

The Twice Monthly Publication
for the Coin Operated Entertainment Industry

PLAY METER

Volume 7, Number 23

December 15, 1981

OUR EDITORS RANK 1981'S TOP TEN
INDUSTRY STORIES

1981 INDEX OF ARTICLES

VIDEO'S 'SATURATION POINT' NEAR?

'CRITIC'S CORNER' LOOKS BACK
AT THE FIRST 5 YEARS



THE YEAR IN REVIEW

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PLAY METER

The Twice Monthly Publication for the Coin Operated Entertainment Industry
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1981 Guide to Play Meter: page 27 begins the comprehensive index to news and feature articles that have appeared in these pages over the past year. A ready future reference for the readers, included are all technical and game play reviews.
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We are the anomaly, the exception to the rule. While government and industry figures debate about whether or not we're all in a recession, a depression, or whatever, the coin-op amusement industry just keeps right on wheeling along. It's boom times for all of us who make our living from coin-op entertainment.

Of course, the sensational product that has been coming out of late has helped to a great extent. But there's another ingredient that I think accounts even more for our success, and maybe we're not even aware of it— it's our optimism. That's right, our optimism.

We've gained such self-confidence in our products and services that we now can march right up and knock on doors we'd never had thought about approaching in years past. Sure, we've got something they want. But it's our self-confidence that's making it happen. As a result, more and more people are getting into this business. The media are showing more and more attention to us because we are news. "Man bites dog" —that's us! While everyone else is sitting around telling sad stories about how the economy has fallen apart and they're victims of it, our industry has gone on a roll.

The numbers we're playing with these days are absolutely frightening— to negative thinkers. Operators, distributors, and manufacturers now have paper outstanding that is several times greater than it has been at any time in their professional careers. But still there's no hesitancy because we know we're on a roll. Are we in over our heads? I think not.

Sure we've had our problems— game prices are going out of sight; of copyrights, there's no end to those problems; and governmental intrusions are increasing. But, as an industry, we still have that overriding optimism that we can do whatever it takes.

All the great things that have been done in this world have happened because someone didn't think it was impossible. We all know that it's physically impossible for a bumblebee to fly, but no one bothered to tell the bumblebee that. So, what we now have is a damn bug that flies only because it's too ignorant to know that it can't. In the same way this industry is like the bumblebee. We are not allowing ourselves to be hemmed in by what is possible, and that's what's so exhilarating about this business today. We can do the difficult today. The impossible takes us until tomorrow morning.

As long as we maintain this overwhelming self-

confidence, then surely we can keep on this phenomenal roll. Isn't it a good thing that *Space Invaders* came along and got all of us positive thinkers together in one industry? Hell, we would all be successful if we made our livings with coin-op Maytag washers and dryers. That's the kind of people we have in this business today.

Sure, the videos are doing great. But don't sell yourselves short. The real reason this industry is on a roll is because of us— all of us. Any industry is only as good as the people who make their living in it. If we were running disreputable businesses, if we were operating sleazy arcades, if we dealt in business tactics that were straight out of "The Untouchables," then it wouldn't matter if God Himself were designing the games. We'd still be failures.

There are no magic words, no secret formulas for success. Of course, there's a degree of dedication and hard work that's required; but the most important ingredient is self-confidence. That's what allows a 175-pound halfback to bowl over a 250-pound defensive tackle.

This is our Year in Review Issue. As you read over what we think were the top stories of the past year, as you check out the index for articles we've done for the past twelve months— I would like you to note that for every problem, every controversy that this industry has faced, there is also a solution that's defining itself.

This is a can-do industry, and we can all be proud of that. All the naysayers in the world cannot detract for a moment from the biggest reason why the coin-op industry is so big today, which is that we've got a whole lot of positive thinkers who are not used to seeing obstacles, only challenge.

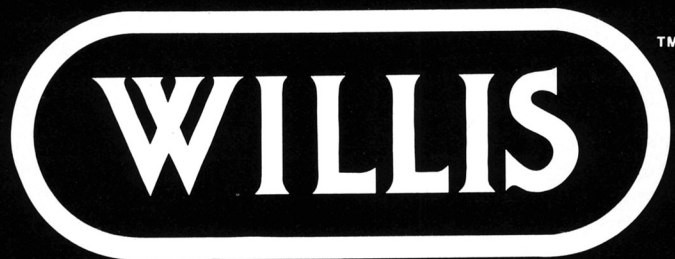
How strongly do I believe in this? Let's put it this way. I'm writing this from a hospital bed. My doctor thinks he's releasing me on Friday, but he must be wrong. I've got a tee-off scheduled for 1:30 p.m. Thursday.



Ralph C. Lally II
Editor and Publisher

Our congratulations
to Centuri, Inc. for
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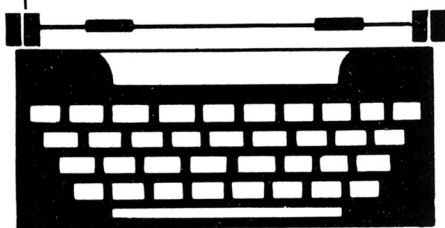
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Letters to the editor . . .



Tune of the times

I am former editor of *Billboard*, former associate publisher of *American Automatic Merchandiser*, currently mid-West editor of *Beverage World* and a strong admirer and staunch supporter of what you guys are doing.

It just proves that young, alert people can always show the old cockers up, especially when they are fat cats, tired, lazy and not in tune with the times. I enjoy what you are printing and to go twice a month shows the need and desire for you do. Go get' em, tigers!!!

Frank Luppino Jr.
Glenview, Illinois

Pattern of things

As the owner of 3 well run and well maintained arcades in the Chicago Suburbs, I am very aware of the ancient prejudices and unfounded preconceptions of village trustees in banning arcades from their communities. In most instances it is very difficult to get approval to do business.

Much has been published in your magazine regarding the formation of associations and the contributions of money to improve our public image. We had better first improve our private image as many manufacturers are making it impossible for us to do business also.

These manufacturers are now moving into our markets on a grand scale with their own arcades. Bally long ago gobbled up Aladdin's Castle, and recently purchased a Chicago chain of 26 suburban restaurants. They are converting them into food and game room combinations. Taito now operates large arcades in our market, and is planning many more. Sega has done the same thing in California. So you see, when we finally get approval from a community, we then have to

compete with the vertical monopoly and corporate greed of the "pillars of our industry."

I realize this does not affect everyone in our business, but it is certainly a pattern of things to come that will determine the future destiny of our industry. The question most often asked me is, "How long do I think video rooms will continue to prosper?" Some manufacturers are killing the goose that laid all of our golden eggs. We, the operators, are fast becoming an endangered species.

Les Jacobs
#1 Fun Family Game Rooms
Chicago

Something on your mind you want to vent? Got a gripe? Full of praise? Have a question? If you have comments on the coin operated entertainment industry, write to Play Meter. Our "Letters to the Editor" columns are dedicated to you, the operator/reader.

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The Top News Stories in Coin-op, 1981

1. *Convertible games appear on the market; meanwhile, used equipment sale prices plummet*
2. *Gray area games pose a threat to amusement industry; AMOA moves Expo out of Las Vegas*
3. *Video game copyrights are enforced in courts; the industry defines the piracy problem*
4. *AMOA's leadership role is questioned; jukebox location list eliminated; jukebox royalty rates are hiked*
5. *Manufacturers and distributors form their own trade associations*
6. *Media focus sharp attention on coin-op games; local regulations tighten up for arcades*
7. *The operator population swells; revenues are up; arcades have marked growth*
8. *'Blue sky' rip-offs hit inexperienced operators*
9. *Major manufacturers diversify into video marketing*
10. *Other equipment types brace to meet video's competitive challenge*

For a review of the top issues making news in the industry in '81, turn the page. . .

'The year the industry found itself'

Reviewing the coin-op year 1981

There's a temptation among the news media at year's end to wrap things up in a neat bundle, by summarizing the year's events—in a nutshell, they say—before shipping the whole damn thing out to some history department's archives for obscurity purposes. Maybe it's a feeling by media people that, after reporting the events all year long, it's their responsibility to make some sense of it all.

It's silly, of course. Presumptuous is the word. But it's a temptation nonetheless. So be it with *Play Meter*, too.

But—what's that, you say? It's not the year's end yet? This year's got over a month's life still in its body?

You're looking at the wrong calendar.

Look at the issue date of this magazine you're reading. Surprise! December 15, 1981, the last of 1981. Your next issue, in a little over two weeks' time, will bear the futuristic date of 1982 on it. And there's a reason for it, you must realize.

As industry veterans will quickly attest, the coin-op amusement industry generally looks upon its year as beginning and ending with the AMOA Show in Chicago.

Maybe it was meant for this industry to be six or eight weeks ahead of its time. To read the press clippings that have been written and spoken about us this past year, it must be concluded that the coin-op amusement industry is indeed ahead of its time. Or, as some others would contend, its time has finally come.

And what do they mean by that? Simply this: Although past years may have produced greater technological advances than 1981, there is probably no year that can match 1981 as far as this industry is concerned. 1981 was truly the year the industry found itself. It's the year the industry became aware of exactly how big it was. It was also the



David Rosen explained
Convert-A-Game system to distributors.

year the industry became aware of the challenges and responsibilities that come with being such a giant.

Convertible games

The cost of new equipment continues to escalate. The games themselves, for the most part, prove to be miracle workers netting collections that were unheard of just a couple of years ago. But still the increasing cost of equipment—coupled with the closeout reductions on unsaleable items—has created a deep-seated suspicion among operators that game manufacturers are “gouging” the operator.

But it was more than just this suspicion that spawned the emergence of convertible games in the industry. A deep-seated fear has also gripped today's operators, a fear of how far can economic reality be stretched?

At the second annual Amusement Operators Expo in New Orleans this past spring, Ray Hibarger of Hanson Distributing told operator attendees, “What we're really selling is air.”

By “air,” Hibarger said he meant

there was nothing tangible the player took away from the game, other than the enjoyment of having played the game.

But with yesterday's video wonders quickly becoming today's dogs, operators are feeling more and more that they are *operating* “air” as well. Their investments are here today, gone tomorrow. Because the games they pay so dearly for are, within a very short time, worth no more than yesterday's newspapers—operators have started to look for ways to protect their huge investments by owning something that retains its value after the game has lost its commercial appeal.

For small businessmen who are trying to build their individual financial empires, this quick obsolescence of games can be very unsettling. That's why operators have started looking for “bricks” which will last longer than just the duration of the single game.

And convertible games appear to many operators to offer that opportunity. Convert yesterday's game to today's hit in just a matter of minutes! After all, these operators reason, why should I have to buy the cabinet and the monitor each time?

Deco, a Japanese game manufacturer, through its U.S. marketing arm, Data East, was the first to try the convertible game waters. Data East started offering the industry this past spring a cassette system with interchangeable game cartridges. It did create a ripple of curiosity but didn't exactly rock the coin-op industry. After all, industry veterans reasoned, it's not surprising that a Japanese company, trying to make an impact on the American market, would try marketing a convertible game package to carve out its place on this side of the Pacific.

But then came the bombshell.

Gremlin Industries—another company with Japanese roots, but

A large, three-dimensional graphic of the year '1981' in a bold, red, blocky font. The numbers are set against a black background and are framed by a thin red border. The lighting creates a sense of depth, with shadows and highlights on the edges of the digits.

Here's to all who helped rack up this Banner year. 1981, our 65th year, has been our best yet! And, we'd like to thank all the people who made doing this business such a pleasure. So, we thank our manufacturers, our customers and our personnel. Here's to more Banner years to come for all of us in this great industry.

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- Location Cost Analysis
- Business Forms and Recordkeeping
- Starting and Managing the Arcade
- Return on Investment and Business Profitability

DISTRIBUTORS' PREVIEWS

Each day, a special exhibit
preview will be available to
distributors. This will be a key
opportunity for suppliers,
manufacturers, and distributors to
make those IMPORTANT face-to-
face contacts in a relaxed
atmosphere.

WE'VE MOVED TO CHICAGO!

Chicago has been picked as the home for the making-news-in-'82 AMUSEMENT OPERATORS EXPO. The Hyatt Regency is the best there is, with exhibits, meeting rooms, special events, and sleeping rooms all located within this fabulous and beautiful hotel. There is much to see and do in Chicago, and after the seminars are over and the Exhibit Hall is closed, you will want to take advantage of the night life and fine entertainment offered in the hotel and throughout the whole city of Chicago.

AMUSEMENT OPERATORS EXPO is making news in 1982. Growing industry-wide enthusiasm by amusement machine owners and operators, suppliers, distributors, retailers, arcade owners, and chain store executives has resulted in close to 200 booths being reserved 6 months before the show! Take a look at this impressive list of exhibitors who have already signed up:

1982 AMUSEMENT OPERATORS EXPO EXHIBITORS

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Bally Pinball Div./Midway Mfg. Company | United Billiards | The Valley Company |
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| Electro Sport, Inc. | General Computer Corporation | Eicon Industries |
| Game-A-Tron Corporation | Stern Electronics, Inc. | Green Duck Corporation |
| Kiddie Rides-U.S.A. | Shanco International | Tournament Games, Inc. |
| Kurz-Kasch Electronics Division | Wildcat Chemical | Wico Corporation |
| Rowe International, Inc. | National Rejectors | Nintendo of America, Inc. |
| Taito America Corporation | Came Software Systems, Inc. | Gremlin |
| Williams Electronics, Inc. | Dynamo Corporation | Encyclopaedia Britannica |
| The Wiz Kids | Exidy, Inc. | Americade Amusement, Inc. |
| Scan Coin, Inc. | D. Gottlieb & Company | Amusement Emporium |
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PlayMeter

Equipment Poll

The following are rankings of the top videos and top pinballs making above average weekly gross collections nationwide. The dollar amounts appearing are the average weekly grosses as reported to Play Meter magazine through its regular national operator survey, including both arcade and street locations. Games with less than adequate responses (less than fifty percent) but with above average collections are so noted. Games not appearing on the poll either (1) did not generate over a ten percent response rate to provide an adequate representative sampling or (2) did not register weekly gross collections above the national average. **Special note should be made that these earnings figures are gross revenues. When computing operator revenues, these amounts should be reduced by fifty percent to reflect the most widespread industry practice, that of granting fifty percent commissions to the location owners.**

TOP PINBALLS

Eleven of 21 pinballs (52%) with a response rate over ten percent have above average earnings.

	Dec. 15	Dec. 1	Nov. 15
National average for pinballs	\$101	\$104	\$113
1. BLACK HOLE/Gottlieb	\$203	\$209	\$236
2. EIGHT-BALL DELUXE/Bally	\$135	\$134	\$160
★ 3. VOLCANO/Gottlieb	\$114	\$108	\$135
4. MARS/Gottlieb	\$113	\$111	\$127
★ 5. PHARAOH/Williams	\$102	—	—

TOP VIDEOS

Thirteen of 31 videos (42%) with a response rate over ten percent have above average earnings.

	Dec. 15	Dec. 1	Nov. 15
National average for videos	\$169	\$186	\$206
★ 1. FROGGER/Gremlin	\$262	—	—
★ 2. TEMPEST/Atari	\$260	—	—
3. DEFENDER/Williams	\$233	\$254	\$282
4. CENTIPEDE/Atari	\$232	\$252	\$271
★ 5. VANGUARD/Centuri	\$230	\$278	\$250
★ 6. OMEGA RACE/Midway	\$229	\$264	\$257
7. PAC-MAN/Midway	\$215	\$238	\$254
8. SUPER COBRA/Stern	\$193	\$216	\$254
9. ASTEROIDS/Atari	\$171	\$193	—
★ 10. VENTURE/Exidy	\$170	\$198	\$239

★ Conditionally Rated— Weekly average based on less than 50% response rate

Provisionally Rated Pinballs and Videos

(Above average earning games, with a response rate between 10—25%)

PINBALLS

Provisional Ratings	Dec. 15	Dec. 1	Nov. 15
CENTAUR/Bally	\$133	\$119	—
SPLIT SECOND/Stern	\$123	—	—
EMBRYON/Bally	\$121	—	—
SOLAR FIRE/Williams	\$113	\$137	—
CATACOMB/Stern	\$109	\$135	—
MEDUSA/Bally	\$105	\$116	\$133

VIDEOS

Provisional Ratings	Dec. 15	Dec. 1	Nov. 15
QIX/Taito	\$306	\$317	\$320
DONKEY KONG/Nintendo	\$283	\$306	\$300
SPACE FURY/Gremlin	\$206	\$189	—

Operator/readers who would like to join the ever-growing numbers of readers participating currently in the survey, write: Play Meter, Equipment Poll, P.O. Box 24170, New Orleans 70184.

also a company which has carved out for itself a respectable share of the U.S. video game market—introduced its Convert-A-Game package to its distributors in the early summer.

That Convert-A-Game introduction stirred up a tempest of controversy within the industry that will probably be debated for some time to come.

Distributors are deeply divided on the issue. There were those who saw the introduction of convertible games as a solid step forward, a way of easing the capital squeeze being put on operators and distributors alike. But then there were an even greater number of distributors who openly expressed fear that convertible games will mean the end of the distributing business.

Still, the convertible game idea seems (initially, at least) appealing to operators. In *Play Meter* magazine's annual operator survey, a clear majority of responding operators (56%) said they favored such a system because, quite simply, it would mean the games would cost less. Another 32% said they had no opinion, and only 12% were dead set against the games.

