FOR THE COIN-OP ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY .... PUBLISHED TWICE MONTHLY

PLAY METER

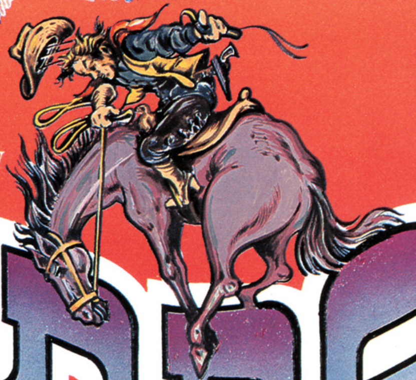
DECEMBER 31, 1984

CHEYENNE™ take a journey thru the "WILD WEST." You and "BUSTER BADSHOT" hunt down vicious outlaws in return for gold. Armed with only a rifle you protect "BUSTER BADSHOT" searching thru ghost towns, haunted graveyards, canyons, saloons, forests, mineshafts and even riding a stagecoach encountering dangerous rivals in your pursuit of bounty.

DIMENSIONS:

HEIGHT:	74.00 INCHES
WIDTH:	25.25 INCHES
DEPTH:	35.00 INCHES
WEIGHT:	315.00 POUNDS

Exidy
390 JAVA DRIVE, SUNNYVALE CALIF 94089
TEL. (408) 734-9410 TELEX-TRT 184836



CONVERTIBLE WITH CROSSBOW

Cheyenne™

PLAY METER

Twice a Month Publication for the Coin Operated Entertainment Industry

BPA Member Business Publications Audit   Member AMOA Amusement & Music Operators Association

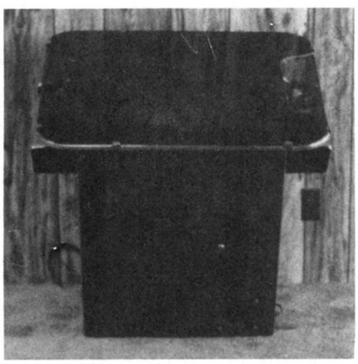
CONTENTS:

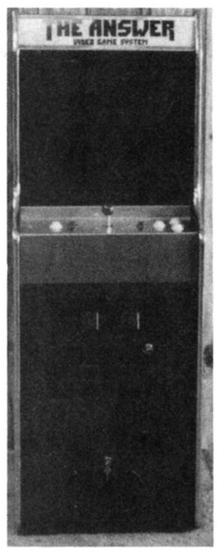
Volume 10, Number 24/December 31, 1984

FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

Cover Credit: Hugh Armstrong, a frequent contributing illustrator for *Play Meter*, did the cover artwork commemorating *Play Meter*'s first ten years.





Staff

Publisher and Editor:
Ralph C. Lally II

Associate Editors:
Valerie Cognevich
David Pierson

Art Director:
Katey Schwark

Typographer:
Jo Ann Anthony

Graphics Designer:
Margret Vincent

Technical Writer:
Frank Seninsky

Correspondents:
Mary Claire Blakeman
Bill Kurtz
Gene Lewin
Charles C. Ross
Roger C. Sharpe

Advertising Manager:
Karen Gray

Circulation Manager:
Renee' C. Pierson

Accounting Manager:
Susan Biggs

European Representative:
Esmay Leslie

Counsel:
Rufus King

PLAY METER, December 31, 1984. Volume 10, No. 24. Copyright 1984 by Skybird Publishing Company. **Play Meter** (ISSN 0162-1343)(USPS 358-305) is published twice monthly on the 1st and 15th of the month. Publishing office: 6600 Fleur de Lis, New Orleans, La. 70124; **Mailing address**: P.O. Box 24170, New Orleans 70184, U.S.A.; phone: 504/488-7003 . For subscriptions: 504/837-7987. Subscription rates: U.S. and Canada—$50; foreign: $150, **air mail only**. Advertising rates are available on request. **No part of this magazine may be reproduced without expressed permission.** The editors are not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts. **Play Meter** buys **all rights**, unless otherwise specified, to accepted manuscripts, cartoons, art work, and photographs. Second-class postage paid at New Orleans, LA 70113 and additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send Form 3579 to PLAY METER, P.O. Box 24170, New Orleans, LA 70184.

European Office: PLAY METER Promotions,"Harescombe" Watford Road, Northwood Middx. England, Northwood 29244.

"...and still the Champ!"

VALLEY

COUGAR CHEYENNE

COIN POOL TABLE

Selected in 1982, 1983 and again in 1984 by vote of the AMOA membership as the "Most Popular Pool Table"!

- **1st** with operators
- **1st** with distributors
- **1st** with leagues, tournaments
- **1st** with players
- **1st** with everyone who **knows** that value can't be measured by low cost alone! Valley is grateful for the confidence expressed and pledges to continue our commitment to the betterment of the coin machine industry.

THE VALLEY COMPANY

Subsidiary of Kidde, Inc.

KIDDE

P.O. Box 656, Bay City, MI 48707 • (517) 892-4536

Sales "Hot Line" (800) 248-2837 • TELEX NO. 234218

Thanks For Ten Successful Years

Welcome to the second decade of *Play Meter*! It's hard to imagine it's been 10 years since *Play Meter* was born. I could burst forward with 100-year old cliches, but that would bore you to death. So, instead, I would rather take this opportunity to extend our most sincere appreciation to those who made *Play Meter* what is is today—the largest and most widely circulated trade publication exclusively serving the coin-operated entertainment industry.

Those who have been reading *Play Meter* from its inception, know it was the overwhelming support of our charter subscribers, that got *Play Meter* off the ground. Looking back, I would say it was our unique editorial philosophy that would make the difference between success and failure. A magazine written by operators and for operators was, to my way of thinking, the only way to go. That may have not been the most profitable way of going, but I felt it was the right way to go.

Being the first publication to serve this industry exclusively, I had a feeling a publication written by manufacturers for manufacturers would never make it. The manufacturers didn't need any help, it was the struggling operators across America that needed help. It stands to reason that if the nations' operators were healthy and prosperous, the manufacturers would prosper as well. Most of the manufacturers couldn't understand that philosphy in the beginning, but most of them do today. Those few who still don't are paying the price for their ignorance.

It's a common fact the vast majority of trade publications are circulated free of charge to qualified recipients. *Play Meter* is one of the few trade publications in the country whose circulation is entirely paid. And that means one thing—we give our subscribers their money's worth. *Play Meter* is read from cover to cover, and that's the most gratifying experience a publisher can have.

I doubt any other trade magazine could have survived a boycott by its major advertisers, but *Play Meter* has. It's been well over a year now, and all efforts to stamp out the voice of the nation's operators have failed.

Like the rest of you, we have survived, and together we will continue to survive in the years to come.

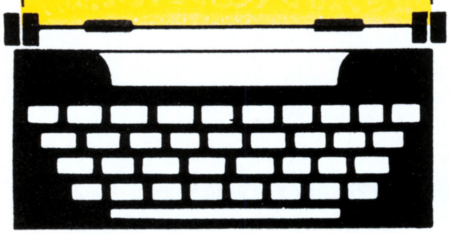
Operators need timely information and honest advice. That's been *Play Meter's* goal from the beginning. The survival of the operator should be the primary concern of everyone involved in this industry. The future of the industry depends on the health and welfare of the operator.

With this being *Play Meter's* 10th anniversary, I can only hope the next 10 years will be as rewarding and satisfying as the past 10 years. I love this industry and my publication and, like a loved one, will cherish them both forever.

Ralph C. Lally II

Editor and Publisher

Letters to the editor . . .



Bill's banner

READING: If I were looking for something interesting to do and were given the choice between reading Gene's misspelled, misguided "Gudgements" and refolding my socks, the choice would indeed be a difficult one to make. Is this some freshman journalism student trying to make some freelancing money? Is this an inept publication falling for his stunts.

ACCURACY: In addition to the five lighted buttons used to select game plays in Bally's *NFL Football*, there is a "game breaker" button (much larger than the play selection buttons) that Gene adamently claims does not exist. This button allows players to increase the favorable outcome of a play up to three times a quarter for each player. How can we take this person seriously when he omits vital features in his game reviews? Gene, maybe you need glasses or maybe college life is getting to you. Gene also fails to understand the concept of target marketing. Maybe he will study this his sophomore year. *NFL Football* is designed to appeal to the older bar-cruising crowd, not the kiddie "shoot-em up" crowd Gene is obviously associated with.

ORIGINALITY: Gene's style has an originality that is rivaled only by the half million or so other freshman journalism students in this country.

OPINION: I could not imagine having someone like Gene Lewin on the staff of a magazine that I would like to have taken seriously.

RATING: I don't think its worth the bother devising a new scale of incompetence for this pathetic attempt at journalistic parody.

Bill Loumpouridis
Chicago, Illinois

Oversees poll?

We are an overseas company involved in the video games business, and we would find it very useful to have some information about the ratings of video games overseas. For they are often different from what is happening in the United States.

For example, baseball and golf are not popular games in our country; and, for this reason, they would be ranked completely different in this country. So please consider this problem and remember that many countries all over the world read *Play Meter* and use it as the bible for buying equipment.

Julio Blitzer
Play Center
Montevideo, Uruguay

[*Editor's Note: The problem with having different equipment polls for each country are many-fold. First, the delay in getting the responses to surveys to and from each poll respondent would take so long that, by the time we published the poll, it would be too much out of date. Second, although it's true people all over the world do, in fact, read* Play Meter, *not enough of them read it in each country to make such a poll possible. A poll is only as good as the number of people taking part in it, and we're sorry to say that an equipment poll that's applicable for Uruguay would have a few responses that would hardly be valid.* Play Meter *prides itself on having a great response to its surveys, and that's why the* Play Meter *polls are so valid, because they're not influenced by just a handful of respondents but are the cumulation of hundreds of responses. You have pointed out a deviation where what's hot in the United States won't necessarily be hot in your country; but, overall, the* Play Meter *poll rankings should be applicable in most areas. As an operator experienced in your own locale, you can spot the exceptions to the rule, the game rankings that don't apply—like baseball or golf. It's the same way you know a soccer game would probably be more successful in your country than here in the United States where "football" means an entirely different game.*]

Needs Buyers' guidance

I found your 1984 Buyers' Guide issue (October 1, 1984) to be quite interesting and informative. It motivated me to inquire about some of the products shown. But, alas, there was no address for Standard Metal Typer and J.F. Frantz. Could you please help me here?

Martin Faber
M&C Vending Co.
Teaneck, New Jersey

[*Editor's Note: Standard Metal Typer is located at 2910 W. Montrose Avenue, Chicago, IL 60618, telephone 312/583-8300. J.F. Frantz or Johnston Products is located at 627 Fifteenth St., E. Moline, IL 61244, telephone 1-800/447-6768.*]

No more blues

It looks as though the sun is beginning to shine through the clouds. For those operators who have been singing the blues, my message of hope emphasizes the common sense steps to be followed down the street of success.

Step 1: Place only *proven* video games on your routes and rotate them when necessary

Step 2: Listen to responsible industry leaders.

Step 3: Be discriminating when setting locations. Do not over-set.

As an example, here is what the three leading games are doing for me in one location in three consecutive weeks: *Spy Hunter* at 25-cent play—$393, $313, and $231; *Punch Out!!* at 50-cent play—$325, $190, and $189; *Badlands* at 25-cent play—$557, $525, and $482. And *Spy Hunter* was out of service for two days during the third week!

Badlands is a Centuri laser game (which costs less than many video games); and while I have heard many operators condemn those games, I have yet to meet an operator who sneers at that much income.

Finally for those who wish to stay with the business, get your heads out of the sand. Things are not as bad as they seem. *There is money to be made.*

Be sure to attend meetings and expositions to get the latest information on games and trends.

George A. Kane
Kane Amusement Co.
Petal, Mississippi

NEWS

ASSETS OF MYLSTAR/GOTTLIEB PURCHASED IN JOINT VENTURE

Premier Technology Company has bought certain equipment and parts of the discontinued Mylstar/Gottlieb pinball product line through a joint venture of several unnamed companies. Gil Pollack, former vice president of marketing for Mylstar will assume the managing of the new company.

Parent company Columbia Pictures (owned by Coca-Cola) announced it was closing Mylstar effective September 30. Only hours before opening day of the recent AMOA in Chicago (October 24-27), papers were signed for the Premier purchase of the Mylstar/Gottlieb assets. However, the name Gottlieb was not available. Pollack said the name Premier was chosen because, "I have always looked upon Gottlieb pins as the premier product in the industry."

Premier Technology is in the process of moving its operations to 759 Industrial Drive, Bensonville, Illinois. Lenore Sayers, regional sales manager for Mylstar will become the national sales manager for Premier Technology, responsible for all domestic sales. She will remain in Los Angeles for the present time. Pollack said a number of previous Mylstar/Gottlieb engineering and manufacturing personnel will remain with Premier.

Premier will be responsible for full service and parts for past Gottlieb games.

Premier Technology exhibited two pins, *El Dorado* and *Touchdown*, at the AMOA, and those games will bear the Gottlieb name. Future games, however, will have Premier's name but will be made with the same reliable Gottlieb parts and electronics.

"We were pleased with the verbal and hard orders we received at the show," Pollack said. "All details are not yet worked out about the distributor network, but most Mylstar/Gottlieb distributors will carry the Premier line." •

PAMMA VS. LCB

The Pennsylvania Amusement and Music Machine Association (PAMMA) has gone to court against the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board (LCB) over the operation of video card games in the state.

PAMMA is trying to stop the state board from enforcing a recent threat it made against operators of the machines. PAMMA sought an immediate restraining order against the state liquor control board, but the Commonwealth Court denied PAMMA's request, though it did set a November 1 date for a hearing on a temporary injunction against the liquor control board.

On October 24, the state liquor control board told PAMMA's counsel that the LCB enforcement agents would enforce the law in accordance with strict guidelines. PAMMA argued that it was unable to obtain a copy of those guidelines. The LCB allegedly said it would use discretion in enforcing the law and that it would not act outside of its interpretation of a recent state supreme court ruling concerning two electronic poker game machines.

That meeting between PAMMA counsel and members of the LCB was one day after PAMMA delivered a letter to Danial Pennick, chairman of the liquor control board, asking the board to postpone its threatened enforcement action for thirty days so that PAMMA could concentrate its legislative efforts on passing a Video Poker Control Act.

When PAMMA failed to win that concession, the state association filed its petition for review in Commonwealth Court. The legal action PAMMA seeks is that the state liquor control board be restrained from citing licensees for processing electronic video poker machines unless there's proof that the machines are possessed illegally. The PAMMA petition also asks that the court make a judicial determination of the propriety of the LCB's sweeping enforcement pronouncement. •


TIME WAS...
When the target was a stump nailed to a tree, and a game of skill was serious fun.
Arachnid brings a timeless game to the electronic era!
It took Arachnid to originate electronic darts, and the entire nation is discovering the age-old game in a whole new way. Here is one game that won't die on location, a game that is taking the amusement world like a fresh summer breeze. Only Arachnid brings you English Mark Darts, the profit-proven winner, combining league and tournament play with a highly successful, dependable game. Contact Arachnid today, and learn what hundreds of operators across the country already know . . . that English Mark Darts score, and score big.
ENGLISH MARK DARTS
T.M.
ENGLISH MARK DARTS
Arachnid INC
The Originator of Electronic Darts
6421 Material Avenue • Rockford, IL 61132-2901 • 815)654-0212 • 1-800-435-8319 • 270-57601 Telex

NATIONAL PLAY METER

Poll Information

On the "National Play Meter," each game's rating represents its average performance as compared to the top game's average in that category. Averages are compiled by Play Meter through its operator survey. Games on the survey (except for novelty equipment) are currently (within the last six months) being marketed in the United States.

Operator/readers who want to participate in the survey should write Play Meter, "National Play Meter," P.O. Box 24170, New Orleans, LA 70184.

DEDICATED VIDEOS

Arcade Locations

	Rating		
	Average Dec. 31 1984	Rank Last Issue	No. of Times on Poll
1. *Karate Champ*/Data East	100.0	4★	3
2. *Return of the Jedi*/Atari	81.5	2	2
3. *Punch Out!!*/Nintendo	77.3	3	15
4. *Spy Hunter*/Bally Midway	74.0	1	21
5. *Two Tigers*/Bally Midway	70.1	5	7
6. *Birdie King II*/Coin-It	60.2	9★	15
7. *Crossbow*/Exidy	57.3	6	19
8. *10-Yard Fight*/Taito	48.3	7	14
9. *Pole Position*/Atari	51.9	8	23
10. *Hyper Sports*/ Konami/Centuri	50.2	11★	9
11. *Track & Field*/ Konami/Centuri	48.3	10	24
12. *Great Guns*/Stern	47.6	—	9
13. *Tag Team Wrestling*/ Data East	43.2	12	11
14. *Tapper*/Bally Midway	40.6	14	16
15. *Root Beer Tapper*/ Bally Midway	39.8	16★	6
16. *Major Havoc*/Atari	37.8	17★	12
17. *Midnight Marauders*/ Bally Midway	37.0	—	2

DEDICATED VIDEOS

Street Locations

	Rating		
	Average Dec.31 1984	Rank Last Issue	No. of Times on Poll
1. *Karate Champ*/Data East	100.0	4★	3
2. *Spy Hunter*/Bally Midway	90.2	1	2
3. *Gaplus*/Bally Midway	80.5	—	3
4. *Two Tigers*/Bally Midway	80.0	3	7
5. *Punch Out!!*/Nintendo	76.5	2	15
6. *Crossbow*/Exidy	66.9	6	19
7. *Birdie King II*/Coin-It	59.0	14★	15
8. *Hyper Sports*/ Konami/Centuri	57.8	8	9
9. *Pole Position*/Atari	54.4	5	23
10. *10-Yard Fight*/Taito	53.8	11★	14
11. *Motorace USA*/Williams	50.5	18	13
12. *Discs of Tron*/ Bally Midway	50.5	—	19
13. *Tag Team Wrestling*/ Data East	49.9	16★	11
14. *Major Havoc*/Atari	48.3	17★	12
15. *Track & Field*/ Konami/Centuri	43.5	12	24
16. *Circus Charlie*/ Konami/Centuri	43.4	9	8
17. *Tapper*/Bally Midway	39.2	—	16

CONVERSIONS

Arcade Locations

	Rating		
	Average Dec. 31 1984	Rank Last Issue	No. of Times on Poll
1. *VS. Baseball*/Nintendo	100.0	1	9
2. *VS. Tennis*/Nintendo	78.6	4★	15
3. *Pole Position II*/Atari	76.6	2	23
4. *Time Pilot '84*/ Konami/Centuri	63.1	5★	13
5. *Motorace USA*/Williams	60.0	—	13
6. *Up and Down*/ Bally Midway	57.9	3	10
7. *Elevator Action*/Taito	56.9	6	21
8. *Exerion*/Taito	51.9	7	13
9. *Champion Baseball*/Wico	50.3	9	9
10. *Mega Zone*/ Konami/Interlogic	43.5	8	13
11. *Mystic Marathon*/Williams	41.3	—	2
12. *Millipede*/Atari	41.1	11	10
13. *Junior Pac-Man*/ Bally Midway	39.7	10	15
14. *Donkey Kong 3*/Nintendo	27.2	14	14
15. *Mr. Do!'s Wild Ride*/ Universal	25.7	12	14
16. *Superbike*/Crown Vending	22.2	13	9
17. *Cloak & Dagger*/Atari	22.2	—	10

CONVERSIONS

Street Locations

	Rating		
	Average Dec. 31 1984	Rank Last Issue	No. of Times on Poll
1. *Pole Position II*/Atari	100.0	1	23
2. *VS. Baseball*/Nintendo	90.8	2	9
3. *VS. Tennis*/Nintendo	72.1	11★	15
4. *Up and Down*/ Bally Midway	64.2	12★	10
5. *Elevator Action*/Taito	63.8	4	21
6. *Exerion*/Taito	62.8	3	13
7. *Millipede*/Atari	60.6	9★	10
8. *Mega Zone*/ Konami/Interlogic	59.5	7	13
9. *Time Pilot '84*/ Konami/Centuri	57.0	5	13
10. *Nova 2001*/Universal	50.3	13	10
11. *Champion Baseball*/Wico	49.3	14	9
12. *Junior Pac-Man*/ Bally Midway	44.2	8	15
13. *Donkey Kong 3*/Nintendo	41.4	19	14
14. *Mr. Do!'s Wild Ride*/ Universal	39.9	—	14
15. *Superbike*/Crown Vending	38.1	10	11
16. *H.B.'s Olympics*/ Magic Electronic	38.0	—	3

LASER DISCS
Arcade Locations

	Rating: Average Dec. 31 1984	Rating: Rank Last Issue	Rating: No. of Times on Poll
1. *Cobra Command*/Data East	100.0	–	7
2. *Firefox*/Atari	88.1	1	13
3. *M.A.C.H. 3*/Mylstar	69.0	3	24
4. *Star Rider*/Williams	59.5	4	11
5. *Astron Belt*/Bally Midway	58.5	7★	19
6. *Dragon's Lair*/Cinematronics	56.8	6	25
7. *Space Ace*/Cinematronics	47.4	5	18

LASER DISCS
Street Locations

	Rating: Average Dec. 31 1984	Rating: Rank Last Issue	Rating: No. of Times on Poll
1. *Cobra Command*/Data East	100.0	1	7
2. *Space Ace*/Cinematronics	46.0	5★	18
3. *M.A.C.H. 3*/Mylstar	44.9	2	24
4. *Firefox*/Atari	43.5	–	13
5. *Star Rider*/Williams	43.5	–	11
6. *Astron Belt*/Bally Midway	41.7	3	19
7. *Dragon's Lair*/Cinematronics	33.5	4	25

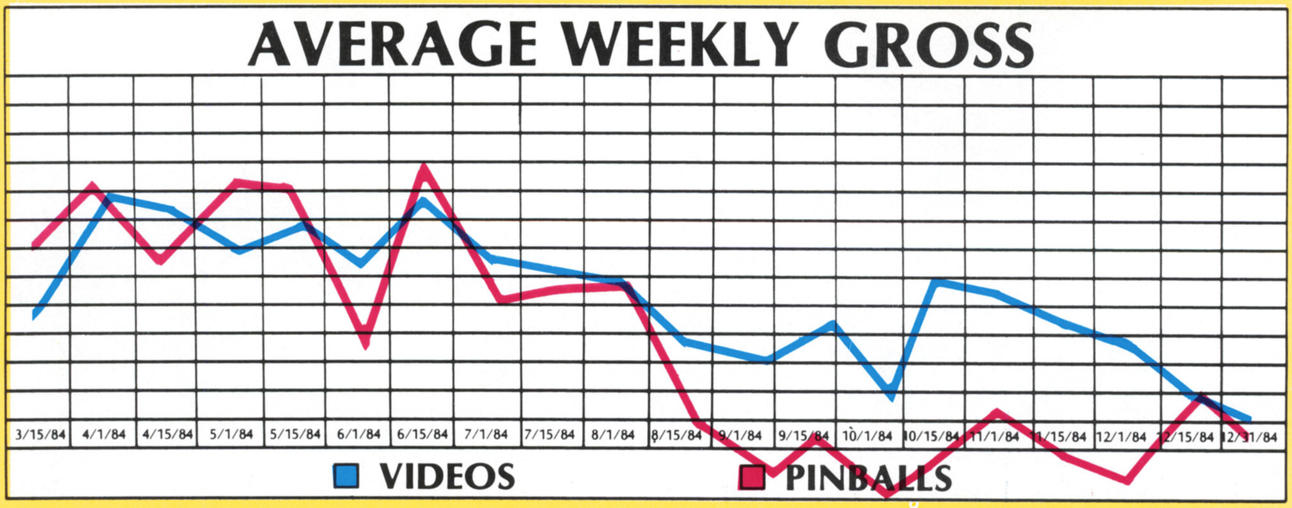
NOVELTIES
Arcade & Street Locations

	Rating: Average Dec. 31 1984	Rating: Rank Last Issue	Rating: No. of Times on Poll
1. *High Ball*/The Norton Co.	100.0	–	21
2. *Whac-A-Mole*/Bob's Space Racers	98.0	–	23
3. *Skee-Ball*/Skee-Ball	76.0	2	21
4. *Bowler Roller*/Bob's Space Racers	70.0	–	11
5. *Boom Ball*/Meltec	59.5	–	23
6. *Big Bat*/Bally Midway	56.0	1	7
7. *Shoot Away*/Namco	56.0	4	21
8. *10-Pin Deluxe*/Bally Midway	56.0	6	9
9. *Triple Strike*/Williams	56.0	5	19
10. *Whirly Bucket*/Exidy	50.2	8	18
11. *Super Shifter*/Bob's Space Racers	46.7	–	8
12. *Ninja Gun*/American Arcade	46.7	–	11
13. *English Mark Darts*/Arachnid	44.8	7	15
14. *Big Strike*/Williams	35.0	–	19
15. *Mr. Muscle*/Zamperla	32.7	–	7
16. *Fire Escape*/ICE	23.3	9	11

PINBALLS
Arcade & Street Locations

	Rating: Average Dec. 31 1984	Rating: Rank Last Issue	Rating: No. of Times on Poll
1. *Alien Star*/Gottlieb	100.0	4★	3
2. *The Games*/Gottlieb	90.9	12★	10
3. *Touchdown*/Gottlieb	90.6	1	3
4. *Devil Rider*/Zaccaria	90.6	–	9
5. *Jacks to Open*/Gottlieb	89.0	10★	16
6. *Black Pyramid*/Bally Midway	88.6	5	9
7. *Amazon Hunt*/Gottlieb	81.8	9★	17
8. *Kings of Steel*/Bally Midway	76.7	13★	16
9. *Eight Ball Deluxe*/Bally Midway	76.6	14★	16
10. *Firepower II*/Williams	75.0	11★	22
11. *Attila the Hun*/Game Plan	73.6	8	6
12. *Pennant Fever*/Williams	66.4	–	8
13. *Laser Cue*/Williams	61.4	15	16
14. *Sharpshooter II*/Game Plan	60.0	6	21
15. *Granny and the Gators*/Bally Midway	59.1	–	18
16. *Rack 'em Up*/Gottlieb	57.9	7	17
17. *Q*Bert's Quest*/Gottlieb	57.3	3	15
18. *X's & O's*/Bally Midway	51.8	16	19

NOTICE: The sole purpose of this survey is to determine on a regular basis the top performing games in the country. Any attempt to use the results of this survey for any other purpose is unauthorized, wrongful, and misleading.



Poll Update

Karate Champ by Data East ranks Number One in dedicated videos in both arcade and street locations.

MAD CRASHER
SNK
POWER ALLEY!
RAMP TO RAMP JUMPS!
TERMINATE ENEMY CYCLES!
SNK Electronics Corporation
3043 KASHIWA ST. • TORRANCE, CALIF. 90505 • (213) 539-2744
SNK
QUALITY CONVERSION KITS

AOE RETURNS TO NEW ORLEANS

After a three-year run in Chicago, the industry's original and longest running springtime trade exposition, the Amusement Operators Expo (AOE), is returning to New Orleans March 29-31 at the Sheraton New Orleans Hotel. The announcement was made by AOE owner and *Play Meter* publisher and editor, Ralph C. Lally II, who also unveiled a special AOE promotional plan geared to benefit the operators' two national associations—NCMI and AMOA (see related story on this page).

AOE '85 will mark the third time the show has been held in New Orleans. The first two AOE shows were also held there, at the Fairmont Hotel (in 1980) and at the Hyatt (in 1981).

Said Lally, "We're delighted to bring the AOE back to its roots. Last year we were plagued by Chicago's bad winter weather, but that won't happen again. The weather in New Orleans in the springtime is delightful. And with a power packed seminar program and a much more complete equipment exposition this year, we anticipate we'll double our attendance."

Lally pointed out a discrepancy between the actual location of the show and earlier announcements that appeared in other trade publications. He explained the discrepancy this way, "Our original plans called for the AOE to be held at the New Orleans Exposition Center, site of the 1984 World's Fair; but, with the bankruptcy of the fair, and the possible unavailability of space," he continued, "we opted for the Sheraton. We think it will more than accommodate the AOE."

The centerpiece of AOE '85 will again be hard-hitting operator-oriented seminars. This year's program, according to Lally, calls for 36 seminars on the best of previous seminar topics as well as many entirely new subjects. This year, Lally added, there will be more new seminar topics than in all past shows.

Lally also pointed out that exhibitor space is selling well ahead of projections. "Quite frankly, after all the confusion last year with the big manufacturers trying to rip-off our show, we didn't expect a strong exhibitor response, but we've been honestly surprised by the exhibitor response to date. Two-thirds of our exhibit space has already been committed, and the only notification we've sent to our prospective exhibitors at this point has been an advance registration form."

He said that one-third of the space had been committed prior to the mailing by exhibitors at last year's show. He added the advance registration mailing netted another one-third of the total booth space available. "Some say it's the move back to New Orelans. Some say it's the slightly later dates. Some attribute it to their expectations of a strong springtime season and the perfect timing of our show. All I can say is we're very surprised with the response to this point. Two-thirds committed, without even picking up the telephone. It may not be the biggest AOE ever, but it will be the best." •

AOE PROMOTION TO BENEFIT NCMI, AMOA

Every attendee to the Amusement Operators Expo (AOE) this year will mean $5 to be split evenly between the two national operators' associations—AMOA and the NCMI. That was the announcement of Ralph C. Lally II, owner of AOE and publisher and editor of *Play Meter* magazine.

"In an effort to promote unity within the industry and to share the success of all future AOE shows, *Play Meter* magazine will donate a substantial portion of the AOE's proceeds equally to the two national operators' associations—AMOA and NCMI."

He said a fee of $5 per person will be charged for each admission badge to the exhibit hall for all non-exhibit personnel. "The entire amount of funds raised in this effort will be donated to the betterment of the industry through the good works of this industry's operator associations."

Additionally, he said that all seminar attendees will be given a free exhibit hall badge and *Play Meter* will donate $5 for each seminar attendee who enters the exhibit hall.

AOE '85, which is billing its seminar program as a distinct departure from previous efforts, said, however, there would be no increase in the seminar registration fees. Like last year, advance registration for seminars will be $25, and on-site registration will be $35.

Lally said advance seminar registration forms will be mailed no later than January 15. Advance registration deadline is February 27.

"If AOE attendance is anywhere close to what we anticipate, the biggest beneficiaries of this year's AOE will be the AMOA and the NCMI which will receive the direct cash allotments."

Lally said this was able to be made because *Play Meter* acquired full ownership of the AOE this past summer from Conference Management Corp., a show exposition management company based in Norwalk, Connecticut, which owned the show jointly with *Play Meter* previously. "What this means," continued Lally, "is that for the first time, *Play Meter* will be running all aspects of the show—the seminar program, registations, booth sales, show setup—everything.

