

DIGITAL PRESS

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PREMIERE ISSUE

ABOUT DIGITAL PRESS

DIGITAL PRESS is composed of a group of videogame enthusiasts - some would call us "students" of the industry, who spent a good portion of our childhood pestering our parents to buy us the latest game. Well, we're grown up now, just like the games themselves, and though we don't pester our folks, we're now spending a good portion of our adulthood playing the latest games.

Far beyond the days when *Pong* seemed like a great game, we've never left the hobby that has grown with us. This newsletter represents our personal studies.

DIGITAL PRESS covers just about every system: Atari 2600, 5200, 7800, Lynx, Intellivision, Colecovision, Sega Master System, Nintendo, Sega Genesis, NEC Turbogرافix, SNK NEO-GEO, and soon, the Super NES. Although you may not see every system mentioned in this edition, each will get its fair share over the next few issues. Whenever you see the term "panel" or "panel average", that refers to the group of us that play and rate games on a scale of 1 to 10. There are six of us on the "panel", each with different gaming tastes and habits. Since not all of us own every game reviewed, keep in mind that the panel average could include between 2 and 6 reviewers.

NEO-GEO: WORTH ITS WEIGHT?

by Joe Santulli

In case you haven't heard, there's a new state-of-the art videogame system on the shelves. It's SNK's NEO-GEO, a 16-bit-plus machine with arcade quality software. In fact, you can find the NEO-GEO stand-up system in most arcades. Naturally, you have to pay the price for

this quality - but isn't it worth it? I see it this way:

I purchased the NEO-GEO system shortly after it became available, along with the *Baseball Stars Professional* title. SNK offers their system alone (called the NEO-GEO SILVER, priced around \$449) or with one game cartridge and an additional controller (NEO-GEO GOLD at \$649). Purchasing the GOLD system really only benefits the consumer in that the second controller is thrown in free - you still pay the same price as you would for the system and one game.

So how does this system stand up against its competition? Is the NEO-GEO worth its hefty price tag? Let's look at the pros and cons: obviously, the SNK system has impressive hardware: two processors, fifteen sound channels, and a graphics color palette of over a thousand colors. None of the present systems come close to that. Those are the pros, and it would seem pretty tough to put the system down for just any reason at all with that kind of power.

There are several "cons" however, that I would warn a prospective buyer to be aware of. The first - the outrageous price - should be obvious to anyone. Recently, I have seen a downward trend in prices for new cartridges, but we're talking \$15-\$20 here, leaving the ominous \$185 price tag dangling like a rock. My gripe, however, is that the software just isn't worth that price. I have played all of the current games, and while I have been impressed by some of the titles (especially *Magician Lord*, *King of the Monsters*, and *Sengoku*), I have been

In This Issue:

- NEO-GEO: Worth It's Weight?
- King's Bounty Review
- Atari 7800 Checklist
- Closet Classics Vol. 1
- The Worst of Atari 2600 pt.1
- Arnold Palmer vs. PGA Tour
- Classifieds

equally impressed by recent titles for other systems with prices only a fraction of the NEO-GEO softs.

I have always been a great fan of video baseball games in particular, and the lure of a 55 meg version definitely hooked me. *Baseball Stars Professional* is alternately brilliant and annoying. The crystal clear voice that does the play-by-play is incredible, but after a game or two you wish you could shut it off, especially when it repeats the same sentence after every hit! There were other quirks about the game - like the sluggish response of the fielding controls and the misleading "tiny diamond" showing the location of the baserunners - that made it more a disappointment to me than a technological marvel.

Don't get me wrong. This system packs a punch, and even some of the weaker titles might make your jaw drop as you witness the state-of-the-art graphics and sound. But I would recommend to even the most die-hard videogame fan to wait and see what happens with SNK in the next few months. The software selection is still rather small, and at almost \$200 a pop, you may find yourself with one very expensive dust collector.

GENESIS PANEL REVIEWS: KING'S BOUNTY (Electronic Arts)

by Joe Santulli

TITLE	JS	KY	BS	JA	KO	HH
KING'S BOUNTY	9	-	-	-	9	7

Have you been looking for a strategy game with adventure / RPG themes? How about a quest game with increasing challenges? Maybe just something different for the Genesis? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you may want to check out *King's Bounty* by Electronic Arts. In this exceptional cart, you must find the Scepter of Order, hidden somewhere within a giant world consisting of four continents, dozens of towns and castles, and a horde of nasty monsters.

