

FOR THE COIN-OPERATED INDUSTRY

PUBLISHED TWICE MONTHLY

PLAY METER

JUNE 15, 1985



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PLAY METER

Twice a Month Publication for the Coin Operated Entertainment Industry

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COVER: Special thanks to Eddie Boasberg and Jules Beauvais of New Orleans Novelty for their assistance on this month's cover.



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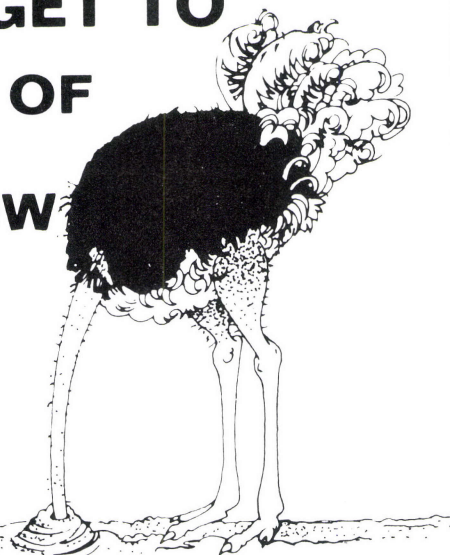
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PLAY METER, June 15, 1985. Volume 11, No. 11. Copyright 1985 by Skybird Publishing Company. **Play Meter** (ISSN 0162-1343)(USPS 358-305) is published twice monthly on the 1st and 15th of the month. Publishing office: 6600 Fleur de Lis, New Orleans, La. 70124; **Mailing address:** P.O. Box 24170, New Orleans, LA 70184, U.S.A.; phone: 504/488-7003. For subscriptions: 504/488-7003. 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" Warford Road, Northwood Middx. England, Northwood 29244.

May 30, 1985

Attention Members,

This letter is to inform you of a new communications system to service the industry nationwide. This new communications system is called OMA (Operators-Manufacturers Alliance). We are sure that you have read about this new communications system in all of the industry trade magazines. The OMA will provide a communication link between operators and manufacturers. Several 800 numbers will be provided for your convenience to call OMA if you have any questions about any of your equipment from any manufacturer. This includes technical information, marketing information, modifications; and to discuss your ideas and input on modifications of games presently on the street. Also, your ideas of future design of any piece of equipment—i.e. video, pinball, shuffle alley, phonograph, pool tables, foosball, etc.

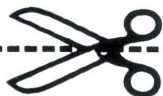
This communications system will be the start of a new bond between the manufacturers and the operators. This system will in no way exclude the distributors. It is simply providing a support system for the distributors and manufacturers to provide a better communication system for the industry. We are sure that there have been times that you, the operator, have wanted to contact a specific manufacturer in order to get advice, give advice, or to ask a specific question to a specific department, but fail to follow through with it. This is where OMA will help you, by making calls for you and getting rapid replies. Your downtime will be cut to a minimum. Those of you who have been successful in reaching the factories have sometimes been unsuccessful in reaching the person or persons to correctly handle your needs. We feel that the industry is somewhat fragmented after the video boom. Now that business is settling down, we want to bring unity to the industry through communication. There will be a \$100 a year fee to join OMA. This cost is simply a help to defray printing costs. The factories will be supporting OMA financially to offset overhead in other areas. There is a form at the bottom of this letter for you to fill out and mail to OMA with your attached check. Please reply as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Joe Peters
President, OMA

1-800/222-1537 (in Texas) then dial 993417
1-800/225-0227 (outside Texas) then dial 993417



REGISTRATION FORM

Company Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: A/C () _____

Remit \$100 with this registration form to this address:

OMA
1349 E. Seminary Drive
Fort Worth, TX 76115



Separating the Bulls from the Chips

The June 15, 1985 issue of *Play Meter* has very few pages of advertising in it. But that's not because there's still an advertising boycott against the magazine by certain manufacturers. Far from it.

The lack of advertising at this time of the year reflects a lack of confidence by many in business for the immediate future. Many equipment manufacturers and suppliers say they can't afford to advertise their products at this time of the year. Business is bad, they say.

You'd think advertisement in *Play Meter* cost millions and millions of dollars, rather than roughly what they're asking an operator to spend for one machine.

Some manufacturers and suppliers have even suggested we run their advertisements for them free of charge, or at least at great discounts. But it is not the practice of this magazine to give away free advertisements to manufacturers just to make the magazine look fat and the industry to look healthy and bullish.

If certain manufacturers and suppliers have a crisis of confidence in the future of this industry, we feel such shill advertisements would be a disservice to those who, like us, believe in the future of the coin-operated amusement industry. So we are not going to pretend they're bullish on the industry when, in fact, they're afraid to re-invest in the industry at this time. *Play Meter's* goal is not to deceive the industry, but rather to act as a mirror reflecting exactly what the industry feels about itself. And, today, many in the industry apparently don't have much faith in the future.

When solicited for advertising in this issue, one manufacturer with current product on the market even went so far as to say, "I'm not doing any advertising at this time. I'm not doing anything at all. I'd sooner put my money in the bank and draw interest, than put it back in the industry at this time. I'll get aggressive again in September."

The industry is filled right now with a lot of these self-fulfilling prophets. Business has always been bad in the summertime, they say; so business this summer will also be bad. Yet still they want operators to demonstrate confidence in the market by buying anyway.

It's a seasonal thing, they say. Things will pick up in the fall, and they'll be ready to introduce new equipment and advertise again. That's not bullish. It's just plain bull. You don't turn aggressive salesmanship and marketing on and off like a faucet. What we're faced with here is excuse-making. We're making excuses why we can't do things, instead of doing what has to be done.

Nothing comes to he who waits.

Few people realize that Steven Spielberg's greatest contribution to the motion picture industry wasn't *E.T.* It was his discovery that millions of people didn't leave the planet Earth during the summer months. Obviously, he must have noted that the only movie that had been able to outgross *Gone With the Wind*, up until that time, was a made-for-summer movie called *Jaws*. So, while those dummies at MGM and Columbia Pictures were still thinking that the only time to introduce new motion pictures was in the fall and at

Christmastime, Spielberg started releasing movies in June!

Spielberg knew there were roughly as many people on the face of the earth during the summertime as there were during the other times of the year, and those people still had a desire to be entertained. So he started a motion picture revolution, summer releases, and presto! Box office smashes.


This summer more than 80 motion pictures will be released. In fact, the motion picture industry now has three different seasons—the summer movies, the fall movies, and the winter movies.

Why won't such pioneering instincts work for the coin-operated entertainment industry? Simply because there still exists, among the industry's manufacturers, a pervasive feeling of defeatism. Instead of trying to make things happen, too many manufacturers have adopted the motto "Don't just do something! Stand there!"

Are we to believe that months with four or six letters, by nature, spell doom and defeat for the coin-operated entertainment industry? After slowly building a new product momentum, with new, exciting releases, the enthusiasm has suddenly died at the factory level. Manufacturers are apparently waiting around for operators to make the first move. And operators are waiting for manufacturers to do something. It's a stalemate where the industry keeps getting staler and staler all the time because everyone is afraid to do something out of the ordinary, to take that Spielberg risk.

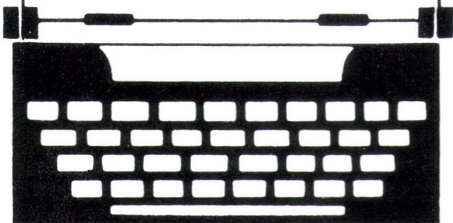
So the next time a game supplier talks to you about the need to be bullish on the industry, on the need for an industry optimism, just pick up your most recent summer issue of *Play Meter* magazine and see if he's bullish or just full of bull. That way you'll see if the person is just blowing smoke or if he really believes what he's telling you. Talk, after all, is cheap. The only way you can tell the man is by where he puts his money. Those who are afraid to re-invest in the industry and who are trying to alibi their ways around it may blame the stars in the sky or the seasons of the year for their lack of success. But the true winners will be those who didn't look for excuses.

We'd like to mouth empty words of optimism at this time, but we feel it's much more honest that we reflect the apparent defeatist, grim attitude shared by most equipment suppliers. Operators, looking to invest in the future, should be aware of what manufacturers are bullish on this industry. They're still advertising at this slack time. And operators can also tell which manufacturers lack confidence in the future; they're the ones who can't even afford to invest as much on an advertisement as they're asking an operator to invest for the purchase of a single machine.



David Pierson
Editor

Letters to the editor . . .



Vested interest?

When Frank Seninsky's article on UBI pool tables first appeared in your magazine (*Play Meter*, Oct. 1, 1983), I called to register my displeasure that a staff writer with vested interest could exercise editorial privilege to promote a competitor's product. The article should have been labeled "Advertisement" so that it could have been evaluated on the same basis as Mr. Seninsky's company's advertisement for this product in the same issue. I'm sure the majority of your readers and those receiving the recent brochure (from UBI which reprinted the article) were not aware of Seninsky's relationship to UBI.

Charles P. Milhem
President
The Valley Company
Bay City, Michigan

REPLY:

This review, as other reviews, brought out both the good and the bad aspects of UBI's pool tables.

I have reviewed many different products for the industry covering as many manufacturers as is possible for a route operator to do.

Reviewing a game usually means I have to buy it! And I'm very choosy in what I buy.

