage is 1975 with a more sophisticated enemy—helicopters with heat-seeking missiles. They have tremendous maneuverability and you will have to duck and dodge while firing off rounds of ammunition to stay in the fight. You must face the dreaded double-prop helicopter before being allowed to time-warp to your final battle which is staged in 1985. Here you will face your toughest challenge with bands of swirling jet fighters, armed with infra-red homing missiles. If you survive these fighters, and the black jet bomber, you will earn your wings! But you only have a moment to rest as it's back to 1910, with your enemy becoming more and more difficult to defeat.

Great Maneuverability

Throughout our battles, our aircraft performed very well, moving left and right, up and down and spinning to face the enemy which came at us from all sides. After using the standard ColecoVision controller for awhile, we decided to follow Coleco's suggestion of using the new Super Action Controllers. We really liked using these new controllers as it really gave us the feel of being in the cockpit! The only drawback, and it was a very small one, is that your aircraft's speed cannot be controlled. Again, with the maneuverability of the plane, this is a very small complaint. Graphically, your enemies in all the eras are recognizable as the aircraft they depict. This game is a worthy addition to any ColecoVision library.

Recommended

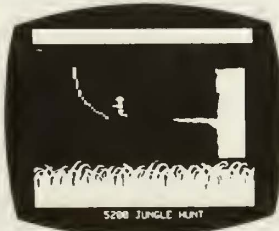
CRITICALLY SPEAKING..ATARI 5200-COMPATIBLE

JUNGLE HUNT (★★★½/★★★½) is a very good adaptation of the Taito arcade hit, in which the player takes on the role of Sir Dashly, a pith-helmeted jungle hunter trying to save Lady Penelope from the savage cannibals. Playable at three skill levels by one or two players, the game has four scenarios, each demanding different skills. When we first meet Sir Dashly, he's perched on the limb of a tree, poised to swing from vine to vine so he can cross the Deadly Forest. This segment is very colorful, with lots of fine detail in the jungle greenery and a well-animated Sir Dashly. When he reaches the last vine, he dives into the crocodile-infested Reptile River, armed only with his hunting knife. Crocs can be stabbed for points or simply avoided. As Dashly churns his way through the river, he also encounters crab-like creatures that won't kill him, but can slow him down—and this is a timed contest! (Graphics in this segment are also quite good, though it's hard to imagine why our fearless hero is swimming with all his clothes on, complete to boots and pith helmet!)

In the third scene, the jungle hunter races up a hill while dodging bouncing rocks—the weakest of the four scenes graphically.

Every time he misses a boulder, poor Dashly lands on his head! In the last scene, rescue is imminent, if only Sir Dashly can avoid the poison-tipped spears of the dancing cannibals. At last, with great skill and daring, Sir Dashly rescues the lady just before she is to become Penelope stew, and the player earns a big bonus. **JUNGLE HUNT** is a charming game, and the adaptation is one that should please fans of the coin-op original.

Recommended. (MSR \$39.95)



MOVED??? Don't forget to let us know so you don't miss one important issue. For the fastest change, either send us your mailing label, or copy the numbers on the top of it and we'll do the rest

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..ACCESSORIES

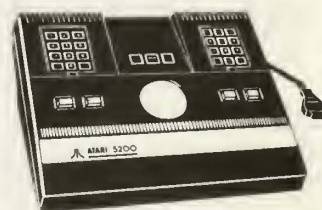
ATARI TRAK-BALL CONTROLLER for the Atari 5200 is a



beautifully designed, arcade-style console controller that can be used with a large portion of the Atari 5200 library of games. The console top contains the Trak-Ball itself in the center, two firing buttons on each side of the ball, and two keypads on either side at the back of the console. The Trak-Ball is equally comfortable for right or left-handed

players because of the arrangement of firing buttons. It can be passed back and forth between two players for use in two-player games, so it's not necessary to purchase two controllers. The top surface of the console is slanted, so the controller has a profile quite similar to the Atari 5200 unit itself. This slanted surface also makes the controller equally suitable for table-top use or placement in your lap. We tested the controller with several of the 5200 games that have the Trak-Ball option, and it performed beautifully on all of them. In particular, *Missile Command* and *Centipede* are more fun than ever when played with the Trak-Ball. This controller adds an authentic, coin-op feel to these excellent games, making them even closer to the arcade originals. The Trak-Ball not only allows fluid movement in any direction, but also gives the player the ability to vary the speed of on-screen objects. This is something that only a Trak-Ball can do, and it adds a whole new dimension to some games. The Trak-Ball Controller is a must for any owner of the Atari 5200 system. (The Trak-Ball Controller carries a 90-day limited warranty from the manufacturer.)

Recommended. (MSR \$69.95)



ATARI SPACE AGE JOYSTICK is a unique combination of



pistol-grip firing device and short-throw joystick in a lightweight, easy-to-use package. This joystick is equally suitable for right or left-handed use because of the arrangement of firing trigger and short stick. In use, the firing trigger falls naturally under the index finger as you grip the ribbed handle in one hand. The other hand can be rested on

the oblong base below the stick, while the fingers manipulate the stubby joystick itself. We gave this joystick quite a workout with some of our favorite games on both the Atari 2600 and the Atari 800 computer, and we were impressed with its comfort, ease of use, and responsiveness on all the games we tested. Firing with the index finger was quick and not nearly so tiring as firing a base-mounted button with the thumb. The short stick was very easy to grasp and allowed maximum control with a minimum of hand movement. We especially appreciated this control on maze games, such as *Ms. Pac-Man*. As joysticks go, this one certainly looks different from everything else currently available. And it proved to be a better-than-average performer, especially compared to others in its price range. (The Space Age Joystick carries a 90-day limited warranty from the manufacturer.)

Recommended. (MSR approx. \$20.00)



INTELLIVISION REVISITED

by Mark Dillen Stitham, M.D.

Although I have a ColecoVision, Atari 5200, Vectrex (and even a pinball machine), I find I frequently play my old Intellivision. What follows is a brief review and overview of that system and its early games.

It's hard to feel sorry for a large corporation, but with Intellivision, Mattel was first ahead of its time, then behind, but never seemingly on time. Initially, of course, it was far superior to the Atari 2600, but high price, problems with manufacture, and Atari's superior marketing gave the 2600 about an 85% share of all home video games. Now its small computer potential has been outstripped by Coleco and others. However, I submit that the very complexity that turned some people off to Intellivision games (versus the "turn it on and play" 2600) in the long run gives the system staying power. The major drawbacks to the system are the hard-wired controllers (subsequently corrected with Intellivision II) and its slow speed due to low computer capacity and relative complexity. Almost all the games must be played on Level 4, and even then are often too slow. (E.g., you can always see the pitch coming in *Baseball*.) Let's turn now to the various categories of games.

Sports Games

The sports games, most notably *Major League Baseball* and *NFL Football*, made George Plimpton rich. Almost all capture the feel of the sport. (The exception is *NBA Basketball*, which is a failure.) The major problem is the need for a second human player. My three favorites in this group are *PGA Golf*, *Auto Racing* and *PBA Bowling*. *Golf* has 9 clubs, hook and slice, tree patterns that move to give the course variety, and—the biggest kick of all—trajectory. From your bird's eye view, the ball actually gets larger as you clear the trees (if you do). *Auto Racing* has 5 courses, 4 different car types, and a scrolling track that you can "lay rubber on." *Bowling* has variables for ball weight, alley slickness, handedness, loft, curve, aim and starting position—the only thing missing is picking your bowling shoe size!

Space Games

Mattel has never been big on licensing, so most of the hot arcade space hits never made it to Intellivision. Their earliest was one of the best, *Space Battle*. At the highest speed, the aliens really take evasive action. *Space Spartans* is a voice-enhanced version with great, clear voices. (Hundreds have probably been sold to men who heard the sexy ship's computer say, "Hello, Commander. Computer reporting!!") My beef about this game is that it's depressing to be so outnumbered. I wish it were modeled after a less unfair battle than that of Thermopylae, 480 B.C. *Star Strike* is a clever version of the final battle from the movie, *Star Wars*, and includes such nice touches as bomb crashes that shake the whole picture, injuries that disable the ship partially, and—if you lose—the destruction of Mother Earth itself! *Astrosmash* gets very repetitive and is a hybrid copy of *Space Invaders* and *Asteroids* to begin with. *Space Hawk* I find boring and, worse, finger-numbing because of the constant need to move. But I have to credit the designer's scatological sense of humor—the object of the game is to destroy bubbles of gas released from the end of a flying bird!