AMOA AWARDS &

The Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA) presented its first Merit Award to David C. Rockola, founder and chairman of the Rock-Ola Manufacturing Corp., Chicago, Illinois, for "his outstanding contributions to the coin-op industry during the past 50 years."

The award was the highlight of the evening October 27 at the AMOA Banquet/Awards Presentation/Stage Show held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Chicago, the final event of the annual AMOA Show

Six JB (jukebox) Awards were presented to representatives of recording artists in various categories. The winners included "Thriller" by Michael Jackson/Epic for best rock record; "Beat It" by Michael Jackson/Epic for best pop record; "To All the Girls I've Loved Before" by Julio Iglesias/Willie Nelson/Columbia for best country record; "Billie Jean" by Michale Jackson/Epic for best soul record; Michael Jackson for most popular artist; and Cyndi Lauper for the rising star award.

Also, the first-ever Best Cigarette Vending Machine Promotion Award was given to R.J. Reynolds Company for the best promotion of their product through marketing techniques that benefit the cigarette vendor.

Three of AMOA's Game Awards went to Atari for *Pole Position* as "Most Played Video Game," "Most Popular Arcade Game," and "Most Popular Route Game." Other winners were Bally Midway for the "Best Played Pinball Game," *Eight Ball Deluxe,* and Valley Manufacturing Company for winning the "Most Popular Pool Table" award for its seven-foot *Cougar Model 32*.

The following leadership changes were made within the AMOA:

John Estridge, president of Southern Games Distributing in Lewisburg, Tennessee, was named president of the AMOA earlier during the four-day festivities of the AMOA Show.

Previously, Estridge served terms as a director, vice president, secretary, and first vice president of the organization. In past years he was also active on the following AMOA committees: membership, education, banquet, government relations, finance, cigarette, executive and state associations.

Locally, he was one of the founders of the Amusement and Music

VIDEO LOTTERY

The following is a position paper adopted by the AMOA board of directors on November 23 concerning the question of video lottery machines.

In an alarming intrusion into private enterprise, states operating video lottery games are now directly competing with small businesses.

The rapid development of state-controlled video lottery games has the potential to seriously harm thousands of small businesses throughout the country. States embarking on video lotteries have inadvertently become direct competitors with businesses that own and operate video machines for amusement purposes.

As the representative of these business people, the Amusement and Music Operators Association strenuously objects to the development or implementation of any state-run video lottery games that do not take into account their direct impact on small business people in the amusement game industry. We recognize the need for states to raise revenues and do not oppose lotteries *per se*. We strongly oppose any revenue-raising system that forces us to compete against state-run monopolies for video game business. That kind of competition is both unequal and unfair.

There are, however, ways that states can draft video lottery laws to enhance small business without diminishing their ability to raise revenues. This could be done by guaranteeing small businesses a role in the placement, operation and maintenance of machines. By the same token, states should be precluded from granting either a single large corporation or themselves a monopoly to run these games. The Amusement and Music Operators Association will support and work for such small business provisions wherever legislation is being considered and will vigorously oppose any legislation that does not contain such provisions. •

ERRATUM

There was a misprint on page 106 of the December 1, 1984 issue. Crown Vending's new game was advertised as *Hero in the Temple of Doom*. Actually, the correct name of the game is *Hero in the Castle of Doom*.

Play Meter regrets the error and apologizes for any confusion and inconvenience it may have created. •

NEWS

APPOINTMENTS

Operators of Tennessee and served as its first and fifth president.

In other officer appointments, Al Marsh, president of Hart Novelty in Bellingham, Washington, was named first vice president of the association. He is next in line for the presidency.

Walter Bohrer, Jr., president of Hastings Distributing of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was appointed treasurer of the association.

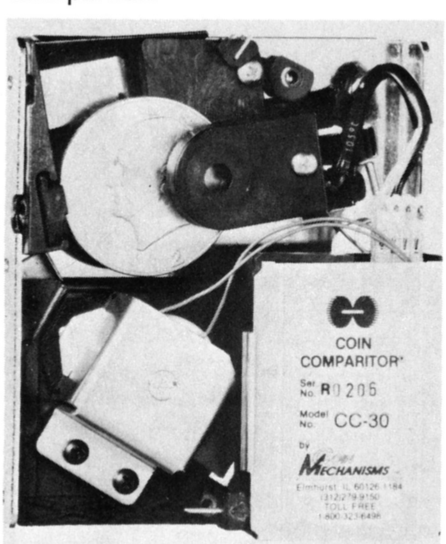
Three outgoing directors from the AMOA board were elected to three-year terms as vice presidents in the association. Those three vice presidents are James Trucano of Black Hills Novelty Company in Rapid City, South Dakota; Kem Thom of Western Automatic Music in Chicago, Illinois; and Richard Jacomet of Red's Novelty Company in West Allis, Wisconsin.

The ten new directors elected to three-year terms on the AMOA board are as follows: John Jordan, Lewiston, Idaho; John Knox, Anchorage, Alaska; David Capilouto, Atlanta, Georgia; Randy Chilton, Wichita, Kansas; Michael Leonard, Adrian, Michigan; Bill Stone, Tullahoma, Tennessee; David Goudeau, Lafayette, Louisiana; Richard Scherer, Oakland, California; Phillip Elum, Massillon, Ohio; and Royce Green III, North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

In a separate matter, the operators' national association issued a position paper opposing video lotteries as potentially damaging to thousands of small businesses. That position paper is reprinted in this issue. •

COIN MECH PATENT

Coin Mechanisms, Inc. of Elmhurst, Illinois has been granted a patent by the U.S. Patent Office for its electronic coin mechanism known in the industry as the Coin Comparitor.



The patent covers several key electronic processes made by Coin Mechanisms for the Comparitor's design and function. An operator simply inserts a sample of the coin or token he wants to use in the sample holder. From then on, virtually anything coming into the machine that doesn't match is rejected. Because it has so few moving parts, the Coin Comparitor is virtually jam free. It also works on input voltages of 12 to 32 volts AC or 15 to 32 volts DC. The manufacturer can tap into the line wherever it's convenient for his design. Also, since an operator can install it in equipment he already has, the expense of a transformer is not always needed.

Coin Mechanisms, Inc. specializes in the design and manufacture of coin mechanisms, door assemblies and accessories for the coin amusement and gaming industry. •

THE CALENDAR

1985

January 17-21
Second annual Induferias Show, Valencia, Spain. For information, contact Induferias at Apartado 476, Valencia, Spain. Telephone: 364-00-11. Telex: 62435 Feria E.

March 1-3
Amusement Showcase International, Expocenter/Downtown, Chicago, Illinois. Telephone 312/771-3290.

March 4-7
AMOA Executive Development Program, The Center for Continuing Education, Notre Dame, Indiana. Telephone 312/654-2662

March 29-31
Amusement Operators Expo (AOE), New Orleans Sheraton downtown. Telephone: 504/488-7003.

Next issue: More on the AMOA show! More on Play Meter's first 10 years!

DUNFEY CONTRACT

Nationwide Vending Services, Inc., a vending management company, has signed a long-term agreement with Dunfey Hotels Corp. of Hampton, New Hampshire, to provide full-line vending and amusement games to the Omni Dunfey hotels under Nationwide's national account program.

Nationwide Vending subcontracts to several hundred local independent operators who will be benefitting from this contract as they now do with the other clients represented by Nationwide.

The Dunfey Hotel chain represents some of the finest and best-known hotels in the country. The Ambassador East in Chicago, home of the world famous Pump Room; the Berkshire Place in New York City; the Marquette in Minneapolis; the Royal Orleans in the New Orleans French Quarter; the Parker House in Boston; the Omni Hotels in Atlanta, Norfolk, New York City, and Baltimore; the Shoreham in Washington, D.C.; and a number of Sheraton Hotels and Howard Johnson's.

According to Fred Pollak, president of Nationwide Vending, the company now has clients in four major markets. "We have a major transportation client in all the Amtrak railroad stations in the United States for full-line vending and a number of chain restaurant clients in cigarette vending including T.G.I. Friday restaurants, a convenience store chain in video games, and now a hotel chain," he said.

Nationwide Vending Services, Inc. was founded in June 1983 by Pollak who formerly was associated with Canteen, Rowe Manufacturing, and ARA Services. His associates are Patricia Watkins, sales vice president; Dan Brown, operations vice president; and F.J. Pollak, director of operations.

Pollak added, "We are exploring the use of private pay phones for our clients, as well as, offering this product to national account prospects as part of our program using local operators just as we are now doing for our other services." •

CALAMARI'S BACK

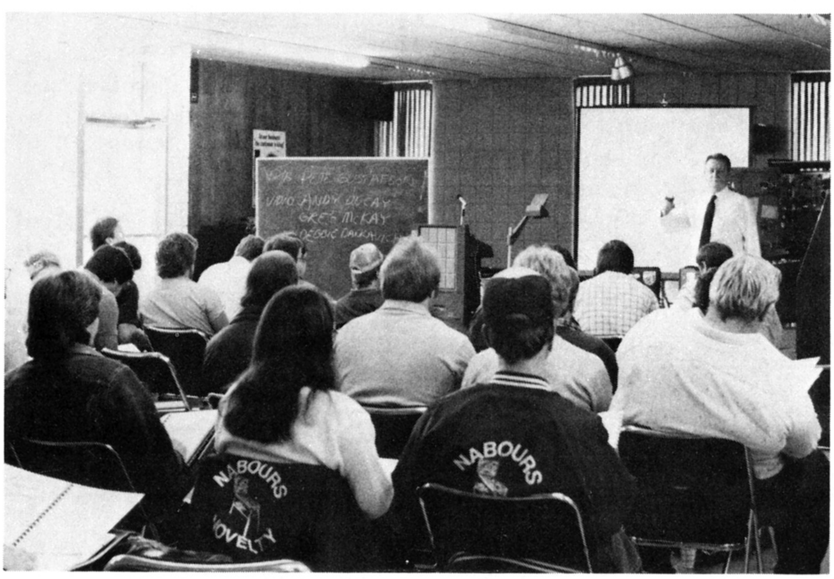
Bally Midway Manufacturing Company, a division of Bally Manufacturing Corporation, recently announced that Paul Calamari, former director of sales, will serve as a consultant to Bally in the coin-operated amusement arena.

"Paul's 47 years of experience with Bally in the coin-op amusement industry will continue to be a valuable asset," said Steve Blattspieler, vice president and director of marketing and sales at Bally Midway.

"When it came time to discuss my retirement, many friends and family encouraged me to stay active at Bally," said Calamari. Bally offered Calamari the best of both worlds—less time on the phone but a chance to still be part of the industry.

"With pinball sales continuing strong, Paul's advice will always be valuable," said Blattspieler.

Calamari will confer with all Bally subsidiaries in the amusement game area, including the newest Bally company, Bally Sente. •



Between 40 and 50 people jammed Sandler Vending's Minneapolis showroom October 4 for a Bally pinball school conducted by Ed Schmidt of Bally. Those attending were given standard technical instruction and treated to a special section dealing with pinball merchandising.

DART TOURNEY

Hanson Distributing of Bloomington, Minnesota, is promoting an electronic dart program called "Shootout"!

Designed to stimulate dart play at the location level, the "Shootout" format consists of a number of qualifying tournaments held in dart locations. Players compete in location qualifying tournaments to gain free entry to the $10,000 finals. The finals is a closed event, with contestants being qualifiers at location events.

The first "Shootout" will involve 64 qualifying tournaments across the upper Midwest. Each location, according to the Hanson Distributing format, will hold qualifying tournaments in one, some, or all of the following events—men's singles, women's singles, men's doubles, women's doubles, and mixed doubles.

The Bloomington, Minnesota distributor estimates as many as 15,000 players will be involved at the qualifying level. Prizes and trophies will be awarded at each of the 320 qualifying open-entry tournaments. The $10,000 prize fund will be shared by 192 winners in the five events.

A spokesman for Hanson Distributing explained the rationale for sponsoring the dart promotion. "At a time when the industry, as a whole, is down, darts is one of the few pieces making money. This is due to the strength of leagues and tournaments contributing to the long life of the game. We feel we can help the operator by stimulating play at the location level," he said.

"We have been a promotion-oriented company for over ten years," he continued, "whether it be tournaments, leagues, service schools, or specific game promotions. We realize that the stronger our customers are, the stronger we are; therefore, it is to our advantage to help the operator work with his locations. This program was designed to help put quarters in the dart cashboxes and enable the operator to establish a long-term profitable dart program.

Qualifying tournaments which began in October and November will culminate with the finals in January.

Hanson Distributing has used the name "Shootout" as its trademarked tournament promotions since 1979. •

VENDING SHOW DECIDEDLY UPBEAT

The climate was decidedly upbeat at the 1984 National Convention-Exhibit of Vending and Foodservice Management in Atlanta, according to officials of the sponsoring National Automatic Merchandising Association.

"You could sense the positive reaction of the entire industry in the convention meetings and in the exhibit hall," said NAMA President G. Richard Schreiber. The optimistic mood was reflected in the attendance of 6,119 registrants, the highest participation of recent years outside Chicago (which usually draws the largest NAMA attendance).

The 213 exhibitors occupied the largest amount of space in the 38-year history of NAMA trade shows, said Jack Rielley, NAMA director of sales.

Held from October 11 through 14 at the Georgia World Congress Center, the exhibit was filled with large crowds of interested vending company executives on the first three days and the business meetings were equally well attended. Rielley said 32 of the near-record number of exhibitors participated for the first time.

Among machine innovations were $1 bill acceptors built into beverage and snack vending machines.

A first-time exhibit of coin-operated telephones, which can be owned and operated by private individuals in several states under the newly deregulated rule of the Federal Communications Commission, drew considerable attention. Also, numerous new vendible product options and computer applications for vending operations were well-received.

Under the theme of "Marketing—Dominance of Tomorrow" the NAMA convention meetings dealt with market planning, employee motivation, opportunities in foodservice and the outlook for the economy.

The next NAMA Convention-Exhibit is scheduled for Reno, Nevada for March 22-24, 1985, aimed at the Western states and the 1985 National Convention-Exhibit will take place at Chicago's McCormick Place from October 24 to 17, Rielley said. •

Industry Mourns

Sam Stern

On November 2, Sam Stern, a true industry pioneer passed away at age 72 after a lengthy illness.

Stern had devoted a half century of his life to the coin-operated amusement industry and he will be fondly remembered by all who knew him and knew of his devotion and accomplishments.

He is survived by two sons, David, a prominent surgeon in Illinois, and Gary, president of Stern Electronics and an attorney.

In 1931, after being talked into buying five coin-operated amusement machines, Stern was quickly absorbed by this new undertaking. He was working in the men's clothing business, but the coin machine business offered him more promise.

By 1939, Stern had developed quite a route and expanded his services by taking on a Rock-Ola distributorship in Philadelphia. Seven years later he made another big step, this time into manufacturing when he bought 49 percent of Williams Manufacturing Company. Two years later he sold his route. In 1959 he purchased the rest of Williams Manufacturing and kept the company until 1964 when he sold it for stock to Seeburg Corp.

Stern stayed on as president of Williams until 1969 when his contract expired. He then served as executive vice president at Bally for a year, then moved to Seeburg as president until 1976. When he heard Chicago Coin had defaulted on a loan, he and his son Gary took over the company and formed Stern Electronics.

At that time Stern talked with old friend, Harry Williams, to encourage Williams to come out of retirement as a consultant and designer.

Said friend Paul Calamari of Bally, "I respected Sam and would truly call him an industry pioneer. He got Harry Williams out of retirement and I admired him for that also. Sam was a great man in every sense of the word."

In fact, Stern's last industry appearance was at the ASI show when his friend, the late Harry Williams, received the "Man of the Year Award."

In a coinman interview in September, 1978, Stern talked about his invention of the drop target and long flippers. "I conceived the idea of a single drop target. Then Gottlieb put them in a bank. I was also the first to come out with long flippers. But that was an accident on my part. We designed a game where the stretch rubber was too long; so I said, let's put a long flipper there, and we did. Then we went to long flippers all the way through."

Another question posed to Stern was what he felt could be done to improve the quality of workmanship that goes into games. He replied, "I don't think workmanship will ever be improved. I don't think the American workman has the desire and interest he once had. But the workmanship is not the fault of any manufacturer. It's the situation everyone is in today whether he's making pinball games or TV sets."

Stern summed up the interview by offering his reflections on the future of the industry. "I think the amusement business is getting stronger and stronger. The games with the best play appeal will always be the ones that do the most business. I see the industry growing continually, not the way it did when solid state first came in, but I think it will have a continual growth pattern for a long time. As for operators, they should keep their routes up to date with the latest, newest equipment and they'll get their top earnings."

The Future Behind Us

By David Pierson

This is the first of a special two-part series commemorating the tenth anniversary of Play Meter *magazine. Although, at first glance, such an article may appear somewhat self-serving and egotistical, this two-part article (the second installment will appear in the next issue) was undertaken because* Play Meter's *ten years in the industry are also a record of one of the most tumultuous periods any industry has ever gone through.*

Both friends and foes of Play Meter *will readily agree that* Play Meter *was certainly at the cutting edge from 1974-1984; so* Play Meter's *story is, in a larger part, the industry's story.*

But, again, what is the purpose of such an exercise? Why dredge up the past? What purpose can it possibly serve? Especially now when present day problems so overwhelm us in a way that makes all our past tribulations only things in miniature.

The pat answer is that only by learning from our past can we avoid making the same mistakes all over again. But, as a pat answer, it only partly answers the real purpose of this two-part series. There is another, far more important reason to remind ourselves right now of where we've been.

In the past, while the industry was enjoying its record years, this magazine and especially this writer were constantly being criticized—most pointedly by the manufacturing segment—of being too negative. We should be more positive, everyone told us. Why focus in on the things the industry was doing wrong?

For some time now, however, the industry—and that includes manufacturers, distributors, and operators—have been the ones more negative. It's as though we as an industry can't possibly get too down on ourselves these days. Our future is surely behind us, we tell ourselves. Things will never be as good as they once were. Our day in the sun is over.

Baloney!

This self-defeatism, more than anything else, is justifying our industry's lack of future accomplishment. And, let it be said, Play Meter *and this writer are not a part of such self-pity.*

That's the real reason for this special two-part series on our industry's past ten years.

Sure, if we don't learn from our past mistakes, we might be forced to relive them. But that's negativity speaking.

The real reason for studying our past is to examine what it was we did right! In that way, we might actually come across the seeds of our success.

The video game boom was not a fad.

Billions of dollars in the cashboxes was not an illusion.

The cover of Time *magazine was not an accident.*

Better homes and better lifestyles for our children as a result of our work in this industry was not something undeserved.

We did something right. All of us. Let's look back now at the past ten years and examine every scrap and see if we can find what it was that allowed us to touch the sky.

With Play Meter's premier issue, the coin-op amusement industry finally had its own publication.

Dark Ages

Ten years ago the coin-op amusement industry was still in the Dark Ages. Information filtered down from the manufacturers to their distributors and then, lastly, to the operators. Problem was nothing of any substance ever got filtered all the way down. And nothing ever got filtered back up.

And the operator, left with little source material—a handful of equipment brochures he might've picked up in the distributor's showroom and, maybe once in awhile, a technical bulletin—had little chance to improve his lot. For the equipment brochures said nothing, and the technical bulletins were both rare and outdated.

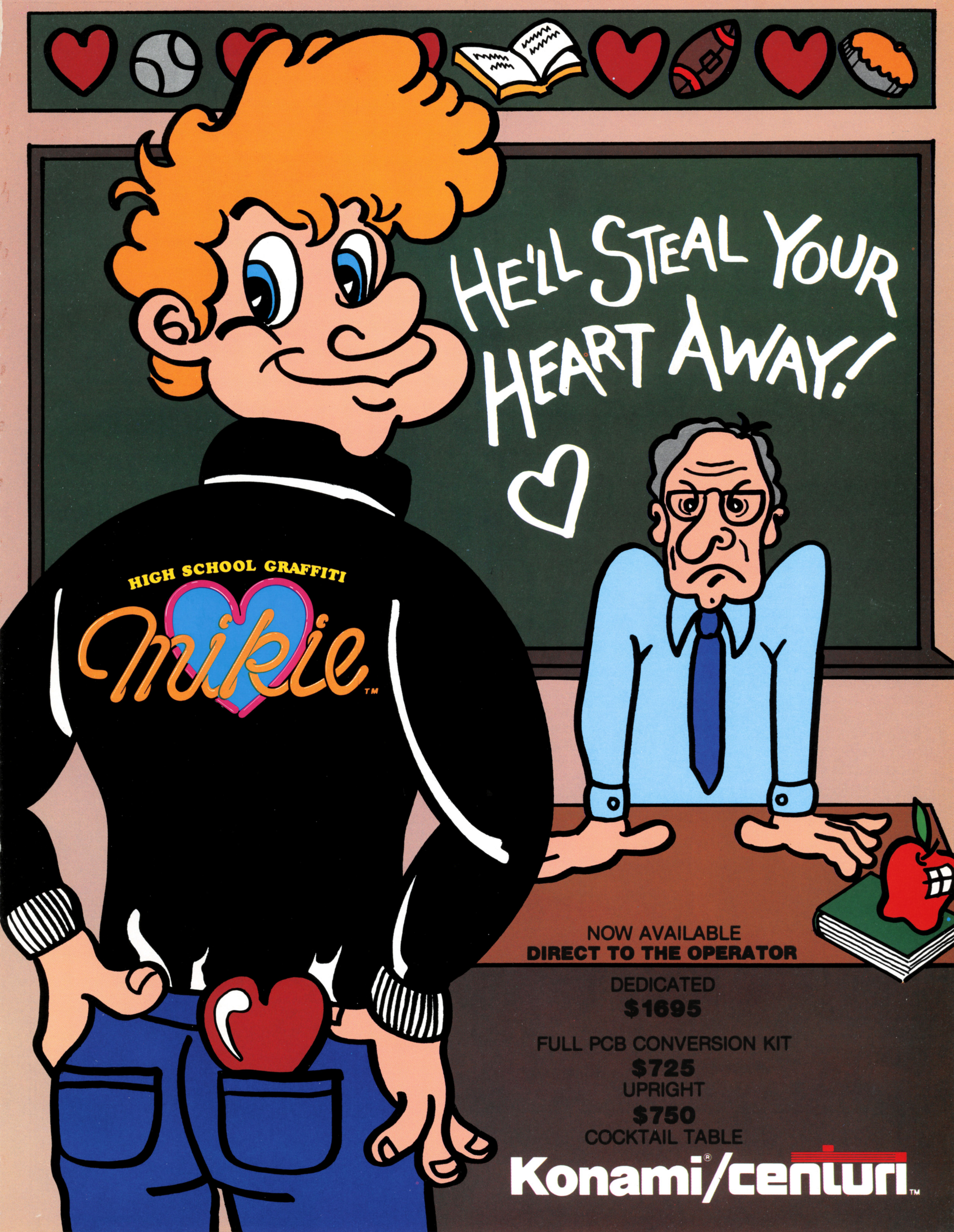
You see, back in the Dark Ages, ten years ago, manufacturers worked under the premise that everything they made was good, and that it worked. It was easy for them to believe that, too, because there was no way they could hear anything to the contrary from the operator. They had no way of knowing what was actually happening once their equipment got into the field.

There were no toll-free factory numbers. There was no equipment advice, except what the distributor chose to tell operators. There were no equipment polls. There was no chance for the operator to compare notes with others like himself about how to run a successful business.

All the operator needed to know was that he should keep his machines clean and in working order and that he should rotate his equipment regularly. And, oh, yes, he should remember that "The jukebox is the backbone of this industry." But that's all an operator needed to know.

He heard it from his distributor. If he joined the national operators' association, he'd hear the same thing from them. And he happened to collar a manufacturer at the AMOA Show, he'd hear it still again.

But if an operator was hungry to know more about how other operators were doing, if he wanted real tips on how to run a

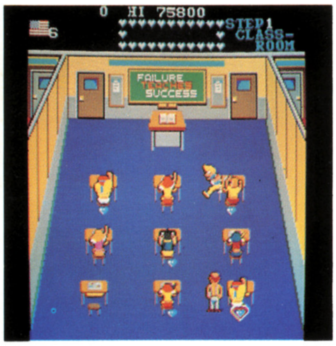


HE'LL STEAL YOUR HEART AWAY!
HIGH SCHOOL GRAFFITI
mikie™
NOW AVAILABLE
DIRECT TO THE OPERATOR
DEDICATED
$1695
FULL PCB CONVERSION KIT
$725
UPRIGHT
$750
COCKTAIL TABLE
Konami®/centuri™

But He'll Put Cash Back Into Your Coin Box.

Mikie™, *High School Graffiti,* is a fast paced, challenging comical character game that will capture the hearts of just about anyone who has ever stepped foot inside a classroom.

Mikie is just your average high school boy who happens to run into a little difficulty every time he tries to get together with his girlfriend.



It starts in the classroom where Mikie tries to collect messages (hearts) from his sweetheart. You see, Mikie, with the use of his HIP ZAP, has to push the other students off their chairs to get those messages. This, as you can imagine, doesn't sit too well with his teacher. Things aren't much easier for Mikie once he makes it out of the classroom and into the locker room.

It gets downright messy in the cafeteria when the cooks start hurling pies at our high school hero.

Poor Mikie finally encounters his beloved in the gym, only to find that the girls' gym teacher is not pleased with the intrusion.

Hand in hand our loving couple make it to the courtyard where they must sidestep several foot-ball players to make it to Mikie's awaiting car ... ah, all this in the name of love.

Mikie™, *High School Graffiti* Conversion Kit comes complete with:

- PCB Board • Marquee • Promotional Header
- Schematics • Side Graphics • FCC Shielding Cage
- Complete Harness with Connector
- Complete Instruction Manuals
- 4-position Joystick, 4 buttons & switches
- Control Panel Overlay with instruction, button & joystick decals

WOW!!
MIKIE™, HIGH SCHOOL GRAFFITI
FOR ONLY: DEDICATED $1,695.
FULL PCB CONVERSION KIT–
$725. UPRIGHT, $750. COCKTAIL TABLE*
DIRECT TO THE OPERATOR!

Have You Heard About The

centuri DIRECT CONNECTION

The CENTURI DIRECT CONNECTION is a dynamic new method of purchasing video games. You, the operator can now buy direct from one of the industry's leading manufacturers at **prices equal to or below distributor cost.** For more information about the DIRECT CONNECTION and how to obtain a FREE DIRECT CONNECTION STARTER KIT, call:

U.S. (except Florida)
1-800-624-6334

FLORIDA AND OUTSIDE U.S.
1-305-558-5200

HIGH SCHOOL GRAFFITI
mikie™

*FOB Hialeah, Fl, product subject to availability and prices subject to change without notice.

centuri™
We're Inventing What The Future Will Bring.

WARNING
The Mikie™, *High School Graffiti* video game in the upright and cocktail table models is manufactured under license from Konami Industry Company Ltd., and sold in the United States, Canada, Central and South America, exclusively by Centuri, Inc.

Willful copyright infringement is a Federal Crime. Centuri, Inc. fully intends to take all legal action necessary to protect its proprietary rights against all parties manufacturing and selling Mikie™, *High School Graffiti* games, or games which imitate the Mikie™, *High School Graffiti* game, and which infringe upon Centuri's said proprietary rights.

CENTURI, INC. 1780 West Fourth Avenue, Hialeah, Florida 33010 • Phone 305-558-5200 • Telex: 803694 ANSB Centuri • Cable CENTURI

successful route, or how to start an arcade, or any other kind of advice, he might think to look for trade magazines to answer those questions for him.

But there weren't too many places for him to look. He could leaf through the back pages of record magazines or vending machine magazines and, maybe, find some factory press releases that really had no relevance for the operator in the field. Maybe he'd even see, inserted in the magazine as an advertisement, those same brochures he got from the distributors. But there was nothing there to help him become a better operator.

Such was the state of coin-op journalism at the time. And such, also, was the state of operating at the time.

Stepchild

The fact was the coin-operated amusement industry really didn't know what kind of animal it was. Magazines serving the vending machine and record industries printed the factory press releases as a way to pick up a few additional ads for their pages, but there was no attempt to cover the industry. Instead, the coin-op amusement industry was seen as nothing more than a stepchild of one or the other industry, and that there was no magazine serving the field only went to underline the fact that coin-operated amusements was not really an industry at all, but an aberrant form of another kind of business.

Then, at the 1974 AMOA Show, there appeared the first edition of a new publication, *Coin Industry/Play Meter*, it was called. The magazine's first words were these: "Welcome to *Play Meter*—a brand-new trade publication dedicated to serving the entire music and games industry. This magazine is for everyone engaged in or associated with the coin-operated amusement machine business."

For the next year, letters poured in from all segments of the industry—from manufacturers and distributors and operators, as well—thanking *Play Meter* just for being there.

"Thanks, *Play Meter*," ran a typical letter to the editor in early 1975, "it's good finally to have a magazine just for our industry."

These letters to the editor could have been carbon copies of each other, so common were they in echoing this same theme over and over again. But they weren't carbon copies. They were letters written by industry veterans starved for real information and thankful the industry finally had a regular pipeline to open up the channels of communication—both ways.

But almost immediately *Play Meter* ran into problems because of its pro-operator editorial position. The magazine started providing technical tips on current games. Manufacturers expressed displeasure that some upstart trade publication should attempt to provide technical advice on manufactured equipment without first getting the approval of the manufacturers of that equipment. It didn't matter that *Play Meter's* technical information was correct. That wasn't at issue. It was simply that all technical information should stream down from the maker of the machines, and there should be no other source.

Play Meter argued, however, that the reason for printing the technical information was because operators needed the technical assistance in the field and the manufacturers simply weren't supplying it. And what the manufacturers were supplying really had no relevance to the operators in the field.

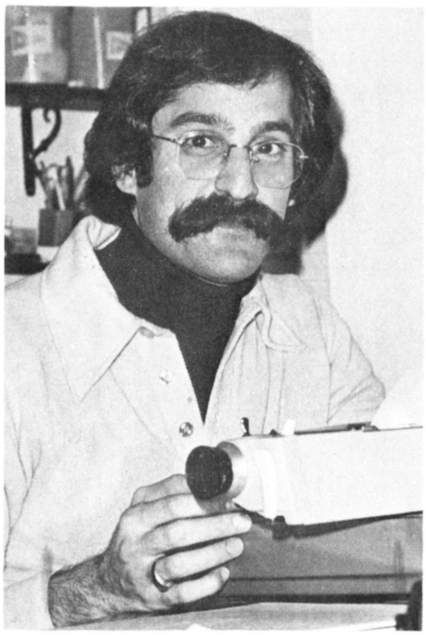
The manufacturers' resistance to *Play Meter's* "Technical Topics" section, however, was short-lived when the manufaturers started getting a tremendous response from operators concerning the unauthorized technical advice. This favorable operator outpouring demonstrated that operators were in dire need of technical assistance.

