



Are you a frustrated video game addict?

Before you let another quarter slip through your fingers, find out how to beat the video games. Read "Win at Video" in the Milwaukee Sentinel's Good Morning! section. Written by Michael Blanchet, a reputed "champion" at the game controls. "Win at Video" will offer strategies to help players earn the most points and time on the machines. Shape up your game.

"Win at Video"
every Monday and Wednesday
in the Good Morning! Section

Milwaukee Sentinel

For home delivery, call 224-2222

Spotlight



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

New features debut today

Today marks the debut of "Win at Video," in The Sentinel's Good Morning! section. Its author, Michael Blanchet, has earned a national reputation for his strategies in beating video games. The column will run Mondays and Wednesdays.

A new weekly business feature, "Wisconsin Stocks in Motion," also starts today. Page 10, Part 2.

Rain might spoil holiday

Cooler with rain likely Monday and Tuesday. High around 70, cooler near Lake Michigan. Maps and tables on Page 12, Part 2.

Business	Pages 9-11, Part 2
Classified	Pages 13-22, Part 2
Comics	Page 4, Part 3
Community News	Page 6
Death Notices	Page 13, Part 2
Editorials	Page 14
Good Morning!	Part 3
Local News	Page 5
Movies	Page 12-13, Part 2
Sports	Pages 1-9, Part 2
Trend	Page 10
TV-Radio	Page 2, Part 3

Video column to make debut

Centipede. Donkey Kong. Ms. Pac-Man. Tempest. Qix. Frogger.

Granted, some readers will see those names and think the Good Morning! editor has flipped.

That's not true.

Those are the names of video games, the subject of a new column, "Win at Video," which will begin Monday in the Memorial Day edition of Good Morning!

The column, filled with tips on how to boost your video game scores, will be published on Mondays and Wednesdays.

The author of the column is Michael Blanchet, who wrote the book "How to Beat the Video Games."

Blanchet discovered video games long before the boom that has made them a \$9 billion industry. His fascination with them grew from an interest in pinball and computers.

During his high school years, he and his father learned how to program for computer games.

With today's proliferation of the machines, he



Michael Blanchet

stays busy keeping up with the new designs. Manufacturers already have tested holographic — or three dimensional — machines, and games that combine pinball and video screens.

His column provides the strategies that will earn players the most points and time on the machines, frequently giving diagrams. He encourages questions from readers, who may address letters to "How to Win at Video," in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, P.O. Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201.

Space mutants, writer zapped by video champ

By Rick Romell

In terms of audacity, challenging Michael Blanchet at video games is sort of like daring the Crusher to step into the ring for a two-man cage match.

It does hurt less, however.

Blanchet's name runs on top of the syndicated "Win at Video" column published in The Milwaukee Sentinel and other newspapers.

The only place you'll find my name in the video record books is at my

Audio exposition visitor to get an earful of sound; Page 5.

friend Buddy's house, where I've got the high score on Bud's home Space Invaders cartridge.

I'm just a typical guy who likes to atomize images of mutant mosquitoes.

Blanchet's a lanky, 22-year-old former arcade addict from northern New Jersey who now manages game rooms in 20 drugstores and wrote a book, "How to Beat the Video Games."

He'll discuss the games and answer questions at The Sentinel's Sights & Sounds '82 show at MECCA Saturday and Sunday. If he can stifle the yawns, he might tell you about the brand of competition I offered Friday night.

I took him to Century Hall because it has two of my favorite games, Tempest and Galaga.

In Tempest, you control a pincher-

**Milwaukee
Sentinel**

**Active
Americans**

like blaster that vaporizes an assortment of space debris on a series of electric-blue grids. (The grids turn red if you're good enough to survive through several levels. I've never faced that disorienting change.)

Blanchet just edged me, 113,566 to 27,046. That's among my better scores, but Mike was a little disappointed with his showing. He said his top score was about 300,000, and he walked away from the machine before that game had ended.

Blanchet added a 141,000-point game Friday night, not bad for playing on two hours of sleep and just stepping off an airplane. I think I scored about 15,000 that time. I'm trying to forget.

I thought Galaga might be a different story. Blanchet doesn't play the game much, and I'd been shoveling quarters into it for a couple of weeks.

Galaga has good graphics — pulsating space-insects that swirl, dive-bomb and otherwise harass the three rapid-firing rockets you get for 25 cents.

Blanchet fired off a 46,800-point

Video

Turn to Page 8



Michael Blanchet (right) and Rick Romell played Galaga in Century Hall Friday.

—Sentinel photo

Video game champ zaps him

Video

From Page 1

game. I've seen better. He did manage to beat my 8,510, though.

Blanchet works with, plays with and writes about video games just about every day. Maybe that's why his favorite game is pinball.

"When it comes to playing games

for games' sake, I would rather do that," he said.

That wasn't the case a few years ago, when he started playing video seriously — \$40 worth a week on a \$100-a-week salary from a department store job.

"The games provided something that I felt was necessary in my life, something I could control," he said. "That, I think, is a lot of the appeal that they have. People like to be in

command; they like to control."

Blanchet enjoys video games, especially Centipede (top score: about 600,000), Zaxxon and Robotron. And he likes making a good living around them.

But when he really wants to have fun, he turns to the Eight Ball pinball game he has at home.

That's the one with the picture of The Fonz and Pinky Tuscadero.

WIN AT VIDEO

Pac-Man 'basic training' for masters

Michael Blanchet, the author of "Win at Video" which begins in this edition of Good Morning! is the author of the book, "How to Beat the Video Games," and has earned a national reputation for his strategies in beating the games. His column will run Mondays and Wednesdays.

By Michael Blanchet

Pac-Man passe? Hardly.

But as this phenomenally successful video game becomes a cottage industry unto itself, variations and new games offer players challenging alternatives.

And, just as Pac-Man replaced such favorites as Space Invaders and Asteroids, growing numbers of players are opting for newer games such as Ms. Pac-Man and Donkey Kong.

Still reigning champion

We're talking about coin-operated games that cost about \$3,000 apiece and require strategies and skills, of which Pac-Man is still the reigning champion and a good training ground for other games.

Some Pac-Man players have claimed more than three million points after hours of play. But any player who can score 50,000 and keep going for 5 to 10 minutes can consider himself out of the neophyte class.

Now for some Pac-Man strategy.

Is the machine set for the slow or fast version? If three monsters emerge at the start, it's the fast one. If only two show and start for the top of the maze, it's the slow version.

First, the fast version.

I based the following strategies on the fact that the monsters move and react to your movements almost identically from board to board. Instead of running a random pattern, you follow a predetermined game plan or "road map."

Illustration: First Screen

Don't be intimidated by the monsters. Stop just before you reach the energizer on the lower right-hand side and wait until the monsters are right behind you. Eat the energizer, turn, and attack without hesitation. You'll have time to capture all four monsters before they change back to colors. You will end up in the lower left-hand corner of the maze. Proceed as follows:

Illustration: Second Screen

Once again, move without hesitation. When you reach the energizer at lower left, wait for the monster to catch up before you attack.

From this point on, I have no set strategy. Simply whittle down the remaining dots, baiting the monsters to follow you toward an energizer. The bonus "cherries" under the monsters' pen are worth only 100 points and not prime targets.

Follow the same pattern for the second board, but keep in mind that the monsters will stay blue for shorter periods of time, alternately flashing blue and white four times before reverting back to colors.

When you eat the energizer in the lower right-hand corner, you have time to eat only three monsters. As soon as you have devoured the second monster, take note of the color of the remaining two. If they are white, you will only have time to eat one more. If they are flashing blue, go for both of them.

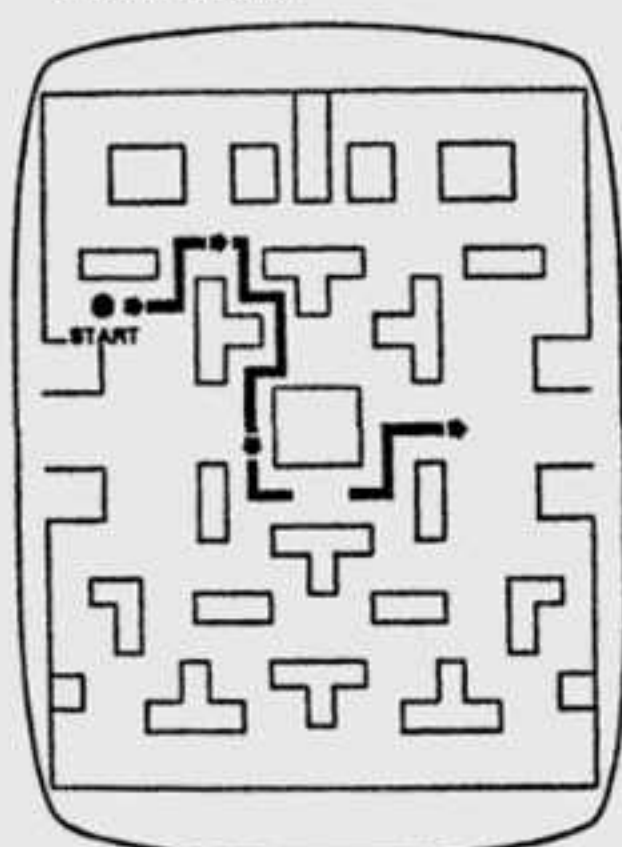
One pattern, minor variations

From the third board on, I use one pattern with minor variations. This pattern will allow you to capture both bonuses that appear each round and consume the majority of the dots. You will be left with nothing but the four energizers and a few dots near them.

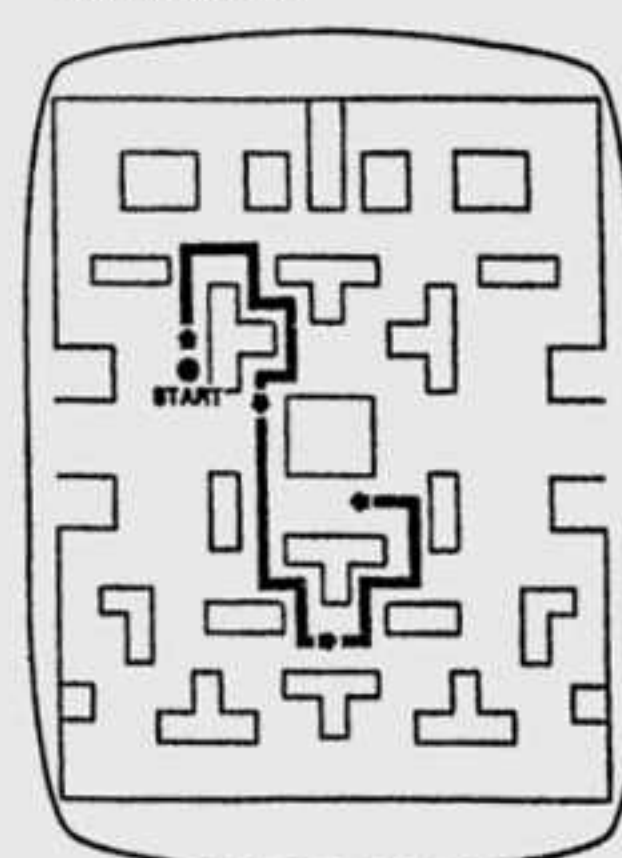
Illustration: Third and Fourth Screen

Once you have snagged the first bonus, proceed as described above. As you come down the long vertical corridor on the right, watch out for Pinky, especially if he is moving by himself. If he is riding piggyback on Pokey, you're safe. He may attempt to cut you off just below the tunnel entrance. If he does, abandon your course and exit through the tunnel. When you reappear, continue

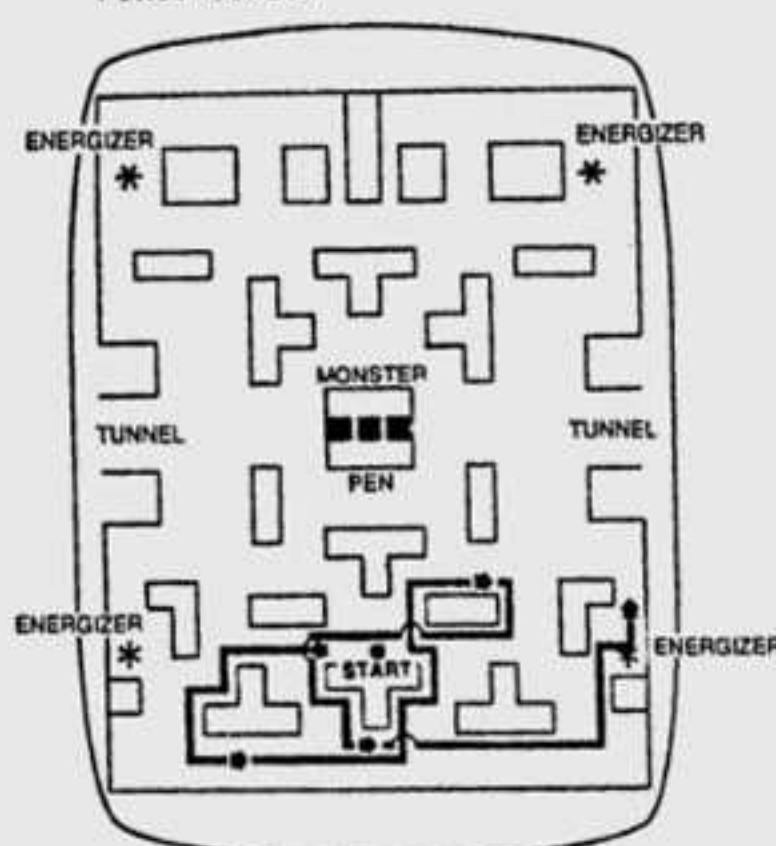
FIFTH SCREEN



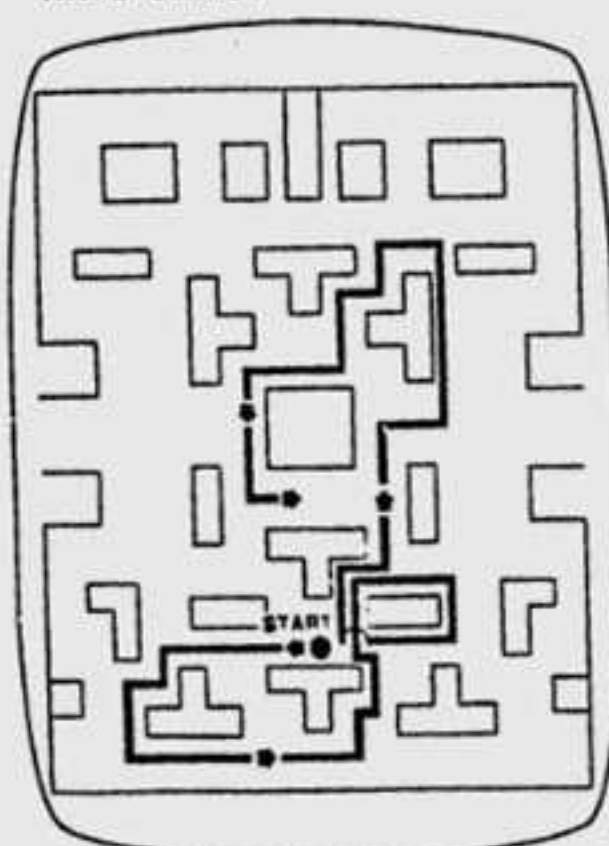
SIXTH SCREEN



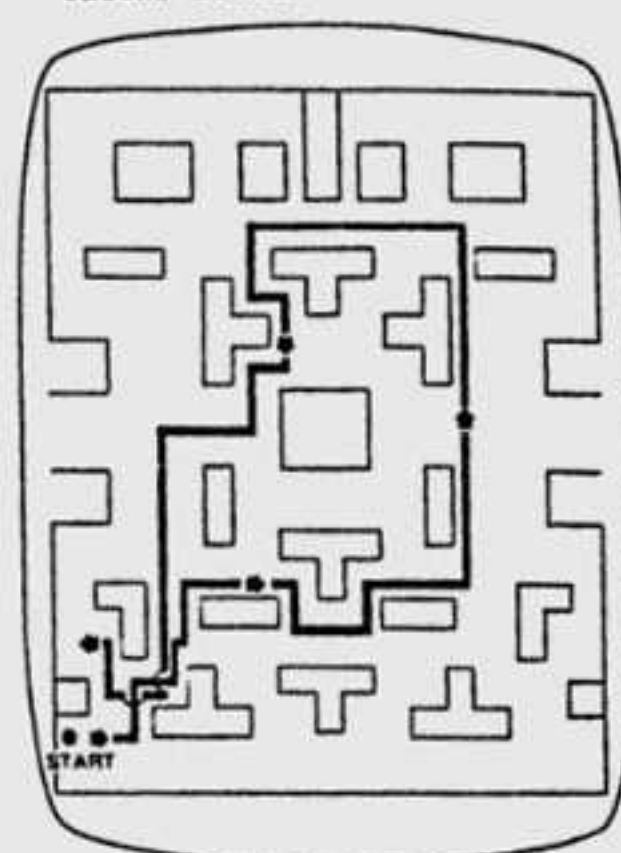
FIRST SCREEN



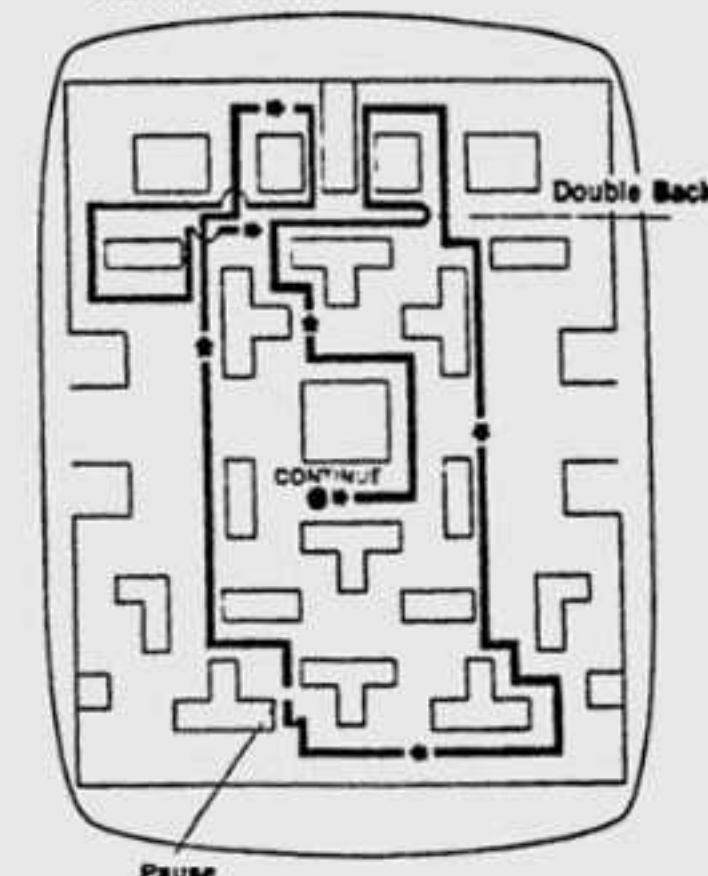
THIRD SCREEN



SECOND SCREEN



FOURTH SCREEN



the pattern on the left in reverse fashion.

Continue to the spot marked "Pause" on the diagram. Wait until the tan monster passes overhead, then proceed. Once you have cleared the left vertical corridor and the upper left-hand corner, the second bonus should appear. Once again, watch Pinky and then decide which course to take. If Pinky exits through the left side tunnel, go directly for the bonus.

If Pinky enters the area around the monster pen, follow direction in fifth screen.

Illustration: Sixth Screen

From this point, all that remains are the flashing energizers and a handful of dots. There is no set sequence in which the energizers should be

consumed. I score maximum points, taunt the monsters so that they follow you toward an energizer. Remember that they will flash white four times before they change back to their original colors.

Counterattacking blue monsters is your greatest source of points, so be bold. Keep in mind that the monsters will reverse course once you have energized. If they are moving away from you, energize to draw them toward you. As the game progresses, the monsters will flash blue for shorter periods of time.

Game play during the slow version is similar to its fast counterpart with these exceptions: The pattern described for use during the first two boards on a fast game can be used on the first four boards of a slow game.

Mousetrap: Technology pits cat against mouse, dog vs. cat

How to beat video games



By Michael Blanchet
Syndicated columnist

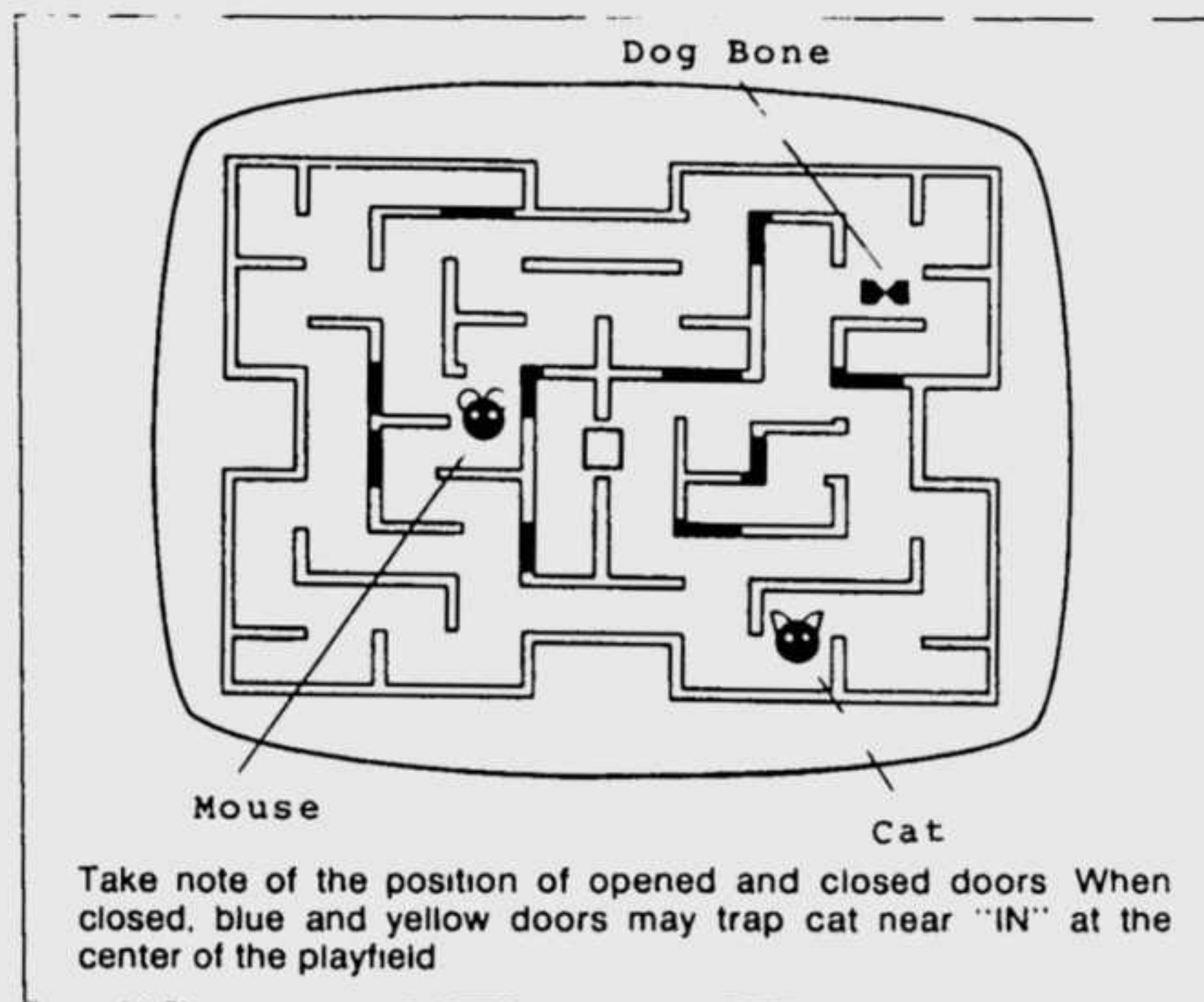
The game play of Mousetrap closely resembles that of Pac-Man, but there are a couple of interesting twists. To score points, you must maneuver a mouse through a maze, gobbling cheese as you go. Larger pieces of cheese, paper clips, safety pins, etc., appear randomly, awarding bonus points when devoured. When your mouse eats one of the four red dog bones (one in each corner), the machine will emit a savage growl. To attack the pursuing cats, push the dog button and chase the howling felines.

Your mouse is propelled by a four-position joystick. The round green button in the center of the control panel is the "dog" button (more on this later). To your left is a row of rectangular buttons, one blue, one yellow and one red. These are

the "door" buttons, the trickiest feature of Mousetrap. When you look at the maze, you will notice several red, blue and yellow doors. To open the red doors, simply press the red button. The same applies to the yellow and blue doors. Each door makes a distinctive sound when opened or closed.

First, I recommend that you experiment with the door buttons. Press them, one at a time, and note which way the corresponding doors open and close. The yellow and blue doors around the center of the maze are particularly tricky. Take note of which areas are sealed off and which are opened.

The cats that patrol the maze seem confined to a certain territory. They aren't nearly as smart as the monsters in Pac-Man or the goldfish in Make Trax, but there are a lot more of them. At some point during the game, a hawk will fly overhead and home in on your dog or mouse. He is not confined to the corridors of the maze and cannot be destroyed. He can be outsmarted though. Located at the center of the maze is a small rectangular box containing the word "in." When your dog or mouse enters in, he is jettisoned to



Take note of the position of opened and closed doors. When closed, blue and yellow doors may trap cat near "IN" at the center of the playfield

one of the corners of the maze and is temporarily safe from the hawk

At first, the door buttons will con-

fuse you. They are large and easy to press but are positioned very close together. You'll probably find your

self pushing the red when you wanted to press blue or pressing the blue when you meant to hit the dog button

To avoid confusion, try this. Keep the fingers of your left hand on the yellow button. When it comes time to open or close the red or blue doors, you need only to move your hand a short distance. Remember that there is no right or wrong way to push the door buttons. If this method does not suit you, develop one with which you are comfortable. The important thing is to find a way to push the appropriate button without taking your eyes off the screen.

Clear the bulk of the maze before devouring the energizing dog bones. Remember that your mouse will not become a dog until a red dog bone is eaten and the dog button is pushed. Use the ability to store your dog power to your advantage. Wait until a considerable number of cats are within striking distance before transforming into a dog. In later stages of the game, you'll find this very helpful, especially when a hawk appears.

After becoming a dog, work your way toward the in square. When a

hawk emerges, enter in to make the hawk stupid. Your dog will be transported to one of the corners of the maze. Devour another bone and repeat the process.

You will also notice that more bonus objects appear toward the end of each round. If the majority of the maze is clear, divide your time between collecting the bonuses and moving back toward the in to avoid the hawk. I recommend keeping the blue and yellow doors open. If they are both closed, you may trap some cats in the area of the in square.

To avoid additional confusion, get in the habit of using your right hand to push the dog button. This way, your left hand will still be in the ready position to open and close doors. Use of the right hand will also keep you from making the mistake of pushing the blue button when you really wanted to push the dog button.

Your dog or mouse has unlimited use of in. Utilize it not only to elude the hawk, but to transport your mouse to a dog bone. The hawk shelters in the four corners, not protected from cat intrusion. don't stay in one too long.

Two can battle Eliminator

By MICHAEL BLANCHET
Tribune Company Syndicate

"Man vs. Machine" video games lacks one thing. A video game never winces after you land a death blow or moans when you hand it a temporary setback. The snide comments and provocations of a human opponent always make for better competition. Eliminator is one of the few arcade games that allows two players to do battle against each other, as well as against the computer.

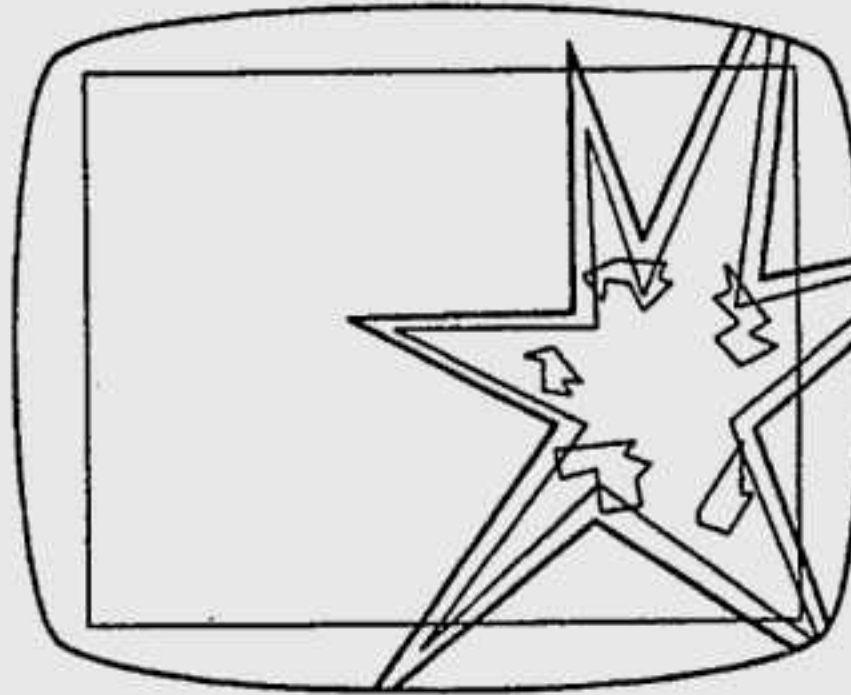
In a one-player game situation, play begins as follows. Your ship will appear in one of the bottom corners of the screen. A large, spherical object also will appear and begin to move randomly about the playfield. This is the Eliminator base. Initially, its throat will be covered by a reddish membrane that in time will begin to disappear. To destroy the base, you must guide one of your shots directly down the throat to the core. Each time the base is destroyed, one additional enemy ship will appear, along with a new base.

The surface of the Eliminator base is lethal to any ship that touches it. Shots do not directly destroy a ship when they score a hit. Direct blows force the enemy ships back. To destroy an enemy ship, you must push it until it makes contact with the Eliminator base.

Use this pushing method not only to destroy small enemy ships, but to destroy your competitor's ship in a two-player game and to destroy the Eliminator mother ship.

Points can be scored in two ways: by destroying the base or by forcing any other ship into contact with the base's surface. Points also are awarded for a hit on an enemy ship, even if it is not destroyed.

video games



To destroy the base, you must guide one of your shots directly down the throat to the core.

Only one energy bolt can appear on the screen at any one time. If you release a shot from your ship, it will travel until one of the following happens.

- It strikes the Eliminator base surface.
- It travels down the throat of the base and destroys it.
- It bounces off three sides of the playfield border.
- It strikes an enemy ship. Or . . .
- You cancel it out by firing another shot after it.

Repeat. Any time you press the fire button, you cancel out the previous shot. In certain situations it pays not to be

trigger happy.

Eventually, the mother Eliminator ship will begin to emerge from the base. It will be encased in a red shell. When it is inside this shell, it cannot be destroyed, nor can it destroy you.

The mother Eliminator shoots fireballs that destroy your ship on contact. Contact with the mother ship is also deadly. In a two-player game, the mother ship will attack the player's ship that is closest to it. To destroy the mother Eliminator, you must force it back onto the base surface.

Every time I've played doubles on Eliminator, my partner and I vowed to work as a team. After assuring each other that this was to be a team effort, we would start the game and almost immediately betray our confidence and each other. Some team! If your partner insists on working as a team, my advice is to be wary.

When game play begins, the Eliminator base will appear in the middle of the screen. If you are commanding the buttons on the left side of the control panel, your ship will be the one on the left side (green). The opposite is true if you are using the right hand set of buttons (blue).

Before giving chase to your opponent or taking aim at the throat of the Eliminator, experiment with bank shots. Your opponent probably does not expect a long-range attack. Fire an energy bolt toward one of the playfield borders and observe the way it caroms. It will bounce off three sides before it disappears. Correct your angle so that your next shot will hit your opponent's ship, pushing him, you hope, into the base surface. If their path is unobstructed, your energy bolts will bounce the same way each time.

Territory is imperative to triumph at 'Qix'

By MICHAEL BLANCHET
Tribune Company Syndicate

Qix is a video game that defies classification. A "shoot-em-up" it most certainly isn't. "Cute" or "comical" don't really do it justice either. It may remind some of you of the old "connect the dots and claim the squares" games. I like to think of it as a state of the art "Etch a Sketch."

The object of Qix (pronounced "kicks") is to claim at least 75 percent of the playfield. This is done by moving a pen ("stix") in any combination of straight lines. Once a closed figure is complete, the area is claimed. Sound simple?

When game play begins, your marker or "stix" appears on the bottom center of the screen. You will also notice a series of randomly twisting lines. This is the helix, your chief opponent.

Your marker is propelled by a four-position joystick. Initially, your movements are confined to the white border the stix rests on. To move out and conquer virgin territory, you must simultaneously move the joystick and depress one of the "draw" buttons.

When claiming territories, you can choose between fast or slow draw. An area claimed by fast draw is shaded blue, while the slow draw areas are shaded brown.

The only time your marker is vulnerable to helix attack is when it is drawing a line. If any part of the helix touches an incomplete line, you lose one of your three game lives. Once a figure is drawn and the area shaded in, your marker is safe from the helix. The helix cannot be destroyed, only outsmarted.

Two sparks appear at the beginning of the game, one at each upper corner of the border. From here they begin their deadly journey around the playfield. Contact with a spark will cost you a game life. To dodge them, make a small square with fast draw to leapfrog over the oncoming spark.

Eventually, the sparks will venture onto the lines you've drawn on the playfield, in the order you have drawn them. In essence, they will retrace your steps. Once again, sparks cannot be destroyed, only outsmarted.

video games

Running horizontally across the top of the screen is a time line that slowly shortens at both ends. Once it vanishes, the machine emits a piercing alarm. This signals the attack of the Super Sparks. Super Sparks travel much faster than regular sparks. Instead of lumbering about the maze of lines you've drawn, Super Sparks home in on your marker with the intent to kill.

Once you venture off the border, there is no turning back. If constant pressure is not kept on one of the draw buttons, your marker will stop and the "fuse" will appear at the point the line you are drawing originated from. To the eye, the fuse resembles a spark. As it moves toward you, it crackles and discolors the lines you've drawn. If the fuse reaches your marker, you lose a game life. To stop the fuse, press down on one of the draw buttons.

In an attempt to dodge the helix or a spark, you may draw yourself into a corner by accident. This misfortune is called the spiral death trap. Remember that you must complete a figure to claim an area. Once you are in a spiral death trap, there is no escape. It's only a matter of time before the fuse or helix strikes you.

Before we discuss strategy, let's look at how points are scored. Once an area is claimed, points are awarded depending on the size of the area concerned. Higher point values are given for areas marked off with slow draw. Let's assume you have drawn two boxes of identical size, one with slow draw, the

other with fast draw. If the fast draw, or blue section, scores 250 points, the brown section, or slow draw, will be worth 500 points.

As you accumulate more real estate, the machine tallies your progress. The percentage of playfield you control is shown at the top of the monitor. If you claim exactly 75 percent of the board, you move on to the next round but score no bonus points. If you manage to fill more than 75 percent, you will be awarded 1,000 points for each percentage point over the threshold.

In Qix, the name of the game is points. The big score can come from two sources, either closing off more than 75 percent of the playfield with your last line or by using slow draw as often as possible.

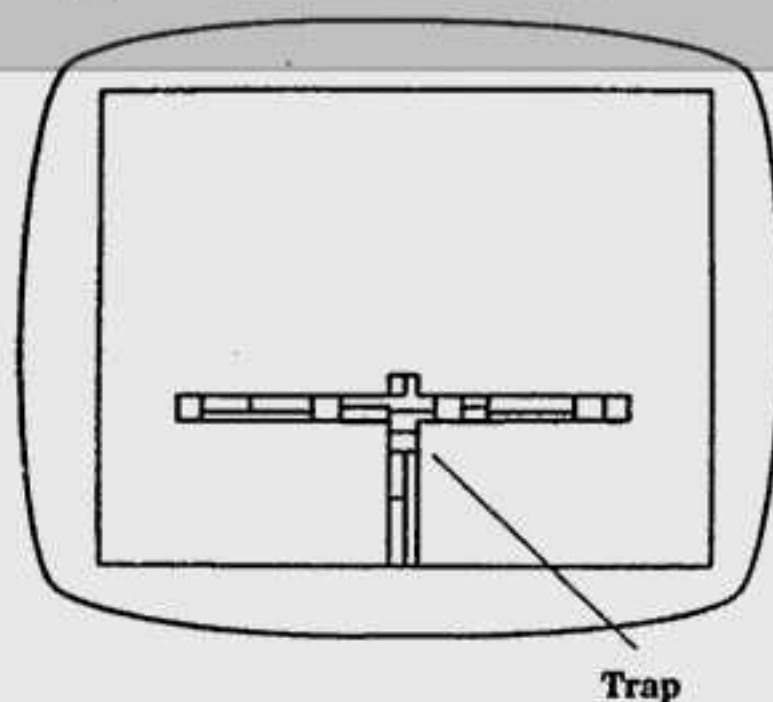
To earn substantial bonus points, set traps for the helix. Try to open him into a small area. On the first board, set a trap by using the configuration pictured (or something similar.)

Don't make the traps too big. You'll lose bonus points when you draw the final line.

Resist the temptation to mark off large areas by drawing lines that span the whole screen. Remember that the only time your marker is vulnerable is when you are drawing a line. Claim one small section at a time to minimize the risk of being struck by the helix.

Use of slow draw is attractive since it scores double the point value. It is also risky because your marker moves at a slower rate of speed. To minimize the risk of slow draw, and still enjoy the scoring benefits, try this:

Set up a series of traps along each border. Draw the bulk of the lines with fast draw. When the helix is at a safe distance, close the traps, using the slow draw to claim the area. Always try to mark off as large an area as possible, using fast draw, and close the area with slow draw.





Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Once you start running up high scores, people start coming to you to learn your "secret." There is no big secret, but there are a lot of little things you can do — primarily, improving the way you handle the controls and knowing the patterns of action.

One of the most frequently asked questions is about the handling of the trak ball in Centipede, by Atari.

If you've ever played Missile Command, you're one step ahead of the crowd in starting out with Centipede. The mini-trak ball on it resembles a cue ball that moves on a field of ball bearings. It provides the player's gun with free movement and excellent speed control inside a set zone, which is roughly the bottom three or four inches of the screen.

Test ball before playing

Before playing, I always perform the "Trak Ball Test." I find that a trak ball that has been broken in responds better than a new one.

Briskly spin the trak ball with the midsections of your fingers and release it. If it continues rolling for more than three seconds, consider it "Grade A." On a new machine, however, you'll notice a considerable drag as the trak ball spins. If you get caught in a tight situation and need to shift your gun to the opposite side of the screen, this "drag factor" can be very important.

Another question I get frequently is: "Whatever happened to pinball machines?" That question might be better phrased, "What's happening to pinball machines?"

There are already games with multi-level fields, such as Gottlieb's Black Hole and Haunted House. The multi-levels allow the ball to roll toward the player on one field and drop down and roll away on another. At the trade show in Chicago in November, a machine called Caveman was displayed. Also manufactured by Gottlieb, Caveman is the first mating of pinball and video in one machine.

No free games

The people who have not been in an arcade since the nickel pinball days also want to know if there are

free games on the video games. Never, though you can get bonus game lives and extend your playing time by surpassing a predetermined point value.

Pac-Man, for example, lasts from about 30 seconds for a novice to about five minutes for someone who is fairly skilled. The masters can keep it running for from a half-hour to a hour.

Recently I got the following note from a disgruntled player:

DEAR MICHAEL: Several times during Pac-Man, the screen went blank momentarily and meaningless figures appeared on the screen. It looked like letters and numbers all jumbled together and moving across the screen. Then a checkerboard of white squares appeared. Each time the game went back to zero. I lost my quarters — and needless to say, my temper. What happened?

— R. Katz, Long Island.

DEAR MR. KATZ: You were zapped by static shock. It happens most frequently during cold weather and in arcades with carpets. As you shuffle along the carpet, you generate static electricity. When you touch a metal part of a video game, you discharge it. With Pac-Man, this charge sends it into a false "test sequence." A maintenance man uses the same kind of electric zap to check circuits.

To avoid static discharge in the middle of the game, touch your coin to the metal part of the machine before starting a game. If you've lost your game because of a static accident, ask the manager if he can help you. He can usually tell if that is the problem because the test sequence erases the "highest score" from the screen.

If you have a question about video games or if you've discovered some "secrets" of your own and want to share them, write to Michael Blanchet, in care of Win at Video, Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201.

Adapted from "How to Beat the Video Game" by Michael Blanchet. Copyright 1982 by Michael Blanchet, published by permission of Fireside — Simon and Schuster.

Tribune Company Syndicate, Inc.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Is it possible that quarter games will be going to 50 cents in the video arcades?

Quite possible, but I suspect that competition is going to keep the price down for quite a while.

Consider that each game can be set by the arcade operator for up to 250 combinations of coins. In some, such as large amusement parks, the 50-cent play can be found already. Those operators feel they have a captive audience.

Prices vary with time

At other places there are bargains. For example, I know of a place in New Jersey that operates on a token system. During the times of the day that there is little

activity in the arcade, the owner gives out six tokens for \$1.

During the "prime time," the rate is four tokens for \$1.

An owner can also program the machines to be activated only if two or three coins are inserted. You get two or three games, but you must commit yourself to playing that many games.

I consider bootleg machines a rip-off. These are machines that seem to be the real thing but are poorly made imitations. You can find machines that have no name on them — a real tip-off — and machines that have names that sound like the original. The imitations usually are operated by inferior switches.

Investment to protect

It takes 25 people to develop a new game — designers, programmers, hardware people. The manufacturers have a huge investment to protect.

Now for a question. ✓

DEAR MICHAEL: What are the most popular video games?

— R.R., Connecticut.

DEAR R.R.: A recent issue of RePlay, the magazine of the industry, listed the top five in this order: Pac-Man by Midway, Defender by Williams, Tempest by Atari, Donkey Kong by Nintendo and Omega Race by Midway.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you have developed your own strategies for beating the games and want to share those strategies with readers of the column.

Adapted from "How to Beat the Video Game" by Michael Blanchet. Copyright, 1982 by Michael Blanchet, published by permission of Fireside, — Simon and Schuster.

The Tribune Company Syndicate, Inc.

Video heavyweights use soft touch

Michael Blanchet, is the author of the book "How to Beat the Video Games" and has earned a national reputation for his skills and strategies in beating the games.

By MICHAEL BLANCHET

Tribune Company Syndicate Inc.

The mass appeal of video games comes, I think, from the fact that the player is really in control. Very little, if anything, is left to chance, and that is true whether you are playing a pattern game like Pac-Man or a target game like Asteroids.

In this column, I'm going to explain the workings of some of the machines, and after reading it I'm sure you will understand why the soft, controlled touch is the route to higher scores and longer playing time. Besides, a really hard slap can shut off the machine. Most of them are equipped with something called a slap switch that is there simply to drive away any players who may be subjecting the machines to abuse.

YOU MAY have heard someone say that they have a favorite Pac-Man machine, or a Centipede, or whatever. The fact is that machines do develop personalities of their own, mostly through the pattern of wear of the various switches and controls.

Although this was written for players of arcade games, some of the techniques in this column can be applied to home video games.

Most of the American-made video games are equipped with the leaf switch button controls.

As you press down on the button, the top leaf makes contact with the bottom leaf. It is important to remember that it is not always necessary to push the button all the way down to make contact. In some instances, this practice can be detrimental to your

performance. To properly understand why, I'll explain what happens each time a button is pushed.

In the case of a firing button on a machine such as Space Invaders, each time the firing button is pushed, one shot from the laser base is released. Before another shot can be fired, the following conditions must be satisfied.

video games

- The shot must score a hit or travel to the top of the screen.

- The firing button must be released to the point where the leaf switches no longer make contact.

Therefore, accuracy coupled with a soft touch cuts down on the necessary recovery time before you can fire the next shot.

ATARI'S CENTIPEDE and Tempest games offer you the capability of repetitive fire, making it unnecessary to release the firing button to launch the next shot. To achieve this "machine gun" effect, simply hold down the firing button. But be forewarned: The second shot will not be released until the first scores a hit or travels to the top of the screen.

A joystick is best described as a four-directional steering wheel. It consists of four sets of leaf switches positioned at right angles to each other, each of which activates one particular game function. Again, a soft but gently firm touch will assure the best results.

The mechanics of the joystick operation are very similar to those of the leaf switch button. As you move the joystick either up, down, left or right, you will notice a point of resistance. In this position, the leaf switch will be closed and the game will react accordingly. When

handling a joystick, be firm but never bang or push on it. Not only will this slow your recovery time for transition from one direction to another, it will damage the leaf switches and render them less responsive to your commands.

Games manufactured overseas are usually equipped with joysticks or buttons that utilize microswitches. You can detect a microswitch by the audible click it emits when closed or opened.

Microswitch-equipped joysticks, unlike their leaf switch counterparts, are more finicky and allow you less margin for error. Extra attention and finesse are required to manipulate them properly, since the microswitches are positioned so closely to one another. Failure to move the joystick exactly left or exactly right may result in more than one of the switches closing at the same time, or prevent the intended switch from closing at all. In any case, the results will be the same. The object you control will not move.

COMPARED WITH leaf switches, microswitches offer more resistance to the touch, and upon release will cause the joystick to spring back to the center switch more quickly. If the joystick rebounds with enough force, it may trigger the switch opposite to the one it was previously against. When dealing with a joystick of this type, be firm and precise in your movements. When dealing with an eight-position joystick, you may find it easier to allow the handle to return to the center before attempting a diagonal move.

Adapted from "How to Beat the Video Games" by Michael Blanchet. Copyright 1982 by Michael Blanchet, published by permission of Fireside, Simon and Schuster. Distributed by the Tribune Company Syndicate Inc.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

●Steve Kramer, Colorado Springs, Colo., Tempest, 906,000.

●Steve Kramer, Colorado Springs, Battle Zone, 9,005,000.

●Leo Daniels, Carolina Beach, N.C., Asteroids, 40,101,910.

●Kevin Gentry, Lake Charles, La., Asteroids Deluxe, 2,117,570.

●Frank Lanzinger, Mountain View, Calif., Centipede, 2,999,999.

●Tim Vargo, Kent, Ohio, Missile Command, 51,957,175.

*The highest score ever achieved on Defender, to my knowledge, is 33,013,200 points. This was racked up by a still-unnamed player from Iowa.

If you think you've set a world record on any video game, write to Michael Blanchard, in care of The Sentinel, P.O. Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis., 53201. Give the score, time and place the attempt was made, along with the names of witnesses. If a record has been broken, your score will be included in this column's listing of world record holders.

• • •

Dear Michael: The other day something unexpected happened to me while I was playing Pac-Man. I was trapped in the maze between Pinky and Speedy. To hasten what I thought was inevitable doom, I

steered my Pac-Man straight at one of the oncoming monsters. Much to my surprise, that yellow gobbler passed right through one of the monsters, unharmed. Is there a logical explanation for this, or was it a freak occurrence?

