

arcade express

THE BI-WEEKLY ELECTRONIC GAMES NEWSLETTER

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U.S. GAMES BITES THE DUST

It's time to play "Taps" for U.S. Games. The West Coast-based division of Quaker Oats first entered the videogame cartridge field more than 18 months ago as an independent operation under the Vidtec banner. At the time of its demise, U.S. Games represented both the work done by the original Vidtec and the efforts of a highly creative design team based at Fisher-Price (another Quaker division) in Buffalo, NY. A source close to the situation pinpoints the lack of a strong sales and marketing push behind the cartridges as the main reason for the failure.

The fate of the U.S. Games library of titles remains cloudy. A number of software publishers are expected to make bids for the company's catalogue, especially the six-pack of cartridges U.S. Games unveiled at the Consumer Electronics Show last January in Las Vegas.

BODY BLOW TO SILICON VALLEY

Atari, Inc. is permanently eliminating 1700 jobs at its Sunnyvale, Ca. headquarters. The company is moving some of its production facilities to Hong Kong and Taiwan in an effort to cut costs.

This news comes on the heels of Warner Communications' announcements that earnings fell 56% in the fourth quarter of 1982. Earlier statements from Atari officials indicated this was mostly caused by unexpected competition from other videogame software manufacturers.

1983 SUMMER CES TO BE LARGEST EVER

As of February 1, over 1030 applications for exhibit space had already been received for the 1983 Summer Consumer Electronics Show, ranking it as the largest CES ever held. Among the many special exhibits at the show will be the "Software Showcase", featuring the latest in video and computer game releases. Literally every major software manufacturer is expected to attend the Chicago trade show in June of this year.

NEW ORLEANS GETS FIRST COMPUTER LIBRARY

The Computer Library, the first venture of its kind, will offer individuals access to many different computer systems for a nominal yearly fee. Dan Ellis, president of the Computer Library which opened on Feb. 11, says, "We felt the time was ripe to introduce an information and resource center that is in the economic reach and intellectual comfort zone for the majority of prospective users of personal microcomputers."

TEXAS INSTRUMENTS FINDS POTENTIAL RISK IN 99-4A

Texas Instruments announced it has detected a potential defect in the electrical transformer sold with the 99-4A home computer. It could cause electrical shocks to users or even damage the computer. Although TI maintains that problems are unlikely to arise under normal usage, shipments of the unit have been suspended until the problem is corrected.

SCRABBLE COMES TO THE COMPUTER "Monty Plays Scrabble" is the name of a new disk for the Apple published by Ritam Corp. under an agreement with the producer of the non-electronic version, Selchow & Righter. The computer handles Monty, who can play at four pre-selected skill levels in a contest against one to three human foes. The program does all the word counts and keeps scores. Excellent graphics present all the needed information including some play aids that definitely speed up the pace.

Ritam is also making a free-standing scrabble computer under the same name. All moves are charted on an LCD display by the unit which has a basic vocabulary of 12,000 words. Two additional memory modules can expand this internal dictionary to over 36,000 words, which ought to be enough to please all but the most discriminating Scrabblers.

MATTEL SLATES OLYMPIC CARTRIDGE Winter sports and Mattel are proving to be a winning combination. The company has long manufactured the "U.S. Ski Team Skiing" cartridge for Intellivision, and recently entered its own team in the U.S. Ski Team Celebrity Classic, an annual fund-raiser that took place in Park City, Utah, February 9-12.

The next move will come this fall when Mattel releases the "XIV Winter Olympics" cartridge. This program has been proclaimed the official videogame of the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia. The cartridge gives home arcaders a chance to ski jump or bobsled on electronic versions of the actual courses. Mattel will produce this game for both the Intellivision system and as an M-Network title for use with the Atari 2600.

'GIVE UP CHAUVINISM' WORLEY TELLS VIDFOLK "Designing a game that appeals to female electronic gamers means designing a cartridge with ingredients that will appeal to all gamers," Joyce Worley, editor of Arcade Express, told the audience during a speech delivered at a seminar, "Videogames and the Graphic Designer" sponsored by the Department of the Arts, UCLA Extension, held March 4-5 in Los Angeles. In her talk, which analyzed the role of women in arcading, Worley stressed the importance of structuring games so that they are easily approachable by novice players, many of whom will be women over the next few years.

Though electronic gaming's best-known lady journalist emphasized that she was not injecting feminist issues into the discussion, she also advised all designers to approach the creation of a new game with a sufficiently open mind to admit the possibility of a female on-screen hero. "Tarzan" is great," she noted, "but what's wrong with 'Sheena, Queen of the Jungle'?"