In direct response, therefore, to *Play Meter's* "Technical Topics," manufacturers started issuing schematics out of fear someone would copy their plans and duplicate their efforts.

The unanticipated response to *Play Meter's* technical tips also demonstrated for the first time that operators were carefully reading the pages of this new magazine, geared specifically to their interests. Manufacturers now realized that the purpose of their advertising was not to silence criticism but to generate sales calls for their equipment. So they started to advertise in greater numbers in the pages of *Play Meter*. And, thus, an uneasy alliance was born. Though manufacturers might not approve of everything that appeared in the pages of *Play Meter*, the manufacturers felt they had to advertise because *Play Meter* was the only way they could reach their buyers.

Regular departments in the early editions of *Play Meter*, besides the now famous "Technical Topics," included "Operating," "Distributing," and "Manufacturing," i.e. news sections geared for each segment of the industry; a department called "On the Move," which told of executive changes within the industry's ranks; "New Products;" and "Music Programming," which included record reviews and a special fold-out section listing the top records in the country for jukebox operators.

Russell Mawdsley,
Play Meter's ***first coinman.***



Roger C. Sharpe, game critic.

But, without a doubt, one of the most informative departments of the new magazine was the "Coinman of the Month" interview, a lengthy question-and-answer with an industry leader. For trivia buffs, history's first "Coinman of the Month" was Massachusetts operator Russell Mawdsley, outgoing president of the Music Operators Association (MOA). Among those early Coinmen were operator/distributor John Trucano, operator Millie McCarthy, Rowe's Joe Barton, distributor Ira Bettelman, operator Jules Millman, manufacturer Nolan Bushnell, and manufacturer Harry Williams.

Early feature articles examined such topics as location security, loans, arcade operating tips, location contracts, and equipment purchasing.

About the time *Play Meter's* first industry questionnaire was reaching operators, the magazine started running a new department called "Critic's Corner." The column written by a pinball player, Roger C. Sharpe, graded each new pinball game on its play appeal.

The column met with immediate resistance. Factories argued that they didn't like seeing the weak points in their games outlined in a magazine that was going to all their potential buyers. And others argued that having one person critique the games was not right because "one man cannot review games and remain objective."

Operator response, however, was equally fast and equally to the point. Sharpe's game reviews were accurate, and that's all that mattered. The column remained intact to this day.

Play Meter's first survey results were published in time for the 1975 MOA Show. The results bore out the contention about the jukebox's position as the unquestioned leader in coin-op. Jukeboxes averaged, according to that first poll, $49 a week. Pool tables were in second place with a per-week average gross of $41. Video games were in third with $40. Pinballs were far back, in fifth place, behind fussball tables, with $35.

A Taxing Situation

Then *Play Meter* started comparing notes coming in from all parts of the country. Though the magazine had conducted an annual survey of operators once before and was in the process of mailing out its second such survey, no comparison had ever been done as far as the tax and licensing structure of the various states.

So, in the August 1977 issue, *Play Meter* published an article entitled "A Taxing Situation," which revealed for the first time the inequitable treatment the coin-op amusement industry was being subjected to by state and local governments.

Solid-state pinballs were just coming into being. Video games were merely a sideshow, but they seemed even back then to promise something for the future. Yet any hopes for the industry at large to prosper hinged greatly on operators not having to dole out unfair amounts of their collections to various governing bodies.

That year's annual poll results showed jukeboxes were still the top-earning piece of equipment, averaging $46 a week; but pinball, on the strength of its recent solid-state introductions, was fast closing the gap with an average of $44. Video games also averaged $44 a week, and pool tables averaged $41 a week.

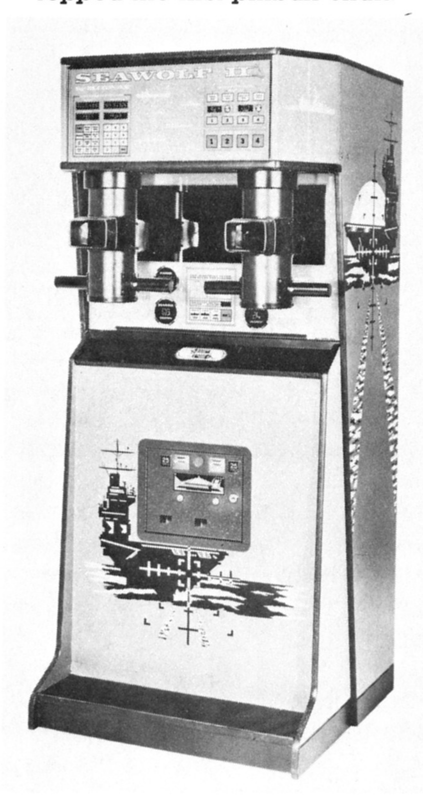
In that same issue, November 1977, *Play Meter* published a ranking of the top video games and pinball games, based on responses to the operator survey. It was the first equipment ranking of any kind done for the industry.

Topping the pinball charts was Bally's *Capt. Fantastic*, and Midway's *Sea Wolf* topped the video game charts. The charts also revealed that two companies Bally Midway and Atari were close to dominating the industry. Bally owned the top three places on the pinball charts, and Midway and Atari games held down the top six places on the video game charts. The industry was on the verge of a closed market—with all the top games coming from just a handful of sources.

Bad Media, Bad Laws

The new copyright law went into effect, and suddenly jukebox operators found themselves having to pay a second time for the use of copyrighted music in their jukeboxes. They were already paying copyright fees when they bought the records.

Capt. Fantastic *topped the first pinball chart.*



Sea Wolf *topped the first video chart.*

Furthermore, the new law dictated that operators, besides paying $8 for each jukebox, must also disclose their lists of locations.

Operators were angered. Location lists, they maintained, were confidential business sources, and the federal government had no right demanding those lists from them. But the lists were required all the same, and operator anger and resentment was directed primarily at the federal government and the performing rights societies which had petitioned Congress for the jukebox fee and the location lists.

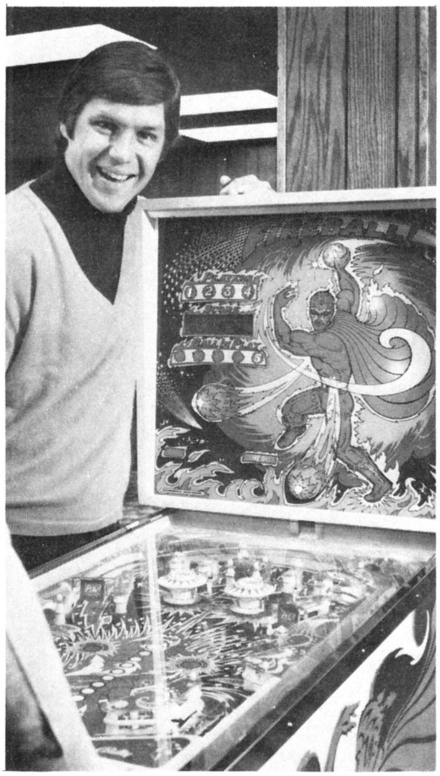
At this stage, no industry fingers were yet pointing inward at those who had represented the nation's jukebox operators so weakly.

With electronic pinball gaining public awareness, Bally announced plans for a national pinball tournament called the "Supershooter" contest. The event garnered additional attention for pinball play, especially in Bally's Aladdin's Castle arcade chain.

But when *Play Meter* published an article detailing how other operators could run a pinball tournament that would enable them to take advantage of this newfound awareness and popularity with pinball, a Bally employee informed the magazine that pinball tournaments were illegal, unless the tournaments were non-profit, like the Bally "Supershooter" contest. Holding a pinball tournament was in violation of federal gambling laws; so operators were restricted from reaping the benefits of pinball's popularity. With pinball tournaments declared illegal, operators turned to pinball marathons to try and keep media and player interest alive.

Meanwhile, other articles appearing in the pages of *Play Meter* at that time defended pinball as a skill game, and operators started reporting local governmental gains by defending pinball as a skill game and not as a subterfuge gambling device.

Then a damning expose of Chicago area operators appeared in the *Chicago Sun-Times* news-



***Bally's home pinball,* Fireball**

paper and was reenacted for CBS-TV's "Sixty Minutes." The expose alleged that operators were dealing in illegal kickbacks to location owners and were merely using thier games as a way to skim money that should be going to pay taxes.

In its March 1978 issue, *Play Meter* explored the news gathering techniques of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, as well as the laws that were allegedly violated and exposed the expose in an article entitled "Witch Hunts! Head Hunts! Here Comes the Times!" The article ended by pointing up that a lack of a coordinated industry effort to rectify past unjust legislation against the coin-op amusement industry would only result in still more vicious attacks against the industry in the future.

Also appearing in that same issue, *Play Meter* announced that it was "investigating whether it should hold its own show, offering operators the largest range of seminar topics ever made available to the industry." The *Play Meter* announcement said, if it held such a show, it would hold the show in the spring.

Meanwhile, Bally successfully completed its "Supershooter" contest, the winner was a boy by the name of Ken Lunceford. National attention had peaked, but no attempt was being done to continue the effort. Pinball tournaments were dismissed as too costly, with the proceeds having to go to charity, so why bother. A year passed, and another, and there was no successor to Ken Lunceford as the nation's champion pinball player.

In the late spring of 1979, *Play Meter* investigated the growing trend toward token operations. With the growth in the popularity of new games, operators were finding the games were attractions in and of themselves. And so arcades started to sprout up and, with them, the need for token operations.

Skipping by almost unnoticed, laughed at as a mere distraction, home pinball games were being widely marketed with some success. The most successful model was Bally's *Fireball*, with artwork that rivalled the backglasses on many of the coin-op versions. Little did anyone anticipate that this same tendency to market directly to the home market would rear its ugly head at a later date and help destroy the industry in the midst of its boom times.

This tendency to market directly to the home market would rear its ugly head at a later date.

AMOA's Notre Dame seminar held in the early spring in Chicago drew less than 100 attendees, but it became the subject of a special three-part series in *Play Meter* which explored business profitability and location cost analysis. The reaction to this first ever business profitability discussion was overwhelming, as operators asked for more and more business information.

All was not right in the coin-op world, though the future of the industry did indeed look bright—despite a few stormy clouds. *Play Meter's* special service issue that year revealed a teeming bitterness among operators toward the manufacturing establishment. Some of the complaints went back to the age-old question of service information. Said one operator, "Manufacturers are notifying distributors of their modifications, but in many cases the people carrying the burden of repairing the machines, the operators, aren't getting the bulletins." Operators were still having trouble adapting to the new solid-state technology and needed more help from manufacturers. That help came in the form of factory-sponsored service schools.

But a more serious and more common complaint was levelled generally and largely at manufacturers as a whole. "All the manufacturer is interested in is selling," one operator said in the magazine. "They couldn't care less about servicing." With manufacturers working through distributors to offer the schools, the charge hardly seemed with merit. But operator bitterness and resentment directed specifically toward the game makers and sellers remained just a cut below the surface, even here while the industry was on the verge of its boom era.

Home games, Atari boycotts

In the final installment of the three-part business profitability series, the article on location cost analysis was dwarfed by another article which proved to be the lithmus test of *Play Meter* magazine's editorial direction.

A Los Angeles operator, Gene Beley, authored a four-page article entitled "Converting Home Games to Commercial Use." With the recent surge in the popularity of video games, Beley pointed out, manufacturers like Bally and Atari were selling cheaper home versions of their games to be played on home computer systems.

Beley's point was that as an operator he had to pay a much higher price for the game; so he tried to adapt one of the home games to work in one of his older coin-op cabinets. His conclusion was that the effort was not profitable for the operator, but still he questioned the intentions of such giant manufacturing concerns as Bally and Atari which were straddling two industries—the coin-op and the home markets.

This article brought swift and direct reprisals from Atari. The company immediately cancelled all further advertising with *Play Meter* magazine. This boycott remained in effect for more than two years.

That year's operator poll showed the top pinball game to be Bally's *Eight-Ball* and the top video game to be *Space Wars* by a new company called Cinematronics. The video game was the first game to break new ground in technological development for the industry and launched a new fledgling company into the limelight for a period.

The operator survey results also showed the fruits of the electronic pinball revolution. Pinball surged to the top of the equipment list with a per week gross collection average of $62, an unheard of high! Pool tables finished in second place with $53. Jukeboxes averaged out a $52, and video games placed fourth with a $50 average.

As the 1978 AMOA Show rolled around, the only subject of discussion was the recent unfair jukebox copyright law. In response to *Play Meter* magazine's announced plans to hold a springtime show, the AMOA held separate panel discussions on specific topics geared to the operators' interests—the jukebox copyright law and arcade operations. However, the furor surrounding the injustice of the jukebox copyright law was so great that, encouraged by one of the arcade panelists, Nolan Bushnell, the arcade session was partly redirected back to the jukebox issue. The consensus of opinion was that the industry had to fight to have the law changed.

Bally and Atari were selling cheaper home versions of their games to be played on home computer systems.

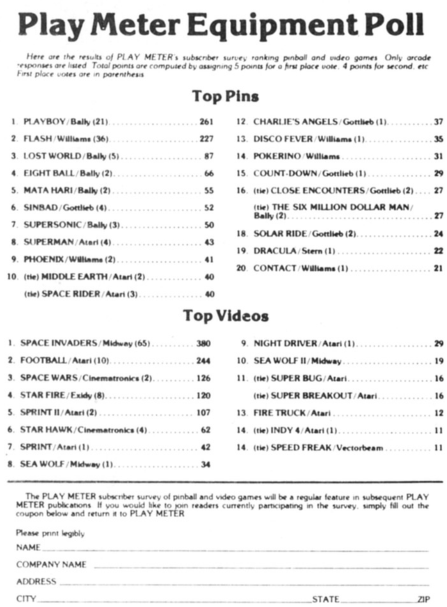
In 1979 the jukebox copyright law took effect, and *Play Meter* completed its year-long writers' contest search by publishing a three-part series of an article by Charles Ross, a Texas operator, which reexamined tax law as it applied to amusement equipment depreciation. His accelerated depreciation schedule quickly became a starting point for operators hoping to take better advantage of existing tax laws.

The First Equipment Poll

In the past, games were mere side attractions in locations such as bars and restaurants. However, as the game industry improved its pinball and video game product and the games became more and more of an attraction in and of themselves, the trend toward arcade operations increased. In April of that year, *Play Meter* analyzed the procedure in landing a prized enclosed mall arcade location. Other articles in that same issue concerned game placement, promotion tips, and cardinal principles which must be adhered to if an operator wanted to land a choice arcade location and maintain the wholesomeness of the industry.

As the games became more and more of an attraction in and of themselves, the trend toward arcade operations increased.

In the June 1979 issue on page 46, *Play Meter* introduced without any fanfare whatsoever the first ever regular equipment poll. It was a revolution in trade magazine publishing, and no other publication would dare copy *Play Meter's* move, for the fear was that manufacturers/advertisers disappointed about the poor relative position of their games in relation to competitors' games would drop their advertisements. Still, *Play Meter* forged ahead with the equipment poll, which was based on operators' responses.



Play Meter Equipment Poll

Here are the results of PLAY METER's subscriber survey ranking pinball and video games. Only arcade responses are listed. Total points are computed by assigning 5 points for a first place vote, 4 points for second, etc. First place votes are in parenthesis.

Top Pins

1.	PLAYBOY/Bally (21)	261	12.	CHARLIE'S ANGELS/Gottlieb (1)	37
2.	FLASH/Williams (36)	227	13.	DISCO FEVER/Williams (1)	35
3.	LOST WORLD/Bally (5)	87	14.	POKERINO/Williams	31
4.	EIGHT BALL/Bally (2)	66	15.	COUNT-DOWN/Gottlieb (1)	29
5.	MATA HARI/Bally (2)	55	16.	(tie) CLOSE ENCOUNTERS/Gottlieb (2)	27
6.	SINBAD/Gottlieb (4)	52		(tie) THE SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN/Bally (2)	27
7.	SUPERSONIC/Bally (3)	50	18.	SOLAR RIDE/Gottlieb (2)	24
8.	SUPERMAN/Atari (4)	43	19.	DRACULA/Stern (1)	22
9.	PHOENIX/Williams (2)	41	20.	CONTACT/Williams (1)	21
10.	(tie) MIDDLE EARTH/Atari (2)	40			
	(tie) SPACE RIDER/Atari (3)	40			

Top Videos

1.	SPACE INVADERS/Midway (65)	380	9.	NIGHT DRIVER/Atari (1)	29
2.	FOOTBALL/Atari (10)	244	10.	SEA WOLF II/Midway	19
3.	SPACE WARS/Cinematronics (2)	126	11.	(tie) SUPER BUG/Atari	16
4.	STAR FIRE/Exidy (8)	120		(tie) SUPER BREAKOUT/Atari	16
5.	SPRINT II/Atari (2)	107	13.	FIRE TRUCK/Atari	12
6.	STAR HAWK/Cinematronics (4)	62	14.	(tie) INDY 4/Atari (1)	11
7.	SPRINT/Atari (1)	42	14.	(tie) SPEED FREAK/Vectorbeam	11
8.	SEA WOLF/Midway (1)	34			

The PLAY METER subscriber survey of pinball and video games will be a regular feature in subsequent PLAY METER publications. If you would like to join readers currently participating in the survey, simply fill out the coupon below and return it to PLAY METER.

Please print legibly

NAME

COMPANY NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

July 1979 saw the first Equipment Poll.

In that first ever equipment poll, Bally's *Playboy* pinball edged out Williams Electronics' fast-rising *Flash*. In the video game field, Midway's *Space Invaders* was the unquestioned leader.

Lack of Leadership

The following month, *Play Meter's* investigation into the jukebox copyright law produced a legislative roll call of how every member of the U.S. Congress voted on the controversial law.

That July issue also quizzed outgoing AMOA executive director Fred Granger on how the industry had lost this vital battle.

That same issue carried a similar interview with the chairman of the Copyright Royalty Tribunal, which oversees the jukebox copyright payments. The main question at this time surrounded not the injustice of the law itself but rather the question of whether the federal government should require operators to turn over their lists of licensed jukebox locations. The interview with the CRT chairman revealed that, after all the debating had been done and thousands of dollars in legal fees invested in the fight, no one bothered to request the lists!

With the September 15, 1979 issue, *Play Meter* introduced its first "State of the Industry/Buyers' Guide" issue. Besides a comprehensive pictorial listing of all available equipment in the field, the issue also produced a comprehensive listing of state licenses and fees.

In that issue, *Play Meter* levelled charges directly at the operators' association, the AMOA, for not assisting operators to remedy this patchwork of bad licensing structures nationwide.

The article read, in part: "Why all this industry fragmentation? There can be only one answer—lack of leadership. When the industry is under fire, then corrective action has got to be taken, but there is mass confusion on where to turn for help.

"This is the disadvantage of a fragmented industry. The scars of a fragmented industry are evidenced by the adverse legislation against that industry and the bad image the industry has suffered.

"There is a need for a centralized source of information, a clearinghouse of information to deal with these problems.

"Actually, the industry does have a mechanism set up to represent it—the Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA). But, as is evidenced by the creation of new, specialized associations, it appears the AMOA just isn't doing all it could be doing.

"True, the AMOA has been fighting the copyright battle for a long time, but there appears to be a growing number of complaints from within the industry that the national association should be doing more. Such problems as the repeal of the gaming tax stamp and the institution of fair depreciation standards are just some of the areas a national association should be addressing.

"As for matters on a more local level, the argument is that the state associations should be handling that. But, most of those associations are working with limited resources and limited sources of information. So there is only so much they can achieve."

The AMOA response was that it assisted the state associations where needed and that the publication of state and local tax structures in *Play Meter* only encouraged more conservative governing bodies to copy the extreme examples employed by some states and local municipalities.

***The game that started the hit game syndrome,* Space Invaders.**

The First-Ever AOE

That year's survey showed pinballs still the top equipment type, earning $65 a week, but videos (on the strength of its technological breakthrough, *Space Invaders*) was just $1 back in earnings. Pool tables were third with $53, and jukeboxes averaged out at $52 a week.

The video game breakthrough of the machine getting better as the player got better and of allowing the player to play as long as he could skillfully operate the game was a dramatic departure for older games which allotted players a given amount of time. And about to be unleashed on the industry was the next generation, *Asteroids* by Atari.

After much deliberation and planning, *Play Meter* inaugurated its first ever Amusement Operators Expo (AOE) at the Fairmont Hotel, March 20-22 in New Orleans. That first AOE featured 24 seminars including such sessions as location cost analysis, business forms and record keeping, starting and managing an arcade, negotiating commissions with locations, new equipment purchasing for the '80s, the profitable distributorship, creative marketing, depreciation, and technical troubleshooting seminars.

Speakers at the first year's show included Jon Daugherty, Fred Skor, Carol Kantor, Steven Goot, Bill Arkush, and Charles Ross.

In an interview within the pages of his own magazine, Ralph C. Lally II, explained the reason for the show:

"We feel that national gatherings of operators, distributors, manufacturers—all segments of this industry—can yield benefits, if it's done properly and if it's done timely. We feel that there's alot of expertise in this industry that needs to be tapped. And, as a magazine that constantly draws upon this expertise for the source of its articles, we feel we can provide the industry with a truly beneficial conference.

"Presently this industry has only one show in the United States a year, and some say that's enough. I would have to disagree with that statement, especially in view that that one show—and I'm referring to the AMOA Show—is held at the wrong time of the year and doesn't do everything it could be doing for operators.

"I don't think it's the intention of the AMOA Show to educate the operator. Basically, I think the purpose of the AMOA Show is to provide an exposition hall for the industry and a meeting atmosphere so that its members can conduct association business. The AMOA Show is essentialy for manufacturers and distributors.

"But I think the goals of a national convention and exposition should entail considerably more than that. I think a national convention should be designed around the operators and their needs. A national convention and trade show for this industry should be designed so that the operators can attend the exhibition and learn a great deal through participation in a series of meaningful seminars. Such a convention should give operators the opportunity to interact with other operators so that they can explore common problems and find common solutions. In other words, it should be educational, not just a show for the sake of a show.

"I should point out that two years ago we made the suggestion to the AMOA in our editorials that the AMOA Show should provide its members with more seminars. The word we got back at that time was that it was not feasible, and that it would take away from the exhibit hours already committed to the exhibitors. Well, obviously it was feasible after all. This year the AMOA had two mini-seminars and a state association seminar before the show even opened up, in addition to its regular seminar. I think that, apparently out of some sense of competition, the AMOA finally decided to hold more seminars at its show. I think this is a step in the right direction for the AMOA Show. This mini-seminar format is definitely an improvement over years past. Also, our suggestion that the AMOA should try having panel discussions has shown signs of being heeded recently. Just about

AOE featured operator-oriented seminars.

all of the AMOA's seminars now employ that panel presentation format that we think afford the best opportunity for dissemination of information.

"But the problem with the AMOA's seminars is still that they are too general. The small operators come out of them with little or no information that he can actually use on his route. I think we're beginning to see an

Atari's Asteroids passed all industry production records.

improvement in this regard by the AMOA, but I still think there's a lot more that can be done."

The first-ever AOE in the spring of 1980 featured exhibit booths by every major amusement equipment manufacturer with one noticeable exception—Atari, which was still boycotting for the article on converting home games to commerical use which appeared 18 months earlier.

For its part, *Play Meter* hardly helped the matter of attracting Atari back into advertising in the magazine; for, in the AOE issue, *Play Meter* reported on a recent formal protest made by the Minnesota operators association against Atari.

A Minnesota operator spotted an Atari advertisement in a trade magazine geared for computer stores. The Atari advertisement announced that Atari had acquired the home rights to the hit arcade game, *Space Invaders*. Picturing a family playing the famous game at home on their television set, the copy for the Atari advertisement read, in part, "We're doing everything we can to get those long lines of people out of the arcades and into your store."

Minnesota operators termed the Atari advertisement "a knife in the back." One operator put it this way, "There's a great deal of resentment that our very strong support for Atari has been ignored."

However, with Atari enjoying the current success of its new hit game, *Asteroids*, the operators' association stopped just short of calling for an outright boycott of Atari product.

Play Meter was the only magazine to cover the story which, for the first time, confronted head-on the issue of manufacturers serving both the coin-op and home markets.

In the *Play Meter* article, Atari chairman apologized for the advertisement, calling it an embarrassment. For his part, he stopped short of promising not to introduce current coin-op video games to the home market. Instead, he claimed the home games would help create more acceptability for the better coin-op versions.

The first AOE came and went. Attendance was low—1,292.

Manufacturers called the show a flop. In almost one voice, they said it proved the industry was not big enough to support two shows and that the industry would never support a springtime show.

However, for the operators who attended, they went home with an entirely different reading. An AOE poll of attendees showed that 98 percent of the operators who attended planned to attend the show the following year. The poll also showed that most of those operators planned to tell their operator friends to attend the second show. The reason? The strong seminar program made the entire show worthwhile.

That summer Atari's *Asteroids* surged past Midway's *Space Invaders* to become the all-time top selling coin-op game.

Pinball, meanwhile, was beginning to suffer as a result of the video game onslaught. *Play Meter* started running articles such as "Wanted: Imagination," which echoed operator sentiments that new gimmicks and features be employed in the pinball games. But pinball, having relied for too long on its past technology as its main appeal, had lost the spark to excite the player.

That was reflected in the 1980 annual operators poll conducted by *Play Meter* magazine. Video games averaged $102 a week, a record leap. Pool tables, the silent earners, held down a distant second place with a $66 a week average. Pinballs were third with $63. And jukeboxes were badly outdistanced with a fourth-place finish of $50.

The wide variance in per-week revenue did more to encourage operator overbuying in the video market and underbuying of pool tables and phonographs and pinballs. Within a short period of time, the industry would be divided into two distinct parts—video games, which would account for more than 80 percent of the operators' equipment purchasing dollar, and non-video games which included everything else—including the former street location staples of pinball, phonograph, and pool.

Next issue we'll examine the video game hitting its peak. The copyright law makes another unkind turn against the operator, the wildfire of legislation brought against arcade games, Pac-Man, *the controversy of* Play Meter's *equipment poll, the intrusion of blue-sky game sellers, the video decline, the growth of gray area operations, the manufacturers form an association, the home video game market swamps the coin-op industry, the manufacturers boycott* Play Meter, *the shakeout/takeout phase of the industry is over. All the next time in the final installment of* Play Meter's *first ten years in the industry.* •

Atari's consumer ad on Space Invaders infuriated operators.

![STATUS]

Presents the Most Memorable Video Game Ever Imagined

Each player begins with 10,000 points. First the player sees the question. He then decides how many points he wants to play on that question. After he has wagered his points three answers will appear. The player now tries to select the correct answer. Each player receives a minimum of four questions. Bonus questions are earned based on high scores. Scores can reach into the millions. Players will like the challenge of competing against the game or each other for a high score. The player who achieves the highest score can enter their initials for display.

Triv-Quiz lets the player choose from four challenging trivia catagories—**SPORTS, ENTERTAINMENT, WORLD FACTS** and the **EXPERT CHALLENGE.** Thousands of questions are stored in our advanced computer game system.

SPECIAL ADVERTISING FEATURE

Triv-Quiz offers the operator a special advertising feature. The operator may program his own advertising messages without the need of an additional and costly Keyboard.

AVAILABLE IN:

COUNTERTOPS

Ideally designed to fit on the bar top. Mounted on lazy susan for player convenience.

UPRIGHTS

Also available in the traditional upright model.

CONVERSION KITS

Conversion kits are available to change over your old video games. Upgrade your old videos into brand new games.

If you want to win big, call us now and ask about Triv-Quiz . . . another quality video game from STATUS.

STATUS GAME CORP.

STATUS

17A Culbro Park, West Hartford, CT 06110. Telephone: (203) 278-1397
2901 South Higland, Las Vegas, NV 89109. Telephone: (702) 731-4940

ATTENTION VIDEO

You Can Direct Fro

The Shortest Distance Between Two Points.

It's always been a straight line, so why should things be different when you purchase video games? Centuri's Direct Connection is just that, a direct line between you and one of the industry's leading manufacturers.

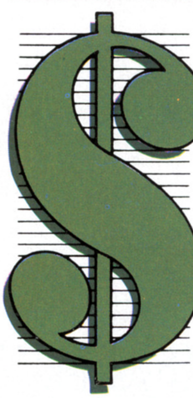
The Old Way To Purchase Video Games

MANUFACTURER → DISTRIBUTOR → OPERATOR

The New Way

The Centuri DIRECT CONNECTION

CENTURI → OPERATOR



So What's In It For Me?

Cost savings . . . big cost savings. Now that you can buy video games direct from Centuri (both dedicated and full PCB conversion kits), you will be paying prices equal to or below distributor cost . . . that's a savings of up to 40%. In today's competitive market, what more can you ask for?

What About Service?

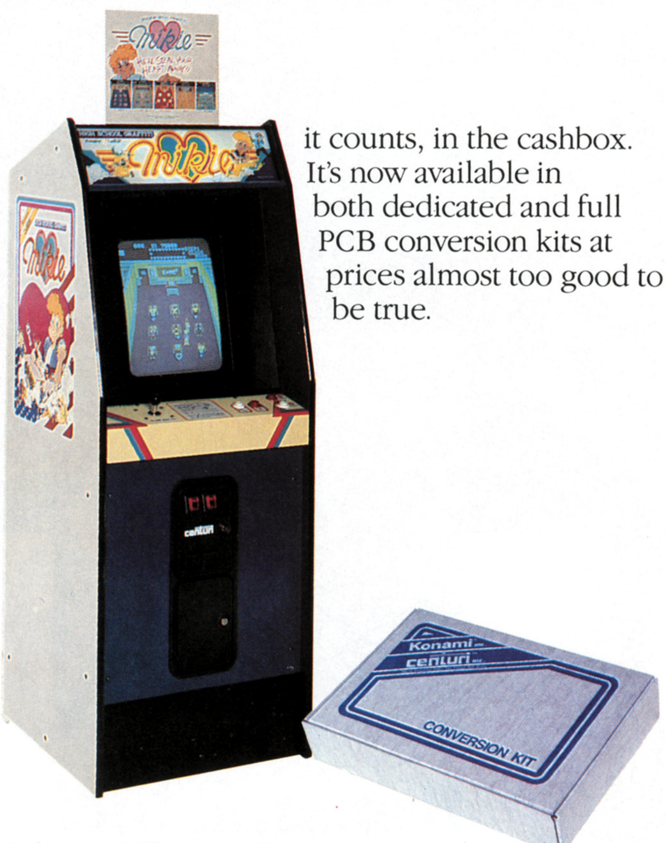
With a smile and a great deal of speed. Centuri's nationally recognized Customer Service Department will assist you with any problems that should arise, very often right over the phone on our toll-free service hotline. And, of course, there is fast turnaround on any repair problems sent to the department.