Mr. Milhem was displeased with this review because he believes (wrongly) that I have a vested interest in United. Yes, as an operator I have

several United tables on my route and am very familiar with the workings of these tables. But I have sold United, Irving Kaye, and Valley tables, according to operator requirements. I do not have any vested interests with UBI. Operators get an honest evaluation of all available equipment from me because I don't have to push product to meet quotas, and that's the case with my "relationship" with UBI as well.

Many companies have asked me to review their products, since a good review would help sales. I have taken the approach not to review products that I feel would be bad investments for operators. However, there are many good products that I have not reviewed (and Valley pool tables happen to be among them), because of limited time, and not having the game or table to work with.

As an aside, I'd like to say small companies and newcomers usually don't get the attention they deserve even when a good product is introduced. For that reason, I have tried to keep up with these companies when I felt they had a worthwhile product.

Frank Seninsky
"Frank the Crank"

Enjoyed 'Up Front'

I so enjoyed the Up Front article in the May 1, 1985 issue ("Imagination is our product").

J. D. Meacham
Director of Communications
and Research
AMOA
Chicago, Illinois

Unsatisfied customer

In November 1984, I answered an ad in *Play Meter* by Cal Distributing Company, San Jose, California, for a Pole Position II kit.

We sent a bank check to Cal Distributing Company and it was deposited in the bank. But I have not received the merchandise.

I was able to contact them on the phone once in November and they told me the check had been overlooked and they had sent the kit. Since that time I have sent them letters and many phone

calls, but have received no answer. They use a phone message answering machine and only answer those calls they want to.

As of this date, I have received no money or kit and I am sending data to Consumer Fraud, Postal Inspection, etc.

Norman Levine
President
Bell Vending, Inc.
Buffalo, New York

REPLY:

Cal-Distributing is currently in the process of procuring and sending to Mr. Norm Levine, owner of Bell Vending, one Pole Position II kit, as previously ordered.

Cal Distributing has been closed for quite a while. We are currently in the process of organizing all accounts receivables and payables, as explained to Mr. Levine on several occasions.

He has launched a one man libelous attack on the company. This is something, however, for our attorneys to resolve. Our concern is to get Mr. Levine his merchandise post-haste. Within two weeks, we will ship Mr. Levine his kit as ordered, as it will take that long for us to procure the merchandise.

We honestly hope, once Mr. Levine has received the merchandise, he will be as anxious to communicate our fulfillment of his order as he has been to complain about the length of delivery.

We sincerely hope this letter has helped straighten out this unfortunate problem.

Rick Schott
Cal Distributing Co.
San Jose, California

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A cause the industry should rally around

Operators of coin-operated amusement equipment probably have at their disposal one of the most effective means of helping locate missing children in the United States today. Video games.

A recent one-hour national telecast can probably best illustrate how a concerted effort by our industry can help combat one of the most terrifying crimes today—kidnapping. The special one-hour telecast showed pictures and told the stories of several missing children; and, within hours after the telecast, two children—both sisters—were recovered. In their case, they had been abducted by their father who had kidnapped the two girls after a court decided against giving him custody. Ironically, the two girls didn't even know they were missing. Their father just told them their mother didn't want to see them again. It was only by chance that they even learned they were, in fact, missing. Both of them are teenagers. There are thousands of similar stories in the United States.

According to nearly all published reports, the biggest percentage of missing children are victims of parental abduction like these two girls. Still more missing children are, in fact, runaways. And the rest are kidnap victims, abducted by strangers—that is, someone other than the children's natural parents or guardians.

In all three cases, we in the coin-operated amusement industry have an opportunity to help locate missing children. A volunteer organization formed by video operators has set up toll-free hot line numbers to help in this cause. The group is called the Video Operators Childrens Alert Line (VOCAL), and VOCAL has won the endorsement and support of industry groups and associations. It's time for us to do our part.

VOCAL has embarked on an ambitious program of printing posters of two missing children along with per-

sonal information about those two missing children. Also, the organization has set up a toll-free hot line to help locate these children.

What VOCAL hopes is that every operator in the country will place these posters on the sides of their games in the hope that someone playing the games will recognize one of the faces and help locate a missing child. And, quite frankly, the VOCAL program has excellent chances of success because our games are located where children congregate. And, if a child is the unknowing victim of an abduction, as was the case mentioned earlier, it's possible the child can be reunited with his family. And in the case of runaways and stranger abductions, these posters might also help locate a missing child.

For a long time now the coin-operated amusement industry has been like a rebel without a cause, it's been an industry without a purpose. Video games are a waste of money, they say. A waste of time. Video games have been criticized as being totally without socially redeeming value. And, now that the industry has settled down to a more moderate level of business, a lot of industry people are likewise doubting their purpose.

But whether the video game vigilantes like it or not, the fact remains that our video games are in nearly all the places where children congregate. And it's simply because of that that this industry has an opportunity to demonstrate that video games can help with a great social problem.

But, in truth, a program like this can work only if the entire coin-operated amusement industry gets behind it and works to make it happen. So *Play Meter* magazine will reprint the VOCAL posters in each twice monthly issues of *Play Meter*. We ask you to photocopy these posters and place them on your machines and to rotate the posters (perhaps with each machine collection). With that kind of

saturation, chances are we can help find some missing children.

You will find the new VOCAL poster in each issue of *Play Meter*. There is no copyright problem. In fact, VOCAL asks you to photocopy the poster and post it in a prominent place—like on your video games.

Additionally, to show a consolidated industry effort on this behalf, *Play Meter* is asking for poster sponsors. At the bottom of each poster, *Play Meter* will print the name and logo of the manufacturer, distributor, or operators' association or organization that donates \$250 to sponsor a particular poster.

Please note none of this money will go to *Play Meter*. In fact, those who wish to sponsor a poster, should make their checks payable to the Hide and Seek Foundation. Those wishing to maintain anonymity can request perhaps a line such as "This poster sponsored by the coin-operated amusement industry" or some similar language. This money will go to help defray the costs of maintaining the toll-free hot line.

We ask all industry organizations—public, private, profit, non-profit—to support this worthwhile industry cause. If ever there was a cause which is perfectly suited for the coin-operated amusement industry, this is it. The physical placement of our machines in locations which children frequent, and children's attraction to them attest to the good results our united industry effort may achieve.

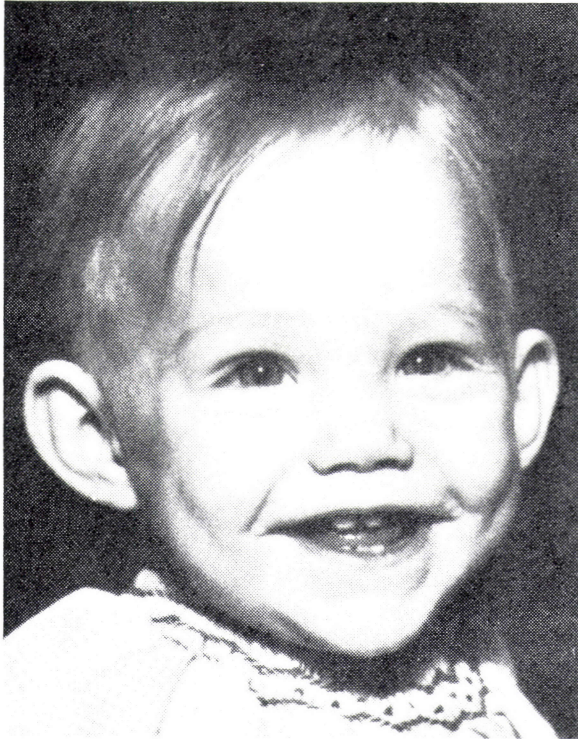
As operators, we must post these posters on our machines.

As distributors, we must encourage our operators to post the posters.

As manufacturers, we must support financially a cause which helps accentuate the positive about our industry.

Perhaps no longer an industry without a purpose, we as an industry now have an opportunity to demonstrate our social responsibility. •

MISSING



Erin Lynn Fisher

D.O.B.: January 8, 1983

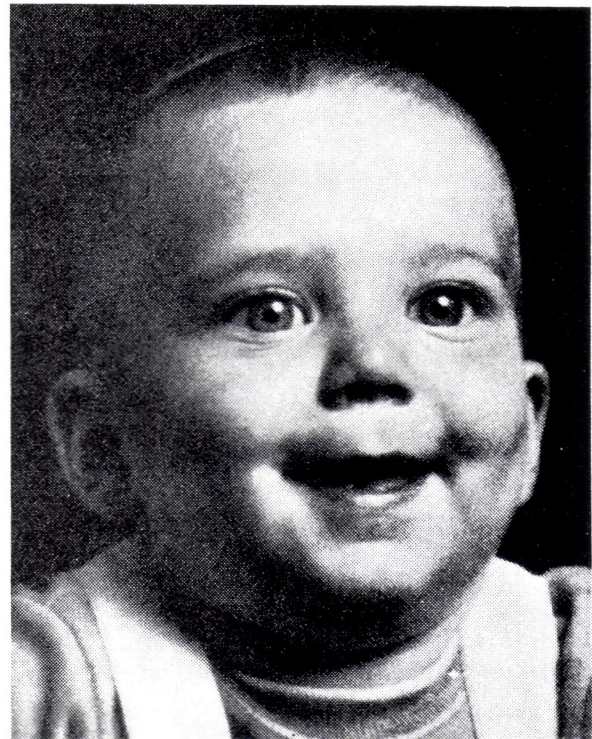
Hair: Blond

Eyes: Blue

Height: average

Weight: average

Disappeared February 13, 1984
from Lakewood, Colorado



Beau Dylan Arceneaux

D.O.B.: June 7, 1982

Hair: Blond

Eyes: Blue

Disappeared September 3, 1983
from Nacogdoches, Texas

**If you have information about either of these children please
call: 1-800-235-3535**



Volunteers Can Call (503) 232-9293

Distributed by:

Hide and Seek Foundation, Inc.