Other speakers at the conference, which also featured a fascinating display of top home and coin-op electronic games, included Jay Smith III, Western Technologies; Roger Hector, Sente; Michael Becker, Imagic; Arnie Katz, Electronic Games; Steven Sidley, Western Technologies; Chris Crawford, Atari; Lane Hauk, Sega; and Malcolm Kaufman, Kaufman & Associates. Each spoke individually for about one hour and subsequently appeared on one of the panels which concluded each of the event's two days, chaired by Sidley and Katz.

EDITORIAL STAFF: Arnie Katz, Co-Publisher; Joyce Worley, Editor; Bill Kunkel, Editorial Director
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BRAVE DESTRUCTION TO FIND THE CRYSTALS "Star Crystals", an action game with adventure overtones, is the newest entertainment release from Program Design, Inc. (PDI). Scientists have discovered crystals on the planet Croga which could end the chronic energy crunch. The Crogans don't want to share this miracle with Earth, and so they have hidden the crystals deep beneath their planet, ringed by an intricate system of defenses. Designer Eric Babinet sends the computerist on a journey through the labyrinthine passages beneath Croga to find crystals and haul them back to the surface one at a time.

SPECTRAVIDEO PLANS SECOND COMPUTER The SV-328 will be an upgraded version of the SV-318 module personal computer system as a step-up for small business (and presumably super-gaming) applications. Spectravideo president Harry Fox declined to go into detail concerning the attributes of the SV-328, but he did reveal that the new system will have 64K of user-addressable RAM.

Fox also reports that the roll-out of the SV-318 is proceeding right on schedule. The \$299.95 (suggested list price) machine should become available in selected national markets this month and should reach full national distribution by the end of June.

MOSES MEETS THE MICRO-COMPUTER Davka Corp. is marketing several computer programs designed for the Passover Holidays. "All About Passover" features background information about the Jewish High Holy Days, including a graphically animated story of Exodus, tips on passover customs, and highlights of the Seder. "How to Conduct a Seder" explains everything anyone needs to know about hosting the traditional celebration. And, when the feast is over and it's time to relax, two Passover-oriented computer games, "Crumb-Eater" and "Afikoman Adventure", are available to help. The software is available for Apple or Atari computer systems from Davka, 845 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Illinois 60611.

RADIO WMMS STAR IN SUPER BOWL TOURNAY The action was hot and heavy at the "Activision Super Bowl Tournament" hosted by Grapevine Records & Tapes in Akron, Ohio, as players squared off against WMMS-FM's Matt "The Cat" Lapczynski. The announcer took on seven opponents in games including Activision's "RiverRaid", "Pitfall", "Spider Fighter", "Megamania" and "Sky Jinks", and finished the day with four wins and three losses. Over 100 players had registered to compete, and the final participants were selected by a random drawing.

BEEFSTEAK TOMATOES PICKET SUPER BOWL That's right, you heard it here first. Seems like almost everyone paid close attention to Super Bowl this year; here's another promotion connected with the gridiron war. As part of a new promotional campaign for 20th Century Fox's new release, "Revenge of the Beefsteak Tomatoe", two giant tomatoes carrying picket signs attended Super Bowl XVII. "Revenge.." joins "Flash Gordon" as the company's newest VCS-compatible software, bringing Fox's catalog to a total of 11 titles. "Revenge.." features giant tomatoes turned killers, dropping saucy bombs. Players can only halt this assault by building brick walls around the deadly fruit. Sounds perfectly sensible to me!

SONY HAS FIRST GAME-READY T.V. Sony is the first t.v. manufacturer to recognize the huge popularity of home videogames. The newest 13-in. color Trinitron TV features a front-mounted auxiliary VHF input jack so arcaders can connect game consoles to the set without disconnecting the antenna.

KNOW THE SCORE Electronic gamers who like to maintain a record of their success may find that "The Video Game Home Score Book" makes the process a little simpler. Published by the Phil Gary Video Computer Group of Columbus, Ohio, it's the brainchild of the president, Phil Gary Scianamblo. He got the idea when he looked for a score sheet to use in a home videogame tournament and couldn't find anything that fit his needs. The book is currently sold in a wide variety of mass merchandizing outlets and specialty stores.

SPACE WILLY WILL LAND HERE SOON Del Mar Entertainment, the folks who brought us Strawberry Shortcake, is introducing a new character to the licensing game: a hapless spacefarer named Space Willy. Along with his girl Devon, his dog Quark and the evil Price Emil Evilmann, Space Willy will soon touch down in amusement centers all over America. You'll find him at Space Willy Crew Lounges, electronic amusement centers, Space Willy Station Q's, family-oriented restaurants, and Quark's Caverns, designed as dancing, dining, video centers with special appeal for young adults.