All Right, Let's Talk Product.

Remember, we are the company that has brought you such blockbuster hits as Time Pilot,™ Gyruss,™ Track & Field™ and Hyper Sports.™ Proven money makers and proven quality. And now, to add to this collection of video game favorites, meet **Mikie,™ High School Graffiti** . . . the smash hit of the recent JAMMA and AMOA shows. **Mikie™** is a fast paced, challenging, comical character game that will capture the hearts of just about anyone who has ever stepped foot inside a classroom. **Mikie™** is a player's game and it shows where

GAME OPERATORS

Now Buy from Centuri



it counts, in the cashbox. It's now available in both dedicated and full PCB conversion kits at prices almost too good to be true.

I'm Convinced, What's Next?

If you want to start buying video games direct from Centuri and save up to 40%, then join the Direct Connection by filling out the coupon and receive a FREE Direct Connection Starter Kit. It contains everything you'll need to begin maximizing your profit potential. To learn more about the Centuri Direct Connection or place an order immediately, call:

U.S. (except Florida) 1-800-624-6334
Florida & Outside U.S. 1-305-558-5200

All prices are F.O.B. Hialeah, Florida. Product subject to availability and prices subject to change without notice. Mikie, Hyper Sports, Track & Field, Time Pilot and Gyruss are registered trademarks of Konami Industry Co., Ltd.

centuri™

1780 W. Fourth Ave., Hialeah, FL 33010
Telex: 803694 ANSB Centuri • Cable CENTURI

Okay, What's The Bottom Line?

Here it is, plain and simple:

NEW GAME	Full PCB Conversion Kit	Dedicated
Mikie™, High School Graffiti	$725 upright $750 cocktail	$1695
Hyper Sports™	$695 upright $720 cocktail	N/A
Track & Field™	$645 upright	N/A
Badlands™ (laser)	N/A	$1795

Okay, the Centuri Direct Connection makes a lot of sense, please rush me a FREE Starter Kit so I can start making more dollars & cents. Send to: Starter Kit, Centuri, 1780 W. 4th Ave., Hialeah, FL 33010.

Name ______________________________

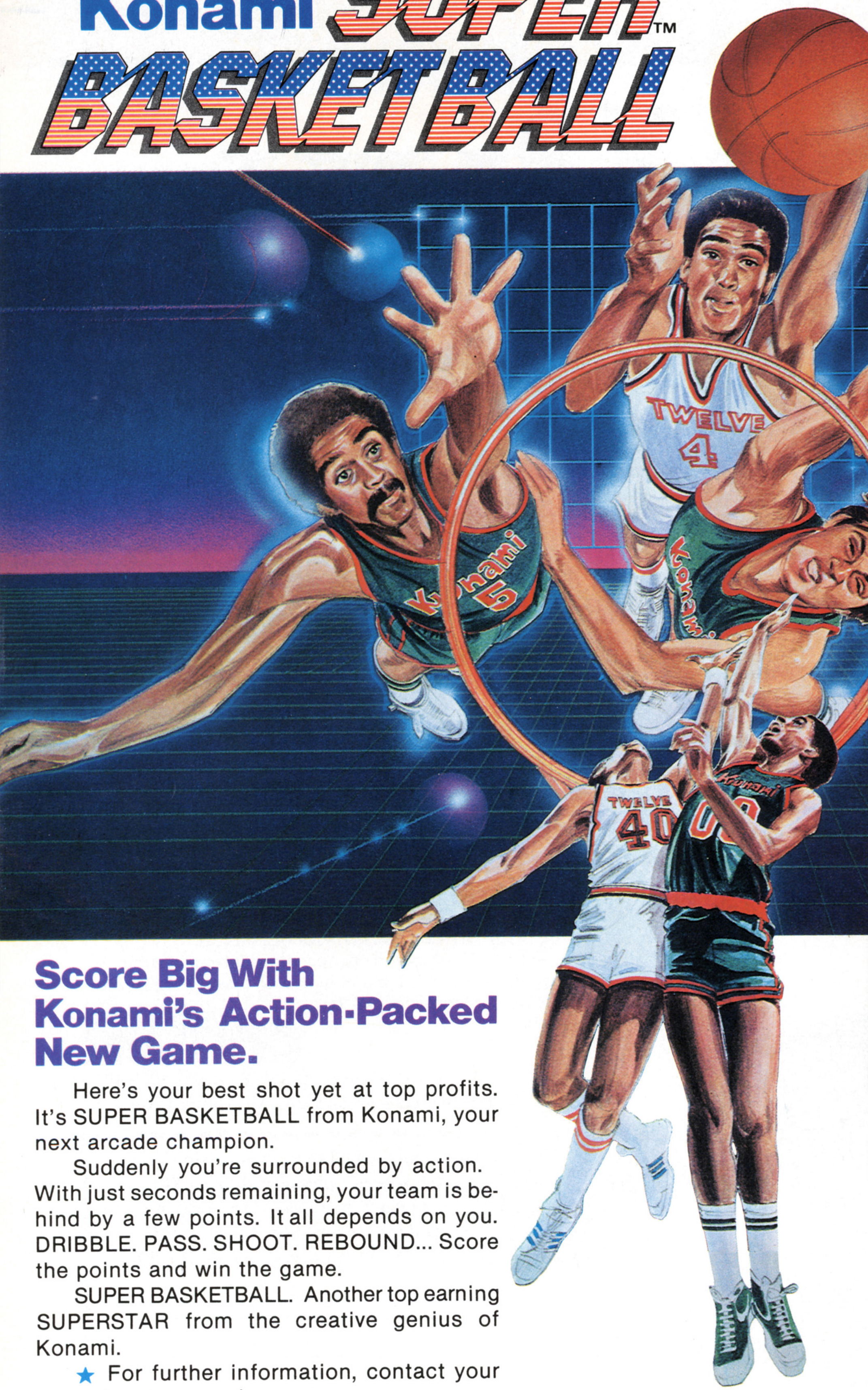
Company ______________________ Title __________

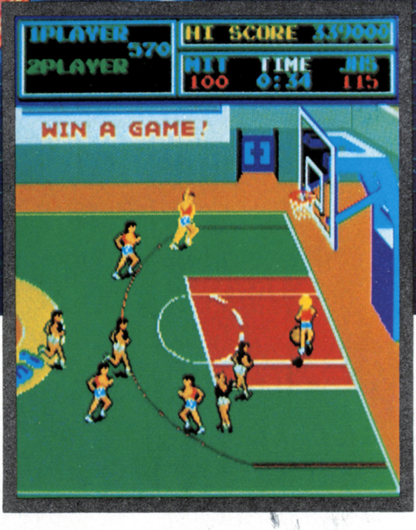
Address ______________________________

City ________________ State ________ Zip ________

Phone (   ) ______________________________

Konami SUPER BASKETBALL™





Score Big With Konami's Action-Packed New Game.

Here's your best shot yet at top profits. It's SUPER BASKETBALL from Konami, your next arcade champion.

Suddenly you're surrounded by action. With just seconds remaining, your team is behind by a few points. It all depends on you. DRIBBLE. PASS. SHOOT. REBOUND... Score the points and win the game.

SUPER BASKETBALL. Another top earning SUPERSTAR from the creative genius of Konami.

★ For further information, contact your local distributor today.

Konami, Inc.

1555 BRUMMEL
ELK GROVE VILLAGE, IL 60007
PHONE: 312/364-6633
TELEX: 6871385 KONAM
FAX: 312/364-1368

TEN YEARS OF COINMEN INTERVIEWS

PART ONE

Industry figures have shared their expertise in *Play Meter magazine's in-depth Coinman interviews. Here are excerpts from each of those interviews.*

December, 1974
Russell Mawdsley, MOA president
"(TV games) gave the industry one of the biggest shots in the arm than it as had in the last five years. And I don't think we've even scratched the surface yet."

January, 1975
John Trucano, South Dakota operator
"With inflation the way it is today, the operator who has been operating out of his back pocket is in trouble. You got to know where you're going... and (how) every part of your business is doing."

February, 1975
Millie McCarthy, New York operator
"The awfully big problem in the industry right now is apathy. It's like each man for himself. And this is dangerous."

March, 1975
Joe Barton, New Jersey manufacturer
"The biggest mistake that too many distributors are making is readily supporting operators that are not financially stable. I mean over-extension of credit to some operators."

April, 1975
Ira Bettelman, California distributor
"Probably the biggest criticism operators have for distributors who operate is they are taking all the good spots. But I really don't believe that. The operator is usually a much better operator than a distributor who operates."

May, 1975
Jules Millman
"About half of our equipment is rented. If I think a game is really strong and we keep it on location for two years, then I'll buy it."

June/July, 1975
Nolan Bushnell, California manufacturer
"Only a healthy operator can make a healthy distributor can make a healthy manufacturer. So we try to make sure our products don't obsolete ourselves."

August, 1975
Harry Williams, Illinois manufacturer
"I'm glad to see outsiders get into the industry, like Atari and Digital Games. But if a new company is not strong financially and builds a bad piece of equipment, it takes money out of the industry by the operator not getting his money back."

September, 1975
Len Schneller, New York manufacturer
"Thanks to promotion and its acceptance by all involved and the quality of equipment, pool is one of the highest of all coin machines."

Without a doubt, one of the most informative departments of the new magazine was the "Coinman of the Month" interview, a lengthy question-and-answer with an industry leader.

October, 1975
Fred Collins, MOA president
"We should change our own attitudes and try to change our customers attitudes about the old standards of doing business and get into the new way. We have to use innovations, new ideas and new types of equipment."

November, 1975
Norm Calfin, Michigan operator
"After our attorney presented our case, the judge said to us, 'I know what those pinballs are. They are those boxes that you crank the handle and you see naked women in them. Needless to say, we lost our case."

December, 1975
Les Montooth, Illinois operator
"It always makes me really happy to walk into a place and see people playing the music machine and having such a good time. The jukebox offers some means of identification for people."

January, 1976
Jon Brady, North Carolina distributor
"I feel the average manufacturer does not understand the distributing business like he should. They don't know all of what is involved."

February, 1976
Peter Groom, British operator
"There are a lot of operators in Great Britain who would cut their mothers' throats to get a location. Suffice it to say, operating is a highly competitive industry here."

March, 1976
Izzy Yodlin, Massachusetts operator
"We don't want every dollar in every way that we can get it. We want it in the proper way, and we want good relationships with the people we are doing business with."

April, 1976
Thomas Cundieff, Texas distributor
"Keeping a game clean is probably the most important consideration... Service is keeping the customer happy."

May, 1976
Roger C. Sharpe, New York player
"All the major industries in the United States have public relations facilities to counteract any negativity, but this industry doesn't, and it should."

June, 1976
Neil Beresth, Connecticut operator
"I equate profit with the bottom line. We're not concerned about volume. Or we're concerned to a degree, but sometimes more is less. I am not concerned today as much with growth as I am with taking care of business."

July, 1976
Bud Gettle, Kansas operator
"If you had to single out the number one problem that we have with equipment, it would be keeping the solid state games operating and income producing."

August, 1976
Vic Leslie, British distributor
"Because of our poor economic state, the people that got hurt with the original videos got hurt to such a far worse extent than operators in America, and it made them very wary of video games."

September, 1976
Arnold Fisher, Florida manufacturer
"I think we're going more into 2001 type games. People want to feel the game when they play, to become part of the game."

October, 1976
Adrian Hoines, Foosball player
"A (foosball) table is like a new car: when it's new and looks nice, it's treated with respect—when it gets old and broken down, then it's not treated as well."

November, 1976
Ted Nichols, MOA president
"Some operators don't have any success in getting better commissions and some are successful, but I think most operators are realizing they have to be better bookkeepers and better businessmen if they want to make more money."

December, 1976
Ray Pasziewicz, Baltimore operator
"It's hard to find mechanics in any state and there should be a program somewhere that would make more mechanics available."

January, 1977
Masaya Nakamura, Japanese inventor
"The most important thing to stimulate and keep this business field going is to prevent copying...I believe the video game will retain its position in the market just as pinball has been retaining and expanding."

February, 1977
Norman Little, Las Vegas operator
"The coming of the microprocessor will allow more flexability in designing appeal into a game and the manufacturers are going to use that."

March, 1977
Joe Isaacson, New Orleans technician
"The flippers are going to suffer for the TV games.

Because the TV games have had so much trouble with boards, guys are going to be weary of the solid state pins."

April, 1977
J. W. Sedlak, New York operator

"Popular video games will last a long time. The first real video game I bought was Atari *Gran Trak 20* and it's been two years and it's still one of the top games in the store."

May, 1977
Tom Neiman, Bally

"If a game gets killed in prototype, somebody has made a mistake and it shouldn't have gotten that far. At worst, we should have to make some adjustments."

June, 1977
Joe Robbins, Chicago distributor

"I think we've come out of a boom period. We've passed the peak and we're in a plateau area. Certainly video games have peaked and they're in a plateau."

July, 1977
Nathan Bush, Texas technician

"The fact that they (manufacturers) sometimes rush into something to keep the (production) line going doesn't really surprise me. In fact, it surprises me they don't make more mistakes."

August, 1977
Wes Lawson, Florida operator

"I never purchase from just one distributor. I believe you may be able to get a little better price if you've got a bargaining point."

September, 1977
Morris Nahum, New York exporter

"I have traveled all over and have found that coin machines have done much better in lower class areas than in middle or upper class areas."

October, 1977
Chuck Farmer, Ohio distributor

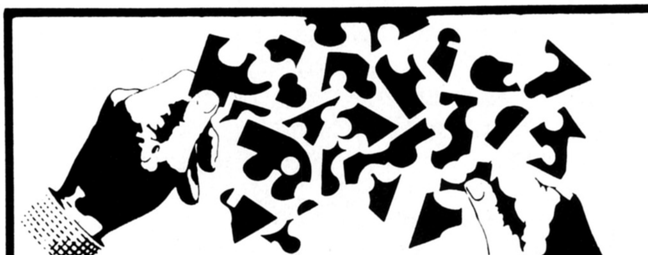
"I think some of the blame of locations buying their own equipment goes to the operator. The tables just sit around the location. The location owner starts thinking if it's that easy, he can do it himself."

November, 1977
Garland Garrett, AMOA president

"We know operators are going to have to pay $8 for each jukebox, but we've been concerning ourselves with the implementation of the law."

December, 1977
Maurice Terry, Texas distributor

"It seems that when it comes to charging a higher price or a better commission arrangement, the



operator is his own worst enemy."

January, 1978
Vincent Storino, New Jersey operator

"We felt that with the size of our operation we needed something to keep track of our machines... and we felt the computer was the way to go."

February, 1978
Steve Kirk, Illinois game designer

"I think you'll find that a lot of things that were impractical with electro-mechanical will now be practical with solid state. There are a couple of things I did with *Stars*, for instance, that I couldn't have done with an electro-mechanical game."

March, 1978
Martha Foshee, Louisiana operator

"People can see that I make my living as honestly as someone who runs a clothing store. I think that maybe the stigma is leaving this business."

April, 1978
Murray Panitz, New York operator

"One of the problems we're facing today is that we're oversaturated. I feel we've been overexposed because of all the cockamamie operators that have opened up. You have many people getting into arcades who, in my opinion, don't belong in it."

May, 1978
Lee Peppard and Cal Rogers, Washington manufacturers

"We have one product. We promote a sport, whereas I think they (pinball and video game manufacturers) would promote an event... Bally's obvious success with their promotion I think shows very clearly that that kind of promotion and not the permanent tour type is better suited for video and pinball manufacturers."

June, 1978
Perry London, Wisconsin operator

"We maintain a weekly record for every collection on every machine at every location. We have a data processing unit with a video screen so that we can go back to varying periods—primarily, we carry thirteen collections on the screen."

July, 1978
Michael Mendelsohn, California operator

"We have developed a service ratio for each type of game, which is actually a ratio of how many calls we get on a game to how much money that type of game makes. Right now, out of all our games... digital pinballs have the worst ratio of service to revenue."

August, 1978
Craig Singer, Texas operator

"We don't allow smoking or drinking of any beverages. I try to make sure the games are always immaculate, and I want to make sure there is no dirt on the floor."

September, 1978
Sam Stern, Illinois manufacturer

"True, the manufacturers may be pushing the games out too fast for the operators to absorb them, but I think the operators are keeping pace with the technology. Manufacturers, I think, have helped them in this regard. I think everyone is trying to help the operators as far as mechanical information is concerned."

October, 1978
Bill Nemgar, Minnesota operator

"It (operator-sponsored pool leagues) guarantees that we have out tables in the location because one of our prerequisites is that a location use our table to be in our league. So this keeps the location from buying its own tables."

November, 1978
Don Van Brackel, AMOA president

"I'd say the biggest single problem we have right now is the copyright legislation. It's the number one problem, without a doubt. Operators I've talked with are deeply concerned, and their concern is that if the Copyright Royalty Tribunal is left to go unchecked, they'll probably go and ruin the business."

December, 1978
Dick Johnson, Canadian operator

"As far as music programming is concerned, for the last 15 or 16 years, we have kept track of the number of plays of every record on every machine. Now I know a lot of operators don't keep track of all this. But we do, and because we do, it was easy for us to switch over to a computer."

February, 1979
Michael Stroll, Illinois manufacturer

"In comparison with June of this past year, the pinball manufacturers as a whole are building about 250 games a day less than they did back in June. The number of machines that are being produced has reached parity and is not significantly higher than it was during the electro-mechanical days."

March, 1979
Darrel Clark, California opertator

"Very often operators are afraid of change. If they only knew how easy it is to go up to the dollar jukebox and get that bottom price up to one play for a quarter."

April, 1979
Jon Daugherty, California consultant

"Generally speaking, the major regional shopping centers can qualify as being successful locations without too many other qualifications or demographics because it's safe to assume that a major regional shopping center has to draw a certain amount of traffic, and that's all we need."

May, 1979
John Estridge, Tennessee operator

"Since 1975 we have not set a location without a contract. Our contracts run for five years and have an automatic renewal clause in them for an additional five years unless it's specifically cancelled by either us or the location."

June, 1979
Jim Calore, Pennsylvania technician

"Even though a manufacturer may get real valuable operator feedback, it seems he (the manufacturer) gets so involved in production, and his games are so far down the line, that these ideas can't be incorporated for maybe three or four models afterwards."

July, 1979
Fred Granger, AMOA executive vice president

"We've got our hands full with the copyright battles. That's why it's so important that operators support their state associations. I know that people have said that the AMOA should go out there and fight some of this legislation at the state level, but there isn't any way we can do all those things."

August, 1979
Michael Green, British distributor

"I think the AMOA should take a strong stand on this. They should work to create a situation where legalized gaming by means of machines in street locations is permissable."

October, 1979
Emil Marcet, Michigan manufacturer

"Even though we may feel the pool table market is, generally speaking, a replacement market, we still feel there is something that perhaps we could do in the future which would help us turn this thing around."

November, 1979
Wayne Hesch, Illinois operator

"Right now, if we get a call for assistance on a local problem, we refer that person to his state association would know a whole lot more about how to handle that specific problem in that specific area than we would."

December, 1979
Howard Dolph, Oklahoma operator

"If you can save much of your income by not doing the wrong things, then you can make it in the jukebox business today."

January, 1980
Ralph C. Lally, *Play Meter* publisher

"Just because we're not afraid to criticize the national association or make suggestions does not mean anything other than that we are truly concerned about the industry."

March, 1980
Kem Thom, Illinois operator

"As I was giving this talk, I would see 17 senators and my honest opinion was they didn't know I was there. But when I told them a jukebox could only earn $1.75 an hour, you could have heard a pin drop."

May, 1980
Ted Olson, California operator

"To figure if a game is worth buying, I try to see if the game is paying for itself in 6 to 12 weeks."

June, 1980
Charles Ross, Texas operator

"A computer is not going to do anything for you, you cannot do by hand. The advantage is a computer can do it a lot faster."

July, 1980
Art Seglin, New Jersey technician

"It (manufacturers' service schools) is certainly worthwhile. I think they do a good job. I think you'll find they are interested in trying to teach and are doing the best they can under the circumstances."

August, 1980
Donald Anderson, Oregon operator

"A couple of years ago I decided I couldn't afford to be a nice guy any longer. I made the move to sixty percent and even added on service charges, and it's worked for me."

October, 1980
Robert Bloom, Illinois manufacturer

"Gottlieb has pursued exclusively the pinball market for most of its 53-year history. It's a tradition. We would only change if there were a darned good reason."

November, 1980
Gary Stern, Illinois manufacturer

"Without any federal protection, everything goes to the state and local authorities, and I see a disaster in many of these areas. I have nothing against pure gambling, but it is the gray area equipment which can cause problems for this industry."

December, 1980
Bob Nims, AMOA president

"On AMOA not making a stand against gray area games, the people in this industry would know better what is legal or illegal in their area than a national trade association would."

FROM PAY PHONES TO PINBALLS

Something for Everyone

By Valerie Cognevich

Once the carpets are rolled up and the booths dismantled, everyone kicks off his shoes and tries to digest just what he saw at the AMOA Show. Not until the last day of the show does it even pay to question attendees as to their choices of equipment. That's when things begin to show a pattern. That's when you can benefit from the observations and insights of others like yourself who were deluged with too much equipment to make any honest evaluations. Ironically, that's when you're most likely to get an honest evaluation from other attendees.

As we are all too well aware, no one knows what will appeal to a fickle public; so picking the hit of a show has many times turned out to be more of an embarrassment than anything else. Consider the year *Pac-Man* was shown. What was the acknowledged hit of the show? Why, everyone knew the answer to that one even before the show started—Atari's *Battlezone*. And industry veterans remember *Battlezone* all too well.

Last year, lasers were the main attraction. Again, everyone knew that going into the show. Operators and distributors alike went to the AMOA '83 Expo all well aware that the next hit game would be a laser game. The only thing they didn't know was which laser game. Today, we hardly need a reminder of just how wrong we all were.

That's what happens when you go into an event like the AMOA Show with preconceptions about what's hot and what's not.

That's also the reason for waiting until the last day to sample operator reactions to equipment on display. You have a better chance of getting opinions based on actual observation and not on pre-show hype. With this year's show, however, there really wasn't too much of a danger of falling victim to pre-show hype.

Shipwrecks and balloons

Manufacturers weren't really expecting to see any buyers at the show anyway; so why should they gear up their PR departments. Why, some manufacturers didn't even bother gearing up their production lines, come to think about it. Everyone agreed the AMOA Show to be nothing more than a roll call of the survivors who made it through the video crash; so why bother with the balloons and fanfare?

Manufacturers fully expected to witness the same crass instinct that rears its ugly head at shipwrecks. As you probably know, after a ship goes down, the first reaction of survivors is to look around and see what other heads bob up above water. No one's in a buying frame of mind at that point; they're too busy just treading water.

Anyway, it was this environment which manufacturers expected to find at AMOA '84—no buyers, just some damn good water treaders. So no one got carried away with pre-show hype this time around.

As a result, when some buyers did show up at the expo, there was really nothing that just had to be seen. Fortunately, operator opinions are decidedly less prejudiced under these circumstances. And, by the third day, when almost everyone has seen almost all the equipment, operator evaluations are more likely to be accurate than past show sensations as *Battlezone* and *Bega's Battle*.

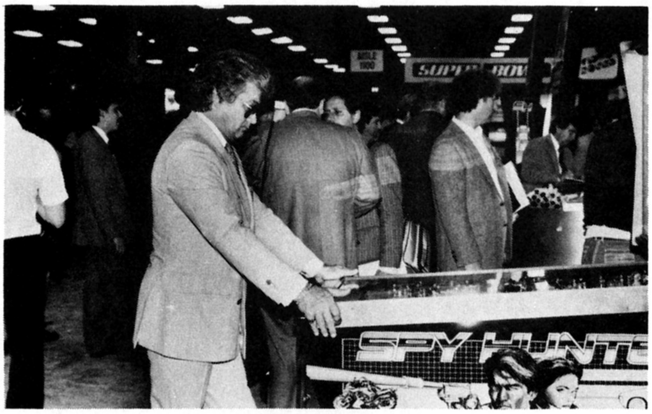
And one operator seemed to sum up the view of the majority of those attending. Said he, "There's a lot of nice equipment here, but..."

But isn't good enough anymore. So with the high fashion video game business stripped of its hype and hoopla, operators were seen looking ever more closely at such equipment types as pay telephones, simulators, shuffle alleys, claw machines, kiddie rides, pool tables, jukeboxes, and pinballs.

Pinballs! My God! What's this industry come to! You mean operators were actually *looking* at pinball machines.

Yes, Virginia, and what's more. There was even talk of *buying* them!

After a ship goes down, the first reaction of survivors is to look around and see what other heads bob up above water. No one's in a buying frame of mind at that point.

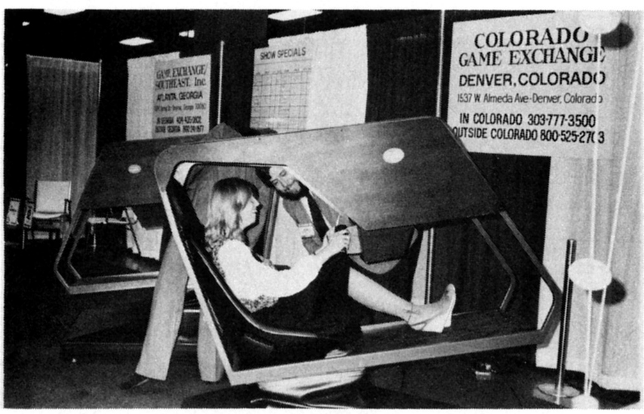


Stan Jarocki, Bally, enjoys a game of Spy Hunter.

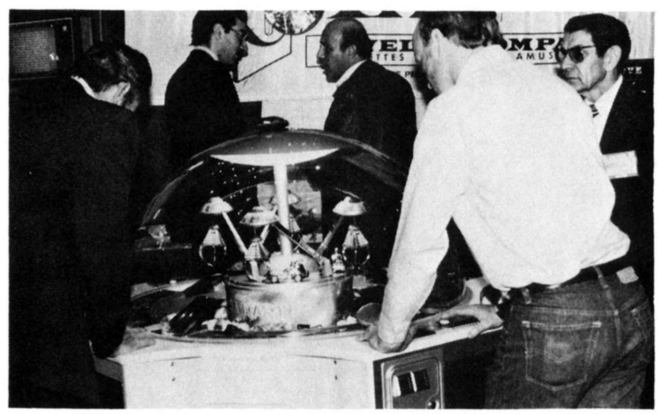
J.F. Frantz exhibited some novelty pieces.

Birdie King 3 *by Monroe/Coin-It offers new challenges for those who have mastered* Birdie King.

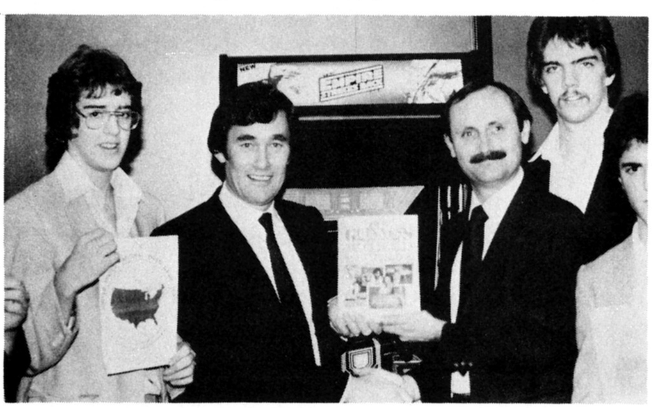
Crown's Golf, *say company representatives, is as close as you can come to a real game of golf.*



Several companies exhibited simulators. This one by Game Exchange was one of four shown.



A pleasant diversion was this claw-type machine by Roth Novelty called Diga Mart.



Atari's Empire Strikes Back *was chosen by players to appear in the Guinness Book of World Records. Here, John Farrand (left of game), president of Atari, shakes hands with Walter Day, organizer of the program.*

Gil Pollack (left), new general manager of Premier Technology and Lenore Sayers (right), national sales manager of Premier Technology, pose with customer by new pin El Dorado.

Next issue:

More on the AMOA show!

More on *Play Meter's* first 10 years!

Still, it was a pathetic thing to see—those video game manufacturers. So often accused in the past of contributing to the glut of games on the market. The Ataris and Ballys were glutted once again—this time with more games than is thought decent in these austere times. But this wasn't like the olden days. No, the factories were showing a glut of games for quite a different reason.

The truth was the manufacturers were so baffled by the market that, honest-to-heaven, they hadn't the slightest idea which games should be produced. It also helped explain the hypelessness of AMOA '84. How could a manufacturer who doesn't even know what's his own best game dare hype his equipment over other factories' offerings.

So, like Hamlet, the manufacturers decided "the show's the thing" wherein they would find out which games to bring.

Then as the final irony, they all played second fiddle to a pinball game!

Brinkmanship

Williams Electronics came to the show not even sure it would remain in business afterwards. However, *Space Shuttle* has certainly assured the company's position in the industry. Distributors furnished Williams with enough orders to guarantee the factory would remain open.

Still, no one is naive enough to believe a manufacturer can stay in business with one game, but Williams has never been known for contributing to the game glut by pushing slews of untested games at its distributors. That's at least one reason why the company took the unusual position of not even trying to introduce product during the past dismal summer. Instead, the company just closed up shop and waited and waited and waited. If the product they introduced at the show would not have met with such acceptance, it's more than likely the company would have kept on waiting. However, the game should give them the stability they need to plan for the future.

Space Shuttle features a replica of the space shuttle on the playfield, with ramps making multi-ball play possible. There's a lot of action on the playfield, and each day the crowds increased as operators waited for their chance.

Other companies displayed similar feats of brinkmanship, though truly none did it with the flair of Williams and *Space Shuttle*.

Premier Technology, formerly Gottlieb/Mylstar, came the closest, however. Only days before, Gil Pollack, former vice president of sales at Mylstar, signed papers becoming the general manager of Premier Technology. Pollack said he chose the name Premier because he always thought of Gottlieb pins as the premier pins in the industry. Many were delighted to see this revival with two new pins bearing the old Gottlieb name, *El Dorado* and *Touchdown*.

Atari was another company subject to numerous industry rumors. Word had it Atari was not long for this coin-op world. But the Sunnyvale, California/El Paso, Texas/back to Sunnyvale, California manufacturing concern surprised even itself with the fantastic response to the two games which introduced its new game system—*Marble Madness* (System I) and *Paperboy* (System II). It now appears Atari may be on firmer ground. Both systems are high resolution, and System II (featuring *Paperboy*) also incorporated a high resolution monitor. John Farrand, president of Atari noted that Atari is making guarantees to support its product. The price of the systems will also be a welcome surprise according to Farrand.

System I, featuring *Marble Madness*, already has a second game, Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, which was also shown.

Atari is reportedly moving its facilities to Sunnyvale and will start production on *Marble Madness*. Availability is set for early December. *Paperboy* will be available sometime in January.