Those operators who were against the games, claimed convertible games would necessarily be inferior in quality because operators would be locked into a certain system which would not be adaptable for changes. But an even bigger fear expressed by these operators was that convertible games might even eliminate the need for operators. They reasoned that location owners could then buy their games direct from the factories, bypassing even the operators.

Nevertheless, the emergence of the convertible game (whether good or bad for this industry) does not appear to be just a passing fancy but rather a legitimate marketing approach in light of the present economics of this industry.

Gray area games

Like any industry, there has been a dark side to coin-op amusements. And that dark side has related to gambling equipment that slips in under the guise of being amusement equipment.

The large majority of people in this industry deal only with pure-amusement machines—whether it be in the manufacture, distribution, or operation of them. But apparently some industry people deal with pseudo-gambling equipment as well.

Enter the "gray area" game, a video game which features such betting games as draw poker, black jack, craps, dog racing, and horse racing. In these games, players bet and win credits on the outcome of races and card flips. Many in the amusement segment contend these games prosper because there is a promise of payoff for game credits won. The gray game opponents contend gray area games do not have the play appeal to attract

Many saw convertible games as a way of easing the capital squeeze being put on operators and distributors alike.

But many distributors feared that the new introduction would end their business.

players and, thus, rely on this promise of payouts to generate their high earnings.

The opponents of gray games go on to argue that the operation of these games will result in a legislative backlash which will have the effect of penalizing or outlawing the pure-amusement games also.

The gray area games issue came to the fore on two separate fronts at the beginning of 1981.

Amusement game factories—among them Stern, Atari, Gottlieb, Gremlin, Williams, Exidy, and Cinematronics—threatened to boycott the 1982 AMOA Show

The manufacturers' position on a Las Vegas AMOA show sent a message to the association that it had to take an assertive position on the gray area games.

unless that show pulled out of Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas. The announced reason for the opposition to the site was that the media attention the industry would garner while in Las Vegas would once again blur the line between amusement and gambling equipment. And gray area games, which they claimed prosper as a result of that indistinction, would create a negative attitude toward all games.

But the position taken by the

manufacturers also served to send a message to the operator's national association, a message that it had to take an assertive, leadership position concerning the gray area games.

For its part, the AMOA did the minimum. After claiming that it was financially committed to the Las Vegas show, the AMOA finally pulled out of Las Vegas when it became clear that the show's major exhibitors were not bluffing.

But as far as clearing the air about the gray area games, the association stopped short of taking any stand against the gray area machines other than agreeing on a definition of gambling machines that would only apply as to how the devices could be exhibited at the show.

Why no further stand against machines which a large majority of the members felt were a real threat to the legitimacy of amusement games? The AMOA said it would not take a stand against any games which could be operated legally somewhere.

At year's end, however, the immediate past president of the AMOA, Norm Pink, threw some more light on possibly why the AMOA restricted itself on the gray area games issue to a definition affecting only its show. Pink told *Play Meter* that at the board meeting, where it was decided how the AMOA should address the gray area games controversy, some board members argued that they wanted to retain the option to operate the games illegally. Thus, the national association's compromised, less-than-assertive position may have reflected this desire as well.

Instead, the leadership stand was left to be taken by a state association.

The Ohio Music and Amusement Association (OMAA) challenged a state court ruling allowing the operation of gray area games when the association learned that the gray area games were exploiting a state law which allowed free plays on pinballs. If the court's decision were to stand, the association's members conjectured, then a stiffer law would replace the existing law, and that stiffer law would probably endanger the operation of pure amusement devices.

So the Ohio association joined with the state attorney general in appealing the court's decision to a higher court. And gray area games lost the case they won in the lower court. But it was not a complete victory for operators in the state.

The appeals court ruling only applied to video games which simulated gambling card games. It still was technically legal to operate gray area games using such themes as dog racing, horse racing, and so on.

At that point, the gray area games operator appealed the case to the state supreme court where a hearing and decision is still pending. It is, therefore, unknown at this time whether gray area games will be allowed in the state or even whether the supreme court will enlarge the definition of gray area games to include other gambling-themed games.

Nevertheless, inspired by the vigorous stand against the games, operator associations in Minnesota, Iowa, and elsewhere quickly adopted similar positions against games which many in the industry have come to see as a threat to the coin-op amusement industry.

Video game copyrights

Why do games cost so much?

Research and development, say the manufacturers. As a manufacturer, whether you license the games or design them yourself, the factories argue, the greatest cost of the game is in that intangible (more "air")—research and development.

One manufacturer went so far as to state, "We're an engineering

company. Even though we manufacture games, we need the manufacturing to pay for our engineering."

So if someone were to interfere with the remuneration for the engineering, it would follow that the original manufacturers would aggressively seek to protect their proprietary rights.

As the cost of these video games increased and the demand for the really hot games surpassed the production capabilities of even a Midway or an Atari, "pirate" manufacturers came into the picture, offering copies of such proven winners as *Pac-Man*, *Defender*, *Asteroids*, *Scramble*, *Star Castle*, and others. The lower cost was no doubt partially reflected by the fact that the pirates did not spend anything on research and development, thus having no expense to recoup there.

The games bypassed the originators and were sold directly to the industry through bootleg distributors or else factory-direct. Manufacturers, in order to keep control of their own product, sought litigation against the pirates. Midway was the first to assert its video games copyrights against pirates. Then Gremlin, Cinematronics, Williams, Atari, Stern, and others followed suit.

Though video game copyright law is still somewhat vague as far as its application, the original manufacturers have scored several court victories, some establishing major precedents which have even called for the seizure of the records of the pirate companies and the return, freight pre-paid, of the pirated games to the original manufacturer.

As a result of these developments, operators who have purchased the copied games have found themselves also tied up in copyright litigation. Pirate companies and operators buying their wares have argued that if they had the resources to pursue the matter in the courts, they could reverse the string of copyright defeats they have suffered at the hands of the copyright owner.

However, the fact remains that the courts are siding in favor of the copyright owners on this vital industry issue.

AMOA's role questioned

The jukebox copyright law started to unravel in 1981 and, with it, so did the operators' national association (AMOA). The AMOA had concerned itself exclusively with that law; and, when the law finally reared its ugly head, the association came under harsh criticism.

First, the Copyright Royalty Tribunal (CRT) announced per-



Stern's rights in Scramble were among those established in the courts this year. Above, a 'bootleg' Scramble copy is being impounded in New York City.

jukebox copyright rate increases that even exceeded the claims of one of the societies representing the copyright owners!

Operators were outraged. Why had the AMOA agreed to a per-jukebox assessment in the first place? A majority of jukebox operators strongly believed that the per-jukebox assessment was double taxation since they were already paying the copyright royalty when they purchased the records.

Then, right on the heels of that major setback, came news that the U.S. Supreme Court had decided it would not review the AMOA's case against the CRT, that the CRT had the right, under the new law, to require operators to submit lists of their jukebox locations. And the national association had spent \$100,000 for a fruitless court case that was defeated every step along the way.

Then *Play Meter* magazine became embroiled in the controversy. Member/readers asked for an accounting of the AMOA's actions. So *Play Meter* tried first to gain access to the association's mid-year board of directors meeting to find out how the decisions were being made, since the AMOA's decisions had turned out to be so poorly advised and against the operator's best interests.

But the AMOA flatly refused. Neither the trade press nor members who were not on the board were allowed to attend the meetings.

A series of investigative articles followed in *Play Meter*, including (1) a statement from a congressman who revealed the AMOA did not aggressively pursue the operator's interests on the jukebox copyright matter in the House of Representatives; and (2) the testimony of a former, expelled officer of the AMOA who revealed how certain important AMOA decisions were made.

Then came the only bit of good news on the jukebox copyright front. The CRT announced that it was discontinuing its location list requirement. The AMOA used this favorable decision by the federal agency as proof that it was doing its job. But the AMOA's claim failed to hold up.

The chairman of the CRT revealed that the AMOA played no hand at all in turning the one decision that went in favor of jukebox operators.

Manufacturers and distributors organize

With the operators' national



Joe Robbins: headed the newly-formed ADMA.



Ira Bettelman: led the distributors (AVMDA) group.

association failing to show leadership in such areas as gray games, copyright litigation, advertising and public relations programs, and a clearinghouse of legislative information—it was left for other segments of the industry to band together to form their own, separate associations.

The manufacturers were the first to do so. Spurred on by a federal regulation which would have virtually stopped video game production, game manufacturers realized that, although they're in competition with each other, they shared common concerns in several areas—among them video game copyrights.

The association brought together most of the major American factories, which joined together as the Amusement Device Manufacturers Association (ADMA). The association hired its own executive director at mid-year and has sought enlisting the rest of the factories as members.

A few months after the manu-

facturers incorporated, a group of distributors joined together for the same purpose—to protect their special interests. This association, the Amusement and Vending Machine Distributors Association (AVMDA), also hired an executive director and began enlisting other distributors to join.

As the groups started to work on their individual interests, it became increasingly clear that there was still a need for a united industry action on several fronts—such as a national public relations program, a central clearinghouse of information on legislative matters, and so on.

Consequently, the three associations—ADMA, AMOA, AVMDA—have expressed a willingness to work together for common goals. What is not clear is if this fragmentation, brought about because of a lack of industry leadership, can be overcome to mold together useful industry programs of benefit to all three segments of the industry.

The media and government

It has been a year of the media's seizing coin-op as it would a suddenly discovered tuna swimming in its backyard pool. Analysts in print have sunk their journalistic teeth in, have kept biting for the meat on the bones, and in aggregate probably haven't understood the beast any better after letting go.

Media field days with coin-op electronic games have been as bright as a scholarly account in *Science 81* magazine about the development of the advanced games today. And, too, they've often been as predictable as an old saw, with newspaper articles such as those titled "Players Hooked on Games" (*Memphis Commercial Appeal*, October 11) or "Video-Game Industry Hits the Jackpot!" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, September 7). The public has been barraged with television attention on pinballs and videos, and among other resulting pictures is the one that there is a \$500-a-week pot of gold standing every five feet in an amusement arcade.

All of which has not escaped the notice of local elected officials, although their grasp of the coin-op business is often no less shallow than the media's.

Here are two opposing attorneys geared for a court fight: Says one, "If it's a fundamental right, such as the rights of minors to associate, the rights of expression for minors, or the rights of sellers—then the state has to show an overriding, compelling interest in abridging that

right." The opposing attorney says, "As a city we have a right to govern these things within our own city. We feel the federal government has taken away too many rights already."

Do they sound as if they're arguing states' rights? Free speech on campus? Federal funding and regulation on local governments? Control of drug trafficking? None of these. The two quoted lawyers represent, respectively, Aladdin's Castle arcade chain and the city of Mesquite, Texas, and they will be pitting their forensic skills in the U.S. Supreme Court sometime later this year over the issue of whether the Texas city has the right to regulate arcades to the extent of banning juveniles from playing games in them.

While the Aladdin's/Mesquite issue began developing before the 1981 flurry of media attention over the nation, it is reflective of the

magnitude to which issues surrounding coin-op have grown this year.

Township after township, from the West Coast to New England has set stubborn opposition to the installation or expansion of arcades. A Columbus, Ohio operator told *Play Meter* recently that, as a result of a city zoning board restricting the number of games in his restaurant/game room units in Columbus, "We're going to court. We contend that it's unconstitutional for them to say you can't have games. So I think the only way to change (the local attitude) is to go to court."

Numerous local news writers beat the drums for the "trouble right here in River City" cadre of residents who cry that video games are corrupters of youth, that pinballs swallow the dollars the kids have to buy their lunches—even that the games have led to an outbreak of juvenile thefts

to raise quarters to play the coin-ops.

Although the resultant actions of officials to appease their wolf-crying constituents are continuing problems for a great many operators, there is sometimes a victory for reason. As reported in *Play Meter*, July 15 issue, the media in Milwaukee had manufactured an "expose" when they reported in March that students at a local high school were "spending an average of \$1000 a month on electronic games" on the schools grounds. The *Milwaukee Sentinel* had editorialized: "There's such a thing as making school too much fun." However, students and most parents—as well as teachers—were found to disagree with the anti-games sentiment.

A principal at a school involved in the issue was quoted to say that educators "are providing for the total student, and part of his life is socializing and recreating." The principal also noted that since the coin machines were installed at his school, vandalism had dropped off, as had student loitering during the free periods.

Operators supplying the schools also rose to the defense, seeking time with the press and television and the taxpaying public came to realize that each school was sharing about 40% of the game machine receipts and that these funds were diverted to pay for other school activities and programs. The case for games' role in lessened vandalism and even drug and alcohol abuse reduction was sustained also.

But the matter at issue—whether the revenue of games, due to their rising popularity, is grounds for increased taxation and operator restrictions—goes on. It is a matter for local, state, and national operator programs to combat and to produce a positive image of operating (as through methods detailed in numerous articles in *Play Meter* in past months).

Like the prevalent rumor a few years ago that ground worms were being served up as hamburger by one of the larger fast food chains, the rap against coin-op is hard to quell. And, like so many fallacies, scares, and plain untruths, false images of the coin industry are unfortunately being perpetuated by the media, local and national.

Growth in revenues and operators

The industry was on a roll in 1981, reaching almost unparalleled growth in the population of operators, cashbox gross revenues, and numbers of arcades springing onto

Union City's pinball controversy

Political, educational leaders oppose opening of arcades

By JIM DWYER
Staff Writer

UNION CITY—Political and educational leaders are mounting a drive against an ordinance that would let four pinball and amusement arcades open here, citing fears that they will become hangouts for children and attract "undesirables."

The applicants for licenses to operate the arcades include a former commissioner, the brother of a city lawyer and a city building inspector.

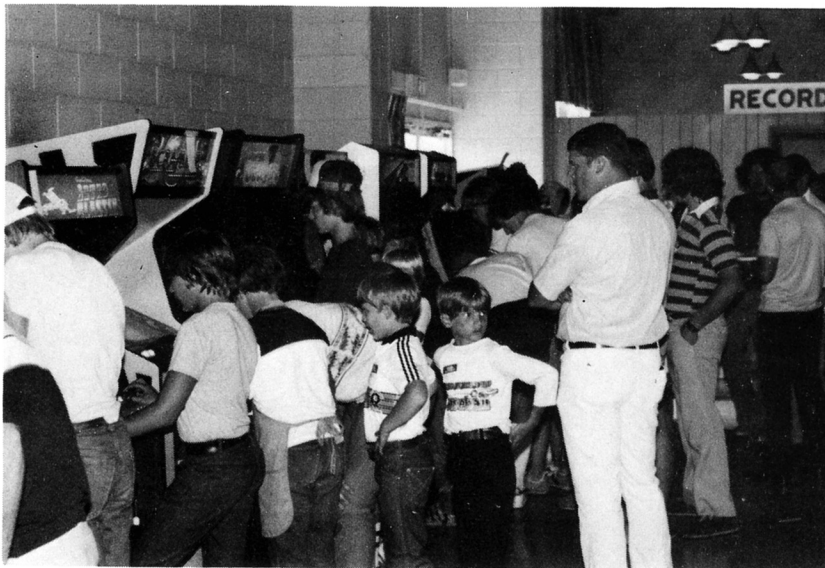
They may, however, face opposition from within the Regular Democratic

"All kinds of things happen in these parlors, and I'm not sure I want them in the city I live in," said Louis Marchesani, a school board trustee and teacher at Memorial High School in West New York. "If I'm at the hearing, I won't be there in support of the ordinance."

Two police officers, Lt. Paul Hanak and Sgt. Harry M. Calandrillo Jr., a former commissioner and now an aide to the chief of police, have applied for four locations. Calandrillo said they hope to get one location and does not think the arcades will do any harm.

"With proper supervision by the employees you hire, I don't think there'd be any effect," he said, adding that he would

News headline indicates friction in local arenas, besetting coin-op amusements during 1981.



Industry growth—which caught the media's eye—boosted the numbers of operators and arcades—and the intake of revenue.

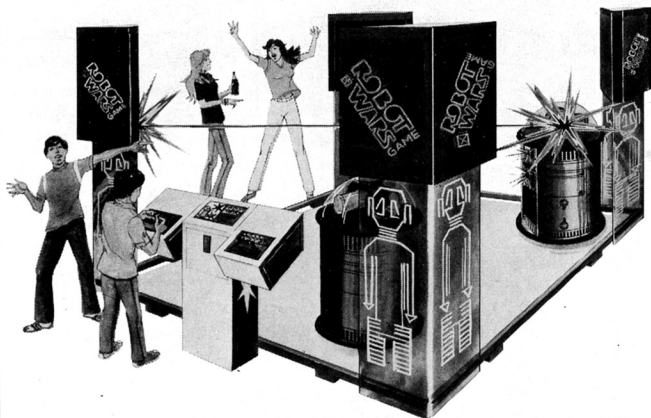
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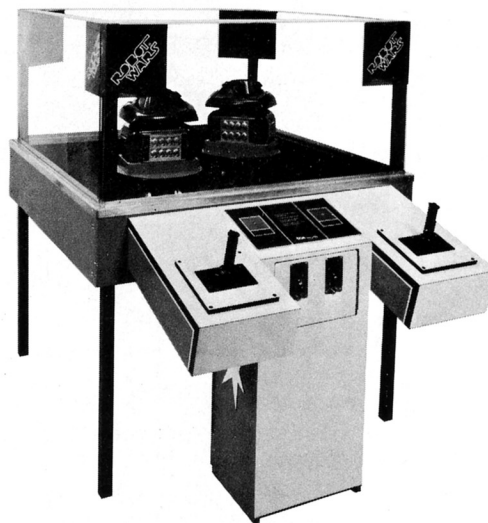
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- Objective is to maneuver for best firing positions and zap as many aliens as "humanly" possible.