Intellivoice

This module produces clear and essential game information, although the number of games is severely limited. In addition to the above *Space Spartans*, the earliest carts were *B-17 Bomber* and later *Bomb Squad*. *B-17* has some technical flaws, e.g. no *B-17* could climb at the angle you can in this game, and the biggest limiting factor is fuel consumption. Interestingly, a big complaint in reviews, namely the long periods where you drone on with nothing happening, is a realistic plus. It must have been like that in World War II, never knowing when the flak or fighters would hit. *Bomb Squad* is a clever idea and fairly well executed. The

soldering iron and other tools look very realistic; the fireworks at the end do boost your self-esteem; and the background rhythm gives a certain freneticism to the whole play. My biggest complaint is Level 3 where the disc is too sensitive and overreacts so much that you lose the 8-second grace period and blow up.

Strategy

In general, strategy games are best handled by dedicated machines or personal computers. In video games, too much memory goes to the video display. Accordingly, the only one in this group that I have is *APBA Backgammon*. Joli Kansil, backgammon editor for *Games* magazine and a friend, agrees with me that the program is pretty weak. Moves tend to be too conservative, and there is no option for doubling.

Miscellaneous

Four favorites are worthy of mention. *Night Stalker* is a paranoid's delight—ever more dangerous robots pursue you in a maze. Two basic complaints: first, the speed is very slow even at Level 4, and it takes a long time to get to the interesting robots; and second, the firing direction uses the keypad, and if you look down, you can lose a man. I got around this by poking a pinhole through the overlay directly over the four direction pads and playing by "Braille." One tip: after 50,000 points, the black robot can blast away your bunker, so stay away from there. If you get hit, you'll reappear there, and the robot can blast away all your men immediately.

Frog Bog is the only game my wife will play with me! Levels are easy for children but challenging for adults. (Indeed, this game has the capacity to allow two players to play at two different levels—a feature notable lacking on all systems save the 2600.) The changing hues of the skyline are quite attractive, as are the pond sounds. An underrated game. By contrast, *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons (Cloudy Mountain)* has been very popular, and rightly so. The highest level is very difficult. Many have complained that the mountains should not have been color-coded to reveal the contents, but this, I feel, would have made the game nigh impossible.

Sub Hunt is quite complex and a very clever simulation. Two typical Mattel touches of realism: the slower your speed, the slower your rudder can turn, and the surface speed is 25% faster than under water! At the higher levels, you really have to hit one or two ships, then dive and hide immediately. When you get hit, water glugs wickedly to the top of the screen! (I sold my *Sea Battle* because it required two players, but it was marvelously complex and engaging.)

Other Software Producers

Imagic deserves many kudos for their prolific output for this system. Their graphics are always colorful, and play action is excellent. *Demon Attack* and *Atlantis* are prime examples. *Microsurgeon* is unusual but too slow for me to play much. *Swords and Serpents* is undoubtedly the best of this genre so far, but it really needs two players to get very far. Activision, so popular with 2600 owners, has been a big disappointment with their first two releases for Intellivision. *Pitfall* and *Stampede* merely duplicated the crude graphics of the 2600. The company came off looking lazy and out for a quick buck. I note that they are now getting into some original programming for the Intellivision system itself.

There it is—not a bad little system, especially if you can get it for \$100 or less. (Those of us who couldn't wait of course paid \$240 and up!) Some of the newer games not covered in this article are very good, such as *Burgertime*, *White Water*, and particularly *Maze-A-Tron*.

Editor's note: Dr. Stitham is a charter subscriber to this newsletter. He practices adult and child psychiatry in Honolulu, Hawaii.

COMPUTERS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Program Design Inc. (PDI) has just completed an interesting study to determine the effects of computerized teaching aids on preschool children in developing reading and other learning skills. There were two groups formed with similar backgrounds in sex, age, and test scores. One group had no exposure to computers while the other group of children worked with several PDI learning programs over a five week period. The results were rather astonishing! When the tests were repeated to both groups at the end of the test period, the children who had not been exposed to the computer learning gained an overall testing level of 13.5 percent while the computer-exposed group gained a whopping 47.4 percent! In looking over the test results, we were impressed also with the comments from the teacher running the computer group. In early exposure to the computer, many of the children had problems with manipulation of the joystick, and general frustration with the dexterity needed. As the testing continued, it became quite obvious that, not only did they improve greatly, but they found high levels of self-satisfaction, a positive attitude about learning, and strong decision-making skills surfacing. Many families have already introduced their youngsters to computers, but many more have held back for various reasons. We feel the results of these tests speak for themselves. Kids want to learn, and will learn in the proper environment. Make it fun and they learn even quicker! And, a home computer can be a family affair—a time for the family to work together and play together. Now, that's positive!

ATARI COMPUTER PLANS

We can give you a further update on the planned release schedule of the new Atari computers which we've covered over the last few issues. First, the 600XL, retailing at \$199, will begin shipment in the first part of this month. Atari is also making a package available for \$599 which includes the 600XL, the model 1027 letter quality printer, and their word processing program, Atari Writer. The Model 800XL computer is also scheduled for release during the month of September, in the latter half. That computer will have a suggested list of \$399. Look for both the 1400 and 1450XLD computers in November (no price set yet for either model)

Planned software

Many of our readers have asked about the availability of titles such as Pole Position, Ms. Pac-Man, Pengo, and others for the Atari computer line. Unconfirmed sources tell us that those and other titles of recent arcade hits (Xevious, Jungle Hunt, etc. come to mind) will make their way to the Atari computer, but not before the first half of 1984.

DEATH OF VIC-20

We have learned that Commodore will quietly discontinue the manufacture of the VIC-20, in favor of the highly popular Commodore 64. Initially, this will not have an effect on third party software for the VIC system; however, it is bound to have an eventual effect on software for it. Studies have shown that the majority of software sales for a computer take place during the first 60 days after purchase of the hardware. With no new hardware in the market, the software sales would have to eventually suffer. Undoubtedly, several companies will continue to make software, but title choice could become much smaller.

DIG DUG DESIGNER TO SOFTSYNC

Christopher Chance, the game designer who programmed the arcade hit Dig Dug to run on the Atari 4/800 and also worked on Caverns of Mars, has signed with Softsync for future projects. The first program to be published is called DANCING FEATS, a non-competitive game which allows anyone, regardless of musical ability, to compose tunes using the joystick to play notes and control the colorful screen display. After programming the type of music you wish to play, Dancing Feats makes it impossible for you to hit a wrong note. The program will also display a graphic rainbow representation of each note.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING...ATARI COMPUTERS

O'RILEY'S MINE (★ ★ 1/2 / ★ ★ ★) is another the "dig your own maze game" and it's a cute one. As O'Riley, the fearless miner, you must travel swiftly through the mine capturing all the buried treasure and return safely to the top of the mine

DataSoft Inc.
COMPUTER SOFTWARE

shaft. All the while, the river monsters are chasing you, and the onrushing water fills the tunnels behind you. Strategy dictates that you start with low tunnels as the water will rise to the highest level you dig in the mine and you will surely drown if you're not careful. You do have the ability to set dynamite charges behind you to block the monster's paths, but the debris created can be washed away by the water. You can time the explosions so the monster is completely destroyed and earn extra points. There is no time limit, other than the water swiftly filling the tunnels.

Average Graphics

Although the water rushing through creates a nice effect, we were not overly enthusiastic about the graphics. Gameplay is very simple and probably will not hold an adult's attention for too many hours at the easiest difficulty level. We found ourselves quickly racking up large scores as we found ourselves able to outwit the river monsters and the river pretty easily. Once you get into the higher levels, however, it becomes a good, challenging game and worthy of your attention. (16K Disk & Cassette packaged together) (MSR \$34.95)

MOON SHUTTLE (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ 1/2) is a space shoot-'em-up, and it's a good one. The object is simple, beginning with the first obstacle which is an asteroid belt. You must destroy asteroids by firing missiles and blast a pathway through for your ship. It's not as easy as it sounds as your ship will automatically start moving toward the belt and it's tough to make your way through the last row of asteroids as they are moving horizontally, as well as vertically. You must deal with the Asteroid Belt between each wave of aliens, each time becoming more and more difficult to make a path as more and more rows of asteroids move horizontally, and the entire belt moves towards the bottom of the screen at a faster and faster pace. In the second wave, you will face Bomb Launchers which dance wildly about the screen, shooting at you while you attempt to blow them out of the sky. The third wave, Expandos, are tough to shoot down as they are slim, missile-like objects which are hard to hit. Luckily for you, they expand just before they fire at you, giving you a split second to move out of the way. The fourth wave, Man-O'-Wars also dance about the screen merrily, with their tentacles reaching out, and no warning of when they are going to shoot. When you blow them up, a quick lightning bolt darts across where the Man-O'-War just was. The last wave, the Blob Men, offer yet another challenge. They start out large and when you hit one with your missile, it will split into two smaller Blob Men. The smaller men will fire at you and are very quick! If you are able to make it through one complete wave, no easy task, you will start again, each time more and more difficult.