Kits and sequels

Exidy showed its conversion for the successful *Crossbow* called *Cheyenne*. The conversion features action-packed graphics and realistic

PROMOTE! PROMOTE! PROMOTE!

Three good words of advice in today's tough market.

DYNAMO

Call your local distributor today to order the Dynamo Soccer Table and inquire about free tournament and league information.

Dynamo Corporation, 1805 S. Great Southwest Parkway, Grand Prairie, TX 75051
(214) 641-4286 • Toll Free (800) 527-6054 • Telex 732432

Congratulations PLAY METER on your 10th anniversary!

sound effects through digital audio. The game features seven (screens) plus a bonus level.

Monroe Distributing, in cooperation with Coin-It, introduced the new *Birdie King 3.* The ever popular golf theme offers a greater challenge to those who have mastered *Birdie King.*

Monroe also introduced *Buggy Challenge*, a Taito-licensed game. A player-controlled dune buggy races across fields avoiding obstacles such as tires, wrecked cars, stumps, water supply towers, fuel drums, and other cars. It veers from the usual driving game since it does not use a race track which makes it all the more exciting. It also comes in a cockpit style.

Data East has a hit with *Karate Champ*. Introduced as samples as a one-player, the company produced it as a two-player game and is meeting with great success. Data East is also offering a conversion to make the samples into two-player games. Data East also told distributors it would continue to support the DECO System, the first conversion system.

Konami, which just prior to the show, announced its purchase of Interlogic, exhibited *Super Basketball* and drew positive comments. Basketball season is starting, and this should prove to be as popular as *Track & Field* was during the Olympics.

Universal, which gave us *Mr. Do!* showed *Do! Run Run*, which operators said was more to the famous *Mr. Do!* theme than the less than successful *Do!'s Wild Ride.* The player runs for his life while being pursued around a three-dimensional playing field, up and down stairs.

Magic Electronics has once again come up with an inexpensive, money-back guaranteed kit. *Driving Force* will convert *Pac-Man* games into a low-priced driving game. Interestingly, a number of operators singled out *Driving Force* as a good conversion candidate for the numerous Pac-Man and *Ms. Pac-Man* games in locations.

Another manufacturer making its mark in the U.S. industry is SNK Electronics. The company's kit game, *Vulgus*, has been out on test and has been a steady earner. It is designed to convert any vertical raster monitor and is competitively priced.

A new company, Kitco, showed *Crown Golf*, a game the company says is truly the closest thing to playing a real game of golf. The player selects his club from 11 buttons, controls the power of his swing, and makes choices from information supplied. Factory spokesmen claim this game was out on test about 13 weeks before production and was consistently the third highest earner being beaten only by *Spy Hunter* and *Punch-Out!!* The game is licensed from Sega.

Centuri made show headlines by its surprise "Direct Connection," a marketing effort that completely bypasses the distributor. *Badlands*, the laser game, was shown, but a new licensed game, *Mikie*, got most of the attention. The cost is what makes both *Badlands* and *Mikie* appealing. The savings, says Centuri, is the result of selling direct to the operator.

Bally, which has met enormous success with *Spy Hunter*, previewed *Spy Hunter* as a pinball. Two video games, *Timber* and *Galaga 3*, are worthy of honorable mention. In *Timber*, the player controls a lumberjack chopping down a tree as he competes with either the computer or another player to clear the forest in the allotted time. *Galaga 3* has all

Seeburg Previews Product

Just like 45 records became the standard for coin-operated phonographs years ago, look for the compact audio disc to take its place in the future. This prediction was made by Ed Blankenbleckler, president of Seeburg, before over 35 distributors at a special distributor showing of the new Seeburg phonograph just before the AMOA Show.

Thirty years ago, Blankenbeckler joined Seeburg as a product field engineer; so he has witnessed the changes in the phonograph industry firsthand. And he is insistent that the new Seeburg phonograph will not be suddenly outdated if and when the record industry changes direction.

The new Seeburg jukebox offering is designed to accept these compact discs, should they become available, Blankenbeckler told his distributors.

The Seeburg president pointed out that many popular songs (like Michael Jackson's "Thriller") are not being put out as 45s until long after the song has become popular, and this great delay threatens to cut into the operator's jukebox profit margin.

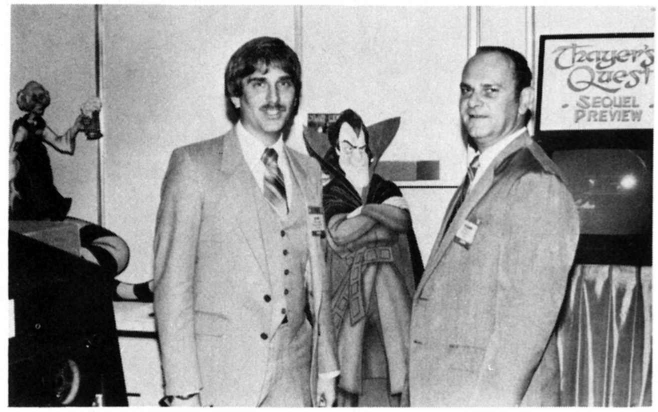
He then urged distributors to view the industry more positively.

"Depending upon whom you believe," he told the gathering, "whether you are optimistically inclined or pessimistically guided, the coin-op industry will experience either a meteoric rise in income or a drop in the next year.

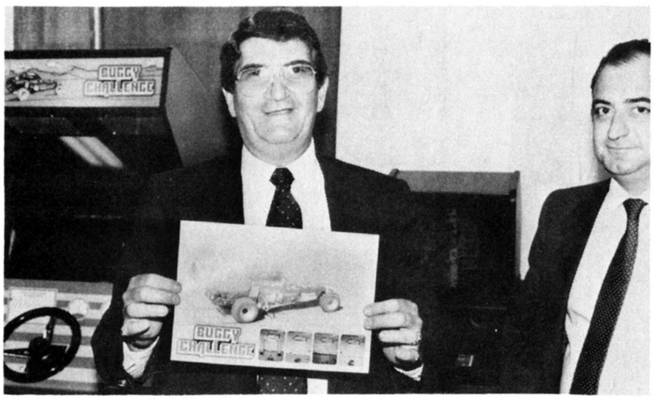
"The self-appointed analysts, the futurists," he continued, "are as divergent as night and day. We know reality must lie somewhere between. What might not be easily found among all the predictions, whether positive or negative, is the significant effect that individual ingenuity, determination, enterprise, and creativity can have on shaping our industry for tomorrow. How we perform as individuals will determine how we will perform as an industry. The frog who sits at the bottom of a well thinks the sky is only as big as the opening at the top of the well. If he jumped to the lip of the well, he would have an entirely different view. If we constantly strive for excellence, we will have a strong and successful industry."

The Seeburg president went on to stress that the industry has returned to its strong base, the three "P's"—pinball, pool tables, and phonographs. •

Wico, well known for reliable parts, displayed new pin, Af-Tor.



Rick Dyer and Dave McAndrews of RDI with Thayer's Quest.

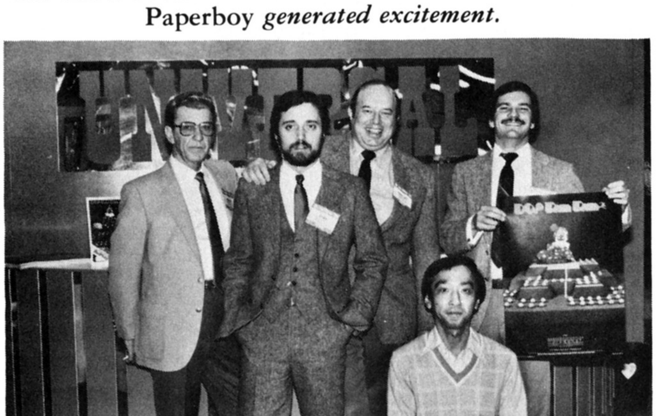


Buggy Challenge *by Monroe/Coin-It is an exciting driving game.*

The group from SNK received positive comments on Vulgas.

The Atari booth was crowded as Marble Madness *and* Paperboy *generated excitement.*

Steve Walton, Bob Lloyd, and Jolly Backer of Data East sensative to operators' needs.



From left: Don Waters, Ray Musci, Marshall Caras, Yoshioka Keiri, and Brian Duke of Universal are extremely pleased over Do! Run Run.

Mike Macke, president, second from right, and Jack Mittel, consultant for Digital Controls, stand by as players enjoy a game of Lode Runner.

the action of the original in a universal kit complete with everything you need to convert almost any game.

Nintendo, which led the way for the system concept, showed the latest Nintendo Paks for the VS. System, *Wrecking Crew*, and the two-in-one pinball/golf combination. The company also previewed *Super Punch-Out!!* as a dedicated game or as a Nintendo Pak for the original *Punch-Out!!* game.

Other games

Nichibutsu exhibited a game that some described as a sleeper called *Roller Jammer*. It will be released soon in the horizontal configuration.

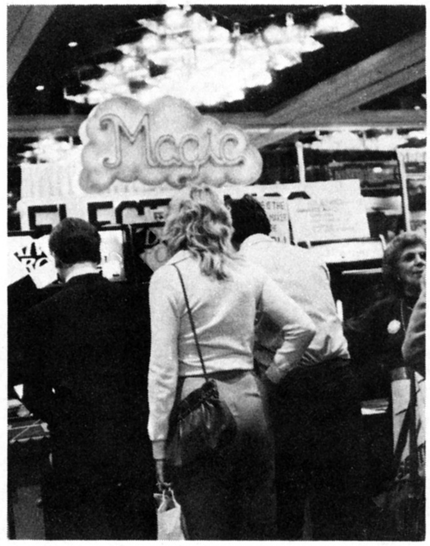
Other games previewed by Nichibutsu were *Seicross*, which is a space bike themed game that is economically priced; *Tube Panic*, a laser conversion now available; *Country Girl*, a card game available as kit or countertop; and *Lovely Angel*, a fairy tale character game that will be available soon in cocktail and kit form.

Bally showed its Six-Pack Conversion System featuring *Swat, Flicky, Mister Viking, Up 'n Down, Water Match,* and *Bull Fight*. All are available as dedicated games, circuit board conversion kits, or ROM package conversions, or a specially designed circuit board that will convert a *Zaxxon* or *Frogger* to any of the six games.

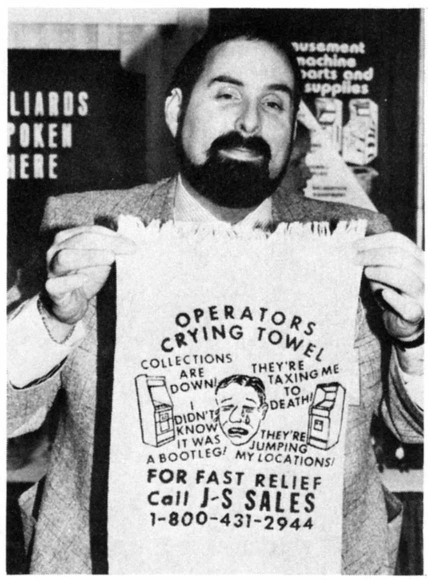
Future Spy is a new state-of-the-art space adventure by Bally. *Ten-Pin Champ* is Bally's 10-Pin Deluxe with modifications and improvements. *Pac-Land* is Bally's newest *Pac* game. The game may have a high hurdle to clear since Pac games have been nearly done to death. However, the latest has the dot-chomping cartoon character leading the way through 19 adventures on his way to fairyland.

Konami also showed *Pandora's Palace, Mega Zone*, and *Road Fighter*.

Sente debuted seven new video games for the original Sente System I. The games include *Chicken Shift, Goalie Ghost, Snacks and Jaxson, Off the Wall, Stocker, Hat Trick*, and *Trivial Pursuit*. *Trivial Pursuit* was the most popular, obviously taking



Driving Force, ***by Magic Electronics is an inexpensive conversion for*** **Pac-Man.**



Ben Cirlin of J-S Sales holds his operators' crying towel.

John Batistic and Herman Fox of Cleveland Coin show the new Univid Test System.

advantage of the trivia interest started by the board game Trivial Pursuit. This game has the familiar board and the player travels around after answering questions correctly.

RDI Video Systems showed *Thayer's Quest*, a laser disc conversion, which was featured on *Play Meter's* AMOA issue cover.

Wico, widely known for reliable parts, introduced a new pin *Af-Tor* and a shooting game called *Treasure Cove*.

Centuri, in addition to *Badlands* and *Mikie*, offered *Hyper Sports* and *Track & Field*. All its games were available in upright or cocktail conversions or dedicated versions.

Monroe/Coin-It showed *Star Force*, licensed from Tehkan. This is a space game featuring the last battle with a gigantic continent floating in space.

Crown Vending, which gave the industry *Superbike*, an inexpensive conversion that hit the "National Play Meter" on numerous occasions, debuted its latest, *Castle of Doom*.

Electro-Sport offered *Trivia Chase*, a colorful video trivia game with four categories to chose from. The faster you answer the higher you score.

Atari completed the Star Wars trilogy with *The Empire Strikes Back*, a converison of *Star Wars*. The third of the trilogy is *Return of the Jedi*.

Williams introduced *Gridiron*, a dedicated pin or conversion for *Pennent Fever*. It's more than a pinball, it's a pitch and hit game where one or two players can play for a quarter. It has been ten years since the last pitch and hit game, factory officials told *Play Meter*.

Williams also showed another pin, *Star Light; a shuffle called Strike Zone*; *Turkey Shoot*, a brilliantly animated shooting game; *Devastator* with flight simulator realism and three-dimensional feel; and *Aeroboto*, a priced-right kit to convert any horizontal color raster monitor game.

Several companies debuted simulators including Exidy (*Vertigo*), Sente (*Strike Avenger*), Amusement Technology (*Max Experience*), and Game Exchange (*Hot Seat*). The fact that several companies had

Discover the secret formula that turns your played out, low-revenue laserdisc games into the hits of your arcade.

Thayer's Quest™

FROM THE CREATORS OF DRAGON'S LAIR®

A PROVEN WINNER

"Thayer's Quest kits are the highest earning kits we have ever tested. Customers' interest is the best we have ever had since the release of Dragon's Lair.

Tommy Haynes, Operator
Nickles and Dimes

"Innovation drives the industry and the A.M.O.A. RDI has the lock on innovation with Thayer's Quest.

Steve Koeningsberg, Distributor
State Sales and Service

"It's the top ranked game in the first six locations that we established. It's doing three and four times the revenues of the location averages. I expect it to be stronger in future weeks."

Jon Daugherty, President
United Artists

DOUBLE YOUR PROFITS HALF THE EXPENSE

Thayer's Quest is available as a low-cost conversion kit. In forty-five minutes, you can transform your obsolete laserdisc game into a $400 a week dynamo (average weekly revenues nationwide range from $300 to $600). And Thayer's Quest won't let you down on a busy Saturday night. RDI guarantees the performance of each component in the conversion kit and provides a complete diagnostic package to insure reliability.

REVOLUTIONARY GAME DESIGN

The Thayer's Quest game system is unlike any other in arcade history. Using advanced laserdisc technology pioneered in Dragon's Lair, and state of the art features like artificial intelligence and speech synthesis, RDI has developed a unique arcade experience.
The system allows players to acquire and use treasures and weapons, calls players by name, remembers their game histories, even gives helpful hints along the way. Players refer to Thayer's Quest not so much as a game, but as an experience. Market tests again and again show players become involved in the plot, setting, and characters in a way impossible with other video games.

SAVE MONEY ON FUTURE GAMES

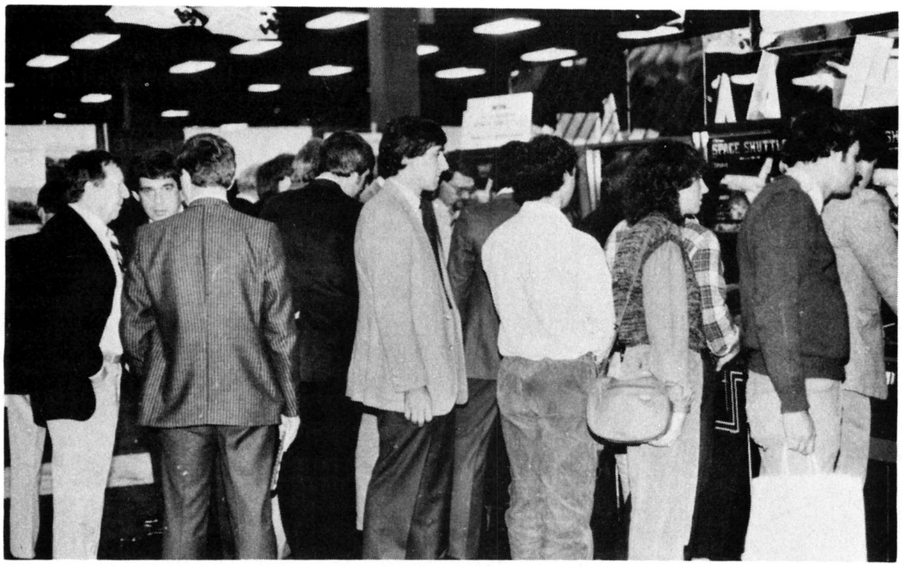
When you purchase your Thayer's Quest conversion kit, you're purchasing all the hardware you'll ever need to install future RDI products in your arcade. You'll be ready to place Thayer's Quest — The Sequel, The Spirit of the Whittier Mansion (RDI'S first live action adventure), and Orpheus (all currently in production) quickly and economically in your facility.

Ask your distributor today about the Thayer's Quest conversion kit.

The only secret now is how to win the game. . . its a secret players are willing to pay a lot to find out!

RDI
Video Systems
2261 Cosmos Court, Carlsbad, CA 92008 (619) 438-1818

this form of entertainment was interesting. First, the piece, by its size and cost, lends itself to being strictly an arcade piece. Arcade locations have diminished considerably in the last year. Steve Bodenstein of Game Exchange noted that his *Hot Seat* is not that expensive, and he feels there will be considerable market for the piece.



Crowds like this were constant as operators and distributors waited to play Williams' Space Shuttle.

Since this technology is a system, the games available will have a big affect on its success.

Digital Controls began its entrance into the dedicated video market with *Lode Runner*. The company also showed *Cowboy Casino, Little Casino, Pinbo* (a countercade conversion), and *Tactician*.

Roth Novelty presented a pleasant diversion to video with *Diga Mart*. Similar to the old claw machine, one to four players can maneuver the claw to win various prizes.

Cardinal Amusement Products showed several extremely inexpensive kits to convert *Pac-Man* games. These were *Beastie Feastie* in which the player helps Toby in his never ending search for snacks; and *Drakton*, in which the player guides the Drakton fighter craft fighting intruders throughout 50 sectors of the galaxy.

Cinematronics showed several games including *Express Delivery* (an express courier is maneuvered around obstacles to reach his destination); *Freeze* (crashing on an uncharted planet, the player must capture a mondo crystal); *Scion* (999 difficulty levels as players travel through a latticed matrix); and *Info-Mania/Reflex* (two games in one in countertop or upright).

Universal presented, in addition to *Do! Run Run, Top Gear, Super Don Quix-Ote,* and *Kick Rider*.

Two new video jukeboxes were on display from Nelson/Aved Technologies and a London company called Weaver Enterprises. The Audix entertainment center from Nelson/Aved features laser disc technology incorporating three laser discs with about 15 selections on each disc.

The VJ video jukebox from Weaver in cooperation with Thorn/EMI uses laser disc technology but with a variation. The disc is enclosed in a protective case. The monitor shows a high quality picture and videos are readily available. •

Pay Telephones Attract Operators & Worries

Manufacturers and distributors of private pay phones which exhibited their product stirred excitement among operators at the AMOA Show. With more and more states following Minnesota's lead and allowing the installation of private pay phones, operators were investigating the profit potential of this new coin-op option. As one upstate New York operator put it, "I've looked at all the games at the show, and I honestly believe telephones are the way to go."

He pointed out that in many of his locations—like grocery stores and candy stores—a pay telephone may act like a jukebox or pool table in a bar location, creating a steady, though unsensational, earning record that will create a base for operators.

Presently, however, private pay telephone manufacturers outnumber the states that have approved private pay phones, and this has created a furiously competitive buyer's market. So competitive, in fact, that several telephone manufacturers are complaining that scam companies are entering the market. The memory of the blue suede shoes boys selling video games is still vivid, but operators can be aware of it ahead of time in this new market.

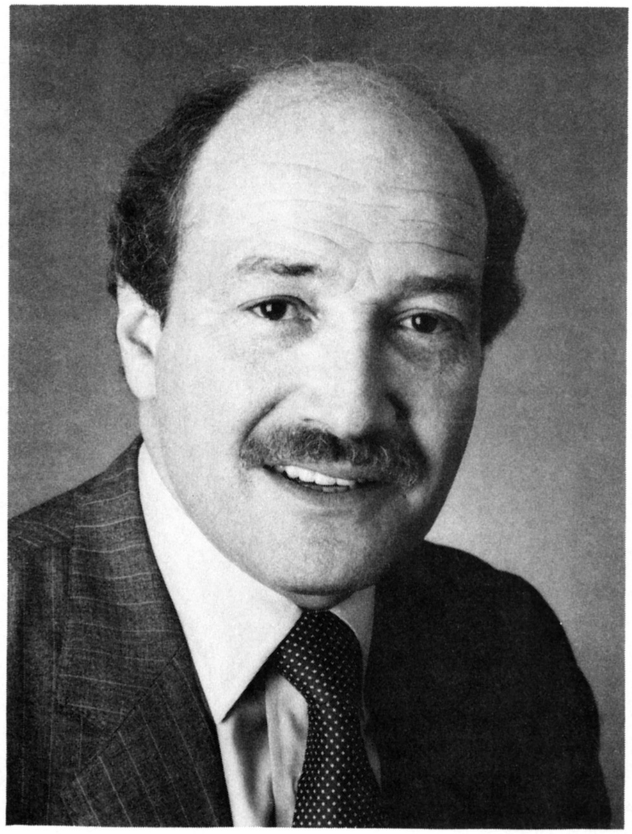
Operators should be aware of the regulations and requirements in his own state before entering this potentially lucretive market.

Operators should also investigate any company he wishes to purchase phones from because prices can vary by hundreds of dollars depending on features offered.

Companies exhibiting their equipment included: Phoneco of Galesville, Wisconsin; Dyna Communications of West Paterson, New Jersey; Cointel Communictions of Calabasas, California; Tonk-A-Phone of Spring Park, Minnesota; SMC of St. Petersburg, Florida; and Empire Liberty Telephone Co. of Spring Park, Minnesota.

Play Meter will be devoting a future issue to this subject, updating operators on laws in different states, a comprehensive list of phone companies and the outstanding features of their phones, and other pertinent information on the subject of private pay telephones and the operator. •

INTERVIEW



Arnold Kaminkow

Whatever can and will be said about the president of Centuri, Arnold Kaminkow, you certainly can't accuse him of not being able to keep a secret. In an industry notorious for its grapevine—leaked vital secrets have been timed at becoming common knowledge within 13.73 minutes, far surpassing even Play Meter's *ability to inform twice monthly—yet, Kaminkow somehow kept the lid on one juicy industry secret until he was good and ready to spring it—at exactly 12:01 p.m., October 25. That's when the doors opened at the recent AMOA Show. He said he did that for impact. Well, it sure enough had impact. Everyone hit the floor on the first day of the show, fully intending to see if such companies as Williams Electronics and Atari and Mylstar would have viable product to see another day. But within minutes the big news was what Kaminkow and Centuri had gone and done. At 12:01 p.m., they announced they had eliminated their distributor network and were hereon selling direct to the operator.*

The controversial marketing ploy called into question the role of the distributor today. So, in a special two-part investigation, we asked distributors what they thought about the Centuri move (Their answers, if you can't guess what they might be, are found elsewhere in this issue). And here we asked Kaminkow for Centuri's reasons for this drastic step.

Kaminkow tells us the distributor does not fit into the video game picture anymore. That's more than just a sweeping generalization; that's quite a turn for a man who's spent most of his many years in the coin-op amusement industry as a distributor! He started in 1962 as a controller for a distributing outlet called General Vending in Baltimore. He ended up as vice president of marketing and sales for the company before joining Robert Jones International in 1973. He served as president of the company which later became Bally Northeast. Then in 1982 he joined Centuri as president and oversaw the company's successful introduction of strong licensed product during a period when other, larger companies floundered around him. One side note, Arnold's son, Joe, which is now with Williams Electronics, was interviewed a couple of years ago as a Coinman of the Month.

PLAY METER: At the AMOA Show in Chicago, Centuri surprised everyone by announcing that it was, in effect, abolishing its distributor network and, from *hereon, marketing its games directly to the operator. The move was certainly widely discussed at the show.*

KAMINKOW: If you go back to the editorial in the December 1 issue of *Play Meter*, you talked about the need for innovation, creativity, imagination, excitement, dedication, and commitment. And I think that's just what we did.

PLAY METER: *No question you created quite a stir at the show. Everyone went to the AMOA, fully expecting the big news to be whether Williams Electronics would reopen for business or whether some other major manufacturer would finally close its doors for good. Then, lo and behold, Arnold Kaminkow drops this bombshell. But what drove Centuri to embark on this policy of direct sales of video games to operators?*

KAMINKOW: First off, you've got to remember I've been a distributor for most of my life in the coin machine business. I've spent most of my adult life in this business. I still see distribution as a very important avenue for selling product in the United States. So don't get me wrong. I'm not anti-distributor. The distributor has his place in the marketplace, certainly where it comes to vending, music, pinballs, pool, shuffle alleys, and novelty equipment.

What I'm saying is, at this time in the video game segment, the distributor does not play a role. At this particular time, it lends itself to direct sales to the operator.

PLAY METER: *Why is that?*

KAMINKOW: Because the video game industry, at the present time, is nothing more than the equivalent of the record business. Basically, what you're selling is software (in the form of boards) for record players that are already out there (in the form of dedicated cabinets). We feel, in order to maintain the video segment of the industry, we have to keep the players' interest active. That's the excitement we were talking about. And that means exposing the player to constant new product.

Now, the most important thing we can do as a manufacturer is to offer product to the operator that he can afford to buy. That way the player can continually see new product.

PLAY METER: *But operator direct? Manufacturers have long maintained that to sell high-ticket items like video games, you need to work through a distributor network. What makes you think you can buck that historical trend?*

KAMINKOW: Listen, during the astronomical video game boom, there were a lot of great games being sold, but there were a lot of illegal copies of those games being sold, too. Sometimes anywhere between 15 to 20 percent of the games that were sold were illegal copies of *Donkey Kong* and *Pac-Man*! Now, did the distributors sell those copies? No. It was somebody else who was working out of his garage. He was selling those illegal copies direct to the operator for cash. And either the operator or somebody else took the copy boards and made the conversions. And it follows that somebody must have been providing the service for those boards, or else the market wouldn't have grown to that size.

So what's my point? It's just this. Direct marketing has been done to the operator all along. True, it was being done in a gray area with illegal copies, but you can't deny it was and can be done in that manner, completely bypassing the distributor. Just because the games that were originally sold in that manner were illegal copies, that doesn't mean there's something wrong with the method of the sale—direct to the operator. Yet, to hear some distributors talk, you'd think it can't be done, but it was done. It was illegally done, but it was being done. There were games being sold direct to the operator at prices lower than original games, and they were sold as conversions. Guys were building copies of *Pac-Man* and *Donkey Kong*, and operators were paying cash for those boards, and service was obviously being provided on them.

You see, there are literally hundreds of guys providing service to operators outside the distributor organization. So that business is already in place. There are already guys doing conversions. Operators go to distributors and buy kits and then take them to some other guy who runs a conversion center and a service center. That business is there. The people in this industry just don't want to recognize that it's there, but it's been going on now for three years.

PLAY METER: *Still, you must anticipate a lower sales volume without a distributor network?*

KAMINKOW: No, I think I'm going to sell more without the distributor network. Let me tell you, despite the fact the AMOA Show was lightly attended by operators, the response to Centuri's "Direct Connection" program went well beyond our expectations. Your magazine reported, even before the show was held, that a lot of operators weren't going to attend because they couldn't afford to go, and we expected that. But, still, those who did attend bought from us at the show. The figures we're looking for in terms of annual sales have been planned on a very conservative basis, and I still see us selling more this way. Let's put it this way. I can be in the position to handle two or three games at the same time. I'm a library, a library of software for the operator.

> ***Direct marketing has been done to the operator all along. True, it was being done in a gray area with illegal copies, but you can't deny it was and can be done in that manner, bypassing the distributor.***

NOMAC LTD.

Your supreme source for a complete line of dart accessories and supplies including:

PUB TIME Darts •

Electronic Dart Game

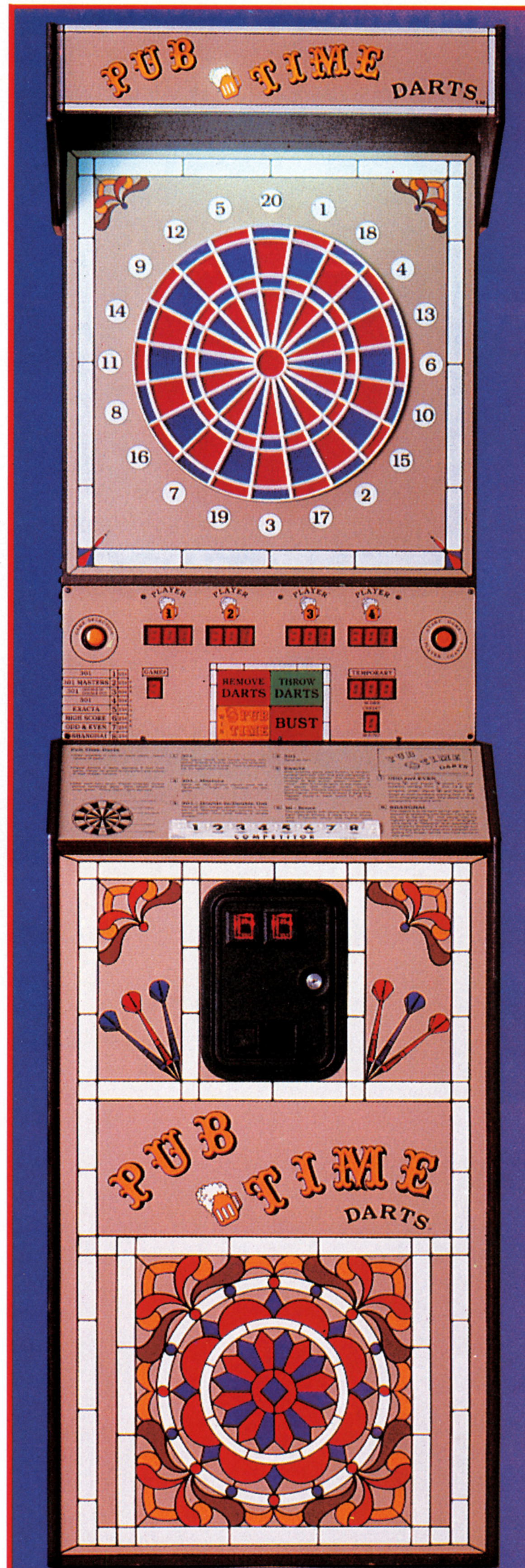
PARTY DARTS •

Home Entertainment

Safe Plastic Tips

• **Pro Dart Line**

Brass and aluminum custom darts in an extensive variety of styles and colors.