- Alien corner posts light up at random and become the designated targets.
- Battle strategy may involve bumping your opponent's robot out of the way or blasting it with your LASER cannon. When hit, a robot will spin crazily out of the way, accompanied by an explosion sound.



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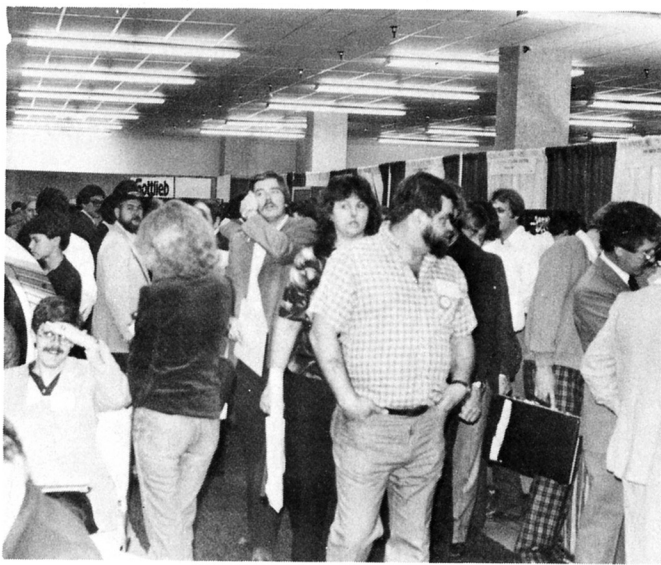
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Coin-op newcomers packed the Amusement Operators Expo floor in spring '81 show.



A large diet of business and technical seminars drew hundreds to the AOE sessions in New Orleans.

the American scene. As observed in *Play Meter's* analysis (November 15 issue): "The coin-op amusement industry has indeed moved into the mainstream of American business and high finance." It had a gross revenue intake of \$8.2 billion, as found by the 1981 Annual *Play Meter* Operator Survey, and the movie industry could sigh as it munched its popcorn.

The growth pattern was not wholly unexpected, only confirmed and quantified by this magazine's annual survey results. Indicators had come throughout the year from the rising average weekly revenues of videos and pinballs; from the observations of persons dealing solely with arcades, such as token manufacturers, who pointed to their rapidly rising trade; from new residential growth areas such as Arizona and western Florida, which were sprouting amusement game rooms like spring flowers—and with these games rooms, new members of the coin-op trade; and from earlier indications this year in *Play Meter's* first ever polling of arcade operators.

The springtime polling found that, of over 10,000 arcades in the United States, the largest category (40 percent, or 4,150 arcades) were located neither in free-standing buildings, strip shopping centers, nor enclosed malls. The largest group was "other." Those were arcades that are being operated in combination with one or more other businesses. Linkups included miniature golf courses, bowling centers, amusement parks, skating rinks, billiard parlors, museums, restaurants, drive-in theaters, specialty or sweets shops, traveling

carnivals, and gambling casinos.

A look over that list reminds one that locations such as candy shops and museums for tourists have not always had adjunct game rooms for the coin-op electronic modes. But many have found room for coin-op games during their current phase of popularity, and many other primarily advertised amusements, such as miniature golf, have claimed great success with their adjunct arcade. Looking forward, reports have surfaced that still other generally undeveloped locations will expand with game rooms, including one or more of the fast-food chains and at least one major department store chain.

As coin-op has become big business, then, Big Business has looked upon Coin-op with a suitor's eye.

What does this expansion mean to the small entrepreneur, the new coin operator? The operator population had swelled to 9,000 in the U.S.A., according to *Play Meter's* 1981 Survey findings. Of that 9,000 population, 24 percent were new to the industry and hadn't committed capital to it until after the time of the 1980 AMOA show, according to the annual survey respondents. Thus the average operator had entered since the *Space Invaders* boom came about and a large percentage went into business since *Asteroids*.

So the new businessman was in a field rife with competition, and array of equipment for a myriad of locations; which has its sharks preying on the swimmers (a subject to be explored a bit later); and which has its own particular methods of doing business more efficiently.

To the last mentioned point, it was

clear last spring that the newcomers (as well as a number of oldtimers and short-termers) were hungry for business information on coin-op, as well as an arcade-season exhibition of the latest games, support equipment, and supply and service companies in the industry. To those ends, they turned out heavily for the springtime Amusement Operators Expo in New Orleans. A bustling business was done on the exhibit floor at the Hyatt Regency Hotel by 2,000 attendees, and standing-room-only seminars were the talk of the show.

For the business information a new operator particularly needs, the AOE seminars dealt with such topics as location cost analysis, negotiating commissions with locations, arcade management and development, training servicemen, and other topics in the industry today. The average attendance in each of 31 seminars was more than 100 AOE attendees.

And a whopping proportion of 1981 attendees have responded that they are heading for Amusement Operators Expo '82 in Chicago's Hyatt Regency next March—as have a large number of those contacted who had not yet attended the springtime show, according to Conference Management Corp., organizers of the programs.

Profit was ultimately the motive for the new operators of 1981 and for the show-goers. And according to last spring's survey, 74 percent of all arcade operators had experienced an increase in net profits compared to the previous year. Only 6 percent reported a downturn in profits. Those in business less than two



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years represented about 33 percent of the whole population of some 4,000 operators of arcades.

Thus, the new blood was a large contributor to the new round of the video buying binge—and gave shots in the arm for other coin-op forms as well—that marked a booming economy in all sectors of the coin machine industry during 1981. (As we noted in the State of the Industry Issue, with the \$8.2 billion gross intake from coin machines, \$4.1 billion was kicked back into other small businesses across the U.S.)

'Business opportunity'—beware!

They don't travel in a circus wagon and have the rainmaker personality of Burt Lancaster these days, but the con artists preying on would-be coin operators are staking out their territories by means of jet travel and a stand of several days, working out of a hotel room.

According to numerous reports to *Play Meter* (and to consumer protection and law enforcement authorities over the states), the "blue sky salesmen" deal mainly in promises. The coin-op equipment is there, in the hotel sales "head-quarters," and it looks appealing to the novice to coin-op. In fact, the equipment looks so much like the *Space Invaders* types of games that the buyer has become passingly familiar with, that he can hear the quarters pouring in, almost, and can envision his old beat-up Ford being traded in for a Caddy, cash up front.

Then there come the promises. "Would you be interested in earning \$100 a week from one of these little games? Of course, the real proceeds can run over \$400, \$500, but we don't want to make extravagant promises..."

Then there will be the shower of reports shown photocopied from newspapers, of how games like *Star Castle* and *Berzerk* and *Asteroids* can claim \$500 a week in the cashbox. And the buyer will be impressed and the seller will not be making blue-sky promises, really. He's not saying it. The *Times* is.

And when the novice operator signs a lengthy, detailed sales contract, for four or six of the little gems at the bargain price of \$3,500 each (slightly higher for a 14-inch TV monitor), he will typically feel himself a shrewd little businessman, well on his way to easy money, fast....

And in another week or so, when the game machine fails to power-up, he will look closer at it and he will

notice that it doesn't have a manufacturer's trademark and that it really isn't just like *Berzerk* or *Asteroids* or *Star Castle* at all. (Mental picture now: he is being blown up himself, in the center of a dimly functioning video picture.)

And the sales person is not to be found, and the legitimate games distributor in the area, once the buyer has thought to call one up, doesn't want any part of a game he didn't sell and which is probably a copy game.

The 'blue sky' sellers are becoming all too familiar. Their rip-off victims may harbor ill feelings against anyone associated with coin-op.

Caveat emptor. It is becoming all too familiar a story, all too frequent. That inexperienced operator may continue in the coin industry in a sadder but wiser manner. But his experience in being ripped off may linger, as ill feelings against anyone associated with coin-op. He may tell his experience to the press (which, incidentally, has generally failed up to now to expose the blue-suede-shoe sellers of inferior games).

During a time of industry expansion, the vultures that loom during boom times could be expected. It is only that they are not

It is clear that domestic factories can no longer maintain stables of one line only, and most will try to ride with video.

immediately recognized by persons inexperienced in the coin industry. State operators associations have taken an active part in warding off and exposing the blue sky salesmen who lend a bad name to the legitimate industry. Law enforcement agencies have begun to recognize the "smoothies" and bring action against them.

It is a problem that has unfortunate growth potential as increasing numbers of entrepreneurs become interested in coin-op.

Possibly the greatest aim to its solution is for industry persons to spread the word on how a sharpie operates and how to recognize quality machine.

The rush for the video market

The year has shown the incursion of games manufacturers over into the video market not to be a flash in the pan. Those producers include not only the pinball makers who tested the market, with noted success, last year—but also old-line manufacturers formerly devoted to jukeboxes, pool tables, or gaming equipment. While success has been spectacular for some and limited for others, it is clear that few domestic factories can any longer maintain one-horse stables, but most will ride videos down their paths to the coin-op market.

Leads into the video pastures were taken by the Chicago majors Williams and Stern with their entries of last fall which produced big sales by spring of 1981.

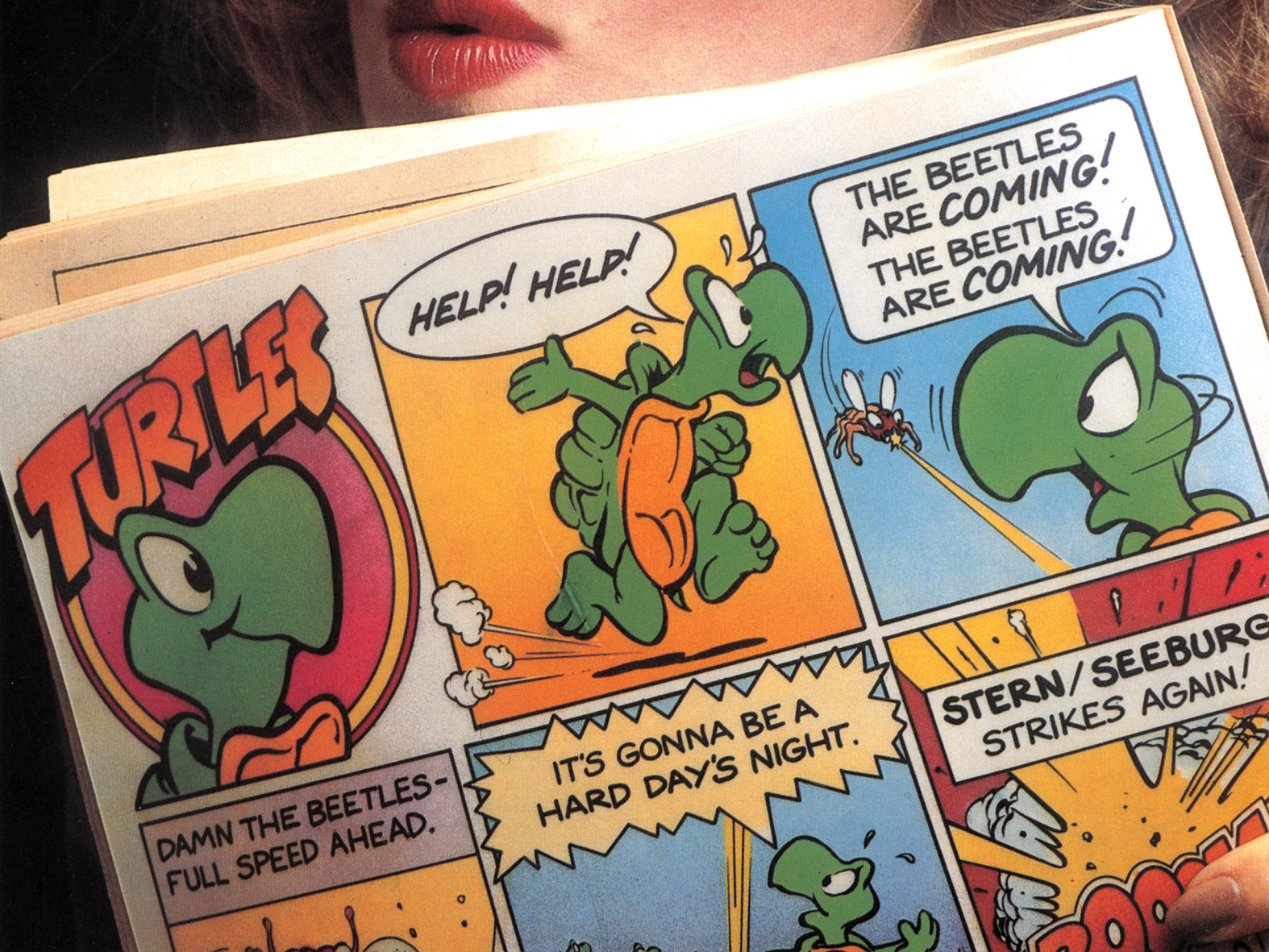
Williams, still competing heavily in the pinball market, has only recently geared its production lines to new products *Stargate* and *Make Trax* after enjoying a year's run of 50,000 *Defender* clones going out to the U.S. and foreign markets.

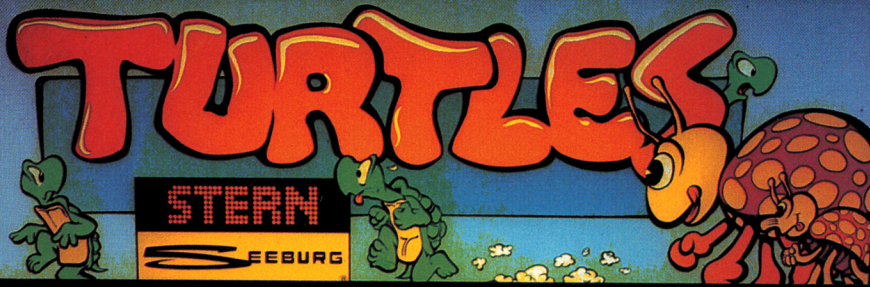
Stern Electronics bred its licensed creation *Astro Invader* last year and that video game was followed to the gate by its *Berzerk*, which enjoyed a wider success than the earlier Stern product. Afterward, Stern signed licensing pacts to manufacture *Scramble* and *Super Cobra* and finished 1981 in a solid fourth place among U.S. video makers, as shown by results of the 1981 *Play Meter* Operator Survey.

D. Gottlieb & Co. diversified from pinball in late 1980 also, but with the more limited sales of its first two efforts, has for the present dropped out of the new videos race (with the ace card it holds for plans to be the first producer to incorporate video play into a new pinball game, dubbed *Caveman*).

Rock-Ola Manufacturing in early 1981 staked some of its production chips on the video market. Dr. David Rockola, vice president of the old-line phonograph producer, had announced that the firm had weighed its opening bets for some time with an eye to producing a winning-level game "and not just another cute or also-ran type of video." (*Play Meter*, January 15, 1981)

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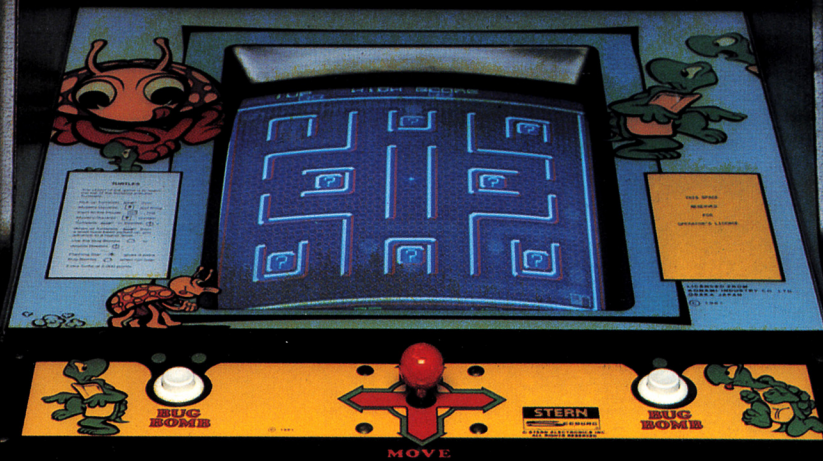


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Along the way the big turtle picks up Turtlelets from mystery squares and carries them to the house. Meanwhile, the Beetles are attacking. The turtle has limited Bug Bombs to fend them off. One



hundred points are awarded for picking up each turtlelet, and one hundred fifty points are tallied for each turtlelet delivered safely to the house. When all turtlelets have been picked up, the player advances to the next of eight levels. If the player can run



over a flashing star, he receives three extra bug bombs. Also, an extra turtle bonus awards the player 5,000 points. Simple game, yes? Wrong.

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Rock-Ola elected to pact with Cinematronics, Inc. for long-term licensing of the vector monitor system owned by the El Cajon, California originator, and to license its *Star Castle* video for marketing outside the United States. Agreements followed later for Rock-Ola rights abroad to Cinematronics' *Armor Attack*.

But by early fall, the unfavorable balance of the U.S. dollar in world money markets appeared to force exporters to pinch their belts a bit. American game manufacturers in Europe were facing a steep increase of parts costs on the Continent.

At that juncture, Rock-Ola struck a contract with Namco Ltd. of Tokyo to manufacture Namco's original game *Warp-Warp* for sales in the U.S. market. The Chicago manufacturer was predicting a successful run with its new video, possibly the first of a number to be licensed from Namco, and Rock-Ola was also signalling that its own think tanks were preparing to launch an in-house developed video product in the near future.

Almost every month of 1981 brought a new U.S. games factory heavily into the video picture.