Super Graphics!

One of the things that raised this above some of the other space games is the super graphics. Your ship even has fire thrust coming out of the bottom of it! The aliens have stunning graphics. We especially liked the Bomb Launchers and Man-O'-Wars. DataSoft is to be commended on the quality of the graphics. Gameplay is very animated and will provide hours of enjoyment for all space fans. (16K Disk and Cassette packaged together) Recommended (MSR \$29.95)

UNITRONICS COMPUTER BUMPS

The Unitronics computer, which features the wafer drive system, appears to be yet another unit that keeps having its delivery date "bumped". We now understand that the unit will not be released before the first quarter of 1984 and pricing is not set.

SUPER COBRA (★ ★ ★ 1/2 / ★ ★ ★ 1/2) is a horizontally scrolling aerial game for one or two players, based on the Konami arcade game. You fly a helicopter over and through the enemy city on your way to the eventual goal, the enemy base. The flight

is divided into 1,000-mile segments; as each one is completed, a block at the top of the screen is filled in so the player knows the extent of his progress at all times. Each segment has a slightly different landscape than the last, and different combinations of enemy weaponry must be dealt with. At times, the action gets really hectic, as the enemy deploys missiles, meteors, tanks and flying saucers. Of course, you can shoot at all aircraft and ground-based objects. Each touch of the firing button alternately releases a straight-ahead shot and then a bomb, so you're able to shoot in two directions with one firing button. You'll also want to destroy enemy fuel tanks, because that's your only means of replenishing your fuel supply. The course is not always easy to navigate, even without the interference of enemy weapons. It can zig-zag, maze-like, narrowing down to some very tricky passageways.

Solid Gaming Fun

Graphics are very clear, colorful and pleasing in this version of the classic flying combat game. The action is more than challenging enough to suit the experienced player, yet the earlier stages can be managed by beginners, because the enemy installations don't fire at your chopper. Sound effects, too, are very realistic—great fun for the gamer who loves to wreak havoc and get lots of noise going in the process! One feature we especially liked was the ability to continue at the point where you lost your last helicopter, even though the score resets to zero. This gives the player a chance to see the screens beyond the point at which he has already lost the game. This one is good, solid gaming fun. Recommended. (MSR approx. \$40.00)

ASTRO CHASE (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2) was licensed from First Star Software for production in cartridge format, and it's one of the most graphically dazzling games available for any computer system. Stripped to its essentials, the story is another variation on the "only you can save Earth from destruction" scenario. This time the Megardian Empire, bent on revenge for its defeat at the hands of the Earth's forces in the 23rd century, has surrounded our galaxy with a huge force field. 16 Mega Mines are in orbit around the Earth, lured inward by its gravitational pull. You must destroy the mines and avoid or shoot the eight types of attack craft launched by the Megardians. Your ship's defenses include shields which can be activated by touching any of the 8 Shield Depots situated at the edges of the galaxy. Attack craft can be destroyed by ramming when your shields are activated, but mines must be shot. You must also watch your energy levels, which are depleted by flying, firing, or bumping into "hot stars," planets, or the force field. (Energy generators at the four corners of the galaxy allow you to replenish your supplies.) The most unusual aspect of the game is "Single Thrust Propulsion," a unique system allowing your ship to fire its lasers in any direction, regardless of the direction it is flying. If you get to be really good at this game, you might even get to see all 8 of the intermission cartoon sequences!

Stunning Graphics

As in the original diskette version, this game makes stunning use of the Atari computers' graphic potential. The game opens with an animated sequence showing your spaceman as he is beamed up to his saucer and then blasts off to defend Earth. The actual scene of battle covers 10 TV screens, and the graphics scroll in all directions. A perfectly gorgeous rendition of the Earth, showing the continents of North and South America, is set in black space full of twinkling stars and realistic-looking planets. The musical accompaniment is Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, but the music can be turned off if it bothers your concentration. The game itself is highly challenging, offering 34 skill levels and the wondrous ability to fire at an enemy behind you while you're in full retreat! This is a must for those who love space shoot-outs. (Cartridge) Recommended. (MSR approx. \$45.00)

ROSEN'S BRIGADE (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★) from Gentry Software is a horizontally scrolling game for one pilot in which you must rescue the parachuting men of your brigade while avoiding and shooting at enemy craft. You control a highly maneuverable little plane capable of daredevil moves as you take off into the fray. The earliest groups of enemy planes don't shoot, so it's a simple matter of swooping to catch falling paratroopers while avoiding the enemy. Later you'll encounter enemy helicopters, tanks that fire at you, and eventually you'll fly over the enemy's battleships.

Quirk in the Program

After playing for a short time, we noticed a quirk in the program: it's quite possible to amass ridiculously large point scores without ever facing an enemy that fires at your plane! Point scoring is heavily biased toward saving paratroopers (1000 points each) rather than destroying enemy craft (100 points each), and we soon learned that there is a limited number of enemy craft in each sector. Once we shot down all the enemy planes in the first sector, we simply flew around, rescuing paratroopers with nothing to stop us or even get in the way. We collected over 100,000 points this way, and it seemed we could have gone on indefinitely, because the difficulty level of the game advances only after a specific number of enemy craft have been destroyed, NOT upon earning a certain number of points. This situation could have been avoided with a provision for automatic scrolling to the next sector once all enemy craft in a sector have been eliminated. We don't want to seem overly picky about this point, because we did enjoy the game. If you play it "fairly," moving from sector to sector after eliminating enemy craft, **ROSEN'S BRIGADE** is a good, challenging game with pleasant, colorful graphics—and it's economically priced! (16K Disk & Cassette packaged together.) Recommended. (MSR \$16.95)

MANIAC MINER (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2) is an intriguing climbing game from Gentry Software. The game opens with a title screen showing Rocky, the MANIAC MINER, making his way to the entrance of the Goldbrick Mine, accompanied by appropriately maniacal music. You control the character of Rocky as he gathers treasures of gems and gold from the four horizontal shafts (levels) of the mine, all visible on your screen at the same time. While scampering for the treasures that appear one at a time, Rocky must duck under bloodthirsty bats and jump over creepy, green spiders. He must also avoid hitting his head on the stalactite formations overhead. Once all the treasures in a shaft are gathered, the Magic Pole materializes, allowing Rocky to slide down to the next shaft. The faster Rocky collects all the treasures in the mine, the more bonus points are earned. The bonus points are added to your score during intermission cartoon sequences.

Unusual Joystick Control

MANIAC MINER offers good, colorful graphics and challenging play action. The most unusual aspect of the game is the joystick control of Rocky. While left and right movements of the stick cause Rocky to run in those directions, and pulling the stick toward you makes him crouch, the firing button is NOT used to make Rocky jump. Pushing the joystick away from you causes Rocky to jump straight up and hover. The longer you hold the joystick in this position, the higher he jumps and the longer he hovers. Forward diagonal pushes of the stick create similar hover-jumps to the right or left. With practice, we found that Rocky's jumps could be perfectly fine-tuned to allow just enough height to reach a treasure without bumping Rocky's head into a stalactite. This unusual control mechanism adds a lot to the game, and it will be appreciated by gamers looking for something new in a climbing game. MANIAC MINER is a good game even without this original touch, but the fine degree of control over Rocky's jumps makes it even better. (48K Disk)

Recommended. (MSR \$19.95)



Back issues are available for most issues of THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE (no copies left of Vol. 1, Number 1,2, and 3). Send \$2.00 for each back issue you wish. Buy any four for \$6.00 and any six for only \$9.00. Make certain you have a complete set!