Michael Kosko.
Long Beach Island, N.J.

Dear Michael: The same thing has happened to me on a number of occasions. The best explanation I have is that at the moment of impact, the monster in question turned its eyes in another direction. If the monster's eyes are not facing you, it is then possible to pass right through him.

The Tribune Company Syndicate Inc.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

'Defender' strategy

Your mission in Defender is to defend a humanoid population that is scattered about the planet's surface below your ship. Initially, your adversaries will be green landers. Their mission is to descend to the planet's surface, pick up a humanoid, and carry it to the top of the screen. At the top of the screen, the two merge to form a mutant, an undesirable opponent.

At first glance, the Defender control panel looks intimidating. It consists of one two-position lever (up and down) and five buttons (reverse, hyperspace, thrust, fire and smart bomb). Before you start doubting your dexterity, let me tell you that only two of the five buttons will be used continually. I recommend using one of the others as seldom as possible. The last two are no sweat.

Now that you are calmed down, I'll tell you what to do.

Reverse button to right

The control handle moves your ship vertically. To the right of the control handle is the reverse button, which reverses the direction of your ship. It is easily accessible to the thumb of your left hand. The two buttons to the far right are the thrust and fire buttons.

Your firepower capabilities are unique. Your jet will loose laser bursts as fast as you can push the fire button. Not automatic, but semi-automatic. You must constantly press and release the fire button. No shot, however, will travel past the boundaries of the screen.

To move your jet along, thrust is necessary. Get used to pushing this button, because you will be doing it a lot. Remember that what you see on the screen at any one time is only one portion of an entire panorama. You have a whole planet to defend.

To help you see what is going on elsewhere, there is a long-range scanner just above the screen. Each enemy leaves its own distinctive mark on the scanner, so familiarize yourself with them.

Green button is trump card

The green button just below the thrust button is your trump card: the smart bomb. When it is pressed, every alien on the screen is destroyed. You get three to start, and an additional one for every 10,000 points scored.

Closest to you, in the center of the control panel, is the panic button, commonly referred to as hyperspace. It is nothing special. When pressed, it relocates your ship at random to another position on the planet's surface. Explosion on re-entry is possible.

Once you have mastered the controls, the rest is easy. An ideal attack plan is to annihilate whatever creature is in your path first, then move on. Standing still can have two negative effects — the unchecked lander force will make off with your humanoids, and if all of your humanoids are mutated or otherwise destroyed, your planet explodes, leaving you to face an overpowering enemy fleet in deep space.

Second, Defender allows you only so much time before it unleashes reinforcements in the form of baiters. Baiters are green saucers that your ship, under full thrust, cannot outrun. So make haste!

If you come upon a lander with a humanoid in tow, you can spoil the party and score some extra points in the process. First, shoot the lander, being careful

not to strike the humanoid. When the humanoid begins to fall, move your ship forward and catch it by flying through it. That's worth 500 points. Set him back down on the ground wherever you choose by descending to the planet's surface. That's worth another 500 points.

If you've developed your own technique for manipulating the thrust and fire buttons, good for you! You beginners may find it difficult to continually press the fire button while holding down the thrust button. I suggest that, using the first two fingers of your right hand, you press the thrust and fire buttons together in quick bursts. In this way, your ship is always moving and always firing.

Fly relatively low to the planet's surface and exercise caution when you dip below the planet's surface. A stray laser blast may strike one of your humanoids and destroy it. Your ship, on the other hand, can fly through a humanoid without harming it.

Tempo of game steps up

During the second round, the tempo of the game steps up, and some new adversaries make their entrance. They are bombers, pods and swarmers.

Bombers appear as small boxes. When they approach your ship, they deposit small white X's, which are fatal to the touch. Pods are round stars, each of which is worth a thousand points. Once destroyed, a group of tenacious swarmers will emerge. As their name implies, swarmers home in on your ship.

Your strategy here should not vary a great deal. Your main objective is to preserve humanoids. Strategic use of smart bombs is critical in later stages of the game. Use them for big points. Hint: when the screen is full of pods, stop your ship and press smart bomb. Experience tells me that nine times out of ten, the pods, as well as the resulting swarmers, will be consumed in a single blast.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Don't go 'Berzerk' over this game

Berzerk is equipped with a unique joystick that enables you to move in eight directions.

The joystick is anchored by a high-tension spring, which keeps the control handle at center until you push or pull it.

Before you play Berzerk, tap or push the joystick slightly and then release it.

If it snaps back to center, it will perform well. If it lies to one side, or offers no resistance, pass it up. The joystick won't respond crisply, and your score will suffer accordingly.

Move, fire diagonally

Finding the angles to move diagonally will be tough at first, but don't give up. If you look closely at the control panel, you will notice an eight-pointed star coming from the base of the control handle. Use the diagonal points at your sights, pushing or pulling the joystick in the direction they are pointing.

If you still can't find the mark, try moving the joystick so that your man is moving in a straight line either left, right, up or down. Slowly move the joystick in the diagonal direction you desire. Eventually, your man will move at the desired angle.

If you wish to fire at an angle and can't find it, move the joystick to make your man fire up, down, left or right. Hold down the fire button and slowly move toward the desired angle.

When moving the joystick, be precise and firm, but don't be overbearing. Unnecessary force won't make your man move any faster or shoot more.

3 ways to destroy robots

The object of Berzerk is to guide your humanoid safely out of the room, destroying as many robots as possible in the process.

If you destroy all the robots on any given board, you will be awarded ten additional bonus points for each robot destroyed.

What the game directions don't tell you is that there are three ways to de-

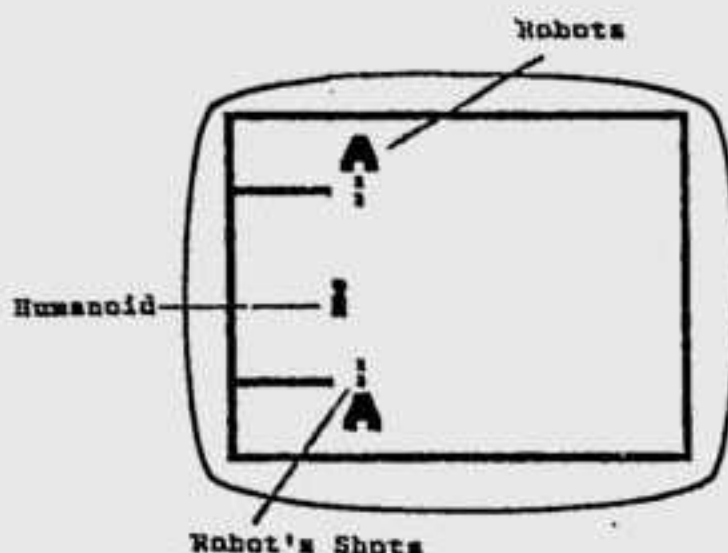
stroy robots. Two of them don't even involve the fire button.

There are two fire buttons on Berzerk, one for right-handed people and one for southpaws. When one is pressed, your humanoid will stop and fire in the direction the joystick is pointed. Pressing the fire button alone does nothing. Constant pressure on the fire button gives you the machine gun effect.

Your opponents are robots, each force progressively faster and wielding more fire power than the one before it.

Each robot occupies a certain territory. Its movements are governed by the way you move your humanoid.

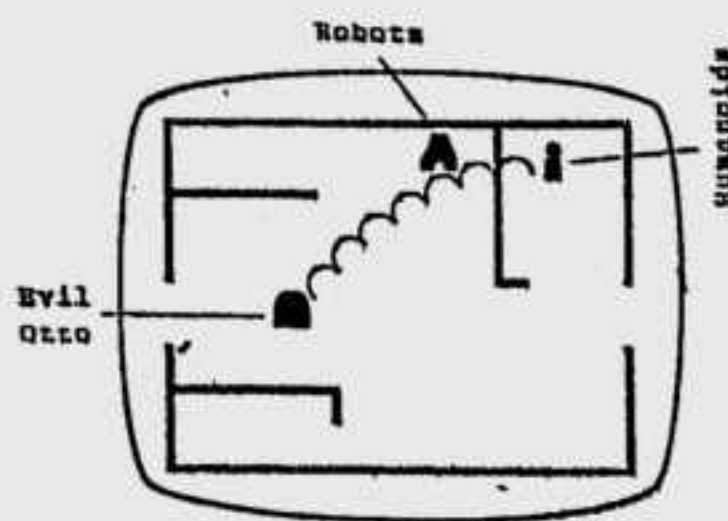
Make the robots destroy each other. Once you are on a horizontal or vertical path with an enemy robot, he will mimic your movements. Make him run into another robot.



When caught between two robots, don't waste time trying to hit them. Your shots and the robots' cancel each other out when they collide.

Wait for robots to move

Stop and wait for both robots to fire at you. When both shots are about to strike you, move out of their way and let them pass. The robots will move in the same direction you do. Move back to your original position, and the robots will follow suit. They will now be in the path of the oncoming shots.



At some point on each board, Evil Otto, the bouncing ball, will emerge from the spot where your humanoid started and make chase with the intent to kill.

His speed is determined by the number of robots left on the board. As you destroy more robots, Evil Otto will speed up.

Slow down Evil Otto

To slow down Evil Otto, leave one robot unharmed, preferably one positioned at the upper or lower left of the field.

Destroy the other robots and position yourself on a horizontal plane with the remaining robot. When Evil Otto emerges, he will head directly for you and destroy the remaining robot in his path.

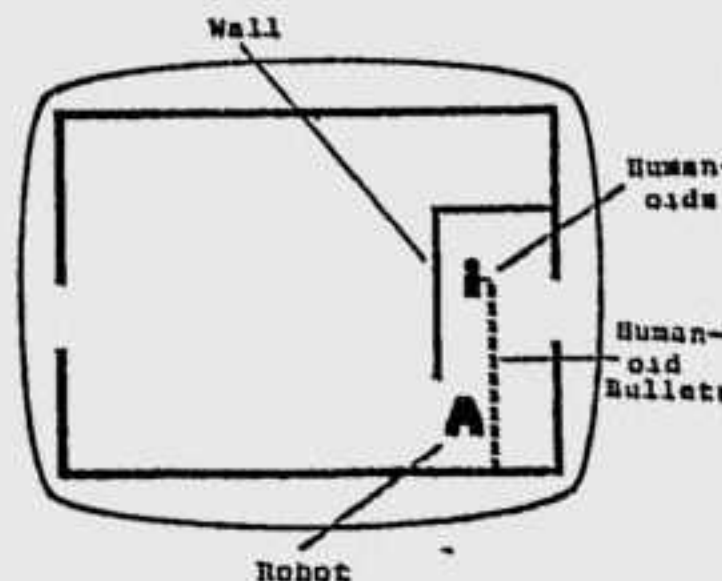
Evil Otto can be manipulated in much the same way as the robots. Use him to your advantage. Instead of trying to shoot the last robot, let Evil Otto destroy him for you.

Exit at right

Try to exit the room through the right hand doorway. This allows you to begin your next round on the left.

Exiting at the top or the bottom is not recommended. You will find that starting at the top or the bottom is much more difficult than starting from the left.

Note that your humanoid uses his right hand to shoot up and down. In a two-player situation, player two will be at a distinct disadvantage, especially if there is a wall running vertically in front of him. Player two can restart his turn by exiting through the right door and reappearing on the left.



From "How to Beat the Video Games" by Michael Blanchet, published by permission of Fireside — Simon and Schuster.

Tribune Company Syndicate



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Victory is possible

Exidy's newest video game, Victory, is cast in the Defender mold. It is a colorful, sophisticated challenge.

The object in Victory is to blast a squadron of hostile nasties before they perform their mission — to drop paratroopers. The paratroopers, in turn, have their own deadly function to perform after landing.

Exidy condensed the array of controls characteristic of Defender down to a bank of oversized, color-coded buttons. Every flight-related function of your battlestar, except for thrust, is executed by a steering knob. The buttons control thrust, fire, shields and the doomsday device.

The action takes place over a landscape that extends beyond the borders of the screen. To preview activity in the other regions of the battlefield, a radar scanner is supplied.

In a departure from basic Defender mechanics, Victory allows you to roam the expanse that exists past the top of the screen. When altitude increases past a certain point, the land below falls from view.

Contact with the planet below is forbidden. Impact with the ground costs one game life.

The capabilities of your weapons increase with each round completed. The number of foes you face also increases.

A player graduates from single shots to dual missiles and finally to tandem lasers.

The doomsday device blows away every creature on the screen.

Shields provide a defense. Your ship is shielded — or invulnerable — for three seconds.

Your ship is a stop-sign shaped fighter with a gun barrel protruding from one side. The gun is aimed by rotating the steering knob. Under thrust, your battlestar moves in the direction the gun is pointing.

The chief danger in Victory is the serene-looking paratroopers that leap from the bombers, interceptors, shuttles and saucers. If they land unscathed, they become scouts. A scout, in turn, heads for one of the land bunkers that hold the hibernating red quarks.

A quark set free is a formidable oppo-

nent that will immediately pursue your battlestar. The number of unreleased quarks during each round is used to determine your bonus score.

The battlestar has free reign of the heavens, but pilots must keep an eye on the fuel gauge to make sure power is not ebbing. Refueling, a necessary evil, is done by docking with one of the stationary fuel depots on the ground below.

The doomsday device is your most potent weapon, but its supply is limited. With each use, every foe present on the screen is wiped out.

A trick that works well in Defender is also effective in Victory. Through evasive flying, draw the attention of as many aliens as possible. As they all move to ambush you, hit the doomsday device.

Initially, each squadron of bombers travels in close formation. If you make haste to this shoulder-to-shoulder armada, one touch of the doomsday device will knock them all out and end the round.

The Tribune Syndicate



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Upgrading your Atari

Atari is still the home video giant, but next to some of the more expensive game systems, Atari's graphics look — well, primitive.

Arcadia Corp., a new entry in the home video market, may have the answer for dissatisfied Atari owners who don't want to invest in a whole new system. Their new Super Charger, an "oversized game cartridge," will upgrade an Atari for a relatively modest price (\$69.95 suggested list).

Increases bytes to 6,272

In essence, Arcadia has stepped beyond the limitations set by the Atari's "primitive" capacity. The Super Charger increases the potential RAM (Random Access Memory) of the VCS from 128 bytes to a whopping 6,272 bytes. This in turn sharpens graphic resolution and permits greater complexity of game character interaction and movement.

The graphics generator incorporated in the Super Charger scans every line of the picture screen (as opposed to every other line). The result is crisp resolution, equal to or surpassing the graphics of more expensive game systems.

The Super Charger cartridge is insert-

ed into the game receptacle of the Atari video cassette system. A cord from the body of the Super Charger is then plugged into the earphone jack of any cassette player. The game program, which is stored on cassette tapes, is then loaded into the cassette player.

The new games that take advantage of enhanced memory provided by the Super Charger are stored on cassette tapes that will retail for under \$15. The initial Arcadia library consists of four games — Communist Mutants from Space, Fireball, Suicide Mission and Phaser Patrol — which is included at no additional cost with the Super Charger.

Pits player against Commies

Communist Mutants from Space pits the player against platoons of diving Commies. A nifty array of munitions, including shields, guided missiles and a time warp option that, when activated, slows down the opposition's assault, are at the player's disposal.

Fireball is a clever revamping of the Breakout theme. The player controls a futuristic juggler, who catches fireballs and hurls them at various brick configurations. As the tempo quickens, up to six fireballs will carom about the playfield at one time. When you miss a fireball, an oversized shepherd's staff emerges from the left side of the screen and drags the juggler backstage!

In Suicide Mission, which may have been inspired by the movie "Fantastic Voyage," the field is the vein and artery

network of the human body. Instead of missiles or lasers, players blast their bacterial foes with antibiotics. As the game progresses, the infection spreads and creates a deadlier strain of microscopic monsters.

Phaser Patrol is a dual mode game. The galactic sector map mode displays a grid-like portrayal of the universe. It is here that players select their destination in the galaxies. Then the player shifts to cockpit perspective. An instrument panel displays a radar screen and gauges provide status reports on key functions, such as energy levels and the condition of defensive shields.

Another trick up sleeve

Arcadia has one other trick up its sleeve — this one borrowed from the movies. By advancing the cassette after the game program has been loaded, you can get a sneak preview of future games, such as Sword of Saros, Killer Satellites, Demolition Derby, Last Line of Defense, Clone Attack and Wipe Out.

Will Arcadia licence and produce Super Charger versions of arcade games? According to company president Alan Bayley, Arcadia will do so "only if the game can be reproduced faithfully and realistically for use with the Super Charger."

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201.

The Tribune Syndicate



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Hollywood gets into games

The home video market is exploding. By Christmas, the Atari VCS owner will have almost 75 original games clamoring for a share of his entertainment dollar. And that's only the tip of the iceberg.

If you think that everyone who could has already entered the home video field, you're wrong. Now Hollywood is trying to get in on the action.

Film division own rights

Entertainment giant MCA recently announced its intention of entering the home video software race. MCA Video Games, the newest subsidiary of MCA, plans to develop and market home video games compatible with "as many game systems as appropriate arrangements can be made for," says James Fielder, president of MCA games. Although no definite titles were announced, Universal Pictures, the film division of MCA, currently controls the rights to Bruce the Shark of "Jaws" fame, as well as "Smokey and the Bandit."

MCA Video Games promises that it does not intend to be an also-ran or a producer of "me too" games. "We're not out to build another Pac-Man," Fielder stated. "We already have Bruce the Shark — he'll eat a Pac-Man any day."

MCA's entry into the games race could have far-reaching effects, particularly on the laser disc market, since MCA is one

of the biggest producers of laser discs. Fielder noted that "the new Magnavox (laser disc) player has an input for the Odyssey Two console."

Pooling talents, resources

Lucasfilm, which brought us "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and "The Empire Strikes Back," and Atari have announced that they will pool their talents and resources to develop home video games, coin-ops and computer software.

"Lucasfilm's feature operation, combined with its computer division, is a perfect partner for Atari, which represents the major force in video games," said Robert M. Greber, Lucasfilm's president. "Together we intend to dramatically affect the evolution of the electronic entertainment industry."

Game titles and subject matter are not yet available, but since the hottest Lucasfilm properties are already licensed ("Empire" to Parker Brothers and "Raiders" to Atari), chances are that most of the early titles will be original. A remark by director Steven Spielberg in a recent Newsweek story, however, intimated that there may be a video game based on one of the most frightening scenes from "Poltergeist."

Atari and Lucasfilm predicted that their first combined efforts will be shown at next summer's Consumer Electronic Show.

Fox entry on display

And the movie-company entries keep coming. Twentieth Century-Fox Films has formed a Fox video games corporation, Twentieth Century-Fox Games of

the Century. Fox was the only Hollywood entry with finished products to display at the recent Consumer Electronics Show. Its first four games — Fast Eddie, WormWar I, Beany Bopper and Deadly Duck — should be available by the fourth quarter of this year. This first group of cartridges is compatible with the Atari system. Fox intends to produce cartridges for other game systems in the future.

CBS-Columbia rounds out the showbiz entries in the game industry. Their gaming arm, CBS Video Games, plans to have at least three cartridges ready for use with the Atari VCS by the end of this year. Eventually, CBS plans to develop cartridges for every game system, depending on the market penetration each respective system achieves.

CBS has an agreement with Bally Manufacturing Corp., which gives CBS the home video game rights to games Bally currently has in development. Also included in those rights are all games developed and licensed by Bally for the next four years.

Tribune Syndicate

Cleaner guarantee just doesn't wash

London, England —UPI— The London Daily Telegraph said Tuesday the following advertising card is used by a St. Albans dry cleaner:

"Our Guarantee. Should you feel we have failed you in any way, we will be only too pleased to do it again at no extra charge."

Beating the video game

New video games to play at home

The big news at the recent Consumer Electronics show in Chicago was Coleco's ColecoVision system.

ColecoVision, which will retail for under \$200, has almost 10 times the screen ram of Mattel's Intellivision. (Screen ram regulates the quality and movement of the graphics.) Coleco's combination joystick-keyboard controller has a built-in dial that allows players to change the speeds of individual game characters. And the ColecoVision cartridge library reads like a "Who's Who" of coin-op arcade games: Donkey Kong (this cartridge will come packed with each ColecoVision set), Mousetrap, Venture and Turbb, to name a few.

Three other new home video game systems, ranging in price from \$130 to \$350, were introduced. The Emerson Arcadia 2001 is at the low end of the price scale. It is the only programmable game system that can be operated on both 12 volt and regular house current. The initial Emerson library consists of 20 titles.

Atari's new super system, tentatively dubbed the 5200 Advanced Video Entertainment System, was the pride of the Atari booth. At least a dozen cartridges compatible with the 5200 were shown, including home versions of arcade games (Taiko's Qix) and a video spin-off of

the movie blockbuster "Raiders of the Lost Ark."

The other big news was new cartridges. Imagic, Coleco, Apollo and Parker Brothers showed game cartridges compatible with the Atari VCS, and Imagic and Coleco showed game cartridges compatible with the Intellivision system.

Atari introduced seven new titles, included the aforementioned Raiders of the Lost Ark and updated versions of Atari sports games. And guess who's developing the official video game of the 1984 Olympics? Who else but Atari!

Coleco showed 10 Intellivision compatible games and nine Atari VCS cartridges, all versions of arcade games. Apollo, the Texas-based software company, has expanded its library to six cartridges. The long-awaited Parker Brothers VCS version of "The Empire Strikes Back" made its official debut, along with Frogger. Parker Brothers is now preparing a series of Star Wars based games.

• Michael Blanchet appears in Upbeat every Friday. Send your questions to Beating the Video Games, The Miami News, P.O. Box 615, Miami 33152. Get his book by the same name from The Miami News for \$2 — \$1.95 off the cover price.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Parker Brothers, a new entry in the home video game cartridge industry, has announced shipping dates for its first two game cartridges, along with the titles of three games being developed.

The Empire Strikes Back and Frogger should be on store shelves by August. Both games are compatible with the Atari system. By early next year, Parker Brothers intends to have both games available for use with all leading home video game systems.

Based on movie of same name

The Empire Strikes Back is based on the movie. The action takes place on a battlefield the width of eight television screens. A radar band and innovative play make The Empire Strikes Back one of the most challenging games available for the Atari system.

With Frogger, Parker Brothers' attention to detail is obvious. The game resembles its arcade counterpart and even spews out the nifty Frogger soundtrack.

Parker has made one minor change, which may help beginners. During the first round of play, a frog resting on a floating log or turtle can exit the right side of the screen and reappear on the left. Doing so in coin-op Frogger costs one game life.

As for titles under development:

Spiderman, scheduled to be unveiled in September, is based on the exploits of the Marvel hero.

Players assume the role of Spiderman and scale buildings in search of time bombs hidden by the Goblin, Spidey's longtime nemesis.

Spiderman will first be issued in Atari-compatible form, but by the mid-1983 of next year it will also be available for use with all the major home video game formats.

Amidar scheduled for fall

The Parker version of Amidar is also scheduled for fall release. Amidar, a proven favorite in Japan's arcades, is making inroads in the US. It blends play features from Pac-Man, Qix and Make Trax.

Players pilot a gorilla around a grid. As the gorilla scurries about, he must scoop up coconuts and elude the Amidar guards.

During the second phase of Amidar, the gorilla's objective is altered. With paint roller in hand, the gorilla must cordon off sections of the playfield while watching out for the guards. When capture appears inevitable, Amidar's jump button is the player's only hope. Press it and guards leap up, allowing the player's gorilla to escape. Amidar will be compatible with the Atari system.

Parker is also developing a home version of Super Cobra, which resembles the Scramble arcade game. Super Cobra puts players in the cockpit of a helicopter. The object is to navigate a series of caves and city skylines en route to booty. Each stage of this game becomes more difficult.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your own strategies for beating the games.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Games that talk to you

Mattel Electronics, the Avis of the home video industry, has unveiled two notable new offerings: the Intellivoice synthesis module, featuring realistic male and female voices, and the M Network, a series of 11 game cartridges for use with the rival Atari system.

The Intellivoice produces speech commands, observations and strategy tips, which are computer selected according to game conditions.

Four new game cartridges will be released in conjunction with the sound module this fall.

Keeps you up to date

In Space Spartans, a female voice acts as your co-pilot throughout your perilous journey. From the moment you take the controls (when the voice greets you with a friendly "Hello commander, computer reporting,") until the end of the game, the voice keeps you up to date on the status of your ship's functions.

In B-17 Bomber, players pilot a World War II bomber over target areas in occupied Europe. The pilot is aided by a bombardier and co-pilot, who bark out instructions. This game demonstrates the versatility of the Intellivoice module. Your co-pilot talks with a Western accent while the bombardier speaks with a Southern drawl.

In Bomb Squad, the object is to disarm

an explosive device planted by a terrorist group. As you try to unravel the numerical code needed to defuse the bomb, the "bomb squad master" shouts encouragement. As the fuse shortens, the squad master eggs you on, saying, "The code, the code, figure out the code!"

A game tentatively called Tron-Solar Sailor, based on the upcoming Walt Disney movie, rounds out the initial Intellivoice library. Tron-Solar Sailor plunges the player into the depths of a computer. To help you guide the Sailor through the jungle of ROMs, RAMS and microprocessors, Yori and Bit offer advice on conditions and possible means of escape. The bad guy is the Master Control Program, an abstract opponent that taunts the player.

Series of 11 games

The M Network, slated for release this summer, is a series of 11 Mattel games that are compatible with the Atari system. According to Joshua W. Denham, president of Mattel Electronics, "The M Network offers owners of Atari VCS units access to markedly improved graphics, game play and extended enjoyment."

Since any cartridge is only as good as the system it is played on, the M Network versions of Intellivision games sacrifice some graphic appeal. But the sports and strategy games do add a degree of sophistication not found in many Atari compatible games.

The bulk of the M Network is original Intellivision games re-engineered for use with the Atari format. In the outer space shoot-'em-up category, Mattel offers As-

troblast and Space Attack (which closely resembles Intellivision's Space Battle).

Intellivision's forte has always been its sports games. The same holds true for the M Network. Visually superior to Atari's own sports games, International Soccer, Super Challenge Baseball and Super Challenge Football offer a considerable degree of player involvement.

Armor Ambush is a tank warfare-simulation that replaces the simple barriers of Atari's Combat with true-to-life landscapes. To stalk their opponents, players must travel over roads, across rivers and through forests. Sea Battle, another head-to-head military confrontation, puts each player on the flagship of an entire naval fleet.

Cops-robbers cast

Lock and Chase, a maze game with a cops and robbers cast, is the only arcade copy in the M Network library. The object is to snag as many sacks of money as little Lupin (the robber) can hold, while eluding the pursuing cops.

The only original title in the M Network is Tron-Deadly Discs, Mattel's second spin-off of the upcoming Walt Disney movie. Wielding a futuristic Frisbee, Tron must dodge the unfriendly discs that are caroming off the walls of the playfield. To cut down the enemy hurlers, Tron can flick his own deadly Frisbee.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your own strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Syndicate



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

New games wed pinball, video

Bally's Rapid Fire is the latest of a new generation of machines — hybrids that are part pinball, part video. Williams introduced the first, Hyperball, a pinball machine that was heavily influenced by video games.

Bally took the cue from Williams and developed its own version of this new breed — Rapid Fire.

Bally obviously scrutinized Hyperball in hope of building a better mouse trap. Its most notable improvements are the extended gun barrel and the beefed-up firepower.

Firing rate increased

Rapid Fire's four-inch gun barrel provides the player with a sense of aim, and the rate of fire is almost double that of Hyperball (480 balls per minute vs. 250).

Most of the playfield's perimeter is open, an aid to rapid reloading. It also cuts down on ball collisions.

Rapid Fire is easy to learn, despite its sophisticated gadgetry. Six buttons on

the control panel activate play functions. By moving the display from the playing field, where it rests in Hyperball, to the back (upright) portion of the cabinet, Bally places the information display at eye level.

One of Bally's other new games capitalizes on the cast of characters from Pac-Man and Ms. Pac-Man. Mr. and Ms. Pac-Man pinball is an attractive combination of pin mechanics and the familiar Pac-Man video game.

Must win at least 6 'moves'

To qualify for a turn on the Pac-Maze, each player must win a minimum of six "moves," which are awarded for placement of the ball at various spots on the field. The object is to get a chance to challenge the "vid-grid." Once conditions are satisfied, play shifts to the vid-grid in the center of the playing field.

Here, using the left flipper button to adjust direction and the right button to move, players attempt to rack up extra points. On the vid-grid the object is to complete mazes within a limited time period noted on the machine's display board.

Meanwhile, Gottlieb, the company that revolutionized pinball with the development of the reverse playing field in Black Hole, is attempting to do it again. Caveman, a unique game that alternately challenges players on a video screen and a

pinball playing field, has been called the "missing link" in arcade entertainment.

The two formats, video and pinball, complement each other. A high score depends on a player's ability to make transitions from one to the other.

A maze of caves

In the video segment, the caveman must be guided through a maze of caves. Upon encountering a brontosaurus or a triceratops, the caveman, under the player's control, must kill them. Each slain beast is then rejuvenated, only to become a tyrannosaur, a nemesis that must be avoided.

If a threatening situation arises, the player's caveman can exit the maze and resume play in the pinball portion of the game. When he returns to the video, however, he will face the situation he left behind.

High scoring opportunities, as well as free balls, are set up in the pinball section. They are awarded in the player successfully navigates the video section. As an aid to players in quest of point bonuses and extra balls, a synthesized voice gives commands.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Battling burgers? Watch for Megamania

Activision, still the undisputed leader of the home video game software industry, has announced two new game titles, Megamania and Pitfall, which will be available in September. Also slated for fall unveiling are the first two in a proposed series of Intellivision-compatible games (Pitfall and Stampede).

Megamania is designer Steve (Barnstorming) Cartwright's nightmare-turned-video game. Players, armed with a ground-based missile launcher, battle a bizarre collection of everyday objects that are armed, dangerous and bent on destroying you.

If you ever wondered what it would be like to fight off a battalion of kamikaze hamburgers or a closet of belligerent bow ties, Megamania may be the game for you. You'll have to do battle with a

set of radial tires, chunks of Swiss cheese, a few handfuls of dice and a group of possessed irons.

In Pitfall, the sixth game that David (Freeway, Gran Orix) Crane has designed for Activision, the player assumes the role of Pitfall Harry, Activision's answer to Indiana Jones, and treks through jungle terrain in search of treasure.

Harry, a gifted athlete, has a way of surmounting every obstacle. To reach the other side of bubbling tar pits that lie in his path, Harry must hitch a ride on a vine. Swamps, teeming with crocodiles, are crossed by using the beasts' heads as steppingstones. A quick leap and a watchful eye will keep Harry clear of the rolling logs and jungle fires that pop up during his journey.

No matter how cautious he is, Harry eventually will make a mistake and tumble into the underground passageway that is the quickest route to the treasure but is loaded with scorpions. Since Pitfall is only a game, Harry is granted three lives in which to complete the treasure hunt.

Tiger Electronic Toys, another new entry in the home video game software industry, is introducing five Tiger Vision cartridges, all Atari-compatible. The initial group consists of Jaw Breaker, King Kong, River Patrol, Marauder and Threshold.

In Jaw Breaker, a maze game, a group of happy faces chase a set of teeth. The teeth munch through a labyrinth strewn with candy. When they swallow a bonus candy, the once gleeful faces turn into sourpusses. The hunters are now the hunted and can be chewed up for bonus points. Sound familiar?

Tiger Vision's King Kong also has a familiar ring. Kong has taken a pretty young lady to the top of the Empire State Building. Your mission is to scale the skyscraper, jumping over the bombs the ape is hurling. When you reach the top, the grateful damsel says, "I love you!"

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201.

The Tribune Syndicate



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Chopper One lands

Defender, one of the most popular of all arcade games, is influencing a whole new generation of home video games. Activision's Chopper Command, involving an air battle over desert terrain, is one of the home games showing a strong Defender influence.

The player guides a helicopter, Chopper One, and serves as guardian angel to a convoy of trucks. The mission: to stop the enemy gunships and jets before they bring down the chopper or blast the trucks into dust.

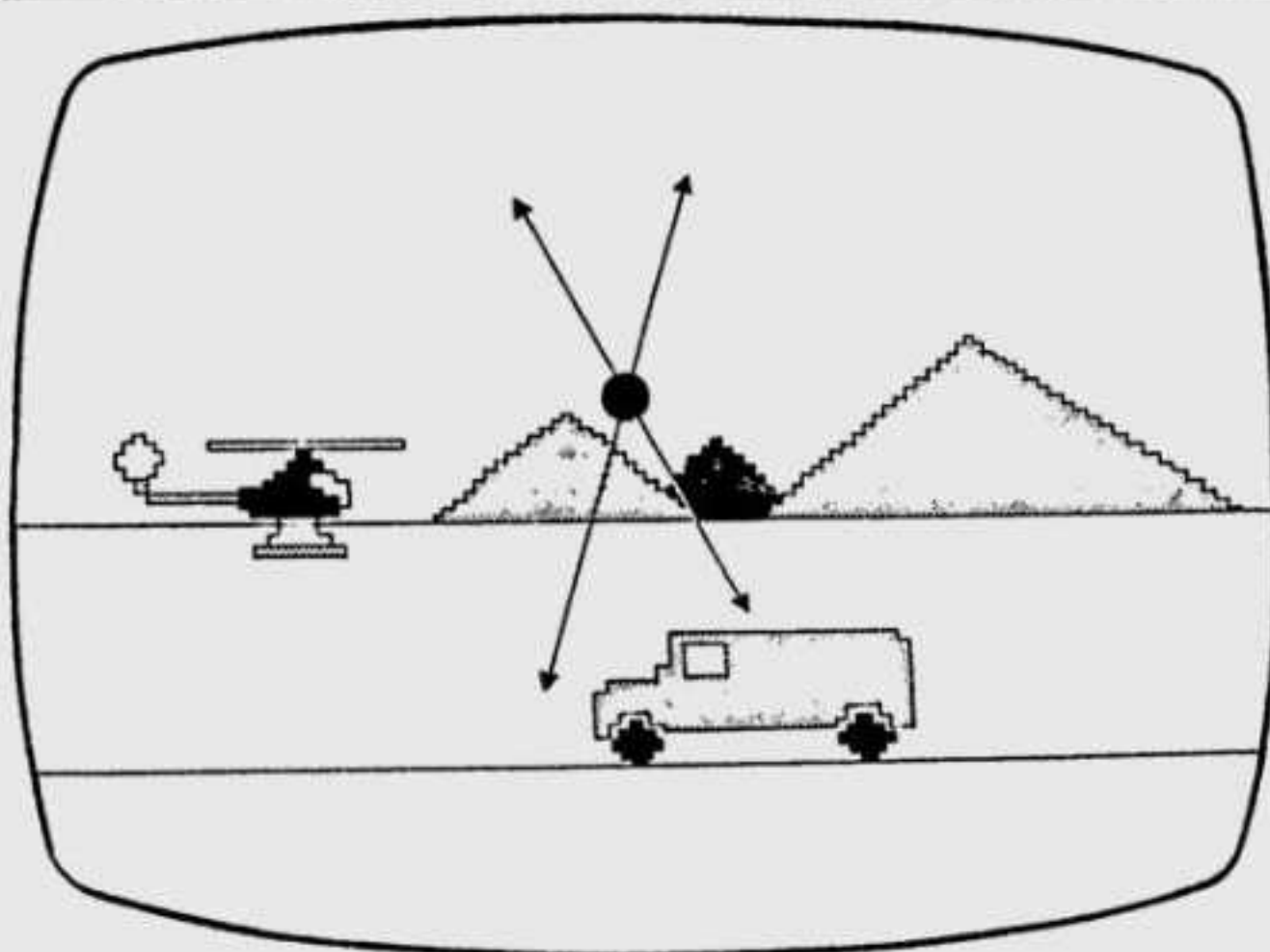
The player is given three helicopters (each representing a game life) at the beginning of each game, and a bonus bird is awarded for every 10,000 points accumulated. The actual battle ground is considerably larger than what's represented on the screen. A long-range scanner (in which your chopper is depicted as a black dot and trucks and the planes are represented by yellow dots) is provided so you can see what lies ahead.

Altitude and speed can be changed by moving the joy stick. To increase speed, simply push the joy stick full throttle. To decrease speed, let up a bit.

For a quick, 180-degree turn, move the joy stick in the opposite direction. Chopper One will react well, but be forewarned: If the chopper is traveling full speed before the turn, the thrust will carry the chopper backwards momentarily after the turn is executed. Remember this if you are heading into a closely bunched squadron of enemy planes.

The red button launches your missiles, which fly on a path parallel to the ground. Putting constant pressure on the fire button gives you a machine gun effect.

Three things can do you in: a midair collision with an enemy fighter, running into an unfriendly projectile, or flying too



ENEMY BOMBS suspended in midair will divide and fly at angles shown by the arrows in Chopper Command.

close to the ground and hitting one of your own trucks.

Since the enemy planes follow increasingly erratic patterns, it is unwise to get too close to them or to put yourself in the thick of a squadron.

Try moving along until the scanner shows that a number of planes are about to appear on the screen. This way, you will have time to react to the erratic behavior of your aggressors, and the enemy will still be within range of your missiles.

Dodging bombs can be tricky. A bomb dropped by an enemy ship will hover motionless for a split second or more. Then the dot will split in two, one half

hurling at the trucks below, the other shooting toward the heavens. But neither half follows a true vertical course. Instead of moving perpendicular to the ground, the missile fragments fly at oblique angles (see illustration).

Never cross the path of a hovering missile. You don't know when it will split. Remember: If you keep your distance from the hostile planes, the bombs will pose little threat.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your own strategies for beating the games.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

More joy in joy sticks

Home video game controls, or joy sticks, may soon be giving us the same kind of performance as their arcade counterparts.

•Wico Corp. is the most important entry in the home video field. Guided by a survey of 1,000 Atari owners, Wico has developed three joy sticks and a trak ball controller for use on game systems, including Atari and Odyssey Two, as well as Apple, Radio Shack, Texas Instruments and Commodore home computers. They will retail at \$30 and \$70 and are expected to be available this fall.

Wico's Command Control joy sticks feature the same leaf-switch construction used in its commercial arcade controls. Wico's standard joy stick, shaped like a baseball bat, has two fire buttons. Each of the leaf switches is self-cleaning and can be replaced easily.

Wico's Joy Stick Deluxe is a beefed-up version of the standard model. This unit has been contoured for comfortable grip, the bottom of the unit has four rubber

pads that prevent skidding, and its two fire buttons respond quickly. Both models come with a 5-foot cord that plugs directly into the Atari, Sears and Commodore home units.

Wico's Red Ball joy stick is, for all purposes, the same control used on popular arcade games by Bally, Stern, Williams and Atari. The Red Ball has two fire buttons and is capable of eight-way game character movement.

Wico's Trak Ball, first popularized in the arcade game Centipede, will soon be available for home video systems. The Trak Ball allows a multiple combination of movements and also allows players to regulate the speed of game characters.

•Zircon International of California is countering with the Video Command joy stick, which combines moving and firing functions in one tubular control. A triangular knob and shaft protrudes from the rectangular body of Video Command. Forward, backward and angular moves are made by moving the triangular knob accordingly. To rotate right or left, one spins the head of the device. To fire, one pushes the plunger down.

For Apple Home Computers, Zircon displayed the Alpha Command paddle control, along with the Video Stick,

which is also compatible with the TRS 80 and IBM Personal Computers.

•General Consumer Electronics has unveiled Firepower, a replacement joy stick compatible with the Atari video cassette system, Sears Tele-Game Video Arcade and the Atari 400 and 800 home computers. With two fire buttons built into the control handle — one on the top, the other a trigger — Firepower can be operated with one hand, independent of a base housing.

Game character movement is initiated by a patented liquid switch inside the handle. To move right, for example, players need only tilt the handle in the appropriate direction. This liquid switch, which does not require friction to operate, could put an end to the headache and expense of joy stick failure. Firepower will be available in October at a suggested price is \$14.95.

•Cynex Manufacturing of New Jersey has introduced the Game Mate II, a remote control system for use with the Atari system. Game Mate allows players to operate wireless joy sticks at a distance of 20 feet from the TV screen. Company spokesmen say the Game Mate will work up to 35 feet, an advantage to owners of wide screen and projection televisions.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Game may prove demonic

By Michael Blanchet

Demon Attack, Imagic's most successful home video offering, pits the player against a fleet of hovering demons. The twist is that each progressive wave of demons uses a different attack strategy.

In each of the 10 waves, players are granted three bunkers, or game lives. Each time the player destroys a wave of demons (eight demons in each wave), a bonus bunker is added to the player's reserve, until a maximum of six is reached.

A joy stick controller is used to move your fighter either left or right, out of the path of enemy missiles. Your retaliatory missiles are launched by a touch of the red button.

Although each wave of demons will employ a different attack strategy, your counterattack will remain relatively unchanged, with the exception of a few tactics I'll discuss later.

Only three of the eight demons in a wave will appear on the screen at one time. And only one of these three will strafe the playing field.

In the first two rounds, the bombs fall in an almost true vertical path and are easily dodged.

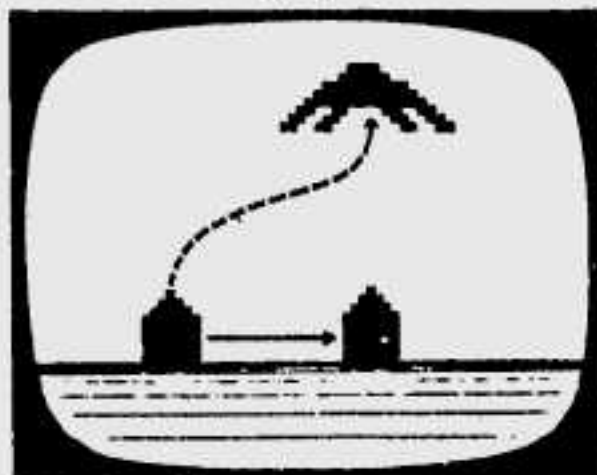
The laser blasts of wave three and four are a little trickier. These blasts travel parallel to one another. Any area between the deadly rays is dangerous to your ship.

The first real test of defensive maneuvering comes in round five. Wave five

demons split when you hit them, and the mini-demons dive at your base.

The diving mini-demons are a lucrative source of points. The easiest way to annihilate them is to stand still and fire repeatedly. If they consistently elude your shots, move left or right. The diving demons eventually will disappear off the bottom of the screen.

The bomb-dropping demon will split



just like the passive demons. Since it will drop fewer bombs after it is split, shoot the bomb-laden demon first. Only one of the halves will continue ejecting deadly shells. Then home in on the passive demons. Wait until the passive demons are out of the way before you finish off the bomb-dropping demon. If you don't wait, a complete bomb-laden demon will materialize the moment you shoot the bomb-dropping half.

During waves seven and eight, laser-wielding demons reappear. Like their cousins in earlier waves, these creatures will divide when hit. Once again, shoot the armed demon first. Only one of the resulting mini-demons will shoot at you. Now go to work on the unarmed demons.

In later stages of the game, the demons' bombs will track you. Instead of falling vertically, they will descend at an angle toward your bunker. Attacking the

most aggressive demon is still a good opening strategy. The trick is getting underneath him for a good shot.

You'll note that the demons, particularly the armed ones, move and fire in a rhythm. Watch for the pattern. After a few seconds, you should be able to judge when it is safe to duck under the demons.

Rounds four and eight give you the "tracer" shot. You can alter the flight path of a tracer shot by moving your base as the shot goes upward. The ascending shot will move in the same direction as the shifting base.

To use tracer shots effectively, fire a missile while stationed left or right of your target. Then move your ship under the demon. (Diagram at left.) The missile will mimic your actions.

Rounds nine and 10 are played with a partner. Control of the laser bases shifts every four seconds. The change in command is signaled by a change in the bunker's color. Each player uses a separate joy stick and maintains his own point tally, but game lives are used and lost together.

If the laser base is destroyed under your partner's command, you will be awarded 500 points. There is a devious way to collect this bonus. Simply place the laser base in jeopardy just before control is transferred. Mentally count the seconds you maintain control of the bunker. Just before the base changes color, move it under a descending salvo.

Two video game contests will be open to players of all ages during The Milwaukee Sentinel's Active Americans Sights & Sounds show in MECCA on Aug. 14-15. The competition will be on Atari's Pac Man and StarMaster by Activision. Each contestant will have five minutes with highest scores winning prizes. Five hundred T-shirts also will be given away.

The Tribune Syndicate



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Zapper a teaching game

Word Zapper and Sneak and Peek, two new home video games, are aimed at the untapped kiddie market.

Word Zapper combines space adventure with spelling practice. At the beginning of each round, a word appears at the bottom of the screen. After it vanishes, the player's mission is to reconstruct it — by blasting the appropriate letters as they scroll across the top of the screen.

Sneak and Peek is a video version of hide and seek. The scene is a mansion and its spacious lawn. As players move through each room, a different display appears on the screen. A brisk musical score heightens tension. Sneak and Peek can be played by one player against the computer or by two players — one hiding, the other seeking.

These games are offered by US Games, the newest subsidiary of Quaker Oats, and will be marketed under the name of Vidtec.

Also for older fans

Vidtec is also offering games for older video enthusiasts. Weird Bird and Towering Inferno fall into the category of "unlikely in real life but possible in video." In Weird Bird, the player must dodge or confront a chicken that loves to lay eggs. Towering Inferno puts the player in the cockpit of a rescue helicopter

that is the last hope for hundreds of tenants trapped in a burning skyscraper.

In the action category, Vidtec offers Space Jockey and Commando Raid. Space Jockey closely resembles Activision's Chopper Command. Commando Raid pits the player's antiaircraft gun against enemy bombers, jet fighters and paratroopers.

• • •

SPECTRA VISION is probably the only new software firm that has not cast most of its games in the hackneyed maze-chase or "save the girl from the bad guy" molds. The first Spectra Vision games, Gangster Alley, Planet Patrol, Cross Fire, Tape Worm and China Syndrome, should be on the shelves in time for Christmas.

Gangster Alley plays like the shooting competition in "Magnum Force," the Clint Eastwood cop flick. The bad guys suddenly appear in windows and on rooftops. Your mission is to shoot them before they shoot you, but you must first make sure they are criminals, not innocent bystanders.

Reactor has been damaged

In China Syndrome, players don their hard hats and try to patch up a nuclear reactor that has been damaged by an earthquake.

Planet Patrol and Cross Fire are space adventures, while Tape Worm is a light-hearted encounter between Slinky the Worm, Spanky the Spider and Beeky the Bird.

• • •

THE FOUNDERS of Comma Vid bring

computer and physical science backgrounds to the consumer electronics marketplace. The first group of cartridges will include Cosmic Swarm (giant termites building a nest in space), Room of Doom (similar to the old knives-in-the-basket trick, but with guns), Mission Omega (a lone ship versus the powerful black heart space station) and Mines of Minos (one robot tries to piece together his buddies so they can help fight off an alien horde). No date on retail availability as yet.

• • •

DATA AGE will have its first complement of games ready for retail in October. Its first release consists of Encounter at L-5, Airlock, SSSSSnake, Survival Run and Warp Lock. Company executives Robert E. Rice and Herbert B. Hershfield, both seasoned veterans of the record industry, promise to make Data Age a household word by the end of the year. How they intend to spread the word is under wraps at this point, but I did hear of a campaign called the Data Age Fall Flurry. We'll keep our eyes and ears open.