Space Willy Enterprises has all these characters available for license, and James Romo, the Chief Executive Officer of Space Willy, promises licensees "a diverse marketing structure and strong creative units of designers" to back up the characters.

SPINNAKER SIGNS THOMAS F. SNYDER Thomas F. Snyder has joined Spinnaker Software as an author for educational game software for the home and school. His first title "In Search of the Most Amazing Thing" is scheduled for release this month. It's a combination adventure, strategy and arcade game designed for players age 10 and over. Snyder's previous hits for Spinnaker included "Snooper Troops I & II".

Snyder, who describes himself as a 'software novelist', says he's turning more to writing potential games first in fiction form. "The initial period of development of a new game is ... sort of like a novelist outlining his first chapter for a new book."

ACTIVISION EXPANDS LIBRARY TO 23 TITLES Activision has two new VCS-compatible games, "Seaquest" and "Oink!" "Seaquest", designed by Steve Cartwright, puts the player in control of a submarine which must find a team of treasure-laden scuba divers and bring them to surface. "Oink!" is a video version of "The Three Little Pigs" in which players are trapped in straw, wood and brick houses, with the Big Bad Wolf at the door, huffing and puffing to try to blow their houses down. "Oink!" was designed by Mike Lorenzen.

GRAPHICS PACK AVAILABLE FOR THE IBM P.C. Mirror Images Software has just debuted its latest product, a new graphics package for use with the IBM PC. "Mirrorgraph" is a menu-driven system for people with little or no programming experience. The package enables users to construct bar graphs, pie charts and multiple line graphics from raw data.

THERE'S HELP FOR VIDEOGAMERS "The Video Survival Kit", packaged like a game, contains two T-shirt transfers, 9 video stickers, 1 pair of solid cardboard "survival glasses", 8 cards with slogans, such as "May I be next?", 1 pin, an 8-page manual, and assorted finger splints, band-aids, and other first aid for joystick-weary fingers. It's available for about \$4 from Koplowtronix Consumer Div., Box 965, Hull, Ma. 02045.

COMING EVENTS

Upcoming Tournaments and Meetings

AMUSEMENT OPERATOR'S EXPO '83, March 25, 26, 27, 1983, Chicago, Illinois

This is the industry event for amusement owners, operators and suppliers. It will be at the O'Hare Exposition Center in Chicago.

WLPX AMUSEMENT PLAYERS EXPO, March 30-31, 1983, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Billed as a "public reaction poll", this expo gives players and dealers alike a chance for hands-on experience with new games, at the Milwaukee Exposition and Convention Center. Call Edward Anhalt, Expo Coordinator, at 9042 Park Plaza Ct., Milwaukee Wi. 53223, telephone 414-355-8371.

EIGHTY/APPLE/PC SHOW, April 8, 9, 10, 1983, in New York City.

The third show for Apple TRS-80 and IBM/PC systems, peripherals and software, it will be held in the New York Statler Hotel. Write to the Kengore Corp., 3001 Route 27, Franklin Park, NJ 08823.

PERSONAL COMPUTERS & VIDEOGAMES: THE HOME MARKET EXPLOSION", April 20-21, in New York City, and May 3-4 in San Francisco, California.

The seminar, sponsored by the Yankee Group, focuses on hardware, software, retailing/distribution, and stock market implications of home computer and videogame trends, for \$795. Write to Lisa Caruso, The Yankee Group, 89 Broad St., Boston, Ma. 02110, or call 617-542-0100.

NJ-NY-CT MICRO SHOW & FLEAMARKET, Secaucus, New Jersey, June 11, 12, 1983.

This show is for microcomputer users. Fleamarketers are welcome. Write the Kengore Corp., 3001 Route 27, Franklin Park, NJ 08823.

PACIFIC AMUSEMENT OPERATORS SHOW, April 22, 23, 24, 1983, Anaheim, Calif.

The show for West Coast amusement operators and manufacturers, to be held at the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim, at the same time the Western NAMA Show is held at the Anaheim Convention Center. Write to Terence Cunningham, Westco Amusement, 2727 Midtown Court, Palo Alto, Ca. 94303, or call him at 415-325-6691 for further information.

FUTURE WORLD EXPO '83, May 5, 6, 7, 8, 1983, Los Angeles, Calif.

This exposition will present the latest developments in electronics, home computers, communications, transportation, energy, space travel, robotics, architecture, astronomy, health and mind science, art and music. For more information on this ambitious expo, write FutureWorld Expo, 5455 Castle Knoll, La Canada, Calif. 91011.