Call us about our operator support program.

Manufactured by NOMAC LTD.

211 Berg • Building 6 • Algonquin, IL 60102

Outside IL Call Toll Free **1-800-323-0449**

Illinois Call Collect **1-312-658-6166**

merit industries, inc.

$200 FACTORY

Dear Operator,

In just 2 years, Merit's PIT BOSS has established itself as the best earning game of its kind in the Coin-Op industry. NOTHING, but NOTHING matches the superior graphics, humorous effects and, most important, the consistent earning power of the PIT BOSS.

What's more, the PIT BOSS is LEGAL all across the country, and has profitably filled the void left by risky "gray area" card games. It's specifically designed to appeal to the strong-spending adult market while avoiding any legal problems associated with gambling.

Even Play Meter Magazine recognizes the popularity—and profit power—of Merit's PIT BOSS, the only video card game listed in the publication's recent State of the Industry Report.

Now, for a limited time, we're offering a *$200 Factory Rebate* on the PIT BOSS, Jr., Merit's great little money-maker, just to prove it will produce for you, too! Give PIT BOSS a chance to *earn* your respect, and we'll pay you $200. It's that simple.

For the authorized Merit Distributor nearest you, phone us—toll free—at

1-800-523-2760

6 GREAT GAMES!

- JOKER POKER
- THE DICE GAME
- ACEY DEUCEY
- BLACKJACK
- FOTO FINISH
- SUPER SLOTS

SLEEK CABINET

2 PLAYER COCKTAIL TABLE

COUNTERTOP-13″ MONITOR

$200 Factory Rebate

COUNTERTOP-9″ MONITOR

PLUS—VIDEO BILLBOARD™

15 screens of full color advertising that you custom program. Add advertising revenue to your collections!

P.O. Box 5004 ■ 2525 State Road ■ Bensalem, PA 19020 ■ (215) 639-4700 ■ TELEX: 831897

REBATE SPECIAL!

PIT BOSS® IS THE ANSWER . . .

". . . this game would be legal for sale and distribution within the State of California."
Sgt. Alan W. Chidester
Special Investigations Division
Sacramento County, CA

". . . Chicago has approved the coin-operated amusement device known as "PIT BOSS""
Ira J. Edelson
Acting Director of Revenue
City of Chicago

". . . I am satisfied that this video game is an entertainment device and not a gambling device."
John F. Vassallo, Jr., Director
Department of Law and Public Safety
State of New Jersey

[APPROVED!]

LEGAL EVERYWHERE

AND MORE! ALL STATE APPROVALS ON FILE…

PLAY METER

1984 State of the Industry Report TELLS IT ALL . . .

1984
Market Shares
By Manufacturer
and Type of Machine

New Dedicated Video Games
(Estimated Total Units Sold: 168,508)

Manufacturer	1984	1983	1982
Bally Midway	21%	25%	33%
Atari	19%	19%	23%
Nintendo	10%	9%	10%
Mylstar	7%	6%	—
Centuri	7%	4%	2%
Konami/Centuri	7%	—	—
Cinematronics	6%	—	2%
Williams	5%	12%	11%
Taito America	4%	5%	6%
Merit	3%	—	—
Coin-It	2%	—	—
Stern	1%	3%	3%
Data East	1%	1%	—
Konami/Interlogic . .	1%	—	—
Universal	1%	2%	—
Exidy	1%	—	1%
Others	4%	7%	6%

The PIT BOSS Line earned Merit Industries a place among the industry's TOP TEN amusement game manufacturers! Merit is the ONLY video card game supplier to gain that distinction . . .

#1 IN EARNING POWER!

PROVEN STAYING POWER

ADDED ADVERTISING INCOME

TOPS IN "R.O.I."

QUALITY . . .
IN A CLASS BY ITSELF!

merit industries, inc.

merit makes the difference . . .
If PIT BOSS® isn't part of your route, you're probably missing out on the hottest, most consistent earnings on the street today.
Call us, toll free. 1-800-523-2760

INTRODUCING YOUR NEXT TIME CONSUMING HABIT.

Tactician is a new adult countertop game with "back to basics" spirit, easy to understand and play, but so challenging players can't stop playing...**Tactician** draws players with its neat looks and blinking lights, then holds them as they call on all the strategy they can muster on their way to earning the title of **Tactician**...

Tactician is habit forming for the operator, too. Its low, low cost and high returns mean the kind of quick profits you can get accustomed to.

Features

- Dimensions: 11″ wide, 13″ long, 10″ high
- Shipping Weight: 22 pounds
- Cash box holds $250.00
- Security U-bolt locks game in place
- Attract mode with lights, sound, sample game
- Extended play for clearing all numbers, increased speed in each added round
- Three rounds per credit
- Accepts Little Casino II advertising keyboard: 4 messages, 64 characters each
- Battery back-up for messages and high score
- Icebreaker for countertop locations that have resisted video card games

Tactician...it gets people back into their old coin-op habits...
For more information call your distributor or dial direct 1-800-441-3332.

DIGITAL CONTROLS
Creator of the world's top selling countertop games.

5555 Oakbrook Parkway, Suite 200
Norcross, Georgia 30093

PLAY METER: *Your insistence that you will sell more product direct to the operator implies you don't think your distributors were doing the job they could've been doing on Centuri product.*

KAMINKOW: I believe the distributor did his job for us.

PLAY METER: *So you're saying that wasn't the reason for your going the direct route?*

KAMINKOW: The reason for the "Direct Connection" goes back to the fact that the video game business is different today. The pricing structure is such that it makes it very difficult for many operators to make the investment to buy new product. We simply feel at this time that the best approach is the direct approach. That allows the operator a substantial cost savings in buying product for his route, and that, in turn, allows the operator to get a faster return on his investment.

PLAY METER: *Is this direction irrevocable? Or do you see Centuri reverting back to a distributor network at a later date?*

KAMINKOW: As far as the video game business is concerned, we're committed to this particular policy. We did not go to the AMOA Show with a two-tiered pricing policy. And many people said we should have. They said we still should have had one price for the distributor and one price for the operator. But my feeling is either you're pregnant or you're not pregnant. And our feeling was it would not be an effective program if we sort of sat on the fence. Our decision was to go with the operator. After all, the operator is the guy who pays the bills. He's the one who always pay the bills.

PLAY METER: *So you think by going direct to the operator, you're going to be able to sell games at a lower price and, thus, garner a larger share of the video game market?*

KAMINKOW: Because of the ease of doing a conversion, most operators can do it themselves. And so we think, if Centuri sells direct to the operator, yes, we're offering a distinctive price advantage for the operator. The problem is there are so many games available in the marketplace, yet many new games never see a coin drop through the coin chute simply because the operator can't afford to make the investment. And the manufacturer, at his end, has to make huge commitments to produce product; so what we have is a cse where too many products are chasing too few dollars.

Our edge, therefore, is in the price. We're offering dedicated games at distributors' prices and sometimes, hopefully, below distributors' prices—to the operator. We're offering prices, for example, with *Mikie*, which is our current new game, at $1695 to the operator. And that's substantially less than what the operator would have to pay a distributor for a dedicated game.

PLAY METER: *But now you're talking about dedicated games. Just a minute ago, you were justifying this direct approach by saying it was a conversion kit market.*

KAMINKOW: Some operators are still in the market for dedicated games. So we're offering two programs to operators. One, I've got the games available for them in the dedicated format; and, two, if they want the game as a conversion kit, I've got the same product as a conversion. That way the operator has his choice. We're selling, basically, software in the form of kits for guys who want to do conversions; but if a guy wants to buy a dedicated game, we'll provide him a dedicated game, six to eight hundred dollars cheaper than he'll have to pay the distributor.

See, there are still some guys who want to buy dedicated games. As a matter of fact, we've sold some dedicated games direct since the show, and the reason is this: Assume a guy can save $600 by buying a dedicated game from us, and that's on the conservative side. How many weeks' collections does he have to make to get back that $600 his end? If the average collection is $120 a week, that means he gets $60 his end. That also means it's going to take him ten weeks just to get back that $600, and you know the most income he's going to make on any game is going to be in the first ten weeks. So we're saying, "Hey, Mr. Operator, you're saving your first ten weeks' collections if you buy from us!" We're reducing his investment and saving him $600 off his new dedicated game price.

It reduces his risk in the product, and the same thing holds true in a conversion. If he wants to buy a conversion, we're offering conversion kits of our games at distributor prices, in the neighborhood of $700. And that's anywhere between $150 to $200 cheaper than he ends up paying if he buys from a distributor. To the operator, that's almost a forty percent savings!

PLAY METER: *Nevertheless, the general industry feeling is that when a manufacturer has a hit game, like you had last year with* Track & Field, *the distributors will hungrily beat a path to the manufacturer's door; and the manufacturer, seeing the advantages of going through the distributor network, will go back to the regular distribution channels—even if he was selling direct before. We've seen just this thing happen before—a manufacturer drop his distribution channels and begin marketing direct, then later, when he had a strong game, revert back to regular distribution channels. Is this what we're going to see with Centuri?*

KAMINKOW: My policy is, and I'll state it unequivocally, we made a commitment, and this is the way we're going to go. Put it this way. The game we introduced at the show is called *Mikie*. It's a top earning game in Japan, and we've tested it ourselves for quite some time. And I'm telling you it is top product that distributors would want to market for us. We could've easily taken the game through distribution, but we felt we might as well go direct. We have top product. We know it. In fact, we have been offering only top product. You've got to understand, I'm committed to this program. It's not something I'm doing this month and then turning around and changing next month.

PLAY METER: *Then why now? Why didn't Centuri do this, say, a year ago, if this is such a good marketing strategy?*

KAMINKOW: In fact, we had planned this thing quite some time ago. We felt that the best possible time to start this program would be at the AMOA Show which, historically, is the kickoff of the fall buying season. We could've done it during the summer. We could've done it during the spring, but we felt the best time to do it would be at the AMOA.

PLAY METER: *Some of your former distributors suggest that distributor response to your immediate past product,* Hyper Sports *was a marginally better game than* Track & Field, *it was following too close behind another game of the same type and, therefore, met with too great a market resistance. And, because Centuri didn't like the distributors' sales performance on the game, Centuri decided to sell direct. I'd like to get your response to that.*

KAMINKOW: The answer is we introduced *Hyper Sports* June 1, 1984. In fact, we couldn't have introduced any product at a worse time because no one during the summer sold any product of any consequence. Regardless of the games that were introduced this past summer, the market conditions were such that, no matter how good the game, no game was going to have any impact on the marketplace. And *Hyper Sports* was a very good game. If you look at the earning charts, it's up there with *Track & Field.* So for distributors to talk like that, to say that's the reason we pulled the line from them, that's sour grapes.

In fact, we had decided prior to that on the direct sales approach to the operator starting at the AMOA. We had talked about direct sales to the operator as far back as February. And, in the beginning of July, decided irrevocably that we were going ahead in that direction. We went full forward with the "Direct Connection" program in July. We worked July, August, September, and into October putting the program together. But we had initial concepts in how we wanted to put the program together and what we wanted to do. But during the summer and into the fall, we honed the program.

If you look at our book, you'll see that this whole program is not some afterthought. We did an extensive mailing to operators, offering our "Direct Connection" program. And for filling out a card, we sent operators back a binder called the "Direct Connection" starter kit. And, let me tell you, we sent out a lot of starter kits, free of charge, giving the full details on how to buy directly from Centuri—how we ship, methods of payment, how we handle service, detailing our warranty, everything. I think anyone who looks at our starter kit will see that this was not a haphazard venture.

We are a recognized major factory that has taken an approach that's no different than what we did with the distributor, except that we did it directly to the

Assume a guy can save $600 by buying a dedicated game from us, and that's on the conservative side. How many weeks' collections does he have to make to get back that $600 his end?

operators. This wasn't something that was hashed out overnight. And anyone who sees the literature can tell that. A lot of thought and planning went into this particular way of marketing. In fact, I don't think anybody has ever spent the money we spent going through the extensive planning and research that we went through in order to put this program together and offer it to the marketplace. If the operator just looks at the Centuri advertisements in your magazine, for instance, he'll see just how committed we are to this program. We've installed and implemented a full program geared directly for the operator. We have 1-800 numbers for sales and 1-800 numbers for service. And, like I said, the initial response has been well beyond our expectations.

PLAY METER: *If you really believe this approach is the most viable way to sell video games today, tell me, do you expect other manufacturers to follow your lead?*

KAMINKOW: I believe we probably jumped the gun on several other manufacturers who had marketing plans to do similar things. I think it was in the discussion stage for many manufacturers as far as the possibility of going direct. It was one of the methods of marketing, selling product, that certain other companies are thinking about, but we took the initiative and did it at the show.

Let me point out that everywhere else in the United States, direct sales of video games are the major way of selling product. Whether it's Centuri or somebody else that does it first, somebody was going to do it. It's been successful everywhere else, and every place it's gone, the video game business has come back as a result.

I think you'll find that after other companies see the success of Centuri, they'll be following us. Absolutely. In fact, I think other companies, because of setting up their own distribution network, have already, in effect, done that here in the United States. Bally, for instance, handles its own distribution. The only difference is they've got all those distribution offices to support. So, in fact, we're doing what Bally is doing, only they're doing it with an extra charge to the operator to support those distribution outlets. They're manufacturing games through Midway and selling them through their marketing arm which is Bally Distributing. So, really, they're selling direct to the operator. They're providing the financing. They're providing the distribution offices, and the showrooms, and the personnel. But all that costs money and raises the price of their games.

PLAY METER: *So you see the operator-direct method of Centuri as superior to the Bally distribution network?*

KAMINKOW: Big is not better. Doing the right thing by the operator is better. The purpose, our goal, is simply to provide product to the operator at a price he can afford so he can maintain his route. But he's got to be able to afford the product. If we can't do that, then the operator won't be in a position to buy, and the player won't have viable new product. And that means the player's going to get bored with the product on the marketplace, and erosion of player interest is going to continue at a faster pace.

PLAY METER: *Then your approach is very much a threat to the distributors; so you must expect the* *distributors to be very negative about what you've done?*

KAMINKOW: Of course, they're negative. But you've got to keep in mind, I think this applies only towards video games. I'm not talking about anything else. There are areas where the distributors are needed.

PLAY METER: *Then do you see the distributors doing backup work for you?*

KAMINKOW: Nope. He's not really needed for back-up service work. How many operators buy games from a distributor and never have a problem with them? Basically, the video game board is pretty fail-safe. Very seldom do they have problems as far as service. They are reliable. They're checked out three or four times before they're ever shipped out. So most video game service can be corrected over the telephone. I'd say 90 percent. And if an operator does have a problem now, what does the distributor do? He has the operator pack up the board and ship it back to him. And the distributor, in turn, ships him another board. The operator doesn't take it in and wait there for it. So when you ask are we going to rely on distributors for our backup service work, all I can say is how much service work does the distributor do now? Not much.

PLAY METER: *Will you be taking trade-ins?*

KAMINKOW: Nope. What trade-ins are taken in now by the distributor? Come on now. They can't do anything with trade-ins either. And the trade-ins they do take in, what do you think they do with them? They rehab the cabinet and do a conversion. They take a kit and make a new video game out of it.

PLAY METER: *Still, by angering the distributors in this manner, you have created for yourself an extraordinary market condition which you must be aware of, that is, that distributors, who see your potential buyers on a regular basis, are now very negative about Centuri and Centuri product. You must see this as a marketing problem you now have to contend with.*

KAMINKOW: I would say that many distributors are going to do whatever they can to try and project Centuri into anything but a positive light. But if the operator really looks at his buying of product over the past 2½ to 3 years, he'll find that a good deal of the product he purchased was Centuri product. We are certainly one of the major companies in this industry, and everyone must know that.

Despite any backlash, we feel the step we took was a very bold, very positive step forward. And no matter what the distributors may now say about Centuri and its product, the bottom line is the distributor made money with Centuri product, and the operator made money with Centuri product. And we're going to continue to bring top quality product to the marketplace in the same manner we did when we marketed through our distributor network, only now our marketing is going to be thrusted to the operator.

PLAY METER: *As I said, one thing your "Direct Connection" did right off the bat was create a whole list of angry distributors. That was true not only with your new marketing approach but also with the manner in which you did it. So my question to you is this—why weren't your distributors informed before 12:01 p.m., October 25, the start of the AMOA Show, about what you were doing?*

KAMINKOW: We felt it was best that we introduce this program directly to the operators at the show. We felt with our marketing program, the best and most positive way to get our program across was the shock effect. We felt to be really effective at the AMOA, to have a real impact on what we were doing, the secrecy of the program had to be maintained for the show, and the announcement would be made at the show, at the time the operators came onto the floor.

> ***Big is not better. Doing the right thing by the operator is better. The purpose, our goal, is simply to provide product to the operator at a price he can afford so he can maintain his route.***

PLAY METER: *This distributor negativity toward Centuri remains one obstacle your company is going to have to overcome in upcoming months. But what other obstacles do you foresee as a result of your "Direct Connection"?*

KAMINKOW: Honestly, personally, I don't see any obstacles. I really don't. I think it's all positive, and it's all thrusted toward the operator. We've got to bring sensibility back to the marketplace and to the pricing structure.

PLAY METER: *Distributors say they sell product for manufacturers by being there personally when the operator is ready to buy. They say they can get operators excited about he games and this creates additional sales for the manufacturers they represent. You're not going to have that personal touch. Isn't that an obstacle to your projection of increased sales?*

KAMINKOW: We plan an active mailing campaign. We plan to call people on the telephone. We plan to show at all the various shows around the United States. We'll have a booth at these shows and be in a position to go direct one-on-one with the operator.

PLAY METER: *But, as you said, it doesn't appear operators are attending shows because of the cost of attending. So isn't it going to be harder to get to those operators one-on-one?*

KAMINKOW: Let's put it this way. You know *Play Meter* is the operators' magazine. We've always advertised in your magazine, continued to advertise in your magazine through certain situations, but again, there's a reason for that. Who reads your magazine? The operators. And I think that's the key. I think if you present a professional approach to the operator, show how he can make a $700 investment to buy a kit from Centuri, a brand new game, he's going to ask himself, "What do I have to lose?" It's worth a try, isn't it? And, as far as we're concerned—one try leads to two tries, then three tries, then the fourth try, and all of them make money, and the operators are going to tell their friends who are operators. It's like anything else.

PLAY METER: *But all these things—attending all the trade shows, extensive mailings, increased advertising campaigns—all these things cost money, too.*

KAMINKOW: Yes, and we're spending the money.

PLAY METER: *But doesn't that cut into the cost savings you're supposed to be passing on to the operator?*

KAMINKOW: No, because in volume, the cost reduces. We would be spending money anyway for advertisements in the magazines and various promotions. All we're doing is taking our marketing dollars and putting them to work in a different way. We're just taking them from column A and putting them to work in column B. When you're talking about Centuri, you're talking about people who have quite a lot of experience in the coin machine industry. We have an accepted name in the marketplace. We are not a tiny little manufacturer. We are an oldtime recognized manufacturer. I personally know games. I was one of the first people to bring in games from Japan. I saw the first *Space Invaders*. I saw the first *Pac-Man* before anybody in the United States saw them. When I was in Bally Distributing at the time, we helped get Midway the contacts in Japan with Taito and Namco. I was one of the first Americans going into Japan in 1973. I was doing business with many of the major Japanese companies that are doing business in the United States today. Like I said, I brought some of the original Namco product into the United States, some of the original Nintendo equipment into the United States. I was there when we were selling video games into Japan, rather than us buying them from them. So we have the experience, the expertise. We know what we're doing.

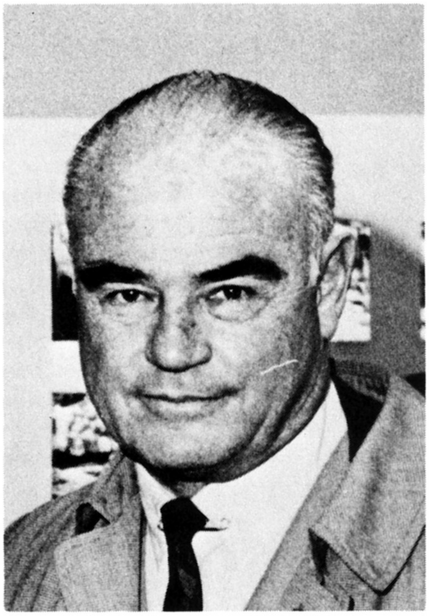
PLAY METER: *The distributor, from his bad experiences during the video game collapse, at least knows who to sell to and who not to sell to. As far as financing, how are you going to know who is bad credit and whose credit is good?*

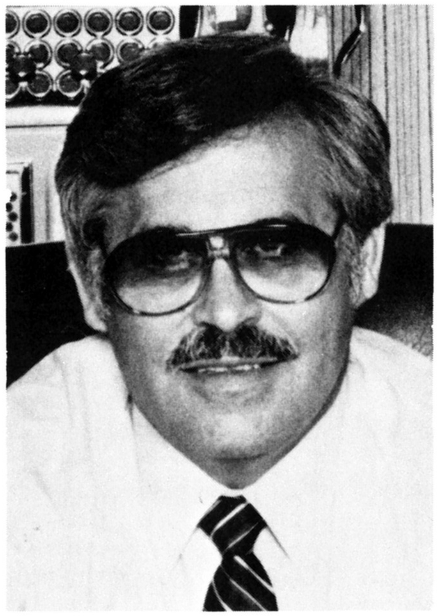
KAMINKOW: Our program is a cash-sale program. We do not provide financing. What we do make available is if people want to charge, they can charge on their American Express or MasterCard or Visa accounts. We'll also take C.O.D. orders. We're basically in a cash business.

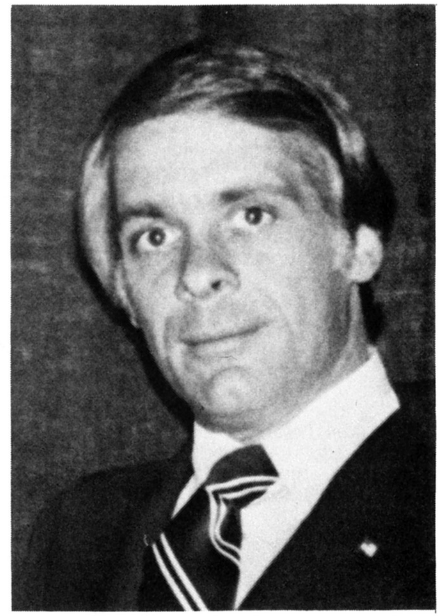
PLAY METER: *But cash up front? If distributors are telling us they can't sell the operators even on credit, how are you going to be able to sell them demanding cash up front?*

KAMINKOW: Many operators do not finance. They'll take the 30-day charge, and they pay in 30 to 45 days. What we're saying is that instead of waiting 30 to 45 days to pay your distributor, you can save money by

continued on page 90


Louis Boasberg


Jerry Monday


Pete Entringer

WILL IT WORK?

Distributors' views on Centuri's "Direct Connection"

At last year's AMOA Show, Centuri was the center of attention with *Track & Field* sweeping the show while laser games, the expected sensations, sputtered on the show floor.

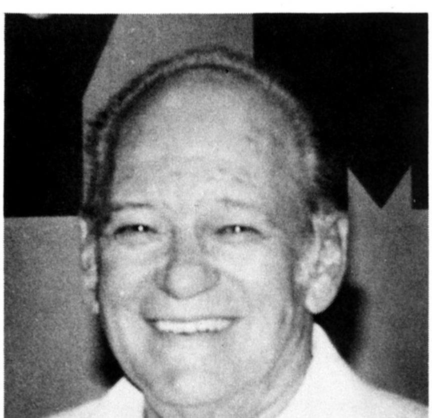
This year Centuri was, once again, one of the most talked about companies but for a very different reason. The Florida-based company announced on the show floor that it was bypassing its distributor network and was now selling direct to operators. Centuri called this new marketing strategy "Direct Connection."

Distributors had other words for it.

Since distributors seem to be the ones most drastically affected by this move, we talked with several of them to get their view on Centuri's approach.

Jim Frye
Brady Distributing
Charlotte, NC

I had several reactions when I heard the news. First, I felt they should have had the courtesy to tell the distributors ahead of time. Second, I am concerned about the backup Centuri will be able to


Marty Cerin


Jim Frye


Dave Gilfor

supply.

I feel that in this volatile time, with the limited demand for equipment, Centuri feels it can cut out the distributor and have less of a markup so operators will be inclined to buy more product.

However, operators are only buying to update locations. They are not acquiring new locations. The operator only has X amount of dollars to spend, and they are not taking many risks.

I can't see a positive side. If Centuri is selling all over the country, I wonder how they will provide the service that a distributor network can provide. Distributors probably won't be too anxious to provide service for games we're not selling because I doubt if any distributor makes any profit on service.

In our case we immediately exchange a board if it's not working. There is minimum down time this way. We also offer warranties. We offer financing to operators who are not accustomed to paying up front.

And another thing is the risk distributors take on equipment. We do market testing so we can offer fair advice to the operators.

Pete Entringer
Audio Visual Amusements
St. Louis, MO

I don't really think they are going to sell direct, I think they are trying to liquidate the company. They were probably terribly disappointed with *Hyper-Sports*, but it wasn't distributors' fault they didn't put it out originally as a kit. It wasn't that different from *Track & Field*.

As far as saving the operators money, I have seen what they have for sale, and it looks like it's higher than they sell it to distributors.

I think they didn't tell the distributors ahead of time because they were making a strong effort to collect what distributors owed them.

The last thing I have to say is that I still love Ivan (Rothstein).

Dave Gilfor
Active Amusements
Philadelphia, PA

This was the best kept secret in the industry. I'm sorry to see it happen, but it doesn't worry me a great deal, though it will hurt more than help. Operators need distributors for guidance and support, service, and financing.

Operators are not looking only to save a few dollars.

I have talked to operators who are not that enthused about the "Direct Connection." How can a manufacturer in Florida advise an operator in Philadelphia?

When operators are looking to buy only good product, many times he goes by his distributor's recommendation. How will he get an honest opinion from the manufacturer of the game?

Advertising and mass mailings will not be enough to excite an operator about a product.

Louis Boasberg
New Orleans Novelty
New Orleans, LA

It won't work any more than renting equipment did years ago. However, I understand that self-preservation is the first law and Centuri had every right in the world to do whatever it felt it had to do to survive.

They aren't doing anything different than the manufacturers who opened their own distributing offices.

I could say that I was going to give my locations 70 percent of the collections; and, even though my competitors would cry bloody murder, that would be my right. Of course, I can't survive on that, but I have the privilege to try it.

When manufacturers first ship to a distributor they know they will get paid. The distributor also keeps the integrity of his territory, and fights adverse laws in his area.

What Centuri needs to realize is that if they have good product, it'll sell; in fact, the world will beat a path to your door.

Marty Cerin
Mountain Coin Distributors
Denver, CO

We all hate to see it, but I understand that if a company is not making its bottom line the ethical way, it must look for alternatives.

But I don't think it will last. A factory won't be able to establish the personal relationship that exists between an operator and distributor. Most operators can get credit from a distributor since the distributor is likely to know the operators' situation and whether he is stable financially.

I have my doubts about how Centuri will provide service and test results. Operators tend to be cynical about test results and distributors usually conduct their own testing, and that is more realistic.

I don't know how long it will take them to find out it won't work, but there are too many problems to overcome for it to work.

Jerry Monday
Circle International
Los Angeles, CA

It was a total surprise, and I feel it is the end of Centuri. The downfall was not putting *Hyper-Sports* out as a kit. They can't force distributors to take product, and I don't see how they will force operators to take that some product distributors didn't think they could sell.

Centuri may have felt they had to do something since they are ending a long relationship with Konami and won't be getting the good product from them anymore.

When an operator has a problem with a board, his distributor can have it exchanged in hours. Sending it to Florida will take days, maybe weeks of downtime.

Not many operators buy with credit cards either; so that will be a problem.

There is no positive side and they are cutting their own throats. It's been tried before and didn't work then either.

Philip Roth
Roth Novelty
Wilkes-Barre, PA

I am sure they are doing what they think is best for them, but the industry has developed in the operator/distributor/manufacturer chain of command, and I think it will stay that way. I operate also; so I'm not just looking at it from a distributor's point of view. The manufacturer doesn't supply anything except the machine itself, and all factories think their game is the best. So what kind of advice will they be able to supply operators?

Distributors are the elasticity between the operators and manufacturers and act as guinea pigs to test equipment. So they provide a necessary function.

Of course, this plan will work if they have very good games. But then, if they had very good games, they could sell them through distributors.

Dick Sarkisian
Mondial Corp.
New York, NY

I think it's the wrong move for them to make and probably the final gurgle before their demise.

The distributor is a vital link between the operator and manufacturer. He provides service, financing, and warranties. What I wonder is where the operator is going to go for service on a game he bought with his MasterCard.

I heard operators at the show telling Centuri that they would buy their product but they still wanted to go through their distributors. •

The Rise and Fall of Video

By Roger C. Sharpe

Even if Benjamin Mandell of Sir Goony Golf of Charlotte, North Carolina, hadn't invited comments to his letter (*Play Meter*, October 1, pages 7-8), I still would've been compelled to respond. There's a lot of operator animosity directed toward manufacturers, and it's based on an industrywide misconception that manufacturers sold out the coin-op amusement industry for big money licensing contracts with giant toy companies and newcomers looking to cash in on the video craze.

But that's only half the story. And I think it's about time we face the full story. I think it's about time we examine why things happened the way they did and what has set the stage for what we can expect in the future.

In the past I've offered a number of feature articles that explored the many influences of the home market—including coverage of the twice-annual Consumer Electronics Show—but, maybe, now is the time to put it together, from start to finish, in order to distribute the blame where it belongs.

Titled "Home Videos' Damage," Mandell's letter notes the separation of Atari's coin-op division from its computer/home game operations and then goes on to state that, "I now believe, and have believed for a long period of time, that the home video game industry has done more harm to those in the coin-op industry than any other single thing."

On the surface, if you're a member of this coin-operated leisure time entertainment field, it's not too difficult to agree with the statement, especially in light of what has occurred the past two years in terms of business and maintaining profitability.