Michael Blanchet, author of Win at Video, will appear Aug. 14-15 at The Milwaukee Sentinel's Sights & Sounds show at MECCA. Another highlight of the show will be two video game contests open to players of all ages. In the competition, on Atari's Pac-Man and StarMaster by Activision, each contestant will have five minutes, with highest scores winning prizes. Five-hundred T-shirts also will be given away.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

'Star Wars' re-created in home video games

Parker Bros., maker of board games for almost 100 years, has entered the home video game software market with a game likely to be a hit. The Empire Strikes Back, the first of a series of "Star Wars" games from Parker Bros., re-creates the battle scene on the Ice Planet of Hoth, where rebel forces are pitted against a detachment of Imperial Walkers.

The object is to stop the relentless Walkers before they reach the power generators.

The battlefield spans the width of eight TV screens. The power generators are positioned on the far right of the screen. The Walkers lumber towards them from the left.

To destroy a Walker, your Snow Speeder must hit it 48 times. Every eight hits, the Walker weakens — and it will move more slowly, fire less often and less accurately.

In addition, one well-placed shot on a bomb hatch — one of the flashing discolored areas that appear intermittently on a damaged Walker — will put the Walker out of action.

You will be faced with five Walkers.

Any Walker that you destroy is replaced by a fresh opponent.

Your Snow Speeder can sustain multiple blows, but once struck, it is classified as damaged. It usually can absorb five hits before it goes down for good.

One of the most unusual features of The Empire Strikes Back is the small valleys that dot the battlefield and serve as service stations of sorts.

Land your wounded Snow Speeder in a valley and hold it motionless. Within seconds you'll hear a beep, signaling that repairs are complete. Each of your five allotted Snow Speeders can be repaired twice.

Once two minutes of game time have elapsed, your Snow Speeder will be rendered impervious to any attack for 20 seconds. It is preceded by a computer rendition of the rebel's theme song.

Players use a joy stick control. North and south directions dictate altitude, while East and West move the Snow Speeder forward or back. As you hold the joy stick in any one direction, thrust builds up. To stop or slow down, move the control handle in the opposite direction.

One word of warning. Under full

steam, your Snow Speeder builds up considerable thrust. Therefore, it requires a proportionate amount of time, air space, and counter thrust to slow down or change direction.

There are 32 Empire Strikes Back game variations, which include one- or two-player action, as well as "smart bomb" and "Solid Walkers" options.

The "smart bomb" option makes the bomb hatch a double-edged sword. A bomb hatch might eject, at random, a gravity defying smart bomb that tenaciously tracks your Snow Speeder.

With the "Solid Walkers" option, the air space occupied by the Walker is off limits to your Snow Speeder. But you still can navigate through the legs of your Imperial foe. Crashing into a Solid Walker will destroy your fighter, but the Walker also will sustain damage equivalent to 24 shots.

Michael Blanchet, author of Win at Video, will appear Saturday and Sunday at The Milwaukee Sentinel's Sights & Sounds show at MECCA. Another feature of the show will be two video game contests open to players of all ages. In the competition, on Atari's Pac-Man and StarMaster by Activision, each contestant will have five minutes, with highest scores winning prizes. Five-hundred T-shirts also will be given away.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Only color missing in Vectrex

While almost every company seems to be developing cassettes that plug into already existing systems, a few rugged individualists are taking the opposite route. These companies are developing whole new systems, hoping, of course, that consumers will find their system the "better mousetrap."

General Consumers Electronics of Santa Monica, Calif., is one such company. Its "better mousetrap" is the Vectrex Arcade System. In design and appearance it is without peer. Selected as one of the most innovative products at the Consumer Electronics Show, it was showcased with 107 other industry wonders in the show's Design and Engineering Exhibition, the only video game product so honored.

Everything but color

Sounds too good to be true, huh? Well, it does have one flaw. In this age when color everything is taken for granted, the Vectrex is — you guessed it — black and white. A color overlay will be packaged along with each Vectrex game cartridge, but that may not be enough to overcome buyer resistance.

But back to the advantages. The Vectrex is self-contained, meaning that is it not hooked up to a television set. The screen is built right into the Vectrex system. That's a big plus, since the standard TV is not engineered to replicate a true three-dimensional effect. Also, the clarity and graphics resolution that are the trademarks of a coin-op game are diffi-



Vectrex Arcade System

cult to reproduce on the average garden-variety television set.

The screen is also a big plus for a couple of more pedestrian reasons. Buyers will be spared the painful task of hooking up the unit, and those family arguments over whose turn it is to use the TV might even come to a halt.

Extendable 'phone cord'

The Vectrex comes with a truly responsive joy stick and button console. The joy stick is self-centering and can move anywhere inside the complete 360-degree range. The control panel attaches to the Vectrex via a four-foot extendable "phone cord."

The initial Vectrex game library will

consist of 12 cartridges and one game, Mine Storm, that's already built-in. Eight of these titles are licensed properties. Armor Attack, Space Wars, Star Hawk, Rip-off and Solar Quest have been developed through agreement with Cinematronics. Scramble and Berzerk also have been licensed — from Konami Industry Co. and Stern Electronics, respectively. Star Trek is licensed from Paramount Pictures.

The remaining offerings are all "in house" developments. These include the resident game, Mine Storm, along with Blitz (football), Clean Sweep, Hyperchase (auto racing) and Cosmic Chasm. No formal introduction schedule has been announced, but General Consumers Electronics plans to introduce additional licensed and original games, as well as educational cartridges, in the coming months.

The Vectrex system will make its retail debut in seven introductory markets (New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco) in October prior to national distribution, which is slated for the first quarter of 1983.

The unit will retail for around \$200, while cartridges are expected to be in the \$30 range.

Michael Blanchet, author of Win at Video, will appear at The Milwaukee Sentinel's Sights & Sounds Show Saturday and Sunday at Convention Hall, MECCA. Another feature of the show will be two video game contests open to players of all ages. In the competition, on Atari's Pac-Man and StarMaster by Activision, each contestant will have five minutes, with the highest scores winning prizes. Five-hundred T-shirts also will be given away.

The Tribune Syndicate



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Wait, fake and jab!

The Empire Strikes Back, the new Atari-compatible cartridge from Parker Brothers, is a game of wait, fake and jab! It re-creates the battle scene on the Ice Planet of Hoth, where the rebel forces are pitted against a detachment of Imperial Walkers. The object is to stop the Walkers short of the power generators.

The most important strategy tips are based on two facts: No Walker will ever pass another (in fact, the lead Walker's speed directly regulates the speed of the others), and a damaged Walker will move slower.

Walkers attack in groups of five, and each succeeding legion of Walkers is faster and more deadly than the group it replaces.

You can apply the brakes to the whole parade by battering the lead Walker. Be careful, though, not to destroy it. Then move past the wounded front Walker and do the same to the rear Walker.

Two objectives realized

You have accomplished two objectives: You have slowed down the advancing column and you have slowed the reserve Walkers that will appear at the rear.

Now move to the middle Walkers and destroy them in order. They can be destroyed with either 48 direct hits, or with a direct blow to a Bomb Hatch (a flashing discolored area that appears intermittently on a damaged Walker.)

Always keep one eye on the lead Walker. Even though he is moving at a reduced speed, he will eventually reach the power generator.

After the three middle Walkers are destroyed, knock off the damaged lead Walker. The already damaged rear Walker will take the front position. Now move to the rear of the pack and damage the last replacement Walker.



Empire Strikes Back
From Parker Brothers

Repeat this process of "buying time" for the balance of the game.

The strategy used when confronting a Walker depends on how much damage you wish to inflict. If you only wish to damage your foe, remain motionless to draw his fire. When his missile approaches your ship, change altitude and fire from a safer position. When a Bomb Hatch appears, be careful not to strike it. A direct blow to the bomb hatch will finish off the Walker.

Try positioning your ship level to the Walker's head and depressing the fire button. The constant stream of fire will accomplish three things.

First, each shot will weaken the Walker. Second, your laser blasts will be clear of any Bomb Hatch. Third, since the Walker's retaliatory missiles are shot from its head, each missile he fires will be met head-on by one of your own. Striking down a missile in flight awards 10 points.

As the Walker draws near, back up and resume your original position.

When confronted by a Walker you wish to destroy, use the same motionless attack plan, but when a Bomb Hatch appears, change altitude accordingly and fire at it.

Be on your toes when you deviate from the head-on position. The Walker's missile will now approach your Snow Speeder from an angle, and they will be almost impossible to strike down. Also remember that shots striking the Walker's legs have no effect.

Move from vulnerable area

Another way of getting a few clear shots at a Bomb Hatch involves moving your fighter to a position away from the vulnerable area. Once you draw his fire, drop (or rise) to the level of the Bomb Hatch and open fire.

I found the "motionless" attack plan effective for a number of reasons.

- A Snow Speeder under full thrust is difficult to maneuver accurately, especially when your battle plan requires constant shifts in direction, speed and altitude.

- When you remain still, the Walker takes note of your position and acts, and it's easier to make an intelligent defensive reaction once the Walker has committed himself.

Don't hang around

If you are playing with the Smart Bomb option, don't spend too much time in one place. A Smart Bomb tracks your ship with intent to kill.

A Smart Bomb does, however, tend to move in slowly reducing circular paths. When it first emerges, it may fly right past you, only to turn around once it has you in its sight.

Take advantage of its initial stupidity and fly toward it as it emerges. Then quickly turn around before it comes back after you. Hang motionless and keep firing. If you miss it on its first pass, quickly move away from the Walker and turn around to ready yourself for its second sweep at your Speeder.

The Tribune Syndicate



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Do-it-yourself games

It's finally happened. Soon home video buffs who are bored with available games will be able to create their own. The personal computer that allows players to do this is the Z-Grass 100, produced by Astrocade.

Four groups of programs eventually will be available for use with the Z-Grass 100: a video game image series, which will generate stock video game shapes and characters (UFOs, missiles, dragons, etc.) for use with player-designated original games; an art series for creating graphics and lettering; an educational series, and a personal management series (including checkbook balancing and word processing).

Optional peripherals for the Z-Grass 100 include a printer, disc drive and outputs for two audio tape recorders. And with a standard phone modem, Z-Grass 100 can tap into information banks, such as the Dow Jones or The New York Times.

The Z-Grass 100 should be available before the end of the year and will retail for something under \$600.

• • •

SOON "CONAN the Barbarian," will

be making its debut — as a video game. Players will control a miniature, club-swinging Arnold Schwarzenegger and do battle with a wide assortment of monsters and wizards.

Ray George, Astrocade's marketing vice president, calls the Conan cartridge "an exciting breakthrough." He adds, "We believe Conan will actually speed up your thinking, improve your ability to solve problems, and exercise your imagination in new ways. I predict it will be the most popular video game ever ... it may even outsell Rubik's Cube."

• • •

GOOD NEWS for budding artists and musicians. Cartridges that allow home gamers to create computer-generated graphics and music are on their way.

Astrocade's Creative Crayon turns your television into a canvas for computerized special effects.

Computer artists can place blocks, circles and straight lines anywhere on the screen. There are 256 colors to choose among, and a variety of brush sizes are available for generating original shapes.

Once the artist achieves an effect he likes, it can be repeated elsewhere. Small images can be repeated by a process called "rubber stamping," a "snapshot" can be taken of any section of the screen and placed elsewhere, and the artist can produce mirror images of objects already drawn.

You also can generate images for home

movies. An optional light pen even allows players to "draw" directly on a TV screen.

And if you get bored with your creation, Creative Crayon also has a Life program, which will transform your artwork in a process best described as computerized metamorphosis.

Creative Crayon will be available this fall. The suggested retail price is \$59.95 (\$75.95 with the light pen).

• • •

MUSIC MAKER, which generates sound effects and computerized music, is for the budding composer. But since it requires no musical knowledge, it can be enjoyed by the novice as well as the buff.

Music Maker works within the rules of counterpoint and harmony while you write original compositions. By adjusting variables such as pitch, vibrato, tempo, volume, etc., players can produce everything from everyday sound effects to synthesizer music. Any masterpieces that you produce can be stored on cassette, as can any piece of an unfinished composition.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your own strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Syndicate



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Starmaster presents unique challenge

Most video games are what you would call third-person — you control an object on the screen.

There are also a few first-person games that put you inside the object that is being controlled, giving you the impression that you are looking out from the driver's seat.

Starmaster, a home video offering from Activision, is a first-person game with an innovative third-person display option.

The object of Starmaster is to destroy every alien ship, but it also is a game of energy conservation. You are allotted 9,999 energy units at the outset of each game. Each time you fire, fly at cruising speed, fly at warp speed or collide with a meteor, energy units are subtracted. Running out of energy must be avoided at all costs.

The joystick serves as a means of steering, and the red button activates your lasers. Remember that the north-south headings on the joystick will affect your ship's altitude, but not the way you would expect. Pulling back on the joystick causes the ship to climb, while pushing it north will cause it to dive.

If a meteor or enemy gun blast slips past your defenses, your ship will be damaged. Specific damage is explained on the readout below the energy meter:

●D:L — Lasers not operational.

●D:S — Protective shields have been knocked out. Any subsequent hits will destroy your ship.

●D:W — Warp engines in disrepair; fuel consumption will increase.

●D:R — Radar inoperable. When you switch to the map display mode, you won't be able to see the enemy ships.

Each form of damage presents unique complications, but all are remedied by locating a Starbase and docking on it.

Starbases are positioned in the outer corners of the galaxy. Each time your ship docks with one, its energy reserves are brought back up to 9,999 units and any damage is repaired.

To get an overview of the entire galaxy and locate a Starbase, flick the difficulty switch on the left-hand side of the console. You are now in the third-person map display mode.

You'll see the location of your Starbases, the location of the hostile aliens, as well as the location of your ship (which is depicted by an X). You can move the X about the map with your joystick, but you cannot fire.

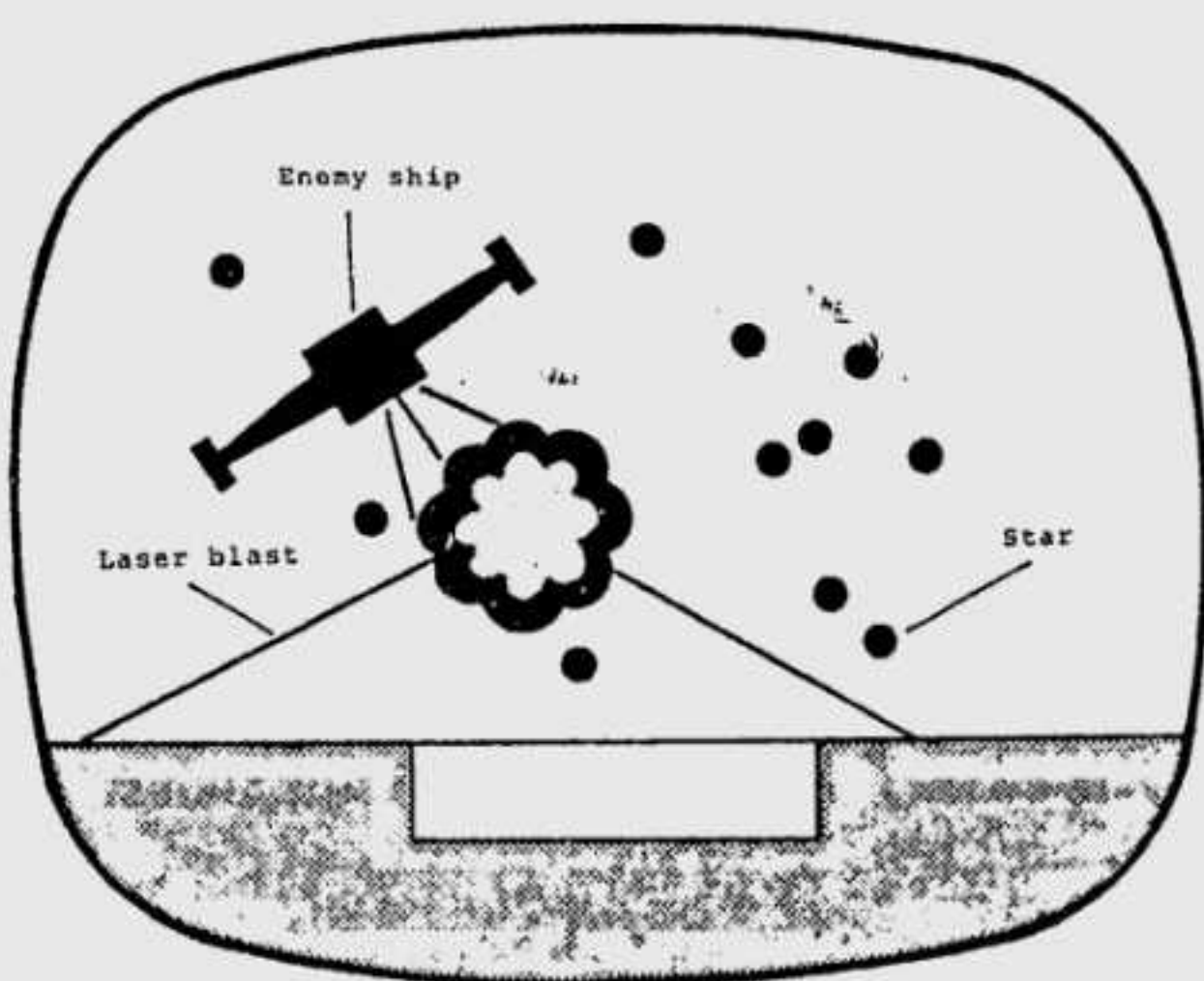
When your ship gets in the general vicinity of a Starbase, it will slow to cruising speed. Enemy fighters will approach with guns blazing. You can dodge the rockets or knock them down with a laser blast. If you succeed in hitting an enemy shell, the explosion will be blue. Connecting with an enemy fighter will trigger a red explosion. After you clear the sector of all the threatening ships, the area about the energy display will turn green, signaling that you can move in and dock at the Starbase.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

You're in the cockpit



WHEN THE fire button is pressed, two deadly laser rays will shoot forth and intersect at the cross hair.

Star Voyager, a new home video cassette from Imagic, puts you in the cockpit and challenges your ability to navigate. But Star Voyager is more than flying and shooting. A fuel factor also dictates your strategy.

The object of Star Voyager is to obtain the highest possible ranking. Ranking is based on a formula that combines the number of enemies you bring down with the number of Star Portals (service stations) you enter. The longer you stay in the game, the better your chances of attaining a higher ranking.

Larger as they close in

Aliens emerge on the horizon and loom larger as they close in. To stop them, you must center the cross hair on them and shoot.

Two weapons are at your disposal, but once you choose one, that's your weapon for the game.

The laser is the more powerful weapon. When the red button on the joy stick housing is depressed, two deadly rays will shoot forth, one from either side of the screen. They will intersect at the cross hair, but their effective swath of destruction will cover the path they follow and the adjacent air space.

Photon Torpedoes are less powerful. They are fired alternately from the left and right sides of the screen. They cannot go beyond the target sight, but they will destroy anything in their flight path.

It usually is wiser to use photon torpedoes since they consume proportionately less energy than the more powerful lasers.

At the beginning of your mission, you are given 99 fuel units. Your supply diminishes with each shot fired and with each moment of flight time. A direct hit from an enemy pulsar bomb or collision with an enemy ship also saps precious power. If fuel reserves are left untended, they will disappear and the game will end.

In the course of your flight, a total of seven "service stations" or Star Portals will appear. A short jingle

will give you advance warning of an approaching Star Portal. To locate the Portal, glance at the scanner. To dock with a Portal, center the cross hair on the middle of its rectangular entrance. A barrage of brilliant graphics will follow. Your ship is now fully fueled and resumes its journey at cruising speed.

Star Portals disappear quickly, so fast location is important. But use caution. If your ship strikes the border of a Portal's entrance, it will be destroyed.

Better to dodge

If energy levels are waning and no Star Portal is in sight, it is better to dodge the alien onslaught than to confront it. Ride out their attack until a Star Portal appears.

The game also gives advance warning of an enemy confrontation. Four consecutive beeps precede each showdown. Once you locate a Star Portal on the scanner, make haste.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your own strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Syndicate



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Barnstormers must tilt with windmills, geese

Barnstorming, a home cassette from Activision, is a simple game that doesn't compromise on sophistication and authenticity.

The object of Barnstorming is to guide a biplane through a predetermined number of barns. At the same time, you must avoid towering windmills and flocks of geese.

Judicious navigation is not enough. Barnstorming is also a race against time.

The joystick controller is used to adjust altitude, while the red button serves as the accelerator. Once the plane is airborne, it is not necessary to keep the red button depressed, since the plane will coast. The idea is to avoid collisions and keep altitude adjustments to a minimum.

Fly through, not over, barn

Each time you glide through a barn, the figure that appears above the elapsed time clock decreases by one. This is the barn count number. When a barn is passed over, the figure remains unchanged.

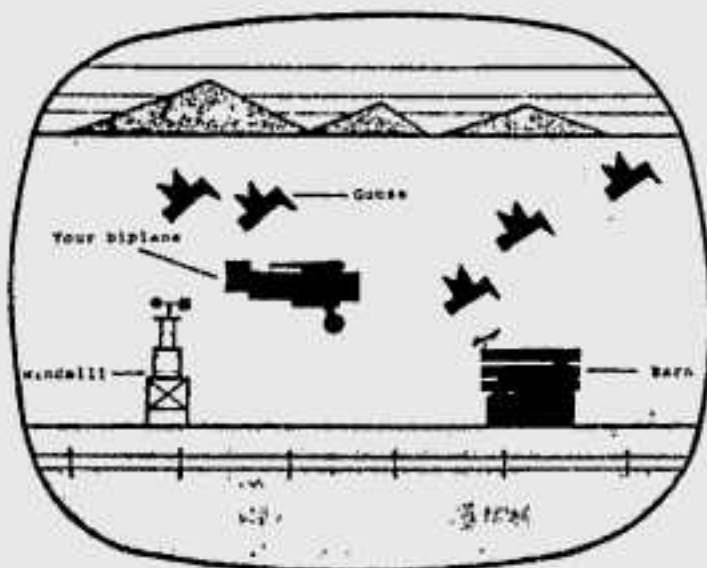
The journey is complete when the prescribed number of barns have been passed through. It's best to avoid passing over barns, since each time a barn is passed, another barn (and maybe a few more windmills) will be tacked on at the end of the course.

Games one through three — Hedge Hopper, Crop Duster and Stunt Pilot — are fixed courses. The windmills and barns will appear in the same order. Memorization of their patterns will give you an edge. Game four, Flying Ace, has no pattern. A course is generated at random each time the game is played.

Memorize sequence

Listed below are the sequences in which the barns and windmills will appear. Remember that if you miss any of the barns, additional ones will be tacked on at the end of the course.

Legend: W = Windmill; B = Barn.



Barnstorming

Game 1: Hedge Hopper

Begin-W-B-W-B-W-B-W-W-B-W-W-W-B-W-B-W-W-B-B-W-B-W-W-W-B-end.

Game 2: Crop Duster

Begin-W-W-W-B-B-B-W-B-W-B-W-B-W-W-W-B-W-W-W-B-W-W-W-W-W-W-B-B-W-W-W-B-W-B-W-B-W-B-B-end.

Game 3: Stunt pilot:

Begin-B-B-W-W-B-B-W-W-W-B-W-W-W-B-W-W-W-B-B-W-B-W-W-B-B-W-W-B-W-W-W-B-W-W-W-B-W-W-W-B-end.

Keep landing gear up

Hitting a stationary object, such as a windmill or barn, brings your biplane to a temporary halt. As your biplane approaches a windmill, make sure your landing gear, which will have an annoying tendency to get caught on the top of a windmill, has enough room to clear.

Hitting geese will reduce your speed. Geese fly slightly slower than your biplane flies at full thrust. When you are cruising at idle speed, the flock always remains ahead of you, out of view. Once you accelerate, you'll find yourself in its midst.

Mastering Barnstorming is a two-step process. First, memorize each course. Second, train yourself to locate the gaps in the flocks of geese that you'll encounter under full steam.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Still life in the old Atari

In light of recent advances in micro-processor technology, the Atari VCS, unchanged since it first trickled onto retailers' shelves in 1977, could almost be classified as primitive.

Even Atari is introducing a more sophisticated system — the Atari 5200 Home Entertainment system — which will become available in October.

But if you're a VCS owner who's worried about obsolescence, relax. According to Michael Moore, president of Atari's consumer electronics division:

"We have created two home game systems in the same spirit in which an automobile manufacturer builds different models to suit different tastes. The Atari 5200 was created for those players who demand state-of-the-art video game technology.

Support promised

"We will continue to support the VCS — the most popular home video system in the world — with fantastic new games, as well as comprehensive service."

The exploding video cassette industry seems to agree. None of the major "software only" companies (Activision, Imagic, etc.) have made announcements concerning future games for the 5200, and the bulk of the current software wave, including the first efforts of newcomers Apollo, Parker Brothers and US Games, are all targeted at the solidly entrenched VCS.

But the new Atari 5200 does have several advantages. Unfortunately, it comes



The Atari 5200 will be available in October.

at a price (\$299.95 suggested retail) that is more than double the current cost of the VCS.

- It has greater power and memory. This means the graphics are sharper and greater sophistication is possible.

- Game controls have been substantially improved. The universal controller for the 5200 combines a keyboard, a paddle and a joy stick in one hand-held unit. The new joy stick permits movement in any direction, a vast improvement over the eight directions to which the VCS joy stick is limited. The 5200 joy stick also can regulate the speed of game characters.

- An unexpected phone call won't spoil a game in progress. Players can simply depress the hold button to freeze the action.

A variety of peripherals will eventually be available.

Optional trak ball

One of the first add-ons will be an optional trak ball, a device Atari popularized in Centipede. The trak ball resembles a cue ball resting on a bed of ball bearings. Game characters move in the direction (and at the speed) the trak ball is moved.

Atari also plans to develop a voice syn-

thesis module for the 5200. Games will be developed in which commands, comments and computer observations from the voice module will interact with game play.

Also waiting in the wings is an adapter for the 5200 that will make all VCS compatible cartridges playable on the new system.

The library for the 5200 will not be nearly as extensive as that for the VCS, but by Christmas it will include 14 titles. Most of the offerings will be updated and enhanced versions of popular Atari games. Included in this group are Pac-Man, Super Breakout, Space Invaders, Asteroids, Missile Command and Star Raiders (a first-person game that was originally developed for use on Atari home computers).

Later releases set

Later releases will be 5200 renditions of popular arcade games, such as Atari's own Centipede, Taito's Qix and Williams' Defender.

The library will be rounded out with the usual sports titles — baseball, football and soccer. The attraction of Atari's new sports games will lie in the attention to detail, a touch that is evident in the baseball cartridge. Pitchers can throw fast or slow, inside or outside, or opt to use a knuckle ball. Base runners can slide, steal or tag up. There's even a relief pitcher warming up in the bullpen.

Game cartridges compatible with the 5200 will retail for either \$31.95 or \$39.95, depending on the game.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your own strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Cartridges 'related'

A BOLD NEW CONCEPT in video games will soon be introduced by Atari — Interrelated cartridges. Its new Swordquest Series will include four cartridges: Earthworld, Fireworld, Airworld and Waterworld.

Each game in the Swordquest Series, though independent, holds clues, directions and information that will help the player complete the remaining cartridges. Included with each Swordquest cartridge is an accompanying comic book, prepared by D.C. Comics, which interacts with game play.

To add interest, the Swordquest Series provides clues to the location of some "rare and valuable objects" that the folks at Atari have hidden. Astute players who have mastered the entire Swordquest Series will have a number of clues at their fingertips. Properly interpreted, these clues will spell out a treasure map.

The first Swordquest cartridge, Earthworld, will be available in October. Fireworld will be unveiled in November. Airworld and Waterworld are due out sometime next year.

UTILIZING A NEW secret computer coding system, Atari has developed what it calls "one of the most detailed and intriguing games on the market." It's Raiders of the Lost Ark, which will be in stores in time for Christmas.

In his perilous journey for the elusive Ark of the Covenant, Indiana Jones must battle through 13 rooms, each containing elements and objects that may help or hinder him in his search.

Atari also has made use of recent advances in game program technology to develop upgraded versions of games in its sports series. This group, labeled "Real Sports Cartridges," includes baseball, volleyball, football and soccer, and will reach the marketplace in October, November, December and January, respectively.

In fact, by year's end, Atari will have released 13 new games, surpassing its own estimate and bringing the Atari cartridge stable to a whopping 50-plus games, the largest in the industry.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Meet K.C. Munchkin

K.C. Munchkin is the Odyssey Two equivalent of Pac-Man. The antennaed, big-eyed hero, K.C., runs through a maze consuming dots (white munchies), is pursued by monsters (munchers), and can turn the tables on his pursuers for a few moments by eating a special unit (a flashing colored munchie).

There are a few differences, though. Unlike Pac-Man, where the maze remains the same, the K.C. Munchkin player can select one of four standard mazes, request a random maze layout, or build an original maze. The top-notch player may even play with the invisible maze option.

Instead of stationary dots and power pills, K.C. Munchkin goes after mobile white munchies and flashing colored munchies. The game grows more difficult as play progresses. The more munchies K.C. consumes, the faster the remaining munchies move about the maze. The last edible white munchie in each round accelerates to a pace equal to that of K.C.

Since there are only 12 munchies present on any given round, the strategy of clearing majority of the dots before going to the energizer does not apply. Also, the three munchers move randomly, which eliminates the possibility of formulating a "pattern."

Technique works well

One Pac-Man technique does work well in K.C. Munchkin. That's the "bait and lead the monsters to the energizer" trick. Though the munchers move randomly, more often than

not they will follow once they spot K.C.

Lead as many munchers as possible towards a flashing colored munchie before consuming it and counterattacking. To capture all three munchers at once, remain motionless until they locate K.C. When they begin to pursue him, move to a flashing munchie. After K.C. eats the flashing munchie, the vulnerable munchers will turn purple. This is the time to strike.

A freshly slain muncher appears ghostlike on the screen. Before returning to the monster's pen in the center of the screen, he will wander aimlessly about the maze. But until he reaches the pen and is rejuvenated, he poses no threat to your munchkin. You can pass right through him. The munchers will flash alternately purple and white before they revert to their hostile state. Be careful then!

No close calls

There is no such thing as a close call in K.C. Munchkin. The munchers need only brush any section of K.C. (including the antennae that protrude from his head) to capture him. Similarly, when K.C. counterattacks, he doesn't have to actually gulp a vulnerable foe. He only needs to brush the muncher.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your own strategies for beating the games.

**Michael
Blanchet**



How To Beat the Video Games

Activision Gran Prix Wins Out

By Michael Blanchet

Special to The Post

The best racing car game for home systems is probably Gran Prix. The Formula 1 racers look and perform like real cars in this Activision game.

The object of each of the four games on the Gran Prix cartridge is to reach the finish line in the shortest possible time. Since there are no turns on the course, your primary concern is choosing the fastest of the four lanes for your racer and, when necessary, switching lanes smoothly. The track is populated with other racers, all computer-controlled.

Your score is shown on a digital stopwatch that reads out to .01 of a second.

The four games on the cartridge — Watkins Glen, Brands Hatch, Le Mans and Monaco — vary in the length. The straightaways on games 2, 3 and 4 are interrupted by bridges, each two lanes in width.

The bridge schedule is:

Game 2 (Brands Hatch) — 1 bridge.

Game 3 (Le Mans) — 2 bridges.

Game 4 (Monaco) — 3 bridges.

The joy stick control acts as your steering wheel and your brake, while the red button is the accelerator. Pushing up on the joy stick (north) moves your car to the top of the screen; pulling the control handle toward you (south), brings the car to the bottom. Braking is accomplished by moving the control handle to the left (west). Momentarily releasing the red accelerator button also will reduce speed.

Crashes will happen. In Gran Prix, any crash will reduce your speed to a rate slower than the car you collided with, so it's more acceptable to slam into the rear of a car moving at near top speed than to suffer a mishap with a car that is moving at a snail's pace.

The oil slicks that are scattered over each course do not necessarily affect your speed. They will, however, cause your racer to shift into a neighboring lane.

On the Brands Hatch, Le Mans and Monaco courses, a heavier than normal concentration of oil slicks serves as a warning that you're approaching a bridge. Heed the signal and move to the center of the track.

The game becomes a snap if you take the time to memorize the traffic patterns for each course.

...



Michael Blanchet has earned a national reputation for his skills and strategies in beating the video games;



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Coleco spells competition

Just six months ago, anyone in the market for a home game system had only to decide between Atari and Mattel's Intellivision. The deciding factor, more often than not, was the price. The Atari emerged as the runaway best seller because of its low price and sizable game library, while Mattel's Intellivision appealed to consumers who demanded more sophistication.

Enter Colecovision. Coleco, a late-comer to the home video games industry, has a product that may put a substantial dent in both Atari's and Intellivision's share of the market.

Price good news, too

The Colecovision system boasts unusually high-quality graphics for a home game system. Even frequenters of arcades, accustomed to the slick visuals of coin-ops, will be pleasantly surprised. The other good news is the price. The Colecovision system is expected to retail for under \$200.

Coleco is also entering the cartridge market in a big way. It has scooped up the rights to a number of arcade hits: Donkey Kong, Zaxxon, Venture, Turbo and Mouse Trap. Coleco plans to release cartridges compatible with Atari and Intellivision at the same time it releases cartridges compatible with its own system.

Surprisingly, little has been lost in the translation of Coleco's games from the coin-op to the home medium. In Donkey Kong, which is included with the Colecovision system, Mario, the game's hero, actually looks like an overweight worker — with overalls, work boots and an engineer's hat. The evil Kong is a carbon copy of his simian counterpart in the arcade version.

Details remain intact

More important, the subtle nuances and details of play that give the game its personality remain intact. The music sounds like the original score. The awarding of points follows the structure laid out in coin-op Donkey Kong. The steel structures are almost identical in size and layout to those in the arcade version.

Serious gamers who consider home games a lame breed are in for a surprise. Home gamers, who have come to accept the bland and nondescript graphics common to most home systems, will enjoy the sharp, lifelike characters.

DEAR MICHAEL: I am an avid Donkey Kong



player. My best score is in the neighborhood of 85,000. Recently I have been encountering a problem in the later, more difficult, stages of the game. Even when I am perched at a safe distance from the falling and burning barrels, little Mario suddenly does a couple of somersaults and I lose my turn. I wasn't hit by anything! Why does this happen?

— Jules Siegel, Scotch Plains, N.J.

DEAR JULES: In later stages of the game, time is of the essence. As you know, for each round you complete, bonus points are awarded. The bonus starts at 5,000 (or 6,000 points later on) and is reduced by 100-point increments as the game progresses. If you dally too long, the bonus will eventually disappear. When it reaches zero, your turn is over. My advice is to make haste.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Teamwork in space

Freedom Fighters is the first home video game that permits two players, working as a team, to control one game character — in this case, a spaceship.

The pilot, using the left-hand joy stick, controls the conventional drive system of the fighter. The co-pilot, using the right-hand joy stick, controls the hyperspace drive system.

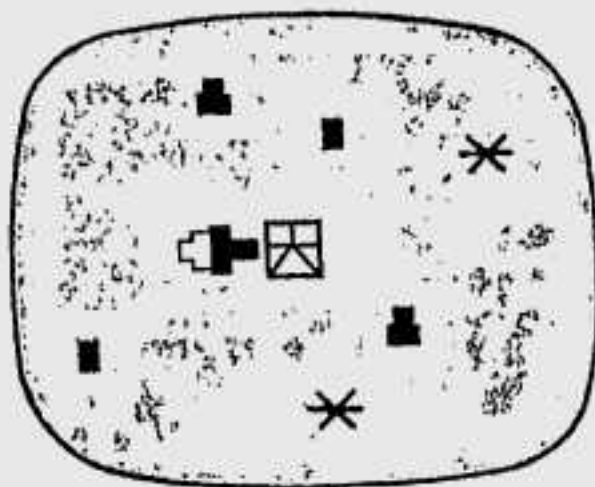
Under conventional power, the ship can move anywhere on the screen. If the co-pilot activates hyperspace drive, the ship can move beyond the borders of the screen. When hyperspace drive is activated, it will override conventional drive. When hyperspace drive is shut off, conventional drive takes over again.

Points are scored when your ship blasts pulsar warships and the drone mines they leave behind. The pulsar warships will follow an arcing flight path and leave a trail of drone mines. The drone mines also travel in an arcing flight path, but move in one direction only, making them easy to outsmart.

The most lucrative source of points, however, lies in rescuing, rather than shooting. Periodically, a flat, box-shaped object will float across the screen, tumbling end over end. Captive astronauts lie in these "confinement crystals." To rescue them, you must guide your ship so that it runs over the crystal. (Be careful not to shoot it!) Each time a rescue mission is successfully executed, the screen will flash — purple on color sets — and 20 points will be added to your tally.)

If two are playing, teamwork is essential. The pilot (controlling the convention drive) should fly about the screen, shooting everything in sight and looking for a stray confinement crystal. The co-pilot (hyperspace drive) should take over only when drone mines are closing in on the ship and conventional drive cannot supply enough power for escape.

To provide the widest margin for error, never position the ship too close to the east or west borders. Your best attack plan calls for observing the direction the drone mines are flying and then positioning your ship so that they will be flying away from it. Operate from the middle of the screen as



TO RESCUE captive astronauts, you must guide your ship so that it runs over the crystal.

border will either be trapped by a closing wall of drone mines, or be surprised by pulsar warships entering the field from the left or right sides.

It is unwise to fire indiscriminately, since you never know when a confinement crystal will appear. Shooting one does not harm your ship, but you will deprive yourself of a scoring opportunity.

When any one sector of the battlefield becomes inhospitable, hyperspace drive should be utilized, but it is not safe practice for the co-pilot to fly for an extended period of time.

When you play in the evasion mode, however, hyperspace drive is a necessity. In this variation of Freedom Fighters, your lasers are inoperable. Points are earned for staying clear of the enemy vessels and bombs, and for successful rescue missions.

In the evasion mode, use hyperspace drive in short bursts of thrust. When a confinement crystal approaches, switch to conventional drive and rescue the captive. Once the rescue is accomplished, return to hyperspace drive and move in short hops.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your own strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Coleco develops add-ons

After viewing Coleco's stunning graphics and authentic re-creations of arcade game play, it's obvious that the Colecovision home video game system currently stands as the yardstick of the industry, the standard by which the competition will be measured.

But when you come right down to it, that high-flown phrase, "state of the art," means little more than "this year's model," particularly in the video game segment of the consumer electronics industry.

Aim at universality

Coleco thinks it may even have a solution for that. In an attempt to make obsolescence obsolete, the engineers at Coleco have developed a series of add-on peripherals that they hope will keep Colecovision "state of the art" for years to come and transform the set into the first universal game system.

As more and more hardware formats are introduced to the marketplace, more

and more game cartridges suited only for use with one particular system will be produced. Since the average game library represents a significant investment, upgrading or switching formats can be a costly venture.

The solution: Colecovision Expansion Module No. 1, which should be available early next year. It will make Atari cartridges playable on the Colecovision system. Coleco also has begun development of a similar expansion module that will make all Intellivision games Colecovision-compatible. Though no official release date has been announced, this adapter should be ready by early 1984.

Expansion Module No. 2 is more limited in function, but it should add to the dimension and appeal of Colecovision. It has been designed for use with Coleco's driving and auto racing games and consists of a tabletop dashboard, steering wheel and a remote accelerator pedal.

No cost or date

The last announced add-on for Colecovision is a personal computer expansion module, but no information concerning price or delivery date of this keyboard console is available yet.

Even though the sharp graphics and versatility of Colecovision will spark

immediate consumer interest, the test of the system will be whether the cartridge library and game controllers find acceptance among the gaming public.

It's still too early to judge the Colecovision library, but it looks solid. It is based mainly on authentic re-creations of arcade games. So far, none of the software-only giants have announced plans to produce cartridges compatible with the system.

Hand-held unit

The hand-held controller unit features a key pad, two independent action buttons and an eight-position joy stick. An appropriate description of it would be "adequate," but it's considerably better than the often cumbersome gadgets other companies try to pass off as joy sticks.

The joy stick itself will take some getting used to. A mere inch in length, it is manipulated with fingertip action. But the short shaft could be a blessing in disguise. Since a decreased amount of leverage is necessary to activate game functions, the joy stick switches will be spared a good deal of wear and tear — the kind of wear and tear that leads to breakdowns.

The Tribune Co.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Monkey Shines pits man against apes

The primary attraction of *Monkey Shines*, a video version of tag, is that no two games are the same — a real plus since most home games, once mastered, are nothing but repetition.

Monkey Shines is designed for two players, each commanding one man. If you wish to play by yourself, however, you can simply ignore one of the men.

The two men are opposed by four computer-controlled monkeys. At the outset of the game, the men appear on the lowest rung of a randomly generated series of monkey bars. To score points, a man must tag one of the four swinging simians.

In the Tailspin variation, the position of the hor-

izontal monkey bars shifts upwards every few seconds. If your man is positioned on a horizontal rung that moves, he will fall to the next lowest bar. You don't have to change your strategy, but the shifting bars will cause additional confusion.

In *Shut Eye*, the monkey bars are invisible to you, but not to the monkeys. The field will appear momentarily when you fall or when your man climbs on top of the other man. No special advice here; just stay near the bottom.

The *Monkey Chess* variation of *Monkey Shines* requires an extra player and a little strategy. In this game, two players control the men, while a third uses the keyboard console to add or subtract monkey bars.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

If coin-op manufacturers were rated solely on the basis of their most recent games, Gremlin-Sega would be the undisputed leader. Turbo and Zaxxon, two Gremlin-Sega offerings, have set a new standard for video game graphics. And last week Sega officially unveiled another industry first: Subroc-3D, the world's first truly three-dimensional video game.

Subroc-3D is not the first game to utilize the principles of depth and dimension on a flat screen, nor is it the first in which players view the action with cockpit perspective. Two years ago, Atari's Battle Zone, a tank warfare simulation, was hailed as that year's sure hit. Instead, it flopped. Arcade-goers found Battle Zone a bit too difficult to understand and play.

Plain by today's standards

But don't assume that the same thing will happen to Subroc-3D. Battle Zone's graphics were plain by today's standards. To simulate the 3-D illusion, a black and white x-y monitor was used. Gremlin-Sega, on the other hand, has developed a viewing system that simulates true 3-D without the need for 3-D glasses.

A series of shutters, operating at 30 images per second, displays the video images on the screen. When a player peers through the periscope-like viewer, each eye sees a different image. The brain puts the two images together and interprets the

emerging single image as three dimensional.

The total game experience is enhanced with stereo sound shaped by Doppler electronic principles. The Doppler effect describes a difference in sound that occurs when the source of sound moves toward you or away from you. The best example of this phenomenon is the way the human ear perceives the whistle of a passing freight train.

Skim surface or soar

In Subroc-3D, players must envision themselves inside a Subroc craft looking out. As the pilot, the player can either skim the surface of the ocean or travel into the upper reaches of the atmosphere. Throughout the perilous journey, changes in color will simulate day, dusk, night or dawn.

At sea level, the Subroc craft must navigate through a storm of torpedoes that are fired from battleships, destroyers and carriers. Battleships will head toward the players, while destroyers move across the screen. Carriers will launch a swarm of fighters, which will in turn assail Subroc with fireballs. When airborne, Subroc must fight off flying saucers and enemy airships.

Subroc-3D is a one-player game, and will be manufactured in both upright and sit-down cockpit modules.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Asteroids' quirks

Atari's home version of Asteroids is similar in appearance to the arcade version, but there are differences.

The chief differences (and subsequent new challenges) arise from the limitations of the memory and the lack of joy stick agility in the home system.

An arcade game is actually a specialized computer, programed to execute commands. The home video game system performs a similar function, but it does not possess the memory capability of the costlier arcade machine. (Memory capability, in simple terms, is the amount of information the computer can process at any given moment.)

Quirks due to limitations

The engineers at Atari have done a laudible job of bringing Asteroids to the home medium, but the lack of "work space" had led to some quirks.

At first glance, your ship appears to be a white triangular vessel. Under closer inspection, you will discover a darkened square around the triangle. The computer defines that square as your ship. So what you think is a close call with an oncoming Asteroid may actually be a fatal collision. Condition yourself to account for the "invisible" part of your ship when maneuvering among Asteroids.

Another program idiosyncrasy occasionally manifests itself when a UFO appears and your fighter is pointing directly east or west. For no apparent reason, your shots will pass right through the UFO. You will have to alter your position before you can stop it.

A joy stick controller is used instead of the array of buttons used in the arcade version. Handling the control stick is the

first (and probably the biggest) hurdle to be cleared.

Depress red button to fire

To initiate clockwise or counterclockwise rotation, the joy stick must be moved either east or west. Once a flight course is chosen, you can thrust your ship in the desired direction by pushing the joy stick northward. To fire, depress the red button. Each time the red button is pushed, your ship shoots two missiles.

It is wise to keep your ship relatively close to center screen for a number of reasons.

- The joy stick is rather cumbersome when you attempt tricky maneuvers. It is far safer to spin in place and aim at oncoming Asteroids.

- At the beginning of each game (and in every subsequent new round), the Asteroids materialize on the edges of the screen. Their trajectory is, more often than not, vertical. It is rare that any Asteroid (save for a few small fragments) deviates drastically from this north to south (or south to north) path. Their behavior leaves you with a relatively uncluttered area in the center of the screen.

The home video ship is somewhat larger than the arcade ship in relation to the size of the field. This reduces reaction time and makes flying about the screen hazardous.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 37, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your own strategies for beating the games.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

UFO characterized by design quirks

UFO, from Odyssey Two, is probably the most difficult home video game made. This is due mainly to idiosyncrasies in design. A few of the quirks, however, can be used to your advantage.

Like most games in the Odyssey Two library, UFO is played until your ship is destroyed. Three alien forms, differentiated by color, point value and level of aggression, challenge you.

The first, a lethargic craft, is capable of random movement only.

The second is the product of two lethargic crafts that merge. According to the game booklet that accompanies UFO, the resulting crafts possess search-and-destroy instinct. But if they do, it is not evident when playing the game.

The third — and deadliest — are light speed starships. The javelin-shaped missiles they throw pass through your force field.