V • O • C • A • L

Video Operators Childrens Alert Line

P.O. Box 14574

Portland, OR 97214

Please make as many copies as needed and post in your locations.

NEWS

Jukebox compromise reached

The Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA) and the performing rights organizations (BMI, SESAC, and ASCAP) reached an agreement in principal on April 17 concerning the compulsory jukebox license fees imposed on jukebox operators in 1978, but jukebox operators are less than enthusiastic with the agreement.

The agreement, signed on May 13 in a Washington D.C. ceremony presided over by Representative Robert W. Kastenmeier, chairman of the House judiciary subcommittee, ended a turbulent battle in which AMOA, representing the jukebox operators, questioned the fairness of the license fee, fought to have it abolished, then agreed to a compromise for reasonable fees.

The accord allows a 20 percent (\$10) rebate in 1985 and 1986 to jukebox owners who have paid the \$50 license fee. In 1987, when the license fee will be at least \$60, a rebate will be allowed for any amount over that, provided at least 110,000 jukeboxes are registered by the end of the year. The rebate will be similar in 1988 only if 115,000 jukeboxes are registered by the end of that year. The agreement also set up a mechanism for future compromises between the parties.

The AMOA (MOA at that time) was formed in 1949 to fight the threat of losing the exemption jukebox operators had against paying a royalty fee. The exemption remained intact until Congress revamped the entire Copyright law in 1976. The exemption had been in effect since 1909.

AMOA was unable to maintain the jukebox exemption, and Congress decreed operators pay a compulsory jukebox license fee which would be paid to the performing rights societies for the operators' commercial use of the songwriters' intellectual property. The Copyright Royalty Tribunal, a governmental body set up by Congress to adjudicate jukebox copyright fees, raised the per-jukebox fee from the initial \$8 in 1978 to \$50 in 1984.

However, that increase was not related to the profitability of operating jukeboxes commercially.

Erratum

In an advertisement in the May 15 issue, *Play Meter* magazine wrongly included a toll-free telephone number for operators to call for information about the new *Triv-Quiz II* video trivia game from Status Game Corp. of Newington, Connecticut.

This was in error.

Status Game Corp. does not have a toll-free number.

Operators who may have called the toll-free number erroneously should note that there is only one *Triv-Quiz II* video trivia game, and the correct telephone number for factory information about that product is available only by calling 203/666-1960.

Play Meter apologizes to Status Game Corp. and to its customers whom our error may have confused. •

For *Play Meter* magazine's annual operators' survey in 1978 showed the average weekly gross on a jukebox was \$52. And operators were being required to pay an \$8 fee. Then in 1984, when the per jukebox rate was increased to \$50, *Play Meter's* survey showed operators averaging a weekly gross on their jukeboxes of \$40.

The declining profitability of jukebox operators was reflected in a continuing decline in the number of jukeboxes licensed by the federal government. In 1978, 143,396 jukeboxes were registered with the copyright office. However, the number was down to 103,062 in 1984. But the copyright office and the performing rights societies maintain that the decline reflects a growing number of operators not registering their jukeboxes. So the new agreement between the AMOA and the performing rights societies included the quota of registrations.

Prior to that agreement, U.S. Representative John Breaux of Louisiana and Senator Ed Zorinsky of Nebraska introduced a bill to Kastenmeier's judiciary subcommittee for final resolution. Kastenmeier, who had stated he disagreed with the Copyright Tribunal's decision to raise the fee from \$8 to \$50, pushed for a compromise resolution between the parties through negotiations in place of the Breaux/Zorinsky bill.

The Breaux/Zorinsky bill called for a one time \$50 royalty fee on new jukeboxes and a one time \$25 fee on used. AMOA and the performing rights societies met on numerous

occasions with the objective of reaching a compromise.

The May 13 signing of the agreement was the culmination of these meetings, and a disappointment to operators. Said David Dougan of Indiana Amusement and Music Operators Association, "The general attitude among operators is that nothing was gained. In just two years (1987) we will be worse off than we are now."

Added Thomas Wycaver of Colorado Coin Industries, "The fee just keeps going up and it's just too high. This fee has hurt the jukebox business."

David Goudeau of the Louisiana Amusement and Music Operators Association put it like this. "The agreement wasn't what we hoped for. Money talks, contrary to what anyone believes, and the performing rights organizations have a lot more at their disposal than AMOA does. I guess we better take what we can get."

And Kem Thom of the Associated Buyers' Club in Chicago said, "The AMOA did what it had to. I think we came out ahead under the circumstances."

The circumstances Tom referred to were obvious to some operators. The performing rights societies, with unlimited resources, could have held out far longer than AMOA. And though operators were disgruntled over the outcome of the negotiations, all admitted that AMOA did the best it could. "ASCAP was prepared to fight until AMOA went bankrupt," said Goudeau. "So what we ended up with was all AMOA could have done."

Thom added, "Operators will benefit a lot more in the long run than if nothing was done. It was a no-win situation, but we got everything we could."

And Dougan agreed with the others, saying, "I'm not happy about the decision, but I'm not critical of AMOA. It was at a stalemate. I don't think AMOA could have done more against the performing rights soci-

eties. They have more resources."

And if a favorable aspect of this agreement can be found, it is in the coming together of the two sides. Said Thom, "They used to look down on us. But now they realize we are businessmen and the industry is not all the gold and glitter it was reputed to be. I think they now understand and won't treat us like nobodies again."

AMOA conceded that the agreement may not be all it hoped for, but justified it by saying in a newsletter to members, "While it (the agreement) does not go as far as AMOA would have liked, the Government Relations Committee took into account considerable expense and uncertainty of a prolonged legislative battle. The copyright societies have far greater resources than AMOA and are prepared to spend whatever it takes to block legislation they oppose. As a result of this agreement...AMOA will have devel-

oped considerable rapport in Washington by its willingness to negotiate."

The leaders of the performing rights organizations, Hal David of ASCAP, Edward Cramer of BMI, and Robert Thompson of SESAC and president of AMOA John Estridge issued this joint statement at the conclusion of the May 13 meeting, "This agreement opens the door to cooperation between creators and copyright owners of music and jukebox operators—cooperation that has never existed before."

For the future, jukebox owners, although receiving a modest rebate for the next two years, will pay higher fees after that. The compulsory license fee will be no less than \$60 in 1987 and probably in the \$65 to \$75 range. And in specifying a registration quota, based on current registration figures, operators should be prepared to pay the higher fee that year. ●



AAMA elects board of directors

Members of the American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA) 1985 board of directors elected May 17 during the association's annual meeting in San Francisco are:

Back row (left-right): Norman Goldstein, Monroe Manufacturing and Distributing; Frank Ballouz, Nintendo of America; John Britz, Bally Manufacturing; Bob Lloyd, Data East, U.S.A.; Paul Moriarity, Taito America.

Front row (left-right): Joe Dillon, Williams Electronics; Ira Bettelman, C.A. Robinson; Joe Robbins, Kitcorp; Shane Breaks, Atari Games.

Louisiana to define gambling devices

In an attempt to curb the proliferation of video credit poker machines in Louisiana, representative Emile "Peppi" Bruneau introduced a bill whereby gambling equipment would be more accurately defined by law. According to Bob Nims, AMA distributor in New Orleans, "The bill stemmed from a disagreement in definitions of a gambling machine between the state attorney's office and the Department of Public Safety."

The current law states that a gambling device is any slot machine, any machine with a cash automatic pay out device, or a pinball or other ball machine equipped with a mechanism to release the number of free plays.

The new bill will retain the above definition of a gambling device but will add the following: Any video machine which accepts coins or credits for the purpose of advancing

the odds or benefits to the player for successful completion of the object of play or which may reward a cumulative total in excess of fifteen games or replays.

A comment made by one of the house members before the vote was called, brings back memories of what many opponents of gray area games said could happen. Representative Singleton stated, "If we're going to outlaw some types of video games, let's just outlaw them all," according to the Louisiana Amusement and Music Operators (LAMO) president David Goudeau, "When Representative Singleton made that statement, several representatives left the room so the vote was delayed another week."

And though Goudeau attended the meeting, the LAMO has decided to remain neutral on the issue. Said Goudeau, "The board

took a vote and decided we would not be for the amendment or against it. The board felt that no matter which side we took, we would lose members. (The association currently has about 70 members.) We will make no stand whatsoever on this bill." Nims added that the association is in a transition period while looking for a new executive director and were unable to have a meeting to determine the facts.

Should the bill pass, the credit pokers will still be illegal but law enforcement officers will be able to confiscate games by definition instead of having to observe payouts as is the case now. Said Goudeau, "If the bill passes we'll be right where we are but they can take the games on sight. However, if the bill does not pass, the games will still be illegal, it is just a little harder to prove."

Seidenfeld resigns, Jenkins promoted

Glenn K. Seidenfeld, Jr., vice president, secretary and general counsel, has decided to leave Bally Manufacturing Corporation to pursue a new career in commercial

real estate development effective July 1, 1985.

Robert E. Mullane, president and chairman of the board, announced that Neil E. Jenkins will be promoted to secretary and general counsel of Bally, July 1, 1985.