The principal of *King's Bounty* is that



you must travel around the four continents, seeking out seventeen criminals each holding a piece of the map showing the location of the hidden Scepter. Each

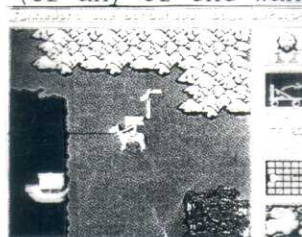
time you capture a criminal, another piece of the map is given to you, uncovering the hidden location. Capturing a criminal requires that you A) know the whereabouts of the criminal's castle, B) have siege weapons to breach the castle walls, C) have a contract on the criminal, and D) defeat his/her/its army once found. Getting the contract and siege weapons are simple tasks - you can get either in any town. Finding the villain is slightly more difficult, requiring some detective work (gathering information from various towns or visiting the scattered castles) or magic.

In order to defeat a villain's army (or any of the wandering ones you'll encounter along the way), you'll have to command an army of your own. Your army can consist of five different races, from the weak peasants to mighty knights to tough(!) dragons. In

all, there are 25 different races you could enlist. With the right amount of money and battle-savvy, you should be winning battles and conquering castles in no time. The difficulty increases with every criminal you defeat, with the final villain, Arch Dragonbreath, nearly impossible to beat.

Luckily, along the way you will find chests that can increase your gold or leadership ability, grant you spells or spell power, or show you a map to the whole continent. With the help of these chests, and the King's salary, you have a sporting chance. Later in the game, you will also incorporate 14 magic spells to aid you in battle (and traveling as well).

King's Bounty is a game with a lot of depth. The non-linear quest literally allows you to roam around the world before ever fighting your first battle! There is strategy galore: for example, you could try to find the Scepter with only some of the map pieces, and hope you see enough to search in the right area. The battlefield holds limitless





combinations for your strategy skills, since some races can use magic, some can fly, others are affected by certain spells, etc. There's a lot to keep you busy in this game!

A few minor complaints: the most significant was the terrible music that plays over and over. Fortunately, that can be shut off. I found that *King's Bounty* was best played with the TV turned down and the stereo turned up. The graphics won't blow you away either, but overall, they work well with the theme. Also be aware that this is a "password save" game, and the password is 56 characters long. Unless you plan to play in long sessions, this becomes quite a nuisance. Overall, though, this is a complex (but not complicated) adventure that will keep you thinking for a long, long time.

ATARI 7800 CHECKLIST

Believe it or not, Atari and a handful of software developers are still supporting the 7800, the system that made the MARIE chip famous. The MARIE chip allowed more sprites onscreen without flicker. Owners of the 7800 often point to *Robotron 2084* as a groundbreaking achievement - the number of characters moving around all at once without disruption in speed or gameplay was truly amazing. Recently, several new cartridges were released for this outstanding little system. The new ones are marked with an asterisk (*) here, but since the inventory is so finite, here is the complete (?) list. All cartridges were manufactured by Atari unless noted in parentheses:

Ace of Aces
 Alien Brigade *
 Asteroids Deluxe
 Ballblazer
 Barnyard Blaster
 Basketbrawl *
 Centipede
 Choplifter!
 Commando
 Crack'ed
 Crossbow
 Dark Chambers
 Desert Falcon
 Dig Dug

Donkey Kong
 Donkey Kong Jr.
 Double Dragon (Activision)
 Fatal Run
 F-18 Hornet (Absolute)
 Fight Night
 Food Fight
 Galaga
 Hat Trick
 Ikari Warriors (SNK) *
 Impossible Mission
 Jinks
 Joust
 Karateka
 Kung Fu Master (Absolute)
 Mario Bros.
 Mat Mania Challenge (American Technos) *
 Mean 18 Ultimate Golf (Accolade) *
 Meltdown
 Midnight Mutants
 Motorpsycho *
 Ms. Pac-man
 Ninja Golf *
 One on One Basketball
 Pete Rose Baseball (Absolute)
 Planet Smashers *
 Pole Position II
 Pyromania (Froggo)
 Rampage (Activision)
 Realsports Baseball
 Robotron: 2084
 Scrapyard Dog
 Summer Games
 Super Huey
 Super Skateboardin' (Absolute)
 Tank Command (Froggo)
 Title Match Pro Wrestling (Absolute)
 Tomcat F-14 Simulator (Absolute)
 Touchdown Football
 Tower Toppler
 Water Ski
 Winter Games
 Xenophobe
 Xevious

This list may not be complete or entirely accurate. Please write if you know something we don't know!