KABOOM! (★★★/★★★½) introduces the Mad Bomber, so well known to owners of the Atari 2600, but a new character among games for Atari computers. There are similarities to the original, designed by Larry Kaplan, and differences in this adaptation by Paul Willson.

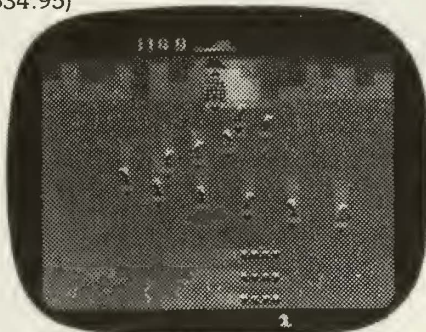
ACTIVISION

The Mad Bomber, dressed in convict stripes, patrols the roofs at the top of the screen, randomly dropping bombs with lighted fuses. The player operates a one-man bucket brigade at the bottom of the screen with joystick or paddle controller, trying to catch the bombs. The bombs fall with sizzling, crackling sounds; when caught, they make a great plopping splash in the bucket, and the Mad Bomber frowns a lot. (Each bomb caught is also accompanied by a musical note. The combination of notes played by several bombs in a row sounded vaguely familiar after a few waves. We finally recognized Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* when we hit just the right rhythm!) When you miss a bomb, you lose a bucket, and all bombs remaining on the screen blow up in a chain reaction. Nasty guy that he is, the Mad Bomber gives you a quick, sarcastic smile when you miss a bomb. While this computer version of *KABOOM!* offers versions for one player and for two players alternating turns, it also has a "Pitch and Catch" variation in which two players can take turns being the Mad Bomber or catching the falling bombs. (Only the player catching bombs will earn points.)

Superb Sound Effects

The graphics in this game are quite similar to the original, but with greater detail. We especially liked the expressions on the Mad Bomber's face and the water splashing out of the bucket each time a bomb is caught. The sound effects are superb. Although either joystick or paddle controllers can be used, we preferred the paddles. In fact, *KABOOM!* is one of the all-time best games for these controllers. The original Atari 2600-compatible *KABOOM!* is a good game, but this version is even better because of the addition of the "Pitch and Catch" variation. This allows true, simultaneous participation by two players, which is rare in video games for any system.

Recommended. (MSR \$34.95)



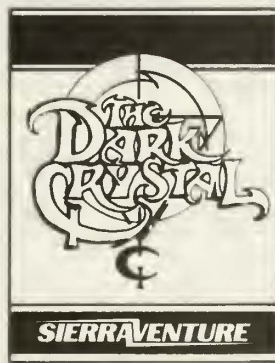
RIVER RAID (★★★★/★★★★) is an outstanding adaptation of the million-selling game for the Atari 2600. Both the original and the adaptation were designed by Carol Shaw. In this combat-themed game for one or two players, you control a B1 Strato-Wing Assault Jet in a daring raid over a constantly changing river course. The river canyon winds through the countryside, crossed by occasional bridges, scattered with islands, and sometimes narrowing down to barely more than wing-tip width. In the early parts of the river, you'll encounter a few large enemy ships, some helicopters that flit back and forth between the high banks, fuel tanks and bridges. All these targets can be shot for points, but you'll want to fly over at least some of the fuel tanks to replenish your plane's fuel supply. (If your timing is good, you can refuel and shoot the tank out for points: once the nose of your plane has almost reached the top of the tank, fire away!) As you fly farther up the river, the enemies appear in greater numbers. White jets fly across your path and multi-colored hot-air reconnaissance balloons bar your way. Tanks sometimes cross the bridges, and blowing up the bridge with a tank on it is worth extra points. Even farther up the river, the going really gets tough as tanks on the shore and helicopters begin firing. Players of differing abilities are accommodated by the ability to start at the first, fifth, twentieth or fiftieth bridge on the river.

Stunning Graphics

The graphics in *RIVER RAID* are stunning. The river winds a picturesque course from screen to screen, and all water and aircraft are very realistic in appearance. Sound effects, too, are extremely well done, giving the player the feeling of really being in the heat of battle. Even without the gorgeous visuals, *RIVER RAID* would be a winner on quality of game play alone. From rank beginner to accomplished game player, this game has just the right amount of challenge for all. (If you think you're pretty hot stuff with a joystick, try starting this game at the fiftieth bridge. If you can get past the first narrow passage between the cliffs, be prepared for all #?! to break loose!) We liked the original *RIVER RAID* for the Atari 2600, but Carol Shaw has really outdone herself in this computer adaptation of the game. (Cartridge) Recommended. (MSR \$34.95)



DARK CRYSTAL (★★★½/★★★★½) is a fantasy-adventure



based on the movie of the same name. With this game, you enter a world peopled with fantastic creatures, such as the Mystics and the Skeksis, both formed during the Great Division of the urSkeks. You take the role of the hero, Jen, one of two Gelflings who survived the great slaughter by the Garthim, under the direction of the Skeksis. Long ago, the Great Crystal was shattered during a violent argument among the Skeksis in the Crystal Chamber. A Shard from the precious Crystal flew out onto the mountainside, and the light left the Crystal. The Quest for the lost

Shard and the dispossession of the evil Skeksis was prophesied to be the responsibility of one of the Gelflings—Jen. Jen was raised by UrSu the Master, wisest of the Mystics, and placed under the protection of spirals of power. Now it is up to you to lead Jen on his Quest, first to find the Shard, and then to restore it to its place in the castle, using the light of the Great Conjunction of the Three Suns. Only then will the Dark Crystal be lit again from within.

This is a very good example of the type of Hi-Res adventure for which Sierra On-Line has become known. If you like this type of game, and especially if you saw and enjoyed the movie, you'll want to add this game to your collection. It has been carefully designed to follow the movie in plot and feeling. It gives the player a chance to explore every possible aspect of the movie and its characters in a highly complex quest. It's not all serious, though. For example, we got a big kick out of the program's response to our command, "Talk Bat," when we encountered a Crystal Bat. We were informed that this is the Dark Crystal...not Dracula! (48K Disk; also available for Apple.) Recommended. (MSR \$39.95)

ST. NICK (★★★½/★★★★) is a game with a yuletide theme, a timed maze contest for one player at any of six different skill levels. The game opens with an exterior view of St. Nick's workshop, where evil

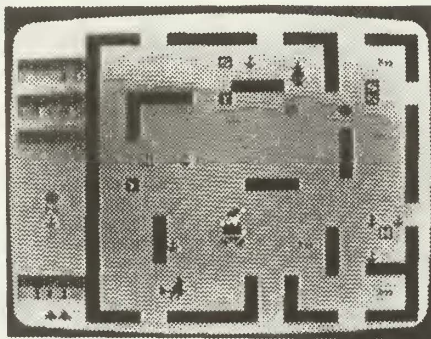
Funware
INC.

A subsidiary of Creative Software

witches have cast a spell on Santa's elves. The elves have stolen toys from the workshop, and they scatter them all over the playing screen to the accompaniment of familiar Christmas music. As jolly old St. Nick himself, your job is to gather up the toys in a specified order while dodging flying witches, all before the allotted time runs out. If a toy is picked up out of sequence, or if St. Nick runs into a witch, the elves return to scatter more toys. While they're busy making Santa's job more difficult, he is frozen in one spot, but the time continues to run out. Differently colored letter blocks are positioned among the toys. If the letters to spell "Santa" can be picked up, the witches will be frozen for a "magic moment," and St. Nick can gather toys unhindered and in any order. If a screen can be cleared, St. Nick moves on to the next maze and even more toys to collect.

Characters & Sounds of Christmas

ST. NICK is a very cute and colorful game full of all the characters and musical sounds of Christmas that are so familiar to children. Santa is immediately recognizable in his red suit. Little elves scamper around, spreading toy boats, balls, horns and gingerbread men. The witches fly on their broomsticks, doing their best to hinder St. Nick's every move. The theme of this game will appeal to even the tiniest children, who will not really be able to play the game, but they'll enjoy watching and listening as an older brother or sister plays. We tried the game at all skill levels; they differ in the speed of the characters and the quantity of toys scattered. None of the skill levels are easy enough for very young children, and the higher levels will tax the most accomplished game players because of the precision needed to move St. Nick to gather only the correct toys. Quite frankly, we think this game is too difficult, considering the obvious appeal to mostly younger children who are likely to have limited video game skills. In our opinion, there should have been one variation with slow timing and very widely scattered toys. This would have allowed tots a chance to play the game successfully. Though the challenging play action will appeal to older kids, they might find the theme too juvenile for extended interest. We do like the game, however, and we can see it becoming part of a family's holiday ritual, along with tree-trimming and turkey dinners. (Cartridge) (MSR \$44.95)



TIGERVISION ANNOUNCES NEW LICENSES

Tigervision has just licensed four titles from Orca Corp. of Tokyo, Japan. Among the games planned for eventual conversion by Tigervision are: *ESPIAL* (which ranks number 6 in Japan arcades), a high resolution graphic space attack game. Use your full fire power to destroy the massive scrolling spy space station; *SUPER CRUSH*, an auto demolition derby; *SKY LANCER*, a 21st century space warrior game; and *CHANGES*, touted as the ultimate maze game.