"We are extremely sorry to see Glenn leave. He has served Bally admirably, and we wish him the best in his new endeavor," Mullane said. "However, we are extremely fortunate to have an attorney of Neil Jenkins' caliber and talent already serving the company which will make for a smooth transition," Mullane added.

Seidenfeld, who joined Bally in 1976 after associations with a major Chicago law firm and the Securities Exchange Commission in Washington, D.C., will remain as a consultant

for Bally for the next year and a half, according to Mullane.

Jenkins joined Bally in August, serving as associate general counsel and assistant secretary. ●



Glenn K. Seidenfeld, Jr.



Neil E. Jenkins

Marcus and Pellegrini form Atlas Distributing

Jerry Marcus and Ed Pellegrini have opened Atlas Distributing, Inc. in Chicago. The two industry veterans had formed J & D Distributors with the purchase of Atari Distributors in Chicago. The two then purchased the assets of Atlas Music Company and moved into the existing building, changing the name to Atlas Distributing.

Marcus noted that many of the Atlas personnel will remain with Atlas Distributing, including Mac Brier, who will remain in sales. Paul Wiederaenders and Pat Thorton, formerly with Atari Distributing, will join the new Atlas Distributing staff. Mike Mazzaroli will join the staff as

parts manager. Mazzaroli was with London Distributing for the past nine years.

Marcus said the company will retain the address and phone number of Atlas Music, 2122 North Western Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60647. The company's telephone number is 312/276-5005. Though the building is undergoing renovations, Atlas Distributing is open for business.

Marcus said the company, which will carry most major lines, including Rock-Ola jukeboxes, has as its goal "to be Chicago's one-stop distributorship."

VonderHaar joins Play Meter

Joseph A. VonderHaar, Jr. has joined the *Play Meter* staff as director of advertising. He helped coordinate the AOE show this past March and was asked to stay on. Prior to joining *Play Meter*, he worked for Johnson & Johnson subsidiaries, Iolab and Vascor, Proctor and Gamble, and the Carnation Company in various sales management positions.

Said VonderHaar on his new position, "I was introduced to *Play Meter* and the coin-operated amusement industry while selling booth space for this year's AOE show. I thought nothing of the remarks from exhibitors at the show who told me over and over again that they were impressed, not only with the show's attendance, but also with the quality of buyers, until I realized that *Play Meter* was, in fact, the sole vehicle for promoting this industry event. Right there I saw firsthand the influence that *Play Meter* has in the coin-operated

amusement industry. In my years in other industries, I have never seen a magazine so widely read and regarded by the industry it serves as *Play Meter*. I'm excited about *Play Meter*'s role in this industry and the challenge it offers for me."



Joseph A. VonderHaar, Jr.

THE CALENDAR

July 9

Missouri Coin Machine Council Annual Business Meeting, The Gas Light Room, Macon, Missouri. Contact Art Hunolt, 816/359-3022.

July 12-13

Pennsylvania Amusement and Music Machine Association's Annual Convention, Valley Forge Sheraton/Convention Center. Contact PAMMA at 717/737-5675. Toll-free in Pennsylvania 800/521-7778.

July 13

Washington Amusement & Music Operators Association Quarterly Meeting/Nomination of Officers, Thunderbird Motor Inn, Yakima, Washington. Contact Yvonne Kline, 509/457-5891.

July 19-21

Minnesota Operators of Music & Amusements Annual Summer Outing & Seminars, Radisson Arrowwood Resort, Alexandria, Minnesota. Contact Hy Sandler, 612/927-6662.

July 19-21

Montana Coin Machine Operators Association Annual Meeting, Levee-goods Convention Center, Kalispell, Montana. Contact Phil Benson, 406/543-5119.

August 16-18

Wyoming Candy, Tobacco, Coin Vendors Association Annual Convention, Holiday Inn, Sheridan, Wyoming. Contact Tom Kilry, 307/635-6467.

September 5-8

North Carolina Coin Operators Association, North Carolina Exposition of Games & Music, Adam's Mark Hotel, Charlotte, North Carolina. Contact Bobby Earp, 919/584-5833.

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Auction held to help missing children

Thirty operators and distributors, and manufacturers, Konami, Greyhound, and Data East donated equipment to an auction held May 18 in Portland, Oregon, to benefit missing children.

The Video Operators Children Alert Line (VOCAL) was started by the Skill Game Operators Associa-

tion in Oregon in September 1983 and merged with the Hide and Seek Foundation in September 1983. Both agencies devoted to finding missing children benefitted from the auction which raised \$3,350 for VOCAL.

State associations throughout America have shown their concern

for missing children by joining the VOCAL Program which is now active in 12 states with 1,200 participating operators. VOCAL sends operators posters of missing children they can circulate in their locations, and stickers to be placed on machines containing "800" numbers and local emergency numbers children can call when help is needed. Money raised by the auction will be used to fund these programs.

The benefit auction was coordinated by the Parent's Club of a local school that arranged for the hall and over 60 volunteer workers. A silent auction was conducted during the first hour allowing guests to bid on items donated by local merchants including electric beer signs, mirrors, free dinners, movie passes, an RCA/VCR, and gift certificates. Also available were books designed for instructing children in personal safety as well as video tapes of "Strong Kids Safe Kids" starring Henry Winkler.

The theme of child safety was emphasized as Hide and Seek volunteers and local police finger printed and offered video tape printing of children.

Hide and Seek has assisted in the recovery of more than 150 children already this year compared to 91 recoveries in all in 1984.

The Hide and Seek Foundation and its VOCAL Program are made up entirely of volunteers. Since there is no charge for services rendered, the foundation relies on the generosity of individuals and corporations to keep its program and services functioning. If you are interested in making a donation or sponsoring a fund raiser, please contact Chet Thompson, National VOCAL chairman at 1410 N.W. Johnson St., Portland, Oregon 97209. Telephone 503/294-0746. •



Auction volunteer, Uomonic Phillips, demonstrating use of Shuffle Bowler donated by Benjamin Vending.



Founders of the Hide and Seek Foundation, Linda and Ernie Rivers, welcome the public to the day's activities.

Greater Southern hosts open house

Greater Southern Distributing Co., Atlanta, Georgia, hosted an Open House, May 10 and 11. Its customers were treated to great food, great buys on new and used equipment, and service and general information seminars conducted by factory personnel from Rock-Ola, Nintendo, Dynamo, and Arachnid. There were also representatives from Bally Midway and Atari.

Greater Southern, with the co-operation of Atari, Bally Midway, Dynamo, Konami, Nintendo, and Williams, presented a number of door prizes.

According to vice president Rubin Piha, "Greater Southern has demonstrated that it is fully committed to the continued growth and development of the coin-op amusement industry. Through such affairs we are able to better educate and inform our customers of the latest developments in the industry in order that they might realize a more profitable and efficient level of business." •

Williams reports 2nd quarter earnings

Williams Electronics reported second quarter net income of \$824,000 or 11 cents per share compared to a net loss of \$2,979,000 or 40 cents per share in the second quarter of fiscal 1984. Revenues of \$22,132,000 for the second quarter of fiscal 1985 were up 25 percent over second quarter revenues of \$17,665,000 for the corresponding period in the preceding year.

Louis J. Nicastro, chairman of the board and president, said that while the coin-operated amusement game industry as a whole remains soft, Williams' income reflects significant improvement in coin-operated revenues and operating results, and further improvement is anticipated in the third quarter. •



Glazman nabbed for ACS contribution

Digital Controls executive vice president Marty Glazman is carted off to jail by two police officers. His arrest, and subsequent conviction for impersonating an executive, was part of a countrywide sweep of prominent Atlanta area businessmen conducted on behalf of the American Cancer Society. The ACS "Jailathon" resulted in a plea of guilty by Glazman who was released after paying his fine, a contribution on the behalf of Digital Controls to the ACS fund drive. •

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Pete Entringer

AVA returns to its roots with open house

Audio Visual Amusements (AVA) of St. Louis held its open house May 29, celebrating the new spring line of coin-op amusement equipment. A strong turnout of St. Louis area operators attended the one-day exhibit, as did representatives from 15 different factories.

But perhaps more noteworthy than the annual spring line was the simultaneous celebration May 29 of AVA's move to 1901 Delmar Avenue. For Peter Entringer, president of AVA, the move to the new location was, in fact, a move back to where he started in business 23 years ago.

"In October, 1962, I was on my way to Baltimore to work for a tool manufacturer," Entringer recounted. "I stayed with some friends in St. Louis for about a week and, for some reason, answered a job advertisement for a vending machine salesman position. I was interviewed for the job here at 1901 Delmar Avenue and hired by George Glass

for what was then called George Glass Distributing. And here I am today, 23 years later, back at 1901 Delmar Avenue."

While a move to earlier quarters might mean a move to less spacious quarters to most in this industry during this post-video game bust era, with Entringer, that's not the case. The move from his previous address marks also an increase in square footage from 13,400 to 15,000 square feet at his present address.

The open house, besides celebrating the recent move, also marked the first time Pete Entringer has represented the Williams Electronics line. That's a line he picked up as a result of his recent purchase of L&R Distributing from Lew Rubin.

Entringer describes today's operators as "wise" and "conservative" and says, "They have increased their level of debt and are ready to buy. But," he continues, "having been trapped once before, they're wary and it'll have to be quality merchandise."

Toward that goal, he says his operators "will try what I recommend, but they buy what makes sense to them. And that's based solely on the cashbox results."

Entringer says most of his operators today are "kits and systems buyers" but added, "I don't think

the ordinary kit business will be around much longer. Smart operators will be buying systems like Nintendo's and Cinematronics'."