However, this blanket condemnation, although it might appear attractive as the cause for all the troubles, doesn't address many other factors which, truthfully, are at the heart of the problem.

Historical perspective

But, we must look back at recent coin-op history to understand how everything took shape. Not long ago, pinball was the center of attention. It was experiencing a rebirth that catapulted flipper games into the public's eye from about 1976 to late 1978. There were daily accounts of the growing rage in newspapers and magazines across the country, not to mention television. Even books were published on the subject (mine included).

In fact, things were going so well for pinball that Bally staged a nationwide "Supershooter" tournament, and it generated the type of media coverage that once was only dreamed about. Surely, pinball had reached its apex, and no one was complaining about the prosperity, or worrying about what the future might bring.

Instead, the newly embraced solid-state, electronic technology provided an ample test of just what could be done on a pinball playfield. Then the games tended to blur together. They all began to look and sound too much alike. As a result, the players started to drift away.

Fortunately, waiting in the wings, video games rose up to become a dominant force. The video games, at this time, were progressing, not stagnating like the pinballs, and offering players excitement. But the industry, never totally understanding the reasons behind the ebbs and flows of its business, speculated that disenchanted pinball players were moving over to video, and the conclusion was that flipper games had reached the point where they were no longer necessary. They were merely an antiquated link with the past, an investment that was only holding back progress and growth.

Video became the new darling as all other coin-op forms faded from the public spotlight. The fad was over, many claimed (a refrain that should be familiar to those who have been around during the past two years). In relative obscurity, video advanced with such landmarks as Cinematronics' dramatic vector graphic creation *Space Wars* in 1978 and Exidy's all-color screen gem *Star Fire* the same year. But the big winners which would lead the industry onward were Bally's *Space Invaders* in late 1978, via a license with Taito, and Atari's *Asteroids* in 1979.

Suddenly business was beginning to boom based on the strength of these and other equally impressive efforts. Video games had taken the next leap forward.

Unfortunately, this video game success tended to dramatize the relative stagnation of pinball development, adding to pinball's loss of customer base. Some of these players left coin-op entertainment behind; some remained to sample each succeeding flipper design, but many moved over to the new game in town—video.

Joining this last group was a massive outpouring of individuals who found comfort and enjoyment from standing in front of a TV monitor, manipulating simplistic joysticks and button controls. And this last group was a customer base that hadn't existed before. And so it was that the curious fueled the fires of unparalleled growth and expansion of coin-op games into markets that previously didn't seem possible to penetrate.

The home market

Meanwhile, another field began exploring what electronics could do to stimulate slumping interest in an enormous leisure time category—toys and games. Aside from board games and certain other product forms, the field hadn't been able to generate any appreciable excitement with the pre-teen audience of the late '70s and early '80s. If the new technology could capture the essence of the arcades in a format suitable for the home... If...

From dedicated systems that feature one or two games from a small unit that attached to a television, design expanded to allow for the cartridge-based system, such as Fairchild's, Bally's early entry; Magnavox's *Odyssey*; and Atari's VCS. All one had to do was plug in a given game, from libraries of titles that were growing regularly, to play video adaptations and variations of common themes—space battle, sports, driving competitions, etc.

But the toy and game manufacturers didn't stop there. They recognized the almost limitless market with its unquenchable thirst for video and created a new product line that allowed people to play anytime and anywhere. The hand-held was born with its crude L.E.D. and L.C.D. screen images that somehow complemented the more conventional visuals and action of the home system offerings, while coin-op continued to reign supreme with its advanced guard of games.

Still, there was enough room for everyone to prosper and meet the demands of an extremely receptive audience. And barriers began to disappear that had once held in check the operation of coin-op games to very definable and specific locations. Movie theater lobbies, hotels, candy stores, restaurants, discount stores, supermarkets, even Laundromats—the list of video game locations grew daily.

Video games were around every corner, invading society in almost eerie, pervasive fashion that couldn't be ignored.

The media wasn't far behind, ready to explore and report on a phenomenon that had swept the country. From print to broadcast features, coin-op was once again thrust into the limelight, and journalists everywhere were searching for the clues to justify all the excitement. Specific models were singled out and given credit for

Home Video's Damage

Now that Atari has sold off its home computer and home video game division to another concern (*Play Meter* September 1, p. 11), it's now time to look at the damage that has been done by this division to the coin-op industry over the past couple years.

I now believe, and have believed for a long period of time, that the home video game industry has done more harm to those in the coin-op industry than any other single thing.

To those that say the industry has been helped by the home video, just try to explain to an uninformed adult (also known as the buyer of the home video system) that there is a difference between his *Frogger* at home and the one that is in the arcade.

I know that there is a difference and you know it too. But the adult bought this system for his kids so he could save money by not having to spend his quarters in your arcade. He doesn't realize that by the time he bought ten cartridges and the main game system that he spent more than if he had gone to the arcade in the first place.

Now the problem is not exactly as simple as it sounds. If these games had been called something different than the arcade names, the problem would not have been nearly as bad as it was. But the manufacturers of these home video games learned several years ago that the home cartridges that didn't have the arcade name on them would not sell. So you and I, the people that bought these games and exposed them to the public, were the ones getting the short end of the stick.

I realize that the licensing of arcade games by the coin-op manufacturers to the home video manufacturers is a source of added revenue. This additional source of revenue to the manufacturers is coming directly out of the operator's pocket. This may not have been the intent, but it is the effect.

If a giant company like Atari, which is a division of a company like Warner Brothers, which has substantial resources lost all of this money on the home video games, it makes me wonder why it messed with it in the first place.

If the manufacturers can learn something from this Atari venture, I along with a lot of operators would feel better about this industry given its current state.

I would urge all manufacturers to immediately stop all licensing of arcade name video games to the home market. Let the home market come up with its own games. Let the home market spend its money to get the exposure for its games.

If the manufacturers will just go along with this one thing, the coin-op industry will be in much better shape.

I welcome your comments on the subject.

Benjamin M. Mandell
Sir Goony Golf of Charlotte
Charlotte, North Carolina

sustaining the boom—*Asteroids Space Invaders, Missile Command, Pac-Man, Defender, Donkey Kong, Zaxxon,* and *Centipede.*

Seeds of destruction

Now the preeminent leisure time entertainment form, the coin-op industry attracted legions hungry to cash in on the sweepstakes. Some chose the manufacturing end and set up operations to produce games, while many more opened up game rooms in one neighborhood after another. The general attitude was that the bubble would never burst, and why not take full advantage while the getting was good.

No one set up contingency plans to deal with the repercussions if the market were to turn around and nose-dive. And everyone involved shared the blame for perpetuating a condition that couldn't survive and was doomed to fail on the basis that the available universe was, within six months, glutted with hundreds of thousands of games.

This saturation helped kill location earnings. After all, there are only so many players to go around. Price wars followed, aided by the widespread use of tokens, to the point where the industry, once hopeful of initiating a rise from quarter play to something closer to 35 or 50 cents, found itself retreating to levels that often ranged from ten to 20 cents per play. It was a no-win situation for everyone, but the worst villains turned out to be the manufacturers themselves.

Still competing in a numbers game from the glory years of pinball, factories began to push out incredible quantities of equipment on a daily/weekly basis. If one company was doing 200 machines a day, another increased production to 250 or 300 machines a day. It was a race for self-destruction, and no one wanted to pull back and risk being left behind. It didn't matter that much of the equipment at the time was redundant and imitative. The public didn't seem to care; so no one wanted to upset the apple cart. As quickly as they were built, games were rushed out the door and put into operation.

No one set up contingency plans to deal with the repercussions if the market were to turn around and nose-dive.

People such as David Rosen at Sega and the folks at Data East, seeing the shocking number of games already on location, offered an alternative to what they saw as an inevitable dilemma. They introduced interchangeable games—kits—so that existing equipment could be upgraded without the costly replacement of wood.

After all, solid-state electronic video games weren't like the old electromechanical devices that the industry had known. These machines were built to last and last and last. Maybe a circuit board or two had to be replaced or a control panel, but that was about it. And, because of the widespread availability of new games to primary, secondary, and even tertiary markets, the resale value on equipment was almost non-existent.

In fact, it became increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to trade up, or trade in, older models in order to make room for new machines. Distributors' warehouses were filled to the rafters with unsold merchandise that worsened the problem, further influencing the demise of certain locations which just couldn't cope and adapt to the new ground rules. The fun was rapidly leaving the world of fun and games, only to be replaced by a growing sense of terror and helplessness.

Everyone involved shared the blame for... the available universe was, within six months, glutted.

An aggressive new force

About this time, an aggressive force was getting ready to enter into the home market in a much bigger way than had once been the case. Up until now, home game systems were showing steady gains in popularity, with Mattel leading the way along with Atari, while Magnavox trailed and Bally's Arcade had dropped out of the race.

However, by the middle of 1982, this major force, about to enter into the picture, changed the role of coin-op as a major influence on the development and advancement of home market activities. It was a total break from past conventional relationships, forever altering, in the process, the essence of what coin-op had always been, and narrowing the dividing lines between outside and at-home leisure time entertainment.

The man most responsible was Arnold Greenberg who dedicated his company to introduce a revolutionary "third generation" game system, ColecoVision. And he close to emphasize a message never before heard in the home market. Hoping to captialize on the growing fervor of arcade video games, ColecoVision came out of nowhere promising the best adaptations, and most faithful versions, of the coin-op realm. Consumers could have it all in the privacy of their own home—graphics, sound effects, and play action comparable to the arcades—and *Donkey Kong* (to name just one video standard at the time) led the way as Coleco struck gold during the holiday buying season.

Greenberg and Coleco left no doubts as to their intent when their software library swelled with both new and old arcade video game titles. Here, for the first time, was a marketing stategy totally committed to tapping an existing resource, while banking on the public's response to efforts that had already gained some measure of recognition, or at least had some increased dimensionality above and beyond being just another maze game or a shoot 'em up game.

And Coleco went directly to the coin-op manufacturers for its product and, in the process, offered an irresistible opportunity for game companies to realize a new very lucrative avenue for product once it had run its course on the assembly line. How could one ignore someone willing to spend large amounts of money for a game that had been off the line for six months to a year? It meant extra profit for the manufacturer, without risk, without any real additional costs.

In fact, in many ways, the potential of having this 'after market' tended to make companies a bit more sensitive and selective in what they chose to build. They began to wonder if their new game concept was strong enough to make it to the home market. Suddenly, all the rules had changed.

Operator fears

Once arcade game titles became the backbone of the home surge in popularity, the initial rumblings began within the industry that operators would lose income if a player could choose between putting in quarters at the arcade or paying one price and owning a game cartridge for use in a home system. Surely, they said, the playing public would almost always opt for the home alternative and that if a game previously might have had a life expectancy of nine months to a year, this period would be lessened due to the release of a home version at, maybe, the six to nine month juncture, effectively killing the piece on location.

Unfortunately, any mounting fears regarding this possible negative effect were only worsened when other software manufacturers selected the Coleco approach to instant product recognizability and began to bid for licensing rights to games not even on the drawing board. When this option failed or proved too risky, given the fluctuating nature of the games and the public's tastes, there were always those negotiations for rights of first refusal, or second refusal and so on down the line just to have something to fall back on.

Inferior product

Product that never had any degree of success in the arcades was suddenly finding an unnecessary and ultimately destructive resurrection in a cartridge or disk format. The result was a marketplace that swelled with inferior product and a public that was rapidly gaining in sophistication to recognize that just because a game might have had a previous life in the arcades didn't automatically insure that it was anything special or significantly different to warrant someone purchasing it.

The real problem regarding what then happened to the arcades and the home game/computer market isn't the result of coin-op manufacturers taking advantage of an open and willing buyer for their products, or that the appearance of these variations and adaptations, alone, dug into arcade profits. That is too simplistic an argument to make and doesn't take into account what actually happened and why events took palce the way they did.

The home market simply needed the pizzazz and excitement of the coin-op world to attract attention to home game systems and even the first personal computers which were unveiled. The problem with this type of dependency, especially when it is based on a cyclical item, is that it stretches the perceived importance or value of that product too thin, and something has to snap sooner or later. You can't just lay the blame on the Ataris of the world for tying to get all that they could while the getting was good.

The blame

If anything, there should be a degree of sympathy and frustration that an entire industry allowed itself to be used and abused to the point where it put its future in jeopardy. First, we must accept the fact that the novelty of video games was severely affected when the coin-op machines were available on almost every street corner and in almost any business establishment. The arcades and game rooms were no longer alone in what they offered the public. Every location was competing against ten others for the same quarter and with the same machines. Something had to give. And it did.

In addition, when demand grew to its mammoth proportions the focus of manufacturers along with distributors and operators was for more of the same. If one *Pac-Man* could earn X amount of dollars and two could earn XX amount of dollars, why couldn't ten earn XY amount of dollars. The same held true for jumping/climbing games a la *Donkey Kong*, or slide and shoot efforts such as *Space Invaders* and *Galaxian*. And this list goes on and on.

So why tamper with a sure thing? Don't do anything new or original. Instead, go with the proven performer even if it's been done to death. Add a few changes here and there and suck out that last bit of blood from a game concept that might have been two or three years past its prime. There's no need to innovate to advance the technology to meet the player's evolving skills.

"Screw the player" was undoubtedly an unconscious attitude since the overriding belief was that this teenager would play anything and didn't have the capacity to expect anything better.

In effect, the target audience was taken for granted. Worse, however, the player was ignored and thought to be a captive participant. The industry actually began to believe its own press clippings and thought that video was the only game in town. It wasn't and those masses who left did so because the novelty wore off. Something else captured their time and money. But everyone in the business was committed to keeping the illusion alive. No one wanted to accept the obvious warning signs that things couldn't remain the way they were.

Now we can see the devastation which has resulted when an industry loses its perspective, when it forgets what it did to achieve success. It is necessary to nurture and develop that loyal following of supporters who want only to be surprised by each succeeding effort.

So it's not enough to blame those who tried to take advantage of the "found" money which appeared on an almost regular basis. No, it is the burden of everyone in the industry who consciously, or inadvertently, fed into the sham perpetrated upon the public. They too must take equal credit for what has transpired.

The only salvation and hope is that the experience has left an indelible impact upon the industry. If any of us endeavor to minimize the chain of events which took place, or try to easily cast aside the real reason why things occurred the way they did, we will forever be in danger of letting history repair itself. And next time, if there is to be a next time, the industry might not be strong enough to weather the storm and pick up the pieces in an attempt to start all over. That fate, admittedly, is a death wish I don't think anyone wants. •

Parent Company Has Been Accused of Links to

TICKET SUPPLIER UNDERWRITING

To Bally Manufacturing Corp., state-run lotteries are a growth industry, and no one is doing more to promote that growth than this Chicago-based firm and its Atlanta subsidiary, Scientific Games Inc., the nation's leading supplier of lottery tickets.

In California, Scientific Games is underwriting a multimillion-dollar effort to persuade voters to approve Proposition 37, the lottery initiative on the Nov. 6 ballot. Similarly, it is financing a petition drive and election campaign designed to add Oregon to the growing list of Western states that operate lotteries.

Four years ago, Scientific Games almost single-handedly financed successful initiative campaigns in Arizona and Colorado, while contributing heavily to the pro-lottery campaign in the District of Columbia.

Viewpoint of Foes

Opponents of lotteries, in California and elsewhere, say that the company has simply used the ballot box as a marketing tool, as a way to expand its sales potential by legalizing lotteries.

They say that the California initiative was drafted in a way that almost assures Scientific Games of getting an initial share of the state's lottery business if the measure passes.

Indeed, in Colorado, which imposes strict disclosure requirements on lottery suppliers similar to those in the California initiative statute, there has been only one bidder for the state's instant lottery ticket business—Scientific Games.

Because the company has played so prominent a role in the nurturing of lottery measures around the country, its parent, Bally, has become a focus of attack in this year's California campaign.

Basis of Opposition

Anti-lottery ads, financed by state horse racing interests, complain that "the folks behind the lottery are big-time Eastern operators who deal in slot machines and had connections with organized crime."

The opponents base their charges about organized crime ties on the extensive public files of the New Jersey Casino Control Commission, which reviews Bally's annual applications as an Atlantic City hotel-casino operator and a major slot machine supplier. Each year, the commission has approved the applications, but only after imposing strict conditions on the Bally license.

The company insists that all the allegations raised in New Jersey are now history. And it points to the fact that the company is fully licensed to operate its New Jersey casino.

"It comes up less and less," said Bally's vice president for corporate communications, William H. Peltier. "The only time it comes up is when people in the press decide they're going to make an issue of Bally, so they go back and dig that thing out."

To qualify for its New Jersey gaming license, the firm was forced to sever all ties with its founder and chief executive, William T. O'Donnell Sr.

It is O'Donnell who is given much of the credit for transforming the small pinball manufacturing firm he and his partners purchased in 1963 for $1.2 million into a $1-billion-a-year multinational corporation.

The New Jersey commission declared that O'Donnell was not qualified to hold a gaming license in that state, concluding that he was largely responsible for what it described as Bally's "admittedly dubious orgins and early life" as well as its long history of doing business with firms and individuals associated with organized crime.

Allegations Outlined

In its 1981 opinion setting the conditions for Bally's license, the New Jersey Casino Control Commission outlined the allegations against O'Donnell as well as other Bally directors and employees. Among the commission's concerns were:

- The role of Gerardo Catena as a hidden partner in the group that in 1963 purchased the manufacurer of Bally-hoo pinball machines, which gave the new company its name. Catena is described in the New Jersey documents as "the underboss of the Vito Genovese crime family." The small company entered and

By Paul Jacobs
Times Staff Writer

STATE LOTTERY DRIVE

quickly grew to dominate the Neveda slot machine market.

- The continued involvement of Bally and O'Donnell with associates of Catena up until the time that the company first applied for a New Jersey casino license.
- O'Donnell's role in an attempt to bribe members of the Kentucky Legislature in order to legalize bingo in that state. In 1968, O'Donnell lent $4,000 to the owner of Southland Distributing Co. in an apparent response to letters quoted by the New Jersey commission showing that the money was needed to pay off legislators. O'Donnell denied ever reading the correspondence although the letters were found in his files.
- The continuation on Bally's payroll for several years of Dino Cellini, who was described by the commission as an "associate of Meyer Lansky (the reputed underworld patriarch who died in 1983) and a person of unsuitable character."

Changing Its Image

Although O'Donnell was never convicted of a crime, New Jersey insisted that he step down as Bally's president and board chairman and that he sell off his company stock as a condition of issuing the company its casino license.

Over the last decade, especially in the five years since O'Donnell was forced out, the company has been changing its image as well as its product lines.

In that time, the company says, it has beefed up its own internal security to assure officials in New Jersey and Nevada, where it distributes its slot machines, that it is free from the taint of organized crime.

Lottery commissions in Colorado, Arizona, and New Hampshire all took a hard look at the allegations against Bally when the Chicago firm acquired Scientific Games in 1982.

And all three states decided to contract with the Bally subsidiary.

After the departure of O'Donnell, the company has been "absolutely clean," said Colorado's lottery director, Owen Hickey.

Objections Persist

However, New Hampshire's attorney general, Gregory H. Smith, strongly objected to the New Hampshire Sweepstakes Commission's decision to continue doing business with Scientific Games.

"Our view hasn't really changed," Smith said in a recent phone interview. "Bally is a multinational corporation. They didn't eliminate the concerns by eliminating one man."

Smith described Bally's new president and board chairman, Robert E. Mullane, as "Mr. O'Donnell's hand-picked successor." And he noted that Mullane in 1981 spent time socializing in Australia with Jack Rooklyn, a former Bally official who left the company in 1977 after the Nevada Gaming Commission questioned his involvement in gaming activity in the Far East.

"As a logical matter, this concern dissipates with time," Smith, who in 1982 wrote a blistering critique of Bally and its links to organized crime figures. "The company asked how long that would take and we said, not two years."

Provider of Tickets

Scientific Games, founded in 1973, now supplies rub-off instant tickets to 11 of the 18 government-run lotteries in the United States.

Defenders of Scientific Games and Bally, including several of the lottery directors who do business with the subsidiary, correctly point out that Scientific Games has never been accused of an impropriety in its handling of lottery tickets.

But in 1982, the lottery ticket supplier formed a partnership with Games Production Inc., to provide tickets and advertising services to the newly formed District of Columbia lottery.

Public records on file with the New Jersey Casino Control Commission show that in the course of the contract, William N. Suter III, who had been convicted of illegal lottery activity in the early 1970's, became a major shareholder and executive in Games Production.

Suter participated in early meetings that established the partnership, but Scientific Games attorneys insist that they were assured that Suter would have no role in the company. Suter disputes that, and a New Jersey Division of

Gaming Enforcement report faults Bally and Scientific Games for failing to take the legal steps necessary to keep Suter from involvement.

The partnership has now expired, and Scientific Games continues to supply the District of Columbia with lottery tickets.

Even before founder O'Donnell relinquished his control of Bally in 1979, the company had begun moving away from its slot machine image.

In the 1970's, the company became a leader in video games with the introduction of *Space Invaders, Pac-Man* and *Ms. Pac-Man*, three of the most successful electronic games in the industry. Under O'Donnell's leadership, the company put its growing profits in Atlantic City, where it built Bally's Park Place, a major hotel and casino.

Trend to Diversification

Mullane then diversified the company's holdings by acquiring the Six Flags theme parks, including Magic Mountain in Southern California, and the Health and Tennis Corp. of America, which operates Holiday Spa Health Clubs, Jack LaLanne Fitness Centers and Richard Simmons Anatomy Asylums.

During the same period, Bally bought Scientific Games.

"Our corporate advertising theme is 'America's fun is our business,' " said Bally vice president Peltier. "We want to be the premiere company in the leisure time, entertainment business.

"The average consumer, as he grows older, the teen-agers and the young 20's, know Bally for *Pac-Man*, and know Bally for Six Flags, and they know Bally more and more for Health and Tennis."

Later he joked, "People come to our corporate headquarters and they say, 'gees, where are all the guys with the black shirts and white ties?' "

Peltier minimizes the role the company has played in winning support for legalizing lotteries. It is too hard a statement to say that the ballot has become part of a marketing strategy, he said. In California, he argues, the Legislature resisted approving a lottery, despite polls showing that the public supported it.

All the issue needed, he said, was "a push here and there, setting up the (campaign) committee, getting it on the ballot and see what the people say."

Lotteries are essentially Scientific Games' only business, said Robert Mote, the subsidiary's general counsel.

"If lotteries are your only business," he said in a recent phone interview, "then you expand your business by legalizing lotteries, selling out of the country, or by increasing participation in lotteries."

Eyeing Computer Business

Mote noted that instant lottery tickets represent only about 35 percent of the business that state-run lotteries do with private firms. The largest share of that outside business is with a small number of firms that provide on-line computer services needed for big-prize lotto games and lower-stakes daily numbers games.

However, Peltier said that Bally is now seriously considering entry into the on-line computer lottery business.

To lottery directors around the country, Scientific Games appears to be skillfully using the initiative process to expand the market for its products. "There's no doubt about that," said Hickey, director of the Colorado Lottery. "It's the free enterprise system at work. Why shouldn't it?"

Key Effort in Arizona

Other lottery directors smile broadly or chuckle over Proposition 37's requirement that a lottery be instituted 135 days after the election, if the measure wins voter approval.

"I think the initiative is very well done, all told," said Arizona Lottery Director Charles E. Buri. "My one question is the timing of it. Can California start a lottery in the best interest of the state in 135 days? I'm sure it was put in there to give (Scientific Games) an advantage."

The 1980 Arizona election was the first real test of Scientific Games' use of the initiative process to establish a state lottery, according to Walter W. Meek, a Phoenix public relations executive who was hired to organize the company's effort to qualify the initiative and then promote its passage.

Virtually all of the more than $200,000 spent to promote a state-run lottery in Arizona came from Scientific Games, Meek said.

After a marketing survey showed that Arizonans would support a lottery, the company hired an attorney to draft the actual initiative, Meek said, and then circulated the petitions to qualify it for the ballot.

On Meek's advice, the company chose not to tie lottery revenues to a specific purpose, although the public polling showed that Arizonans felt that the state ought to be spending more money on law enforcement and on road repairs. Tying a lottery to a specific need is a device used in other states to establish a natural constituency for the lottery, Meek said, but he said he was afraid that legislators would object to such a tie-in and actively campaign against a lottery.

Looking for Constituency

"While we were getting ready, we did form a nondescript committee," Meek said. Because the lottery proceeds would go into the general fund, "there was no built-in, made-to-order constituency."

California's Proposition 37 would require that at least 34 percent of lottery revenues be used to supplement the state's budget for public education. And a number of educators have lent their names to the pro-lottery campaign committee, Californians for Better Education.

Bally's Peltier defended the education tie-in: "They're always screaming they don't have enough bucks for education." He acknowledged that "from a marketing standpoint," education was a good way to sell a lottery to voters.

Peltier is confident that one day every state will have a lottery. "Sure, I think it's inevitable," he said. "It's a way to increase state revenues and at the same have a little fun....It's probably the fastest-growing new business in the country." •

FRANK'S CRANKS

By Frank "The Crank" Seninsky

AMOA—
Generates Operator Enthusiasm— System Conversions Dominate

This year's AMOA has helped the amusement games industry lift its head, open its eyes, and even take a few steps in a positive direction.

We're all glad Atari and Williams are back. The manufacturers have been listening to the operators' needs and came up with many diverse games. These ranged from inexpensive conversion kits, to pinballs, to shooting games, to basic equipment (shuffles, pool tables, jukes), to system conversions.

There is now enough different kinds of games available to make every type of operator happy. We're not out of the woods yet, but we will be fine for at least another six months.

The most prevalent and talked about concept at the show was the system conversions. Convert-a-pacs are not new to the industry. We have seen them come and go with Data East and CVS taking their best shots, maybe before their time. As operators, we have learned to be very careful about buying a new system with promises of hit games to come.

I have always bought a new game based solely on its own merits and earning potential. If it happened to be a new system game and a future conversion system kit came along worth buying, well, all the better. This is exactly what happened with *VS. Tennis*. So much for logic and common sense. But the manufacturers have learned from us. There are now whole libraries of system kits for some of the hardware systems! We must now re-think our approach to system games.

I have chosen to investigate three major systems exhibited at the AMOA show. Each operator will have to make his own decision whether or not to get involved with these. Price, the initial size of the library of games, and the earning power of these games are the three major factors to be analyzed.

VS. System

Nintendo is way out in front of the competition with its VS. System. It has over 10,000 units already sold. Many of us purchased *VS. Tennis* and *VS. Baseball* because both are great games that earn steadily. With the current popularity of sports games, these two were right on the money. *Tennis* and *Baseball* are part of the head-to-head series that now includes *Wrecking Crew* and *Balloon Fight*.

Nintendo also has the two-in-one series that can include two different games in one cabinet. *VS. Golf*, *VS. Pinball*, *Excitebike*, and *Urban Champion* are part of this two-in-one series. Also, I hear a driving game will be added shortly.

Of the new VS. games shown, only *VS. Golf* excited me. I need more data on the other VS. games.

You should still be getting a lot for your money with the VS. System. If you already have *VS. Tennis*, then the *VS. Baseball* and *VS. Golf* kits are great buys at their low prices.

If you are considering an initial purchase, the price of the hardware (cabinet, monitors, power supplies) is approximately the same price that you would pay for one dedicated game. Note that in the two-in-one series, four people can actually play at once so $1 play is a reality! Another bonus is, in most instances,

The manufacturers have learned from us.
There are now whole libraries of system kits for some of the hardware sys
We must now re-think our approach to system games.

this game will be charged only one license fee.

Nintendo has promised to introduce a new game to the library every few months. They have also made a guarantee that there will never be any closeouts. If they do lower their prices, they will make it retroactive! Now that's a pretty good commitment from a manufacturer. Street operators will be glad to know that Nintendo is considering making a smaller cabinet for their upright so it can fit through normal doorways.

Finally, the standup cocktail model isn't stable enough (it can be easily tipped over) for many street locations.

Systems I & II

Atari has my vote of confidence for its System I (medium resolution) and System II (high resolution) games. The price of the System I hardware and software (*Marble Madness*) is around $2,000 to the operator. *Marble Madness* was an instant hit, not a block buster, mind you, but a two-player strategy game that appeals to a wide audience. It will generate steady earnings. It is simple to understand but can also be very challenging.

The next System I game is *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, an adventure game, which I felt was (like the movie) more of a kids' game. Atari didn't show any other System I game (they are working on a third); so, at this time, a decision to buy *Marble Madness* is based mainly on *Marble Madness*, which I happen to feel is a great game.

The Atari System II debut, *Paperboy* is excellent. It has high-resolution graphics, good musical sounds, and plenty of cute action that will attract a wide range of players. The handlebar controls give the feeling of riding a bicycle, which is a welcome change from all the motorcycle and car game controls. Atari didn't show any other System II games; so *Paperboy* must also be rated on its own.

By the way, I've heard that

Paperboy is testing better than any non-laser game ever has. The price should be about $2,600 to the operator, making it an excellent buy.

SAC I

Bally/Sente has also come up with a decent library of games (they showed eight at the show) for its SAC I System. I liked *Trivial Pursuit, Hat Trick, Off the Wall,* and *Chicken Shift.*

Sente has made its games easy to play so as to attract a wide player base. The only problem I see is the initial price, which is just slightly higher than the Atari System II. Another thing to consider is the cabinet size, which is larger than a conventional video. This could limit the system's accountability in street locations but will enhance it in arcade and game room locations. The commitment is definitely there from Sente. Arcades are presently doing well with the Sente games.

As you can probably guess, I am buying some of Nintendo's VS. System games, some Atari's *Marble Madness* games and a *Paperboy* or two. But I will wait awhile before deciding on Sente's SAC I.

Now for my pick of the new games I feel look like winners:

Pinballs

Space Shuttle by Williams will have the largest initial impact on your location. If you thought *Fire Power II* was good, then this one can't miss.

El Dorado by Mylstar (now Premier Technology) was perhaps the best long term buy at the show. This pin will be a steady earner.

Spy Hunter by Bally is better than the last couple of Bally pins. It has enough features to challenge the player and will also attract players because of its name.

Conversion Kits

Galaga 3 by Midway, as a conversion kit, will upgrade any location were *Galaga* once earned well. Midway also showed a "Six-Pac" system.

Hero in the Castle of Doom by Crown Vending is a strategy/adventure game for just over $300! It's a very good street location game, and the price, of course, is right for any operator.

Super Basketball by Konami is still another sports-themed hit that attracts players. It's grossing high numbers.

Super Punch Out!! is good for operators who have already rotated *Punch Out!!* through their routes. *Super* is harder to master and should get some bored *Punch Out!!* players back into action.

Empire Strikes Back by Atari is a kit made to give *Star Wars* another life. Operators should be able to make money with it.

Roller Jammer by Nichibutsu is a roller derby driving-type game that looks very promising.