CREATIVE PLANS

Creative Software has licensed *CRISIS MOUNTAIN* from Synergistic Software for translation to the VIC-20 and Commodore 64 computers.

Crisis Mountain is an action game in which you control a mine explorer who has stumbled onto hidden mountain treasures as well as traps, bombs, and bats. As you wind your way through dark caverns, two buried time bombs tick away in remote caves and threaten to destroy you and the mountain.

RIVER CITY GAMBLER (★★★/★★) from L&M Software is a dice game for one or two players; the computer may be allowed to play or not. Aside from a nicely animated depiction of a Mississippi river boat at lower left and two dice on the right, the entire screen display is text against black background. The numbers 1 through 12 are displayed at the top of the screen, and each player's starting tally of 78 points is lined up on the left. The spots on the dice flash, signifying that the computer is rolling the dice. The object is to eliminate as many numbers as possible from the array at the top by choosing single numbers or combinations equal to the sum of the two dice rolled. The sum is subtracted from your score, and the dice are rolled again and again until the player no longer has enough numbers to equal the sum of the dice. (Errors will end your turn—watch your addition!) Rolling doubles allows the player to take either the sum of the dice or double the sum. If the computer is playing, its turn is always last. The player with the lowest score wins.

While the graphics and music are well done, the play action is quite slow, which is often a characteristic of games written in BASIC, as this one is. As a single player game, *RIVER CITY GAMBLER* becomes boring after a few plays; with two players it's only slightly better. The only reasonable application we can see for this game would be as a disguised addition drill for young children, since correct choices are rewarded with another turn and errors end the game. (16K Cassette) Not recommended. (MSR \$9.95)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..VIC 20

JAWBREAKER II (★★½/★★½) brings the ever-popular *Jawbreaker* to the VIC-20. The concept of this version is basically the same—you control a set of chomping teeth let loose in a candy factory where dashes represent candy bars. You work horizontal tracks on which you can move to the left and right, and vertical movement is accomplished via sliding bars with doors. Meanwhile, the Smiling Faces chase you and will munch you if you don't stay out of the way. You can head for the energizers at either end of two of the tracks which will allow you to eat the Smiling Faces for points. There are also special treats which appear in the center of the maze. If you clear the maze of all the candy bars, a tooth brush comes out and brushes your teeth.

VIC-20 Restrictions

This is a game which we have always enjoyed and were somewhat disappointed by the restrictions the VIC-20 put on the game. In addition to the inferior graphics inherent in many VIC-20 games, there was only a total of five tracks in this version with over-large characters. We also had some problems getting used to the "feel" of this version as it took quite a bit of work with the joystick to make our teeth move in the direction we wanted them to. After awhile with the game, we overcame this problem and, in fact, found ourselves working through the tenth level (actually just a repeat of the maze, slightly faster) in no time. We lost interest in the "challenge" of the game rather quickly. There are some games which would be better off not translated to certain formats and we feel this falls under that category. We would suggest strongly that you try this one out before purchase. If you have *Jawbreaker* in another format, this one is *NOT* for you! (cartridge) (MSR \$33.50)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..VIC 20

CANNONBALL BLITZ (★ ★ 1/2 / ★ ★ 1/2) is a climbing game, similar to Donkey Kong. In this one, you must climb to the top where you can capture the Redcoat's flag. Instead of ladders between the levels, you use catapults, either by running and jumping them, or by standing on the catapult and waiting for a cannonball to fall through the trapdoor to catapult you to the next level. Throughout, the cannonballs continue to roll down, and you must jump over them. Once you reach the top, you must catch a balloon to reach the flag. In the second level you must make holes in the platforms all the way to the top and knock them out from under the Redcoats. The cannons can be destroyed by a hammer, or you can jump them. On the third level you must, once again, capture the flag. This time you have elevators and ropes to assist you.

Pretty Typical

The premise of this game is pretty typical, and there have been several variations of the same general theme. However, this is one of the more challenging VIC-20 climbing games we've seen, and worth a look if you enjoy this type of game (cartridge) (MSR \$37.95)

LUNAR LEEPER (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★) is a very cute game in which you must rescue men from an alien surface while Leepers try to jump up at you and also kill the men you are trying to rescue. As you attempt to pluck the men into your spacecraft, the Leepers come bouncing up at you trying to grab the men AND munch your ship up. Your time is limited by the amount of fuel you have and you will have to refuel occasionally from fueling stations. Rescue all the men on Level One and advance to the second level, a dark cave. There you must destroy the giant eyeball at the end of the tunnel, again avoiding aliens. In the caves, unlike Level One, there are no refueling stations, so you must work fast.

Good Graphics

The graphics on this version are very good and the motion of the Leepers is terrific—they look like frogs making giant leaps when they take off after your ship. This is no easy game, either. From the pick-up of the men to avoiding the Leepers, it is challenging, to say the least. One drawback we found was the lack of power thrust in directing our space ship across the playfield, but that's really more a question of getting used to the feel of the game. (cartridge) (MSR \$37.95)
Recommended.

THRESHOLD (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ 1/2) is another familiar title translation and is a typical space shoot-'em-up in the genre of *Space Invaders*, *Galaxian*, and the like. Your spaceship is at the bottom of the screen and you must shoot all the aliens in each wave before going to the next wave. After you get through several levels, you refuel at the Mother Ship. You then begin another round of shooting aliens. You also have the ability to occasionally use a hyper-warp driver which slows down the time and speed. The feature can only be used once per ship. Your lasers can heat up, which will force temporary malfunction where you cannot shoot at all.

The graphics are pretty good and, in fact, the graphics on the Mother Ship are quite stunning. The action is very typical for this type game and we cannot find anything which is different enough in this game to warrant addition to your library. If you don't own a good shoot-em-up for your VIC-20, you should consider this one. However, if you already own space games, you will probably want to pass on this. (cartridge) (MSR \$37.95)

DESIGN YOUR OWN

VSS Inc., the programming group which has developed VCS games for CBS and Xonox, plans to sell their proprietary development system to the public. Called READS 2600, the package includes an 8Kbyte ROM Emulator, connections for your Atari 800 computer, software, and instructions. It carries a suggested price of \$795.00. You can add VIC-20 programming capability by adding the 8Kbyte VIC-20 Cartridge Adaptor at a suggested retail of \$295.00. (In addition to the supplied software, you will need one of the 6502 assemblers currently available for the Atari 800.)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING. APPLE-COMPATIBLE

APPLE CIDER SPIDER (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ ★) is a deceptively simple game which will "hook" the fans of climbing games. The scenario finds your spider having to climb to the attic where his web

is, all the while avoiding a maze of crashing apple crushers and messy conveyor belts in a Cider Mill. Timing is critical and there are only a very few ways to wend your way to the top without hitting a dead end. You must stay out of the way of the juice and bottlers, along with frogs and wasps. Once you reach your web in the rafters, it's time to face a new maze in another part of the Mill. Grab a line, jump and climb, and use those conveyor belts to your advantage!