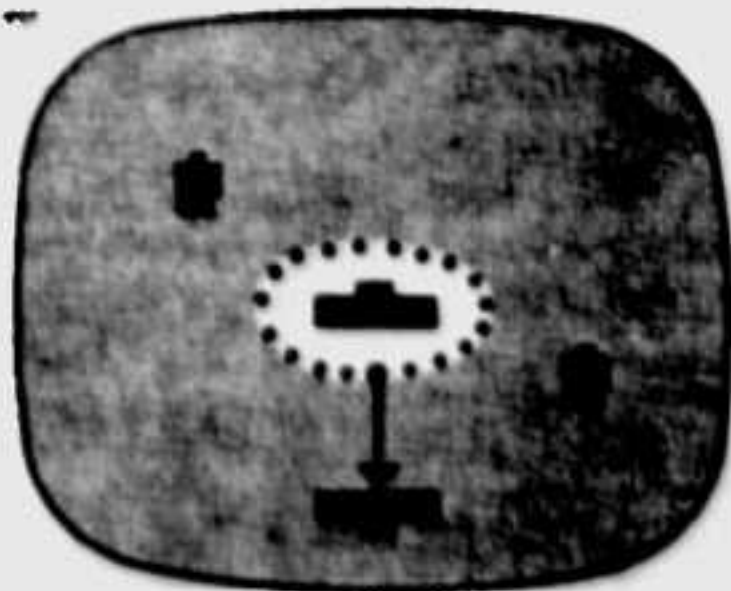
The player controls an armed flying saucer. A ring of blue dots surrounds the ship. This is the force field. One of the

beads in this chain is oversized. It serves as the ship's laser cannon.

The force field allows you to ram enemy ships. But the impact of the collision will momentarily drain all power from your force field, rendering your ship vulnerable until it is recharged. Allow for a post-collision recharging period. Each time your lasers are fired, the shield is also dropped until the burst ceases.

Your laser is aimed by the white dot in the force field ring. The problem with the force field firing system is that even though the ship will move in the desired direction as soon as it is told to do so (by the joy stick controller), the laser dot must rotate to the chosen heading before it will fire in the proper direction. This lapse of response time deprives you of control. Making matters worse, the force field ring moves only clockwise.

Your best bet is to play the center section of the screen. To do this, simply move in a north to south (and south to north) course. Fire as you patrol from one border to the other. To clean the bat-



Scene from UFO

tlefield, ram as many ships as possible.

The light speed starship is your most formidable foe, but it has one weakness. It can fire only diagonally. Any counter-attack, therefore, should be executed with your ship positioned horizontally or vertically to the starship. Ramming and laser fire are equally effective. To prepare for an assault, simply move so that your fighter is not in a horizontal path with the starship.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

2 favorites adapted for Mattel system

Activision, a leader in the home video game software industry, has announced that Pitfall and Stampede are available in cartridges compatible with Mattel's Intellivision. Both games were designed for use on Atari.

With more than 1 million Intellivision units in use, it was inevitable that Activision would market games for Mattel. "Pitfall and Stampede were the first choices because they are special theme games that

combine imagination, skill and adventure," said James H. Levy, president of Activision.

Pitfall, one of the best "role-playing" games to date, puts the player in the shoes of Pitfall Harry, Activision's answer to Indiana Jones. In a treacherous journey that can last as long as 20 minutes, Harry must trek through a jungle where every step might well be his last. He is hunting for treasure; he encounters swamps teeming with crocodiles, tar pits, and brush fires. Jumping over rolling logs, scorpions and snakes are all in a day's work for Harry. Pitfall is by far the finest adventure game available for the Atari system.

Stampede, designed by Bob (Chopper Command) Whitehead, was released as an Atari cartridge last December. The player controls a horse and rider and at-

tempts to lasso a herd of stampeding longhorns. Points are awarded for each runaway that is roped.

In a market that is spilling over with copies, Activision has managed to develop original games. Sky Jinks, the fifth game created by Whitehead for Activision, is a realistic simulation of air racing. An Atari-compatible cartridge is scheduled for release by Thanksgiving.

In Sky Jinks, players pilot a racing plane past multicolored hot air balloons and snow-white clouds as they zig-zag through the red and blue pylons. To heighten the sensation of flight, shadows cast by the plane and clouds change in size as the racer adjusts altitude and velocity.

Though rich in detail and stunning to the eyes, Sky Jinks is simple to learn and play.



Activision's Pitfall



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Simply frustrating

Out of This World from Odyssey Two is probably the most deceptive home video game ever. The player needs to operate only one control (the action button); the object of the game is quite simple, but I've seldom experienced the "healthy frustration" I encountered with Out of This World.

The challenge of Out of This World is to safely touch down your lander on one of three lunar surfaces. After landing, the player ascends to the top of the screen to hook up with the mother ship, which traverses the upper edge of the field at varying speeds and directions. After docking, your lander plummets toward the terrain below. This cycle continues until one player manages 10 hookups or his energy supply (measured in mega joules) is depleted.

Players get energy units

At the outset of each round, both players are given 50 energy units. The supply decreases each time the action button is depressed.

As a reward for a soft landing, the player's fuel supply is credited with 20 additional mega joules. The maximum capacity of fuel reserves is set at 60 mega joules.

A botched landing that results in a crash costs 10 energy units. The delay for



It is necessary to dock with the mother ship to refuel in Out of This World.

repair has no effect on your performance if you are playing solo. In a two-player situation, however, your opponent will benefit, since the crash gives him a chance to dock uncontested.

In a two-player game, only one of those competing will be able to dock with the mother ship in each round. The fuel supply of the player who docks is replenished, and the unlucky player who misses the mother ship must go through the next round with less than a full tank.

The person who manages fuel reserves in the most efficient manner ultimately stands the best chance of winning.

Beating Out of This World calls for a

balanced touch on the action button. A soft touch is not effective, since sufficient thrust must build up before your ship will move. And a heavy hand will cause you to overshoot your target and waste fuel.

The three game variations have different fuel requirements.

Need a landmark

You will need a landmark to determine when to press the action button. I have selected the lowest star (appears as a white dot) on the right of the screen as the landmark.

For a smooth, fuel-efficient descent in game 1 and 2 (Moon and Mars), free fall until the bottom of your lander touches the imaginary line by the star. Then, to prevent lunar gravity from causing your ship to crash, press the action button until at least 10 units are gone. Release the button when the fuel gauge reaches 40. Your ship will touch down unscathed.

The Jupiter variation has the strongest gravitational pull. Here, landing requires you to mentally divide the screen into three sections. After the ship has fallen a distance equal to its length, thrust for 10 units. Free fall until you reach the level of the landmark star. Thrust again for 10 units. When your lander approaches the top of the fuel display, thrust until touchdown.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Armor Battle is a wonderful example of the realism and attention to detail that Intellivision achieves in its game cartridges. This combat game pits two players' tank battalions against each other on one of 240 randomly selected battlefields.

Each field has a different landscape with various layouts of water, grass, roads, trees and buildings. The landscaping is more than just a means of dressing up the battlefield.

Each surface affects the tanks' forward and turning mobility. The swiftest ground to travel on is the road; next best is grass. Water, of course, should be avoided. The forests are negotiable, but the trees tend to inhibit progress.

The buildings that appear on the playfield can provide some strategic advantage. More on them later.

Unlike most games, Armor Battle does not challenge you to rack up points. Your goal is to preserve as many of your tanks as possible while depleting your opponents' army. Whoever has the most tanks at the end of the game is the winner.

At the beginning of Armor Battle, each player has two of his 50 tanks positioned in the same location, regardless of the battlefield configuration. A player can activate only one tank at a time, switching between the two at will.

To move your tank to a desired heading, depress the control wheel at the appropriate point. The activated tank will spin toward that direction, choosing the shortest route possible. Once the control wheel is released, movement ceases.

The recoil of each shot causes the tank to rebound in one of three directions — straight back, slightly left or slightly right. As a result, you must correct your position after each round launched (and

after you're struck by an opponent's shell as well).

This post-firing dance is generally a hindrance, but in certain situations, it becomes a blessing. By firing and depressing the control disk simultaneously, your tank combines its normal rate of movement with the recoil action, thus allowing a turn to be made in less than normal time.

The solid rectangular buildings on the battlefield are impassable by tanks or missile fire. Their only strategic value is as temporary cover.

But the buildings with windows and the "covered bridge" buildings provide defensive and offensive advantage. A player's tank positioned inside either of these buildings can shoot out at opposing tanks. But the tank inside the building is protected.

The obvious strategy is to take advantage of the shroud of safety provided by the buildings by positioning one of your tanks inside. If you choose to do battle with your other tank, the "garaged" one is safe.

Since only one tank can be mobilized at a time, protection of the dormant craft should be your chief concern.

A good defense is actually your best offensive weapon. Position one of your tanks in a relatively inaccessible area, such as among trees. To cover the approach that is easiest for your opponent to travel, drop the mine each tank carries. Remember its location, so your own tank doesn't strike it.

Now play the waiting game. By hovering near your tank in storage, you are not only dug in but also forcing your opponent to confront you on your own turf.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Defense is the key success in Astro Smash. The game pits your laser base against the relentless descent of dangerous objects.

The goal of Astro Smash is not simply to score points, but to preserve the game life of each laser base. Careful setting of priorities and defensive maneuvering are very important.

Astro Smash features an "auto fire" button. Once depressed, your laser base fires three rounds per second automatically. To prevent hand fatigue, use the "auto fire" mode throughout the game.

Danger comes in the form of large and small rocks, large and small spinners, and UFOs, which carry homing bombs and guided missiles.

Points subtracted

The unique feature of Intellivision's Astro Smash is what I call the "missed rock" penalty. Anytime a rock reaches the ground, points are subtracted from your score.

Spinner will destroy your laser base if they are allowed to land, and anywhere from 100 to 600 points also will be deducted from your score if this occurs.

This fact dictates your strategy: Spinners are the top priority target; rocks are secondary.

Once an object explodes, either

through impact with the ground or as a result of a direct hit from your laser base, it detonates in a reddish burst. Any explosion is life-threatening to any object on the screen that might be nearby.

Guided Missiles can be as dangerous as spinners. A guided missile will track your ship and occasionally follow it along the bottom of the screen.

Dodge as it nears you

Thwarting a guided missile can be accomplished in one of three ways. The first is obvious: Shoot it! If you fail to hit it, dodge it as it nears you. By doing this, you leave the missile little time to react and it will fall to the ground. If by chance it begins to move toward you along the bottom of the screen, move your ship to the extreme right or left.

The fact that guided missiles track your ship is not all bad news. This tendency can sometimes be used to your advantage. By moving your laser base, you will shift the guided missile into an oncoming spinner or rock. The impact of a guided missile colliding with any other object on the screen consumes both.

Another way to efficiently use each shot involves hitting the lowest object first. A rock or spinner that is unlucky enough to fall into the reddish cloud of a freshly annihilated object will also be destroyed.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Communist Mutants from Space is one of the first games introduced for use with the Star Path Charger, a new add-on module that promises to dramatically improve the graphics provided by the Atari system. **Communist Mutants** possesses the most offbeat game title of the year and may be the best Atari-compatible "laser base" game since **Demon Attack**.

Each mutant begins its kamikaze mission as a docile mutant egg. After peeling away from the main formation and beginning its descent, the egg hatches, giving birth to a mutant. A mutant on an attack run will bomb. Once any egg or mutant is destroyed (or exits the bottom of the screen), the mother ship discharges a replacement. The object is to blast away at the enemy legions until your supply of ships is exhausted.

Since the player is confined to the bottom of the play field, **Communist Mutants** is more a test of reflexes than an exercise in strategy. What separates it from other "dodge and shoot" contests, however, is the player-selectable options. Wise use of these can dramatically increase your score, and they will keep the game challenging.

In addition to conventional firepower (one missile launched each time the red button on the joystick housing is pressed), your fighter can deploy

penetrating and guided missiles. As a defensive aid, both the shields option (which renders your ship temporarily impervious to the mutant onslaught) and the time warp option (which slows the mutants) can be utilized once per game life (by moving the joy stick south and north respectively.)

The most important immediate goal is to knock out the mother ship. Penetrating fire works best against the mother ship since it effectively takes out the first mutant it strikes and then the one behind it.

If penetrating missiles have not been selected as an option, chip away at the cluster of eggs at either end of the armada. When the mother ship shifts either left or right, engage the time warp to slow the action. Once a path to the mother ship has been cleared, you should have time to get in a couple of unobstructed shots.

Use a soft touch on the joy stick. A light hand will cut down on oversteering, as well as preventing accidental activation of the shields or the time warp.

Until you become more familiar with **Communist Mutants from Space**, set the difficulty switch at the "A" position. Your fighter will move more slowly, but it is far easier to line up with the desired target.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

New game improves on last attempt at 3D

Gremlin-Sega may have set a new standard for video game graphics with its recently unveiled Subroc-3D, the first truly three-dimensional video game.

Subroc-3D is not the first game to utilize the principles of depth and dimension on a flat screen, nor is it the first in which players view the action with cockpit perspective.

Forerunner flopped

Two years ago, Atari's Battle Zone, a tank warfare simulation that boasted a hefty helping of microprocessor punch, was hailed as that year's sure hit. Instead, it flopped. Players found Battle Zone a bit too difficult to understand and play.

But don't expect that the same thing will happen to Subroc-3D.

Battle Zone's graphics were plain by today's standards. To simulate the three-

dimensional illusion, a black-and-white x-y monitor was used. Gremlin-Sega, on the other hand, has developed a viewing system that simulates three-dimension without the need for 3-D glasses.

Stereo sound added

A series of shutters, operating at 30 images per second, displays the video images on the screen. When a player peers through the periscope-like viewer, each eye sees a different image. The brain puts the two images together and interprets the emerging single image as three-dimensional.

The game experience is enhanced with stereo sound shaped by Doppler electronic principles. The Doppler effect describes a difference in sound that occurs when the source of sound moves toward you or away from you. One example of this phenomena is the way the human ear perceives the whistle of passing a freight train.

Attack from air, sea

In Subroc-3D players must envision themselves inside a Subroc craft looking

out. The player can skim the surface of the ocean or travel into the upper reaches of the atmosphere. Throughout the perilous journey, changes in color simulate day, dusk, night or dawn.

At sea level, the Subroc craft must navigate through a storm of torpedoes that are fired from battleships, destroyers and tri-fleet carriers. Battleships will head toward the players, while destroyers move across the screen. Tri-fleet carriers will launch a swarm of fighters, which will, in turn, assail Subroc with fireballs. When airborne, Subroc must fight off flying saucers and large enemy airships.

Command ship versatile

At the end of each round, players will confront the command ship, a formidable opponent that is cloaked by a force field. The mobile command ship can dive below the ocean's surface, cruise above the waves or soar into the sky. The ship's force field can be knocked out momentarily with a direct hit on the barrier's red dot target.

Subroc-3D is a one-player game and will be manufactured in both upright and sit-down cockpit modules.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Harry faces varied pitfalls

Pitfall, game designer David Crane's sixth creation under the Activision banner, seems well on its way being a video best seller. Sales of the new Atari-compatible cartridge are so brisk that Activision president Jim Levy has predicted that Pitfall will outsell every other non-arcade game for the Atari system.

Activision soon will go after the Intellivision market as well. Pitfall is scheduled for release in an Intellivision-compatible format shortly before Thanksgiving.

The object of Pitfall is to guide the hero, Pitfall Harry, across a horizontally scrolling course that includes 255 different jungle scenes. Scattered along the way are 32 treasures, such as diamond rings, sacks of money, and gold and silver bars.

Harry's job is to pick up as much loot

as he can before 1) three of his game lives are lost, or 2) the 20 minutes he has been allotted expires.

Harry is spotted 2,000 points at the outset of his journey. If he falls into one of the open holes that provide access to the subterranean passageway, he loses 100 points, but not a game life. Points also are deducted each time Harry stumbles on a log.

Tripping and falling are mere annoyances compared to the other perils that lie between Harry and the coveted booty. Swamps, quicksand, tar pits, brush fires, crocodiles, scorpions and snakes challenge Harry almost every step of the way. All of these can be overcome by one simple maneuver — jumping.

A jump is initiated each time the red button on the joy stick is pushed, but the

angle of any jump can be tailored to suit the needs of the situation.

With the joy stick at center, a tap of the button causes Harry to jump straight up. If Harry is running when the jump button is pushed, he will take off at an angle. A combination of movements is necessary when Harry wishes to catch a swinging vine or hurdle a brush fire, scorpion, snake or stationary log.

To capture all the treasure within 20 minutes, it will be necessary to use the underground tunnels for a portion of the journey. For each screen length of tunnel traveled, Harry moves a distance equivalent to three above-ground frames.

But running below is not as easy as it sounds. Certain segments of the tunnel are blocked off by walls. When confronted with a dead end, Harry must backtrack until he finds an access ladder to the surface.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Space Cavern a winner

Apollo has only been in operation one year, but it has already managed to develop and deliver seven Atari-compatible cartridges.

Its most recent releases — Space Cavern, Lost Luggage, Racquetball, Shark Attack and Infiltrate — cover a spectrum of subject matter and include one sure winner, one major disappointment and a good game with a serious flaw.

The winner is Space Cavern, an outer space adventure in which a lone astronaut battles an endless stream of aliens, known as Electrosauri. Space Cavern is simple to learn, difficult to master, and should offer challenges for months to come.

Tests your coordination

The player's man is ground-based and can shift left or right to dodge Electrosauri bombardment. But looking straight up is not enough. Creatures called Marsupods occasionally rush the spaceman from the left and right corners of the screen. You can kill a Marsupod by moving the joy stick up or back. This sounds easy, but it is a test of coordination since you must mind what's going on above you at the same time.

The graphics are colorful and realistic. When the player's astronaut is hit by an electro-molecular charge or is caught by a Marsupod, his skeleton glows as his body disintegrates. This makes getting wiped out almost as much fun as racking up a big score.

Lost Luggage is the major disappointment. The title and scenario are original, but play action is nothing more than a cute revamping of Activision's Kaboom.

The action takes place at a baggage carousel at an airport. Shortly after a plane touches down in the background,



Space Cavern
Offers a challenge

the conveyor belt begins to spin wildly, throwing suitcases into orbit. The object is to catch each piece before it hits the ground. This is done by sweeping a stick figure back and forth across the screen. Missed bags pop open, exposing various unmentionables (undergarments, etc.) to public view.

Suitcases explode

If you select the terrorist option, random suitcases will explode if they are missed (and bring the game to an abrupt end).

Lost Luggage is played with the joy stick instead of the paddle controller. The player's bellhop has vertical as well as horizontal access to the field, a liberty that does nothing significant to improve the appeal of the game.

Infiltrate is a cross between Berzerk and Donkey Kong. Players control a secret agent who must work his way up five floors to reach a cache of documents. Once he seizes them, he must turn around and work his way back to the lowest level, where another bundle of papers awaits him. To get from one floor to the next, our pseudo "007" must hop onto one of the perpetually moving elevators.

Two mechanized assassins are out to see that his journey is not a safe one. These robots patrol the playing field, using the same elevator system as our hero. They are easily destroyed with a quick blast from the player's laser gun, but they can reappear in the worst possible places. The agent can duck to avoid enemy volleys if the player pulls the joy stick in a southern direction, but this provides only temporary cover. When he is in this position, he can neither run nor shoot back.

The graphics in Infiltrate are good, but they are in no way comparable to those in Space Cavern. And Infiltrate has one major drawback. After two or three cycles, the killer robots accelerate to an almost blinding speed, while the player's speed remains constant. This makes the game little more than a massacre, and can discourage even the most stalwart player.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your own strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

K.C. gets new life

In a recent federal court decision, North American Phillips, maker of Odyssey Two, was banned from further distribution and sale of its popular K.C. Munchkin, on the ground that it infringed on copyrights held by Atari. The game has been withdrawn but, in an attempt to capitalize on the popularity of the game's central character, K.C., Odyssey has introduced K.C.'s Crazy Chase, the first Challenger Series game that makes use of the Voice, Odyssey's speech and sound effects generator.

Like K.C. Munchkin, K.C.'s Crazy Chase is a maze contest. A few variations have been thrown in, however — not only to satisfy the courts, but to give the game a personality of its own.

The object is to steer K.C. through the labyrinth in search of the Dratapillar. To complete one

round of play, K.C. must munch on all six of the Dratapillar's body segments. The head of the Dratapillar is deadly. The two drats (the Odyssey equivalent of Inky Pinky, Blinky and Clyde) that patrol the field also must be avoided.

Once any Dratapillar body segment is devoured, the drats turn white and flee. When they are white, they are vulnerable to attack and can be eaten for bonus points. Instead of running back "home" before returning to action, a freshly chewed drat turns in place. When he is about to return to the offensive, the spinning slows.

K.C. is slowed down by obstacles (trees) that appear randomly in the corridors of the field. K.C. can chomp through them, but since he is only given one point for each tree he chomps, they prove to be more of a nuisance than a blessing. Then again, the Dratapillar also must eat his way through the trees.

The sound accompaniment provided by the voice module does little to enhance the play. Throughout the game, a male voice chants a litany of witless phrases and halfhearted attempts to cheer you on.



Win at Video Voice a 'missing link'

By Michael Blanchet

Voice modules seem to be the latest thing in home video entertainment, but (theoretically at least) no company should be able to make better use of one than Odyssey Two.

That's because the Odyssey Two system includes a keyboard that, until now, has never been used for anything sophisticated enough to justify its inclusion in the system.

Odyssey Two's speech and sound effects module, dubbed the Voice, could almost be called the missing link for Odyssey owners. In conjunction with the keyboard, it should allow dozens of sophisticated applications that other game systems are currently unable to duplicate.

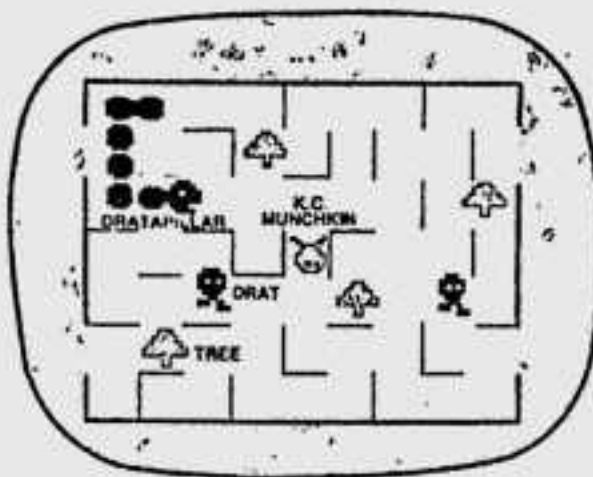
Integrates with system

As far as appearance is concerned, the voice module integrates well with the Odyssey console. A protruding connection, fashioned to resemble a game cartridge, juts from the underside of the Voice. It is inserted into the existing cartridge on the system's console, giving a streamlined look. Voice or non-Voice compatible games are then inserted into a receptacle atop the voice module. No battery or auxiliary power source is required to drive the Voice, but Odyssey does recommend a beefed-up AC adapter in lieu of the original. This comes packaged with the Voice.

Speech produced by the Voice is heard through a small speaker built into the module, while background game sounds are piped through the audio system of the television set. A slide control is provided to adjust the volume.

At presstime, I had reviewed three cartridges that take advantage of the Voice's speech-producing abilities: Type and Tell, Nimble Numbers Ned and K.C.'s Crazy Chase.

At first glance, Type and Tell appears to do very little. Anything typed on the



K.C.'s Crazy Chase

Here, Voice irritates

screen via the keyboard is repeated by the voice. Since the technology utilized for the Voice is more or less "first generation," the Voice is by no means an oratorical wonder. In fact, its diction is what one would expect from a machine — monotonous, slow and without emotion. Words are pronounced phonetically, and the absence of inflection is almost as irritating as fingernails on a chalkboard.

What makes it fun

But the shortcomings of the Voice are what make Type and Tell so much fun. Getting the machine to pronounce your name correctly is a battle in itself, and discovering how to get around the machine's idiosyncrasies is where the challenge and appeal lie.

Type and Tell does more than echo the typed word. It is most amusing as a generator of special sound effects. If you punch in a run of G's, the Voice comes back at you with a hideous laugh. Q's typed in succession come out sounding like a choo-choo train. In this capacity, the Voice has boundless applications, some practical, most mindlessly entertaining.

Nimble Numbers Ned could be titled Mario, the Carpenter, Goes to Grammar School. It is an educational cartridge that is guaranteed to confuse.

At the beginning of this game, Nimble Ned is standing on a numbered stone. The object is to advance Ned from stone to stone (100 in all). To get from one stone to the next, Ned must leap over rolling barrels that are streaming across the screen from right to left. To earn the chance for additional jumps, players must answer a battery of questions from one of three math exercises.

Players make selections

At the outset of each game, the Voice asks, "Which drill?" Players can select (1) Name the Shapes, (2) Multiplication Run-through or (3) Function Machine. I was confused from the start since "Which drill?" sounded more like "Nick Nill" to me.

Name the Shapes is an exercise in visual identification. A series of figures appears on the screen and the Voice asks, for example, "Is this a square?" The Voice's pronunciation is poor here as well, and this time around it's no fun.

Developing a game to gauge progress in math drills is quite ingenious, but the Voice, the game's main attraction, detracts from its effectiveness.

The Voice also detracts from the player's enjoyment of a new and strategically challenging Odyssey Two game, K.C.'s Crazy Chase. The Voice does little to enhance play and, after the novelty wears off, it becomes downright irritating.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your own strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Invective before defeat

Odyssey Two, long a purveyor of off-beat games (Monkeyshines and Pick Axe Pete), has returned to basics with Attack of the Timelord, an outer space shoot-'em-up in which the player is given the Herculean task of defending Earth from the forces of Spyros the Deathless — the Timelord of Chaos.

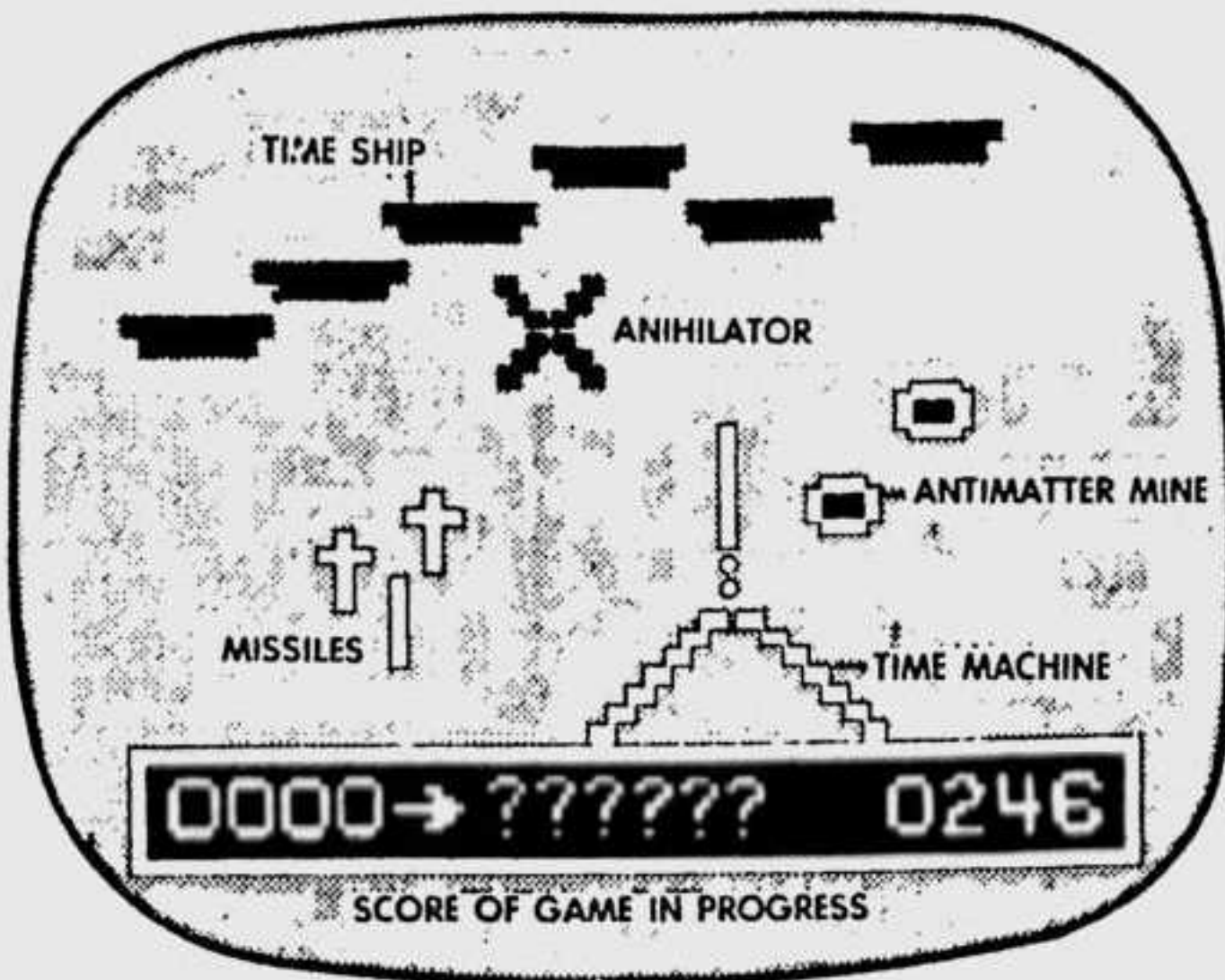
If you enjoy being provoked by threats and rebuffed by insults, you will love Attack of the Timelord. It's programmed for use with the Voice, Odyssey's speech and sound effects module, but is also functional in Odyssey main frames that are not Voice-equipped.

At the beginning of each round, Spyros — who is portrayed by a skull-like face — appears at center screen. After muttering such things as "Prepare for defeat" or "Goodby, earthling," he fades and is replaced by the time warp, from which the forces of the Timemaster spring.

In each round, eight ships dance around the screen, firing on the player's ship. The object is to bring down as many hostile ships as possible.

The bottom line of Attack of the Timelord (and most other video games) is death. The skilled player can delay it, but it cannot be avoided. Never being able to beat the computer has always irked me, but I have never felt this as strongly as I did when I played Attack of the Timelord.

Odyssey claims there are 256 different and progressively harder stages in this



Attack of the Timelord

game. By some miracle I managed to shoot my way through 20 or so. Losing was injury enough, but the persistent insults of Spyros proved my undoing.

The soundest piece of strategic advice is to stay out of the corners, particularly in later stages of the game.

The first squadron of enemy ships is the most passive. Pay no attention to their fancy flying — they're only trying to confuse you. Your best bet is to work the middle two-thirds of the field. Fire when the enemy ships pass overhead.

Level One aliens drop only simple missiles, which are easily destroyed by your shells. When only one alien remains, take

the opportunity to gather some extra points. Spend a few minutes firing at his missiles. Each hit is worth two points.

Level Two aliens have a new trick up their sleeves — antimatter mines, which appear as brownish-orange balls that track your ship as they descend. For extra points, try to shoot them.

Level Three aliens include missiles, antimatter mines and annihilators. Annihilators appear as green X's.

Level Four aliens are well armed. Their arsenal includes nucleonic time killers, which are piloted by expendable robots and programmed to anticipate human reactions.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

A new gig for Journey

WHILE ANALYSTS are speculating that the boom in the video game industry may be partially responsible for the current lull in the music industry, Data Age, a fledgling software house, is operating under the assumption that the two industries can complement each other.

Data Age will soon be releasing Journey's Escape, a home video game cartridge licensed from the rock band Journey and named after their platinum 1981 LP.

The game places members of Journey in a humorous predicament. Action begins after a Journey concert, as members of the group walk out the stage door and attempt to board their bus. The object is to see that band members are not mauled by groupies during their short walk from stage door to bus door. Hence, the title Journey's Escape.

A novel approach, but will the association with Journey save what sounds like a mediocre game? We won't know until January, when Data Age releases the cartridge.

Data Age has also enlisted the help of musician Craig Hundley to help promote its first batch of Atari-compatible games

(Warplock, Airlock, SSSSnake, Encounter at L-5 and Bugs). Hundley, an electronic music composer who has written the scores for "Megaforce," "Firefox"

Input from Hollywood and rock-music scene could prop sagging arcade game industry. See TV Today, Page 2.

and "Star Trek II," has composed music for a Data Age album that attempts to capture the mood of Data Age's games.

The album, Mindscape, is full of special effects and eerie voices. Best of all, it is free for the asking anywhere Data Age games are sold.

• • •

ULTRAVISION, a self-contained, programable video game system, appears right on the heels of General Consumer Electronics' Vectrex. For the suggested list price of \$499, Ultravision offers a nine-inch, black and white vector scan monitor, 64 K of ROM (read only memory) and a sound circuit capable of generating stereo effects. A pair of joy stick

controls and stereo headphones are also included.

The compatible software (Ultravision Series I and II games) is also functional with the Atari. Likewise, all games playable on the Atari are compatible with Ultravision. The system, which will be available in January, runs on either AC or DC power.

• • •

SOFTWARE GIANT Activision has three cartridges scheduled for release during the months of December, January and February. Though no specific titles were announced, one game will be designed by Carol Shaw and will be her first cartridge for Activision.

The final cartridge may be the most interesting. It is the work of an unknown (as yet unnamed) designer who approached Activision with a working prototype of the game. Activision liked what it saw and put it into production.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Sky Jinks takes aim at pre-teen players

As game manufacturers compete for business, difficulty is the yardstick most often used to measure video games. Unfortunately, one segment of the video market has been lost in the shuffle — pre-teens, who are too old for simple educational games and too young to appreciate the sophisticated themes of most current titles..

Sky Jinks, Activision's latest Atari-compatible cartridge, attempts to fill the breach.

Sky Jinks players test their skill in a downscaled re-creation of air racing. As the pilot of a P-41 racer, the player must slalom through a strip of pylons strewn along the length of the game's course.

The duration of the game varies from a

25-pylon hop in Game 1 to a marathon flight in which the pilot must pass 99 randomly positioned pylons in Game 5. Pylon placement is consistent in four games, random in the fifth.

Sky Jinks is a race against time. Memorizing the layout of the courses in Games 1 through 4 helps. Plane speed (and the way plane speed affects the handling of the plane) is a major factor.

Under normal speed, your P-41 will cruise at its lowest altitude. At idle, the plane banks and slides when a turn is initiated. Depressing the red button on the joystick housing causes the plane to accelerate. Altitude also increases as the plane accelerates.

But as air speed increases, so does the

lag in the time it takes for the plane to respond to your commands. At higher speeds it is necessary to start a turn sooner.

In the interest of time, it is good practice to cut the closest possible turn around each pylon.

With practice, the art of cutting a tight turn can be perfected. But the test of a true pilot comes when you least expect it. Two obstacles — hot air balloons and trees — litter the P-41's flight path from takeoff to touchdown.

There is no surefire method of circumventing these hot air balloons and trees. The best course is to adjust your bearings as each obstacle is confronted.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

To give potential record holders an idea of what they should aim for (and show the rest of us how far we have to go), this column periodically lists video game scores that have been verified as world records.

All information has been supplied by the Twin Galaxies National Scoreboard, an internationally recognized clearinghouse for coin-op game records.

If you think you have set a record, submit in writing the name of the game, the score, the number of game lives granted by the machine and, if applicable, the difficulty level on which the machine was set. Include the signature of the game-room owner or manager, along with that of at least one other actual witness. Send information to:

Twin Galaxies International Scoreboard, 226 E. Main St., Ottumwa, Iowa, 52556.

Meanwhile, congratulations to the current record holders:

Donkey Kong, Steve Sanders, Kansas City, Mo., 3,165,300; Donkey Kong Jr., Jeff Brant, Peoria, Ill., 491,800; Dig Dug, Antonio Medina, Napa Calif., 3,357,270; Defender, Ned Troide, Clearwater, Fla., 62,999,975.

Missile Command, Kevin Baughan, Dayton, Ohio, 72,547,630; Ms. Pac Man, Mike Lepkosky, Houston, Texas, 286,410; Super Cobra, Matt Brass, Helena, Mont., 198,470; Tempest, Leo Daniels, Wrightsville Beach, N.C., 3,086,355.

Frenzy, Jay Bennett, Kenosha, Wis, 1,897,821; Frogger, Mark Robishak, Mountainview, Calif., 258,000; Kickman, Lois Lanhan, Lancaster, Mo., 4,656,220; Alpine Ski, Ray Bersabe, Militas, Calif., 221,000.

Kangaroo, Henry Guerrero, Safford, Ariz., 152,350; Thief, Mark Kiminski, Bloomfield, N.J., 1,512,970; Bosconian, Peter Zenke, Racine, Wis, 442,400; Qix, Gary Daley, Missoula, Mont.,

532,628; Looping, Charles Brown, Wrightsville Beach, N.C., 295,550.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Speed of Infiltrate may prove too much

Infiltrate, the seventh Atari-compatible game from Games by Apollo, is a combination of Berzerk and Donkey Kong. It is also Games by Apollo's most challenging game to date.

The action takes place in an incomplete building that houses a file of secret documents on its top level. The field consists of six levels, or stories, as wide as the screen. The object is to reach the upper level of the structure and pick up the documents.

Each time the player's man reaches the top of the field and snatches the secret documents, a new set will appear on the lowest level. The object then is to reach the bottom. Once this is done, the papers reappear on the top.

Six elevators, positioned throughout

the playfield, move from floor to floor. The elevators move continually, and the player's man must hop a ride while the elevators are in motion. Each elevator crosses between two or three floors.

The structure is guarded by a pair of robots that move from floor to floor by the same elevators the player must use. Each robot wields a laser gun, which he will fire at the player's man.

The range of the robot's bullet is altered by the left difficulty switch on the game's console. In the "B" position, each shot will travel approximately a quarter of the playfield. In the "A" position, the robot's bullets have unlimited range.

The player's man has two alternatives when he confronts a hostile robot. He can return fire or duck. To make him duck, pull back on the joystick. The man is safe from bullets in the crouched position, but he can neither fire nor move. And he is not safe from a possible collision with a robot, which will cost him a game life.

Even though the object of Infiltrate is easy to understand and the play is challenging, maneuvering from top to bottom and bottom to top while fighting off robots becomes monotonous after just a few games. In Infiltrate, like most other video games, you never really win. And in Infiltrate, just lasting long enough to reach a respectable score is an admirable achievement.

After the player completes one top to bottom circuit, the robots move faster and stalk the player more tenaciously. This change is not gradual, but instantaneous. The player soon finds himself overwhelmed by robots moving at near blinding speed.

By the second time I reached the top of the field, the robots were so fast that it was virtually impossible to avoid them. And the brisk acceleration of difficulty was not matched by a corresponding increase in my man's ability to hold his own.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Super Charger's here

The wait is over. The Super Charger from Starpath Corp. and the first two multi-load home video games — Escape from the Mind Master and Dragon Stomper — are now available.

The Super Charger is an add-on that allows you to play more sophisticated games, with better graphics, on your old Atari — at a fraction of the cost of a new system.

The Super Charger is loaded into the Atari-like cartridge. Games are then fed into the Super Charger's memory via a tape recorder. The multi-load games are stored on cassette tapes, which can store more than cartridges and are cheaper (\$17.95 suggested list price). The greater storage space led Starpath to develop the multi-load game.

Like chapters in book

According to Starpath's president, Alan Bayley, each portion of a multi-load game is similar to the chapters that make up a book. "To draw another analogy," he added, "the multi-load concept is to cartridge video games what the L.P. album is to the single 45 record in the music industry."

The "chapters" are loaded into the Supercharger's memory as play progresses. Each "chapter" consists of a series of different contests that are related by a single story line. Each follows the general plot of the game, but adds different characters and requires new strategies. When the player completes the object of the first load, he advances to the second, and so on. Scores from each stage are carried over to the next, until the final contest is concluded and the player's performance is evaluated.

In Escape from the Mind Master, the player must navigate through six different mazes. The difference between this game and standard maze games is that each labyrinth is seen in first-person perspective, as if the player were actually in a maze. A condensed representation of each maze is shown on the bottom of the screen and serves as a road map. The player's position is shown by a white square.

Tests analytical skills

Unlike other maze games, where the object is to clear each screen of some type of blip or dot while avoiding

(or chasing) the bad guys, Escape from the Mind Master tests analytical skills.

At each level, the Mind Master challenges the player with a different test. Each test probes a different facet of the player's abilities — from reflexes and coordination to ability to recall and deduce.

One quiz that appears throughout the game is the peg test. Four pegs are scattered about the maze. The corresponding holes for each peg are placed somewhere among the walls of the field. To unlock the door that leads to the next level of play, each peg must be placed in the appropriate hole. At each test, the player's performance is given a score, which is used by the Mind Master at the end of the last maze, when a rating is assigned.

Escape from the Mind Master does have one element in common with other maze games — a "bad guy." In this case, it is the Alien Stalker, an unfriendly soul that is trapped in the maze along with the player.

The real challenge of Escape from the Mind Master is that it pits a player against himself, perhaps the toughest adversary of all.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Watery Atlantis challenges player

If you prefer the thrill of victory to the agony of defeat, think twice before playing Atlantis. Atlantis, one of the latest Atari-compatible games from Imagic, might be presented as solid proof that Imagic's games are indeed "designed by experts for experts."

It is set in the fabled lost city, which is situated on the ocean floor. The player's mission is to clear the skies over the submerged city of hostile Gorgon ships and bombers.

Aided by sharp graphics and unusual play variations, Atlantis emerges as an original.

Six installations are strewn along the bottom of the field. Two sentry stations (one on each end of the screen) and the Acropolis command post (at center screen) are positioned on the ocean's surface and guard the city. The command post is the enemy Gorgon fleet's primary target.

Before any Gorgon ship pulls within striking range of Atlantis, it must complete three laps across the screen. Once it enters the final lane of approach, cruising just above the ocean's surface, it will open fire with a death ray. Every ship follows a wrap-around flight path — it exits one end of the screen and reappears on the opposite side. With each pass, the ship drops one notch in altitude.

Any of the defensive guns can be used to blast the Gorgon ships. Each operate independently, but only one can be fired at any given moment.

Each gun fires at a fixed angle, which

limits its area of effectiveness. The Acropolis command post fires straight up. The east and west sentry guns rest at 45-degree inclines facing the center of the screen. Since it is more difficult to score a hit with a sentry gun, accurate shooting from the east or west positions is rewarded with double point value.

The Acropolis command post is the cornerstone of your defense. As long as it remains intact, a force field protects the remaining underwater installations. Once it is knocked out, every outpost and generator is fair game.

The first ship that penetrates the fourth approach lane will fire exclusively at the command post. Taking out that ship with a blast from one of the sentry posts is your best bet. To determine which gun to use, observe which side of the screen the Gorgon ship exits upon the completion of its third crossing. Select the gun aimed at the side of the screen in which the vessel will reappear.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Video who-dun-it

The time in 1936. Millionaire industrialist Derrick Reardon has been murdered. The suspects include Reardon's former wife, an actress; his spinster sister, his playboy brother, his extremely private secretary, his teenage ward, the family doctor, a secretive German businessman and, of course, the butler.

No, this isn't an Agatha Christie novel. It's a Murder. Anyone? a video who-dun-it that takes advantage of laser disc technology and asks the player to match wits with detective Stew Cavanagh, the on-screen gumshoe, and solve the fictional crime. Unlike most video games, which feature cartoon-like characters, Murder, Anyone? is acted by a cast of 11 actors and actresses.

First title in series

Murder, Anyone? is the first title in a Mystery Disc series that is being designed for laser disc players. The series is being developed by Vidmax, in cooperation with Pioneer Video and NAP Consumer Electronics (the makers of Odyssey Two).

According to Ken Kal, president of Pioneer Video, Mystery Disc represents a programing breakthrough for the video format.

Vidmax president Eric Nowlin feels that original programing, such as the Mystery Disc series, will give the sluggish laser disc market a shot in the arm. (Many feel that poor software selection is the major reason that the laser disc player hasn't found a market.)

Said Nowlin, "Vidmax is dedicated to creating original programing that will at-

tract the consumer to this exciting technology."

Allows alternative endings

What separates a laser disc game from a conventional mystery movie is the advance laser disc technology, which makes the alternative endings in Murder, Anyone? possible. The technological advances include dual soundtracks, automatic stops, freeze frame, random access frame and random access chapter search.

Murder Anyone? will retail for \$29.95 and will be distributed by all the laser video disc player manufacturers.

• • •

VIDMAX ISN'T the only company using laser disc technology to develop Different kinds of video games. Sega is working on a coin-op game that will combine laser disc and microprocessing technology, but at presstime, details were unavailable.

Sega did display a prototype at the recent Japan Amusement Association Show in Tokyo, which demonstrated how laser disc and computer video game hardware and software could interact. The effect was described by one observer as "mind-boggling."

Other highlights of the Sega Exhibit include Pengo, a cutesie coin-op, and Subroc-3D — hailed as the first true three-dimensional video game. The Sega offerings were rounded out with Tac-SCAN, an X-Y game that features more than 1,300 space sound effects and three-point perspective views and ZOOM-909, a space game described as "totally different" by Sega.

The Tribune Company

What to Look For In a Video Game

By MICHAEL BLANCHET

Syndicated Columnist

A mere six months ago, anyone in the market for a home video game system faced one decision: Atari or Intellivision. Even then, choosing wasn't always easy. Today, it sometimes seems downright impossible.

At last count, there were more than a dozen different home game formats screaming for the attention of the estimated 8-million consumers who will buy game systems this year. Judging which system is the best depends on many factors, including price and the gaming preferences of the buyer.

Now that the holiday season is upon us, many buyers are ready to take the plunge. To make some sense of the myriad of choices, this column has undertaken a survey of the six most prominent home video systems follows.

Let's take a look at some of the current home game consoles.

✓The Atari VCS model 2600 is by far the most popular. The Atari 2600, introduced in 1977, is largely responsible for the booming home video game industry. But the first generation technology used in this system makes it appear almost primitive in comparison to consoles incorporating the latest technological advances.

The Atari 2600 carries a suggested list price of \$199.95, but it is generally discounted anywhere from \$50 to \$75.

✓The Atari 5200 Super system was introduced last October and list priced at \$299.95. Dubbed System X during its developmental stages, the 5200 is Atari's answer to consumer demands for greater sophistication and realism. Despite persistent rumors, Atari insists that the 5200 is not intended to replace the 2600 and that Atari will not cease to support the 2600.

✓Intellivision, from Mattel Electronics, is the current runner-up. Until recently, Intellivision's introductory price was a steep \$260, so many would-be Intellivision owners opted for the cheaper Atari 2600, forsaking the spiffy graphics and realistic games that have become Intellivision's hallmark. Recently, however, Mattel has begun offering a substantial rebate, and many retailers make discounting standard practice. Judicious shoppers can find the Intellivision system priced around \$150.

✓ColecoVision, the new kid on the block, hopes to attract gamers who have become partial to the sophistication of Arcade games. ColecoVision boasts the most ROM (computing power) of any console currently available, and its price (anywhere from \$179 to \$200) makes it a viable alternative for those who thought a state of the art system was out of reach.

✓The Odyssey Two system from NAP Consumer Electronics is the only console that offers a complete alphanumeric (letters and numbers) keyboard as standard equipment. As of January, NAP will also offer Odyssey Three, featuring a complete keyboard and a built-in voice and sound synthesis module. Odyssey Two owners who wish to upgrade to the newer system, will be able to purchase a module, which will make Odyssey Two games usable with Odyssey Three. Odyssey Two currently retails for between \$135 and \$199. Price information for the Odyssey Three was unavailable at press time.

✓Astrocade, formerly known as the Bally Home Computer, is the most expensive console on the market. The system, which retails for \$299, offers a calculator function and a built-in design generator, which allows you to draw virtually anything on the TV screen. In addition, the Astrocade console has two built-in games: Checkmate and Gunfight, the latter a copy of Midway's Boot Hill arcade game.