Aeroboto by Williams is a horizontal kit that goes nicely into *Defender* and other Williams games. Kids like the man turning into a plane theme. This will do well in skill locations.

Driving Force by Magic Electronics is a low priced driving kit that converts *Pac-Man.* It's good for street locations where you simply can't afford to put in a *Pole Position.*

Dedicated Games

Crown Golf by Kitco is a very exciting golf game that will earn for a long time.

Buggy Challenge by Monroe is a game that looks like the sleeper of the show. It will take awhile before this game gets noticed.

Chinese Heros by Kitco is doing extremely well in Japan, and all indications are that it will do well here also.

There were, of course, many other kits and games that looked interesting. I just named the ones that grabbed my attention. I wonder if I missed a hit game? There will be more in the next issue.

If you would like more information on how games and kits are doing, you can reach me at Alpha-Omega Sales, 6 Sutton Place, Edison, NJ 08818. Telephone: 201/287-4990. •

Yes! I want to receive every issue of **Play Meter**. Please enter my subscription as shown below:

☐ **Payment enclosed** ☐ **Bill my company** ☐ **Bill me**

United States & Canada	☐ 1 year (24 issues) $ 50	☐ 2 years (48 issues) $90	☐ 3 years (72 issues) $120
Foreign (via air)	☐ 1 year (24 issues) $150		

Mr. ☐
Ms. ☐ Name ____________________

Street ____________________

City ____________________

State ____________ Zip ________

Charge my ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Card No. ____________ Card Expire Date ________

Signature ____________ Date ________

Title ____________________

Company ____________________

Check One
☐ Manufacturer
☐ Distributor
☐ Route Operator
☐ Other ____________
☐ Arcade Operator
☐ Support & Supply
☐ Technician

This offer effective through December 1984.

PLAY METER
MAGAZINE

Yes! I want to receive every issue of **Play Meter**. Please enter my subscription as shown below:

☐ **Payment enclosed** ☐ **Bill my company** ☐ **Bill me**

United States & Canada ☐ 1 year (24 issues) $ 50 ☐ 2 years (48 issues) $90 ☐ 3 years (72 issues) $120
Foreign (via air) ☐ 1 year (24 issues) $150

Mr. ☐
Ms. ☐ Name ____________________

Street ____________________

City ____________________

State ____________ Zip ________

Charge my ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Card No. ____________ Card Expire Date ________

Signature ____________ Date ________

Title ____________________

Company ____________________

Check One
☐ Manufacturer
☐ Distributor
☐ Route Operator
☐ Other ____________
☐ Arcade Operator
☐ Support & Supply
☐ Technician

This offer effective through December 1984.

PLAY METER
MAGAZINE

ARE YOU READING SOMEONE ELSE'S COPY?

Subscription Line: 504/837-7987

Yes! I want to receive every issue of **Play Meter**. Please enter my subscription as shown below:

☐ **Payment enclosed** ☐ **Bill my company** ☐ **Bill me**

United States & Canada ☐ 1 year (24 issues) $ 50 ☐ 2 years (48 issues) $90 ☐ 3 years (72 issues) $120
Foreign (via air) ☐ 1 year (24 issues) $150

Mr. ☐
Ms. ☐ Name ____________________

Street ____________________

City ____________________

State ____________ Zip ________

Charge my ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Card No. ____________ Card Expire Date ________

Signature ____________ Date ________

Title ____________________

Company ____________________

Check One
☐ Manufacturer
☐ Distributor
☐ Route Operator
☐ Other ____________
☐ Arcade Operator
☐ Support & Supply
☐ Technician

This offer effective through December 1984.

PLAY METER
MAGAZINE

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY CARD
FIRST-CLASS PERMIT NO. 954 NEW ORLEANS, LA

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

PLAY METER
P.O. BOX 24970
NEW ORLEANS, LA 70184-9988

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY CARD
FIRST-CLASS PERMIT NO. 954 NEW ORLEANS, LA

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

PLAY METER
P.O. BOX 24970
NEW ORLEANS, LA 70184-9988

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY CARD
FIRST-CLASS PERMIT NO. 954 NEW ORLEANS, LA

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

PLAY METER
P.O. BOX 24970
NEW ORLEANS, LA 70184-9988

ARE YOU READING SOMEONE ELSE'S COPY?

Subscription Line:
504/837-7987

YOU ARE INVITED TO . . .

World Wide Distributors'

NEW-YEAR CLEARANCE SALE!

LOWEST PRICES EVER!!

OVER 500 GAMES SOLD AT OUR LAST FREE-FOR-ALL FALL SALE. NOW, USED VIDEO GAMES WILL BE LOWERED TO PRICES NEVER SEEN BEFORE! DON'T FORGET TO CALL AND ASK ABOUT OUR SPECIAL PACKAGE DEALS . . !!

JANUARY 8,9,10, 1985

FROM 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (CENTRAL TIME ZONE)

OVER 600 GAMES TO CHOOSE FROM

PRIZES • REFRESHMENTS • SAVINGS

We are looking to buy good used Seeburg Phonographs

SERVICING OPERATORS WORLDWIDE FOR OVER 40 YEARS

World Wide Distributors, Inc.
2730 W. Fullerton Ave., Chicago, IL 60647

312/384-2300

(ILL TOLL FREE) 800/572-4285

Out of State, Call Collect!

Triv-Quiz

Status Game Corp. of West Hartford, Connecticut, has joined the trivia craze in a big way by introducing a countertop video game called *Triv-Quiz*.

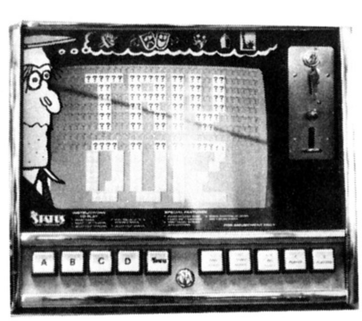
Available also as a kit or as an upright game, *Triv-Quiz* features thousands of questions in four general categories—sports, entertainment, world facts, and expert challenge.

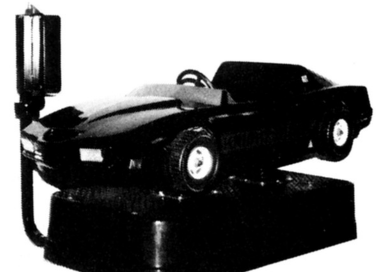
Also included with the game is a built-in advertising feature which allows the operator to program his own advertising message without a costly keyboard attachment.

Other features of *Triv-Quiz* include one- or two-player options, bonus scoring, and high scorer initials.

But, more importantly, as a commitment of back-up for operators, Status Game promises regular update question kits to keep *Triv-Quiz* current and constantly challenging to players.

Play allows a player to bet all or some of his points in answering each question. The more points a player risks on a given question, the more points he stands to win...or lose. After he has wagered his points, three answers appear, and the player must select the correct answer. If he runs out of points, the game is over. If he makes it through his four questions, he may be eligible for bonus questions. Thus scores can reach into the millions.





V-Line

Carousel International of Eldon, Missouri, has introduced a new outdoor *V-Line* kiddie ride named, *Knight Rider*. The car, suggestive of the car in the hit television program, has a sleek black design.

As with other Carousel offerings, the kiddie car ride features state-of-the-art sound system, lightweight construction, auto-type wiring, improved access for service, better security.

The new ride carries Carousel's full-year warranty on all parts and components.

Designed for outdoor locations, such as in front of grocery stores and department stores, the ride is geared for children aged 2-7.

Pay Phones

Empire Liberty has introduced its latest model pay telephone, the *703 Liberty Phone*.

An LED display shows the customer how much each call costs and how long he has left to talk. It is programmable for AT&T rates or any percentage above those rates.

Two other features of the *703 Liberty Phone* are that it comes with expandable circuitry, allowing this telephone to program countless other functions. The second novel feature about the pay phone is that it is totally line-powered so that it does not have to be plugged into AC power.

Those operators interested in the *703 Liberty Phone* can contact Empire Liberty directly at 612/471-0143 or contact one of its distributors.

NEW products

Sapphire 89

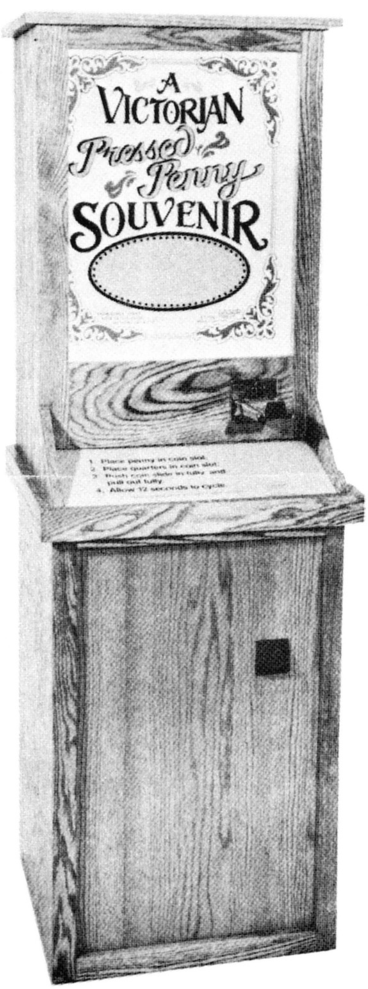
Rowe's newest 200-selection phonograph, *Sapphire 89*, has a new dual channel three-way speaker system which delivers remarkable full-range stereo sound.

New features that complement the incredible new sound include a sleek new back-lit selector keyboard with flush, tactile-feel dome switches, a new easy-to-read price card that's back-lit, too, and two eye-catching bar graphs that pulsate in time to the music.

Rowe's expanded digital display shows what's happening on four individual readouts. A fifth display gives a "Make Selection" message when credit is available and says, "Thank You" after the last credit is spent.

The redesigned central computer gives operators more control than before and is equipped to accept video. The selector, coin inlet, OBA bill acceptor (which accepts both $1 and $5 bills), and price card have been repositioned to the extreme right side of the phone, and there's a raised title rack for easy viewing and a flashy new lighting arrangement, as well.

Service and maintenance on the *Sapphire 89* is easier with all-front accessibility, LED readouts, troubleshooting charts, and modular components. The company offers a five-year warranty on all moving parts and a two-year warranty on electronics.



Penny Press

A new souvenir penny press machine called *Coin-Laser Press Mega 3 Diffuser* is being marketed by Vending Alternatives of Wheat Ridge, Colorado.

Designed to print any advertisement or souvenir message on one or both sides of a customer's penny, the *Coin-Laser Press Mega 3 Diffuser* is the latest in vending machines catering to souvenirs and promotional devices. Customers can use the machine to press custom designs for key rings, earrings, necklaces, tie tacks, pins, buttons, decorative studs, pocket souvenirs, good luck pieces, fishing lures, promotional pieces, and even unique business cards.

The attractive hand-crafted oak cabinet is durable and comes available with five different panel motifs.

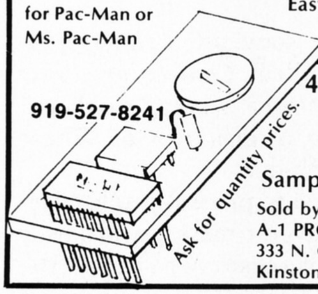
No special environment is necessary for dependability, though the machine is intended for indoor use or sheltered outdoor operation.

The average vend cycle is 12 seconds, and the price per vend is variable in increments of 25 cents up to $1.

For more information, contact Vending Alternatives at 5160 Parfet Building, B Number 2, Wheat Ridge, CO 80033, or call 303/425-4738.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

SPEED UP BOARD
WILL MAKE MONEY TODAY!
Variable speed control
Easy plug-in.
for Pac-Man or
Ms. Pac-Man



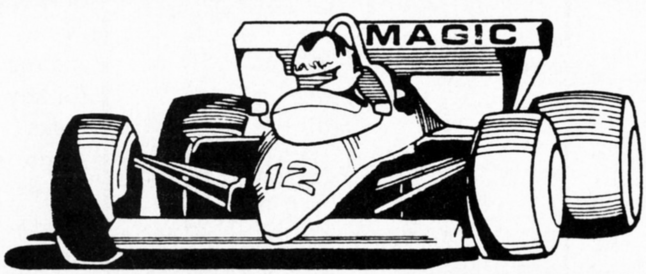
919-527-8241
SALE
4 or more
$25
Ask for quantity prices.
Sample $27 ea.
Sold by
A-1 PRODUCTS
333 N. Queen St.
Kinston, NC 28501

Service expertly and reliably done on all coin operated games. Boards repaired, games converted, kits installed. Contract rates available. Arcade a specialty. Call by beeper 718/241-4717 Unit 674 or write:
JACK GUARNIERI
SERVICE COMPANY
Box 155, Brooklyn, NY 11236

Liquidation Sale

Must sell immediately
21 kiddie rides, games, and High Ball machines used in restaurant amusement center less than one year.
Detroit, Michigan area

Contact John Kettler
313/647-7171



DRIVING FORCE™

IMMEDIATE DELIVERY

It's an inexpensive substitute that will dare those who think Pole Position II™ is the ultimate Racing Game!

They'll be back time and time again to meet the challenge and you'll make the money you deserve!

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

If not completely satisfied simply return the kit within 7 days for a full refund

Montgomery Vending
P.O. Box 3263
820 Elmwood Ave
Providence, RI 02907
401 946-2077 OR 946-2070

NEW!!!

Another Big Winner
from
CROWN VENDING

THE MOST HEAVILY TESTED KIT EVER OFFERED TO OPERATORS

Once again we give you the ultimate conversion.

NO WIRING — NO SOLDERING

Just plug in and start *earning* with the kit that will become *the* one all other kits are measured by.

HERO IN THE CASTLE OF DOOM

CROWN VENDING CORPORATION

111-59 44th Ave. • P.O. Box 19 • Corona, NY 11368 • Telex 509034 CROWN NY

212/592-7070

HERO: for Donkey Kong & Donkey Kong C/T — only $319
HERO: for Donkey Kong Jr. & Donkey Kong Jr. C/T — only $319
HERO: for use with the CVS Conversion System — only $275

BEST PRICES EVER

for new & used videos, pins, Rockolas, Valley & US Billiard pool tables.

LOS MEJORES PRECIOS PARA AMERICA LATINA

juegos de video, Rockolas y mesa de billar (nuevos y usados) preguntar por Julio.

Bagman	$ 350	Frogger	295	Nibbler	395	Star Trek s/d (new)	1095
Bezerk	200	Galaga	995	Omega Race	450	Star Trek s/d	895
Centipede	495	Great Guns	1500	Omega Race c/t	450	Star Wars (new)	895
Champion Baseball	595	Hell Shooter	250	Pac-Man Jr.	1050	Star Wars	695
Cliff Hanger (new)	1195	Hyper Sports	1495	Pooyan	395	Strategy X	250
Cliff Hanger	995	Jack the Giant Killer	200	Pro Sports	995	Subroc 3D	595
Congo Bongo (new)	550	Joust	250	Q*Bert	595	Super Cobra	200
Congo Bongo	400	Kangaroo	350	Rescue	350	Tac Scan	295
Curveball	995	Krull	450	Robotron	275	Tapper	1050
Defender	225	M.A.C.H. 3	1495	Root Beer Tapper	1050	Track & Field	1295
Dig Dug	395	Mario Bros.	650	Satan's Hollow (new)	495	Turbo	1250
Donkey Kong 3	595	Mazer Blazer (new)	495	Satan's Hollow	395	Turbo (mini)	1250
Donkey Kong	295	Mazer Blazer	295	Scramble	200	Turbo (mini c/p)	1500
Dragon's Lair	995	Millipede	750	Space Duel	200	Turtle	200
Extra Bases	195	Monaco Grand Prix (mini)	149	Space Firebird	250	Tut	350
Fantasy	395	Moon Cresda	175	Space Fury	295	Us vs. Them (new)	1495
Fire Power	250	Ms. Pac-Man	695	Space Odyssey	250	Xevious	595
Frenzy	300			Star Gate	225	Zoo Keeper (new)	895
						Zoo Keeper	650

KITS

Cobra Command	$1395	Stern Track Ball	$ 195	Time Pilot '84	$ 595	Us Vs. Them	$ 795

A.M.A DISTRIBUTORS, INC.

(Doing Business Since 1947)

1525 Airline Highway, Metairie, Louisiana 70001

504/835-3232

Ask for Johnny or Chris / Preguntar por Julio

WANTED

Lucky Crane, Boom Balls, Philadelphia Skee Balls, Triple Crane, Whac-A-Mole, Muppet Video, Hydraulic Kiddie Rides. Also looking for **The Games** and **Jacks to Open** pins.

M & P AMUSEMENT CO.

717/848-1846

Jukebox Operators

A brand new alternative wall-box for your Seeburg (e/m or digital) compatible with all others shortly. Mahogany and brass finish, full view to please all locations. Details from **Elgin Enterprises Ltd.**, Unit 4/1C Meadow Mill, Water Street, Stockport, Cheshire, England.

FOR SALE

24 video games in trailer with removable wheels so trailer sets down on ground, used two seasons.

Trailer-mounted kiddie ferris wheel, built Baby Eli but isn't. Approximately 18' high. Hasn't been used since sandblasted and painted.

20' Waymatic digger joint with 23 machines, formica cabinets. **All equipment in excellent condition.**

Bill Hanks, Route 2, Box 269, Robinson, IL 62454. **618/544-2438.**

HEART RATE MONITORS

$197

NEW

WHY PAY MORE!!!

Send check or money order to:

AST VENDING, Box 1231, Corsicana, TX 75110

Or Call: 214/872-7891

TICKET DISPENSERS for VIDEO GAMES

SPECIAL

~~$395~~ **$197.50***

* while supply lasts, same 100% warranty

HARBER TECHNOLOGY

513/772-5053

10 SKEE BALLS

— For Sale —

(like new condition)

$1495

Contact:

Jeanette Vending Co.

814/352-7777

TAKE ONE—TWICE MONTHLY

Preventative measures, taken on a regular basis, can maintain your coin-op business at a healthy level.

In an industry where sudden changes in market activity can put great stress on your individual business, you need up-to-date input from all areas that contribute to achieving and maintaining maximum business health.

A subscription to PLAY METER magazine is the best prescription for success.

DEPEND ON A SOLID INDUSTRY INSTITUTION

PLAY METER

P.O. Box 24970, New Orleans, La. 70184

CALL OUR SUBSCRIPTION LINE COLLECT!

504/488-7003

INFINITY 1

The Game Of A Thousand Faces!

NEW GAMES COMPLETE $495 (F.O.B. Chicago)

KITS — While they last! * Plus 5 new releases at AMOA show

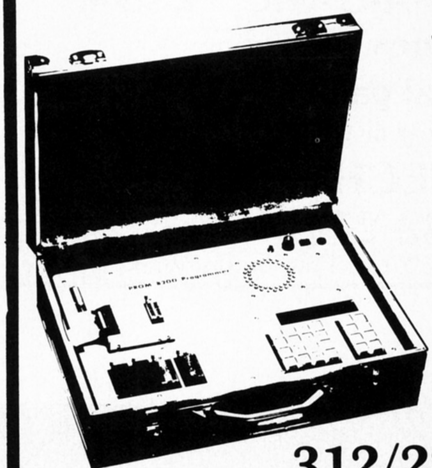
All Laser Games Available from $495. Call for current prices!!!

Sun Sun	$695	Ring Fighter	call
Basketball	495	Do!'s Castle	295
Pro Golf	495	Nova 2001	295
Us vs. Them	395	Burgertime	195
Tag Team Wrestling	call	Lil' Hustler	195
10-Yard Fight	call	Lady Bug	75*
Exerion	call	King Tut	75*
Seicross	call		

* PC BOARD ONLY

PROM 8200 PROGRAMMER

Bi-polar E PROMS, up to 256K



- Write your own program & replace your own IC's.
- Intelligent programing algorithm, 20 seconds needed only to finish 2764 copy.
- Check, Verify, Read, Write, and Modify the PROM/EPROM in the programming mode.
- Examine, Alter, Move, Fill, Upload, and Download the memory contents in the data mode.
- 32Kx8 dynamic RAM buffer with powerful memory handling capability from keyboard.
- Allows data transfer/combine/separate from one PROM/EPROM type and size to another PROM/EPROM type and size.
- One RS232 port, for linking to the computer to upload/download data.
- Simple to operate, over current indication, automatic check-write-verify sequence.
- Fully portable for field or in-plant use.
- One full year guarantee.

312/280-7610

HOFFMAN INTERNATIONAL

600 N. McClurg Ct. Ste. 309, Chicago, IL 60611

Telex: 280208 Hoffmn. Int. Cgo.

ATENCION:

Clientes De Latino America

Video Ware, Inc. les ofrece los mejores precios en

P.C. Boards & Partes

ESPECIALES DE ESTE MES

Time Pilot	$249	Springer	$ 49
Roc n' Rope	199	Route 16	49
Tutankam	129	Red Alert	49
Moon Patrol	279	Scramble	49
Baseball	249	Strategy X	49

Preguntar por Cecilia

VIDEO WARE, INC.

600 Clover Street, Los Angeles, CA 90031

213/225-1337

Telex: 295379 TABLEVISION

Northern California's

Video Connection

Price Busters On:

Conversion Kits & PCB's

Mr. Do!'s Wild Ride kit	$427
Mr. Do!'s Castle kit	350
Mr. Do! kit	295
Jungle Hunt (for Elevator Action)	375
Complete Popeye kit	175
Atari Cloak & Dagger	283
Do! Run Run	689
Time Pilot '84	489
Seicross	489
Junior Pac-Man	489
Mario Bros.	450
Agent Super Bond	310
Joust or Robotron kit	195

Greyhound Poker kit — call

BUY • SELL • TRADE

VIDEO CONNECTION

930 Jeffrey Lane, Dixon, CA 95620

916/678-5189

NEED CASH? WANT TO TRADE?

We Need Your Used Color P.C. Boards For Export

LET'S MAKE A DEAL!

VIDEO WARE, INC.

600 Clover Street, Los Angeles, CA 90031

213/225-1337

Telex: 295379 TABLEVISON

Kiddie Ride Route established six years. Servicing Hawaiian Islands, no competition. Grossing $150,000 and growing. Selling for $450,000. Will finance or sell part. Call Sam, person-to-person **808/822-1701.**

WANTED

Old jukeboxes, slot machines, trade simulators, gumball machines and parts for above. John Johnston **718/833-1406.**

Ardac Coin Changers

Wall unit dollar bill $800, floor unit dollar & five $1500, floor unit dollar bill $1000, excellent condition, call **212/257-4045.**

CONVERSION KITS

(New and Used)

Bomb Jack	$call	5-in-1	$495
Vs. 10-Yard Fight	695	Motorace USA	395
Fighting Basketball	695	Pro Golf	395
Mad Crasher	695	Ms Pac (from Super Pac)	395
10-Yard Fight	545	Mr. Do!	345
Ring Fighter	545	Champion Baseball	295
Elevator Action	495	Roc n' Rope	245
Pro Sports	495	7 amp power supply	34.95
Exerion	495	Joystick	11.95

Above Kits Include: PCB & Cosmetics

DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE

Y.C. ENGINEERING

P.O. Box 1194, Laverngne, TN 37086 • Telex: 534623 YARBRC

615/793-9142

STICKERS — DECALS

Laminating Plastic

Machs. • Parts • Supplies • Mdse.

We make these machines Better, Prettier & for Less money We've got a line of stickers, decals & other merchandise to fill all makes of machines & they Sell Like Hot Cakes

Call, write or come visit us— We're eager to serve you!

HERB POTTER

The Staley Mfg. Corp.

437 Highland Ave., Passaic, NJ 07055

201/773-1981

continued from page 60

What we're saying is that instead of waiting 30 to 45 days to pay your distributor, you can save money by buying directly from us and pay cash at the time you buy.

buying directly from us and pay cash at the time you buy.

Let me tell you something. Everything that's happened in the marketplace, in the video game business, elsewhere in the world, has eventually happened here in the United States. You had copy games going all around the world, and everybody said it couldn't happen here in the United States, and it ultimately happened here in the United States. They said the same thing about cocktail games in this country, but cocktail tables became a large part of the market here in the United States. Then they said you couldn't sell a kit here in the United States, even though kits were being sold everywhere else. And ultimately we were selling conversion kits in the United States. In every other market in the world, video games are sold, basically, direct from the manufacturer to the operator. It's in Japan. It's in the U.K. And it's in Europe.

PLAY METER: *But while the distributor network in other countries may be called into question as far as video game conversions—in this country we span four time zones. Doesn't this vast geographical spread make it difficult, if not impossible, for a manufacturer to represent his company, especially if his company is based in Florida and his customer is in, say, Oregon?*

KAMINKOW: How many operators never go in to their distributors? A lot. And all they see from them is a piece of mail or a postcard or a telephone call. The fact that distributors sell out of their territories seems to indicate that this geographical expanse is not so important after all. Some distributors used to laugh and tell me their territory was 360 degrees—in all directions.

But, back to what I was saying, I feel in the long run what has happened in every other part of the world, in the video segment of this industry, will happen in the United States. The direct sale to the operator, offering quality product at a substantially lower investment to him, will bring back and make the industry, as far as the video game segment, a lot stronger so we can maintain the base. You have to remember, in 1978, there were anywhere between 50,000 and 75,000 video games in place in the United States. Tops. In 1981-1982, at the height of the video game boom, it was estimated to be anywhere between 1.2 to 1.4 million video games on location. Today, on the conservative side, even if there's only 800,000 video games left, there's substantially more there than there were in 1978. The base is so much higher. Even if there are only 500,000 video games, it's still a thousand times more than in 1978. So there are still more players playing video games, interested in playing games, than we had before the boom.

Another important fact you have to consider is that, between 1981 and 1983, we had to contend with the consumer market, the home games. With many of the new games that were coming out, within six months, the home game versions were out, and that hurt the games in the arcades. But, now, I believe the consumer business is finished with. All the 2600's and the 5200's and all the Colecovisions and the Intellivisions are gathering dust. You look in the newspapers, and you can see the closeout prices on game cartridges. They're trying to dump their inventories, as low as a dollar a game. So I don't see anybody muddying the waters, making a major investment, trying to market video cartridges. The cost is too much now to manufacture and market the games today; so what I'm getting to is you're going to see people who want to play video games going back to the arcades and to the street locations. We're still in the entertainment business, anyway you look at it. And, when you eliminate the consumer business that was taking dollars away from us, you're still looking at a base of games that constitutes a very large business. We're still taking in a lot of dollars.

PLAY METER: *I have one last question about your usurping the distributing role in your "Direct Connection" marketing approach. We hear that the distributor plays the role of counselor to his operators. Do you see Centuri fulfilling that void?*

KAMINKOW: Absolutely. I think by bringing the operator high-quality, top-earning equipment to the marketplace, I can help him better than that. When I came into this business in 1962, I learned one thing. You can talk all the gibberish in the world, but the whole industry boils down to three words—*cashbox, cashbox, cashbox*. Regardless of product, all that matters is what's in the cashbox. If you provide product that fills up the cashbox, it's going to be sold, whether it's from distribution or whether it's direct from the manufacturer. Or whether it's from a guy walking around from door to door trying to sell direct to an operator.

You talk about counseling. The operators left in this business know their way around. All the new people who came into the business during the boom have left the business. We found an interesting thing on the cards that the operators filled out at our booth at the show in Chicago. We took close to a thousand cards and, in analyzing those cards, we found that most operators who filled them out have been in business for more than seven years. The guys who came in during the boom, most of them, are gone. What you've got left are the hardcore operators, who's been there, who already knows what he needs. He's got a route. He's got video, pool tables, cigarette machines, jukeboxes, shuffles. You're back to the basics.

PLAY METER: *Are you still a member of the Amusement Game Manufacturers Association (AGMA)?*

KAMINKOW: No. Just prior to the show, because of our "Direct Connection" approach, we felt it was inapropos for us to belong to the manufacturers/distributors association. We just didn't feel it was proper. We were supporters of the association for the things they did when we were members, but we feel by going direct we are now members of the operators' association. •

GOLDEN 89. IF YOU THINK IT LOOKS GREAT, WAIT UNTIL YOU HEAR IT!

Our newest 200-selection phono is a show stopper in any location. Its high tech styling attracts audiences everywhere. But the sound it delivers is what keeps the music playing and keeps your cash box jingling. For inside its large lower grille is Rowe's new dual channel three-way speaker system which produces the most awesome full-range stereo sound in the industry. No competitive amplifier can match this unit in power output or volume. And its sound quality even exceeds many high-grade home component systems! ☐ Music lovers turn on when they see our new selector keyboard and touch its flush, tactile-feel dome switches. Both selector and the new easy-to-read price card are back lit and optional rhythmically pulsating bar graphs keep the action going. ☐ Other new features of the Golden 89 are its four separate digital displays that show exactly what's happening and when. A newly redesigned central microcomputer which gives you more control than ever and is ready for video. A dazzling new lighting design. Relocation of the selector, coin inlet, bill acceptor and price card to the far right side of the phono. And a raised title rack for easier viewing. ☐ As on other Rowe phonos, our OBA bill acceptor is standard. It accepts both $1 and $5 bills and has been proven to increase collections measurably by encouraging overplay and special offers. ☐ As for service and maintenance, it couldn't be simpler. Thanks to all-front accessibility, LED readouts, trouble-shooting charts and modular components. Rowe's unique 5-year warranty covers all moving parts and a 2-year warranty covers electronics. ☐ See and hear the dazzling Golden 89 soon. Just contact your Rowe distributor or call us directly.

ROWE®

Rowe International Inc.
Subsidiary of Triangle Industries
75 Troy Hills Road, Whippany, NJ 07981
(201) 887-0400

Do! Run Run

... and better than ever in the new game, Do! Run! Run! You run for your life as you're pursued around a 3-dimensional playing field. Up and down the stairs you race —just one step ahead of danger. A Sizzling Snake whizzes past and cuts off your escape! Quickly you throw your powerball and run as more snakes approach, rocketing balls of flame. No time to get another powerball. Hurry! Roll the log and let it crush anything in its path. More monsters appear! How will you ever escape?! Non-stop action is in store for you in the latest Mr. Do! adventure from Universal. You'll be breathless each time you play Do! Run! Run!

from UNIVERSAL®

Universal USA, Incorporated

The Street Operators' Manufacturer

Universal Sales Co., LTD
1-7-7, Nihonbashi Horidome-cho
Chuoh-ku, Tokyo 103, Japan
Phone: 03-661-6004, 6005
Cable: UNMANIFACT
Telex: J27348 (UNICO)

Universal Europe
81 Tottenham Court Road
London, WIA IEY, England
Phone: 01-631-1713
Telex: 892989 Elcoin

Universal USA, Inc.
3250 Victor Street
Santa Clara, CA 95054 USA
Phone: 408-727-4591
Telex: 172247 (UNI USA SNTA)