Very Colorful

The graphics, as can be the case with the Apple-compatibles, are very colorful, crisp, and generally stunning. The gameplay, while very good, is predictable. Once you get the correct pathway down, and the timing in avoiding the apples and cider, you'll find yourself running through screens pretty quickly. Of course, with a 48K Disk, it will take you a long time to get through all the screens! The music is very cute and adds to the atmosphere of the game. Coming for the Commodore 64, VIC-20, and Atari computers. (48K Disk) (MSR \$29.95)
Recommended

SAMMY LIGHTFOOT (★ ★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★ 1/2) is an cute variation on the climbing game theme with trampolines being the main mode of getting up to the next level. Your character, Sammy Lightfoot, is a funny little guy who, with your help, can really jump high on his trampoline and swing on the trapezes to cross chasms. There are three scenarios with 12 different difficulty levels for each one. In Scene One, Sammy uses the trampolines to gain altitude and swings across chasms on trapezes, all the while avoiding the rolling circus balls. In Scene Two, Sammy must dodge falling plungers, make it across disappearing platforms, and then travel on top of the plungers, just like a ride on a flying carpet! After you make it through Scene Two, Scene Three will challenge your abilities as you must avoid hammers, puff balls, and make it safely to the elevators, no easy trick. At the top of this level, Sammy must cross a flaming pit on a trapeze, and avoid getting his hair singed. Throughout all scenes, you start with a high score which counts down throughout your navigation. The faster you make the correct moves, the higher your score will be.

Deceptively Simple

The game is deceptive in that you can master the scenes with just a little bit work. However, the trick is all the different difficulty levels which will keep you occupied for some time. The action, especially with the trampoline, is very good and the graphics are great. The detail on Sammy is terrific, from his thick thatch of red hair, to the way his head spins when he gets bonked by a circus ball. His hair goes flying if you release the button as he's jumping on a trampoline. This game is really cute and there are plans to convert it to Atari computers, Commodore 64, and VIC-20 later this year. (48K Disk)
Recommended (MSR \$37.95)

ODYSSEY NAMES ITS THIRD PARTY SOFTWARE

Odyssey has named its third party software for the various game and computer systems, "PROBE 2000." Initial games are promised for September

The first title planned for ColecoVision is WAR ROOM, a representation of simulated computerized war games requiring strategic and hand-eye dexterity skills. Featuring split-screen action, it will show you the targeted region under attack and a view of the country as seen from the satellite under your control. You must defend cities while making certain they have the necessary materials to continue production vital to the defense effort. Cities that produce laser fuel, for example, must be supplied with food, raw materials and machinery. The game ends when there are no more cities to defend.

CRITICALLY SPEAKING. APPLE-COMPATIBLE

TITAN EMPIRE (★★★★ / ★★★½) is a fascinatingly complex combination of outer space shooting and strategy/adventure game for a solo Starship Commander. The evil inhabitants of Titan, a moon of Saturn, are trying to take over the solar system. Your task is to defend the remaining

MUSE
SOFTWARE

friendly planets and win back those already taken over by the Titans, all in the shortest time possible, in order to be enrolled in the Titan Empire Hall of Fame. Although the Titans are fictional, nearly everything else about this game is highly realistic. You operate within your own solar system: a sun, nine orbiting planets and their major moons. To play this game is to learn a great deal about the vast regions of space beyond our planet.

Learning the game requires time because of the various commands needed to execute various actions and call up different screen displays. Weaponry available to the space commander includes photon torpedoes and tracking missiles to be used against enemy ships or planets, and shields. Fuel supplies must be monitored, especially before warping off to a distant planet or moon. (Fuel can be beamed up from friendly planets or moons.) Friendly armies can also be beamed up to your ship. They can also be beamed down to an enemy planet with no armies for takeover, or they can be sent down to battle enemy armies. The game is complex enough that the player will probably want to take advantage of the "save to disk" option to continue a particularly good game.

Involving Game Play

With its excellent, colorful graphics and involving game play, this one is a must for Apple II+ /IIe owners who enjoy space games. It's the kind of game that can keep you happily occupied for many hours, planning strategies and battling enemy forces. Our only complaint—a minor one—is that the controls are a little less responsive than we'd prefer. The first few times you play the game, after you've gotten used to handling your ship, do try attacking moons before you go after planets. In general, the moons require fewer armies for takeover, and the enemy action in space while orbiting them is less intense than it is around enemy planets. This is a great game for escaping from your everyday cares. If you're sitting in a comfortable chair, it really feels as if you're a space commander ready to battle anything and everything. (48K Disk) Recommended. (MSR \$34.95)

NEW RECORD ON LADY BUG

Don Murray of Van Nuys, California, is a 37-year-old gamer and former member of the Turtles, a rock group of the late 1960's. He owns both a ColecoVision and an Atari 5200, but he seems to spend most of his spare time playing LADY BUG. In fact, he has played that game so much that he has developed some techniques that have led to astronomical scores. On August 4, 1983, Don decided to break the 882,910-point record published in *Electronic Games* magazine (September, 1983 issue). From previous experience, Don knew that LADY BUG scores will "roll over" to zero on the one millionth point, so he set up his video cassette recorder to tape this planned record-breaking game. He started playing at 8:00 p.m., and his score 14 hours later was **10,020,340 points!** (Don still had three Lady Bugs in reserve at this point, but he simply let them die. No wonder—most people would be exhausted after such an all-night marathon!) Since a still photograph of the screen at the end of this amazing feat would show a score of only 20,340 points, the video recording was necessary for independent verification of the multiple roll-overs. Don's tape was viewed by members of the *Video Game Update* staff, and that score is genuine. Our heartiest congratulations for a game well played!

Editor's note: to record your special games on video tape, simply disconnect the game switchbox from your TV and connect the output of the switchbox to the RF input of your video cassette recorder, using a standard 75-ohm "F to F" cable. (An adaptor may be necessary.) This part of the operation allows you to record the game, but not to see it on your screen. To restore the game picture to your screen, connect the output of your recorder to the antenna input on the back of the TV set, again using a 75-ohm F to F cable. (An adaptor may be necessary.) Never again will anyone doubt our high scores!

B.C. COMES TO SIERRA ON-LINE

Sierra On-Line and Sydney Development Corp have joined forces in a licensing agreement whereby Sydney will develop at least eight educational and entertainment programs within the next year and a half. Included are QUEST FOR TIRES, WIZTYPE, WIZWORD, WIZLAB, WIZSPELL, DOT TO DOT ZOT, and BUNG JUGGLER. The games are planned for all systems including Coleco! Sierra On-Line hopes to have QUEST FOR TIRES and WIZTYPE available for the Christmas season for Apple, Atari, Coleco, and Commodore 64 as well as 80 new B.C. and WIZARD OF ID games on the market in the next eighteen months!

Cartoon-Quality Animation

A unique computer graphic system will be utilized in designing the games which promises cartoon-quality animation. After the cartoonist draws a cartoon, the drawing is placed on a big pad and traced with a light pencil. The image is then projected on a screen by digital code (which allows the programmer to see how the game will look before it is programmed). Colors are filled in with a light pencil with an advanced paint program and the background is drawn. The image is then put into the computer and programmed to move!



BITS AND BYTES

★ Among new titles being added to Coleco's schedule is **DUKES OF HAZZARD** which will use the Driving Module! Undoubtedly, because of the nature of the TV series, this should be a rip-roaring good driving adventure!

★ Broderbund has shipped its popular title, **David's Midnight Magic**, for the Commodore 64 (disk; MSR \$34.95)

★ Watch for a brand new publication entitled **SOFTWARE EXPRESS**, a 300-page, bound book containing descriptions of more than 800 software titles and peripheral accessories for personal computers. SKU, one of the largest computer distributors, will be putting this guide into various computer stores around the country at a suggested list of \$14.95. An additional feature will be vendor coupons good toward the purchase of software and/or accessories.

★ Micro Fun, the first independent software company to release anything for the ColecoVision (Miner 2049er) has told us they intend to support Coleco's ADAM with compatible versions of their successful business, home and educational products.

★ Tandy and CBS Software have signed an agreement whereby CBS will have the right to convert and market selected Tandy software programs for computers other than those marketed by Tandy under its own brand name for Radio Shack.

★ Funware will release **SCHNOZ-OLA** for the TI-99/4A, a game based on an epic tale about a Mayan prince with tremendous jumping powers and a huge hawk-like nose.

OIL BARONS (★★★★/★★★★) is a combination computer/board game for one to eight players and it's terrific! Provided is a game board with squares indicating desert, plains, mountains, brushland, coastline, forest, offshore, arctic, and more. Put the computer disk in and you



have the choice of several game variations, including customizing options. One feature we liked a lot was the ability to play through without having to spend hours memorizing the directions. The computer prompts you through most transactions. Each player starts with \$1,500,000 in cash assets. The game opens with The Auction where additional parcels of land can be put into play. If you wish to skip the Auction, you can do so. The next segment of the game involves surveying and drilling for oil. Pick any coordinate on your board which is not already owned and decide if you wish to survey for possible oil. The computer gives you a read-out of survey costs, neighboring oil wells, and drilling costs. You can choose not to survey, or go directly to drilling if you feel there's a good chance of finding oil.