✓The General Consumer Electronics Vectrex system is unique among gaming consoles — it has its own TV screen. The display, a nine inch black and white vector monitor format, solves the problem of who gets TV rights (the viewers or the players). It also serves up 3-D graphics that a standard television tube is incapable of generating.

To spruce up the appearance of each game, colored screen overlays are packaged with each game cartridge and for the built-in game, Mine Storm. The system retails for \$200.

Before making a final decision, however, it is crucial that the buyer find out how many cartridges, and what type of cartridges, are available for the system in question.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

A shopper's guide

First of three articles

Six months ago, anyone in the market for a home video game system faced one decision: Atari or Intellivision. Even then, choosing wasn't always easy. Today, it sometimes seems downright impossible.

Now that the holiday season is upon us, many buyers are ready to take the plunge. To make some sense of the choices, a survey of home video systems follows.

- The Atari VCS model 2600 is by far the most popular. The Atari 2600 is largely responsible for the booming home video game industry, but the first-generation technology used in this system makes it appear almost primitive in comparison to consoles incorporating the latest technological advances.

The Atari 5200 Super system was introduced last October and listed at \$299.95. Dubbed System X during its developmental stages, the 5200 is Atari's answer to consumer demands for greater sophistication and realism.

- Intellivision, from Mattel Electronics, is the current runnerup. Until recently, Intellivision's introductory price was \$260, so many would-be Intellivision owners opted for the cheaper Atari 2600, foresaking the spiffy graphics and realistic games that have become Intellivision's hallmark. Recently, however, Mattel has begun offering a rebate, and many retailers make discounting standard practice.

- ColecoVision, the new kid on the block, hopes to attract gamers who have become partial to the sophistication of Arcade games. ColecoVision boasts the most ROM (computing power) of any console currently available.

- The Odyssey Two system from NAP Consumer Electronics is the only console that offers a complete alphanumeric (letters and numbers) keyboard and a built-in voice and sound synthesis module.

- Astrocade, formerly known as the Bally Home Computer, is the most expensive console on the market. The system, which retails for \$299, offers a calculator function and a built-in design generator, which allows you to draw virtually anything on the TV screen.

- The General Consumer Electronics Vectrex system is unique among gaming consoles — it has its own TV screen. The display, a nine-inch black

and white vector monitor format, solves the problem of who gets TV rights (the viewers or the players).

Next: Video cartridges: What games are available for what system?

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Shopping: Part II

Second of three articles

The number of game cartridges available for a home video system and the quality of those cartridges are important considerations in selecting a home game console. After all, what good is a perfect system if you can't buy any games to play on it?

The market for home video game cartridges is booming. Fortune Magazine estimates that 60 million cartridges will be sold this year, which translates to \$1.8 billion in sales. But when it comes to game selection, all systems are definitely not created equal.

Largest library so far

The Atari VCS Model 2600 has the largest library by far. For this reason, the system is worth considering, even though its graphics are primitive compared with newer systems. More than 50 games are offered by Atari, and another 100 or so are available from other companies, such as Imagic, Activision and Parker Bros.

Most of the titles from Atari are adaptations of arcade games, such as Berzerk and Defender. Parker Bros. has also taken the licensing route with Frogger and the soon-to-be-released Tutankham and Super Cobra. But don't expect too much from a copy of an arcade game.

Atari's new 5200 Super System has enough computing power to translate arcade games accurately but, as of this writing, only 10 cartridges are available. Atari, of course, is promising more. The bulk of the 5200 cartridges are arcade games, such as Pac-Man, Galaxion, Super Breakout and Missile Command. Centipede, Qix and Defender are scheduled for future introduction.

Geared for arcade buff

The ColecoVision system also is geared for the arcade buff. The system's library reads like a Who's Who of arcade games: Donkey Kong, Venture, Zaxxon, Lady Bug, Turbo, Mouse Trap and Carnival. Thanks to the computing power of the ColecoVision console, little is lost in the translation from arcade to cartridge. Almost every aspect of play, from sound to graphics, has been carefully re-created.

If you purchased Astrocade when it was the Bally Home Computer, the salesman probably told you that all the better arcade games would be offered for this system, since Bally owned Midway, a major in the arcade industry. This never came to pass. Still, there are some solid titles in the Astrocade library. The Incredible Wizard is a dead ringer for Midway's Wizard of War. Ditto for Galactic Invasion and Space Fortress, which, for all practical purposes, are Galaxian and Space Zap.

NAP Consumer Electronics offers roughly 45 cartridges for the Odyssey Two system. Though this list boasts no arcade games, it does have the

Master Strategy game, a clever blending of principles from board games and video games. One feature of the Master Strategy game is that more than two can play.

Next: Add-ons.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet
Adding on

Last of three articles

Every time we turn around, someone seems to be producing a better home game system. This leaves the buyer with an important question: Will his system become obsolete in six months? He'll also want to know whether add-on modules will be available if he wants to expand and modernize.

The Atari VCS model 2600 probably comes as close as any to being a universal game format. It was the first console to acquire a large portion of the market, so most of the independent producers of game cartridges have produced them almost exclusively for the Atari system.

There are at least 100 Atari-compatible games marketed by companies such as Activision and Imagic, in addition to the 50 or so cartridges available from Atari.

If there is one thing Atari owners agree on, however, it's the poor responsiveness and short life span of the standard Atari joystick.

Luckily, companies such as Discwasher and Wico have entered the hardware market with replacement joysticks. After testing every replacement controller on the market, I

found the Pointmaster from Discwasher to be the most responsive — and the most durable under prolonged use.

Of all the new systems introduced this year, Coleco's ColecoVision offers the consumer the best edge against obsolescence. Instead of just developing a state-of-the-art system, Coleco has designed a series of add-on modules that will expand the system's capabilities.

The first add-on is an Atari-compatible module, which retails for \$60. When it's plugged into the ColecoVision console, it serves as a computer language translator, making Atari 2600 cartridges playable on ColecoVision.

Expansion module No. 2, though more specialized in function, adds another dimension to the ColecoVision console. This add-on is a tabletop version of a race car cockpit, complete with remote floor accelerator and six-inch steering wheel.

The third expansion module, which is scheduled for sometime next year, is a complete alphanumeric (letters and numbers) keyboard, which would turn ColecoVision into a personal computer.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Cosmic Ark

Ever wonder what happened to the survivors of the Gorgon attack on Atlantis? Well, wonder no more. They're aboard Cosmic Ark, Imagic's sequel to the popular Atlantis cartridge.

Cosmic Ark is divided into two separate conflicts. First, the ark hovers at center screen in the middle of a meteor shower. Then, after navigating through the rock storm, the ark automatically enters the atmosphere of the first planet. Once inside the planet's atmosphere, the ark sends down its shuttle ship to capture the two beasties that are prancing across the ground. Then it's back to the ark to face another meteor assault.

Pleasing to eye

Cosmic Ark is pleasing to the eye. The graphics, though angular, are colorful and imaginative. The story line (inspired by Noah's ark) is original. Unfortunately, aside from the tempo of the meteor assault, which picks up considerably as the game progresses, Cosmic Ark never varies. Play is far from easy, but it becomes monotonous after a few games.

The player is allotted a limitless supply of Cosmic Arks — as long as there is fuel in reserve. The fuel level is monitored by the red line that appears below the score in the meteor shower segment. Although the preservation of fuel is the underlying object of the game, the energy level

will mind itself once you learn how to make it through the meteor and rescue segments of the game.

Test of reflexes

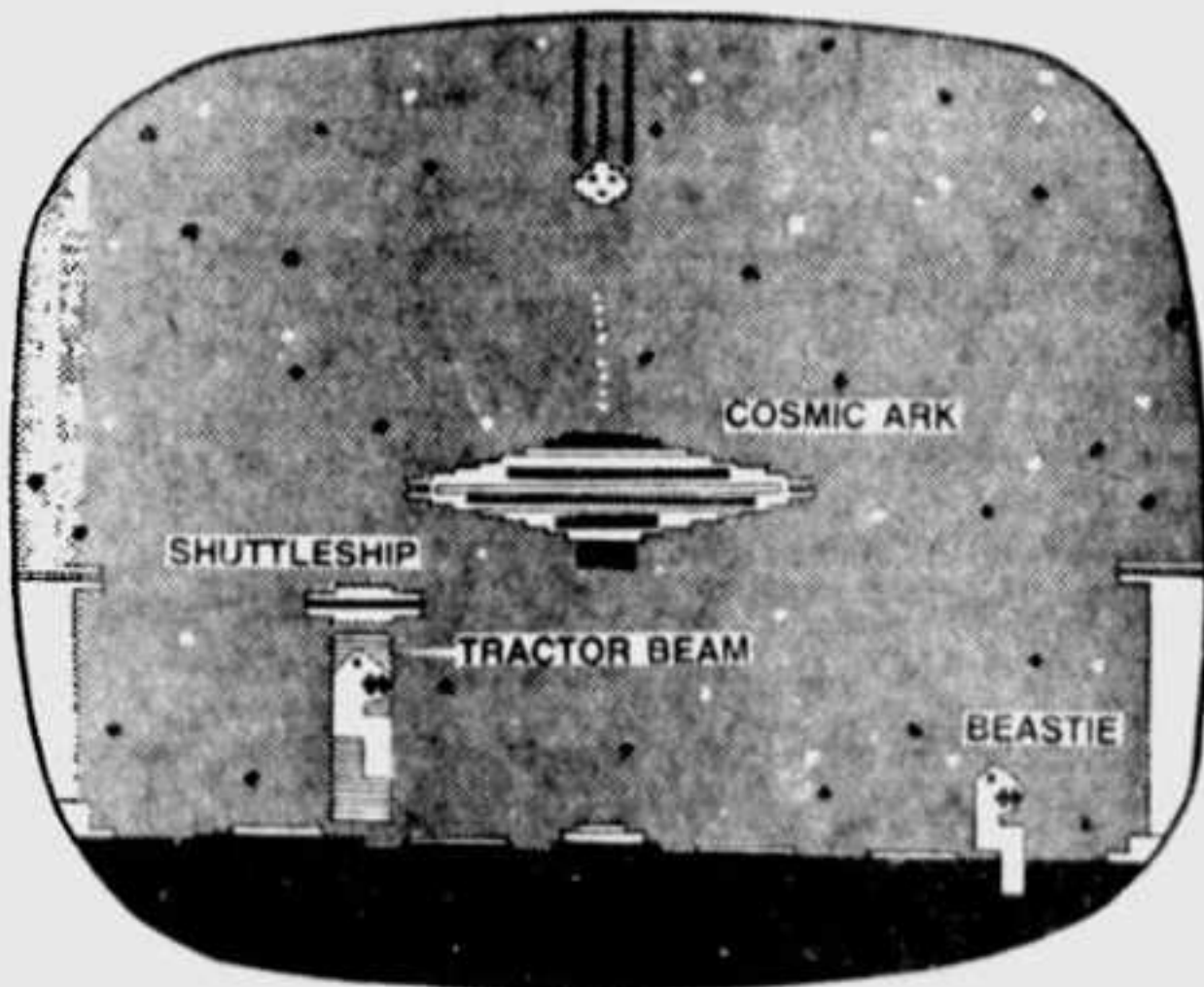
The meteor shower is a simple test of reflexes. Once the ark settles at center screen, asteroids will stream toward the ship. The player fires by moving the joystick in the direction of the approaching meteor.

Be sure to return the joystick to the center after each shot. Otherwise, you will misfire. If you wish to practice, switch to game variation No. 2. In this mode, the game repeats the meteor segment until the fuel supply is exhausted.

In the rescue segment, the ship's captain becomes head zookeeper. The mission is to pilot the shuttle ship toward the planet's surface, where two beasties frantically pace back and forth. The joystick controls the shuttle ship, while the fire button activates the transporter beam, which is used to bring each creature aboard the shuttle.

Time is limited

Once the shuttle ship leaves the ark, the player has a limited amount of time to retrieve the beasties and return to the ark. The game emits an audible warning when time is running short. If the shuttle fails to return after the alarm is sounded, a meteor will plummet toward the



ark, which is defenseless while the shuttle is outside.

After the warning tone sounds, it's best to beat a hasty retreat to the ark. If you are able to capture only one beastie, don't worry. You'll get another chance at the second beastie after you go through the meteor segment.

Columns rise and fall

Once you reach the second planet, you'll find two columns (one on the east end of the field, one on the west) that rise and fall in unison. This is the planetary defense system. At random intervals, a beam will jump from one

pole to the other. If the shuttle ship is hit by this ray, it will be vaporized, and all aboard will be returned to the planet's surface.

Move as close to planet's surface as possible. This way, you reduce the amount of time necessary to beam the beasties aboard. You also reduce the amount of time that your shuttle ship is exposed to the planetary defense system.

When the columns retract, move above them. Keep above them as they extend, until they fire across the field. Then it is safe to drop down for an uninterrupted rescue attempt.

The Tribune Co.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

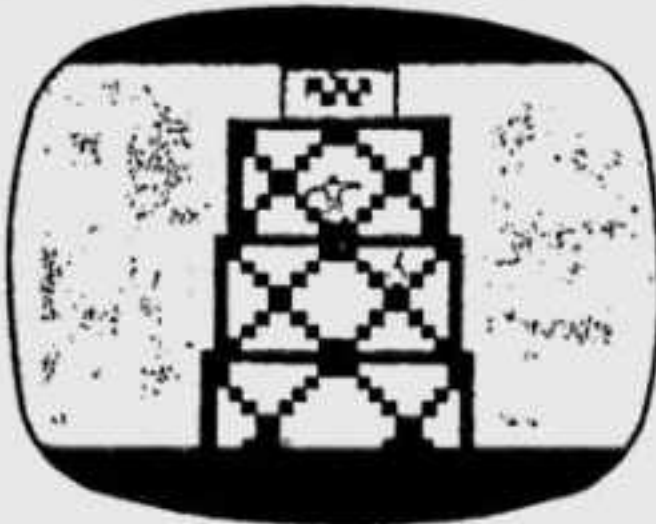
Spiderman vs. Green Goblin

Many home video games have been inspired by Nintendo's Donkey Kong, but few have added an original twist to the "climb-to-the-top-of-the-building-and-save-the-girl" theme. Spiderman, the fourth Atari-compatible home video game released by Parker Brothers this year, is a notable exception.

The villain is the Green Goblin, against whom Spiderman has been matching wits for years. In the video Spiderman, the Green Goblin has taken control of a skyscraper. A Super Bomb rests on the roof. Spiderman must climb the building and defuse the bomb.

Enlists help of hoods

To make Spidey's climb a little tougher, the Goblin has enlisted the help of some hoodlums, who periodically pop up in the windows of the skyscraper. If Spidey makes it past the criminals, he must then scale a high voltage tower, which the Green Goblin has mined with explosives. If Spiderman passes this test, he must slip by the Goblin, who is patrolling



IF SPIDERMAN makes it past the criminals, he must then scale a high-voltage tower.

the building's roof. *Then* he can defuse the Super Bomb.

The joy stick controller is used to move Spiderman. When pressed, the red button next to the joy stick shoots web fluid. Webs can be shot in three directions — left, right or straight up. Once a web line is placed, pushing the joy stick north will move Spiderman until he reaches the end

of the web. Then, if Spiderman is to continue upward, another web line must be shot.

Since Spidey's web fluid is limited, he must replenish it every chance he gets. This is done by brushing his body across a criminal peering out of a window or by brushing his body across a time bomb on the high voltage tower.

This aspect of the game can be confusing. Logically, reaching the bomb quickly should be the game's primary object. Yet, the player is awarded bonus points based on the number of criminals snagged and bombs extinguished along the way.

So the object of the game is twofold. As you climb the building, you should make an effort to snag the criminals you pass. But stalking one villain for an extended period would be foolish. You must mind your web fluid throughout the climb, and any web fluid gained by the snag would be consumed by the chase.

Climbing the building at angles is the most efficient method for catching criminals. The only danger is that an extending web may pass across a window occupied by a villain. If this occurs, the villain will cut the web and Spiderman will fall.

Swings like pendulum

To limit the chances of having your web cut, observe the floor directly above the target villain. If no criminals appear, shoot a web one story above the target villain, at an angle. Spiderman will now swing to and fro, like a pendulum. When he hangs on a short web, he will cross two windows on each pass (each of the building has six windows).

As you approach the high voltage tower, move toward the east or west side of the building. Scale the tower by firing webs straight up the outermost supports. If you chose to extinguish a time bomb en route, fire a web at a 45-degree angle to swoop across it. The outside path is the safest route, since it provides the most reliable surface for your webs to latch onto.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Racing in your living room

Ever wonder what it would be like to drive 200 miles per hour in your own living room?

ColecoVision's Turbo, copied from the popular Sega coin-op, puts the controls of a high-performance, Formula One racer in your home. It is almost identical to the Turbo coin-op (lacking only the ear-piercing, bone-jarring arcade sound effects) and is included with ColecoVision Expansion Module No. 2.

The package, which sells for about \$60, includes a table-top dashboard, a steering wheel and a foot-operated accelerator.

The object of all driving games is simple and straightforward — go as fast and as far as you can. But Turbo represents a milestone.

The first racing games were flat, one-dimensional contests, where the player viewed the action from overhead. Turbo heightens the sensation of depth and speed by shifting the player's vantage point to the rear of the car. Objects appear in the distance, then loom larger as the player's car approaches them. This gives the illusion of depth without sophisticated, three-dimensional viewing equipment.

The race begins in an urban setting. The roadway is flanked by rows of skyscrapers and office buildings. As the race progresses, the scenery lining the course changes. In one segment, the racer guns down a lonely country road bordered by trees and sprawling green fields, then heads onto a coastal highway. Other scenes include a tunnel sequence and a snow-covered street.

The object is to pass a minimum of 30 cars within 99 seconds. If you fail to pass 30 cars with-

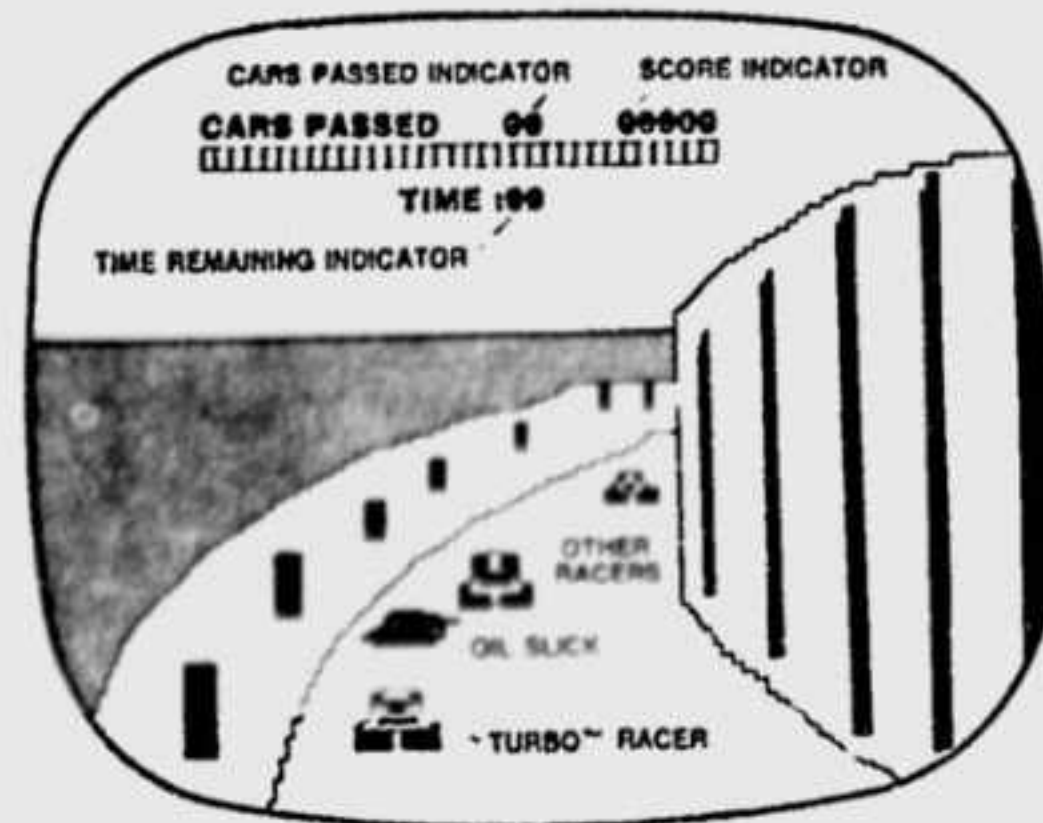
in the 99-second time segment, the race is over. If you succeed, the timer is reset and the race continues. If you manage to pass more than 30 cars in the 99-second time period, you will be awarded a bonus for each additional car.

For the longest trip (and the highest score), resist the urge to drive like a maniac. Your best strategy is to follow the simple rules of the road — the ones taught in driver education courses.

Always look as far ahead as possible. Other cars will first appear as small blips on the horizon. Determine which side of the highway the other car occupies, and adjust your position accordingly.

The game's only drawback is that the steering response is somewhat sluggish. At first, the slow reaction time will cause you to oversteer. Familiarize yourself with the idiosyncrasies of the steering response by experimenting at the beginning of the race when traffic is lightest.

You will discover that one complete rotation of the wheel will move the car from one side of the track to the other. You will also notice that your car, for no apparent reason, creeps both left and



KEEP YOUR eye on the "cars passed" and "time remaining" indicators when playing Turbo.

right across the roadway, even when the steering wheel is held motionless. Glance at your car from time to time and correct your position.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

'Star Wars' spins off

Parker Brothers has won praise for the manner in which it has converted arcade games to the home format. Judging from planned releases next year, gamers can expect more of the same.

Three games based on "Star Wars" and "Revenge of the Jedi," plus a cartridge featuring characters from Strawberry Shortcake, are among products recently announced. Parker Brothers also plans to market home versions of two arcade games, Q-bert and Popeye.

Depicts movie scene

The first "Star Wars" game, Jedi Arena, depicts the scene where Luke learns to use his light saber against the Seeker. The other "Star Wars" games, tentatively called Revenge of the Jedi Game I and Revenge of the Jedi Game II, will re-create scenes from the forthcoming Lucas movie.

Strawberry Shortcake Musical Match Ups is touted as the first game for young girls. The game is staged in Strawberry Land where Strawberry Shortcake and her friends have gathered to stage a talent show.

The villain, the Purple Pieman, has other plans. After he scrambles the bodies of Strawberry Shortcake and her friends, it's up to the player to match heads, torsos and legs. If the

player succeeds, the playmates dance as their names appear on the screen.

Strawberry Musical Match Ups will be available for the Atari 2600 in March.

Parker Brothers also has announced its entry into the computer software industry.

Player is pilot

Super Cobra and Sky Skipper, will be available for the Atari 2600 in March. Super Cobra is similar to the Scramble arcade game. The player, pilot of a helicopter, must make his way through cities and caverns teeming with enemy tanks, missile silos and UFOs. The objective is to recover booty stashed in the enemy base camp.

In Sky Skipper, the player must rescue kittens, turtles, ducks and rabbits by bombing a band of oversized gorillas, then swooping down to rescue the furry creatures.

Slated for release later in 1983 are two more arcade games, Gottlieb's Reactor and Stern's Tutankham. Reactor presents a situation in which the player is trapped inside a nuclear reactor and must prevent a meltdown by containing the nuclear particles.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Player pilots jet in River Raid

Activision's fascination with airplanes has taken gamers from circa 1920 to the present. In Barnstorming, Activision put you in the cockpit of a Sopwith Camel. In Chopper Command, gamers traded in the biplane for a heavily armed helicopter. Then came Skyjinks, with air-racing simulation where the player schussed around pylons in a P-41 Mustang.

Designed by Carol Shaw

In River Raid, the latest Atari-compatible cartridge from Activision, the player pilots a jet fighter along a heavily fortified river canyon. River Raid is the first game designed by Carol Shaw for Activision.

Until coin-ops such as Defender and Scramble were introduced two years ago, the action in any video game was staged in one arena or screen. Little or nothing changed from round to round except the shifting mass of aliens.

Games such as Donkey Kong and Ms. Pac-Man offered multiple screens (four different field configurations that repeated), while the action in Defender and Scramble scrolled across the screen laterally. Even though the player could penetrate the east and west borders of the screen, the battlefields were actually repeating loops.

Crisp, colorful graphics

In River Raid, the players travel upstream. The crisp and colorful graphics, which have become a trademark of the Activision library, change with almost every frame. The ever-changing scenery and the inability to anticipate what lies ahead are River Raid's greatest assets. In a typical 20,000-point game, the player never covers the same turf twice — great for holding player interest.

The joy stick controller in River Raid operates in the manner of the controls of a real aircraft. In River Raid, north and south control the speed of the player's jet. The altitude of the player's jet remains constant throughout the game. To bank left or right, the joy stick is moved east and west respectively. The red button is used to fire the jet's retaliatory missiles.

Acrobats keep you on your toes

How to beat video games

By Michael Blanchet

Syndicated columnist



There is a saying in the video game industry that "you are nobody in this business unless you've been sued by Atari." Nobody knows this better than N.A.P. Consumer Electronics, the makers of Odyssey Two.

Atari charged Odyssey with copyright infringement after securing the exclusive rights to reproduce Pac-Man for home game systems. The suit contended that Odyssey's popular K.C. Munchkin was an unauthorized copy of Pac-Man. The allegations were debatable, but Atari emerged victorious and K.C. Munchkin was swept from the shelves.

In light of the K.C. Munchkin incident, one would think that Odyssey would make every attempt to avoid future lawsuits. But apparently the Odyssey board of directors thinks differently. P.T. Barnum's Acrobats seems to be in direct violation of an Atari copyright protecting their Circus Atari cartridge.

Aside from the titles of the two games and the systems they are each compatible with, the games are identical. Since P.T. Barnum's Acrobats is one of the best Odyssey Two games to date, I suggest you act quickly. Even as you read this, a law suit may be pending.

Action is centered around a pair of acrobats on a springboard. When the airborne member of the team falls on the high end of the seesaw, his partner is hurled skyward toward three rows of moving balloons. Each balloon the acrobat makes contact with pops. The resulting explosion helps the acrobat defy gravity for a brief moment. If the acrobat strikes enough balloons in succession, he will bounce from one end of the screen to the other. Eventually, he will fall.

To send the stationary acrobat back towards the balloons, the player must place the upper end of the seesaw under the spot where the descending acrobat

will land. There are no safety nets in P.T. Barnum's Acrobats. If the seesaw is misplaced, the plummeting performer will meet with temporary demise. His replacement will appear on the platform on the left side of the screen. Each game consists of 10 jumps or chances.

Multiple chance games, such as P.T. Barnum's Acrobats, should be a welcome change for Odyssey Two owners, who are accustomed to the one life format of most games made for the system. Odyssey also has eliminated the non-stop play feature. Before, when one game was finished, another began automatically. Now gamers can sit back and savor their scores for a moment before starting a new game, instead of watching the automatic reset wipe their tallies from the screen in the blink of an eye. P.T. Barnum's Acrobats also offers 18 play variations — the most of any Odyssey cartridge in recent memory.

The Voice enhancement in P.T. Barnum's acrobats is no better than that of past Odyssey efforts. At first, the announcer's insults ("Oh, no!" "Turkey!" and "Squash!" when an acrobat hits the floor) are very funny. At times, they are hilarious. For instance, more than once the Voice responded with a satisfied "AHHH!" as the acrobat hit the floor head first. Other times, the same event solicited an "incredible" or an "amazing" from the Voice. Though the amusing comments get a chuckle at first, the charm of the soundtrack quickly wears thin, and it becomes boring, repetitive and irritating.

Since there are virtually no strategic tricks to be exploited, P.T. Barnum's Acrobats will be a challenging contest, even for the gamer who makes playing a daily ritual.

The only "trick" to the game is to get the acrobat as high into the balloons as possible. To do this, simply have the descending acrobat land on the end of the raised side of the springboard. The law of leverage applies here. Thus, if he lands too close to the fulcrum, the other acrobat will only ascend a short distance.

To assure yourself the greatest chance of being in the right place at the right time, follow the airborne acrobat along the screen with the seesaw. When he falls, you will already be in position.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Dragonstomper demands thought

Dragonstomper, Starpath's second multi-load game, is a game of many distinctions.

It challenges the player's ability to deduce. The player actually can beat the game. And it is a multi-load game, a group of three separate contests linked by one story line. The game is compatible with the Starpath Supercharger, a hardware add-on that increases the computing power of the Atari 2600 50-fold.

Dragonstomper is not for the casual player who prefers simple games. There are no spaceships to blast or power pills to munch. It is a thinking player's game — and a good one at that.

The story opens with a typical sword and sorcery plot. To restore the balance of power, the Dragonstomper (the player's role in the game) must journey through the enchanted countryside to an oppressed village. From the village, he

travels to the dragon's cave, where he meets the dragon.

The object in the earlier portion of the game is to equip the Dragonstomper with the objects that will be needed to defeat the dragon. The Dragonstomper must fight or barter with the Dragon's thugs along the way.

At the outset of his trip, the Dragonstomper finds himself in the enchanted countryside, a land covered with trees, swamps, buildings and unseen perils. During this first stage of play, he must gather gold, weapons and other artifacts. These will be used to bargain with the guard at the bridge.

En route, the Dragonstomper will be confronted by a vast array of creatures. Each time he meets one of these creatures, he must decide whether to run, fight or use one of the objects in his possession.

The joy stick is used to select the course of action. A tap of the fire button brings the action choices to the message box at the bottom of the screen. The arrows beside each choice indicate the direction in which the player should move

the joy stick to select a particular option.

Should you choose to fight, each hit your adversary scores robs you of strength. Your enemy is weakened in turn with each blow you land. The outcome is flashed in the message box.

The oppressed village is entered after the Dragonstomper barter with the guard at the bridge. The village is a tranquil place; there are no battles to be fought there. Instead, the player must enter the magic shop, the trade shop and the hospital to sell or trade his belongings. In return he will receive magical powers, weapons, potions or the services of various idle warriors wandering around town. Once the player feels he is amply armed, he moves toward the cave's gate.

The dragon's cave is a long, narrow corridor filled with the bones of those who came before you. This is the most difficult stage of the game, since you'll need to experiment with each object you possess to see if it will have any effect on the hazards you encounter along the way.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

In the two years since video games started to gain widespread popularity, software manufacturers have created nearly every imaginable situation for them.

With Dragonfire, the latest Atari and Intellivision compatible cartridge from Imagic, players can now tackle something practically impossible. Imagic has carried the "designed for experts by experts" theme too far.

The story begins with the lament of a once-mighty king. "Without our vast treasures, we cannot raise an army against these accursed dragons. Our kingdom must languish under lizards!" A prince retorts, "Nay, not so, my liege! None knows that castle, those many bridges and storerooms better than I."

The king grants the prince leave to embark on a perilous mission. He must cross a bridge. At the end of the bridge, he will find a room full of treasures. This is where the dragon roams. If the prince manages to snatch up all the loot, he may exit the room, only to find himself back on the bridge. This cycle is repeated until seven princes have been scorched by the dragon.

The prince must sprint across the bridge, ducking fireballs hurled by unseen baby dragons. This sequence is a test of reflexes. With practice, I

found it a snap. The first few attempts, though, are very frustrating.

Once a prince reaches the tower on the left side of the screen, he enters the treasure room. The prince must emerge from hiding in the lower right of the screen, scoop up the treasures and reach the escape door, which appears only after the last artifact is recovered. As he scurries about, the prince must dodge the dragon fireballs.

The treasure room is the impossible phase of the game. Initially, it is challenging; the prince's speed matches the dragon's. But by the third round, the dragon's speed has escalated so much that the player is likely to lose all seven princes in rapid succession.

It's a shame that such painstaking work was wasted on a game that serves primarily to inflict self-punishment.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Storming the castle

In the Middle Ages, there were no bowling leagues, single bars or television, so people spent their spare time smashing castles with catapults. This popular pastime of days gone by has been re-created in *Smithereens*, a new voice-enhanced cartridge for the Odyssey Two system.

Smithereens is a two-player game. Each player uses a catapult to bring down the other's castle. For extra points, the player can hit his competitor's knight or catapult, knocking them out of the contest temporarily.

Level castle to win

To win the battle, the player must level his opponent's castle. This requires nine direct hits on the enemy fortress. A complete war consists of 10 battles. Scores from each battle are tabulated and carried over to the next round. The player with the highest score at the end of 10 battles is declared the winner.

Each catapult is aimed and fired with the joy-stick controller. To launch a boulder, the player pulls the joy stick in any direction. When he releases it, the rock travels a distance proportionate to the time the joy stick is held,

The three play variations in *Smithereens*

affect the tension of the catapults. On the No. 1 setting, the catapult is most relaxed. Thus, the player needs to hold the joy stick for a longer period of time. In the third variation, only a slight touch is necessary to send the rock skyward.

The voice enhancement in *Smithereens* is what we've come to expect from *Odyssey*. When you make a mistake, the announcer berates you by saying "Come on, turkey, hit it!" If a well-placed shot strikes a knight or a catapult, the announcer comes back with "Ouch!" or "Incredible. Do it again!"

Sound effects realistic

The other sound effects are realistic. Each time a boulder strikes a castle, a thunderclap is heard. There is a "plop" each time a rock hits the ground. And a splashing sound is heard any time a rock lands in the lake. *Odyssey* might be wise to incorporate more of these authentic sound effects in future games and forget about bombarding the player with a monotonous litany of trite comments.

Besides, *Smithereens* is a two-player game, and the participants are perfectly capable of flinging insults at one another, without any assistance from the voice.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

New games unveiled

Many modern-day celluloid heroes made their video game debuts at the consumer electronics show held in Las Vegas early this month. Unfortunately, most were barely recognizable. You often had to read product packaging to find out who the blob you were looking at on the screen was supposed to represent.

Herein lies the fault with licensed properties: Few subjects lend themselves well to re-creation as video games. Few plot lines or themes transfer gracefully to video games. And the graphic capabilities of the Atari 2600 video game system (for which most of these games were designed) doesn't permit authentic re-creation of scenes.

One example of a hit TV series that doesn't quite make it as a video game is the 20th Century-Fox adaptation of "MASH." The overall tone of the popular series is humorous; no one associates "MASH" with guns and bloodshed. Unfortunately, Fox was unable to create a video game in which the object is to plan and pull off practical jokes, so tanks and planes have been given a large role in the game's story line.

Players must carry out two functions — pick up the wounded and operate on them. In appearance and play value the game rates an average.

Since Fox already controls the rights to other movie hits, look for more of the same in the future including the Donkey Kongish "Fall Guy," and "Megaforce," a shoot-'em-up with a familiar story line.

WIZARD VIDEO proudly unveiled Atari renditions of two horror classics, the "Texas Chainsaw Massacre" and "Halloween," billing both as the first violent and scary home video offerings. (I thought all video games were violent to some degree.) There is nothing particularly new here. Both feature hysterical women being chased by bloodthirsty maniacs. Action adheres to the Pitfall format. When the player loses, though, the death is quite graphic.

THE MOST SURPRISING jump on the licensing bandwagon was made by Sega Electronics, a division of Paramount and one of the leading innovators in coin-op games. Spurred by the success of Zaxxon, Turbo and Carnival, all of which were licensed to Coleco, Sega is entering the home market with licensed movie and TV titles. Few finished products were on display at the show, but Sega is currently developing games based on movies such as "Friday the 13th," "Marathon Man," "Star Trek II - The Wrath of Khan" and "48 Hours." Sega also will offer home adaptation of some of its latest coin-ops, including Tac-Scan and two renditions of a Buck Rogers-related game.

Since no finished product was available, I cannot comment on playability and graphics. In light of Sega's tremendous growth as a coin-op power, expect good things. The first titles (Star Trek Subterfuge and Tac-Scan) should hit the retail show in April.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

The gaming public (the arcade crowd, that is) traditionally has been more receptive to popular music — specifically rock 'n' roll — than it has been to home video games. So, it was natural for California-based Data Age to combine the two. The industry's first rock 'n' roll video game, *Journey-Escape*, is based on the after-concert antics of Journey, among the most commercially successful rock groups to emerge in the last decade.

If ever a game re-created the fantasy of the teenage male, *Journey-Escape* is it. Controlling each band member one at a time, the player must dodge groupies, photographers and promoters en route to the escape vehicle. The journey unfolds vertically, so the player must move the long-haired musicians north past the obstacles.

Instead of racking up points, the player must try to preserve his stash of cash, which begins at \$50,000. Each time he hits an obstacle, he loses money.

Running into some figures, however, can be helpful to the player. If the player runs into a roadie, for example, he is granted three or four seconds during which he can progress unmolested. The band's manager, when accosted, fills the player's coffers to the tune of \$10,000.

The object of the game is to get each of the band's five members aboard their escape vehicle and retain as much of the booty as possible.

All this running must be completed within 60 game time units — or 50 seconds.

The play action in *Journey-Escape* gets progressively faster and more diverse. In concept, it may remind many of *Kaboom*, but instead of catching, the object is to avoid the various figures as they scroll from north to south.

Journey-Escape is a defensive contest. Preservation of life and limb through quick lateral movement is the key to mastery. Graphically, the game is sharp, colorful, and an all-around improvement over the first group of Data Age cartridges. The sound track features licks from popular Journey tunes, including "Don't Stop Believing."

The scoring system, which uses dollars instead of points, is a good idea, but your final tally is not an accurate indication of how well you have played. It is possible to transport only one band member to the shuttle and retain 90% of your assets. Then again, after getting the entire group on board, you may be bankrupt. And, as in most video games, the cycle repeats once you board all five figures on the escape vehicle.

Not only does *Journey-Escape* enjoy the distinction of being the first rock 'n' roll based video game, it also bows as the first home game licensed by a coin-op company.

Two firms aim for versatile software

While most late entrants into the home video game software market feel that licensed, high visibility titles will be the key to survival, two established firms — Imagic and Activision — are standing by their commitments to develop original, innovative products. And both are, to varying degrees, expanding their lines to include games for systems other than the Atari 2600.

In the past, Imagic introduced products for use with the Atari 2600 only. But by year's end, Imagic games will be compatible with seven different hardware formats.

While Activision is still largely a purveyor of Atari-compatible fare, Imagic seems to be gravitating toward the more sophisticated hardware formats, particularly Mattel's Intellivision. For the first half of this year, Imagic plans to unveil eight



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

cartridges for use with Intellivision, including Dragonfire, which is available now. In February, Ice Trek, a game staged in the frozen tundra, will make its debut. In the fantasy-adventure category, Imagic offers Swords and Serpents, also scheduled for February release.

Many of Imagic's new games have story lines based on real-life situations. Two players race their rigs across the United States in Truckin', the player gets a rough ride down a roaring river in White Water, and armchair crooks can practice up with Safecracker. All of these will be available by May.

Activision's Jim Levy recently buttressed his commitment to original, innovative software with his announcement that the Activision design team will be expanded to 31 members. This group will design game software for a number of systems, including the Atari 2600, Mattel's Intellivision and Atari home computers. The computer software will be available later this year. Information regarding titles will be released in the spring.

Meanwhile, Activision displayed nine new games at the computer Electronics Show. One of them, Hap-

py Trails, will be issued for use with Mattel's Intellivision. The remaining titles will be compatible with the Atari 2600.

Later this month, the Centipede-like Spider Fighter will become available. Sea Quest will hit the shelves in February, followed by Oink in late March. In April, Activision will unveil Gary Kitchen's Keystone Capers. An accomplished game designer, Kitchen adapted Donkey Kong to the Atari 2600 for Coleco and designed Space Jockey for US games.

Dolphin, the premier effort from designer Matt Hubbard, is also scheduled for April release. Hubbard, an accomplished singer, songwriter and synthesizer player, has made sound an integral part of game play in Dolphin — without the aid of a voice synthesis module or sound-effects generator.

Supercharger takes advantage of new technology

By Michael Blanchet

It is estimated that 200 to 300 new games will be released this year. The quantity of available titles is staggering, but are quality and technical finesse keeping pace? Companies such as CBS Games, US Games and Coleco are plugging new technologies in hopes of boosting consumer enjoyment of video games.

At last summer's Consumer Electronics Show, Starpath introduced the Supercharger — a hardware addition that increases the computing power of the Atari 2600 50-fold. The Supercharger, an over-



sized game cartridge, requires the services of a cassette tape player to operate.

Supercharger games are stored on audio cassettes and loaded into the Supercharger via an audio cable.

Now both US Games and CBS Games have indirectly followed in the footsteps of the Supercharger with 8K game cartridges. Wings and Tunnel Runner from CBS and The Pink Panther from US Games are stored on an 8K game chip that greatly increases the computing power and graphic capabilities of the Atari 2600.

Wings, a flight simulation game, puts

the player in the cockpit of a jet fighter. The object is to protect your airspace from enemy cruise missiles. It is on par with Jumbo Jet Pilot by Thorn EMI and Phaser patrol, Starpath's flagship game.

Tunnel Runner, another first-person game, drops the player inside a maze. To check bearings, an overhead view of the field can be brought on screen at any time. The object is to navigate five maze levels, avoiding hazards along the way.

Tunnel Runner enjoys one distinction over other maze games. Preset, memorized patterns are of no use. Each time the game is reset, new mazes are generated.

US Games' Pink Panther is still a prototype, but graphically is the best recreation of any licensed property thus far. The lanky step and the devilish grin have been captured. Delivery of this 8K game is slated for May in an Atari-compatible format.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Want to
go buggy?

As long as video games exist, the world's insect population will never be out of work. Bugs are common central characters in video game story lines, surpassed only by spaceships and aliens.

Why bugs? Well, everyone seems to love killing bugs, especially spiders. And killing spiders is what *Spider Fighter*, the latest Atari-compatible game from Activision, is all about.

The player, using the joy stick controller, is in command of a bug blaster that travels along the bottom of the screen. The object is to ward off an avalanche of spiders before the spiders make off with the player's crop of oranges, strawberries, grapes and bananas.

Nest discharges pods

The game is divided into rounds, each round consisting of four waves. A typical assault starts with a mother nest, which enters the field from the left side of the screen. As it begins to dance around the screen, the nest discharges pods, which in turn hatch into spiders. As the spiders shift from side to side, they spit out deadly venom bombs that incapacitate the blaster on contact.

If the player vaporizes four consecutive lots, he is awarded either bonus points or an extra blaster. The game continues until all the blasters have been poisoned or when all the fruit (three pieces) has been snatched up.

Spider Fighter resembles *Kaboom* in many respects, but *Kaboom* is an exercise in mindlessness, asking little more of the player than to catch bombs in a bucket. The same principle is at work in *Spider Fighter*, but other demands are made on player. The player must vanquish the enemy, avoid the venom bombs and protect his fruit orchard.

Screen filled with activity

As the game progresses, the Spiders pick up speed, and their bombardment gets so heavy that the whole screen is filled with activity. In most video games, this stage of play would be "the wall" the point at which your abilities no longer match those of the game-controlled characters. In *Spider Fighter*, though, your firepower is enhanced during the more difficult stages of play.

About the time you reach the 15,000 point



Spider Fighter

mark, the blaster begins to fire double time, giving you a fighting chance to keep up. This is a thoughtful touch, since most games become almost impossible to play when they reach their second or third increment.

Visually, *Spider Fighter* is as good as Atari-compatible games come. The full-grown spiders are especially animated. As they bounce across the screen, their legs move in a creepy fashion. And anyone who has ever walked along a supermarket produce aisle will be able to identify each fruit as it appears.

If you consider yourself a bug hater (or lover, for that matter) and enjoy a fast and furious challenge, *Spider Fighter* is highly recommended.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Of all the home computer-video game consoles introduced at the recent Consumer Electronics Show, the most ambitious by far was Ultravision, made by Florida-based Ultravision Inc.

This set tries to cover all the bases. It's a game, it's a computer, it's a color TV.

Listed at \$595, the set includes a 10-inch raster monitor (which is also a UHF-VHF television), a set of "fast action" game controllers, a headset for private listening, and a cigaret lighter adapter cord.

Company literature describes Ultravision as an all-encompassing, do-everything gadget, but my investigation led me to believe that it is actually a fancy switching center for home entertainment machines.

Any set can do that

The heart of the unit is a television set. You can connect a video cassette recorder or a video camera to the console. The television also can be used for home security when connected to a closed-circuit video camera. So far, I'm not impressed. Any television set can do that.

I was led to believe that Ultravision was a full-fledged computer. Well, not quite. Even though the set boasts 64K RAM and a 280 Microprocessor (the same used by the TRS-80 and the Digital Rainbow 100), this power will remain untapped until the optional computer keyboard is purchased.

To be more accurate, Ultravision is computer compatible. If you chose not to purchase the Ultravision keyboard, you could always interface your own computer system. Other peripherals, such as printers, disc drives and phone modems can also be connected to Ultravision through one of the system's input-output ports.

Sounds promising at first

As a gaming console, Ultravision sounds promising at first. The set has the potential to be a universal format but only after you purchase the optional expansion modules. Two will be available soon. The first translates Atari-compatible software, the second makes ColecoVision cartridges usable on the system.

Each expansion module will retail for \$79.95, which is a ludicrous investment even if you have enough Atari or Coleco cartridges to justify the purchase. Since Ultravision contains a UHF-VHF TV, it would be far easier (and cheaper) to connect your Atari or Coleco console directly to the set and bypass the expansion module completely.

Ultravision also will offer its own brand of software, which will function only in its console. Each cartridge will retail for \$49.95. For that price, they had better be good.

Of the 11 Ultravision games slated for release this March, I was only able to preview Condor Attack II. Though nice to look at, the game was nothing special as far as play action was concerned. It reminded me of Imagic's Demon Attack.

Other proposed Ultravision titles include Unexpected Danger, Dare Devil Driver, Air-Sea Attack, Space War, B-52 Bomber, Baseball, Swim Meet, Quest for the Idol, Emergency II and Karate II.

Ultravision also announced its entry into the Atari software market with six cartridges, including Condor Attack, Karate, Space Robot, Astro Battle, Sea Hawk and Exocet. By year's end, expect a dozen more. Each game will list for \$34.95.

From what I can gather, Ultravision is little more than a color TV with a game console built in. It hardly seems worth the \$600 asking price, since all the peripherals that would make it universal must be purchased separately. In fact, this system could well be called a jack of all trades and master of none.

The Tribune Company

Coleco to replace lone weak link

In the six months since its debut, ColecoVision has established itself as the standard by which other game systems are measured.

For graphics, the ColecoVision system is without peer. The ColecoVision game library is varied and includes home versions of many popular arcade games. The only aspect of the system that has fallen short of expectations is the controllers.

But by June, ColecoVision owners will be able to retire their factory-supplied joy sticks and try Coleco's new Super Action Controllers. In addition to the Super Controllers, Coleco will offer the Roller Controller Trackball console.

Coleco's new Super Action Controller doesn't quite measure up to a Wico coin-op joy stick, but it does represent a considerable improvement over the stubby sticks supplied with the set.

The Super Action controller design is unique. The player grips the device in much the same way a fencer grabs a sword. An eight-position joy stick with an extended shaft is perched atop the controller. A 10-button key pad, used to select game options, rests directly behind the joy stick.

On the back edge of the controller, closest to the user, is a speed roller, which will enable the player to adjust the speed of game characters, independent of the overall tempo of the game.