CLOSET CLASSICS, VOL. 1

by Kevin Oleniacz & Joe Santulli

Here is this issue's edition of "sleepers", or games that receive(d) little attention but packed hours of fun into our systems:

1. WORM WHOMPER by Activision (for the Intellivision) - Talk about intense! This was one of the best games ever

produced for the system. The premise is to keep an army of insects from reaching your crops. If they reach all of the crops, your game is over. While that may sound all too familiar, the gameplay was not. While blasting bug spray to a rapidly increasing background tune, you will encounter many different kinds of bugs: moths which drop little worm eggs up close to your crops, snails that take multiple hits to kill, slugs that move surprisingly fast, and hundreds - and I MEAN hundreds - of creeping inchworms. The graphics are great, the game plays very well, and the music will make you sweat bullets when it picks up. A real classic, manufactured only for this system.

2. D.J. BOY by Kaneko (for the Genesis) - Amidst the swarm of shooters for this system, this little surprise seemed to be invisible on the shelves. That's because the packaging was terrible - no screen pictures on the box, and a sadly inadequate description of the game. The truth be told, however, this is one dynamite game. If you can imagine *Double Dragon* on rollerskates, that's what you've got here. Only better. D.J. Boy has hysterical end bosses (a fat mother throwing pies and flying kicks, a conceited bodybuilder, exploding clowns, and much more) and graphics that will knock you out. The action is



continuously fast-paced, but not TOO difficult. To top it all off, the music is catchy, with occasional cheering (who doesn't like cheering

when beating up on video punks?). D.J. can probably be found at any Genesis distributor.

3. QUICK STEP by Imagic (for the Atari 2600) - One of the lesser-known Imagic carts, what sets this apart from other *Q*Bert* clones is that it's a better game. The basic premise is to control either a squirrel or a kangaroo, and attempt to hop along trampolines, changing them to your color. While you are doing that, the opponent is doing the same. As the trampolines scroll off the screen, you

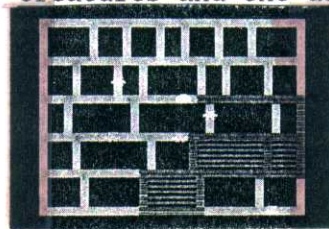
get points for any remaining in your color. If you scroll off the screen, you're dead. With it's charming graphics and unpredictable playfield (the trampolines occasionally branch off into narrow passages or dead ends!) *Quick Step* incorporates fast-thinking strategy with a simple concept. One complaint, however, when your character dies, he is sometimes placed in an impossible position, causing an undeserved death. In spite of this setback, gamers would enjoy hours of fun with this one.

4. FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER by Data Age (for Atari 2600) - Data Age is a company known for producing very simple games of a rather low quality for the Atari 2600. However, if most of their releases were as inspired as *Frankenstein's Monster* (their final game), this company may have survived the huge videogame shakedown of 1984. In this action game, the player has to travel across Frankenstein's Castle to retrieve blocks used in building a wall around the monster. Along the way are various hazards: spiders, bats, trapdoors, an acid pit, disappearing floors, etc. to reach the blocks and get back. The graphics, although sub-par even by Atari standards, are excellent compared to all of the other Data Age releases. This cart was truly a change of pace from the pattern most of their releases followed: very low-quality ripoffs of better games already available for the system.

THE WORST OF THE ATARI 2600, PART 1 OF 3

by Kevin Oleniacz

1. AMIDAR (Parker Bros.) - This is a maze-type game where the object is to color in the maze while maneuvering around a grid. Immediately one would notice the lack of detail in the creatures and the dull, plain grid. The game play is painfully slow and is equally painful to watch. The sound effects are also very crude. Slow, repetitious play would cure anyone's insomnia.



2. CHINA SYNDROME (Spectravision) - This cart is challenging and fast paced but too easily gets out of hand and leads to frustration. The sound effects consist only of blips and primitive sounds of explosions, while the graphics consist mainly of dots. The "meltdown" sequence at the conclusion of the game is unspectacular and not worth watching.