At Game Plan, Inc. of Addison, Illinois, where a new infusion of capital was announced early in the year, video game products began trailing off the assembly lines with *Intruder* and followed with *Killer Comet*, *Megatack*, and others planned for AMOA Show introduction in late October.

U.S. Billiards of Amityville, New York, rolled into videos with a game called *Quasar*, unveiled at the Amusement Operators Expo in New Orleans in March. With its introduction, U.S. Billiards execu-

tive Richard Simon vowed his company's "commitment to become a major factor in the video business," while keeping its production schedule for the pool table market steady.

Other pool table manufacturers are considering entry to the video market, *Play Meter* has learned.

During the year, Centuri Inc. rose fast in the video field after having been established as a company in the second half of 1980 (succeeding Allied Leisure) in Hialeah, Florida. After its first upright, *Eagle*, the products from Hialeah were continually in the front ranks: *Phoenix*, *Route 16*, *Pleiades*, and *Vanguard*, giving Centuri its 6 percent market share this year.

On the West Coast, Pacific Novelty Manufacturing entered the video sweepstakes as a new company this year, introducing *Shark Attack*, which was later licensed to Game Plan. Pacific then diverted from videos a bit, producing the novelty machine *Computer Portraits*.

Game-A-Tron of New Britain, Connecticut, having originated the *Zap* video game, licensed the rights to Midway Manufacturing which marketed the game in uprights and cocktails as *Space Zap* this year. Game-A-Tron's own market item, *Space Bugger*, was shipped in 1981.

Rounding out the manufacturers changing their stripes, the gaming equipment manufacture G.D.I. of Chicago entered the amusement video field this fall with its *Red Alert*.

While the domestic producers were jockeying for position in the video derby, the U.S. branches of Japanese concerns—Nintendo, Universal, Nichibutsu, Data East and others—continually entered

product on the field.

One seasoned observation of the coin-op industry has been that the next trend in video manufacturing will be toward increased involvement in domestic production by the foreign interests in the industry—as Taito of Japan has established a firm manufacturing base in Illinois with Taito America.

The only conclusion can be that, no matter how many horses leave from the gate, only one can win the derby...however, there can be at least three to win, place, or show in the Triple Crown.

Challenging video's domain

Competition being what it is (fierce, in the world of coin-op), the marketing teams for other product than video have not been on extended vacations while video has strengthened its hold on the playing public. The minions of the competitive modes have come up with ideas, and put them into effect, to push non-TV or TV-hybrid games beyond the bounds of yesteryear...

To begin with pinball, multi-level playfields and multi-ball games have been explored with various combinations and with marked success, as with *Black Knight*, *Flash Gordon*, and the recent entry of *Black Hole*. Still more pingame engineering was in the wings to be introduced this fall. And at least one manufacturer, Williams, was touting the economics of investing in pinball, with its *Barracora* pin billed as "an affordable pinball with quality built in."

Designers of pingames during the past year have broken away from space-themed games to a large extent—perhaps an emblem of the factories' differentiating pinball play



New video manufacturers' games entered the races (*Defender*; *Berzerk*), and new pinball themes & play effects emerged to challenge video (*Mars*; *Medusa*, for example).

from the futuristic video monitor—but at any rate scoring with graphics and sound packages such as in *Eight Ball Deluxe*, *Jungle Lord*, *Pink Panther*, and the themes from mythology that have recently sprung from the minds of the designer-gnomes of Chicagoland.

Jukeboxes have appeared with elaborate dressing and engineering as sister modes of coin-op to compete for the hand of the nation's quarter-bearers. To name a pair of examples: Centuri wired its best engineering available to produce its first phonograph, *2001*. And Stern Electronics will manufacture a marked departure from the jukebox mold in its *Video Music Center* and its video color monitor features plus an elaborate solid state system. Rock-Ola, Rowe/AMI, and the German-built NSM machines show no signs of having come from closed-down factories, either; all are in their competitive regalia for a new season of jukebox sales.

To spur competitive urges at the player's level, pool table manufacturers have boosted pool league play and launched promotions to enliven interest in 8-ball, therefore stimulating pool table sales in an era of electronic button-pushing. A national movement toward operator-run pool leagues was stimulated by The Valley Company of Bay City, Michigan, culminating in 1981 with Canada-U.S.A. champions in Rochester, Minnesota. State and regional pool tournaments showed viability for the table game elsewhere during the year.

Also, pool table manufacturers showed a willingness to hold the line on table prices in a period when the cost to them of an essential imported element in the table, slate, was rising steeply.

Covering the bets on video's permanence, it must be noted, two coin-op manufacturers extended their interest in the TV form beyond the arcade market. Atari Inc. introduced its "holographic" effect home video games to that market (*Play Meter*, June 15 issue), and Bally Corp. announced its contracting with a computer games producer to market Bally's video modes for the home market (*Play Meter*, November 15).

The introduction of novel ideas for the coin-op market, however, continued apace for the growing arcade sector. Pacific Novelty bowed its *Computer Portraits* photo-type machine for what it saw as an undeveloped market. And Gametronix introduced *Split*

Second/2 reaction timers with a two-player feature and claimed this countertop mode had instant, wide appeal.

Other "non-videos" were clearly viable, as reported in *Play Meter's* pages this year. Game rooms stocked with strictly kiddie rides were showing success in U.S. shopping malls, as had been a phenomenon in Europe, operators reported (*Play Meter*, May 15); parents and mall management gave the game rooms high ratings.

Videos had been at least a mixed blessing for the competitive forms—which were stimulated to break out of standard molds and themes and to explore new areas of play.

Remote control cars and boats appeared to be a family-oriented alternative to videos and pins (*Play Meter*, December 1), and were adaptable to arcades and parks. And even a coin-operated computer appeared on the operating circuit (*Play Meter*, December 1), to attract customers—not only for games but for business calculations—who had not played arcade coin-ops before.

Videos, then, had been at least a

Out of the controversies that have raged this year, can come progress toward a clean and businesslike industry. But the storms are not over...

mixed blessing for the competing coin amusement forms. On the one hand it had stimulated the general public's interest in amusement games that were playable in arcade, bar, or restaurant settings, far above the levels of recent years. On the other, it stimulated its competitors to break out of standard forms and themes, and to explore new areas of automated play as the industry approached another year with hopes of setting higher records of profitability.

Conclusions

So, it has been a year of controversies in the coin industry. In these matters, operators have been particularly vocal, which reflects an increasing awareness that the expression of views in one's own best interest should not be whispered.

There are pluses and minuses in all the storms that have raged over the industry this year. Out of the friction, the debates, the recriminations will hopefully come progress for the industry: a clean and truly businesslike industry, with greater benefits for all concerned. But it will not be easy, it will not be automatic. The storms are not over yet.

Industry people have become better versed in using the communications media to advantage. (On the flip side, the media have often exaggerated the profits from the cashbox, drawing legislators' attention and making instant "experts" out of every location owner who watches national TV.)

Leadership has been proved lacking or absent across the industry during 1981. (But, conversely, new formal organizations and a sense of industry unity, both here and abroad, have signaled a greater voice coming out for coin-op's interest.)

For the manufacturer, it has been a year of keen competition. Under the free enterprise system, some producers will thrive more than others. This healthy competition can only help operating, as more playable, versatile, and reliable equipment comes down the pipeline.

On down the list of *Play Meter's* top news stories of 1981, ranked by the editors, the reader can probably find a silver lining for every dark cloud. That's not Pollyannaism; this industry was built with a large measure of optimism, as much as was Henry Ford's little concern earlier this century.

Optimism should embrace an expectation that the public will continue to play coin-op equipment. But it should not be taken for granted. Hope should also spring for a united industry; but that won't be automatically achieved. Efforts should drive out the pirates and fast talkers that prey on the hard-working operator and capital-investing factories; but it won't be through "someone else's" work that it's accomplished.

It starts with the average man in this business. If he can be found.

—by David Pierson and Ray E. Tilley

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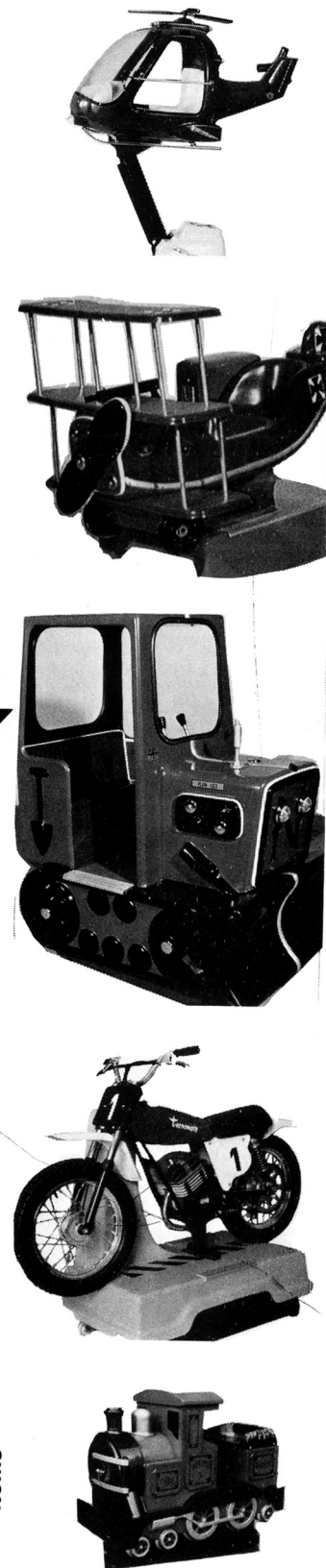
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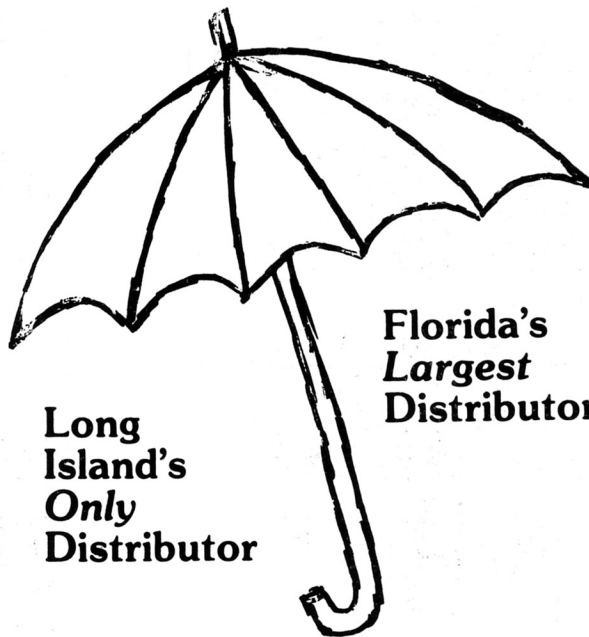
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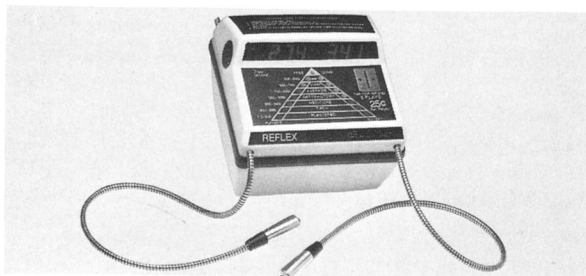


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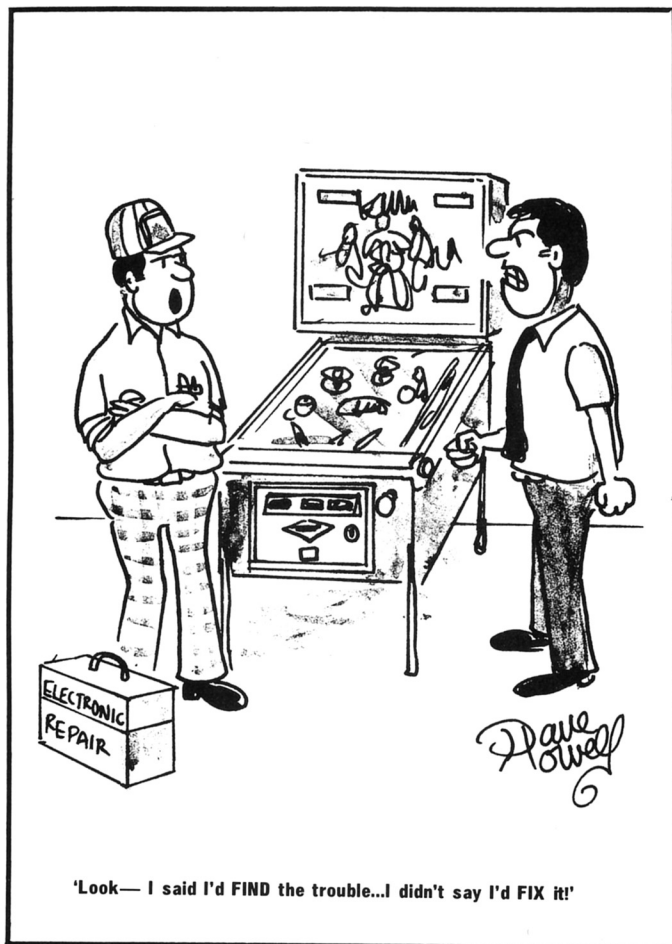
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Business Myth of the Month

The Myth:

“All locations should be collected at least once a week.”

By Charles C. Ross

Collecting a location or “robbing a location” or whatever term you use is a necessity of the amusement business. Happily for operators, it is the nicest necessity we have. The question is how regularly should we collect from a location. To simply answer the question, do not collect any more often than you have to.

Now you may be wondering why you should put off collecting a location as long as possible. First of all, collections probably take more time than any other facet of the operator’s business. So the theory is that if collections can be made every 10 days or every 14 days, you will free up valuable employee time and your time.

Remember the added money in coin boxes for an additional week or additional several days will not cause a doubling of the time needed to collect a location.

Lengthening the time between collections at a location can make the difference in a location being

profitable and unprofitable. If you have a marginal location you can help its profitability by spending less time servicing the location.

Now there are some problems with stretching the collection period. Fortunately, some of your machines will get full before one week has passed, much less two weeks of waiting before collecting.

Some locations have a vandalism problem and you would find it hard to sleep at night if you knew there were two weeks of collections at such a location. And some locations have owners who need the money on a weekly basis, as you may well know.

It can also be argued that you are losing interest on the money sitting in coin boxes. I would ask if you would be making interest on the money if it weren’t in the coin boxes but rather your checking account.

There are some problems with a lengthening of the collection cycle, but the progressive amusement

operator should use some creative thinking to figure ways to expedite collections. For example, using larger coin boxes, or replacing filled boxes with empty boxes and locking the full box in the bottom on the machine. Use individual alarms in high crime locations and discuss the problem you face with location owners.

Remember that collecting your route probably takes more time than any other routine duty you and your employee perform, so to help maximize profits stretch your collection schedule as long as possible and you will save on employee time, truck expenses, and trips to the bank.

Also, you will have more time for repairs, or establishing rapport with potential new locations.

Charles C. Ross is a partner in Innovative Management Consultants which specializes in consulting to the amusement industry.

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ANALYSIS:

The Saturation Point

An 'astronomical' rise in videos raises questions about the future of the industry
By Michael Mendelsohn

During the past year, the most frequently asked question of video game operators has been "what will be the next big 'hit video game'?"

Considering that video game income rose 38 percent in 1980 over 1979, it was no wonder this seemed to be the most important concern of the average operator.

But the new question in the industry this past summer seemed to be: "When will we hit the saturation point?" It seems as though nearly everyone from operators, distributors, manufacturers, investors, to just interested observers is asking, when do we hit the peak?

Obviously there can be just so many video games per thousand people before income levels off. At this point we begin to compete with ourselves as well as each other. There seems to be schools of thought on both sides of this issue.

The manufacturers would have us believe that the day may never come when video games peak out. They

acknowledge the fact that the number of video games sold is astronomical as compared to two or even just one year ago.

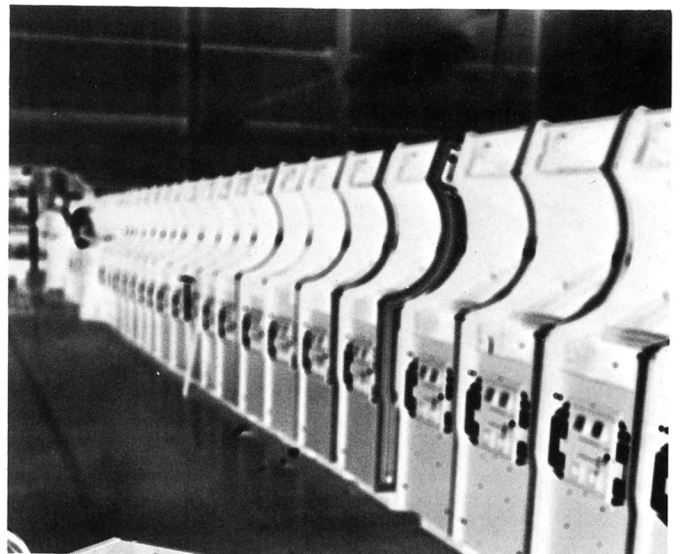
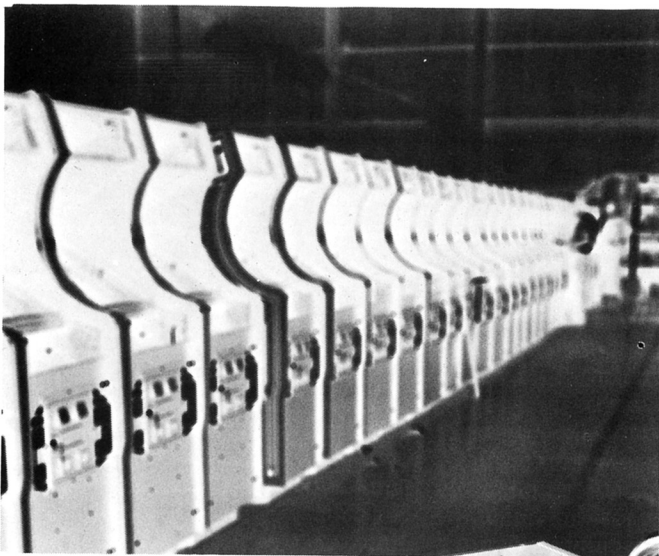
But they will bring your attention to the fact that the playing population has grown tremendously for several reasons. First is the increase in competitive realism which makes the game so much fun to play. The player becomes totally involved with the machine. Second is the increased age group that video games are drawing from. Many more adults are "turning on" to video games; some for release of tensions—others for the challenging fun they represent. *Pac-Man* probably has had the most influence in this area.