Positioned underneath the user's fingers is a bank of four triggers. To change certain aspects of game play, the player can pull the triggers — either singly or in specific combinations.

One feature included in the prototype Super Controller I tested has been deleted because of engineering difficulties and cost. The feature was an impact-producing device that gave the player



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

tactile feedback during certain game situations. For instance, in Contact Baseball the player making a catch would actually feel the "thump" in his hand as the ball hit the screen player's mitt.

In addition to the Baseball game, Coleco also plans to offer two other cartridges that take advantage of the multiple functions of the Super Controllers — Contact Football and Rocky Battles the Champ.

. . .

ONE OF THE BEST of the replacement joy sticks available for the Atari 2600 — Disc-Washer's Pointmaster — has been upgraded.

The new Pointmaster Pro Tournament joy stick features high-performance suction feet and a constant fire circuit. This allows the user to fire constantly by holding down the fire button. (The constant fire circuit is able to fire as quickly as allowed by the individual game software.)

The suction feet and the constant fire circuit should relieve the fatigue caused by holding the joy stick housing and continually depressing and releasing the fire button. The Pointmaster Pro is compatible with the Atari 2600, with Atari 400 and 800 computers and with the Commodore Vic 20 computer. It will retail for \$27.95.

The Tribune Company

This one's for nuclear nuts

By Michael Blanchet

Thanks to video games, North America's teenage population is filled with ace pilots, seasoned jungle adventurers and brave carpenters.

If there seems to be a shortage of nuclear physicists, don't worry. Parker Brothers' latest Atari-compatible game — *Reactor* — is taking care of that problem.

If you've ever wanted to step inside the core of a nuclear reactor approaching critical mass, here's your chance. But be forewarned. This is not the most hospitable of places.

As the pilot of a nuclear troubleshooting ship, you will have two objectives. First, you must keep the expanding reactor from reaching the meltdown point. Second, you must destroy the hostile nuclear particles floating inside the chamber.

To cool and shrink the reactor, you must make the foreign particles collide with either bank of control rods. The core will be contained when all the particles in any given round are destroyed through collision with one of the kill walls.

Naturally, the hostile particles are attracted to your ship. Approaching singly or in groups, they will flock around your ship and attempt to push it into a kill wall.

You can counter-attack through force or deception. By crashing your ship into a particle, you can send it flying. Think of it as a cue ball striking a target ball in a billiards game.

As the game progresses, though, the enemy atoms become heavier and faster. At this point, only constant pummeling will move a particle.

This is where your limited supply of decoys comes in. When the fire button is pushed, your ship releases one decoy. It will remain where it is deposited for approximately 10 seconds before it disappears. The particles will swarm around the decoy and cannon off the square until it vanishes.

If you last through eight rounds of nuclear bombardment, you will be treated to a new nemesis. At the outset of the ninth wave, the solid core will

be replaced by a radioactive whirlpool. If unchecked, the whirlpool will grow tremendously and eventually suck your ship in.

Despite all this, *Reactor* is not a fast-paced game. Its pace is somewhere between chess and bull fighting. Again, the comparison to billiards seems appropriate. Most of your attention will be devoted to planning, rather than executing, strategies.

Curiously, one of the most effective strategies is to do nothing. This is one of *Reactor's* major drawbacks. If you remain motionless, you can simply let the atoms kill themselves. As the reactor core grows, the amount of free space between the core and the kill walls is reduced. The particles will inadvertently bounce to their death without any prodding. By staying put, I was able to survive 10 rounds without losing one game life.

*Go easy on
the joystick when
you move around*

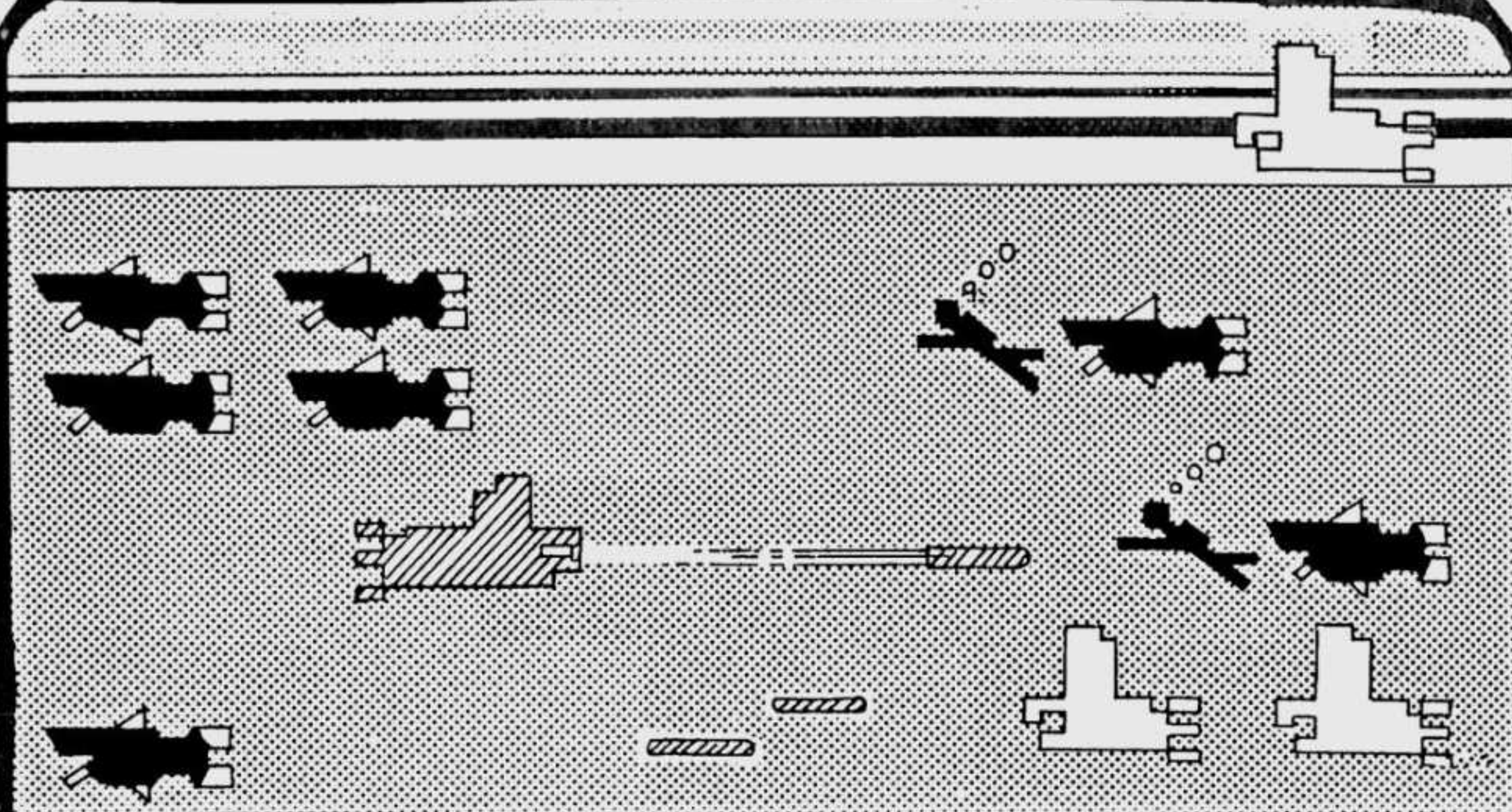
If you choose to move around, go easy on the joystick. The ship has an annoying tendency to build up momentum. Unless you counter by pulling the stick in the opposite direction, you'll strike a kill wall.

This lack of control really irks me, but the blame does not lie with Parker Brothers. It's the fault of the cumbersome Atari joystick. *Reactor* would be a much better game if it were played with a track-ball, as was the original Gottlieb coin-op version.

If nothing else, *Reactor* is a different game — a welcome departure from the shoot-'em-up or maze norm. Due to program idiosyncrasies, some experienced gamers may find *Reactor* a little too easy. I recommend this one only if you own a track ball controller. Otherwise, both you and the reactor will go out of control.

(Toronto Star Syndicate)

2160



OXYGEN

In Sea Quest, player must fend off subs and sharks, pick up divers and watch oxygen

New nautical game a winner

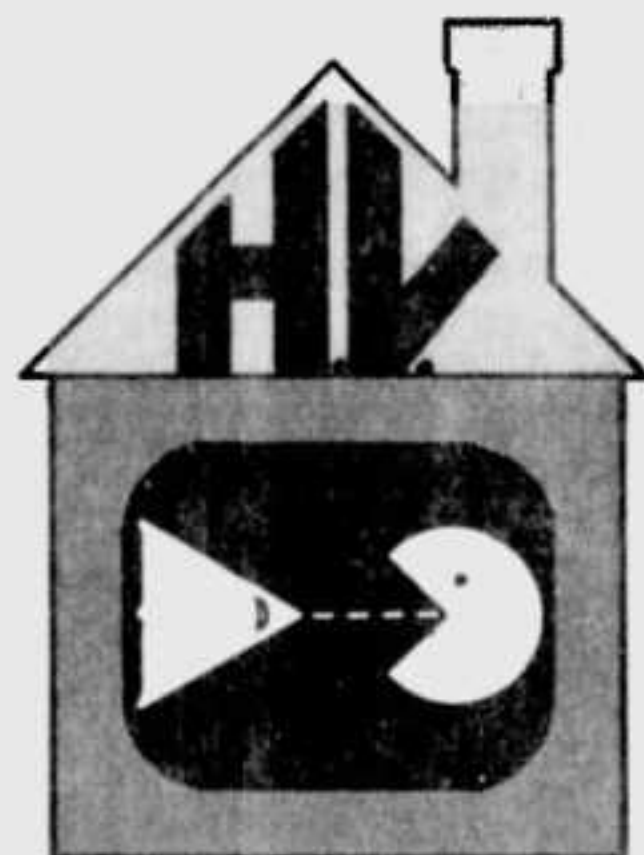
By Michael Blanchet

Pity the poor game designer looking for a new setting to exploit. Mazes and outer space already have been done ad infinitum, but next to them, the more conventional settings look a little mundane.

But now, another standard video game setting may be developing — underwater adventure.

None of the new nautical breed are as entertaining or informative as a Jacques Cousteau television special, but they are a welcome relief from the overdone maze and space genres. Of all the underwater-based games I have previewed, one stands out — Activision's Sea Quest.

Sea Quest puts the player at the helm of a submarine sailing in unfriendly seas. "Unfriendly" is an understatement. There are enough killer sharks to keep Jaws in sequels for years to come, and pirate subs, which



spew out deadly torpedoes, are also lurking in the area.

The object of the game is to pick up six treasure-laden divers and bring them to the surface. The player, using the joystick controller, can pilot his sub anywhere within the borders of the screen. He cannot, however,

travel off one end of the screen and reappear on the opposite side.

Sea Quest is stated within a contained playfield (it doesn't scroll to reveal previously unseen areas), but since the player can manoeuvre freely about the screen (this is not the case with some other underwater games), the game takes on an added dimension.

Collision with sharks, pirate subs or pirate torpedoes will sink the player's sub. The player's vessel is equipped with a limitless supply of torpedoes, which are launched when the fire button is depressed.

While the player is busy fending off subs and sharks and picking up divers, he must also watch his oxygen supply. Every second the sub remains submerged, air is consumed.

To refill, the player must surface. Each time he resurfaces with less than six divers on

board, he forfeits one passenger.

He also loses a passenger when his ship is destroyed through collision with a shark, sub or sub's torpedoes.

Visually, Sea Quest is a triumph. The player's sub is a detailed figure, complete with a spinning prop. Ditto for the pirate subs.

The divers and sharks are especially life-like. As each diver swims across the screen, his legs kick and air bubbles trail behind. The sharks' jaws snap as the sharks scurry across the playfield.

The ocean is as blue as the waters off Bermuda. And the brilliant sunset is right out of a travel agency brochure.

As more and more mediocre products find their way onto retailers' shelves, it is encouraging to see that Activision has not compromised its standards. Sea Quest is another top-notch effort.

(Toronto Star Syndicate)

'Monster' casts player as hero

We've all engaged in the futile exercise of coaching an actor in a movie. "Run," I've found myself muttering as the bogymen creeps up on another victim. They never listen, of course.

That's why I like *Frankenstein's Monster*, the latest Atari-compatible game from Data Age. Instead of just watching the pathetic weaklings try to stop the monster, you, the player, can get in there and protect them.

To stop the monster, you must scale a Donkey Kong-ish field that is teeming with Pitfall-like hazards. You begin your trek on the upper tier of the multilevel field. From here you must make your way to the bottom of the screen.

A brick rests in the lower right-hand corner of the field. The hero must retrieve and carry it back to the top of the castle. With brick in tow, the hero ventures behind the green wall, which sits directly below the *Frankenstein* monster.

Here the screen becomes dark as bats begin to cascade towards the hero. To place the stone and begin building a wall around the monster, you must dodge the bats and reach the top of the screen. Once this is done, the action shifts back to screen one. To completely contain the monster, you must repeat this process six times.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Your score is tabulated according to an add-and-subtract formula first used in Activision's *Pitfall*. You begin with 500 points. Each time you encounter a spider or ghost, you lose 20 points. Ten points are deducted if you collide with a bat. You lose 100 and 200 points, respectively, for falling through a trapdoor or stumbling into the acid pool on the bottom of the screen.

On the plus side, you get 500 points for each stone you place around the monster. If you complete the wall before *Frankenstein* becomes energized, you are further rewarded with 100 points for each remaining time unit.

If *Frankenstein's Monster* had come out a year ago, I would have applauded it as an original effort. But this year, following as it does in the footsteps of both *Donkey Kong* and *Pitfall*! *Frankenstein's Monster* is another "me too" game.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Expanding into a home computer

Mattel's Entertainment Computer System is a prime example of the latest breed of game machines. Through add-on peripherals, the user can expand a simple game console into a complete home computer.

The backbone of the Entertainment Computer System is the Intellivision Computer Adapter, which plugs into both Intellivision II and the original Master Component No. 2609. The adapter packs two bytes of additional random access memory (RAM) and twelve bytes of additional read-only memory (ROM). A sound generator increases the master component's sound channels from three to six, and BASIC computer language is built into the system.

To unlock the power of the computer adapter, you will need the Intellivision computer keyboard. Fortunately, this is thrown in with the purchase of the adapter. The keyboard resembles a standard typewriter in both appearance and action. BASIC computer language is already built into the adapter, so the user can start programing immediately.

Of particular interest to gamers is the keyboard's ability to supplement the hand controllers, allowing the player to vary the graphics and skill levels of games.

The computer keyboard isn't the only keyboard available for the Entertainment Computer System. There is also the Intellivision Music Synthesizer, the first full-sized musical keyboard offered by any video game manufacturer.

This keyboard is nothing like most of the small, self-contained units currently on the market. The 49 keys are standard piano and organ size.

And innovative software could make learning music as much fun as playing a game. Mattel has incorporated gaming into the learning process with Astromusic, a musical rendition of the popular Astromash game cartridge. Instead of rocks and spinners, the players will be bombarded by musical notes, which will fall in the pattern of a song.

To shoot the notes down, the player must press the appropriate keys on the synthesizer. As he continues to fight off the falling notes, he is, in effect, playing the song. Who said video games possess no educational value? Astromusic is a perfect example of how games, properly applied, can aid the learning process.

Additional software offered by Mattel includes:

- Way with Words, Number Jumble and the Flintstone's Keyboard Fun in the educational category.

- Three programs, tentatively titled Mr. BASIC Meets Bits 'n Bytes, Game Maker and BASIC Programmer in the BASIC programing category. Bits 'n Bytes is an introduction to BASIC programing. BASIC Programmer is an intermediate-level cartridge aimed at the user who has a fundamental understanding of the BASIC language. Game Maker lets the user create his or her own games.

- World Series Baseball, Mind Strike and a maze game featuring the popular cartoon character Scooby-Doo in the "super" games category.

The Tribune Company

Surprises abound in Ram It

Ram It, a stylish derivation of Breakout, is the best effort to date from Telesys, a small but innovative California software company.

Ram It is a war fought on two fronts. The player is represented by a laser-wielding Ramroid, which is suspended like a yo-yo on a line running down the middle of the playing field. Stacks of bars rest on both sides of the Ramroid.

When the game begins, the bars start growing at random. The object is to repel the growth of the bars before they meet in the center of the screen. This is done by firing at them.

Since the bars grow on both sides of the board, you must shift your attention from one side of the screen to the other. And since the bars are generated at random, the element of surprise — something not found in many video games — is preserved.

A joy stick is used to pilot the Ramroid along the central axis. Much to my surprise, I found the standard Atari joy stick better suited for playing Ram It than the super-responsive DiscWasher Pointmaster. You only have to move the joy stick north and south, so a custom joy stick offers no edge in maneuverability.

Each advancing bar is shortened, one section at a time, by the Ramroid's laser blasts. It takes a number of shots to clear the entire board, but don't worry about hand fatigue. The Ramroid has rapid fire capability. Just hold down the fire button, and it will send out a constant stream of bullets.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Each of the 32 hostile bars plays a different musical note when hit. This sound track is cute and provides a welcome relief from the morbid sound effects generated by most shoot-'em-up games.

A complete game of Ram It can be lengthy once the player learns the tricks necessary to clear the board. At the outset of each contest, the player is given three game lives. If all the bars are wiped out in any one round, the player receives an additional game life.

Each life will last 50 seconds. This period is monitored by the bonus timer at the bottom of the screen, which begins at 5,000 and shrinks by 100-point increments. To buy additional time (and points), the player can shoot a flashing bar. Once hit, a flashing bar disappears completely. The bonus timer value is simultaneously credited with anywhere from 400 to 1,300 points, depending on the size of the bar in question. Frequently, the bar opposite the freshly-killed flashing bar will suddenly spring out toward the center of the field. This is referred to as a "ram it" in the instructions.

Odyssey Two owners can enjoy Demon Attack now

Until recently, Odyssey Two owners missed out on something that Atari and Intellivision owners have enjoyed for a long time — games designed by independent software companies. Demon Attack, Imagic's first cartridge compatible with Odyssey Two, changes all that. Demon Attack, a major hit in Atari- and Intellivision-compatible cartridges, easily outclasses anything currently offered by NAP Consumer Electronics, until now the sole source of Odyssey games.

The idea behind this game is simple: Destroy or be destroyed. Unlike Space Invaders or Galaxians (two games similar to Demon Attack), the action

Win at Video



By
Michael
Blanchet

unfolds in an unpredictable manner. The player controls a ground-based bunker. His job is to dodge enemy fire and position the bunker to shoot back at the demons.

Instead of creeping across the screen, the demons dance around, bobbing to and fro as

they hover over you. Only two full-sized demons will appear on the screen at a time, but if this sounds easy to you, guess again. As the game progresses, the demons get faster and smarter.

With each round of play, the demons change their shape and mode of attack. In round five, for example, a large demon will split in two when hit. The smaller demons are elusive targets, and good shots to boot. They will move nonchalantly around the field, then suddenly one or both will dive toward the bunker.

There are six game variations in the Odyssey Two Demon Attack, but until you get the hang of things, I recommend the basic game or the basic game with tracer shots. The tracer-shots feature allows you to control the path of a shot after it has been fired. Just move the bunker left or right, and the shot will follow.

Tron calls for strategy

The Adventures of Tron could have been called Donkey Kong-2001 or Pitfall Harry Meets the Master Control Program. That's because Tron, as

depicted here, could easily pass for Pitfall Harry, and the playfield looks like Mario's dilapidated Donkey Kong structure. The Adventures of Tron borrows a little here and a little there from a number of games, but it has managed to emerge with a personality all its own.

Win at Video



By
Michael
Blanchet

The game centers around Tron and his quest for the floating bits, which resemble futuristic Christmas tree ornaments. To capture these bits, Tron must leap up and grab them as they pass over-

head. The grid these bits call home is a four-level structure. Tron ascends to the higher floors by elevators and descends to the lower rungs by jumping or by sliding down the Input-Output beam, which is something like a fireman's pole, in the middle of the screen.

Tron is controlled by a joy stick. A custom stick may improve your score dramatically. Aside from the usual left and right movements, you can push the controller north to go up an elevator or south to jump down one floor.

In comparison to other video game heroes, Tron is a coward. He never fights back and is constantly fleeing. Normally, I would frown on a game that asks for little more than running from peril. But The Adventures of Tron has a saving grace — it requires a fair amount of strategy.

The Tribune Company



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Spectravideo's CompuMate 2600 computer converter is just one of the many new computer converters targeted at Atari VCS owners.

The CompuMate Keyboard attaches to the top of the VCS console. The unit has a 42 key membrane keyboard that will enable the user to write BASIC programs. CompuMate features 16 bytes of read only memory (ROM) and 2 bytes of random access memory (RAM).

In addition, a computer language (BASIC) has been built in. This means you will be able to start programing immediately if you know BASIC. Spectravideo also will market software specifically for use with its computer converter.

The keyboard features a built-in music composer program that allows you to compose songs on the computer, as well as a built-in doodling program called Magic Easel. By using the joy stick, you will be able to draw pictures, using up to 10 colors, on the TV screen. The CompuMate keyboard will sell for less than \$100.

But Spectravideo isn't stopping there. It is also producing its own computer-game system, which it claims outperforms the Commodore 64, Apple II Plus, Radio Shack Color, Nec 6001 and Atari 800 in capability, expandability and affordability. It will be priced at \$299.95.

Features of the system included 32 bytes ROM (expandable to 96 bytes), 32 bytes RAM (expandable to 144 bytes), built-in extended Microsoft BASIC and a built-in joy stick. It also features built-in 2.2 CP-M and CP-M Plus compatibility, which means the user can purchase any one of the estimated 10,000 CP-M programs currently available and use them immediately with the system.

A series of 15 peripherals for use with the SV-318 also will be available this month. They include the SV 903 dual channel-data cassette drive, the SV 9-2 floppy disc drive, the SV 901 dot matrix printer, the SV 601 seven slot super expander, the

SV 701 dual band rate modem, the SV 105 sensor touch graphic tablet, the SV 602 single slot expander, the SV 803 16 bytes RAM expander cartridge, the SV 804 32 bytes RAM expander cartridge and the Quickshot joy stick controller.

Gamers will be particularly interested in Spectra Video's SV 603 ColecoVision videoe game adapter. Once connected to the back of the SV 318, it will allow the user to play any ColecoVision-compatible cartridge.

Dracula faithful to the story line

The Dracula story is familiar to us all: Man becomes vampire, bites victims and must be home by sunrise. This is exactly how the new Intellivision-compatible game from Imagic plays.

Dracula is not a scary or violent game. It's a tongue-in-cheek contest in which the player-turned-vampire must canvass the town in search of victims.

The game begins in the graveyard. Dracula emerges from his tomb in bat form and floats to the sidewalk. In each round the number of available victims increases. Theoretically, Dracula must find all of them, bite them and return to his coffin before the timer reaches 6 a.m. I use the word "theoretically" because this isn't easy. There are a few obstacles to overcome, such as the unwillingness of the victims.

To flush out a victim, you need only go to his door and knock. If a potential victim emerges, Dracula makes chase, either as a bat or as a man. As a bat, he is capable of swift flight but he's vulnerable to the vulture, which is stalking him.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

When Dracula wishes to bite a victim, he has two choices: He can either bite him or turn him into a zombie. Zombies can be dispatched against the cops, who are hot on the vampire's trail.

The game really heats up when the cops start walking the beat. Dracula must chase his victims and, at the same time, avoid the cops and the wooden stakes they are tossing at him. If a stake finds its mark, the Count is temporarily immobilized and must wait until it disintegrates before he can move on.

Dracula is best when it is played by two people. In this mode, the contestants alternate control of Dracula. One plays the Count, while the other controls the victim.

One thing I've found disturbing about many video games is that they take themselves too seriously. Dracula's greatest asset is that it's a challenging game that manages to remain humorous and lighthearted.

New satellite game shot down

Killer Satellites is the latest Supercharger-compatible game by Starpath.

The game takes place in "your home town, USA." You are in command of the only jet capable of defeating the legions of once-dormant satellites.

The play field scrolls horizontally as your ship flies left or right. Beneath you lies the city — a scattered collection of buildings, homes and trees.

As the Killer Satellites break their orbits and enter the atmosphere, their positions are marked on the long-range scanner. Using this as a guide, you can determine whether to fly east or west to intercept your target. Unlike the radar used in similar games, this scanner shows general position, not altitude. Thus, cautious maneuvering is recommended.

The joy stick is used to accelerate and change altitude.

With each second in flight, a portion of your fuel is consumed. Once used it can be replenished only after an entire wave of satellites has been destroyed.

There are 95 skill levels in Killer Satellites. A normal game commences at level one and continues until the player's supply of ships (six to start



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

and an additional one every 10,000 points) is exhausted. You can start a game on a higher level by hitting the game select switch. The levels increase in increments of five each time the switch is depressed.

Killer Satellites' graphics set the game apart. Anyone familiar with Atari's Asteroids or Defender will notice that the images in Killer Satellites do not flicker — a common occurrence in cartridge games in which many objects appear on the screen at one time. The satellites themselves are detailed figures. Your ship is trailed by a stream of exhaust. And I could detect no loss of clarity, even when the screen was teeming with satellites and meteors.

If games were judged solely on the basis of their looks, Killer Satellites would be the hands-down winner in the shoot-'em-up category. Unfortunately, we've all seen the play action before.

The Tribune Company

Turning Atari into computer

By Michael Blanchet

"My First Computer" sounds like a caption under a Nolan Bushnell baby picture. Actually, it's one of the many add-on keyboards targeted at the estimated 10 million Atari 2600 owners.

The idea behind these devices is simple — when attached to the Atari console, they transform the game system into a modestly powerful personal computer.

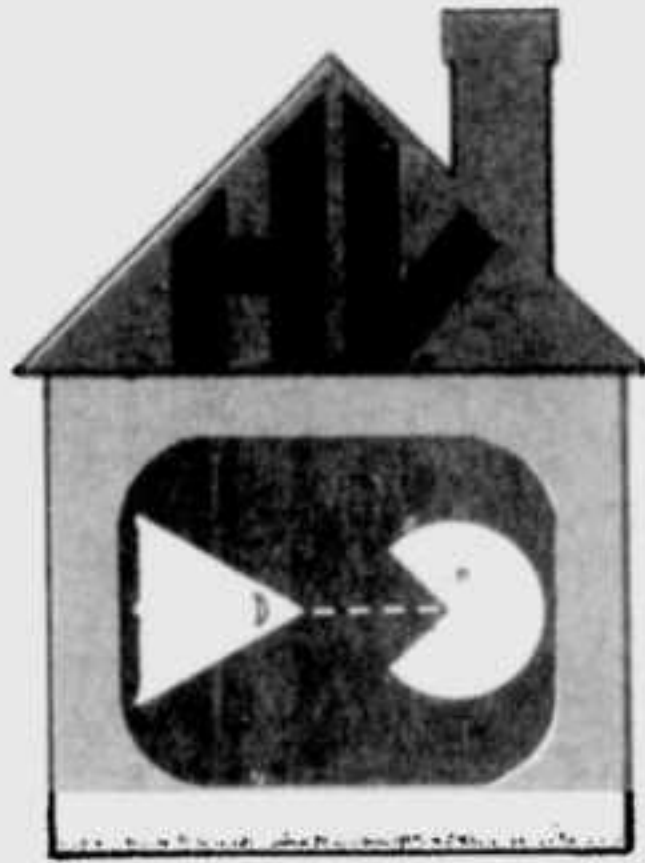
In the fall, four add-on keyboards will be available: My First Computer from Atari, the Expander and the Expander II from Unitronics, the 2000 Piggyback Color Computer from Entrex and the CompuMate 2600 Computer Converter from Spectra Video.

Prices range from "under \$90" for Atari's My First Computer to "less than \$130" for Entrex's Piggyback. Aside from price, though, very little separates one keyboard from another.

*Has more memory
than three common
competitors*

The Atari rig, with 8 kilobytes (8,192 bytes) of random access memory (RAM) has more computing power than the Timex Sinclair, the TI 99 and the Commodore Vic 20.

It includes a raised typewrit-



er-like keyboard, built-in BASIC computer language, and an expansion port that will accept additional memory or peripherals — such as a printer and a disc drive.

Atari has also announced plans to introduce a similar device for the Atari 5200 Supersystem later this year.

The Unitronics Expander System comes in two parts — the expander itself (a cassette tape player that plugs into the Atari cartridge slot) and the keyboard. The Expander functions in much the same way the Starpath Supercharger does. Unitronics will offer 16 kilobyte video games on cassette.

In addition to the 16 kilobyte games, Unitronics will also offer the Gamealbum — a series of four 4-kilobyte games on one cassette. The advantage of this system is its low cost in the long run. Games stored on audio

cassette retail for less than \$15 — about half the going rate of a cartridge.

Once the Expander is connected to the Atari, the user needs to remove it, even to play standard Atari games. Standard cartridges fit into the Expander's cartridge slot.

Phase two of the Expander is the keyboard, which plugs into the Expander module. With 64 keys and built-in BASIC computer language, the Expander keyboard is as well-equipped as the rest of the group. Over the course of the year, Unitronics plans to offer a speech synthesizer, a four-color printer and a phone modem.

*One add-on
keyboard has two
built-in programs*

The Entrex 2000 Piggyback Color Computer, the most expensive of the group, offers built-in BASIC computer language and 70 typewriter-style keys, including nine special function keys and four cursor movement keys.

Entrex will offer a variety of software in cartridge form. First releases include programs for home finance, computer typing, speed reading, beginning math and algebra, BASIC programming, sports statistics and number and word games.

Proposed peripherals include a 16-kilobyte memory expansion cartridge, bringing the total RAM of the system up to a respectable 34 kilobytes.

The final and most diverse entry is Spectra Video's CompuMate 2600 Computer Converter. Like the others, CompuMate attaches directly to the top of the Atari console. The keyboard has 42 keys and BASIC computer language has been built in. Total RAM is 16 kilobytes.

To store data, the user can connect any audio cassette recorder to the keyboard.

CompuMate is the only add-on keyboard to offer resident programs. Two built-in games are included. The first is a music composer program that allows the user to write and play original music. The second is a drawing program. With the Magic Easel, the user can draw pictures with a joystick and use up to 10 colors.

(Toronto Star Syndicate)

Odyssey Two's latest is a game to 'beehold'

If you ever wondered what it would be like to be a bee, here's your chance. Killer Bees, the latest from Odyssey Two, casts the player as a swarm of killer bees.

The bees are not after honey or innocent civilians; their job is to swarm over the green and red Beebots that are patrolling the square-shaped playfield. After prolonged contact, the Beebots begin to slow down. Eventually, they die and their lifeless carcasses are replaced by red gravestones. When all of the Beebots are stung, the round ends.

Your only adversaries are the multicolored swarms that enter the field from one of the five holding pens. Each time this group touches your swarm, you lose some of your bees. The game ends when all of your insects are killed.

Your swarm is guided with the joy stick controller. Each time a Beebot is destroyed, you are given one bug zapper. Using the bug zapper is the only way to destroy the multicolored



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

swarms. When the zapper is used, a ray flashes horizontally across the screen, killing all the colored swarms in its path.

Killer Bees is nothing new. It is, however, one of the best action games compatible with the Odyssey Two system. It is also one of the few Odyssey games in which the sloppy action of the joy stick does not detract from game play.

Graphically, Killer Bees shows marked improvement over previous Odyssey Two efforts. The Beebots are a far cry from the block-like graphics seen in most Odyssey Two games.

Plodding action spoils China Syndrome

Since most of us will never see the core of a nuclear reactor, Spectravision has stepped in to fill the void with China Syndrome.

The object of China Syndrome is to cool and contain a nuclear plant that is approaching meltdown. But whatever the story line of a video game, the game should be, above all, fun. China Syndrome is not.

The player's job is to grab the nuclear particles before they crash into the reactor's walls. If a particle crashes into the walls, it will split. If the player allows five particles to crash into the wall, a meltdown will occur. A meltdown consists of a red curtain slowly descending across the screen. It

lasts 20 seconds — a tedious way of telling you that you have lost.

The play action is plodding. The particles move briskly, but your robot arm almost limps.

You guide the arm around the playfield with the joystick controller. Once you have zeroed in on a particle, a tap of the red action button closes the trap-like device and eliminates your foe.

The whole operation reminded me of the penny arcade machine in which you attempt to grab a cheap watch or cigaret lighter with a mechanical crane.

China Syndrome's biggest drawback is the sluggish manner in which the robot arm responds to



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

the controller. If you use the standard Atari stick, you don't stand a chance.

You may find the game more enjoyable if you own a good replacement stick, such as the Discwasher Pointmaster or Wico's Command Control. The ultimate would be a track ball, since the game calls for full field movement.

Home games lack arcade quality

Space Fury and Donkey Kong Jr., once popular arcade games, now are available as ColecoVision cartridges. Coleco claims that both "play like the real arcade game" but you may end up disappointed.

Space Fury was Sega's second coin-op to feature speech synthesis. The alien commander provoked you with "So, a creature for my amusement. Prepare for battle." From there on, it was you vs. the alien fleet.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Aside from the voice, Space Fury is a typical shoot-'em-up. Your ship has free run over the field. You can thrust, fire, rotate left or right. When you blow away everything on the screen, the round ends.

Most of the action has survived the translation from coin-op to home cartridge. What's missing is the best part of the game — the commander's spooky voice. Coleco has replaced the alien's monolog with music.

The commander appears, moving mouth and all — he just doesn't speak. Instead, the words scroll along the bottom of the screen. It's not the same without the commander's spoken comments.

Although the game is colorful, the action is too one-dimensional to hold player interest.

Donkey Kong Jr., on the other hand, is initially challenging. This game centers around the attempts of Mr. Kong's offspring to free him from Mario, the carpenter hero of Donkey Kong.

A game consists of four screens: the opening vine sequence, the chain screen, another vine screen and the jump board screen. As Jr. climbs

each of these three structures, he must avoid snap-jaws, nitpicker and stookybirds.

Donkey Kong Jr. is a challenging contest. The changing screens are a definite plus. Two things bug me, though: The controllers are inadequate and the game is repetitive.

If I had to choose between the two, though, I'd choose Donkey Kong Jr. It's a better-looking game and will prove more interest over the long run.

Tribune Company

Space Panic returns as cartridge

If you thought Donkey Kong was the first video game to use ladders, guess again. Back in 1980, Universal unveiled Space Panic, the first obstacle course-ladder game.

Space Panic had a short-lived run in the arcades, but now it's back as a ColecoVision cartridge. It stands out as the best-looking and most challenging games Coleco has offered to date.

The object is to clear the multilevel field of aliens. There are three different bad guys — Creatures, which look like tomatoes; Bosses, which bear a striking resemblance to beer pretzels; and Dons (the quickest and most cunning of the lot), which don't look like much of anything.

The field consists of five levels connected by a series of randomly placed ladders. To do in your foe, you must first dig a hole. Once the Creature falls in, you must quickly bury it. When this is done, the Creature falls one level and is destroyed. In the case of a Boss or a Don, it will be necessary to dig two or three holes, one under the other. Bosses must fall two stories before they are beaten, while Dons must fall at least three.

Your man, the astronaut, moves from tier to tier by using the ladders. He can also descend by leaping through one of the holes he has dug. The Creatures, Bosses and Dons can also descend and ascend the ladders. They cannot, however, jump through a hole. If they happen upon an opening, they will fall in. Eventually they will crawl out, so you must move swiftly to bury them. If you do not, they will re-emerge as members of the next highest species.

The game opens with the astronaut versus three Creatures. Once this lot is ousted, a second wave of five Creatures appears. In the third round you'll face seven Creatures. When the fourth round begins, you'll face a new foe. Here it will be necessary to shift your strategy.

One trick that is helpful against the Bosses and Dons is to ascend to the top of the field and seal yourself off by digging two holes — one to your left, the other to your right. Perfect your timing for filling the holes so that when you knock the



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Don or Boss down to a lower girder, it will hit another alien. Both will disappear on impact.

If the idea of burying monsters repulses you, wait till you hear the sound effects. They range from funny and realistic to eerie and downright disgusting.

Anyone for tennis? You might love video version

Traditionally, tennis has been a sport for the wealthy; it certainly isn't a poor man's game. If you add the cost of lessons, rackets, balls, court time and proper attire and compare it to the \$30 or so for the video game, both Atari and Activision's Tennis cartridges stack up as bargains.

Both tennis games are cheaper and easier to learn than the real thing, though video sports games are never as much fun as the real thing. If you're in the market for a video tennis cartridge, your only problem is which one to choose — Atari Tennis or Activision Tennis.

Graphically, both tennis games are light-years ahead of the Pong-like video tennis. The blocks have been replaced by stick men, each a racket. You view the game from the end line, looking over the shoulder of the near player at the fellow across the net. Both games also feature a shadow that follows the ball back and forth.

The only visible difference between the two games is the attention to detail in the Atari cartridge. Before the first serve of each game, you can "type" your name on the scoreboard by selecting the appropriate letter with the joy stick. This is a clever attempt to personalize the game, but it can be a source of confu-



Win at Video

By

Michael Blanchet

sion. Unless you read the instruction booklet, it will take some time to discover that you must punch in eight letters on the scoreboard before you can start the game. This monogramming sequence must be repeated each time the game console is shut off.

All-around, though, the Atari version looks tighter and cleaner than the Activision offering. The Activision players are one-color figures swatting across a solid net while members of the Atari team, decked out in spiffy tennis duds, are on their respective side of a real net — the kind with holes in it.

Both games are played about the same. In the one-player version, for example, the server, be it the player or the computer, swats the ball when the red button is pressed. From here on it's just a matter of being in the right place at the right time.

You never really have control over how the ball is hit, despite claims from both camps. As long as you are close enough to the oncoming ball, your man automatically hits it back.

The Tribune Company

Video aficionado cans killer tomatoes

I was curious, even excited, about *Revenge of the Beefsteak Tomatoes*. The game's premise — killer tomatoes — is certainly unusual and *Revenge of the Beefsteak Tomatoes* sounds like an unusually creative effort from 20th Century-Fox, which is primarily a purveyor of movie-inspired games (*MASH*, *9 to 5*, *Allen*, *Flash Gordon*).

As usual, your mission is to save the world, but this time it must be saved from a set of "previously harmless garden tomatoes" that have turned into "cold-blooded killers." Why, you ask? "Perhaps it was some form of rebellion against bottled ketchup or maybe they were provoked by acid rain," says 20th Century-Fox.

To contain the three tomato plants that spring up along the bottom of the screen, you, represented by a tomato sprayer that looks like a hypodermic and syringe, must construct three walls, east to west, across the field. While you're busy building, you must avoid tomato bombs, killer cherry tomatoes, brick eaters and roving beefsteak tomatoes.

The bricks used to build the walls float across the top of the screen. To capture a brick, you must shoot it once, then turn, face the bottom of



Win at Video

By

Michael Blanchet

the screen, and fire again. The brick plops into place. Once the trio of barricades is complete, the plants wither and die. But they are replaced by a fresh crop, even more ferocious than the first.

Revenge of the Beefsteak Tomatoes isn't your typical video game. First, the object is to build, not destroy (or should we say to build to destroy). Second, the game calls for judicious use of the fire button. Third, it is difficult and challenging.

But as impressive as it sounds, it isn't. Maybe my hopes were too high after all the hoopla surrounding the game's release.

The problem with *Revenge of the Beefsteak Tomatoes* is the same thing that gives the game its personality — its story line. The scenario sounds exciting and original when it's described, but it flops when you play the game.

Coleco Super Games are more of the same

ColecoVision games look super compared to competitors' games, but not super enough for the folks at Coleco. Their quest for the elusive "arcade experience" has led them to develop a third expansion module — the Super Game Module. This module dramatically increases the computing space of the already powerful ColecoVision console and will sell for about \$125.

The module accepts Coleco's new line of Super Game Wafers, which differ both in appearance and capacity from the standard game cartridge. Each wafer boasts 32 times the memory of any cartridge designed for the Atari 2600.

By year's end, Coleco plans to release nine Super Game wafers, including Super Donkey Kong (which comes with the Super Game Module), Super Donkey Kong Jr., Super Zaxx-



Win at Video

By

Michael Blanchet

on, Super Buck Rodgers — Planet of Zoom, Super Sub Roc, Super Time Pilot, Super Turbo and Super Smurf — Rescue in Gargamel's Castle. Each is touted as a duplicate of the arcade game.

If the Super Games are as good as Coleco says, ColecoVision owners are in for a real treat. My only objection is to the games offered. With the exception of Super Time Pilot and Super Sub Roc, all of the proposed titles are already available in standard ColecoVision format.

The Tribune Co.

Kapers puts player on right side of law

Activision's new Keystone Kapers is a video game that strips police work to its bare essentials. You're a cop, dressed circa 1920, and you have little more than a pair of legs and a billy club to work with. Your assignment is to nab a felon who has run into a department store.

When the game begins, you find yourself standing in the lower right corner of the screen. The crook is already on the second floor and is making tracks for the roof. If he reaches the east end of the roof, you lose one game life and must begin again.

To reach the crook, you must use the elevator or the escalators. The elevator is in the center of the store. It, like the escalators, moves automatically, pausing briefly at each floor before moving on. The escalators, which are positioned at either end of the store, only go up.

To further complicate your mission, an unusual collection of obstacles, including bouncing balls, shopping carts and model airplanes, will pop up throughout the game.

The store, consisting of three floors and the roof, is much larger than what is seen on the screen at any given moment. As you run off one edge, you reappear in another



Win at Video

By

Michael Blanchet

frame. From end to end, the store spans eight screens.

To locate the felon, you must glance at the long-range scanner that runs along the bottom of the screen and marks your position and that of the crook.

This enables you to map out your strategy. But the crook possesses a sixth sense regarding your whereabouts, so Keystone Kapers is not a pattern game.

I found this both a blessing and a curse. It does guarantee that no two games will be the same, but you often will find yourself at an impasse with the crook, particularly when you are in the elevator approaching the floor he might be on.

Quirk aside, Keystone Kapers is a worthy effort. In fact, I think it's the best thing to come from Activision since Pitfall. It resembles Donkey Kong in some respects, but it offers enough graphics and strategic differences to be labeled an original and imaginative game.

The Tribune Company

Quest for ice cream kicks off a Food Fight

Video games weren't around when I was growing up, so my friends and I had to improvise. One game we used to play was Army. Decked out in real fatigues, our first job was to secure ammunition. Use plastic guns? No way! Our battles were fought with tomatoes, rotten walnuts and apples, compliments of our neighbor's garden.

So when I happened upon Charly Chuck's Food Fight, one of the newest coin-op games from Atari, my fondest childhood memories were rekindled.

Food Fight concerns Charly Chuck and his quest for an ice cream cone. Charly Chuck must avoid four crazy chefs (Oscar, Angelo, Jacques and Zorba) who, I assume, would rather see our hero dining on *carbonnade a la flamande*.

The object is to reach the cone before it melts. En route, Charly Chuck must avoid the chefs, the food they throw, and holes, which are represented by horizontal white lines.

Food scattered about

Scattered about the screen are pies, watermelons, tomatoes and bananas. To arm yourself, you need only to move Chuck into one of the piles. Likewise, the chefs will scurry for the nearest food to use against you.

For each chef you hit with an edible item, you are given 100 points. Each successive hit is worth 100 points more than the last. Meanwhile, each edible item left unthrown is worth 100 points once you reach the ice cream cone.

The first thing you'll notice about Food Fight is that your man moves much more slowly than the chefs do. There are ways to work around this. In contrast to the chefs, who seem to move without any direction, you can select your destination. You can also



Win at Video

By

Michael Blanchet

fling faster and more accurately, thanks to the wonderfully responsive joy stick.

Head for the cone

In the first round of play, head directly for the cone. Don't bother throwing any food — only two chefs will pop up to greet you. You should, however, pick up one item and hold onto it before grabbing the cone. When the second round begins, Charly Chuck will still have that object in hand, ready to fling at the first chef who threatens him.

In every round, try to hold onto one food item before eating the cone. In later stages of the game this will prove most helpful since the chefs move much more quickly than you do. Chances are, you will be cut off from the nearest food stash by one or two of the crazy cooks. If you are already armed, take out the nearest chef and move into the food pile.

Toss judiciously

Don't make the same mistake I did — trying to throw as few food items as possible for the sake of their bonus point value. In earlier rounds, judicious tossing is recommended. But when you come right down to it, Charly Chuck's life is more important than a few points.

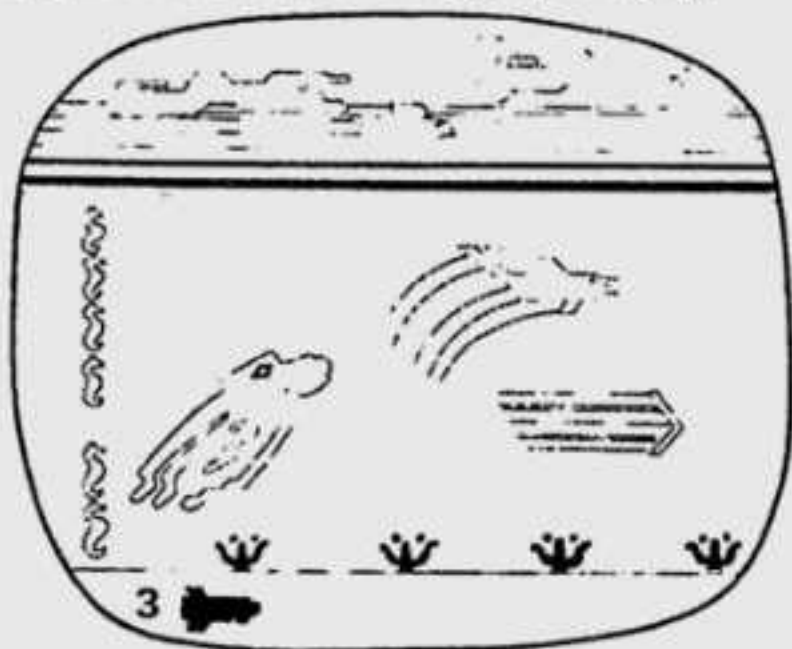
Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company

Sound an integral part of play in Activision's latest, Dolphin

All video games have sound tracks. Some are silly, some are morbid, but most of them have little or nothing to do with the games.

This is not the case with Dolphin, the latest cartridge from Activision. Without any assistance from an add-on voice or sound effects module, Dolphin makes sound an integral part of play.



Sound directs play of Dolphin

The object is to help a dolphin elude a hungry octopus. The dolphin has two possible escape routes — one east, the other west. On each end of the screen, you'll see a sea wall. As the dolphin swims (with the octopus in hot pursuit), you'll hear a reverberating tone. You will use the tone as a gauge to correct the dolphin's position so that it corresponds with the gap in an approaching sea wall.

If the tone is high, you should move the dolphin up; if the tone is low, you should move the dolphin down. If the tone is somewhere in the mid-range, you should move the dolphin up a bit or down a bit, depending on whether the tone is in the higher or lower part of the mid-range.

If you misjudge the location of the opening, the dolphin will still pass through the wall, but he'll lose ground to the octopus. If the octopus gets too close, the dolphin is through.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

The game begins with one dolphin on screen and a trio in reserve. Push the action button, move the joy stick left or right, and you're off.