3. COCONUTS (Telesys) - Avoiding coconuts thrown downward by a monkey which jumps back & forth between two trees did not make me go nuts over this game. Besides being utterly annoying, this game is completely frustrating to play, as the gameplay goes from being very easy one moment, to nearly impossible the next. Because the difficulty increases too rapidly and there is a lack of variations, no gamer could go nuts over *Coconuts*.

4. DISASTER (Zimag) - The object of this dismal game is to keep several plates continually spinning on poles, catching any that fall. The lack of sound effects, details or any background whatsoever while maneuvering around one unchanging screen would surely claim this as a DISASTER. The continual music rapidly becomes monotonous.

5. FIREFLY (Mythicon) - Who was Mythicon kidding when they released their three terrible games, claiming they were the "first in a series of..."? This dud's concept was too simple and very repetitious. No backgrounds or sound effects, and the music would test anyone's nerves. *Firefly* wouldn't fly high on anyone's list.

6. FOOTBALL (Atari) - Basic (and I really mean basic) rules apply in this game, five minutes per game and four players per team. It's not unusual to find older Atari games' graphics to be primitive, but even the gameplay here is unrealistic. For example, the defensive players cannot catch up with the offense, leading to many 80 yard touchdowns. Any football fan (or non-football fan) would be very disappointed with this cart.

7. HUMAN CANNONBALL (Atari) - The extremely simple concept (shooting a man out of a cannon) surely didn't hold many gamer's attentions. The graphics are so blocky that the "man" closely resembles

the "water tower" he is fired into. This is one of Atari's first releases, and the graphics and sound truly reflect this.

8. KARATE (Froggo) - The graphics in this fighting contest are shockingly bad considering this game was released many years after the system was put out on the market. The fighters basically consist of (and look like) blocks connected together. The worst aspect, however, is the gameplay, where no skill is involved (just move the stick around and hope a blow lands). To make matters worse, the game gets more DIFFICULT when you lose, as the opponent who just beat you gets a promotion in rank! This game is a real loser.

ARNOLD PALMER TOURNAMENT GOLF VS. PGA TOUR GOLF: SIDE BY SIDE

by Joe Santulli

TITLE	JS	KY	BS	JA	KO	HH
ARNOLD PALMER	5	5	6	-	8	6
PGA TOUR GOLF	9	-	-	-	9	10

Video golf has always been a crowd pleaser. You don't have to search endless hours for a missing ball. You don't have to wait for the person in front of you. Best of all, if you're having a bad game, you can just shut the system down and no one ever has to know.

Naturally, the more realistic the simulation, the more fun. The Sega Genesis has two golf cartridges: *Arnold Palmer Tournament Golf* by Sega, and *PGA Tour Golf* by Electronic Arts. Which is best? Well, if you take our word for it, *PGA Tour* is the winner, hands down. We are, however, just a bunch of New Jersey boys, and some of us don't even golf in real life, so you may disagree. I personally wasn't satisfied with Sega's golf game, and hoped that someone would come along and do it right. How would you judge? Look at this side by side comparison:

OPTION	ARNOLD PALMER	PGA TOUR
# of Courses	3	4
Real courses?	No	Yes
Real players?	No	Yes
Skill levels	12	2
Camera angles	3 - behind golfer, putting green, overhead.	6 - behind golfer, ball approach, putting green, close-up, overhead, fly-by preview.
Maximum players	2	4
Practice mode?	Yes	Yes
Save method	Password	Battery
Statistics?	No	Yes
Club selection?	Yes	Yes
Instant replay?	No	Yes
Special shots	None	3 - chip shot, punch shot, fringe putt

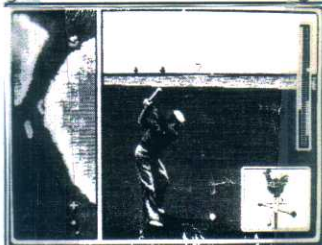
Overall, the game play is pretty similar between the two. The golfers in Arnold Palmer are larger and better detailed, but the music gets aggravating real fast.



PGA has weaker graphics overall, with most of the graphic power used in the ball flight. Both games have cheering, but you'll find that

it sounds better on PGA, and happens more often.

Looking at the above chart, it seems obvious that PGA is the superior game. As a golf simulation, it is. If you prefer a golf where you have more control, you might lean towards Arnold Palmer. In PGA, hooks and slices occur based on how cleanly you hit the ball, just like in real golf.