Survey Procedures

Once you decide to survey, the screen changes to depict the area (mountains, ocean, jungle, etc.) and a vehicle arrives with the detonation and seismic devices. The results of the survey are given with the chance percentages of whether there is oil below the surface. If you decide to drill, an oil well is put in place, you drill, and, hopefully, you strike oil. If you do, you will start receiving royalty payments. Of course, you must pay drilling costs out of your cash assets. Based on the option chosen, you can continue to survey other parcels or go to the next person.



Financially Speaking

After the parcels have been surveyed and drilled, the next step is the payment of royalties, financial statements, and company balance sheets. The computer reads out exactly where you are financially and, in fact, is a valuable teaching aid regarding bank notes, interest, net worth, and the workings of big business.

The Oil Street Journal

The "Oil Street Journal" video newspaper prints out the news and special government announcements, all of which are self-explanatory. You may be surprised by some of the other things that crop up at this point of the game. In one game, we found ourselves being sued and we had to employ a lawyer to have our case dismissed! At this point in the game, you are able to "save" the game for later play.

Customize or Gamble

As we mentioned above, you can customize if you wish. Change the cost of drilling, the value of the land, difficulty of finding oil, etc. Or, play the Gamble Mode where the computer scrambles the rules. The players must discover the parameters through trial and error. And, a feature that solitary players will love, is that you can set up a couple of companies and play yourself.

Challenging and Educational

We found this totally engrossing and educational in the process. Strategy plays a critical part as far as working with your cash assets and claiming new land. You must constantly weigh decisions regarding the spending of capital on surveying, buying new land, drilling, etc. The graphics, because it is giving directions and facts, is, on the most part, very simple. However, when you do your surveying of various landscapes there are some pretty impressive graphics, from helicopters dropping seismic charges to trucks making a clearing in the forest! Epyx has come up with a real winner in Oil Barons! (48K Disk)

Recommended (MSR approx. \$45.00)

LODE RUNNER (★★★★/★★★★) is a climbing game and it's a winner! As a Galactic Commando deep in enemy territory, you must infiltrate each of 150 different treasury rooms, evade

Brøderbund Software

the Bungeling guards, and recover every treasure chest of Bungeling booty. To complete a level, you must collect all the gold chests in the scene. When you succeed, you climb a ladder at the top and enter the next level. You use your laser drill pistol to drill pits and passageways through the brick floors. If a Bungeling guard falls into a pit and gets stuck, it will become safe for a moment for you to run over him. Any holes that you've drilled will fill in again after a period of time and the guards can pursue you again. Your Commando will climb ladders, traverse rope bridges, and dig through surfaces to come up with the treasures. Meanwhile, the enemy guards carry invisible gold chests and you will have to trap the guards in a pit and pick up their gold before you can advance to the next level.



Design Your Own Version

A feature which really makes this a great addition to your library is the ability to let you design, move, erase, playtest and save to disk you own Lode Runner program - with no programming knowledge required. You can also use the editor to access directly (and play) any of the game's 150 different game screens. With an easy-to-use chart, you can set up a data disk, design your own game boards, and have at it!

Animation Terrific!

This is one of the best climbing games we've seen, from the vibrant colors to great animation. Both the Galactic Commando and the Bungeling Guards look terrific with the movement of the arms and legs extremely realistic. The gameplay is very fast and precise as you move quickly around the treasure rooms gathering the chests. The game screens vary a great deal and offer many excellent and challenging screens. We found this to be a totally engrossing climbing game and a worthy addition to anyone's library. (48K Disk)
Recommended (MSR \$34.95)

LIFESPAN RATING WRONG

A gremlin got into our newsletter at the printing stage in the August issue, and LIFESPAN, by Roklan for the Atari computers, had an incorrect rating credited to it. The correct rating for Lifespan, which we recommended, was ★★★/★★★½, NOT ★★★/★★½ as printed.

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AVAILABILITY UPDATE

(Based on projected release dates given to us by the manufacturers. May change without notice)

ATARI 2600

AUGUST

x-Battlezone (AT)
x-BurgerTime (MNTWK)
x-Decathlon (ACTV)
x-Fathom (IMGC)
x-Joyboard (AM)
x-Pole Position (AT)
Popeye (PB)

SEPTEMBER

x-Donkey Kong Jr (COL)
James Bond 007 (PB)
Kick-Man (CBS)
x-Kool & Pletcher Man (MNTK)
Laser Gates (IMGC)
Mr. Do (COL)
Off Your Rocker (AM)
Party Mix (STP)
Quick Step (IMGC)
SAC Alert (AM)
Sir Lancelot/Robin Hood (XON)
Spike's Peak/Ghost Manor (XON)
Star Trek (SEGA)
Super Cobra (PB)
Surf's Up (AM)
Sweat (STP)
Targ (CBS)
Thunderground (SEGA)
Time Pilot (COL)

OCTOBER

Alpha Beam (AT)
Berenstein Bear-voice (COL)
Big Bird's Egg Catch (AT)
Bump & Jump (MNTK)
Cookie Monster Munch (AT)
Cosmic Commander Power Arcade(MB)
Dr. Seuss One Fish-voice (COL)
Ewok Adventure (PB)
Fall Guy (FOX)
Flight Commander Power Arcade(MB)
Krull (AT)
Moon Patrol (AT)
Mountain King (CBS)
Omega Race (CBS)
Out of Control (AH)
Pigs in Space (AT)
Power Lord (ODY)
Power Play 1 (AM)
Power Play 2 (AM)
Pursuit of Pink Panther (ODY)
Realsports Baseball (AT)
Rocky & Bullwinkle (MNTK)
Shuttle Orbiter (AH)
Sky Blazer (BRO)
Sorcerer's Apprentice (AT)
Springer (TGV)
Survival Island (STP)
Sword of Saros (STP)
Trackball (AT)
Tunnel Runner (CBS)
Voice Module w/Smurf (COL)
Wings (CBS)

NOVEMBER

Asterix (AT)
Buck Rogers (SEGA)
Master of Universe (MNTK)
Power Play 3 (AM)
River Patrol (TGV)
Snoopy & Red Baron (AT)
Space Shuttle (ACT)
Wing War (IMGC)

DECEMBER

Front Line (COL)
Mario Bros. (AT)
Oscar's Trash Race (AT)
Subterranea (IMGC)

INTELLIVISION

AUGUST

Dungeons & Dragons Tarmen (MAT)
Empire Strikes Back (PB)
Joystick w/Keypad (WICO)
Popeye (PB)
Tutankham (PB)
x-Zaxxon (COL)
SEPTEMBER
2600 Adaptor (MAT)
x-Dreadnaught Factor (ACTV)
James Bond 007 (PB)
Q*Bert (PB)
Suner Cobra (PB)

OCTOBER

Beezor (IMGC)
Blueprint (CBS)
Donkey Kong Jr. (COL)
ECS Keyboard (MAT)
Fathom (IMGC)
Gorf (CBS)
Kick-Man (CBS)
Kool Aid Pitcher Man (MAT)
Moonsweeper (IMGC)
Omega Race (CBS)
River Raid (ACT)
Solar Fox (CBS)
Turbo (COL)
Wings (CBS)
Wizard of Wor (CBS)

NOVEMBER

Bump 'n Jump (MAT)
Domino Man (CBS)
Madden Football (CBS)
Master of Universe (MAT)
Wing War (IMGC)

ODYSSEY

OCTOBER
Powerlords

COLECOVISION

AUGUST

x-Miner 2049er (MIC)
x-Mr. Do (COL)
Nova Blast (IMGC)
Popeye (PB)
x-Time Pilot (COL)

SEPTEMBER

Boxing (COL) ★ ★
Dino Eggs (MIF)
Dragonstomper (STP)
Escape from Mindmaster (STP)
Frogger (PB)
Globe Grabber (MIC)
Joystick w/Keypad (WICO)
M*A*S*H (FOX)
Moonsweeper (IMGC)
Phaser Patrol (STP)
Q*Bert (PB)
Quest for Tires (SOL)
Rocky (COL) ★ ★
Scraper Caper (MIC)
x-Super Action Controller w/Baseball
Super Donkey Kong (COL) ★
Super Donkey Kong Jr (COL) ★
Super Zaxxon (COL) ★
Time Runner (MIC)
War Room (ODY)