HI-TECH HYATTFEST WEEKEND, June 18, 19, 1983, Schaumburg (Chicago), Illinois

A weekend geared for consumers interested in computers, videogames and robots, held at the Hyatt Regency Woodfield, in Schaumburg, a Chicago suburb. Write Kathy Goldblatt of Rashman Public Relations, 400 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Illinois 60611, or call 312-467-7142.

LEISURETRONICS, February 19-26, 1984, Monte-Carlo, Monaco

The first international congress for electronic gaming. Write CMAC. 294 Main St., East Greenwich, Rhode Island 02818, or call 401-884-9500.

THE HOTSEAT

Reviews of New Products

- RATINGS: 10 - Pure gold and about as good as a game could be. A rare rating.
 9 - An outstanding, state-of-the-art game.
 8 - A very good to excellent game.
 7 - A good game.
 6 - Better than average, but maybe not for everyone.
 5 - An average game that does what it promises.
 1-4 - The item has serious flaws.

KEY: The information heading each review follows the same simple format. First is the name of the item, then its classification, and, if it's a home arcade software program, the system/s with which it is compatible. Finally, there's the manufacturer's name.

CRITICS: AK-Arnie Katz; CK-Charlene Komar; TF-Tracie Forman

SLITHER & SUPER SLITHER/Computer Game (for VIC-20)/Commodore

This has the player steering a worm-like creature into boxes that appear and disappear on the playfield. Each box has its point value marked, and the idea is to add up those points within the one-minute time limit. "Super Slither" is similar, but more than one box appears at a time. What's more, the worm grows another segment for each point scored, while in the basic version it only adds a body part for each box hit. The player can use either keyboard or joysticks, and the game ends automatically if the worm runs into itself or the edge of the playfield. The game is fairly basic and doesn't really hold the gamer's interest over a period of time. Rating: 5 (CK)

CENTIPEDE/Videogame Cartridge (for Atari 5200)/Atari

Once again, Atari has turned to a proven arcade title as the basis for its software for the 5200 "third wave" system. And once again, they have a surefire winner on their hands. This is a fairly close approximation of the Atari coin-op and includes most of the frills and features which made the colorful invasion game so popular in its play-for-pay format. The only cloud in the sky is that the 5200 joystick is difficult to move with the precision sometimes needed to play "Centipede" at top levels. Rating: 8 (AK)

ALIEN GARDEN/Computer Game (for Atari 4-8-1200)/Epyx

You control the Cosmic Critter which flies around a vertically-scrolling garden, bumping, eating and stinging flowers to change them into new generations of plants for extra points. The concept is cute, but the muddled play-action, confusing scoring system and lack of definition between flower species makes the game a little disappointing. Rating: 6 (TF)

SATAN'S HOLLOW/Coin-Op Game/Bally-Midway

"Satan's Hollow", one of the most spectacularly visual games yet to appear in arcades, pits the gamer against swarms of gargoyles and fire-breathing demons, as you battle to build a bridge across a ravine to do battle with the Prince of Darkness himself. However, the play action doesn't live up to the graphics. While the first screen is challenging, you may find the climax of the scenario a bit disappointing. Rating: 7 (TF)

MEGAFORCE/Videogame Cartridge (for Atari VCS)/20th Century Fox

This horizontally-scrolling desert shoot-'em-up pits you, a member of the elite Megaforce unit, against an entire battalion of airborne and ground-based enemies bent on destroying the fair city of Sardoun. Equipped with the advanced Moto-Fighter, your mission is to defend Sardoun from attack while crossing a long, treacherous stretch of desert in an attempt to destroy enemy headquarters. Fast-paced play action and beautifully detailed graphics combine to make this one of the best VCS-compatible cartridges around.

Rating: 9 (TF)

ALIEN/Videogame Cartridge (for Atari VCS)/20th Century Fox

This videogame cartridge, purportedly based on the hit sf thriller movie of the same name, is a replay of the old maze-chase routine. In this version, the player maneuvers an on-screen astronaut around the spaceship maze, stamping out alien eggs as he goes. His progress is hampered by up to four pursuing aliens which can be temporarily held at bay or even turned away completely with a well-aimed shot from your flamethrower. Pass over energizing dots to turn the aliens blue and you can "catch" them. If you clear a maze, there's a bonus screen in which you dodge marauding aliens for a chance at a high-scoring prize. While the graphics are cute, the play mechanics are too unoriginal to merit much excitement. Rating: 7 (TF)