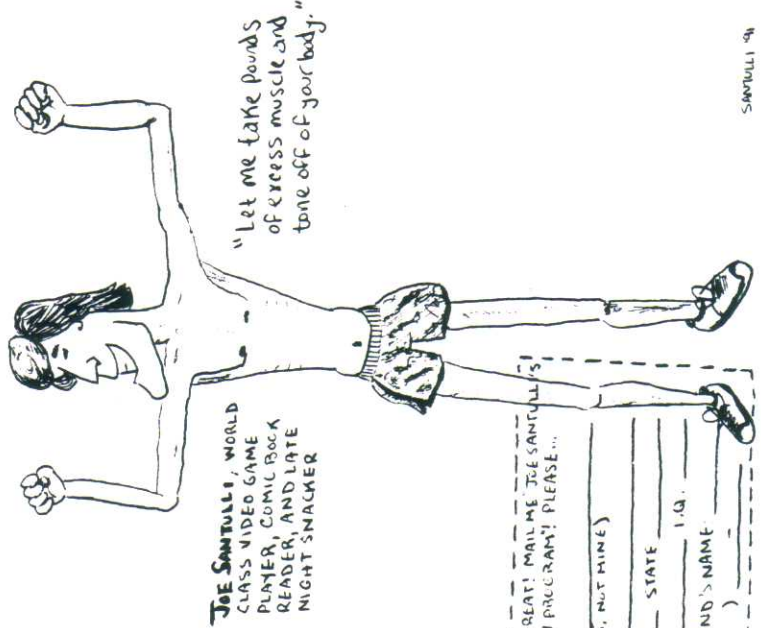
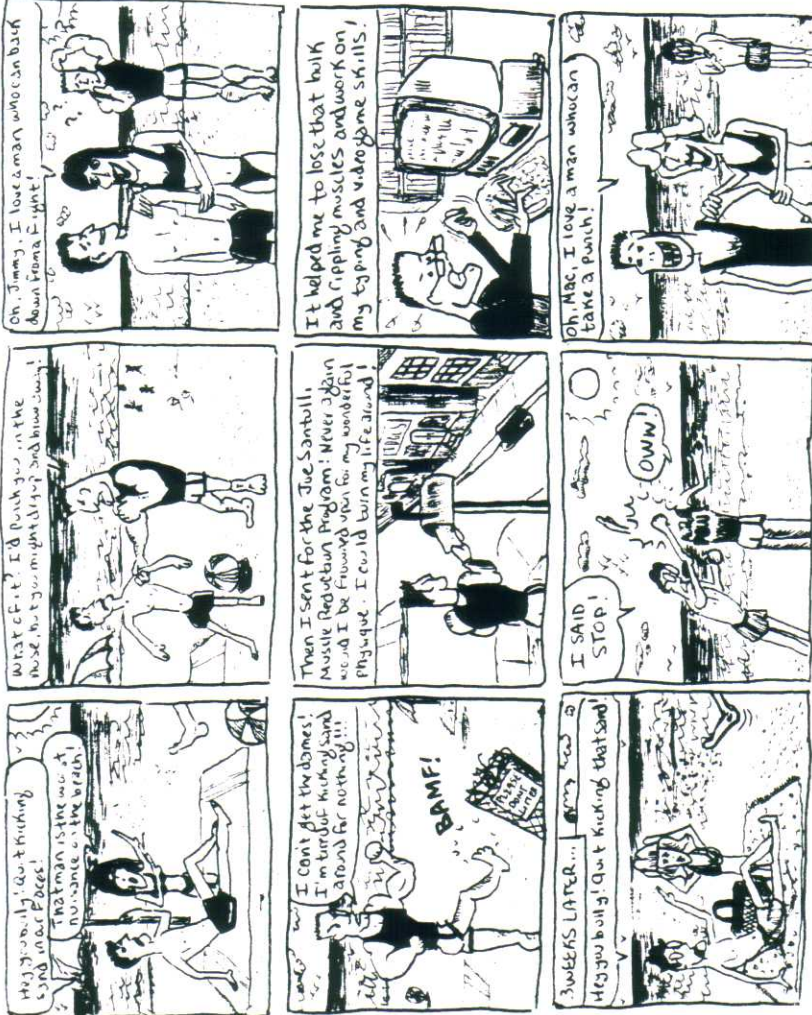
In Arnold Palmer, you have control over the hooks and slices.