He said action during his open house reflected that trend, with Nintendo and Cinematronics systems doing extremely strong.

"I thought *Mayhem* was a good game," Entringer said. "But, after seeing every operating company in here today—and I mean every operating company—purchase *Mayhem*, either as a dedicated game or as a systems kit, I have great hope for Cinematronics for the future."

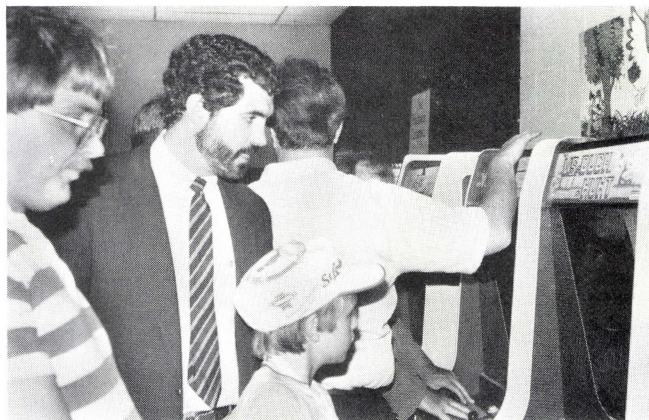
He qualified that by adding, "A system is only as good as the software in it, however, and now Cinematronics is going to have to keep it up, like Nintendo."

Nintendo is a favorite subject of Entringer's. He has steadfastly represented that company's product line since the days of *Radarscope* and *Sheriff*, long before *Donkey Kong*. And so he takes special pride in his fulfilled prediction concerning this game maker.

"Three years ago," Entringer said, "I predicted Nintendo would be number one in this industry. And I was right. And that's because they did something right by the operator. Since late March alone, I have gone through over 500 UNI system kits.



Rob Boldt of Cinematronics shows off the company's *Mayhem* 2002.



Frank Ballouz of Nintendo looks on as a player tries his hand at *VS. Duck Hunt*.

That should tell you how strong Nintendo is right now in this market.”

He told *Play Meter*, “I think we’re coming back as an industry. Most of the people who are going to be shook out are getting shaken out, and I see the survivors getting stronger. I see any further shakeouts coming at the factory level. As for that, I see four or five factories, with a number of smaller factories serving the industry.”

Among the product exhibited at the AVA open house were the following: Nintendo’s VS. system with games *Excitebike*, *Ice Climber*, *Golf*, *Baseball*, and *Super Punch-Out!*, and Cinematronics’ Cinemat system with *Mayhem 2002*. In pinball, Premier Technology showed its *Chicago Cubs*, *El Dorado*, and *Ice Fever*; Williams, its *Sorcerer* and *Space Shuttle*; and Zaccaria, its *Magic Castle* and *Clown*. Other videos exhibited included *Pitfall II*, *Lost Caverns* from Sega; *Inferno* from Williams; *Roller Jammer* from Nichibutsu; and *Road Fighter* and *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* from Konami. Nomac’s *Pub Time Darts*, jukebox offerings from Wurlitzer and Seeburg, foosball and pool tables from Dynamo, and a shuffle bowling game (*Strike Zone*) from United. Also exhibited were the countertop Digital Controls game *Tactician* and the upright trivia game from Merit Industries, *Trivia Whiz*.

A number of companies offered enticing door prizes at the St. Louis showing. Among them were Nintendo, which gave away a Honda 70 dirt bike; Cinematronics, which donated a *Mayhem* upright video; Digital Controls, which gave away a *Tactician* countertop game; Konami, which gave a *Super Basketball* kit; and Merit, which donated a trivia kit. Others donating prizes included Williams, which gave away a *Sorcerer* pingame; Premier, which donated some Chicago Cubs baseball equipment; Seeburg, which contributed with a Sony disc player; and Dynamo, which offered one of its home foosball tables. Nomac pitched in with five home party darts. Universal contributed to the operator giveaway with an *Indoor Soccer* kit. And PGD of San Diego offered one of its trivia kits. ●



AVA’s parts department did brisk business all day during the open house.



Representatives from 15 factories join Pete Entringer and the AVA crew for a team picture.



Dynamo’s Bill Rickett (center) shows one of the construction features of the factory’s pool table.



COINMAN INTERVIEW



TODD ERICKSON

Todd Erickson started his own company, Summit Amusements in 1974 in St. Paul, Minnesota. But he had been in the business many years before that, cleaning machines in his uncle's arcades. That first job, cleaning machines, apparently made quite an impression on young Todd because today he is one of the most outspoken operators on the need for operators to clean up their act and work their machines.

Todd, who is a member of both the AMOA and his state association (Music Operators of Minnesota), operates close to 1,000 machines today. His employee payroll varies seasonally from four to 20. Cost conscious, Todd believes a great part of the industry's survival depends upon operators cutting their costs and the manufacturers standardizing their equipment to help operators achieve that goal. A hands-on technical man at heart, Todd says his route consists of about 70 percent videos, 20 percent pinballs, five percent pool tables, and five percent jukeboxes.

He argues that operators blow away a lot of their potential game profits by not properly adjusting their games. While admitting that he's going more and more toward video game conversions, Todd insists that his smart game adjustments have helped him milk more life out of the original games than most other operators. Says he, "The average operator is probably heavier into conversions than I am because of what I do in terms of game adjustments."

A speaker at last year's AMOA and the recent AOE

shows, Todd lectures operators on the specifics of game adjustments. His seminars were strongly received at both shows because of his down-to-earth approach to game operating.

A longtime resident in the St. Paul, Minnesota, area, Todd and his wife, Leslie, have two children, aged six and three.

PLAY METER: What's the main thing operators should be looking at today?

ERICKSON: Game adjustments. A tremendous amount of the games come from the factory set on the conservative side, which they should be when they're brand new. After all, if it's a brand new game, you don't want to give it away and have people playing for an excessive amount of time on it. But, as the game gets older, you have to back it off so the player can get a little more for his quarter.

You see, we're selling entertainment, and entertainment is worth more when it's new. It's just like with the movie industry. You won't find first-run movies running for 99 cents. It's generally the movies that have been around for awhile that are running for 99 cents. Movie theaters know they have to make adjustments, and we have to do the same thing in our business.

PLAY METER: You say the games coming out of the factories are set conservatively. Do you find that they are generally set right?

ERICKSON: I'm saying they may be set right. Let me give you an example. Bally's *Eight Ball Deluxe* was set right, but Williams's *Joust* pinball was not set right. When it came from the factory, it would award only 13 percent replays, and ten percent of that was match. By contrast, *Eight Ball Deluxe* was giving 30 percent replays. The *Joust* was set way too low, and that was reflected in my earnings.

So I reset the *Joust* and put it out again. And that *Joust* pinball did as well as my *Karate Champ* and *Pole Position II* combined! The reaction to the *Joust* pinball after I made the game adjustments was just phenomenal. It was the dominant, number one piece, doubling anything else in the location. Here was a game that was originally set to award 13 percent replays; and, by adjusting that to award 30 to 35 percent, I had a super game. And that's just one example of a game the manufacturer couldn't sell; but, by me, the operator, readjusting the game, I was able to put it out there and beat the best games in the country with it. So what I'm saying is you've got to stay on top of game adjustments. If you got that game initially and recalibrated it, it would earn half again what an *Eight Ball Deluxe* makes. Now, it doesn't have the location longevity of an *Eight Ball Deluxe*; so you'll end up moving it every three or four months. But to get that kind of income out of it is sensational.

PLAY METER: You mentioned a Williams and a Bally pinball. Do you perceive any tendencies on the part of any of the factories in this area of initial game adjustments?

ERICKSON: Actually, you have to take each game individually. But Williams, if anything, tends to run its games tighter out of the chute. *Space Shuttle*, for instance, is in the 15-20 percent range; but, for a game like *Space Shuttle*, I like to run it conservatively in the beginning because if people are going to stand in line to play it, it makes sense to do that. That goes back to what I said before about brand new games. And if a game is going to attract more players to it, like *Space Shuttle* did, and increase my pinball revenue 33 to 50 percent, like it did, I'm going to run that game lean. If I have that newness going for me, I don't want to give it away. If they're standing in line for 50 cents, are you going to drop the price to 25 cents? Not hardly. If they're going to stand in line and pay 50 cents for 60 seconds—like they did when lasers first came out—you might as well get the big money.

PLAY METER: What are you looking for to clue you in when to start making game adjustments?

ERICKSON: You're looking for a drop in income. Once the game starts dropping below that number one, two, or three spot, that's when I start making my adjustments. I will never monkey with my best game. I don't care if it's playing 60 seconds or five minutes. If it's my number one game, I'm very hesitant to make adjustments with it. But, after it drops below, say, the top three games, I try to find

out what is going on and why.

I know that somewhere between 25-50 percent replays is where I want to be. If it's a good game, maybe I can get away with a 25-30 percent range. If it's a game that's somewhat marginal or that I bought used or older, I may be running it in the 40-50 percent range. And if the game doesn't have much substance to it, I may find I'm better off just to rotate it to another location.

PLAY METER: All this pinball percentaging, how much does it translate into in terms of collections?

ERICKSON: It means a 30 to 40 percent increase in revenue. And a lot of operators out there today don't realize that. They don't realize what can be gained by game adjustments. They say things like they don't have time to make game adjustments. That's generally when I ask them if they operate jukeboxes. And, if they do, I ask if they just go into their one-stop, close their eyes, and



take whatever records they happen to grab. And, of course, they tell me no, that they take the time to choose what records to play. So then I tell them that game represents a significant investment on their part, and how come they don't have ten minutes to adjust that game if it can mean 30-40 percent more money to them? And then they'll tell me they never thought of it that way.