Also increasing playing population has been the promotional activity by manufacturers as a whole. The manufacturers are "hyped" their hit games with nearly the same flourish and hoopla as Warner Brothers or Paramount would a new motion

picture. (Oh, I almost forgot, they own the video game manufacturers.)

The distributors would seem to take a similar but slightly more realistic viewpoint. They attempt to protect both themselves and their operators. Distributors would like to agree with the manufacturer but the strong possibilities of a glut of operators attempting to force used, highly devalued games down their throats, keeps them somewhat cautious. They have not forgotten warehouses full of pinballs during the past two years that have not sold, so they have no intention of being caught in a saturated market.

This is not to say they are not optimistic. Video game distributors are now enjoying the most prosperous period in their history. But at the same time, they should be commended for the responsible approach they have been taking toward the future growth of this industry. It is their responsibility to keep a watchful eye on both sides of



Hit videos 'clone' at a game factory: How many per thousand players before income levels off?

'One important variable of game saturation...is the new negative attitude city councils have toward arcades. It could be disastrous....'

the street, and the video game business would have a difficult time surviving without them.

Operators Cautious

The operators, it would seem, are both optimistic and cautious. They have withstood the high price increases on video games, gasoline, and labor. Game income and increased opportunities seem to have made it worthwhile. While the top two games (*Defender* and *Pac-Man*) seem to have just kept pace with the *Asteroids* and *Galaxian* of last summer, there are many other high-earning video games that did not exist last year.

An additional five or more videos are earning within 25 percent of the top two. This certainly was not the case last summer. Add to this the fact that *Asteroids* and *Galaxian* are still hanging on nicely. It seems the operators who have purchased wisely are doing quite well. But summer is peak season, and many operators are worried of what the following year will bring. The large

number of arcades which opened this past year tempered the increases many of us expected to see this summer, which may be a sign of things to come. Game income and used game values will drop this fall. How far they will drop is the question.

Three very important variables of game saturation should not be overlooked. The first is the new negative attitude city councils have toward arcades. If carried too far, the negative publicity could be disastrous to our growth. Temporarily, at least, it will allow income to begin increasing in those locations which presently have games. Do not allow this to temper your responsibility in battling this negative tide of publicity. For if unchecked, the end result will be the loss of many locations due to over-regulation.

The second factor is what I call the "marginal arcade quotient." Many arcades will not make it past the fall. Some have been opened by inexperienced operators who will be unable to replace the necessary

games as the market changes. Marginal locations as well as those in oversaturated areas will have the same problem. Therefore, the income of the remaining operators will stabilize—and in some cases, increase.

The other important factor deserving comment is the continued research and development carried on by United States and Japanese manufacturers. As an example, Atari devotes 8 to 9 percent of gross sales into R&D while Cinematronics devotes 8 to 12 percent. It is this research along with technological advances brought about by the space and computer industry which may bring the breakthroughs necessary for huge jumps in video game design.

These technological leaps, every few years, will be vital to the continued growth of this industry. This also brings with it the danger of devaluing our old equipment, the nature of this beast called the video game, which we have just learned to accept, but dread just the same. ●



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*Hitting a different market:
'The Godfather' Video Game Lounge*



The game room/lounge has combined uprights and sitdowns in a successful arrangement not previously thought possible by some.

Capitalizing on the video game boom is not always a simple matter of buying a few pieces and then turning them loose on the video public. Here's how one Toledo, Ohio company found a marketing gap in Toledo's video market, filled the gap, and enjoyed immediate success.

Dominic's Restaurant owner and manager, Greg DeLelles, explains the marketing gap this way: "The video game boom was escalating in the market with video games popping up everywhere—convenience stores, gas stations, laundromats, you name it. The games created a whole population of video addicts. Of course the arcades switched over to capture a large portion of the new market, but they generally appealed to the younger players."

"The gap arose," DeLelles continued, "when there was no location for the people who wanted to spend a relaxing evening playing video games. What about the couple that wanted to go to a movie or a nice dinner, and then spend a few hours playing video games...where do they go? They certainly didn't want to get dressed up to play *Pac-Man* in the laundromat! That's why we created the Godfather Video Game Lounge."

The Godfather Video Game Lounge is an extension of the Dominic's Restaurant/Godfather Lounge complex, located near the city's largest shopping mall. The complex enjoys a favorable reputation in the market and is perennially one of the strongest restaurant/lounges in the city.

"There was a certain amount of risk involved in introducing a totally foreign idea into this winning combination," said DeLelles, "but a little marketing strategy paid off with immediate results."

The changeover to the video game lounge occurred this year. The room had originally been the complex's banquet facilities, a room with ample business but not with the potential that DeLelles saw in the video lounge idea. The Godfather Video Game Lounge includes a full-service bar, seating, and 25 games—12 upright videos, 12 sitdowns, and one pinball. The concept, according to DeLelles, was unique in the city and perhaps in the nation.

The Godfather Video Game Lounge has already accomplished a few things that others considered impossible. "For example," says DeLelles, "we've combined uprights and sitdowns in a way that seems totally acceptable. We were told in the beginning to concentrate one way or the other and not to mix them up. That's not necessarily so. Another area is seating; we were told again that sitdowns had a unique problem of their own—people would rapidly grow tired of sitting and quit the games. We installed quality Gasser seats and haven't noticed a problem yet."

The Godfather Video Game Lounge, with its earth-tone decor and relaxing atmosphere attracts the 25-49 year olds, a group that is too often ignored by the industry, said DeLelles. "Sure there are more players 18-30, but there are also more places for them to play. We've

taken a smaller segment of the video market and have become that segment's sole, quality outlet for video play."

Two immediate problems arose in introducing the idea—both from the public conception of video in the market. "Dominic's is an established 'family-oriented' restaurant. The going public concept of video locations was that of arcades or 'pizza palaces'. So, we didn't want our regular customers thinking we'd changed the whole location into a giant pizza palace...and we didn't want the regular arcade players thinking a new arcade had opened up. From the start, we wanted a person coming into the Godfather to expect quality and that, in effect, was battling the accepted norms in the video business."

The operators chose to market the lounge slowly, first getting the regular customers to accept the lounge as a part of the complex and then to introduce it to the city. With easy access from the restaurant and lounge, table tents and free tokens brought the first new players back. In a short time, the video lounge became an accepted member of the complex. Then, to introduce the new idea to the mass market, they chose a slogan that would hopefully describe what they had attempted to accomplish—"Toledo's first sophisticated, adult video game lounge!" Says DeLelles, "We thought that a lot of people were sitting back, waiting for something like this to come along...and we were right!"

The success of the idea is no surprise to DeLelles. "First, Dominic's and The Godfather Lounge is a nice, pleasant place to spend an evening. The games are maintained in excellent condition, we allow no down-time on the floor. And we've even erased certain factory discrepancies with our own modifications," said DeLelles. "People don't come to the Godfather Video Game Lounge just to play video games...they can get that anywhere....Our customers come here because we try to do things a little bit better...and it pays off."

"A sophisticated, adult video game lounge...it's an idea that is overlooked and whose time has come," said DeLelles, adding that he willing to discuss this unique approach with anyone considering hitting the same unique segment of the video market.

He can be contacted c/o Dominic's Restaurant, 2121 South Reynolds Rd., Toledo, Oh. 43614; or phone 419/381-9861.

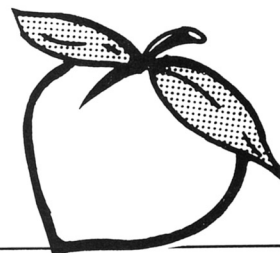
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Frankfurt trade show readies for 11,000 international buyers

IMA, the international amusement and vending trade fair, which will be held in Frankfurt for the third year, January 21-24, 1982, shows high promise of continuing on its course of success.

With more than 150 exhibitors from ten countries having participated in 1981, IMA will next year take place on 17,000 square meters of exhibition area in Hall One of the Frankfurt Fair Grounds. Only visitors from the trade will be admitted.

Some five months before the opening of IMA '82, the fair management, Heckmann GmbH, Messen und Ausstellungen, in Wiesbaden, pointed to an increase in the number of exhibitors by about 20 percent.

With 8,967 trade visitors, IMA '81 had been able to push itself into the top rank of the world's coin machine fairs. In 1982 the fair management expects to draw 11,000 trade visitors to Frankfurt Fair Grounds.

The organizers' expressed confidence despite the fact that the opening date of January 21 is the same as the closing date of the ATE in Birmingham, England, also a major trade event for the Continent and the international coin industry.

That the trade fair concept was appropriate to present amusement and vending machines together under one roof, could be confirmed, the organizers said, by the fact that both coin-op sectors have won new IMA exhibitors from over the world.

The function of the IMA as a highly qualified trade fair was also proven, the management said, by the fact of numerous exhibitors which participated in 1981 for the first time now having enlarged their own exhibition areas by up to 100 percent.

In close cooperation with the Association of German Coin-Machine Manufacturers (VDAI), which is functioning as sponsor, an extensive seminar program has been developed for IMA'82.

A further highlight should be the planned special show "Art & Coin Machines" at which photographs, engravings, and old advertising posters will be shown.



'Bootlegs' seized at Oral Roberts U. student union building

Court grants Stern sweep of Scramble's 'infringers'

Stern Electronics has reported that bootleg *Scramble* video games have been seized and impounded by the U.S. Marshal in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Stern filed copyright infringement suits in federal court in Tulsa against John Nowlin, doing business as Ada Music; Spectrum Games, Inc.; James Cooksey; Rick Scott; Frank Bruce and Clarence Williams. On the same day that the suits were filed, U.S. District Judge James O Ellison granted temporary restraining orders against the defendants and also ordered the U.S. Marshal to seize and impound the games which Stern alleged to be bootleg *Scramble* video games.

U.S. marshals, pursuant to the court order, seized alleged bootleg *Scramble* games which had been placed by Ada Music at a Safeway supermarket in Tulsa, at the Student Union of Oral Roberts University, at a hamburger stand in Dewar, Oklahoma, and at a 7-11 store in Beggs, Oklahoma. The marshals also seized alleged bootleg *Scramble* video games from the Mesquite Bar of the Sheraton Inn in Tulsa, the Pirates Chest arcade in Mannford, an arcade operated by Frank Bruce in Owasso, a game room operated by Clarence Williams in Tulsa, Roy's Garage in Tulsa, a game room in Bixby, Oklahoma, and Caesar's Pizza Parlor in Tulsa. In addition, a

Scramble circuit board was seized from Spectrum Games, Inc., located in Tulsa.

In several federal court decisions including the landmark decision of *Stern Electronics, Inc. vs. Omni Video Games*, the audiovisual presentation of video games has been held copyrightable, and federal courts have issued injunctions and seizure orders in connection with alleged bootleg video games.

A Stern spokesman stated that Stern will pursue those who manufacture or distribute or operate bootleg video games and such persons "will be subject to the significant penalties of the U.S. copyright laws."

In the *Omni* decision, U.S. District Court enjoined producers and distributors of an allegedly infringing game from marketing that game while lawsuit over copyright infringement was pending, and all of the questioned games were ordered to be impounded.

Stern counsel had contended that Stern's copyright covered the *Astro Invaders* game's audiovisual components, particularly the presentation of characters on the screen. The attorneys showed a video tape of *Astro Invaders* play and compared it with a video tape of play on *Zygon*, marketed by Omni and alleged to be a copy of *Astro Invaders* effects.

Statement of purpose issued by games distributors association

Amusement and Vending Machine Distributors Association (AVMDA) was formed to band together key coin machine distributors and consolidate their efforts to promote and develop a sound and healthy coin machine industry.

The distributor has always played a most important function in the industry acting as a liaison between the operator and manufacturer. The distributor provides service parts and has dedicated his organization to prevent lengthy machine downtime. Today particularly he provides financing for the growth and success of an operator and has always guided the operator through his representation of manufacturers to bring him the most profitable and trouble-free equipment to promote the operators' growth and success.

The AVMDA has committed itself to improve and develop the image of the coin machine industry in the eyes of the public through a viable public relations program which has been so badly needed for the entire industry; to participate in protecting and guiding the action of distributors in the area of adverse legislation and conduct industry statistical studies for both the distributors and operators.

The coin machine industry today is a far cry from the old concept of

equipment in a dark and dingy location housing a jukebox and a few pinball machines. Today, particularly since the advent of video games, arcades, shopping malls, hotels and motels, has given the coin industry a boost in its image, but there still remains a great deal of work to be done in this area and this can be accomplished through a positive public relations program.

Unfortunately, there are still communities which associate coin machines with the concept of the past and consequently the public has to be educated in its new image—one which establishes the coin machine industry as a wholesome entertainment activity which it has become today.

Adverse legislation limiting the number of machines in locations or establishing a minimum age can unquestionably have an adverse effect on the industry. Young adults are certainly better off in an arcade under a controlled and supervised atmosphere pursuing an entertaining past time rather than standing on street corners.

The distributor has developed and grown in the past few years and no longer is a coin machine distributor, a small operation—it is a sophisticated business requiring knowledge in marketing, finance,

service, all of the functions found in any successful large concern.

The AVMDA intends to make its association a spokesman of the industry, not only representing the distributor but also the operators who are the backbone of the industry. Distributors today represent big business and programs relative to data processing, its place in the distributor's business, an association health program, and uniformity of financing documents to protect distributors and operators are areas which must be updated for most distributors. Positive action in handling both local and federal ordinances requires the combined efforts of all associations, whether they represent the operators, manufacturers, or distributors.

The distributor has always played a most important function in guiding and assisting the growth of a healthy operator but today, one of the most pressing problems facing the industry is promoting the image of the coin machine industry in the eyes of the public. AVMDA is committed to a positive program in developing a public relations program which is long overdue.

AVMDA

*E.G. Doris, Executive Director
Chicago*

Stern taps Trocano as v.p.

Anthony L. Trocano has been appointed vice president of operations of Stern Industries, Inc., parent company of Stern Electronics, Inc.

In his new position, Trocano will coordinate and oversee general operations for all Stern Industries' subsidiaries: Universal Research Laboratories, Inc., Elk Grove Village, Ill.; Stern Properties, Inc., Chicago; August J. Johnson Co., Bensenville, Ill.; and Stern Electronics, Inc. Trocano comes to Stern from AM International, Inc., Mt. Prospect, Ill., where he serves as director of operations.

Trocano graduated from Kent State University with a degree in business.

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**Average each issue preceding 12
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Total no. copies printed	6,000
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(1) through vendors	300
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Total paid circulation	5,300
Free distribution	500
Total distribution	5,800
Office use, leftover, or spoiled	200
Total	6,000

Actual single issue nearest filing date

Total no. copies printed	8,500
Paid circulation	
(1) through vendors	555
(2) mail subscription	6,828
Total paid circulation	7,383
Free distribution	612
Total distribution	7,995
Office use, leftover, or spoiled	505
Total	8,500

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Ralph C. Lally II, Publisher and Editor.

Play Meter welcomes readers' notes on games technical improvement and repair; new operating/location methods; your gripes and brags about the coin industry; and all questions on the business topics most important to you.

Write Play Meter today!

Williams pursuit of 'pirates' has been broad-gauged

Williams Electronics, Inc. reports that its year-long effort to protect the trademark and copyrights of its video game *Defender* from video game pirates has been markedly successful.

The pirated games, most of which were assembled in "garage-type operations" from printed circuit board kits inserted into homemade or used cabinets, according to Williams, have been sold under such diverse names as "*Defendor*," "*Defense*," "*Defense Command*," "*Galaxy Wars*," "*Outer Limits*," "*Mayday*," and "*Video Devices*."

U.S. courts throughout the country have ruled that such games infringe Williams' proprietary rights and have issued temporary restraining orders, impoundment orders, or permanent injunctions in California, Texas, New Jersey, Alabama, Oregon, North Dakota, and New York.

Williams Electronics has further cases pending in U.S. District courts

in Indiana and California. In addition, several individuals and companies have agreed in private settlements to cease and desist infringing Williams rights.

Private settlements are being finalized in Indiana, North Carolina, New York, Kentucky, Iowa, and Texas. Settlements are also expected, shortly, in two cases in Toronto, Canada and in one case in the Vancouver, Canada area. The U.S. Customs Service has also been utilized to prevent copies from entering the country and has confiscated infringing games in Los Angeles, California and New Haven, Connecticut.

A spokesman at Williams stated that the company "is extremely pleased with its legal successes in the United States and around the world, and Williams will vigorously continue to protect and defend its trademark and copyrights on *Defender*, as well as all other future games manufactured by Williams Electronics."