PANDORA'S BOX/Computer Game (Apple II)/Datamost

You all know what happened when Pandora opened that darn box in the mythological tale...As the protagonist of this colorful maze-shoot designed by Bob Flanagan and Scott Miller, your job is to track down all the minions of evil which your rash act has loosed on the world and dispatch them to whatever plane of existence they call home. The home arcader may use either keyboard or (preferably) joystick to control the movement and fire of the on-screen hero on the main display, an overhead view of countryside dotted with temples, forests and graveyards. A secondary display to the right of this map is a tracking screen that indicates the current positions of all monsters. Clear the level before time runs out or any monsters left over will return to bedevil the hero at skill level #8. "Pandora's Box" is slight, though quite entertaining and makes for an enjoyable blast-'em-up session. Rating: 7 (AK)

THE CAVERNS OF FREITAG/Computer Game (Apple II)/Muse Software

This action adventure, created by David Shapiro, is easily the strongest entry bearing the Muse banner to reach market since the celebrated "Castle Wolfenstein". The two programs are, in fact, somewhat similar, though the differences are so numerous that players aren't likely to complain about any lack of variety. Keystroke orders are used to guide the on-screen explorer, who is armed with a sword and bow, on a journey through a labyrinth in search of the dreaded dragon Freitag. A selection of monsters--all depicted in hires linework drawings--inhabit the maze, which also contains chests full of gold pieces. Three different displays give the player quite a bit of information, and most will need every possible advantage to survive very long at the higher skill levels and faster game speeds. This disk offers nothing radically new, but "The Caverns of Freitag" certainly makes the most of familiar elements to produce an entertaining gaming experience. Rating: 9 (AK)

TWO IMPORTANT NOTICES: Effective immediately, Reese Publishing Co., publisher of Video, Electronic Games, and Arcade Express, has changed its corporate name to Reese Communications, Inc. Also effective immediately is a new address: Electronic Games is now located at 460 West 34th St., New York, NY 10001.

HONOR ROLL

The Nation's Highest Scores

THE NATIONS HIGH ROLLERS These are the current top scores from the editors of Electronic Games and Arcade Express. To compete, send a photo of the game screen showing the final score clearly enough for judges to read the numbers. All photos become property of EG and none will be returned. Include your name and address, and mail to Electronic Games, 235 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003.

HOME VIDEOGAMES:

Asteroids/Atari VCS/Game #6 - Lance Simon, Carmichael, Ca. - 579,660
 Defender/Atari VCS/Game #1 - Gene Fruit, Maroa, Ill. - 9,068,400
 Tron Deadly Disc/Mattel Intellivision - Ed Cason, APO, New York - 5,400,900
 UFO/Odyssey/Game #1 - Dave Jacksch, RAF Bentwaters, UK - 6,136
 USAC Auto Racing/Mattel Intellivision/Course #1 - Ray Lomstock, no address, 2:48

ARCADE GAMES:

Donkey Kong Junior/Nintendo - David Herren, Pratt, Ks. - 806,400
 Ms. Pac-Man/Midway - Brian Burknep, Berwyn, Il. - 443,310
 Frenzy/Stern - Pete McCormick, Morris, Mn. - 1,243,163
 Wizard of Wor/Midway - T.P. Woolley, Goldendale, Wa. - 556,200
 Zaxxon/Sega-Gremlin - Mike Bromberg, Ft. Lee, NJ - 2,300,900
 Kick-Man/Midway - Jay Nowak, Summersville, Va - 7,685,690
 Kangaroo/Atari - Chris Andersen, Port Coquitlam, Canada - 610,200
 Looping/Venture Line - Craig Johnson, Juneau, Alaska - 2,458,770
 Joust/Williams - Rick Linden, Northbrook, Il. - 83,000,000
 Q*Bert/Gottlieb - Ace Vaselenak, Alberta, Canada - 4,008,550
 Lady Bug/Universal - Jon Morgan, Jacksonville, Fl. - 256,980
 Missile Command/Atari - Joe Fernandes, Artesia, Ca. - 52,246,260
 Centipede/Atari - Darren Olson, Calgary, Canada - 15,207,353
 Super Pac-Man/Midway - Mike Schneider, Los Angeles, Ca. - 1,233,410
 Dig-Dug/Atari - Mike Strain, San Angelo, Tx. - 6,269,720
 Donkey Kong/Nintendo - Bill Schenley, Ocean Grove, NJ - 11,800,300
 Stargate/Williams - Mike McCrary, Albuquerque, NM - 64,830,268
 Robotron/Williams - Ken Vance, Las Vegas, Nv - 200,257,350
 Tempest/Atari - Ken Vance, Las Vegas, Nv. - 4,999,993
 Vanguard/Centuri - Guillermo Toro, Caba Rojo, PR - 2,238,220

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