As you glide along, you'll notice occasional arrows, which represent currents. To get a boost, you can position the dolphin in front of one that is coming up behind him. If a current is heading toward the dolphin, it will slow him down. The trick is to lure the octopus into the currents that will slow him down.

A seagull will fly overhead on a fairly regular basis. When the seagull flies overhead, the dolphin has a chance to turn the tables on the octopus. If the dolphin leaps out of the water and touches the gull, he will be temporarily energized. Now the hunter becomes the hunted. The dolphin can turn and catch the octopus for a hefty bonus.

My first impressions of Dolphin were negative. But Dolphin quickly grew on me. It has three things going for it. It's original, it involves two senses (seeing and hearing) rather than the usual one sense (seeing), and it has that attack factor. Running away from something can get boring after a while (nobody likes to play the coward all the time). Even if it takes you an entire weekend to grab the gull and catch the octopus, it's worth the effort.

Dolphin is a solid game. It's challenging, but not too hard; visually striking but not at the expense of game play, and above all, it's a game that you can almost beat.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

Player hunts golden idol in Aztec

"Raiders of the Lost Ark" rekindled a national interest in the great adventure story. Aztec, an Apple-compatible disc from Datamost, is the most recent cartridge inspired by that adventure story.

In Aztec, a golden idol is hidden in a lost pyramid. An eccentric archeologist, Prof. Von Foerster, has descended into the depths of the temple, but he has failed to return with the prize. Rumor has it that the jealous Von Foerster has constructed booby traps to protect the idol from other explorers — including you!

The temple has eight floors, each containing eight rooms. The rooms are further divided into up to three levels. Each time you enter a new room, you face a new problem. According to Datamost, each problem has a fair solution, but Datamost does not promise that the solution will be evident. You must experiment.

As you move your Indiana Jones-like figure through the temple, you'll encounter



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

booby traps, spiders, snakes, scorpions, Aztec warriors and dinosaurs. You begin the journey with three sticks of TNT and three units of strength, but you'll lose a little of your strength each time a temple denizen sinks his teeth into you.

Your score is determined by the time it takes you to retrieve the idol and escape the temple's confines — and by the difficulty level you select (there are eight difficulty levels).

Aztec is one of those rare games that demands, and usually gets, your undivided attention. Temple configurations are different with each new game. That's why Aztec never gets stale.

Penguin's Pieman simple in concept, execution

I have never aspired to be a baker, so right from the start Pieman, an Apple Computer-compatible disc from Penguin Software, had one strike against it. It offers you a chance to be something you probably wouldn't care to be either — a peon in a pie factory.

According to the story line, the only summer job available is an apprenticeship at the Automated Bakery Co. Your duties include filling pie shells with whipped cream as they roll along the conveyor belt, sticking cherries on top, and picking up the completed pies and moving them to the refrigerator.

Sound simple? You're right, it is. In fact, Pieman is so simple, both in concept and execution, that it couldn't hold the attention of anyone for long.

The object is to fill pie shells and stack pies for as long as possible. If seven pies roll off the end of the conveyor, you're fired and the game ends. If you manage to shelve 24 pies (I managed 31 myself), you are promoted to baker first class, which seems to be as far as anyone can advance at the Automated Bakery Co. After this, pies are pumped out so fast that you don't stand a chance.

Occupational hazards, such as grease spots and misplaced flour sacks, pop up on the screen as the game progresses. If you happen upon any of these hazards, you'll be



Win at Video

By

Michael Blanchet

stopped momentarily and must find an alternative route from storage bin to conveyer belt. Eventually the flour bags and grease spills will cover so much of the screen that you'll be forced to snake through them like a slalom skier.

This part of the game is not so easy. Unless you have a joy stick for your Apple, you'd better have nimble fingers. Pieman can move in eight directions, and each direction is controlled by a different key. Fortunately, Penguin had the foresight to arrange the keys in logical order.

Graphically, Pieman is a lot tidier than the job it asks you to perform. The pies look like pies, and the baker, decked out from head to toe in real baker's duds, traipses around with a bouncy, Charleston-like step.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company

New auto game is wheels ahead of the majority

By Michael Blanchet

I dislike sports games on general principle. Those games are invariably better when they are played in real life.

I shun driving games for much the same reason. It's a lot more fun to zip around in a sports car than it is to drive some blob on the TV screen. But after playing Enduro, the latest Atari-compatible game from Activision, I'm ready to alter my opinion.

Enduro gives you a behind-the-wheel feeling like no other driving game. It's so good, I'd venture to say that it's comparable to the ColecoVision version of Turbo.

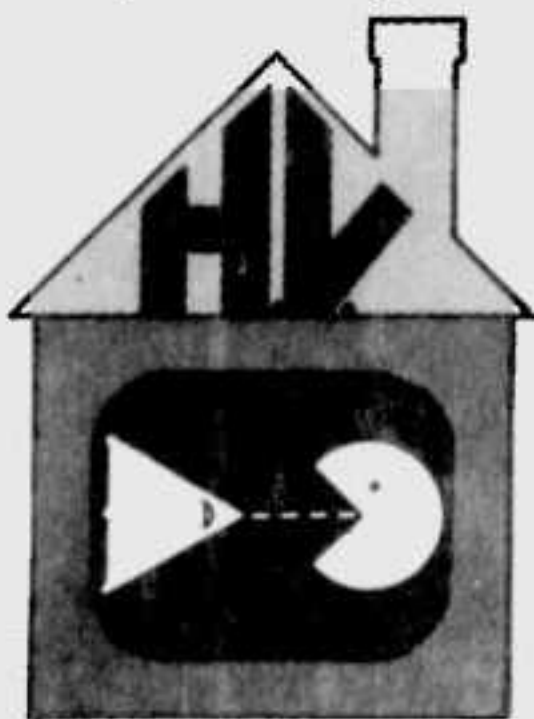
This is an endurance contest. As you drive, the day will go from sunrise to sunset. Each game day you must pass a specified number of computer-controlled cars.

The instrument panel features a odometer, which gives your score. The number of cars you must pass is posted directly beneath the odometer. This figure decreases with each auto you zip by.

To say that this is a tricky course would be an understatement. Enduro winds, bends and turns. But the transition between directions is remarkably smooth. The course doesn't just blink into a sharp turn. (That was Turbo's biggest drawback — one moment it was smooth sailing, the next moment you were headed for disaster. More often than not, this rough transition resulted in an accident.

Since you only need to adjust your lateral position on the course, the less-than-agile standard Atari joystick does not hamper Enduro's playability. In fact, the stick's lack of responsiveness is almost a blessing. Your steering response increases in proportion to your speed. Under full steam, the car responds perfectly to light taps on the controller.

I hate being kicked when I'm down, so I was pleasantly



surprised to discover that my car was not struck from behind after being involved in an accident. This was another inconsistency in Turbo that was maddening — and totally unrealistic to boot.

Enduro gives you credit for being a good driver, but it doesn't over-penalize you if you're a little sloppy. You can brush against the side of the road without automatically crashing, but you will be slowed down.

Visually, Enduro is a lot cruder-looking than most Activision products, but it still looks sharper than a good 90 per cent of the cartridges other companies try to pass off as realistic.

Your perspective on the action is third person. Like Atari's Pole Position coin-op, you view the action from behind the car — as if you were being towed along in a little U-Haul trailer.

To keep you on your toes, Enduro throws in a few surprises. In one sequence, the road is blanketed with ice and snow. Extra caution is necessary here, since you'll slip and slide — just like real cars do in inclement weather. Just after dusk, a thick shroud of fog descends on the race course. Again, special care is needed to emerge safely.

I wouldn't go so far as to trade my car in for Enduro, but Enduro is the best Atari-compatible game that I've seen yet — bar none.

Wavy Navy a replay of Space Invaders

"Wow! Sometimes it's hard to believe that Wavy Navy is just a video game," says the package. I agree with that statement. Wavy Navy, an Apple II-compatible disc from Sirius, is also a surefire cure for insomnia.

Do we really need another revamped version of Space Invaders?

In Wavy Navy, you are represented by a P.T. boat. Huge swells roll across the lower part of the screen. As a wave hits your ship, you're lifted to its peak, and as it rolls on you slip down its back side. This is a very deceptive effect, and I'll give Sirius a few points here.

A squadron of enemy jets and choppers patrol the skies. As a group, the jets shift from left to right to left to right, dropping down a hair when they reach either side of the screen and occasionally throwing a bomb. Wipe 'em all out, and you are promoted from galley slave to boatswain.

In later rounds, the game tosses a few curves. If you dally too long with any one force, the choppers swoop down and strafe the waters. Once in a while, a jet will peel off and head toward you. Again, credit is due. Instead of simply getting faster, Wavy Navy introduces new challenges.

But how long does Sirius think the gaming public wants to play silly rehashes of Space Invaders? Why didn't Sirius take advantage of the Apple



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

computer's ability to handle more sophisticated games? For all its fluff, hype and implied lunacy, Wavy Navy can't hold a candle to the majority of the software made for less powerful game formats.

I will say one thing, though. This is one computer game that is actually easier to play on the keyboard than with a joy stick or a paddle. The "left" and "right" keys power your ship along at a swift clip. A second tap on either button locks your vessel in place. This maneuver (which is critical for anyone looking to advance past the rank of cook) is difficult to execute with a stick.

In closing, I have one final question. Are video game designers devoid of imagination? If not, why are they so bent on twisting around and brushing up on old favorites? Can we expect something new soon? I hope so because I, for one, am tired of playing Space Invaders.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

Plaque Attack seats player in driver's mouth

By Michael Blanchet

I hate going to the dentist as much as the next person, but I can't recall having nightmares about the food my toothbrush missed. Whatever you think goes on in your mouth, your most hideous nightmares aren't as paranoid as those depicted in Activision's *Plaque Attack*, another piece of twisted surrealism from Steve Cartwright, the designer of *Megamania*.

The battleground in *Plaque Attack* is two rows of horribly overspaced teeth. A tube of toothpaste is your only defense against the waves of junk food. The idea is to zap each food item with toothpaste before it touches a tooth. If contact is made between comestibles and cuspid, the tooth yellows and quickly disappears.

The opposition's roster reads like the average teenager's diet — double cheeseburgers, hot dogs, fries, doughnuts, ice cream cones and candy canes. Each food item appears in waves. When a group of candy canes appears on the screen, for example, the candy canes shift, twitch and move about in unison. You have 35 seconds to rub out each onslaught. As time passes, you'll notice that the toothpaste tube will begin to shrink.

Plaque Attack's story line is unusual. Unfortunately, when it comes to play action, *Plaque Attack* is your standard shoot-'em-up. Of course, it



Win at Video

By

Michael Blanchet

has a noble pursuit — but preventing cavities is not my idea of fun.

What saves the game is its incredibly lifelike graphics. Unlike *Megamania*, where most of the common household-items-turned-villains are unrecognizable, the "bad guys" in *Plaque Attack* look just like they do in real life. The images are detailed, colorful and true to life.

The game also features an amazingly diverse array of audio effects — from the grotesque sound of a withering tooth to the whimsical score that rings when the bonus points are tallied.

Unlike other Cartwright games, *Plaque Attack* allows your on-screen persona to reach both the east and the west borders of the field. (Anyone who has played *Megamania* or *Seaquest* has noticed that the extreme sides of the screen are off-limits to the player's ship, while the enemies have full run of the field.)

But as good as *Plaque Attack* looks and sounds, it's just another shoot-'em-up. The only thing this game did for me was make we want to brush my teeth.

Jungle Hunt slick but it's short on challenge

Tarzan had a knack for making everything look easy. Whether he was swinging across the jungle on a network of vines or paddling upstream with a pack of hungry crocodiles in hot pursuit, the king of the jungle managed to conquer every obstacle — without any apparent effort.

I always felt it would be nice to be like Tarzan,

but I've been having second thoughts after playing *Jungle Hunt*, a new cartridge from Atari. Like most people, I enjoy the struggle more than the triumph, and challenge is the one ingredient that is missing from this slick rendition of Taito's coin-op hit.

Like its coin-op counterpart, *Jungle Hunt* consists of four sequences, culminating with the final confrontation between the hero and a band of headhunters. In the story line set forth by the Tai-



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

to coin-op, your mission was to save a girl who was about to become the barbarians' next meal. Unless I missed her, no such prize awaits the Atari *Jungle Hunter*.

In the opening scene your man, dressed like Stanley I. Presume, must swing across the jungle on a series of 10 vines. This little test of skill is so easy that even neophyte gamers will find it a pushover. From here, the action shifts to your typical African river — which, naturally, is teeming with hungry crocodiles.

Again, I failed to see any reasonable challenge. If you choose to confront the beasts, you can brandish your knife with a tap of the action button. Unlike coin-op *Jungle Hunt*, the business of stabbing crocs is a very unexact science. Some crocs, which seem out of reach, fall dead under an almost invisible blade. Others can kill you with a simple swipe of the tail. This sequence is inconsistent.

Once the river's far shore is reached, you'll find yourself up against a rather meek onslaught of boulders. As Darth Vader would say, "this is all too easy." Just jump over the little ones and

crouch under the big ones.

In comparison to the journey that you undertook to reach this point, the headhunter showdown is quite difficult — at first, anyway. But after a little practice this sequence, too, proves to be a cinch.

I'll give Atari credit for one thing — it has done a laudible job of cramming all four of the original *Jungle Hunt* screens into one tiny cartridge. What it left out was the challenge.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

Realistic, but game lacks fun

By Michael Blanchet

Believe it or not, I was a trucker once. Well, not a real trucker. My rig only had six wheels and I only drove a hundred miles at a time.

Maybe that's why I missed out on everything. I never felt that "romance of the road" so many country-western singers croon about. I never used a CB, never dined at a greasy spoon, and certainly never happened upon a shapely hitchhiker.

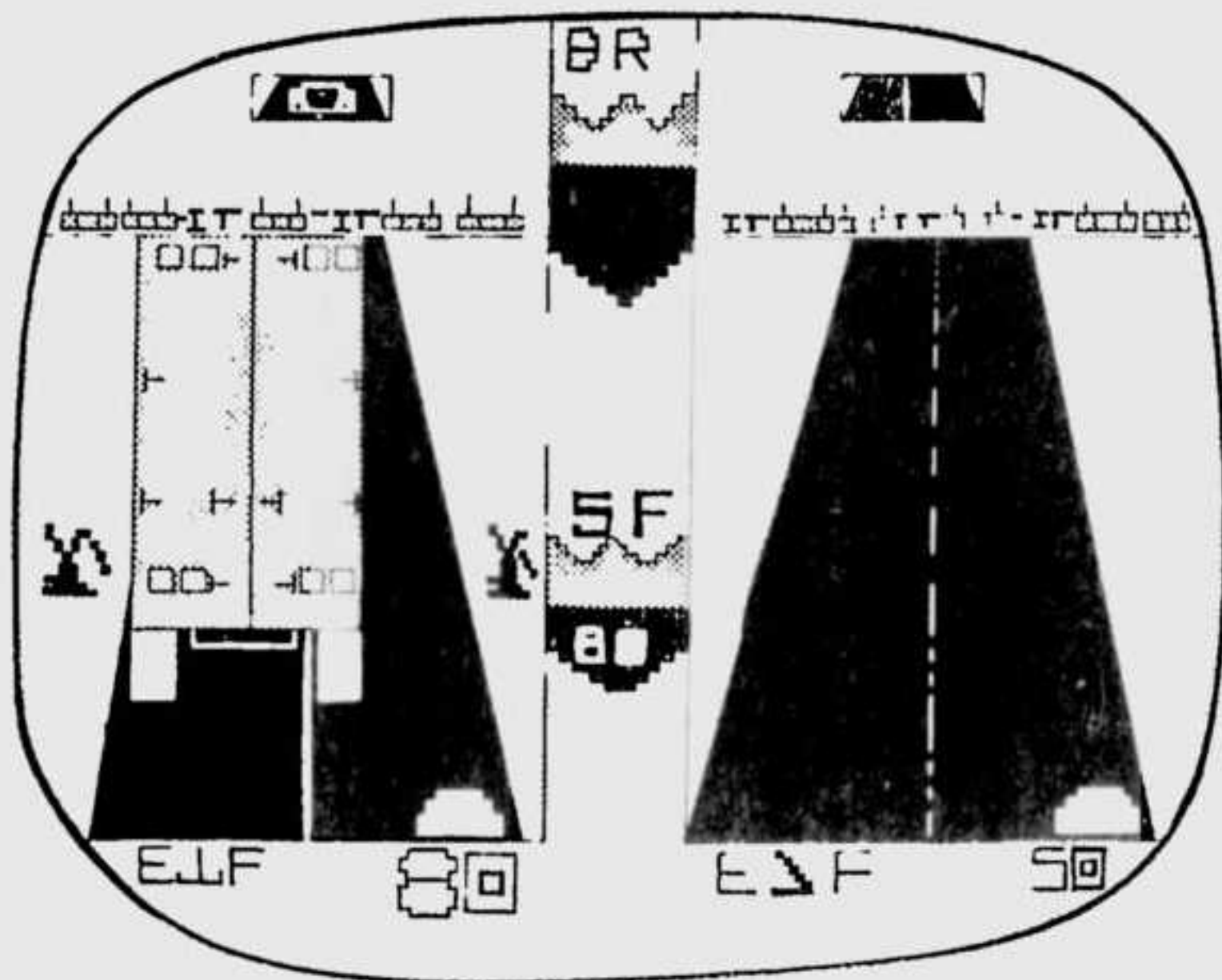
Truckin', Imagic's latest Intellivision-compatible game, is a lot like my experiences on the road — you do the work but miss out on all the fun.

Truckin' is definitely not a game for the masses. It's a strategy contest, not a flashy visual treat, and it is one of the few games that tests your business sense instead of your motor skills.

The object of the game is to fill your coffers with as much cash as possible before the game ends. (A game can last from five to 60 "days.") To do this you must drive your rig into a city, pick up a load (corn, gravel, cattle or milk) and haul it to its destination.

Truckin' is just like real trucking. You view the passing world as you sit and look out your windshield, just like real truckers do. You can speed up and slow down, just like a real trucker does. All the essential elements are there, but the game fails to capture the essence of life on the road.

The scenery, for example, never changes. Visually, Tru-



Truckin' not a game for the masses

ckin' is like the stretch of route 80 that rolls through the Midwest — boring.

Fashioning a game after a real-life situation is a clever idea, but a video game can never duplicate real life. Truckin' does not provide the thrill of the wind rushing over your body through an open window, the chatter coming over the CB, or the sight of a brilliant sunset.

Although Truckin' doesn't have the romance, it does succeed in revealing that life isn't easy in this line of work. You are charged for gas and repairs, and must pay the piper if you are nabbed for speeding.

Repairs are needed frequently, since the trucker encounters many bad drivers who just can't seem to stay on their side of the road. This aspect of the game is most annoying. At least half a dozen times a minute, another truck appears in the distance. As it approaches, it will shift from lane to lane, and will almost invariably come to rest in your lane just before impact.

The instruction booklet

recommends blowing your horn when there's an oncoming truck, but this seldom remedies the situation. The only other alternative is to pull into the left lane, but then you are at the mercy of the less-than-responsive Intellivision controller.

If Truckin' doesn't make a better defensive driver out of you, it will at least familiarize you with all the major trucking routes frequented by real truckers. The playfield theoretically encompasses the entire continental United States. Maps are included.

For all its authentic touches, Truckin' doesn't capture the personal experience of real trucking. I felt more like a dispatcher than a driver.

One feature that I found most dehumanizing was the fatigue factor. At a certain point during each game day, the computer decides that you are tired. Until you pull over and rest, you won't be able to drive faster than 5 to 20 miles per hour.

Finally, a game that tells you when you are tired of playing!

(Toronto Star Syndicate)

White Water game a washout

When I first heard of White Water, Imagic's latest Intellivision-compatible game, my mind raced to the movie "Deliverance" — four men crashing through the wild water, ready to take on all attackers. Imagic's White Water attempts something like that, but it doesn't come close enough.

I don't consider myself an authority on rafting, but I do know what makes the sport ex-



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

citing and fun. It's that "down in the trenches" feeling with the water in your face, and the interaction between you and the elements. In White Water, most of that thrill is gone, since you steer the raft from overhead (imagine yourself in a helicopter looking down on the river.)

According to Imagic's scenario, you are the leader of an expedition into the "largely unexplored reaches of the Amazon River." Along the way, you will take in a lot of sights. Just past each beach you encounter is a forest — the home of an ancient tribe. These barbarians have decided to let you participate in "their most ancient tribal game: the Flag Race ("Tykutoomwa" in their language.)

At the clearing, you'll find a bunch of flags, a golden urn, and two other figures (the chief and his henchman). You can grab two flags in

each turn (the henchman is the other contestant). Ideally, you want the urn to be the last piece remaining when it's your last turn to pick. If you capture the urn, you can return to the raft and head for the next beach.

The business of steering the raft is much more difficult than the flag race. I'll divide the blame evenly between Imagic and Mattel. Whoever designed the disc controller that moves the ship should be hung by his thumbs. In still water, the boat responds well. Most of the game, though, you are at the mercy of the currents. Navigating the tough spots is the heart of the game, but the player barely gets a fighting chance.

Another obstacle is determining the front of the boat. You must look closely at your passengers, whose arms face front.

The flag race does manage to pump a little spice into an otherwise hopeless quest. But when you come right down to it, you could play this game with toothpicks or matches instead of a \$30 cartridge.

Graphically, White Water is another Imagic masterpiece. The images are sharp and colorful. But no amount of imagery can save this game. Instead of re-creating an experience that most of us rarely get a chance to participate in, White Water separates us from it.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company

Happy Trails set in the Old West

For Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, the phrase "Happy Trails" was a way to say "So Long." For Activision, these words take on a new meaning: Happy Trails is an exciting game that takes you back to the days of the adventurous Old West.

Happy Trails is Activision's third offering for Intellivision and its first game made specifically for that system. Unlike Pitfall! and Stampede, which were originally designed for the Atari VCS and later translated to the Intellivision format, Happy Trails looks and plays more like an Intellivision game than its two predecessors.

In search of moneybags

The goal of Happy Trails is to navigate your hat and boots around each maze configuration in search of moneybags and a bad guy named Black Bart. Before you say, "Oh, no, another maze game," let me explain how Happy Trails works. Instead of moving a man or figure, you manipulate sections of the play field. Each screen of the game contains an increasing number of trail panels, and each panel contains one section of the trail.

When properly positioned, the trail panels will give you access to every moneybag along the route. Your job is to make sure that your hat and boots always have somewhere to walk. Treading into the open black space or reaching a dead end will cost you one game life.

Certain aspects of Happy Trails are reminiscent of those hand-held puzzles in which small tiles are moved inside a tray to form a completed picture. Those simple-looking puzzles are actually quite complicated, requiring the player to plan his moves well in advance and to consider the consequences as well as the benefits of any move he makes. Happy Trails possesses a similar allure. The game starts with a simple maze consisting of three tiles, but in each successive round the maze grows as more tiles are added.

In most video games, the level of difficulty is governed by the tempo of the game — the longer you play, the faster the game gets. But Happy Trails throws in a few more variables in each



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

round of play. With each new board you'll have more pieces of the puzzle to juggle, and advance planning becomes more and more complicated. This is not a "twitch" game where a good score requires nothing more than reflex action.

Doesn't hamper playability

Usually, any game designed for Intellivision must contend with the curse of that system — the Intellivision disc controller. Its sloppy and inaccurate action has been the undoing of more than one game. Happy Trails is an exception. Since you only need to move the trail panels up, down, left or right, the disc controller doesn't hamper playability. In fact, it is better suited for this game than a joy stick is. Anyone who has played with those tray puzzles will find using the thumb a familiar and completely natural way to manipulate the controller.

If there's any fault with the game it would be the graphics. By Activision's standards, they are average at best. Although the game lacks the overall attention to detail and graphic artistry that has come to be the unofficial Activision trademark, each scene and character is clearly depicted and easy to identify. In a game such as this, too much color and decoration could distract the player. In light of this, the clean and uncomplicated graphics actually increase the game's play appeal.

Like any good game, Happy Trails is easy to understand but difficult to master. Don't miss it.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company

A lot lost in translation of Zaxxon

Popularity doesn't always mean quality. Data-soft's Atari 400-800 compatible version of Zaxxon has been a best-seller since its release, but if it wasn't for the Zaxxon name, this game would have little going for it.

Like coin-op Zaxxon, Datasoft's version is broken down into four battles. In the first and third stages, you must fly your fighter over a heavily fortified piece of floating rock. Between each rock you'll encounter a fleet of enemy ships. This is simple stuff — either kill or be killed.

At the end of the second asteroid you'll face Zaxxon, the missile-spewing robot. You can destroy the robot with six well-placed shots or simply survive the encounter by destroying or dodging the missiles with which he attacks you. In either event, when the round ends you find yourself back at the front end of nother space fortress.

Can't play immediately

The first thing you'll notice about this game is that you can't start playing immediately. In the cassette format it takes seven to eight minutes to load the program; and, of course, there's always the possibility of a misload. The game that follows is barely worth the wait.

Visually, Datasoft's Zaxxon only partially maintains the 3-D perspective that is the trademark of the coin-op original. Since the walls are low and the fortresses are lacking in detail, it's difficult to gauge your speed and altitude. The fact that your plane is bigger in proportion to the down-size



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

walls only increases the feeling that this isn't 3-D at all but merely a two-dimensional game twisted at a funny angle.

Difficult to gauge

The trick with coin-op Zaxxon is to be pilot first, fighter second. That's also the case here, but the division of duties is quite unbalanced. Since the jet is larger and the field smaller, any sense of three-dimensional flight you may have acquired playing coin-op Zaxxon is distorted and of limited value here. Because there are so few markers, I found it difficult to gauge my altitude and speed in relation to the planet's surface.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company

Video game has moral message

Until recently no one paid much attention to the thematic or moral messages communicated by video games. Most people take a game at face value — if it's fun, they like it and couldn't care less if the makers intended to impart some sort of message.

But Crime Wave, a new Apple computer compatible disc from Penguin Software, is different.

Since you play the role of a police officer and can never win, Crime Wave is open to dark interpretation. As the lone police cruiser in the Big City, your job is to protect the banks from felons. And this Big City is unique — there's a bank on



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

almost every street corner and each is surrounded by a tricky network of one-way streets.

Initially, Crime Wave is quite challenging, but after a while the game starts to wear a little thin.

The Tribune Company

Mack starts tough, gets tougher

Hard Hat Mack, the new Apple computer-compatible disc from Electronic Arts, follows in the footsteps of Donkey Kong, the game generally perceived as the first obstacle course contest.

But instead of wasting his time chasing girls, Hard Hat Mack is out to complete the construction of a building. On the opening screen, the player must pick up four girders and place them on each of the structure's four floors. Once this is done, he must rivet them in place.

Occupational hazards include vandals, OSHA inspectors, flying chunks of metal and, of course, the danger of falling. Unlike most video games where the play starts easy and gets more difficult as the game progresses, Mack starts out tough and get tougher.

Three different screens

There are three different screens, each requiring you to perform a different task. In round two, you must pick up all of your toolboxes, then properly time your ascent to the top floor so that the large magnet will pick you up. In the final sequence, you must drop all of the steel block laying about through the holes in the building's framework and into the rivet machines at the bottom of the screen.

The objectives in Hard Hat Mack may sound simple, but this is a video game that gives new meaning to the words run and jump.

Unlike its cousin Donkey Kong, where the player simply has to reach the top of each structure, Mack forces you to pretty much cover the entire field as you work. You can start your job at the top, the bottom or the middle, but wherever you choose to begin, you must complete the specified task on every floor before you can move on to the next screen.

In Donkey Kong, the ape and his barrels are the only concern. Here you must look up, down and sideways to see what's heading right for you. Every screen of Hard Hat Mack is seething with activity, and the game demands your complete attention.

Many ways to tackle tasks

Although the object of the game seems clear-cut, there are many ways to tackle the task at hand. You'll find yourself experimenting with different jumps and patterns. Like any good puzzle, a solution exists, but it's not always evident.

Graphically, Hard Hat Mack rates up there with



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

the best of the recent coin-op crop. Even on the Apple monitor, the images look clean and sharp.

The only possible complaint might be the fact that you must start over whenever Mack fails or is otherwise eliminated. In round one, for example, each unriveted girder pops back out when a game life is lost. But, alas, being close only counts in horse shoes.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company

Robot Tank's mission to search and destroy

Watch out, Los Angeles. According to the scenario of Robot Tank, a new VCS-compatible game from Activision, the city is threatened by a detachment of cybernated tanks.

The tanks have sprouted brains of their own, are no longer taking orders from Army Computer Central, and are rolling through the Mojave Desert en route to L.A. Controlling a force of similar robot tanks, the player's task is to stop the machines before they enter the city.

Al Miller has designed Robot Tank so that the player shifts perspective, instead of manipulating a character on the screen. This concept of first-person perspective debuted to mixed reactions with Atari's Battle Zone coin-op. As realistic as the play was, gamers found Battle Zone too difficult to understand.

Robot Tank, though not as complex as Battle Zone, is an excellent attempt to reproduce the illusion of depth of field on the Atari VCS.

Each Robot Tank is equipped with radar, a forward cannon, the ability to move, of course, and video feed. As in Star Master, any one of these functions can be knocked out by an enemy shell. Unlike Star Master,



Win at Video

By

Michael Blanchet

though, there are no repair stations in the Mojave Desert. Lose your video, for example, and you must rely solely on your radar to locate enemy tanks. Until the damaged tank is hit and replaced with a fresh vehicle, you cannot regain a lost function.

Keeping out of the line of enemy fire isn't your only concern. Changing weather conditions will affect your maneuverability. Even the bravest tank commander will find it a challenge to navigate under fog, snow and rain.

On the surface, Robot Tank sounds pretty straightforward — simply search and destroy. You'll find, though, that for every obvious strategy there is another subtle one that must be discovered and implemented. This is a solid challenge for anyone looking for a different type of shoot-em-up.

Player has cleanup job in arcade game Bubbles

As more and more video games are designed, there are fewer fresh topics to explore. Manufacturers are being forced to look in directions other than maze and shoot-em-up categories. Coin-op makers have given us everything but the kitchen sink, and now even that has made the jump in Bubbles, the latest arcade game from Williams.

Like Centipede, Bubbles appeals to one of man's universal characteristics — a loathing of insects. Other objects of distaste are crumbs and grease spots. Brace yourself — Bubbles has all three.

As the "bubble" in the game, your job is to run over ants, crumbs and grease spots while avoiding razor blades, brushes, roaches and sponges. As you roll over your targets, you'll grow and eventually sprout a pair of eyes and a mouth. Once the bubble cracks a smile, you are permitted to bump into both sponges and brushes. Razor blades, however, are to be avoided at all times.

Roaches can only be killed with a broom. Where do you get a broom? From the cleaning lady, of course. Shortly after the start of each round, she will pop out of the drain. To get a broom, you must touch the bubble to the bristles, which is easier said than done. If you touch any part of the cleaning lady first, your bubble will swallow the broom. So, be careful.

With broom in hand you can safely confront and destroy any roach that peeks up from the drain. If the broom doesn't make direct contact with the bug, you'll pop. Your best bet is to remain still once you have the broom. Move close to the drain, broom first,



and wait for the roach to come to you.

Your mother probably taught you to do a thorough cleaning job, and when you "missed a spot," she handed the cleanser back to you. Well, forget mom's admonitions here. Being too neat can cost you a game life.

Throughout most of the game you must avoid the drain. When it flashes green, that's your cue to jump in. If you reach the opening untouched, the round will end and you'll be given bonus points on the basis of how portly the bubble has become. If you sop up every last crumb and grease spot, though, you'll forfeit the bonus and also lose a game life when the faucet comes on.

As soon as you see the green light, head for the drain. Even if you have overlooked an ant or two, you'll notice that they will begin to head back to the drain on their own. If they crawl inside, the round is over. Like the ants, your bonus and a game life will go down the drain.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

'The Dark Crystal' comes to life

On paper, translating a movie to the video-game medium makes good business sense. Software companies pay the filmmakers for the rights to a movie or character. The gamemaker has a "pre-sold" entity, while the film studio gets a financial shot in the arm. The only one who stands to lose is the game player. That's because it is next to impossible to authentically repackage the continuity, characters and themes of a movie in a game cartridge.

Sierra On Line's *Dark Crystal*, an Apple II- and IIe-compatible floppy disc, is the first exception to this rule. On the Apple computer, unhampered by the memory restrictions peculiar to game cartridges, "The Dark Crystal" comes to life.

Knowledge of the film is not necessary to enjoy the game. The instruction booklet does a more than ample job of communicating the purpose of your mission, giving special attention to the story line, which (unlike most scenarios) actually has a bearing on what's happening on the screen. If you read carefully, it is possible to extract a few clues and tips from the text.

Your job is to help Jen (the hero of the movie) retrieve the missing fragment of the Dark Crystal. If the tyrannous reign of the Skesis' is to be ended, the missing fragment must be retrieved before the great conjunction of the three suns. If you fail, the final chance to restore peace and order will be lost.

Part of the challenge is finding out which commands the computer will understand. The instruction booklet suggests conversing with the creatures you come across during your journey.

Unlike most adventure games, the *Dark Crystal* does not always come back with a cold and mechanical response when the player types in an invalid command. When I prodded a birdlike figure to speak by typing in, "talk bird," the response was, "this is Dark Crystal, not Dr. Doolittle."

Although the movie found great popularity among the young, I don't think the game was de-



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

signed with children in mind. Anyone can enjoy the game's beautiful graphics, but an understanding of the English language and a certain amount of keyboard dexterity are necessary to play it. It will also take an adult (or a child familiar with adventure games) to appreciate the nuances of play and the cerebral challenge.

Thanks to the enormous power of the Apple computer, *Dark Crystal* can take you in literally hundreds of different directions. Some adhere to the plot of the film; others reflect directions the movie could have taken, and still others travel in independent directions.

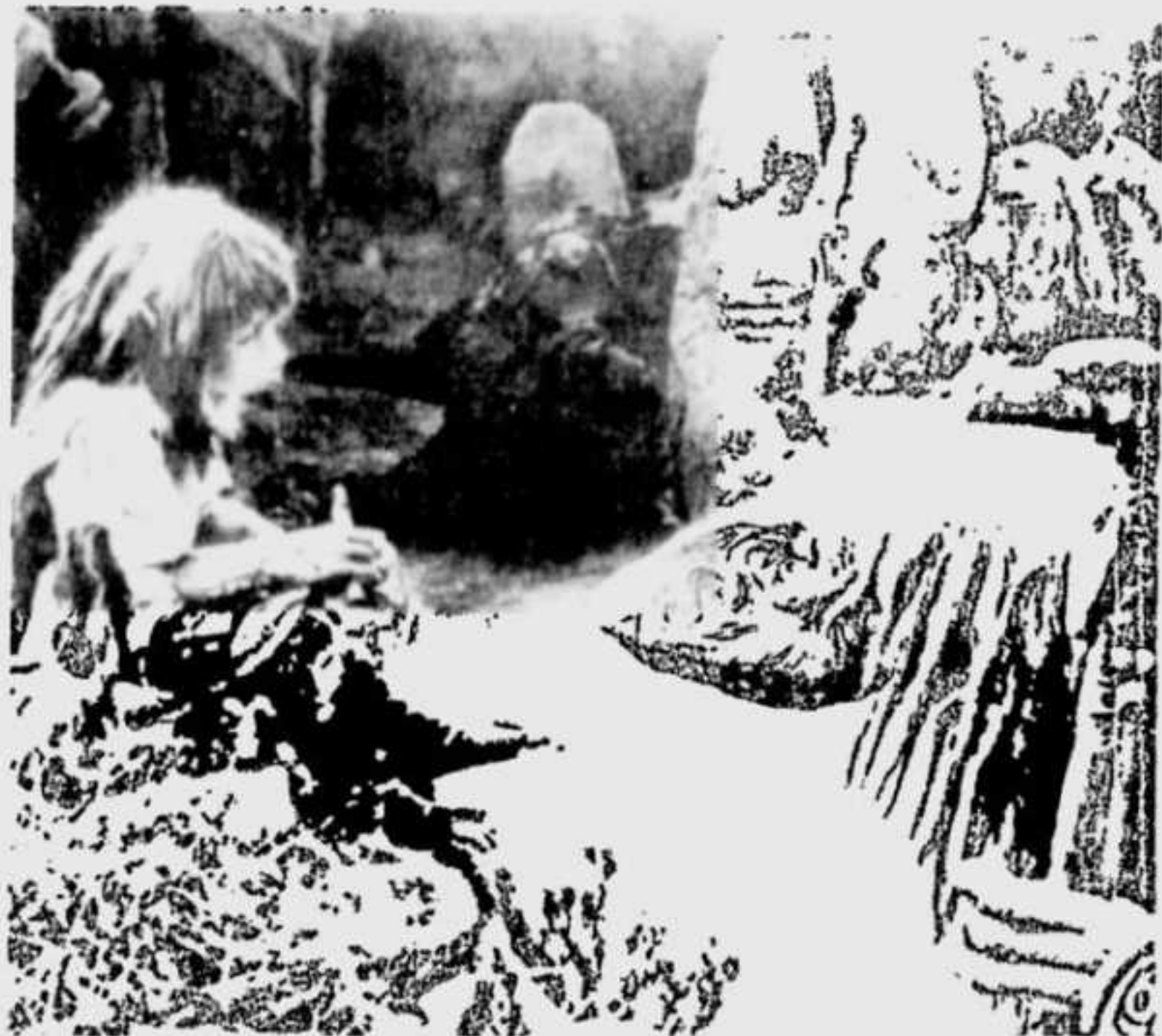
Dark Crystal is the first game that can truly claim to be "based on a movie."

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company



BEFORE JEN CAN ACT, A MYSTIC APPROACHES
AND SAYS, "DESU, WISEST OF OUR RACE, IS
DYING. HE HAS SENT FOR YOU. COME
QUICKLY." THEN THE MYSTIC WALKS AWAY.



A scene from Dark Crystal, the movie

Video game first based on a movie

By Michael Blanchet

On paper, translating a movie to the video game medium makes good business sense. Software companies pay the filmmakers to acquire the rights to a movie or character. The gamemaker has a "pre-sold" entity, while the film studio gets a financial shot in the arm. The only one who stands to lose is the game player. That's because it is next to impossible to authentically repackage the continuity, characters and themes of a movie in a game cartridge.

Sierra On Line's Dark Crystal, an Apple II and IIe compatible floppy disc, is the first exception to this rule. On the Apple computer, unhampered by the memory restrictions peculiar to game cartridges, "The Dark Crystal" comes to life.

Basic knowledge of the film is not necessary to enjoy the game. The instruction booklet does a more than ample job of communicating the purpose of your mission, giving special attention to the storyline which (unlike most scenarios) actually has a bearing on what's happening on the screen. If you read carefully, it is possible to extract a few clues and tips from the next.

Your job is to help Jen (the hero of the movie) retrieve the missing fragment of the Dark Crystal. If the tyrannous reign of the Skesis' to be ended, the missing fragment must be retrieved before the great conjunction of the three suns. If you fail the

final chance to restore peace and order will be lost.

Part of the challenge is finding out which commands the computer will understand. The instruction booklet suggests conversing with the creatures you come across during your journey. Unlike most adventure games, the Dark Crystal does not always come back with a cold and mechanical response when the player types in an invalid command. When I prodded a bird-like figure to speak by typing in, "talk bird," the response was, "This is Dark Crystal not Dr. Doolittle."

Although the movie found great popularity among the young, I don't think the game was designed with children in mind. Anyone can enjoy the game's beautiful graphics, but an understanding of the English language and a certain amount of keyboard dexterity are necessary to play it. It will also take an adult (or a child familiar with adventure games) to appreciate the nuances of play and the cerebral challenge.

Thanks to the enormous power of the Apple computer, Dark Crystal can take you in literally hundreds of different directions. Some adhere to the plot of the film, others reflect directions the movie could have taken, and still others travel in independent directions.

Dark Crystal is the first game that can truly claim to be "based on a movie."

Toronto Star syndicate

Video games ranked by trade magazine

The top video games in the country for the week of June 15, according to Play Meter magazine, a trade publication serving the coin-operated amusement industry, were:

1. Pole Position (Atari)
2. Time Pilot (Centuri)
3. Millipede (Atari)
4. Q-Bert (Gottlieb)
5. Front Line (Taito)
6. Baby Pac-Man (Bally-Midway)
7. Joust (Williams)
8. Ms. Pac-Man (Bally-Midway)

The top-selling home video game cartridges as of June 1, according to a survey of retailers across the country, were:

1. Centipede (Atari, for the Atari 2600 and 5200)
2. Pitfall (Activision, for the Atari 2600 and Mattel's Intellivision)
3. River Raid (Activision, for the Atari 2600)
4. Frogger (Parker Bros., for the Atari 2600)
5. Ms. Pac-Man (Atari, for the Atari 2600)
6. Keystone Kapers (Activision, for the Atari 2600)
7. Donkey Kong Jr. (Coleco, for ColecoVision)
8. Donkey Kong (Coleco, for the Atari 2600, Mattel's Intellivision and ColecoVision)
9. Enduro (Activision, for the Atari 2600)
10. Space Fury (Coleco, for ColecoVision)
11. Dragonfire (Imagic, for the Atari 2600 and Mattel's Intellivision)



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Player calls shots in Dig-Dug

Video games, by nature of their design, are tools of conformism. So much emphasis is placed on the repetition of movements and patterns that I fear we are breeding a nation of lemmings. Pac-man, for example, requires the player to execute a series of turns in a specific order if he wishes to avoid the monsters and register a good score.

But if you took that same game and allowed the player to carve his own path . . .

That's where Dig-Dug, available for the Atari 5200 and the Atari 400 and 800 home computers, comes in.

It bears some resemblance to games like Pac-

Man, but it deals with the situation in an entirely new fashion. As Dig-Dug, the player must tunnel through layer upon layer of terra firma in search of Pookas and Frygars.

As our hero burrows through the soil, he leaves behind a tunnel large enough to accommodate himself and his enemies. When he taps a compartment containing either a Pooka (a ball-shaped creature with two legs) or a Frygar (a bad-tempered dragon that breathes fire), he must either fight or run.

With a tap of the action button, Dig-Dug can brandish a most unlikely weapon — an air pump. By continually depressing the switch, he forces



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

more and more air into his foe. A swift half-dozen pumps will cause both Pookas and Frygars to burst.

Since Dig-Dug allows the player to choose when and how he'll attack, it is a good deal more than a simple reflex contest. Dubbing it a strategic exercise, however, would be just as erroneous. It is a happy mixture of the two. Dig-Dug provides enough visual appeal and immediate gratification to please casual gamers, while veteran gamers will like the fact that solid strategy is needed for a good score.

Home computer front and center

The video game console as we know it (the Atari 2600, Intellivision or ColecoVision, for example) is being outclassed by home computers and the games being made for them.

That's why independent gamemakers have begun to shift their emphasis away from conventional systems and toward home computers.

Imagic, for example, recently announced plans to all but abandon development of games for conventional systems. Activision will release two of its blockbuster hits, River Raid, and Kaboom, in the computer disc format sometime in fall, while Parker Brothers will offer Frogger, Q-Bert and Popeye by year's end.

We're beginning to reach the point where purchasing a simple game looks a bit foolish. Owners of the Atari 2600, for example, who are unwilling to go to the expense of purchasing a keyboard are limited to playing simple cartridge games.

With prices plunging, it may pay to look ahead and purchase a home computer instead of a video game console. In 1979 the Texas Instruments 99-4 computer sold for well over \$1,000. Today it costs less than \$150. In 1982 the Atari 400 home computer retailed for \$300 to \$400. Now it sells for \$79. The Commodore 64, introduced in 1982 at \$595, now sells (with rebate) for half the price.

All signs indicate that home computers, like calculators before them, will continue to decline in price. Projections offered by market research groups indicate that the Apple II, which currently sells for over \$1,000, will drop to \$600 by year's end.

The volume of new computer games will certainly continue to boost sales.

If you're a potential buyer and you want to make sure you have plenty of games to play on your new home computer, Apple, Atari and Commodore are your best bets.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Apple does not consider itself a game maker, but many other manufacturers have stepped in to fill the void. Sierra-On-Line, Broderbund, Infocom, Epyx, MicroLab, Muse, Datamost and Data-soft all make Apple-compatible games. Titles run the gamut from educational games to text adventures.

Atari, true to its roots, has plunged headlong into the game market. For the Atari 400, the Atari 800 and the Atari 1200 personal computers, Atari currently offers a wealth of popular arcade game titles — some translations of games manufactured by Atari's own coin-op division, others translations of coin-ops developed by competing firms from which Atari has secured rights.

Imagic already has started producing games for Atari computers, and Activision and Parker Bros. will soon join the list. Datasoft, Sierra-On-Line, Infocom, Broderbund, Epyx and Muse provide games for Atari, as well as Apple computers. Other software makers offering products for the Atari computer include Synapse, Spinmaker, Roklan, Sirius, Adventure International and Penguin Software.

The Commodore 64, big brother of the immensely popular Vic 20, is just now coming into its own as a gaming machine. At the recent International Consumer Electronics Show, most of the previously mentioned software houses showed at least one Commodore 64-compatible game. Titles included original designs for the system as well as translation of currently available games made for other formats.

Atari 2600 short on space for games

By Michael Blanchet

Computing space in the Atari 2600 is limited. That's one reason why so many of the new games being developed for the 2600 look like copies of previously released games; there is not enough computing space to develop something really different.

Even Imagic, one of the most creative of the software-only concerns, has resorted to repackaging old ideas under new titles. The scenario for Solar Storm, Imagic's latest Atari 2600-compatible cartridge, will sound familiar to even the most casual gamer.

You are strapped in a laser ship hovering over a planet. Scores of hostile ships and chunks of solar debris rain on you. If the planet beneath you absorbs one too many of these bits of refuse, it will overheat and explode.

Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

To repel this bombardment, you simply slide to and fro and fire.

When your score reaches 500, your ship is transported to the orbital platform sequence. Positioned at center screen, your job here is to knock out as many fleet ships as possible. If you hit five before time expires, you'll receive an additional laser base. Regardless of the outcome in space, you'll return to the planet's surface when time is up.

Solar Storm has a few unique features. First, it is so fast that some gamers may find it trance-inducing.

Second, the player uses the paddle controller, rather than the joy stick. The paddle controller, quick and responsive, dovetails well with the brisk on-screen action.

Solar Storm is by no means easy to beat. If you enjoy games that fall into the "blast 'em till you die" category, you'll probably enjoy Solar Storm. Chances are, though, that you have played something similar before.

The Tribune Co.

Computer game potential remains largely untapped

Home computers have the potential of being the ultimate gaming consoles. They have the increased memory and computing power to accommodate larger, more sophisticated programs, along with a keyboard that can alter the parameters of game play.

With all these resources at the designer's fingertips, one, naturally, would expect computer games to be better than conventional home video games.

Unfortunately, as a look at some recent offerings will attest, computer game makers tend to be technicians rather than storytellers. The potential is there, but it hasn't been realized.