Bally to acquire lottery concern

Bally Manufacturing Corp. announced that it has reached agreement in principle for the acquisition by Bally of Scientific Games Development Corp. Scientific Games is said to be the largest designer, producer and supplier of instant and weekly types of lottery games in the world. Scientific Games has sold lottery tickets to fourteen of the fifteen state government-operated lotteries in the United States and to lotteries operating in seven foreign countries.

Robert E. Mullane, chairman, president and chief executive officer of Bally, stated: "This acquisition is important to Bally not only in terms of the contribution Scientific Games will make to Bally's overall earnings but, like most of Bally's divisions, it is a leader in its field and, as such, it complements our other operations."

The transaction is subject to execution of a definitive agreement, approval of the boards of both companies and compliance with customary regulatory requirements.

Meanwhile, Bally Manufacturing Corp. has elected three of its executives to the post of corporate

vice president. They were: Glenn K. Seidenfeld, Jr., corporate secretary and general counsel; James Barrett, corporate director of manufacturing; and Dr. Martin Keane, corporate director of technology.

Chairman Mullane also announced that Paul Ignacek, manager of corporate accounting, had been promoted to director of financial reporting and accounting.

Seidenfeld joined Bally as general counsel in 1976. Previously he had been associated with McDermott, Will and Emery, Chicago and as attorney-advisor to the Securities and Exchange Commission in Washington. A graduate of the University of Illinois College of Law and Northwestern University, Seidenfeld is 37 years old and lives in Northfield, Illinois with his wife Patricia and their son, Gleen, III.

Barrett, who has been associated with Bally for ten years, was promoted to his present position earlier this year after having served as director of manufacturing for the pinball and slot machine divisions. Before joining Bally, he was an engineer with the General Electric Corporation.

Belam enters vending

R.H. Belam Co., Inc. major exporter of coin-op games and phonographs and one of the largest domestic distributors, located in Lake Success, New York, has launched its entry into the vending industry.

Jospeh Gilbert, a veteran in vending sales, was tapped as the new corporate consultant for vending and is based at Belam Florida/Miami. In addition, John Stowe has been appointed vending salesman for Florida and James Walmsley was appointed for sales in New York and Long Island.

Belam has been appointed distributor for Automatic Products, Moyer-Diebel, Mars Money Systems, Ardac Bill Changers, and other lines. The company reports "very satisfactory reaction from customers and sales are already very good."

Belam also announced that it will begin a program of exporting vending machines. "The international marketplace has many countries that do not have vending machines and Belam expects to introduce them to many of these markets," said a company announcement.

Levin re-joins GPI

Darrell G. McCullough, president, Game Plan, Inc., Addison, Illinois announced that Stanley Levin has rejoined the organization as director of business development. This is a new position and Levin will report directly to McCullough.

His primary responsibility will be identifying and acquiring new products for the company. All aspects of search, evaluation, and reporting on new opportunities will be in his area of operations at Game Plan, Inc.

Deposit money vendor?

A machine capable of refunding deposit money on empty bottles is currently being sought by the British Overseas Trade Board in response to an inquiry from Helsinki.

There is a movement in Europe and Scandinavia in particular towards the returnable empties as a means of conserving energy used in bottle production, which has the support of the ecologists who want to avoid litter.

PLAY METER CALENDAR

November 19-21
IAAPA, Parks Show, Bartle Hall, Kansas City, Missouri

November 25-27
Incomat Exhibition, Salzburg, Austria

November 26-28
SADA '81, Palacio De Congresos Torremolinos, Malaga, Spain

November 30-December 1
Scottish Preview, Renfrew

December 9-12
Forainexpo, Paris, France

December 17-20
BRUFOREX, Brussels International Trade Fair for amusement equipment, Exhibition Centre, Brussels

January 18-21, 1982
ATE, Birmingham, England, National Exhibition Centre

January 19
Music Operators of Minnesota, annual convention, Holiday Inn, Minneapolis

January 21-24
IMA, Frankfurt, Germany

February 16-18
Northern Show, Blackpool, England

March 3-5
Australia's AMOA Convention, Hilton Hotel, Melbourne

March 26-28
Amusement Operators Expo '82, Hyatt Regency, Chicago

March 31-April 2
Coin-Op '82, Irish Amusement Trades exhibition, Racecourse Centre, Leopardstown

April 14-23
Milan Fair, Italy

May 7-8
Ohio Music & Amusement Operators, annual convention and show, Columbus

June 3-5
Amusement and Music Operators of Texas, Americana Hotel, Ft. Worth

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'Camel races' and spaceship rides highlight British displays

A new version of a popular racing game and a kiddie-ride replica of the world's first space shuttle will be highlights of the diverse British exhibits at the IAAPA Expo in the Kansas City Convention Center, November 19-22.

Bafco Ltd., will display the facsimile of the orbiting vehicle, Columbia. The *Space Shuttle* ride features flashing lights and authentic sound effects.

An updated version of a racehorse game will be shown by Kentucky Derby Ltd. Called *Arabian Derby*, the contest uses model camels instead of the more traditional horses. Available for 12 or 18 players, it is supplied for trailer mounting and is said to be quick to set up and easy to secure after closing.

The latest coin-operated amusement from MKC Designs uses the jet from a water gun to push a ball through a maze and into a target. The gun is pedestal mounted and the 3' x 6' fiberglass target board stands almost vertically in front of it. The maze is made of white plastic-coated steel wire. When the 7" diameter ball enters the target hole, a siren sounds and an illuminated display shows the score.

Change dispensers will be promoted by the Torman Group of Companies. The machines are said to give change quickly and accurately. The units are so flexible that any combination of the world's coinage up to 30mm diameters can be handled. Color-coded keys ensure a fast, accurate response.

An inflatable English castle will be featured by Supa-Bounce. Representing a typical Middle Ages fortification, the *Camelot* comes complete with turrets and castellations. Children can jump around on the unit's air cushioned floor.

Rounding out the British exhibits will be logic boards and conversion kits for video games from Competitive Video, Marmatic Sales with a coin counting machine and coin acceptor mechanisms—and Petittdemange Ltd.'s water amusement which uses a fleet of canoes,

and Styro Glass Aero Marine Models.

The British firms are sponsored jointly by the British Overseas Trade Board and the British Amusement Catering Trades Association. The firms planning to participate include: Bafco Ltd., Unit 2a, Clover Trading Complex, Clover Road, Willoughby, Alford, Lincolnshire, England;

Represented by: J.C. Berry, director, L A Collins, director.

U.S. Agent: Kiddie-Rides America 3416 Blackhawk Road, Suite 205, Rock Island, Illinois 61201
Competitive Video, 122 Villiers Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey, England.
Kentucky Derby Ltd., 21A Cemetery Road, Southport, Merseyside, England;

Represented by: Stuart Keane, director; Arthur Helm, director.
Marmatic Sales Ltd., Unit No. 2, White Hart Road, Plumstead Road, London SW18 England.

MKC Designs, Oak Bridge House, Croft, Skegness, Lincolnshire, England.

Represented by: Michael K. Chester, director; Judith Chester, director.

Petittdemange Ltd., Harbour Road, Outlon Board, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 3L2 England.

Styro Glass Aero Marine Motels LTD, Unit 2, Copper Street, Off Wharft Street, Dukinfield, Cheshire SK16 RJB England.

Super-Bounce Inflatables, Newton Road, Harrowbrooke Industrial Estate, Hinckley, Leicestershire, LE10 3DS England.

Represented by: R. Combley director.

Torman Group of Companies, Both Booth Hill Works, Booth Hill Lane, Oldman old OLI 2PH England


Represented by: Ian torr, manmaging director; Hon Slater, development engineer.

U.S.A. agent: Wico Corporation, 6400 W. Gross Point Road Niles, Illinois 60648.

Importers: Universe Affiliated International Inc., 314 West First Avenue, Roselle, New Jersey 07203.



A new racing game, *Arabian Derby*, available in 12- or 18-player version, to be on show at IAAPA Expo in Kansas City: product from England.



MUSIC PROGRAMMING

by Pat Matthews

'Tis the Season to be listening

Well, look what's about to sneak up on us again! Christmas!!! Can you believe it? It's a time for giving and a time for listening, I guess. I listened to quite a few records this time out, so, if you would, please listen to me for the next few minutes and if you write to the editor, I'll get to listen to you!! Now listen....

Trouble—Lindsey Buckingham—Asylum/E-47223-A

Fleetwood Mac has been on hiatus and the two mainstays of the group and its successful sound, Nicks and Buckingham have released solo efforts on different labels—neither of which is the Mac's Warner Brothers....there's no trouble here.....the sound is Buckingham inspired Fleetwood Mac...a positive substitute while the band counts its money...nice acoustic guitar work by Buckingham and great backing vocals...*10 out of 10 easy.*

Leather And Lace—Stevie Nicks (with Don Henley)—Modern Records/MR 7341

Last time she shared a hit with

Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers, and this time she's back to break all the guys' hearts with a little help from Don Henley of the Eagles...written by Nicks, this lovely ballad is highlighted by the recognizable vocals of this true present-day queen of the rock 'n' roll scene...Henley, whose voice is also easy to detect in a crowd, adds a nice touch....breezy and sweet....*10 out of 10*...(and you thought Fleetwood Mac split up).

Love In The First Degree—Alabama—RCA/JK-12288

"Feels So Right" brought this country-politan band to the masses and this song should serve to enforce the niche they've made in the past six months. It's a little more up-tempo and features those great harmonies backed by acoustic guitar and a very un-country string section....nice song with all the ingredients needed for chart success as a cross-over hit....*10 out of 10* on highest chart.

Don't Stop Believin'—Journey—Columbia/18-02567

They've gone through personnel changes, but they continue as the premier AOR rock'n'roll group that gets its share of single chart successes...anytime their name appears it just about guarantees either a sell-out or a record that will sell beyond all expectations....this song has it all....the song was a favorite at their shows on their recent tour and now the single is available for anyone who wants it....starts off sounding like a ballad and ends up kicking tail near the end....*9 out of 10* or better.

Sharing The Love—Rufus with Chaka Khan—MCA/51203

Rufus tried to go it alone after the lovely Chaka split, but with little or no success....meanwhile, Chaka had some pretty good luck...she rode the crest of the disco wave, all the while selling a sizeable amount of lps. Well, now they're all back together again (at least for this lp) and the initial single release is a goodun.....close to a ballad, it features the multi-octaved voice of Chaka and some well

The records are rated as follows: 10 out of 10 = Top 10 peak; 9 out of 10 = Top 20 peak; 8 out of 10 = Top 30 peak; 7 out of 10 = Top 40 peak; 5 or 6 out of 10 = Somewhere in Top 100; 4 or less = Forget it, loser, break in half.

crafted instrumentation on a superbly produced disc....the lp is titled *Camouflage*, but there's no hiding the hit potential of this *10 out of 10* R&B smash!

Twilight—ELO—Jet Records/ZS5 02559

They're still having trouble shaking the stigma they got when they did the music for the ill-fated movie "Xanadu"....and it's a shame, too...the new lp, *Time* is probably their best overall effort to date... "Hold On Tight," the first single proved that, and now there's more evidence with this up-tempo "art-rock" ditty....for those of you who still miss the Beatles and the way their music could make you feel, there's still ELO!!! *9 out of 10* for sure.

Turn Your Love Around—George Benson—Warner Brothers/WBS49846

There's another high priced lp out this month. It's called the *George Benson Collections* and is a two-record set which lists for around \$17 and has all his greatest hits (how many could that be?), some early classic Benson, and this song.... continuing in the mold of "Give Me The Night" and other Michael Jackson sound—alikes this one should score big just as easily...*10 out of 10* on highest chart—which could be either Pop or Soul.

Pay The Devil (Ooo, Baby, Ooo)—The Knack—Capitol/P-A-5054

Boy, have these guys changed.... and just when you thought they took the hint. Well, the new sound is a pleasant surprise....sort of a Beach Boys mutation....breezy, nice ooohs and aahhhs in the backing vocals and some nice keyboard work....could be a sleeper....doesn't anyone want to get the Knack anymore? *7 out of 10* possibility...personally, I'd be surprised at any more than that.

Lonely Nights—Mickey Gilley—14-02578

Where would this man be today if it weren't for the "Urban Cowboy" flick and fad that followed? Counting his money at his club in Pasadena which is what he's doing anyway...it's just that he's successful enough now to have someone to count it for him now...he always had a pleasing voice in a country sort of way....and if you're ready, here's another Gilley hit to help those Lone Stars go down a little easier...*10 out of 10* Country, natch.

Play Meter's List of Songs You Simply Can't Be Without

- START ME UP—Rolling Stones—Rolling Stones Records
- SHARE YOUR LOVE WITH ME—Kenny Rogers-Liberty***
- HERE I AM—Air Supply—Arista
- ALIEN—Atlanta Rhythm Section—Columbia***
- ATLANTA LADY—Marty Balin—EMI America***
- OH NO—Commodores—Motown***
- ARTHUR'S THEME (BEST THAT YOU CAN DO)—Christopher Cross—Warner Brothers***
- YOU SAVED MY SOUL—Burton Cummings—Alfa***
- WHEN SHE WAS MY GIRL—Four Tops—Casablanca
- HARD TO SAY—Dan Fogelberg—Full Moon/Epic***
- LOVE ALL THE HURT AWAY—Aretha Franklin & George Benson—Arista***
- PRIVATE EYES—Daryl Hall & John Oates—RCA***
- WE'RE IN THIS LOVE TOGETHER—Al Jarreau—Warner Brothers***
- SAY GOODBYE TO HOLLYWOOD—Billy Joel—Columbia***
- JUST ONCE—Quincy Jones—A&M***
- THE NIGHT OWLS—Little River Band—Capitol***
- FANCY FREE—Oak Ridge Boys—MCA***
- I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOUR LOVE—Teddy Pendergrass—Philadelphia International
- NEVER BEEN SO LOVED (IN ALL MY LIFE)—Charley Pride—RCA
- TRYING TO LIVE MY LIFE WITHOUT YOU—Bob Seger—Capitol***
- I'VE DONE EVERYTHING FOR YOU—Rick Springfield—RCA***
- EVERY LITTLE THING SHE DOES IS MAGIC—Police—A & M***
- CONTROVERSY—Prince—Warner Brothers
- THE OLD SONGS—Barry Manilow—Arista
- SAUSALITO SUMMERNIGHT—Diesel—Regency/Atco***
- WAITING FOR A GIRL LIKE YOU—Foreigner—Atlantic
- PHYSICAL—Olivia Newton John—MCA***
- YOUNG TURKS—Rod Stewart—Warner Brothers
- LET'S GROVE—Earth, Wind & Fire—Columbia/Arc
- THEM GOOD OL' BOYS ARE BAD—John Schneider—Scotti Brothers***

Researcher: slow the music and speed up customers

A tip for jukebox operators to pass to tavern locations: Slow-paced songs on the music machine tend to speed up the pace of customers' calls from the bar.

A University of Minnesota researcher reported finding this relationship between the record and the rum after a four-year study of behavior in more than 100 taverns in Montana and Minnesota. The anthropologist, Dr. James Schafer was quoted in a news account as saying people drank less in disco bars, where the music was fast and there was adequate room for dancing.

Schafer, director of alcohol and drug abuse programs at the Minnesota campus, said he was a country music fan but was alarmed after visiting a few bars in Texas. His deeper study revealed that the numbers that tended to cause

customers to drink beyond their limits included Kenny Roger's "Lucille," Willie Nelson's "Whiskey River," Linda Ronstadt's "Crazy," Hank Williams' "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," and Crystal Gayle's version of "Don't It Make Your Brown Eyes Blue."

The researcher explained, "Most of the songs are sad stories about broken lives and tend to reflect the reality of the people in the bars. The songs have a self-pitying mood that is associated with heavier drinking."

Music isn't the only environmental factor affecting drinking, but the jukebox in a tavern is the primary "mood selection device," said Schaffer. Other elements are moderate lighting, small dance floors, a high ratio of men to women, and horseshoe-shaped bars with bartenders who hustle drinks, all contributing to overindulgence.

FRANK'S CRANKS



By Frank Seninsky

Mini-reviews and letters, too...

Testing joysticks on route

It has now been more than two months since I wrote my last review. During that time Midway's *Wizard of Wor*, Gottlieb's *Volcano*, and Williams' *Solar Fire* would have been reviewed. It was a good time *not* to write; you didn't miss much.

Volcano was well named. Mine erupted when the kicker rubber actually caught on fire from the heavy arching of the kicker contacts. *Solar Fire* is similar to *Pharaoh*. Let's just forget about *Wizard of Wor*. Mine burned up in a real fire which may have been caused by *Pleides*. So much for the games with the "hot" names.

Some months ago Art Noparstak, Wico's director of marketing, sent me samples of the Wico 8-position, *Berzerk* retrofit joystick. I have put this joystick on twenty-five *Berzerks* and marched them into the field for testing. Service calls have been greatly reduced. The kit takes five minutes to install and is well worth the price of \$50.00 (part #15-9550-01).

The control handle is too long and too thin on the Wico eight-position *Berzerk* retrofit. It can be easily bent or broken off. By banging on the top, the control shaft can be forced down through the grommet hole with only the red knob stopping it from falling through the panel. (Instant service call) It is also common for the switch blades to crack due to metal fatigue. Why can't blades be designed to go through millions of flex cycles before failing? I also didn't like the idea of the blades being fixed through plastic stacks that you can't take apart.