I think, to a large part, people in this industry just got lazy. They got to the point where they just lost track of reality. They got used to putting out a lot of marginal videos and having people stand in line to play them. But those days are gone. The player today is more educated and much more selective about what he plays.

PLAY METER: What about readjusting the pingames from three balls to five balls?

ERICKSON: I tried that during the video boom when pinballs were down, and I got a temporary increase, but it

wasn't a lasting thing. People like to win today; so I would rather dole out more play in terms of free games rather than go to five balls. But, again, every game is different. Five balls might be still another avenue for games that are commercially dead. There's no one right answer on how to operate the games. I can do things which might work for me and three or four other people; and another person might do the same exact thing and it won't work for him. Extra balls might do it for somebody.

Here's something I did once that worked. I had a game that just didn't seem to go; so what I did was throw in an extra free play where it's not supposed to be. And then, all of a sudden, kids started playing the game. And you know why? They thought the game was broken, and that's why they were winning. That actually worked for me. Now, it may not be 100 percent on the up-and-up, but if something works and brings in the money, then that's what I want.

Something else you should be looking for on your pinballs is how many people win at each replay level. I bought a used pingame called *Split Second* from my distributor. In fact, I bought every one he had. I checked the bookkeeping functions on the game and found that on one of the games no one had ever beaten the second replay level. The games were still on the factory settings. So I reset the percentages and put the game back on location. And the operator who had this game before me and had sold it to the distributor asked me why I bought those dogs. He said they were no good. So I opened the coin door and showed him the meter, and he was stunned. Those supposed dogs, if set up correctly, can, in many cases, outscore *Eight Ball Deluxe*. *Split Second* was just a superb game. It also happens to be Harry Williams's last game.

PLAY METER: You were talking about the importance of monitoring both first and second replay levels. How many players should be able to reach the second replay level?

ERICKSON: At least a fourth to a half of the people who make it to the first one. You see, you've got to give your players the opportunity to win. You have to give him his money's worth. You want to treat him like you would want to be treated yourself.

PLAY METER: So you're saying the operator shouldn't begrudge giving the player additional playing time?

ERICKSON: Exactly. Every good game is a game people have learned to play so well that they can play excessively long. *Galaga* is an example of a long-playing game that's still a good game today.

Actually, the operator may have, to a certain extent, gotten a little greedy when the games were going good. If he had his way, he would keep his games playing at a minute and a half. In fact, that's the explanation I got from Atari when I asked why they put *Food Fight* out at such a tight setting. *Food Fight* is a game that came out of

the factory at the wrong setting. I bought that game on a closeout, reset it, and it became my number one game for two to four weeks. So, when I asked Atari why they set the game so tight, they said they had asked some Bay area operators; and the Bay area operators said they wanted a minute and a half game so they could get the maximum dollar return.

But you can't begrudge the player for playing for a long time on the game if he gets good at it. If you have a game that the player spent a lot of money learning to play, I want him to be able to play for at least 10 or 15 minutes. But I'm talking about maybe one percent of my players. If we look at how the business changed, back when a game was doing \$300 to \$400 a week, the game was going steady; so extra playing time meant lost revenue. But today, with games doing \$50 to \$75 a week, the operator can afford to let the player play a little longer.

PLAY METER: You mentioned how adjusting your pins can improve collections. Now our conversation seems to be getting into videos. What can an operator do there to improve his revenues?

ERICKSON: Of course, we're not dealing with percentages of replays there. What we're dealing with there is game time. Let me give you an example of Williams's *Robotron*. When that game first came out, it averaged only 60 seconds per play. Now I don't know how Williams did their testing, but I know that game started out immediately with good income, then dropped very quickly. It was at that point that I made my game adjustments. I went to a more liberal game difficulty setting. I added two lives to the player's playing time, and the game shot right back up. Even today, there are times when my *Robotrons* are getting into the top ten. Now, with *Robotron*, it's to the point where I've gone back to the original factory settings because I allowed my players to get very good on the game. You have to realize that every game is different.

Let's take another game, Atari's *Tempest*. *Tempest* is a difficult game. So I will always go to five lives and put them on easy settings. I will generally drop my bonus level to around 16,000 on that game. If you make those kinds of adjustments, you'll find it's still an excellent filler piece. I took that game during the height of *Ms. Pac-Man* and, by loosening it up, was able to have my *Tempests* beating *Ms. Pac-Man*. Again, it's simply a matter of giving the player his money's worth. You're dealing in an entertainment industry where there's no one right answer.

While I'm on the subject of Atari games, I'd like to mention something about its newest game, *Marble Madness*. Very creative game, a super hardware system. It's the first of the new generation, as far as I'm concerned, by the new Atari; but I'm a little disappointed by the cabinet because you can spill a Coke in the speakers and it will run down onto the circuit board. But the main thing is the game is too hard. They gave us, I think, just three

adjustments on it. But we need a little more adjustment leeway on it. In fact, I think it's to the point where they should release another set of memory chips, allowing us wider parameters in this particular game. It is probably the highest initial grossing game I've received in the past year and a half, except for the game's shortness of life; and that's something that could be corrected.

In this area of allowing wide parameters for game adjustments, I'll pinpoint Williams. On the Williams's games, we can adjust the lives anywhere up to nine, if my memory serves me right; and, by adjusting it, give the player a fair return for his quarter. The Japanese, for some reason, have a different attitude on the games, and I hope they will start evaluating this particular area because, generally, we are very limited with them. They're only now starting to come across with a few more adjustments as far as the difficulty ranges; but, as a general rule, there are not as many potential adjustments in the Japanese games.

PLAY METER: How much leeway should be built into the game adjustment parameters by the manufacturers?

ERICKSON: It should range from very easy, in case I want to place the game around little children, maybe in a pizza parlor when it's a couple of years old, to so difficult that 99 percent of the people can't play it. We need to have enough parameters where we can adjust as necessary so we can get our return on our investment.

PLAY METER: Then you wouldn't agree that some games are made for skilled players and others are made for less skilled players?

ERICKSON: A lot of that is just game adjustments.

PLAY METER: Are there any other areas where an operator can help his video game collections by game adjustments?

ERICKSON: The high score to date can be very useful to the operator. On pinballs, to have a realistic high score to date can mean anywhere between a three to five percent increase in revenues. On videos, it can mean anywhere from a two to five percent difference. Maybe that doesn't sound like a lot; but a lot of times today we may be dealing with less than a two percent bottom line profit.

I have a friendly competitor up here who's a big operator, Norm Pink. And he can attest to the importance of resetting the high scores. He has his field collector reset all those numbers. Norm figures, even in a good-sized location where it might take his man 15 minutes to even a half hour to reset all the games, it's still worth doing it. And he's right. It can have an effect on your income. If you have an *Eight Ball Deluxe*, for example, that has a high score of 7,000,000, that feature is doing you absolutely no good. In fact, it might even be hurting you because the average player knows there's no way he can reach that. If you travel around this country, you'll find that a lot of games obviously haven't had their high

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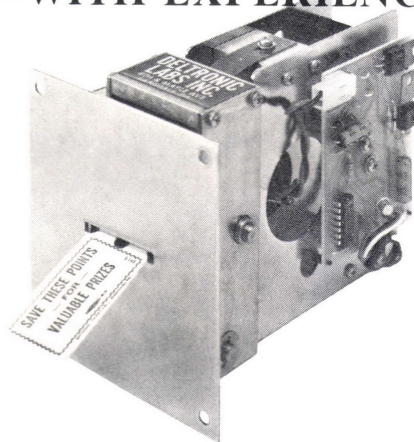
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scores reset in a long, long time. I went into this one arcade recently where they had several *Centipedes*, and every single one of the *Centipedes* was maxed out at 999,990. There's no telling how long it's been since those high scores were reset.

But this is another area where the manufacturers can help the operator. If they would just put it in their bookkeeping that the game automatically resets the high score to date every 500 or 1,000 plays or whatever, that would save the operator the expense of even having to reset the high scores to date.

PLAY METER: But, in general, you'd say there's more the average operator could be doing to improve his collections than he's presently doing?

ERICKSON: Let's put it this way. As I travel around, I ask such things as "Are dart machines any good?" And some operators will tell me they're absolutely no good because the location can put up its own dart game and the customers can play for nothing. And other operators will tell me that dart machines are the most fantastic things they've got. They'll tell me all their dart machines are doing good; and, since they're bringing in more people, the other equipment is also going up. And I'm finding the same thing with countertop games. Some people will tell me they're fabulous, that if you place them right they can earn as much if not more than an upright. And others will tell me they're just no good, that they just can't place them.

PLAY METER: And what does that tell you?

ERICKSON: That the operator can do with his business what he wants to do with it. If he wants to do some creative marketing and go out and hustle things, he's going to find out they're going to work for him. If the operator has a positive feeling toward his business, and he realizes what he can do, then he can do it. Positive attitude is the biggest thing today. Our industry is not what it was three or four years ago. But, if we work a little harder and do what has to be done, it can still be a very viable business. The operator has to have a little more pride in what he puts out there. A lot of the games that are out there today look like they're early 1970 vintage. They're filthy. A lot of the conversion games are disastrous. If you have a *Robotron* out there that looks like it's seven or eight years old, you can't expect it to make anything for you. The operator has to realize this is a business that has to be worked; and, if you don't work at it, you're not going to make any money.