OCTOBER

Apple Cider Spider (SOL)
Buck Rogers (COL)
Cavern (ODY)
Crisis Mountain (MIC)
Destructor (COL) ★ ★ ★ ★
Fall Guy (FOX)
Frogger (PB)
Frontline (COL)
Lunar Leeper (SOL)
Omega Race (COL) ★ ★ ★
Porky's (FOX)
Roller Controller w/Slither
Sammy Lightfoot (SOL)
Sub Roc (COL)
Super Action Football (COL) ★ ★
Super Gorf (COL) ★ ★
Victory (COL) ★ ★ ★ ★

NOVEMBER

Domino Man (CBS)
Frogger (SOL)
Lord of the Dungeon (ODY)
Madden Football (CBS)
Mountain King (CBS)
Powerlords (ODY)
Super Cobra (PB)
Super Smurf (COL) ★
Super Sub Roc (COL) ★
Super Time Pilot (COL) ★
Tutankham (PB)
Wings (CBS)
Wing Wars (IMGC)

DECEMBER

Dukes of Hazzard (COL) ★ ★ ★ ★
Jawbreaker (SOL)
Learning With Leeper (SOL)
Pursuit of Pink Panther (ODY)
Wargames (COL)

★ indicates data-pak for use in ADAM ONLY

★ ★ for use with Super Action Controllers

★ ★ ★ for use with Roller Controller

★ ★ ★ ★ for use with Expansion Module 2

ATARI 5200

AUGUST

Analog joystick (WICO)
x-Kangaroo
x-2600 Adaptor (AT)

SEPTEMBER

Jungle Hunt (AT)
Ms Pac-Man (AT)
Pole Position (AT)
Popeye (PB)
Q*Bert (PB)
Realsports Baseball (AT)
Space Dungeon (AT)
Star Trek (SEGA)
Tac-Scan (SEGA)

OCTOBER

Blueprint (CBS)
Choplifter (BRO)
Dig Dug (AT)
Domino Man (CBS)
Gorf (CBS)
Joust (AT)
K-Razy Shootout (CBS)
Madden Football (CBS)
Moonsweeper (IMGC)
Mountain King (CBS)
Omega Race (CBS)
Realsports Baseball(voice)
Satan's Hollow (CBS)
Serpentine (BRO)
Solar Fox (CBS)
Vanguard (AT)
Wings (CBS)
Wizard of Wor (CBS)

NOVEMBER

Battlezone (AT)
Berzerk (Voice) (AT)
Buck Rogers (SEGA)
Congo Bongo (SEGA)
Fathom (IMGC)
Jawbreaker (SOL)
Mario Bros. (AT)
Moon Patrol (AT)
Pengo (AT)
Polaris (TGV)
Quick Step (IMGC)
Road Runner (AT)
Sport Goofy (AT)
Super Cobra (PB)
Wing War (IMGC)

DECEMBER

Laser Gates (IMGC)
JANUARY
Robotron (AT)
Xevious (AT)

VECTREX

SEPTEMBER

Heads Up Soccer
Spike
Web Wars
OCTOBER
Batter Up
Dark Tower
Polar Rescue
Pole Position
Star Castle

ATARI COMPUTERS

AUGUST

Earthfall (INF)
Hard Mack (EA)
X-Operation Whirlwind (BRO)
X-Pooyan (DS)
X-Type Attack (SIR)

SEPTEMBER

Learning With Leeper (SOL)
M*A*S*H (FOX)
Popeye (PB)
Porky's (FOX)
Q*Bert (PB)
Revenge of Beefsteak Tomato (FOX)
Spare Change (BRO)

OCTOBER

Domino Man (CBS)
Droll (BRO)
Kaboom (ACT)
Lunar Outpost (EPYX)
Mad Netter (CM)
Moonsweeper (IMGC)
Oils Well (SOL)
Pitstop (EPYX)
Polaris (TGV)
River Raid (ACT)
Sammy Lightfoot (SOL)
Solar Fox (CBS)
Springer (TGV)
Wings (CBS)

NOVEMBER

Archon (EA)
Axis Assassin (EA)
Fathom (IMGC)
Laser Gates (IMGC)
Lode Runner (BRO)
M.U.L.E. (EA)
Quick Step (IMGC)
Quest for Tires (SOL)
Risk (PB)
Super Cobra (PB)
Wing War (IMGC)
Worms? (EA)
Zinderneuf (EA)

DECEMBER

Donkey Kong Jr (AT)
Football (AT)

VIC-20

AUGUST

Frogger (SOL)
In The Chips (CS)
Q*Bert (PB)
Repton (SIR)
Tac-Scan (SEGA)

SEPTEMBER

Dragonfire (IMGC)
Final Orbit (SIR)

OCTOBER

Crisis Mountain (CS)
M*A*S*H (FOX)
Moonsweeper (IMGC)
Nova Blast (IMGC)
Polaris (TGV)
Porky's (FOX)
Revenge of Beefsteak Tomato (FOX)
Seafrog (BRO)
Sky Blazer (BRO)
Springer (TGV)

NOVEMBER

Buck Rogers (SEGA)
Congo Bongo (SEGA)
Lode Runner (BRO)
Popeye (PB)
Sammy Lightfoot (SOL)
Super Cobra (PB)
Tutankham (PB)

COMMODORE 64

AUGUST

Astrolblitz (CS)
x-Blade of Blackpool (SIR)
x-Juice (TRO)
Mr. Cool (SOL)
Pennant Race (UMI)

SEPTEMBER

Alice (UMI)
Apple Cider Spider (SOL)
Cannonball Blitz (SOL)
Choplifter (BRO)
Creepy Corridors (SOL)
Death in Caribbean (MIF)
Earthfall (INF)
In The Chips (CS)
Lode Runner (BRO)
Pipes (CS)
Sammy Lightfoot (SOL)
Scraper Caper (MIF)
Seafrog (BRO)
Serpentine (BRO)

OCTOBER

Archon (EA)
Axis Assassin (EA)
Bank St. Writer (BRO)
Crisis Mountain (CS)
Fun With Art (EPYX)
Hard Mack (EA)
It Is Balloon (CM)
Jumpman Jr (EPYX)
Learning With Leeper (SOL)
Lunar Leeper (SOL)
M.U.L.E. (EA)
Pinball Construction (EA)
Worms? (EA)

NOVEMBER

Droll (BRO)
Gateway to Apsal (EPYX)
Oils Well (SOL)
Pitstop (EPYX)
Q*Bert (PB)
Quest for Tires (SOL)
Spare Change (BRO)
Zinderneuf (EA)

TI 99/4A

AUGUST

Porky's (FOX)
Q*Bert (PB)

OCTOBER

MBX Voice System (MB)
Microsurgeon (IMGC)
Miner 2049er (TGV)
Schnoz-ola (FUN)
Springer (TGV)

NOVEMBER

Demon Attack (IMGC)

THIRD QUARTER

Buck Rogers (SEGA)
Entrapment (TI)
Fall Guy (FOX)
M*A*S*H (TI)
Moonstod (CS)
Moonmine (TI)
Porky's (FOX)
River Patrol (TGV)
Sneggit (TI)
Star Trek (SEGA)

COMPANY NAME CODE

ACTV - Activision
AH - Avalon Hill
AM - Amiga
AT - Atari
BRO - Broderbund
CBS - CBS Electronics
COL - Coleco
COMM - Commodore
CS - Creative Software
CVD - CommaVid
CM - Computer Magic
DM - DataMost
DS - DataSoft
EA - Electronic Arts
EPYX - Epyx
FIR - First Star
FUN - Funware
FOX - Fox Games
IMGC - Imagic
INF - Infocom
MAT - Mattel
MB - Milton Bradley
MIC - Microfun
MNTK - M Network
ODY - Odyssey
PB - Parker Bros.
PDI - Program Design Inc
ROK - Roklan
ROM - Romfox
SIR - Sirius
SOL - Sierra On-Line
STP - Starpath
SYN - Synapse
TG - TG Products
TGV - Trigonvision
TRO - Tronix
VEC - Vectrex
XON - Xonox

(x = indicates shipped to retailers by our press date (may not be in national distribution, however.)

(Editor's Note: We feel, in some cases, the dates given us by the manufacturers are simply not realistic. However, we feel it is our responsibility to give you the projected dates as they are given to us, without any alteration.)

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