So if you have these controls, it is wise to carry extra blade sets and extra control shafts. Stern has used the Wico joystick assembly on *Scramble* and *Super Cobra*. I have seen three different lengths made for the joystick shaft. Try to use the shortest shaft: the one used on

Super Cobra. The shortest one is difficult to bend and harder to knock through the supporting grommets. (Wico also makes a four-position control that we have been using on *Crazy Climber*, but this installation takes time.) Wico has the right idea. Once these bugs are removed they will have an excellent joystick. Right now I will give it an 8.5.

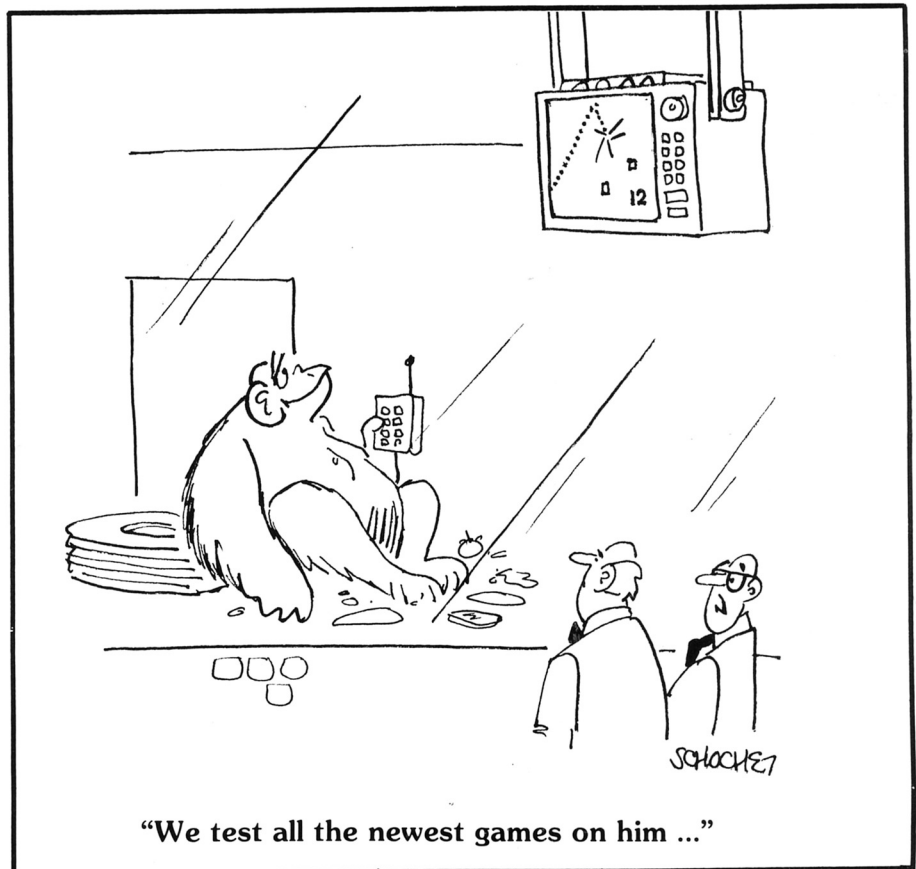
While we are on joysticks—Al Ryan, chief mechanical engineer at Midway sent me their latest parts for the *Pac-Man* joystick. These new parts consist of a hard plastic bushing that looks like a small cylinder with a large washer around it (the new bushing is just one piece; no washer and no E-clip are

required), a round cylindrical piece that won't wear as it pushes the contact switches, and a flat plastic guide plate which replaces the white plastic with the diamond cutout section that wore quickly.

So far these new parts have shown almost no wear after two months in the field. There have been no service calls except for dirty contacts. This new joystick control is the best I've tested so far. I give Midway a 9. Now if you put the new Atari blade switches on this control you would reduce service calls to almost nil.

ANOTHER CRANK WRITES...and I appreciate it:

"Dear Frank: I agree that Taito



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upright cabinets are very well constructed, and the quarters are relatively safe once they are inside the game. But heaven help the operator who may someday lose the front-door key to one of these games.

"A company I do some work for did just that and summoned me to change the lock. Since I've never had to change a Taito lock before, I expected the job to be routine. Needless to say, I was wrong.

"The company uses a type of lock that is foreign to the video game industry. It's barrel is slightly smaller in diameter than conventional counterparts, and the hole in the front door is too small for a conventional lock barrel to fit in...

"At any rate, if you don't have a Taito lock as a replacement (I didn't), and your local distributors have none on hand (they didn't), you have to file a bigger hole in the door—you can't drill because you need a couple of flat sides.

"The lock arms that come with the conventional long-barrel locks hit the top of the slot of the security bracket bolted to the cabinet just right of the door, so you either have to cut a notch in the lock arm, the bracket slot, or remove the bracket and attach some kind of spacer to eliminate the front-door slot (I screwed in a Stern lock arm) because you can't bend the front-door arm far enough to close the gap.

"Not only that, but the retaining nut on the original Taito lock barrel is nearly impossible to unscrew with normal tools. I had to break a spot weld nearest the lock and bend up a small section of metal so my pliers could grip the oversized nut..."

Paul M. Theile, Hughes Aircraft Company, Microelectronic Products Division, Newport Beach, California.

Crank's Answer: "I don't know why Taito goes to such extremes to lock up the coin door since the cashbox is located in a separate compartment below the coin door.

I had six video games lined up in a game room. All the games had front door hasps across the coin door except for the Taito *Crazy Climber*. I didn't put a hasp on for two reasons:

(1) the Taito lock is so strong I didn't feel anyone would try to break into the game; (2) the cashbox is located in a separate compartment, which I figured crooks would realize.

The Taito game was the only game that was vandalized. The coin door was badly bent up but it didn't come open. Now I put hasps across the Taito coin doors just to make them look like the other games. And to add insult to injury, now I have to change the Taito lock and I didn't even lose the key!

SERVICE TIPS:

Space Fury (Sega/Gremlin): If you have one that works—the cutouts under the coin mechanisms have to be widened because the quarters can easily be jump up.

Super Cobra (Stern): There is a regular 4 amp fuse on the power supply that fails and still "looks" good. I have been replacing these fuses with 5 amp regulars and haven't had a problem again with these games.

Rowe BC 25 and MC bill changer: The coin return lever can stick in, which also activates the bill acceptor motor. The motor will heat up and shut off after several minutes (thermal shut down). I have disconnected the micro-switch behind the coin return lever figuring it is better not to have someone take the changer out of order and take a chance that a bill won't get crumpled in the bill acceptor. So far I have been lucky.

Eight Ball Deluxe (Bally): If the flipper sticks, file out the sleeve and cut the return spring in half and reattach. The springs were not designed properly; too weak.

Centipede (Atari): Good idea to solder on wires to the fire button blades because they slip off due to vibration. Also the trak ball housing can come loose so it should be checked during collecting.

Defender (Williams): Since each game has 24 of the same RAMs, it is a good idea to carry a spare RAM. Usually only one fails at a time and it's easy to locate the bad RAM with Williams' seft test mode. Williams uses 4166 chips but a good replacement is 416C or 416D which can be purchased at any good electronics store.

The Taito lock is so strong I didn't feel a door hasp was needed to prevent anyone from breaking into the game.

The cashbox is located in a separate compartment, which I figured crooks would realize. When the game was vandalized, the coin door was bent but not opened.

Talk to the players

By Mike Bucki



Warp-Warp, Super Cobra on review

Just when you think you've got it down to a science, or at least a few logical assumptions, up jumps the anomaly. In the shopping center arcade jammed with teens and pre-teens, those games with an easy to medium level of difficulty gobble up coins like lumberjacks confronted with hotcakes on a cold winter morning. Yet *Asteroids Deluxe* sits there, in that same arcade, comparatively idle.

But observe the game room of the student center on the local college campus and find that the more frantic and challenging the game, the better the players like it. Hit them with the hardest and they ask for more.

So, what's the problem? Place the easier games where the less adept come to play and locate the extreme challengers where the experts roam, that's the answer isn't it?

Sure, but what about the neighborhood tavern where *Pac-Man* and *Asteroids Deluxe*, standing side by side, have both garnered fantastic rewards but are now slightly on the wane? Why the success and why now the apparent down trend? Will the latter last and what should an operator do if it does?

Hell, I don't know, I don't have all the answers, no one in the industry does. The reasons for the success or failure of certain games in certain locations are as varied as the people who play them. The point I'm trying to drive home is the importance of observation as you make your rounds. But don't just look, talk as well. Ask questions. Find out why a player likes *Centipede* or why he hasn't even tried *Defender*. Is he getting bored with *Pac-Man*? Do the controls of *Venture* respond as fast and/or accurately as he wishes? What games do his friends favor?

Keeping the machines functioning and counting the coins aren't enough. Observation and conversation are also a big part of success.

Having dispensed with that semi-lecture, let me move now to a couple of new market entries that will definitely challenge your skill in choosing the right location: *Super Cobra* by Stern and Rock-Ola's *Warp/Warp*.

SUPER COBRA

Here is a colorful, action-packed adventure that will generate much initial interest wherever you place it but I believe only frenzied fanatics and experts will stay with it. It's a multi-phase, buy-back-into-the-game, where-you-got-clobbered challenge that only a few will consistently answer.

PLAYFIELD: Mountains landscapes and cityscapes at the top and bottom of the screen form alternately board and narrow tunnels. With a joystick the player moves his *Super Cobra* helicopter up and down, and can speed up or slow down the forward assault (unlike *Vanguard* where I found the fast/slow action lacking.) With two fire buttons the player drops bombs and launches sidewinder missiles at the enemy targets. The enemy, for their part, send satellites and flying saucers after you, launch their own sidewinder missiles, drops stalactite bombs from the ceiling, and attacks from below with tanks, rockets and gun turrets.

While flying through each of ten 1,000-mile journeys the player must also remember to bomb the fuel tanks below to refuel his helicopter. The enemy never launch all their arsenal in any one part of the journey but their combinations are extremely devious. For example, the tanks that were stationary during the first 5,000 miles suddenly attain more firepower and mobility in the 6,000 mile phase. **PROS AND CONS:** Multi-phase *Super Cobra* is far more difficult to play than *Vanguard* but my gut reaction is I like it better. Each offers the player a breather phase immediately after a frantic hyper-attack, but *Vanguard's* breathers lack challenge for the true expert. *Super Cobra* moves from the first phase to the last with a peak-and-



Stern's SUPER COBRA



Rock-Ola's WARP-WARP

valleys degree of difficulty—each peak harder than the one before, each valley lesser than the peak preceding but harder than the previous valley.

While I like the response of *Super Cobra*'s controls I believe there's room for improvement. Because the game is so darn rough, the action so fast and furious, Stern might consider allowing the player to not only slow his helicopter but hover or stop his forward movement...just for a few seconds, 3 or 4 would be enough, so he could fathom a strategy for new obstacles. The delay between dropping pairs of bombs should be shortened, and there should be no delay in the firing of sidewinder missiles.

Scores for one or two players, plus the high score are displayed at the top of the screen, but, as the player moves from one phase to the next, he starts at zero each time he loses all of his ships. How about a cumulative score for those fanatics determined to reach the end? It's very disheartening to go through 80 credits in 48 minutes of continuous play and not be able to complete the 10,000 mile journey, but it's a complete turn-off to look at the scoreboard after that exhausting trip and see some piddling little number like 3380.

But that's only one of the obstacles standing in the way of success for *Super Cobra*. The major factor looming over this game is it's just too damn difficult to play. Yes, there'll be zealots who'll go bonkers over it and zealots attract average players. But is the average player going to drop a coin or two in the slot every 36 seconds? How long will he continue to do so? What will he tell other players about the game? When he walks away, will he ever come back?

However, allow me one qualifier if you will, one hedge to the bet of this review. Competition is so ingrained in the American psyche that I've assumed that most players faced

with a multi-phase challenge like *Super Cobra* and its successors will want to at least try to get through all phases of the game.

Maybe not. Maybe some will be satisfied with the action in the first 3,000 miles. But unfortunately most will be consistently beaten by the game in less than one minute; they'll be turned off rapidly and most won't come back.

In a few, very select locations *Super Cobra* could do very well, but be wary.

ITA -3, MO -0, CB +4.

By the way, *Super Cobra* comes from the factory with a suggested two quarter for one play setting. Change it to one quarter for one play if you want any success.

The player only has ten seconds to add a quarter and hit the discharge button to continue the game where he was obliterated.

WARP-WARP

At the exact opposite end of the frantic action scale lies Rock-Ola's *Warp-Warp*.

PLAYFIELD: There are two, Space World and Maze World. In Space World the screen is blank with the exception of two rectangular bars at center screen. Monsters, called bobos, chase your fighter along vertical and horizontal lines are fire slow moving missiles.

With a joystick the player moves the fighter along vertical and horizontal lines and shoots the monsters with a touch of the fire button. Hitting three monsters of the same color in a row brings forth a mystery monster which can be shot for bonus points. When the words Warp Warp appear on the rectangular bars at center screen the player can maneuver his fighter between the bars and enter the Maze World.

The monsters are the same but the fighter has changed. In Maze World the object is to run away from the monsters and lay time bombs in the fighter's wake. The delay is set by

how long the fire/button is depressed. Again, when Warp Warp appears on the center bars, the player can switch worlds.

PROS AND CONS: Immediate turn away will not a problem of *Warp's*, at least not in sense of blitzing the player with early game difficulty. After 3 or 4 warm-up games just to get the sense of what's expected, I began my usual semi-scientific approach of keeping time and score. In fifteen straight games only once was I knocked out in less than a minute. Most of the time I extended my play to between 1:30 and 2:00. That's good, that timing range seems to indicate profit for the operator and pleasure for the player.

However (and please note how big this however is) I would not have played *Warp-Warp* in the first place. I did so only because it was suggested by the editor for this review. It's not attractive. There's no spark. Watching its display mode or with another player trying his hand, there's no visceral "Hey that looks neat, I think I'll try it!"

So, while immediate turn away is not one of *Warp-Warp's* problems, initial attraction is. As is boredom.

According to Rock-Ola: "Game becomes more difficult as each regiment of monsters is destroyed, offering a great challenge to players of every skill level, from beginners to the most expert." I wouldn't know; I didn't play it long enough to find out. Therefore, as you see below, I've put a question mark by the MO or Max-out factor.

ITA -4, CB +2, MO = ?.

Rock-Ola's designers and marketing people, if they knew my personal preferences, would probably try to defend *Warp-Warp* with a statement like: "Of course *Warp-Warp* is too simplistic for Mr. Bucki; he's an *Asteroids Deluxe* devotee." To which I would counter: "True, but *Frogger* is simple, deceptively simple, yet it's also fun." More about *Frogger* in the next Viewpoint column. ●

Mali

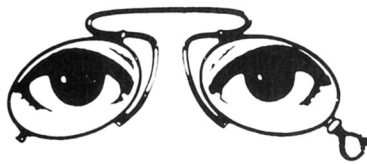
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By Roger C. Sharpe

Looking forward, through the mirror

It seems strange that the 1981 AMOA is a thing of the past, even though as of this writing, it has yet to occur. By now all the rumors have either been proved true regarding the development and unveiling of certain equipment, while other expectations might not have been met. Sitting here now it's especially difficult to project any reactions, even given all the advance information I have about the machines I'll be seeing in less than a week.

Was it a video show? Did pinball stage a comeback? Or was the new celebrity some other variation on a theme that crossed over into both areas in the hope of further tapping the existing and ever expanding market for coin-op machines? These questions will best be answered next time around, when I'll try to recap the show and further scrutinize the pinball situation.

For this time around, what we (Dave Pierson, Ray Tilley, and myself) thought might be nice, given the theme of the issue and its general timing, was a departure from the regular game review format to see what the Corner and this writer have been about since the whole concept was started about back in July of 1976.

The thing I can't believe in looking back is just how long I've been around, especially when I remember those in the industry who thought I would just disappear once I was finished with my book. But I have lingered around, loving every minute of it, and marveling at the evolution of the business and how far it's come in five short years.

I think of the pinball boom that came and went; the development and surge of video and the realization of New York City and Chicago finally growing up to the fact that coin-op games can exist. I look back at when I first happened upon the scene and the nature of pinball



First game critic reviewed:
Gottlieb's *BUCCANEER*/July '76
($\# \frac{1}{2}$ rating)

without solid state and even the companies and some people who have stayed, come and gone, or shifted to other places. It is a nostalgic feeling since I really came in on the tail end of what had been a "family" industry that's now turned into big business with big corporations now involved on many different levels.

And through it all, there's been Critic's Corner and this writer's ongoing evaluation, appraisal, and commentary on pinball machines in particular and the state of the industry in general. I even remember how much criticism Ralph Lally and I received when we first decided to try this feature, but we still continued with my belief always being (even today) that when somebody pays money for any product, they should have some sense of what it's about.

That was always the purpose of the columns: a chance to take a closer look, before deciding on your own what's best for you and your customers. Hopefully, it has accomplished that much, by making you more sensitive to the different aspects of the machines.

I know I've wavered over the years, have possibly played favorites when I shouldn't have, or have taken my own views too strongly without considering all the other input that's always been available. There are games I look back on and I cringe at what I wrote, others I feel fairly comfortable with, and even a fair share that I think have withstood the test of the time.

My track record? You'll have to decide, although I am constantly changing and trying to reflect many of the variables that impact on each new model. All in all, I don't think I've done too bad. Hopefully, you agree.

The first 200

In looking back over the years, from that first column in July, 1976 all the way through to last issue's *Black Hole*, I find it hard to imagine that I've reviewed an even 200 different machines. It's even harder to imagine that that many different models have been produced, not counting the games that came and went before I could even review them.