A large number of currently-available computer games are, in fact, very close copies of popular coin-op games. The fact that they resemble Tempest, Donkey Kong or some other coin-op is not in itself bad. But it is deceptive when they are packaged (as they are) as originals.

The package of Sirius' Wavy Navy, for example, features a humorous illustration and tongue-in-cheek story description. Pity the poor consumer who shells out \$29.95, only to discover that he had just bought a cosmetic once-over of Space Invaders.

Adventure International's Prepple



Win at Video

By

Michael Blanchet

is Frogger all over again. Instead of leaping around cars and over logs and turtles, Prepple must navigate his way through a sea of objects associated with the prep persona. Prepple's package does include an accurate representation of the game's graphics, but it doesn't give any indication of just how unimaginative game play is.

Or take Sirius' Bandits. In this game, the player commands a ground-based bunker that is the last line of defense separating the computer-controlled thieves from the stash of supplies they are after. Arcade buffs will notice a striking similarity between Bandits and Stratovox, a long passe Talto coin-op that played like a mix of Space Invaders and Galazians.

Although the trend in computer games has been copy, rehash and repackage, some recently-released software does display a refreshing dose of originality. Hard Hat Mack from Creative Arts is one of the best action games for the Apple computer.

Thunderbombs another rehash of Space Invaders

Don't ask me why, but every fledgling software maker seems to feel obliged to base one of its flagship releases on that ancient arcade hit Space Invaders. Penguin Software, the maker of Thunderbombs, a new Apple II-compatible floppy disc, is no exception.

Thunderbombs, like a number of other comput-

er games, shows a strong Space Invaders influence. Again I ask: How long do game companies think the gaming public wants to play silly rehashes of Space Invaders?

To say the game is a complete clone would be a bit unfair, though. It does have one imaginative twist. The player controls a cloudship that slides along a vertical axis in the middle of the screen, while the enemies attack on two fronts — one group from the left, the other from the right. But true to the Space Invaders format, each squadron move side to side (actually, up and down), moving one notch closer to the player's ship each time the northern or southern borders are touched.

To stop this mechanized onslaught, the player must fire in two directions. To end any given round, you must destroy the enemy ship on both sides of the screen, and the droneclone replenishers as well. Droneclones are the Thunderbombs equivalent of the Space Invaders UFO.

The player can choose among three modes of control. The most effective is the keyboard. The A and Z keys control your movements (up and down respectively), while the arrow keys fire in their respective directions. In the keyboard mode, you



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

are able to fire in both directions simultaneously. With either an Apple- or Atari-compatible joy stick (your other options) you cannot, since the controller must be pointing in the direction you wish to fire.

Despite the strong resemblance to Space Invaders, I initially found Thunderbombs quite challenging. Since the attackers confront the cloudship from two sides, the player is forced to divide his attention between the two sides of the screen, and Thunderbombs does strike a good balance between challenge and healthy frustration. But the novelty of two fronts quickly wears thin.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company

Adventure games more complex

Adventures, a new class of video games that are really more puzzles than games, have become the most popular recreational software for home computers.

They are not for the restless player with a short attention span. In some cases, months of playing time have to be logged before the player makes appreciable headway.

The instruction booklet for Sir-Tech's Wizardry, for example, tells the player to expect to log two to three months on the keyboard before beginning to understand the task at hand.

That's quite a departure from the standard video game. Games produced for conventional video game systems have usually been little more than a reflex test, mostly because these systems could produce little else.

A few games tried to do more, but they tended to fall flat. There simply isn't enough memory in the console to make an adventure game work.



On the home computer, however, the adventure game has flourished.

In an adventure, the player is presented with a goal, but is given virtually no clue to how to proceed. (In a twitch game, the modus operandi is spelled out from the outset.) No joy sticks or paddles are used. The gamer issues commands by typing instructions.

Adventure games fall into two categories — the text adventure and the graphic adventure. The text adventure is a series of typed descriptions that the player reads as the game progresses. The player types in his own instructions and the copy changes to give him a rundown on the new scenario.

The Zork series from Infocom is an example of such a game. The text (which reads like a pulp fiction paperback) describes a journey through different levels of a dungeon. Dropped into the text is an occasional riddle, hint or clue. What makes The Zork series (Zork I, II and III) unique is that the games accept multi-word commands.

Typical graphic adventures can fathom only two-word commands (a verb and noun), but Zork has a large vocabulary (over 500 words) and understands complete sentences. The player's ability to qualify a command with additional verbiage, though, does not make Zork any easier. Like all adventure games, Zork requires concentration and patience.

Graphic adventures undoubtedly will appeal more to the average gamer. They don't provide the immediate gratification associated with simple reflex games, but they are a little more stimulating since the text is complemented with graphics. Two excellent examples of graphic adventures are Time Zone and the Dark Crystal.

Time Zone spans, in theory, the time dinosaurs walked the Earth to a period thousands of years in the future. The game is stored on six floppy discs.

The Dark Crystal is an excellent adventure game and probably the first authentic translation of a movie to the game medium.

For cerebral challenge, adventure games are the purest form of entertainment to emerge in recent years. They also present one of the strongest arguments for the purchase of a home computer.

Datamost's Spectre another maze game

In the final analysis, every maze game is the same. Move through the corridors, avoid the monsters, and pick up whatever objects lie in your path. Once you pick up all the objects, you'll find yourself in a new maze with a fresh set of objects and monsters to avoid.

Datamost's Spectre, an Apple II- and IIe-compatible disc, is another maze game.

As usual, the Spectre story line has little to do with the action on screen. The instruction booklet begins with some dribble about a disabled space station. You (the player) are the only chap left on board, and a band of Questers is moving in for the kill. To seal off the vessel, level by level, you must move through a series of corridors and lock down every space port. But, as the game begins, it is already too late. A few of the beasts have penetrated the chinks in your defenses.

You have two weapons. The first is an energizer. Touch it, and you can safely confront any Quester — until the power of the energizer vanishes. If no energizers are nearby, you can opt for the teleportation chamber. Once inside its walls, you are beamed



Win at Video

By

Michael Blanchet

to the position you held at the beginning of the round.

Spectre offers a split-screen display. One side shows an overhead view of the maze; the other side shows what you would see if you were standing inside this space station. The first-person side is, for the most part, useless but does offer slight assistance in the more advanced levels of the game.

In the novice game, the walls of the maze disappear five seconds after the game begins. By committing the layout to memory (believe me, this isn't hard), one can easily remember which paths to take and which to avoid. Hence, there is never any real need to refer to the first-person screen.

One final note. All maze games are infinitely easier and more enjoyable when played with a joy stick. Spectre is no exception.

The Tribune Company

Auto race adapts for home play

Atari's conversion of Pole Position for the Atari 5200 Supersystem comes as a pleasant surprise. This is one cartridge that's as good as — and in some respects, even better than — its coin-op counterparts.

The object of Pole Position is to complete a qualifying run for the Grand Prix in as short a time as possible. If you finish the qualifying lap in less than 73 seconds, you are assigned a starting position for the Grand Prix. The most desirable slot is the pole position — front row, inside lane.

Pole Position is separated from the rest of the pack by its unique graphic perspective. Instead of

Win at Video



By
Michael
Blanchet

looking down from behind at a 45-degree angle (as in Turbo, for example), you view the race from behind as if you were being towed along in a little trailer. This, coupled with the almost hypnotic scrolling of the screen, gives you a sensation of movement unmatched by any home game for any system.

I have a few complaints about the controller. Since both shifting and steering are controlled by the joy stick, it is possible for the player to accidentally downshift while trying to negotiate one of the course's many tricky turns.

Unlike the coin-op version, Atari 5200 Pole Position offers a choice of four racecourses. In layout they're not different, but each new course is more challenging than the previous one. The player can also select the length of each race, from one to eight laps.

The Tribune Company

Beat Bond at his own game

By Michael Blanchet

Contrary to expectations conjured up by the title, *Safecracker*, Imagic's latest Intellivision-compatible game doesn't cast you as a villain. You're a thief all right, but you work for the government. That means you can pocket whatever you want — with a clear conscience.

As the *Safecracker* in our story, you are on a sensitive diplomatic mission. The spy work done in *Safecracker* is nothing like that done by James Bond and other movie spies. *Safecracker* spy work is considerably more straightforward, but the game has retained some of the spirit that makes a spy yarn such fun.

Ultimately, you hope to gain access to the treasury vault, which contains a stash of gold bullion. But before you can open the safe, you must first raid a couple of embassies to gather the clues that will eventually help you discover the combination of the treasury vault.

To move from embassy to embassy, you use a spy's favorite toy — a car (in this case a sedan, circa 1930). As you cruise around the boulevards in search of an embassy to plunder, the playfield scrolls, Zaxxon style. Thus, you view your movements from an overhead but slightly twisted



perspective, as if you were trailing behind in a helicopter.

I don't know how Imagic pulled it off, but these graphics manage to give the impression of true depth. In some instances, you'll actually lose sight of your car as it moves behind one of the taller buildings that dot the cityscape.

To locate an embassy, you must observe the outer edges of the screen. The color of the border corresponds with the direction in which your target lies. Green, for instance,

means you should head southeast, while blue is your cue to head southwest.

Once you have located an embassy, you have 30 seconds to open its safe. If you cannot figure out the combination in time, you can always blow it up. Blowing up a safe, however, will bring the secret police out of hiding. That's when the game really gets good.

With the secret police on your tail, your driving skills will be put to the test. At first, avoiding the secret police will be difficult, thanks to the finicky nature of the Intellivision controller. With a little practice however, driving becomes easier.

Defensive driving is the key but in a pinch you can fall back on your forward and aft guns. By depressing the appropriate switch on the controller you can send a shower of bullets in both directions.

Safecracker doesn't qualify as a true adventure game, but it does offer a degree of cerebral challenge. Better still, it is unhampered by the complicated instructions and commands common to most Intellivision games of this nature.

At present, there's nothing quite like *Safecracker* out there.

(Toronto Star Syndicate)

Ms. Pac-Man a sequel to the smash arcade hit

When Atari introduced the 5200 Supersystem, it changed the rules for judging home versions of coin-ops. With a console this powerful, gamers no longer had to judge a cartridge against its coin-op counterpart. They only had to decide whether they liked the game. They could rest assured that the 5200 version would be a close replica of the coin-op it was based on.

Ms. Pac-Man is another fine Atari



Win at Video

By

Michael Blanchet

5200 effort. For those who do not frequent game rooms, Ms. Pac-Man is the sequel to the phenomenally successful Pac-Man arcade game. The basic premise mirrors the objectives set forth in Pac-Man, but Ms. Pac-Man is much more difficult. Instead of one maze repeating level after level, Ms. Pac-Man offers four different labyrinths.

Patterns are almost useless in this game. It's a supreme test of one's ability to scramble and improvise.

Some of the other differences are subtle, but they add to Ms. Pac-Man's appeal. The bonus objects float about the maze. The concept of intermissions (pioneered in Pac-Man) is put to good use in Ms. Pac-Man. There are three such sideshows, which fall between the first three rounds of play.

The graphics are as good as you're going to get anywhere.

My only bone of contention is with the controllers. Unless you have the nerves of a diamond cutter and the hands of a brain surgeon, chances are you're going to run into the ghosts frequently.

It's a shame that such a good game must be spoiled by such an ill-designed piece of hardware. But ardent 5200 owners will manage to overcome this obstacle.

One way is to buy a set of those self-centering joy stick mechanisms for your 5200 controller. One, the Joyguide, sells for \$5-\$10 and is available from Entertainment Systems of Oakhurst, N.J.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company

New Buzzard Bait, sure looks familiar

Buzzard Bait, a new Apple II, II+ and IIfx compatible disc from Sirius, is a game best left to the birds. Once you get past Sirius' tongue-in-cheek story, all that's left is another tired reworking of Demon Attack.

A flock of buzzards has been snatching passers-by, carting them to buzzard nests and feeding them to hungry young buzzards. To save the town, you must operate the municipal hovercraft and battle the buzzards.

Win at Video



By
Michael
Blanchet

To win a bonus ship, you must maneuver through a sea of pushy penguins in search of the parts that make up your ship. You must retrieve three such parts while avoiding

mines being dropped.

Then it's back to more buzzards. In round two, things get trickier. Here you'll have to watch for the penguin. When he passes along the south of the screen, your only recourse is to jump over him. If you don't he'll smash your hovercraft.

Visually, Buzzard Bait is a treat. The buzzards flap their wings, while the people look like they believe this horror is taking place. But graphics alone cannot carry a game.

When a game borrows heavily from others, it should at least try to improve on the inspiration. Buzzard Bait is another version of Demon Attack, and a second-rate version at that.

Round About fulfills the promises on box

I have a lot of respect for Datamost, but I don't always approve of the way in which they package their games. Nowhere on any Datamost game box will you find a representation of actual game graphics. There are plenty of verbal descriptions, of course, but most of them are hype.

But just when you're ready to swear you'll nev-

er believe another word you read on a game box, something like Round About, one of Datamost's newest Apple-compatible games, comes along. Datamost prints some pretty strong words about Round About, and by golly, the game lives up to most of them.

'It's a happy game'

Here are a few examples: "Round About is the kind of game you never grow tired of because it's sheer fun, sheer enjoyment on every level. It's a happy game that lets you pass the minutes, or hours, or days in a carefree way."

Later on you'll read, "It keeps you on your toes while it works a hypnotic spell on you." This glorious description closes with, "Round About is about the most fun game around."

Well, every bit of this is true — to an extent, anyway. I wouldn't go so far as to say that this is the last word in computer gaming. It isn't. It is, however, one of the few shoot-'em-ups to treat the "blast them before they blast you" scenario with any degree of originality.

Adversaries materialize

The Round About playfield is a simple rectangle. When the game begins, your ship (a circle) will appear along the uppermost border. By using the appropriate keys (or a joy stick), you can pilot your craft along the outer edges of the screen. Your adversaries will materialize and saunter around the screen in unison. They include Hoops, Fops, Joonz, Wooz and Flooz. These beasts have their own unique shapes, as well as their own peculiar modus operandi.

Your job, obviously, is to traverse the edges of the screen and blast these guys before they run onto you.

This is the kind of game that anyone can play — and enjoy — immediately. But while it is undeniably easy to understand, it is by no means a cinch to master. It strikes a near-perfect balance between all-out frustration and that feeling that if



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

you give it just one more try, you'll definitely do better.

There are 24 different squadrons of geometric foes, and Datamost offers some incentive to practice up, so you can progress past level six (They promise that you'll see "various special graphics" once you clear the sixth board.)

This one is worth a look.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company

Program quirks mar Q-Bert in home version

Parker Brothers' Q-Bert is *almost* a successful translation from coin-op to home cartridge.

The Atari 2600 version of Q-Bert retains the spirit of its inspirations — and its image as well — but abounds in programing quirks.

The player is cast as Q-Bert, a beach ball-like fellow who must hop from cube to cube on a pyramid-like structure. The object is to change the col-



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

or on the uppermost facing of each cube until all the blocks are the same color. When all the blocks are properly shaded, the round ends.

Confronting Q-Bert in the home version are Coily and Sam. Although the opposition has been considerably reduced, you'll still have quite a task on your hands. In fact, you may find sidestepping Coily and Sam a lot easier than wrestling with some of the quirks in this game's program.

Anytime a game is translated from the arcade format to the home medium, a certain number of graphic concessions are to be expected. But Q-Bert looks just as he does in the arcade. The play field has made the jump as well. Q-Bert's trademark curse balloon even appears when Coily catches him.

Unfortunately, it seems that too much money was committed to graphics, not enough to game play.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

Baseball game for home computer will respond to voice commands

With the MBX Expansion System for the Texas Instruments 99-4A, Milton Bradley has laid the groundwork for using voice recognition as an integral part of computer game play.

If any category of games could stand a little improvement, it would be sports games. Few provide even a fraction of the fun of the real thing.

Baseball is a leisurely game to begin with. On the computer, it is often impossibly slow. Delays between command and reaction kill whatever realism the computer game has to offer. What is needed, obviously, is a catalyst, and voice recognition fits the bill.

In Championship Baseball, the defensive player is freed from the yoke known as the joy stick. The fielders are controlled by voice commands. After "training" the computer to recognize your voice, you need only say "first" to swing the first baseman into action. If the ball is in the hands of another fielder, that same command will cause the player



to throw the ball to first base. It's logical and easy to use. Best of all, it speeds up game play.

Baseball buffs can substitute the position titles with the names of real players. Thus, first base could be "Carew," second "Gantner" and third "Nettles." A grounder along the third base line is scooped up by saying "Nettles." Say "Carew," and the ball is thrown to first base. If there is a runner on first — now moving toward second — you can try for a double play. Say "Gantner" and "Carew" in quick succession. The computer remembers both instructions and executes them with little apparent delay.

The same wizardry responsible for

voice recognition pumps out the best-sounding computer-generated voices I've come across. An on-screen umpire, for example, calls balls and strikes in a voice that is both understandable and full of emotion.

Batters and runners are controlled manually with the wonderfully responsive joy stick that comes with the MBX. As the offensive player, you can select the speed of the batter's swing by spinning the top of the stick left or right. The defensive player uses the keyboard on the MBX to select the velocity and direction of each pitch.

The fluid play action is beautifully complemented by lifelike graphics. The ball, for instance, is followed by a shadow, so fielders can properly judge the trajectory of a fly.

The MBX expansion unit and Championship Baseball are expected to be available sometime in September.

The Tribune Company

Moonsweeper rated top-notch

Moonsweeper, Imagic's latest Atari 2600 compatible cartridge, is the first Atari-compatible outer space shoot-'em-up since Demon Attack that I can wholeheartedly recommend.

There are a number of conceptual similarities between Moonsweeper and any number of other shoot-'em-ups, but Moonsweeper also offers a host of unique play features.

Each game of Moonsweeper is divided into two rounds. In the opening sequence, the player's ship, the USS Moonsweeper, appears on the bottom of the screen. The object is to fly around the sun (which is at the top center of the playfield).

During this sequence, you must avoid the aurora flares, photon torches and space bullets, which fly toward you at angles. These can be shot for points as well.

To enter the second phase of the game, you must guide the Moonsweeper so it touches one of the moons in the playfield. When contact is made, play automatically shifts to the surface of the moon selected.

The object of Phase 2 is to rescue six of the miners stranded on the moon's surface. As you cruise over any lunar surface, you'll encounter a number of objects that, like the space debris, must be avoided or shot for points.

Once you have recovered six miners, it's time to re-enter Phase 1. To break free of the moon's gravitational pull, you must guide the Moonsweeper through a series of accelerator rings.

Win at Video



By
Michael
Blanchet

Mission in Dreadnaught to save peaceful Terra

I would bet that Tom Laughry, designer of Dreadnaught Factor, spent many nights munching popcorn and watching "Star Wars." There are similarities between Activision's latest game for Intellivision and George Lucas' epic sci-fi adventure. Although Activision isn't trying to pass this one off as "based on a movie," it could very well bear the "Star Wars" name. This should give you an idea of how good the game is.

The "Star Wars" movies feature a small group of zealots up against the evil technocrats and their machines. Dreadnaught Factor features you against a bunch of bullies (the Dreadnaughts). At stake is the peaceful planet Terra. Flying a small Novaray fighter, you are the last line of defense. Unless you can halt the Dreadnaughts, Terra will be destroyed.

In any game you select (there are seven, ranging in difficulty from practice to impossible), you are given 10 Novaray fighters. The Novaray fighters are dispatched one by one to the Stargate, where they engage the Dreadnaught ships. Your goal is to



Win at Video

By

Michael Blanchet

knock out each of the ship's 16 energy vents with strontium bombs. By doing so, you'll "create a lethal pressurization deep within the Dreadnaught" and blow it up.

This is easily one of the best blast-'em-to-bits games for the Intellivision system. First, it's a contest that you can actually win. You'll square off against a set number of Dreadnaughts. Destroy them all and "Victory!" splashes across the screen.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company

This year's game news is what's not being made

Last year, the news was the incredible number of new video game makers and the new products they had announced. Many of the new companies took the licensing route — "pre-sold" characters.

This year, the news is how few of those licensed titles have seen the light of day. Whatever happened to Mr. Bill, 48 Hrs., Marathon Man, and the Devo game?

Mr. Bill, you'll remember, was a Data Age licensee. His hopes of becoming a video game star disappeared when Data Age went under. Industry observers link Data Age's demise to the failure of its most ambitious project, the Journey game. Industry sources say Data Age needed to sell more



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

than a million copies of Journey-Escape to break even. They didn't. Consequently, there was no money to fund Mr. Bill.

The demise of Data Age had an impact on the rest of the industry. Wizard Video had announced a rock 'n' roll video game of its own, penned by and starring Devo. Wizard Video has declined to comment on what happened to the Devo project, but industry observers point out that Wizard probably learned something from the Journey game failure. The lesson: Rock 'n' roll is not a solid basis for a video game.

Since Data Age banked so heavily on licenses —

as opposed to designing and developing original games (as Activision and Imagic do) — other companies that had buttressed product lines with "pre-sold" entities re-evaluated strategies.

When Sega entered the market a year ago, it unveiled a release schedule containing a dozen titles. Most of these planned releases were movie games conveniently on loan from Sega's parent company, Paramount Pictures. As of this writing, only three of the dozen have reached retailers — Sub Scan, Tac Scan and Star Trek Strategic Operations Simulator.

The list of discarded projects doesn't end with games. Mystery still surrounds what was to be the third expansion module for the ColecoVision console — the Super Games module.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

By The Tribune Company

It's you against encroaching roaches in Crackpots

If you get a kick out of killing cockroaches, you might enjoy Crackpots, Activision's latest game for the Atari 2600.

I use the phrase "might like" for a reason. In premise, Crackpots boasts a bit of originality, but the action is nothing more than a once-over on play principles that have long been milked of their novelty. I'd call it a reverse version of Kaboom.

The object of the game is to prevent the "encroaching roaches" from entering the row of windows on the top floor of a building. If six insects penetrate your defenses, an oversized termite enters the bottom corner of the screen and chomps a swath out of the bottom floor. The building then settles on its new foundation, leaving the next wave of roaches with a shorter distance to travel.

The player controls Potsy, the proprietor of this tenement-to-be. Potsy must shuffle back and forth



across the roof and push flowerpots, of all things, on the approaching bugs.

In earlier rounds, the action is straightforward. You guide Potsy with the joy stick controller and push the flowerpots off the ledge with a tap of the action button. Initially, the roaches will ascend along straight vertical paths. As the game progresses, the bugs will follow diagonal courses and climb at greater speeds.

Fans of Kaboom will notice more

than passing similarities between the two games. The main difference is that instead of catching, your job is to drop. Each time six roaches slip through the open windows, you lose a piece of your building. Like Kaboom, Crackpot quickly escalates to a pace that borders on the impossible.

Graphically, Crackpots has the look of a game designed for a much more powerful system. The animation is so good you'd swear you were watching cartoons. The sound effects also are effective. The most comical sound effect occurs after the termite finishes chomping away the ground floor. As he leaves, the building drops with a resounding, almost

room-shaking thump.

But cute graphics and funny sound effects only solicit "oohs" and "aahs" when the game is new. Once the novelty wears off, we are left with another twitch game that requires no significant strategy.

Fans of the frenetic and mindless contests will no doubt like this one. The rest of us should pass it up.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company

New Star Trek misses target

Sega's Atari 2600 version of Star Trek is a dead ringer for its coin-op inspiration, but its introduction into the already-glutted home market is too late. Most gamers have had their fill of similar first-person outer space shoot-em-ups, such as Starmaster, Phaser Patrol, Star Voyager and Star Raiders. Star Trek treads on tired ground.

As in the arcade version, the object of this game is to secure as many sectors as possible. To do so, you must blast every Klingon ship you encounter.



Win at Video

By

Michael Blanchet

Star Trek features three displays. All appear on the screen at the same time.

The uppermost section of the playfield is a third person overview of the

Video

Turn to Page 3

New Star Trek misses target

Video

From Page 1

entire sector. To the left, you'll see an information center complete with graphs that measure such vitals as shield strength and power levels. Finally, running along the bottom of the screen is the cockpit view of the sector as seen from the bridge of the Enterprise. Here is where you'll face the Klingons eye to eye.

This three-screen arrangement detracts from the game's playability. The sector map shouldn't be displayed at all times. It is for reference purposes only, but since it dominates the playfield, one cannot help but look at it.

Fans of the arcade game should also be forewarned that a joystick is substituted for the responsive array of buttons and knobs on the arcade version.

One could easily mistake Sammy Lightfoot, a Sierra on Line creation for the Apple Computer, for one of those learn-at-home dance courses.

Nowhere on the box is there a representation of the game's graphics, and the description is misleading. Sammy Lightfoot is one of the best jumping-climbing-swinging games I've seen.

The player is cast as Sammy Lightfoot, a '50s leftover complete with pompadour. His job is to "challenge the Cool Pumpkin" in the game's three

Player is 'Sammy Lightfoot'

scenes -- scenes that aren't nearly as weird as the presence of a Cool Pumpkin might suggest. Sammy, it seems, is auditioning for the circus.

The object in each round is to complete the task before the bonus timer runs out. Unlike similar contests, such as Hard Hat Mack and Donkey

reach the other side of the screen. Once the west side is reached, he must turn around and come back. This time around, the plungers will serve as steppingstones. With each crossing, the end platforms creep closer to the top of the field. Ultimately, you must see Sammy safely onto a flying carpet, which carries him to his third and final challenge.

Finally, you must guide Sammy to an elevator.

En route, he must avoid falling hammers and puff balls. If you make a safe crossing, the elevator will whisk Sammy up to a trapeze.

If I had to describe this game with one word, I'd say it was silly. But I mean silly in the best sense. Fans of climbing games should jump on this one.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company



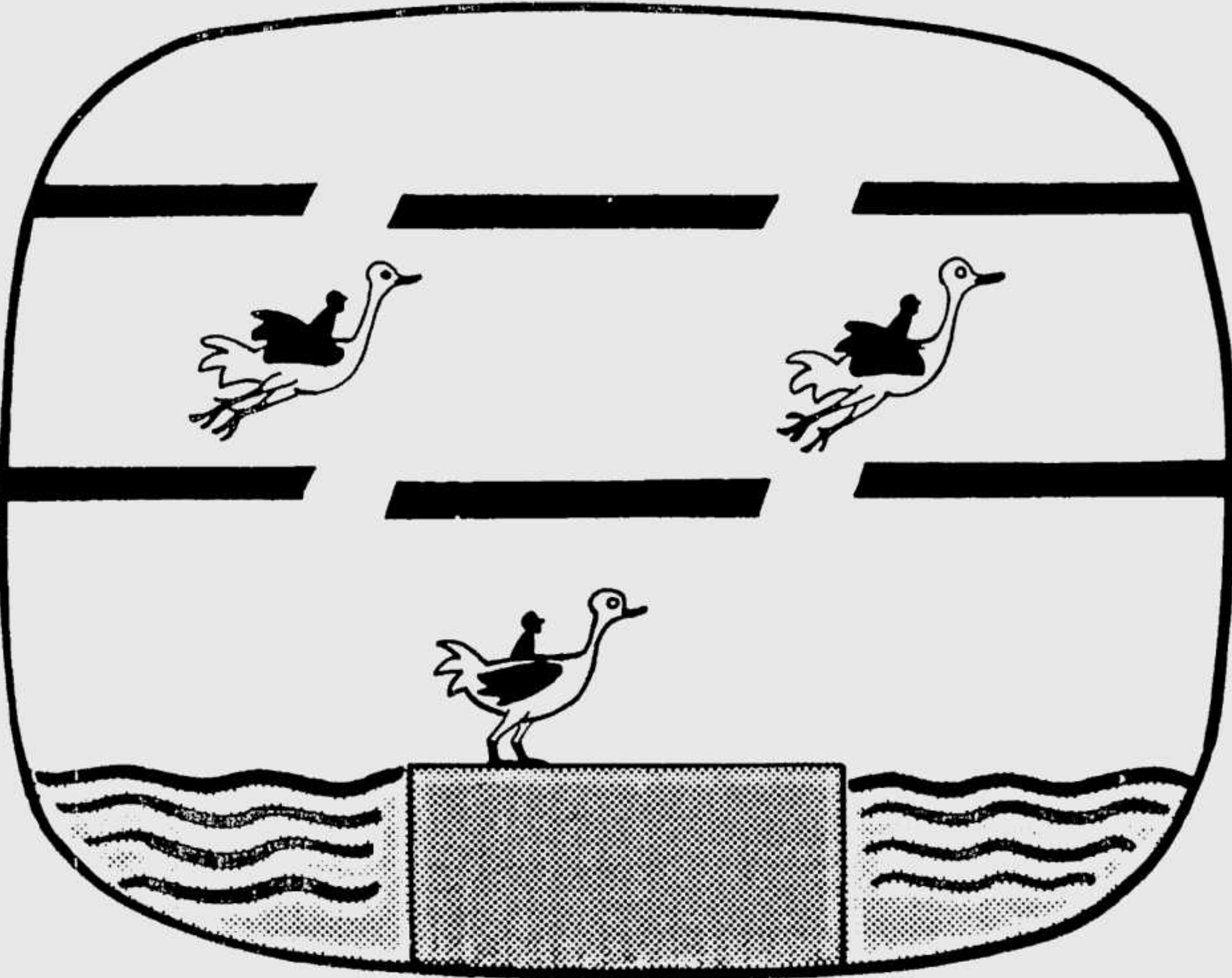
Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Kong, you won't forfeit a life when the timer expires.

Sammy must hop onto a trampoline, then a platform, swing across two more platforms, jump onto another trampoline, and finally climb onto the ledge where the Cool Pumpkin is perched. He must also avoid the bouncing balls that cascade down on him from the upper edge of the screen. Believe it or not, this is the easiest of the three.

Next, he must sidestep falling plungers and watch for disappearing platforms as he tries to



Getting in a flap can pay off

By Michael Blanchet

Quirks and concessions abound in Atari's 2600 version of Joust, but it still stands out as one of the best coin-op-to-cartridge translations in recent memory.

In Joust, the player does battle atop a most unlikely conveyance — an ostrich. The rules of the game are simple, and the fundamentals of play are a cinch. The idea in each round of play is to crash head-to-head with the opposing mounts. High lance wins.

The player's ostrich flies by flapping its wings. This function is controlled by the action switch-fire button on the joystick. For each tap you get one flap. Turns are initiated (either left or right) by moving the joystick in the appropriate direction.

You'll face three different foes in this game, each represented by a different color bird. Hunters, for example, are red. Bounders, the next highest rank, are grey. Shadow Lords, by far the fastest and most cunning of the lot, are blue.

Fans of the arcade game will notice a few changes in the game's format. The Egg Wave, for example, falls every third round (as opposed to every fifth round). The eggs, too, behave differently. Instead of succumbing to the forces of gravity, these eggs float about the screen like balloons.

One problem home game designers have yet to address successfully is that of maintaining proportions. For some reason, the size of game characters and playfield elements

seem out of sync in virtually every arcade-to-home game translation. In most cases, one could fault the orientation of the typical TV monitor, which is longer than it is high. (Arcade game monitors, on the other hand, stand tall and run shorter across the middle).

Whatever the reason, things got a bit distorted in this translation. Your mount, for example, is just a hair too large in relation to the size of the gaps between the ledges. In coin-op Joust, one could fly through these openings blindfolded. Here, the experience rivals threading a needle while wearing a pair of mittens. In the end though, you'll probably find these quirks only temporarily annoying. This game, I'm happy to report, is no turkey.

Time Zone the ultimate adventure game

With more than 1,300 separate rooms and 1,400 pictures, Sierra-On-Line's Time Zone is probably the largest adventure game undertaking ever.

The story behind its development is almost as interesting as the game itself. To cram Time Zone into the memory available on the Apple computer,

Sierra-On-Line programmers, under the direction of Ken and Roberta Williams, completely restructured adventure game programming procedures.

New graphic routines were penned, and a new procedure was developed to facilitate movement of information from one scenario disc to another. As a result, what was originally intended to cover five of six discs now covers both sides of six diskettes.

This game is *big*. Needless to say, it was not designed with the novice adventurer in mind. And



with a suggested list price of about \$90, it wasn't priced with every gamer in mind either.

If you're an adventure game fanatic, though, you'll find the asking price a bargain. By Sierra's estimate, Time Zone contains enough information to fill 30 of their standard-size adventure games.

The Time Zone scenario is hard to pinpoint since play, in theory, spans millions of years. Ultimately, your goal is to reach the planet Neburon in the year 4082. Neburon's ruler, Ramadu, is planning to attack Earth. According to the story line, Earth is rapidly closing the technological gap with the more advanced Neburites and Ramadu doesn't savor the possibility of another race surpassing the Neburites.

Meanwhile, Earth is unaware of this impending attack. Your job is to render Ramadu's awesome arsenal useless.

This is an ambitious project designed for ambitious adventurers. If you have nothing to do for the next year or so, by all means, give this one a try.

Novice adventurers and those with short attention spans should save their money.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

You won't master Miner 2049'er over a weekend

It's been over a year since the ColecoVision system was introduced, and now the first cartridges designed for ColecoVision by companies other than Coleco are reaching retailers' shelves.

Coleco's own games have been faithful repro-

ductions of arcade hits, but none of them have fully exploited the power of the ColecoVision console. That's probably because Coleco's strength lies not in software but in the development of hardware.

But Microfun's Miner 2049'er has exploited the ColecoVision console to its fullest. The Miner 2049'er story line bears strong resemblance to both Donkey Kong and Donkey Kong Jr., but it's more than a Kong copy or rehash. With 11 different screens, Miner is probably the most complex piece of programming ever offered for the ColecoVision system.

As Bounty Bob, your object is to survive all 11 game levels without being destroyed. To do this you must "mask" the entire framework in each and every round. To mask the structure you need only run over it.

As Bob goes about his business, he must avoid a silly-looking group of creatures referred to as



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

mutants. Mutants can be dealt with in two ways. Bob can either leap over them or kill them by touching any one of the many miners' tools scattered about the play field.

Miner 2049'er is by no means an easy game. (After two eight-hour sessions, I was only able to reach the third level.) A typical Coleco-made game is a cinch in comparison.

But potential purchasers shouldn't be turned off by the game's difficulty. In fact, its difficulty is its greatest asset. This is one game you are not likely to master in a weekend.

Graphically, Miner is more cartoonlike than most Coleco games. Bob is nothing more than a

head with a set of legs, and the mutants are simple figures that do little more than hobble about the screen. The game's characters have been simplified, but the play fields have not. Each one of the 11 screens is colorful, beautifully detailed and chock-full of surprises.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

Planetfall like a novel in which player is central character

Planetfall might be better described as an experience, rather than a game. One, I might add, that's currently unmatched by any other form of computer-compatible entertainment.

Those unfamiliar with Infocom and its unique breed of game will immediately notice the absence of on-screen cutesies and / or bad guys. This is an all-text game — or in the words of its maker, "interlogic prose." I liken it to a novel — a novel in which you assume the role of the central character.

In this humorous sci-fi adventure, you play the part of the lowliest ensign aboard the stellar patrol ship Feinstein. Your ultimate goal is



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

to save a doomed planet, but what transpires between now and then is far too long and involved to recap here with any degree of justice.

Like all Infocom games, Planetfall accepts multi-word commands — in contrast to the standard graphic adventure, which can handle no more than one verb and one noun.

Planetfall's package is three times the size of the industry-standard "matchbox." Inside the dossier-like folder are a couple of postcards from fictitious locales you'll pass through during the game, a letter to home written on S.S. Feinstein letterhead, and a credit card-like ID badge. These extras compliment the humorous flavor of the game and serve as clues to certain situations you'll encounter.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

Decathlon, like its Olympic counterpart, is grueling

If designer David Crane set out to capture the grueling nature of the Olympic event in Decathlon, an Activision game for the Atari 2600, he has succeeded. But if he also intended to make a game that's fun to play, I'm not so sure.

Like its Olympic counterpart, the Activision Decathlon is a grueling contest. In fact, this may be the first video game that actually builds up your forearms. In each of the 10 events (100, 400



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

and 1,500 meter runs, 110 meter hurdles, shot put, discus, javelin, pole vault, high jump and long jump), your on-screen athlete is propelled by a most tiring method of moving the joy stick. The faster you can move the joy stick, the faster your man will run.

In the field events and the hurdles, the action button is used to initiate a jump or throw. After running to the scratch line in the long jump, for example, a tap of the red switch causes the athlete to jump. In the javelin, a tap on the switch tells the athlete to throw.

To give you an idea of how tiring this game can be, let's take a look at the longest event, the 1,500 meter run. The current world record for the event is around three minutes and 45 seconds. Assuming you won't crack the world mark your first time out, you'll be jiggling the joy stick back and forth for no less than four to five minutes.

Not only is this taxing on the arm; it's also a bore. Crane has painted a pretty screen, complete with an animated athlete and grandstand, but the action is confined to the far left-hand side of the field.

Designer Crane has captured the look and the spirit of the most grueling event in the Olympics but, frankly, for all the energy you'll spend playing this game, you'd be better off going for a jog around the block.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwau-

kee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company

Beamrider boasts 3-dimensional look

While other software companies pump out complex adventures and arcade translations for Mattel's Intellivision system, Activision has wisely opted to offer simple, straightforward shoot-'em-ups. Beamrider, its latest for Intellivision, is fast, fun and well-suited for use with the Intellivision disc controller.

Conceptually, Beamrider is nothing new. It looks and plays a lot like Mattel's own Astromash. But Astromash was two-dimensional; Beamrider has the look of a three-dimensional game, thanks to some unusual graphic treatment.

As the pilot of the Beamrider, your mission is to smash the restrictor shield — a 99-layer shield that surrounds the Earth's atmosphere. During your quest to reopen the expanse of space to interplanetary travel, you'll encounter enemy vessels, including yellow chirper ships, green blockers and bounce craft, blue chargers, orange trackers, red zigzag streakers, white saucers, and, when any one round is completed, the sector sentinel.

The play field in Beamrider is a matrix of horizontal and vertical lines. Your ship can only move along the length of the lowest horizontal line and fire up the five vertical paths that intersect with it. Since side-to-side movement is your only concern, the Intellivision disc controller isn't the nuisance in Beamrider that it often is in other games.

Points are accumulated by blasting aliens as they cascade down the vertical axis. (Your weaponry is re-



Win at Video

By

Michael Blanchet

ferred to as laser lariets). For blasting the sector sentinel, you are given a limited supply of torpedoes, which can be launched by either one of the lower fire buttons in the controller housing.

Blasting the aliens before they blast you is the general idea, but the game requires solid strategy. Dave Rolfe has spiced up the action by introducing new challenges as the game progresses, rather than merely accelerating the overall tempo. The result is one of those rare shoot-'em-ups that actually gets more interesting the longer you play.

While the coolly deceptive graphics authentically replicate a three-dimensional scene, a fair amount of screen space is underutilized. Your ship, for example, can only fire along five vertical poles. And if your TV is anything like mine, you're bound to lose some of the play field along the East and West sides of the screen. I think the game would have been a lot better if seven or eight axes were packed into the space now occupied by a scant five.

As is, though, Beamrider is a pretty decent shoot-'em-up — and one sure to please Astromash fans.

The Tribune Company

Lady Tut is nothing amazing

Lady Tut, an Apple-compatible game from California Pacific Software, is nothing more than another maze game.

I have nothing against maze games, but I do have something against Lady Tut trying to call itself anything except what it actually is.

Little of what you read on the box or in the instructions has anything to do with playing the game. The instruction booklet takes four pages to tell the legend surrounding King Tut's mother, Meritre Tutankhamen. The last two pages reveal that Mos-sad, Interpol and the CIA are all in a dither about Lady Tut's awakening. Then, just when you expect play instructions to begin, the book ends.

If you're looking for a maze game that isn't cute, Lady Tut will fit the bill. Your ultimate goal is to confront Lady Tut deep inside the pyramid. To reach her, you must survive a series of mazes, which are teeming with snakes, spiders and the like. This is basically a scramble-from-danger



Win at Video

By

Michael Blanchet

contest. Points are scored by collecting various treasures. Any strategy beyond the obvious "run from the bad guys," would involve the judicious use of the many swinging trap doors you'll find in each maze.

Graphically, Lady Tut is a real gem. In some ways it reminds me of Datamost's Aztec, but Lady Tut's perspective is overhead, while Aztec showed a side view. The animation is good, as is the detail of each game character.

Lady Tut is challenging and fun — for a while anyway. Those in the market for a maze game will find this one as good as anything out there.

The Tribune Company

Was Sirius quite serious about Gruds in Space?

I've seen games based on strange subjects — Kool-Aid, "the McDonald's Experience" and the antics of a rock 'n' roll band, to name a few — but never have I seen a game based on a corporate trademark. That game, believe it or not, has finally arrived.

Gruds in Space, starring the Sirius Software Grud, is that company's latest graphic adventure for the Apple computer. It looks great, but it doesn't play nearly as well as some of the past Sirius offerings, such as Kabul Spy or Critical Mass.

The object of Gruds in Space is to deliver some fuel to a "dude" named Lord Deebo. Deebo, according to Sirius' standard, less-than-serious story line, is stranded somewhere near Pluto, and your ship is the only craft able to make the journey. Lucky you!

The game begins aboard a "totally awesome space commuter." Here you'll receive your orders, as well as the coordinates for your first port of call — Saturn. And it is here that you'll first encounter the Gruds.

The Gruds are the stingy critters who have the fuel you'll need to complete your mission. But as often as I tried, I couldn't get one of those blasted Gruds to speak to me.

Well, one did say something once. The proprietor of some supply store I stumbled upon told me that "humans must pay double for anything." He also informed me that I "couldn't afford his prices." Some nerve.

As you can see, I didn't get very far with Gruds in Space. The Gruds are uncooperative, to say the least, and the limited number of commands was another stumbling block. All too often, the game countered with those dreaded words — "Try something else." Finding the proper verb-noun combination is part of the challenge, but I don't find coming up against a brick wall a lot of fun.



Win at Video

By

Michael Blanchet

If you've noticed a sprinkling of Val-Speak in my earlier descriptions of Gruds, there's good reason for it. As usual, Sirius has elected to romanticize this game with a tongue-in-cheek package description. For some odd reason, they've selected Valley Girl lingo. Real smart! That stuff only died out about three years ago. My question is this: Why can't they give an honest description of the game on the package? Why all this underhanded and deceptive prose to pique consumer interest?

Graphically, Gruds is quite a treat. Had this been an arcade-style game, the spiffy visuals would have made a difference, but in an adventure, they should be secondary to the game's plot and its usable vocabulary. In this case, I fear the inclusion of pretty pictures was at the expense of the more important aspects of play.

If you've never played an adventure game before, skip Gruds in Space and "try something else." The package proudly states that "Instructions (are) included," but the three-page portfolio tells you little more than how to load the game.

Gruds is not better or worse than most adventures. Maybe I have outgrown this type of game, but I found it frustrating and plodding. My advice is to forget this one and go out and buy something from Infocom.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, in care of The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201. Write, too, if you would like to share your strategies for beating the games.

The Tribune Company

Missile launch game proves challenging

Minit Man, a Penguin Software game for the Apple II computer, should carry a warning — something along the lines of: "Do not become too proficient at this game. Doing so will result in immediate induction into the US Air Force."

You, the Minit Man, are the lone caretaker of a nuclear missile base. Your orders are to load and launch three Fat Boys before the timer expires. Your efforts are opposed by a group of robots who'll do anything to thwart your mission.

Graphically, Minit Man lends credibility to Penguin's claim of being "The Graphics People." I found this game most realistic when played on a color TV, but even on the phosphor-green Apple monitor, the images lose none of their appeal. Transition between screens is a bit slow, but this did not hamper the game's playability.



Win at Video

By Michael Blanchet

Minit Man is probably not for everyone. It's very hard, and naturally, it gets tougher with each round. But hotshots who pride themselves on conquering every game they can get their hands on will find their money well-spent on this one.

Do you have a question about video games? If so, write to Win at Video, The Milwaukee Sentinel, Box 371, Milwaukee, Wis. 53201

The Tribune Co.

Movie 'Krull' inspires game

Despite dismal reviews, both E.T. and Raider of the Lost Ark proved to be modest hits as video games in terms of sales. Those who enjoyed either E.T. or Raiders probably will like Krull, Atari's latest movie game for the 2600.

Win at Video



By
Michael
Blanchet

Krull, like its big-budget sci-fi inspiration, centers around Colwyn's quest for his wife, who a la Donkey Kong, was taken against her will by a creature known as the

beast. This beast holes up in the Black Fortress. As Colwyn, it is your job to locate the Black Fortress and free Lyssa.

Like its movie-inspired predecessors, Krull is a multi-screen game.

The opening sequence, a wedding, is rudely interrupted by a pack of slayers. The idea is to stab as many of the door crashers as possible. Eventually, they'll overpower you and make off with Lyssa.

Round two is more passive. You are given opportunities to garner additional game lives and weapons.

Round three is excruciatingly difficult. You face the Widow of the Web on her own turf, a moving geometric nightmare. To discover the location of the Black Fortress, you must hop over a series of moving web strands and reach the widow's cocoon. If you do so before the hourglass runs out, a flashing light will point out the pathway to the Black Fortress. But the directional signal is good for a limited time. With each sunset on Krull, the beast breaks camp and moves.

In the fourth and final test, Colwyn must punch a hole in Lyssa's cell — sounds like Breakout.

Frostbite won't melt game buffs' hearts

The arctic setting of Frostbite, Activision's latest effort for the Atari 2600, is novel, but it cannot cover the mish-mash of Frogger and Q-Bert influences that make up this game.

The player must construct an igloo and enter it before the temperature reaches zero. One block is added to the structure each time Frostbite Bailey safely lands on a passing white ice floe, which then turns blue.

After all four floes have changed

from white to blue, they will, as a group, turn white again. There's then more hopping from block to block, until a door appears on the igloo. At this point, Frostbite must return to the strip at the top of the screen and crawl inside.

While floe-hopping, Frostbite also must avoid an array of creatures.

Frostbite is fun for a while. But the novelty soon wears off. Also, you cannot beat this game.

Win at Video



By
Michael
Blanchet

Graphics are knockout on Sub Roc home game

Fans of the Sub Roc 3-D arcade game will notice the omission of the word "3-D" from the title of Coleco's new home version. But while this version isn't exactly 3-D, it's pretty close.

Sub Roc 3-D was one of the coin-ops that didn't make it. It was great to look at, even if it did induce an occasional headache, but it was too tough to play.

In Coleco's home rendition of Sub Roc, the object is to keep blasting at whatever comes your way. These whatevers include battleships, flying saucers, drone ships, interceptors, fighters and the command plane.

Attacking ships first appear as dots on the screen. As they close in, they will grow more ominous in your view. Likewise, when your torpedoes and missiles leave your invisible gun, they are large as life. As they speed toward their targets, they shrink and



Win at Video

By

Michael Blanchet

eventually disappear. This is fascinating to watch, but the game isn't nearly as appealing as the graphics.

The game is loaded with quirks that quickly become annoyances. For example, when opposing ships launch torpedoes at you, you logically should be able to avoid them by becoming airborne. Not so. These charges will seek you out and destroy you. And if you choose to retaliate, you barely have a fighting chance. These torpedoes are nearly impossible to hit. They're too small and too fast.