PLAY METER: You mentioned that manufacturers should put into their bookkeeping function a way for the machine to automatically erase the high scores after 500 to 1,000 plays. Are there other ways the manufacturers could help the operator?

ERICKSON: Yes, but first the manufacturers are going to have to understand how much it costs for us to operate a machine. I've talked to any number of manufacturer representatives, and none of them are really aware of how

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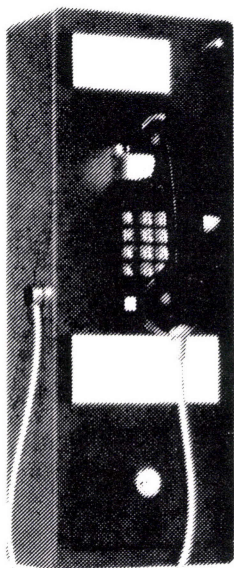
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much if costs to operate a machine. The average pinball is probably approaching \$20 a week to operate. During the open forum at this year's AOE, one operator said his cost for operating a pinball is \$18.50; so what I'm giving is a ballpark figure, plus or minus 25 percent. Videos cost about \$8 a week to operate, again plus or minus 15 percent. So it averages out at about \$10 a week to operate a machine. And that's not counting the actual cost of the game or its depreciation or anything else. That's how much it costs if somebody just gives me the game free and tells me to operate it.

Now, I mentioned this to one factory representative, a well-known figure in this industry, and he couldn't believe me when I told him the average cost was \$10 a week. His exact response was, "Are you sure you're right, Todd? That sounds awfully high." And that's what I'm trying to point out. The manufacturers don't have any idea what our costs are. If we get a ball under the rubber, for instance, it may be a very simple matter to correct; but what they don't realize is you have to send a man out there to remove the ball from under the rubber. And maybe he corrects the original problem and maybe he doesn't. And, by that time, you've lost anywhere up to \$25 to correct the problem.

Flipper assemblies are another problem. Generic defects are directly related to cost savings, and flippers are the biggest culprits. And the biggest culprits on the pinballs are the flipper assemblies. And the biggest culprits on the flipper assembly is the coil stop. We need a lot of beef back there, but some manufacturers are still using the smaller screws. Now, if we have to send a guy out to take the flipper assembly apart to put in a couple of more screws, it costs us \$30 to \$35.

In another area, if the operator looks at what he's purchased in bulbs for the past three, four, or five years for his games, it's just horrendous. The manufacturers could help us out here by simply running it at slightly less voltage. We could double the lives of our bulbs. It costs me money when it takes my man a half hour or 45 minutes to do something that should be only a three to five minute job. For instance, just look at the savings if we had die-cast doors that have two holes set apart at a standardized distance. That way, if I want to put a security bar across the front, it'll take my man just a matter of minutes because I'll know if I send him with a bar they're all going to fit the same. I'm not interested in having my man go there, then have to go to a hardware store to get some more washers because it turns out something's different on that game. When that happens, it wastes up to a half hour or 45 minutes doing a job that should only take three to five minutes. If we were standardized, we wouldn't have all that guesswork.

PLAY METER: The need for standardization is a big part of the Todd Erickson message. Why is that?

ERICKSON: Non-standardization is creating high costs for me. Locks, for instance, are one of my biggest pet peeves. We've got $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch locks, $\frac{7}{8}$ -inch locks, $1\frac{1}{8}$ -inch



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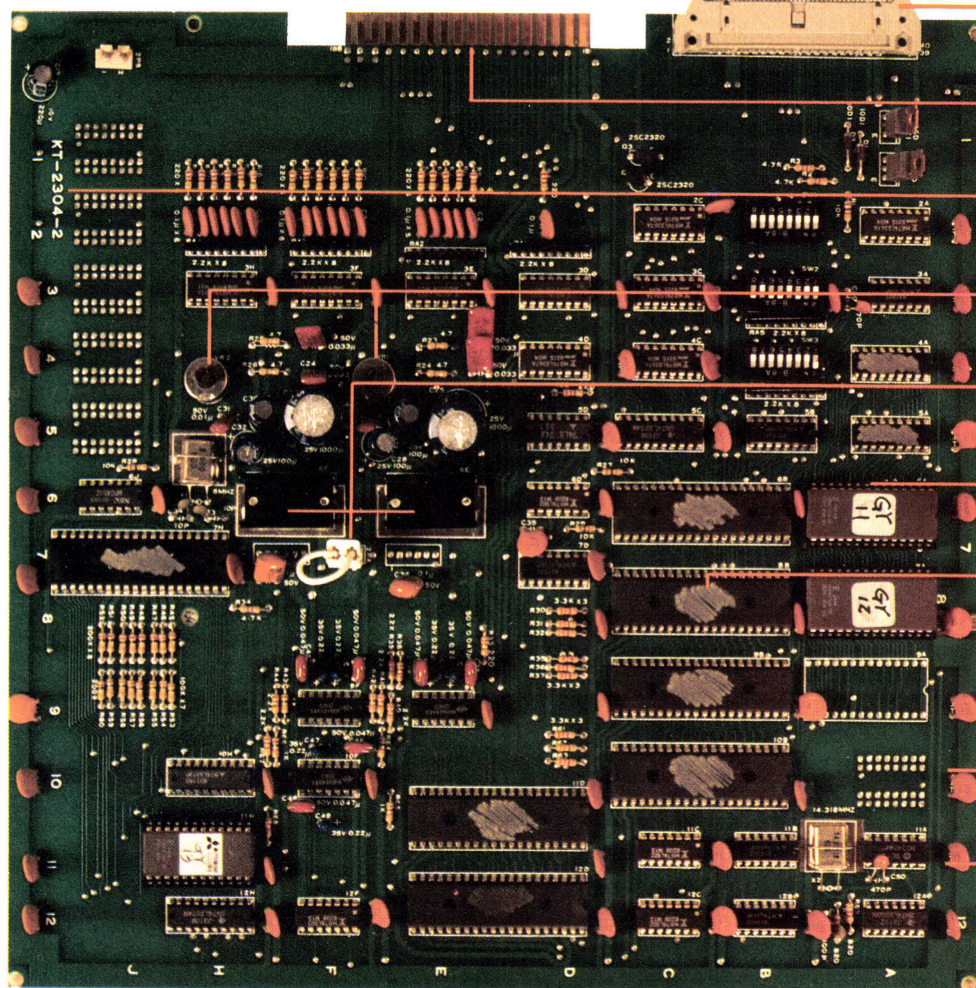
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VIDEO GAME OPERATOR:

Visual Clues to Determine a Legitimate Board



1. The ribbon-cable connectors of a legitimate board will be of a higher quality to ensure that the band connection between boards is adequately maintained.

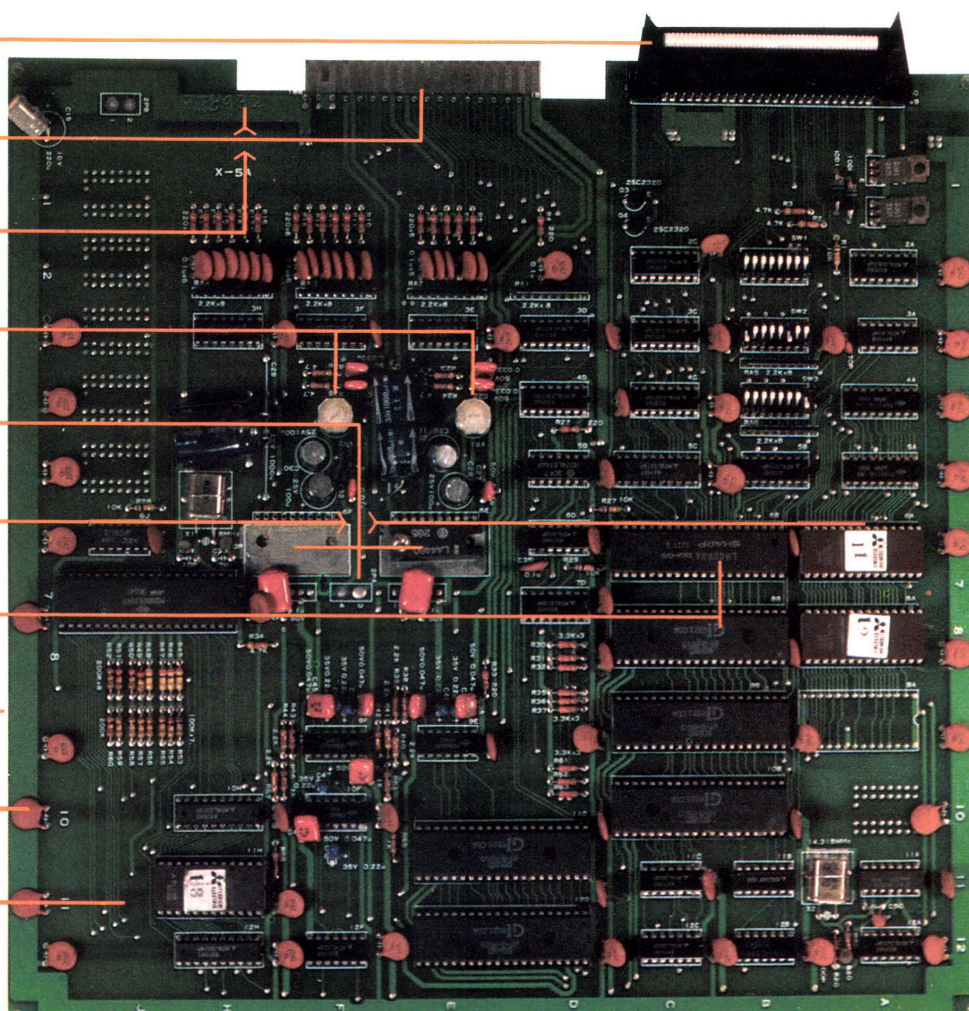
2. The connectors of a legitimate board will be of a higher quality as determined by the degree to which they are coated or uncoated to both prevent corrosion and facilitate a board's electrical connection to the game.