To put the time into perspective for those who might be more nostalgic and sentimental, that first Critic's Corner served up such golden oldies as Gottlieb's *Buccaneer* and *Royal Flush*, Bally's *Captain Fantastic* and *Old Chicago*, Williams' *Aztec* and—a name from the past—Chicago Coin's (remember them and who they are now?) *Cinema*.

It's amazing how things change. But let's take a closer look at how the companies have done, what the top games (by this reviewer) were, how



1977 Pin game of the Year
in Play Meter's annual poll;
Roger's rating: #####



1978 Pin game of the Year
in Play Meter's poll;
Roger's rating: #####



1979's No. 2 Game of the Year
(Flash/Williams was No. 1 in poll);
Playboy rated ##### as did Flash

the years matches up, and lastly some breakdowns of the facts and figures.

For 1976 I had the chance to review 18 games over the six months not only including domestic manufacturers but also some foreign companies' efforts. The models that received #####s were Bally's *CAPT FANTASTIC* and Chicago Coin's *SOUND STAGE*. The average rating computed on the values given all the machines was 3.12 (or a little more than ###). As for how the companies did— well, here it is for 1976:

BALLY	3.3
CHICAGO COIN	3.25
GOTTLIEB	3.0
WILLIAMS	3.0

In 1977, when pinball was really enjoying a measure of success and a rebirth, there were 39 games reviewed, with an average rating coming out to 3.06. Nine games, or 23%, for you number freaks, received #####s, including Sonic's *PROSPECTOR*, Gottlieb's *TARGET ALPHA*, *JACKS OPEN*, *BRONCO*, *TEAM ONE*, *JET SPIN*, and *JUNGLE QUEEN*; and Bally's *EVEL KNEIVEL* and *EIGHT BALL*. The top four companies for the year according to the rating lined up like this:

GOTTLIEB	3.70
SONIC	3.3
BALLY	3.25
PLAYMATIC	3.0

For 1978, with the domestic manufacturers getting more solidly entrenched in solid-state electronics there was a dramatic shift, at least for this reviewer, regarding the viability and competitiveness of the imports—which ultimately proved to be true—as well as a toughening of the ratings reflected in the 2.91 yearly average for the 44 models that hit the streets.

This time, only 6 games (or 14%) received #####s including Stern's *STINGRAY*, Williams' *CONTACT*, Bally's *POWER PLAY*, and Gottlieb's *CLEOPATRA*, *SINBAD*, and *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND*. The company rankings for the top four looked like this: (as you can see, it was something of a dogfight.)

BALLY	3.3
STERN	3.29
WILLIAMS	3.18
GOTTLIEB	3.17

In 1979 there were probably more solid games produced than have been seen since, as, in many ways, pinball began its last moments in the



1980's No. 1 Pinball
in Play Meter's annual poll;
Roger's rating: #####



1980's Space Invaders, No. 3 in
Play Meter's annual poll;
Roger's rating: #####



1980's Meteor, No. 5 in
Play Meter's operator poll;
Roger's rating: #####

sun. The year brought us 41 different models and an average rating for all the machines of 3.20 which included a whopping 15 #####s.

Obviously, I was enjoying what I was seeing and playing, although, so too were the other pinball players out there, especially considering the likes of Williams' *FLASH*, *POKER-INO*, and *STELLAR WARS*; Bally's *HARLEM GLOBETROTTERS*, *KISS*, *PLAYBOY*, *SUPERSONIC*, and *PARAGON*; Gottlieb's *GENIE*, *COUNTDOWN*, and *CHARLIE'S ANGELS*, and Stern's *METEOR*, *HOT HAND*, and *MAGIC*; as well as Atari's *SUPERMAN*, which proved to be too little, too late for the company and its venture into pinball.

As for the top four in 1979, there was some shifting of positions as witnessed by the following:

STERN	3.9
WILLIAMS	3.75
BALLY	3.74
GOTTLIEB	3.4

In 1980, there was a pronounced change in the fortunes of pinball that resulted in a rise for video and the plateauing of the games in terms of innovation and excitement, across the board, for the 34 models

produces. It's evident in the fact that the average ratings were down to a new low of 2.90 with only 4 machines (or just 12%) getting #####.

The memorable games of the year? How about Williams' *FIREPOWER*, Bally's *SPACE INVADERS*, and Stern's *BIG GAME* and *FLIGHT 2000*. As for how the manufacturers stacked up:

WILLIAMS	3.4
STERN	3.34
BALLY	2.67
GOTTLIEB	2.58

That brings us up to 1981, which, although still not complete as yet, has still managed to bring another 24 games to use and an average rating of 3.05 so far as of last issue's last game. Seven games have garnered #####s so far, including Williams' *ALIEN POKER*, and *BLACK KNIGHT*; Bally's *XENON* and *FLASH GORDON*; Stern's *LIGHTNING* and *FREE FALL*; and Gottlieb's *MARS*.

As of now, the rankings read like this, although there is still some time for change before the year runs out:

WILLIAMS	3.45
STERN	3.38
BALLY	3.0
GOTTLIEB	2.93

Aces and jokers

So what does it all mean? Well, you can see where I might have been right over the years, as well as wrong and whether I've gotten any better over time. For me, it is a revelation to look back, see how far we've come, the impact of some games for each of the companies and how they may change the balance of production and design for succeeding efforts. Anyway, if you have any reactions to all the numbers, etc. let me know.

As for the next issue, get ready for the post-AMOA wrap up report highlighting the games, the people, and conversation about the future and present of the amusement business. I'm excited by the prospect of what I'll be seeing in a few short days and optimistic about everything in general and the promise of pinball in all ways, shapes, and forms—to survive and continue as an integral part of an industry that has never been restricted by the production of only one type of game in more than 100 years since the first patents began trickling into Washington.

Until then, we hope all had a happy Halloween. Zachary Nathaniel and older brother Joshua Lucas wish you well and their daddy would like to also add, be well and prosper. •

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Made of durable, red, molded plastic, the attractive Easy Wrapper has seven openings to accommodate coin wrappers for nickels, dimes, quarters, halves, both the "Ike" and "Susan" dollar coins, and pennies.

The familiar paper coin wrapper tube is placed into the appropriate coin hole. It fits around an "island" which holds the wrapper upright, ready for filling. Coins are dropped into the paper wrapper tube. When the coins reach the top surface of the Easy Wrapper and are level with it, the wrapper can be removed and closed, because it will then contain the correct number of coins, without any actual counting being necessary.

The Easy Wrapper comes complete with instructions. It is 4½ inches high, 6 inches long, and 3½ inches wide.

Prices is \$19.95, postpaid, from: Coin Handlers, Department PM, 1445 Sunset Ridge Road, Glenview, Illinois 60025.

Music on display

The VMC —Video Music Center was introduced by Stern/Seeburg at the AMOA. Its standard 19-inch color TV monitor displays music titles, credits, information that can be stored by the location—such as sports scores or stock market readings, the selection currently playing, and "operator only" service modes.

In the attract mode, the screen's list of music in title/artist/title format scrolls upward. The location-formatted message can contain 40 letters in each of 12 lines.

The customer utilizes only two controls, a thumbwheel and a select button. When he moves the thumbwheel, pushes the select button, or inserts coins, the main index is displayed. Credits are displayed upon insertion of money. The control panel features dual coin mechanisms to reduce downtime due to jammed coin rejectors.

The stereo speaker system consists of two separate channels housed in one cabinet to produce full stereo sound, mid-level in the unit, with a total of six speakers within each system—a woofer, tweeter, and midrange in each channel. Songs are programmable up to 200 selections.

Seeburg describes the VMC cabinet as "high technology contemporary." Access to the interior is gained by opening two key-locks on either side of the speaker grille, permitting all service from the front.



Cops'n'robbers

Capitalizing on the recent detective craze in fiction, television and the movies, Taito America Corp. has released *Lock 'n' Chase*, a video game of pursuit and capture.

The cops-and-robbers adventure begins as "Lupin" stealthily moves through the maze heisting gold coins and other assorted riches. Super sleuths are in hot pursuit as Lupin attempts to outwit his pursuers, nab all of the riches, and move on to a more devious maze offering additional riches. Lupin escapes the detectives by manipulation of the joystick and skillful use of the lock button which can temporarily bar the path of his pursuers or lock them behind bars.

But Lupin must beware of the gates that open and close at random, blocking his path. He may exit the maze and return on the opposite side, thereby skillfully eluding the super sleuths. Collecting the hat, crown, valise, and telephone in each successive maze earns bonus points, with points doubling for each money bag he snatches. But with each successive maze the detectives become more devious and resourceful.

The game is available in 1- or 2-player upright models. *Lock 'n' Chase*, originally designed by Data East of Japan for its cassette system, is being manufactured for North and South America by Taito America in Taito's standard video game format.

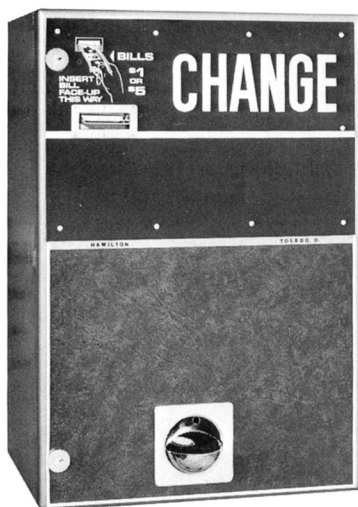
Changemasters are introduced

Two new Changemaster models have been introduced by Hamilton Scale Corp. Both feature a new *extended* hopper design allowing greater capacity at lower cost than existing models. The one-hopper model features a capacity of \$1000 in quarters while the two-hopper model features a capacity of \$1600 in quarters.

Either model can be ordered to accept \$1 bills, or \$5 bills and \$1 bills. Both models use only one validator. This bulk load equipment can also vend tokens, instead of coins, without modification.

Security is another Changemaster feature. Constructed of high strength, heavy duty 3/16-inch thick steel, cabinets are available with front openings for both the one- and two-hopper models. The one-hopper model is also available in a back-load design, permitting privacy and safety during loading and collection operations.

For more information, contact Hamilton Scale Corp., 3350 Secor Road, Toledo, OH 43606; (419) 535-7667.



Hot pursuit

Cinematronics Inc. has introduced *Solar Quest*, its latest one- or two-player video sensation.

The game begins with a spaceship appearing on the screen. Soon you are being followed by enemy spaceships which try to ram you. The object of the game is to destroy the enemy spaceships and pick up their survivors. When you pick up twenty-five or forty survivors (operator selectable), you get an extra ship.

Solar Quest contains five hundred different phases, according to Cinematronics. Each time you destroy a wave of attackers, the next wave contains more responsive and accurate enemy ships. On the fifth phase the attackers actually begin firing at you. The game can be adjusted by the operator to begin on any phase from one to eight.

Cinematronics Vice President/Marketing, David Stroud said: "Players are very excited about the challenge of *Solar Quest*. They can shoot the enemy ships with regular shots, as well as use a nuke to destroy them in bunches, or hyperspace through the galaxy to safe location. But challenge increases as the players improve, which leads to more excitement and greater collections from your locations," Stroud went on to mention.



Taito test fixture

Taito America Corp. has developed its computerized *Test Tech* fixture for troubleshooting individual Taito logic boards to component level in the field or on the bench.


"The handy fixture is self-contained in a briefcase for on-the-job portability," said Rene Lopez, Taito's director of customer service.

Taito *Test Tech* features its own internal 6809 microprocessor. "Using its keyboard and display, it performs tests of all major circuit functions and generations of patterns for signature analysis," Lopez said. Signature analysis is a numbered readout corresponding to a book code which determines where the problem is located. The device allows the technician to get to the heart of the video game's system, thereby isolating a particular problem.

"The Taito Engineering Department has recognized a particular industry need in developing the *Test Tech* to meet the need," Lopez said.

For more information on the Taito *Test Tech*, contact a local Taito distributor.





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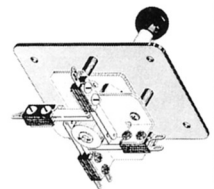
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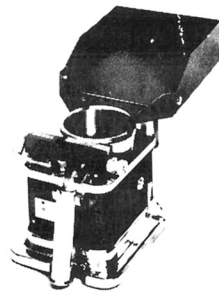
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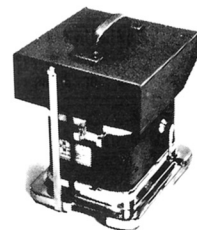
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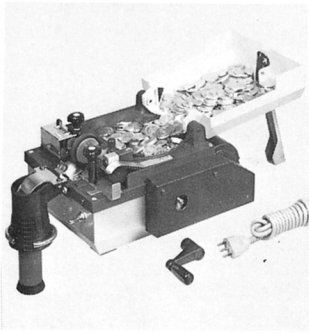





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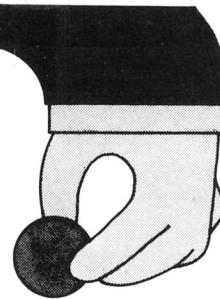
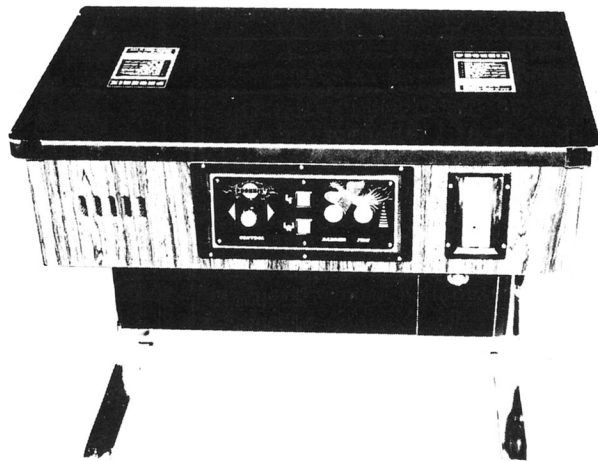
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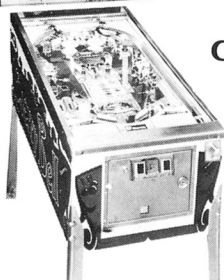
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News briefs.....news briefs.....AMOA show notes....

.....The Tournament Games "Spectacular," a national \$400,000 world championship tournament staged in Chicago during the AMOA Show, has turned out to be a veritable fiasco with winners finding out that their checks are being returned for insufficient funds. Atari, Inc., which as a co-sponsor of the tournament, reportedly will make good on \$50,000, the total of cash prizes due to winners of the Atari video game competition. A spokesman for the company, Frank Ballouz, said Atari had paid Tournament Games International (TGI) \$50,000 plus additional fees for running the tournament but that money apparently was not paid to the players. Atari indicated it will probably sue. Atari insists, however, that it has no further legal obligation as far as the outstanding \$350,000 in prizes promised by the tournament.

"Because of the adverse effect this national fiasco is going to have on arcade licensings and extra-legal restrictions on the industry in general," said David Pierson, editorial director of Play Meter, "the magazine has volunteered itself to be the central clearinghouse for all industry donations to help with the outstanding debt.

"We don't know what the response from the industry is going to be on this," Pierson said. "But something has got to be done by the industry as a whole to show everyone that Tournament Spectacular does not reflect the way this industry conducts its business. An incident like this can create exactly the kind of legislation backlash we are all trying to avoid."

Donations to the cause should be addressed to "Tournament Fund," P.O. Box 24170, New Orleans, LA 70184. "Please do not make checks out to Play Meter or to any individual's name. Industry people are reminded that their donations to the fund are tax deductible. Readers will be kept abreast of the Tournament Fund, as will the general media which is watching us closely to see if we have the wherewithal to police ourselves.".....

.....The AMOA International Expo drew the largest numbers it will ever pack into the Chicago Conrad Hilton Hotel on North Michigan, October 29-31...a total of over 10,900 attendance which includes a contingent of 1,243 exhibitors personnel. The halls were overflowing for the swan song of the Conrad Hilton as the AMOA site; next fall, the show moves to the downtown Chicago Hyatt Regency. Filling 370 exhibit booths at the Conrad Hilton were 131 games manufacturers and support & supply companies in the coin-op world. AMOA staff said all records were broken by the 1981 show, except the number of foreign attendees, which stood at 800 persons in Chicago. And AMOA membership swelled to over 2,000 with 566 new members signing at the show, according to staff spokesman John Schoff.....

.....It was not all game-playing, buying, and party-going at Chicago, however. The AMOA had several chief items of business at hand, not the least of which was the confirmation of Leoma Ballard, Belle, West Virginia, as the incoming president of AMOA. Other top AMOA officers elected at its general meeting October 30 were: First Vice President Clayton L. Norberg, Manakata, Minnesota; Secretary Wesley S. Lawson, Winter Haven, Florida; and Treasurer Dock Ringo of Mineral Wells, Texas. Incoming vice presidents are Walter Bohrer, Jr., Milwaukee, Wisconsin; James B. Reeves, Whiteville, North Carolina; and Vincent Storino, Toms River, New Jersey. Full coverage of the annual meeting--as well as the AMOA seminars--will follow in Play Meter, January 1 and January 15 issues.

.....Among AMOA's main business was a resolution to wage "a campaign we have never seen before" (in outgoing President Norm Pink's words) in petitioning the Congress to amend the Copyright Revision Act of 1976 to exempt coin-operated phonographs from infringement of copyright--which would strike out the requirement for per-jukebox royalty fees, if the AMOA effort succeeds. Pink said the legislative program should draw support from the influence of locations as well as jukebox operators.....

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