The courses in PGA are more challenging. You won't find too many unusual holes on Arnold Palmer -

just a lot of wide doglegs and short three-pars. In PGA, there are greens on islands, on thin bars of fairway, and behind trees. Definitely a better challenge.

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SANTULLI '91

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CLASSIFIED

Looking for used or hard-to-find cartridges? Want to sell something to a collector? Let DIGITAL PRESS help. Send us your list - for the November/December 1991 issue, all classifieds are free!

WANTED: (for Atari 2600) Mountain King, Indy 500 w/controllers. (for Intellivision) Safecracker, Shark! Shark! (for Colecovision) Tunnels & Trolls, Dracula. **FOR SALE:** Intellivision Empire Strikes Back, B-17 Bomber, Space Spartans, Lock n Chase, NHL Hockey, Night Stalker, Star Strike, \$5 each. Also Intellivoice module, computer module, and musical keyboard. Write or call: Joe Santulli, 29 Cupsaw Avenue, Ringwood, NJ, 07456 (201) 962-7438.

WANTED: In good condition: Coleco's Telstar Tank Combat, also Spider-man for the Atari 2600. Contact: Howard M. Hirsch, 45 Red Twig Trail, Bloomingdale, NJ, 07403-1204 or call (201) 838-3580.

FOR SALE: Atari 2600 carts w/photocopied instructions: (5\$ each) Alien, No Escape, Outlaw, Planet Patrol, Spider Fighter, Swordquest Fireworld, Venture, Warlords. Atari XE: Gato (new - \$7). Atari 7800: Super Skateboardin' (new - \$10). Atari 5200 and Commodore 64 games also available. **WANTED:** C-64 disk New York City, 2600 carts: Mangia, Master Builder, Sinistar, Frogger II, many others. Also need instructions for Atari 2600 Ghostbusters. Write or call: Kevin Oleniacz, 96 Buena Vista Dr., Ringwood, NJ, 07456, (201) 835-8156 after 7pm weeknights, anytime on weekends.

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NEXT ISSUE:

- NEO GEO game reviews
- Videogames' "family tree"
- The worst of Atari 2600 part 2
- Complete Colecovision list & a look into the system's best software
- Closet classics, reviews, and more

Shipping October 15th! Order now!

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8/16/91

Dear Digital Press,

Thank you very much for sending me your premiere issue, which I enjoyed immensely. I am enclosing a check for \$5.00 to cover the next six issues. I can hardly wait to see your feature on Colovision next issue!

I am a 44 year old wife and mother who has been involved with video games for more than 20 years. I have the original Odyssey system (pre-Pong), which I purchased new in the late 60's, and I have virtually every system that has been available since, with extensive software collections for each. My children have grown up playing whatever system was "hot" at the time, but I'm afraid neither one really shares my fascination with these things.

Reading Digital Press really made me think about getting out some of the older stuff and playing with it again. I tend to get obsessed with one system, and will play it exclusively for long periods of time. At present I'm in a TGB / PC Engine phase.

Well, keep up the good work, and thanks again!

P.S. I loved the cartoon!

Sincerely,
Lynn Glenn
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106)927-6182

Erik Schimek
3125 E. 18th St.

Inver Grove Heights, Mn.
55076

Dear Editor,

Wow, another "fanzine." God, how many are there? The rumored # is 100+, and I believe it. I'll mention you in Sudden Flame III, printed in Mindstorm. (If you don't receive Mindstorm, send 50¢ to Aaron Buckner 9474 Fallson Ct. Blue Ash, OH 45242 for a sample issue.) I usually try to print the address of any 'zines that are sent to me, especially those not reviewed by god (Arnie Katz).

Your worst 2600 games surprised me. Why print it? I was under the assumption that all 2600 games sucked. (Blasphemy, you say?)

I enjoyed squinting at your "Ad." Of course I want a Pee-wee Herman physique! Who wouldn't?

Are your 2600 carts with copied instructions, dare I say it, could they be possibly pirated!?! (I'm telling Arnie!!)

I'm broke and the Digital Press isn't exactly the greatest thing since Spam, so here's \$1.00. Don't spend it all in one place.

- Erik Schimek