3. A legitimate board will be labelled (ie., **embossed** not hand-scratched or affixed) with **both** the game manufacturer's name and a model number as opposed to counterfeit boards which often lack either, particularly the manufacturer's name.

4. A counterfeit board's component parts (ie., reo-stat switches, etc.) will likely be of an inferior quality as compared to a legitimate board's component parts.

5. A counterfeit board will likely have obvious **missing parts** (ie., chips, heat sinks, etc.) as determined by either open mounting areas or soldered-over spaces.

From a Copy Board



6. A counterfeit board will likely have some chips soldered directly onto the board unlike legitimate boards which utilize socket holders to protect the chips.

7. A counterfeit board will likely have a "hodge podge" of computer chips unlike legitimate boards which contain chips from a limited number of parts suppliers as well as some custom security chips made by and identifying the game manufacturer. (Note: custom chips, left photo, scratched to protect trade secrets).

8. A legitimate game's printed circuit board will be of a higher quality as determined by a board's composition, thickness and lustrous green color.

9. The underside of a counterfeit board will often be discolored (ie., typically, missing part areas) through the application of heat indicating alteration of or tampering with used legitimate boards.

10. The underside of a legitimate board will have a clean, quality solder-wave pattern as opposed to counterfeit boards which often display a lack of workmanship in their solder patterns through the use of a lower grade solder and lack of adequate machinery.

locks, and more. I've got a man changing locks, adjusting cams up and down. On a few of the doors, you can't use a certain lock because the elongation holes are going the wrong way. What all this does is make a major project out of something that should be a two-minute job. Because there's no standardization, it's become a complete hassle for the operator, and it's something that should have been very easy.

And on/off switches, that's another thing. There have been times when I've had service calls because my evening people didn't know where the on/off switch is located. I've had the location call, saying the game was out, and we send a man out there only to find that the on/off switch was accidentally hit, like on Taito's games where a player can accidentally hit it with his foot because it's in the lower lefthand side. I know of one case, and this was six or seven years ago, where a man was starting up in the arcade business, and he bought an Atari *Drag Race*, and he hauled it all the way down to the Daytona 500 race, but he wasn't able to get the game to power up. So he brought the game back to his distributor, very irritated and complaining that the game didn't work. Well, the shop foreman plugged the game in, then reached down by the gas pedal and turned the game on. The operator didn't know where the on/off switch was. Again, this is not a major problem; but, when you start adding up a lot of little stuff like this, it becomes very irritating. You get Atari putting their on/off switch down in the back. And, if you have a lineup of games, you can't even use the

thing. They all have to be accessible, and they all have to be in the same position.

Another thing is volume controls. I even asked the owner of one of the game companies to show me how to adjust the volume on one of his games. He looked at it for a couple of minutes then said, "If I had the book, I could." But there wasn't a book with that game. Now here was the owner of the game company, and even he couldn't adjust the volume control! Taito, on its older games, had it where you had to take out boards because it was buried in the middle of one of the boards. And I'm paying a man good money to do all this stuff. It might take him ten minutes to do a very simple task. It took me about ten minutes to adjust the volume on *Karate Champ*, by the time I found the volume control. Now add that up over a number of times for every single game. It makes the operation of the games cost more, and that translates into less money that we have as operators to buy more new games.

PLAY METER: Relating specifically to the servicing of the games, are there any other areas where standardization would help?

ERICKSON: The coin doors. There is probably not a single good coin door made in this entire industry, and coin calls are probably the biggest amount of calls we get. If I'm right, the present system was designed back in 1948. We're talking almost 40 years ago. Now we have a lot of companies working on new electronic coin acceptors.

(continued on page 50)

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The "Home Run Theory" and other management models

By H. Richard Priesmeyer, Ph.D.

Though businesses differ and offer a variety of management challenges, there are fundamental rules of good management which are useful universally. Here are some such rules which have been packaged as models. Each model is discussed and presented graphically to make the concept easy to remember.

Model #1: Fugitive Information

If you took geometry, but don't know geometry now, then you know the definition of Fugitive Information. It is everything you knew but forgot.

This first model shows the advantage of representing ideas graphically; it helps you remember. These graphic models are pictorial representations of key concepts. Remember the Smiley Face and what it stood for? Now let's apply the technique to management. There are some fundamental rules of good management we should not forget. You'll be familiar with most of these ideas, and the models will help you keep them in mind.

Model #2: Unity of Command

In the late 1800's Henri Fayol, a successful businessman, made a list of 14 good ideas about how to manage a company. One was the idea that each employee within a company have only one supervisor. That seems simple enough, but it's one of the most frequently violated rules in management. Most often the victims are secretaries who are made unofficially accountable to two or more managers within the company.

Do you have employees who have to answer to more than one supervisor? If so, consider ways to reorganize their work; perhaps rescheduling

or reorganizing to avoid conflicts.

Model #3: Organizational Inertia

Model three of a bowling ball rolling down the alley suggests that companies build inertia which must be managed. Inertia here relates to the methods and procedures the company uses and the overall philosophy of the firm. For example, have you ever stayed in a losing location too long, even after you knew you should pull out? Did you ever buy too many of a particular machine because it did well in the past? Do you have a warehouse full of used equipment? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you're looking at the bad affects of inertia.

Fortunately, inertia can be good too. If your business is improving, put more energy behind those things that make it improve. Separate the strategies that work from those that don't and push accordingly.

Model #4: Home Run Theory

One mistake some company presidents make is thinking they must hit another home run after having done so once. Being successful once doesn't mean you can expect to repeat that performance anytime soon. Swinging for the fence may reduce the chance of getting a hit. The best strategy is to work and plan for those incremental successes; that's what makes a winning business.

Model #5: Northbound Train

The Northbound Train model is best described by the following: "This train is going North. And we need people who want to help us go North. If you believe in the goals of this com-

pany, then we need you aboard to help. If you don't want to go North then that's O.K. too; but you need to get off as soon as possible."

This model points out the difference between company goals and personal goals. What a company needs are people who have parallel goals to those of the firm, who want the firm to be successful because that makes them successful, too.

The model also points out that individuals are entitled to personal goals even if those goals don't fit the company, but they need to change trains. As professionals we should not just throw them off the train, but should help place them elsewhere.

Finally, you can ask, "Which employees are pushing North, and which ones are only passengers along for the ride?"

Model #6: Management Gap

Here's a model that sets a standard for your management personnel. The Management Gap suggests the need for a sufficient gap between the leaders and followers within a firm. The top bar represents leaders or supervisors; the bottom bar represents followers or subordinates. You maintain a gap between the two by challenging supervisors to do better; they in turn will challenge subordinates to do better.

The Management Gap is the key to improving employee performance. With no gap, who provides direction? Who maintains quality standards? The president sets company objectives which are challenging to managers within the firm. They, in turn, will place increased demands on others. The accelerating demand for performance will cause some to fail and those

failures are the natural attrition every firm needs.

Model #7: Recruiting Triangle

The recruiting triangle is a simple idea with a valuable lesson. The three corners of the triangle suggest hiring employees in a three step process, picture, locate, and compare.

Picture the skills and personality of the person needed. Consider the type of job, level of responsibility, etc.

Then locate places where you are likely to find that person. Remember the old joke about the fellow who was looking for a coin under a street light even though he dropped it in the dark alley? When asked why he was looking under the street light he answered that it was easier because he could see better. Don't look only where it's convenient, look where you're going to find the people you need.

Finally, compare the applicant to the picture. If you've ever interviewed four applicants for a job, then asked yourself which one was best, remember you don't necessarily need the best of those four. None may be best for the job. You need *one* that fits the picture. Compare the person to the job, not to other applicants.

Model #8: Equitable Pay

Model eight is a big "E" representing Equitable Pay but it is also a graph of how you pay your employees.

The horizontal scale along the bottom of the "E" represents the employee's contribution, that is, how hard that employee works and the difficulty of the job. The vertical scale represents how much he's paid and any benefits. The upward sloping line suggests, then, that the more an employee puts into the company the more he should get out. Do your employees get paid according to the value of their contributions? It's a worthwhile exercise to rank the value of your employees and compare their pay.

The Equitable Pay theory suggests that employees expect to be paid according to their contribution, lining up somewhere along the upward sloping line. But an employee who gets paid less than what he considers equitable, may feel his only choice is to cut back on his contribution (get lazy, be late, leave early) or increase his own

pay (steal). Maintaining equity and fairness in paying employees can help eliminate some of these problems.

Model #9: Delegation Pie

Is there anyone who doesn't recognize this model as *Pac-Man*? Let me attach new meaning to the model and call it the Delegation Pie.

Delegation, of course, is assigning jobs and accountabilities to others. The ability to delegate is probably our final constraint in how much we can do.

First, define your responsibilities, and how you should spend your time. That slice is the one that's missing in the model. Then slice up the rest of the

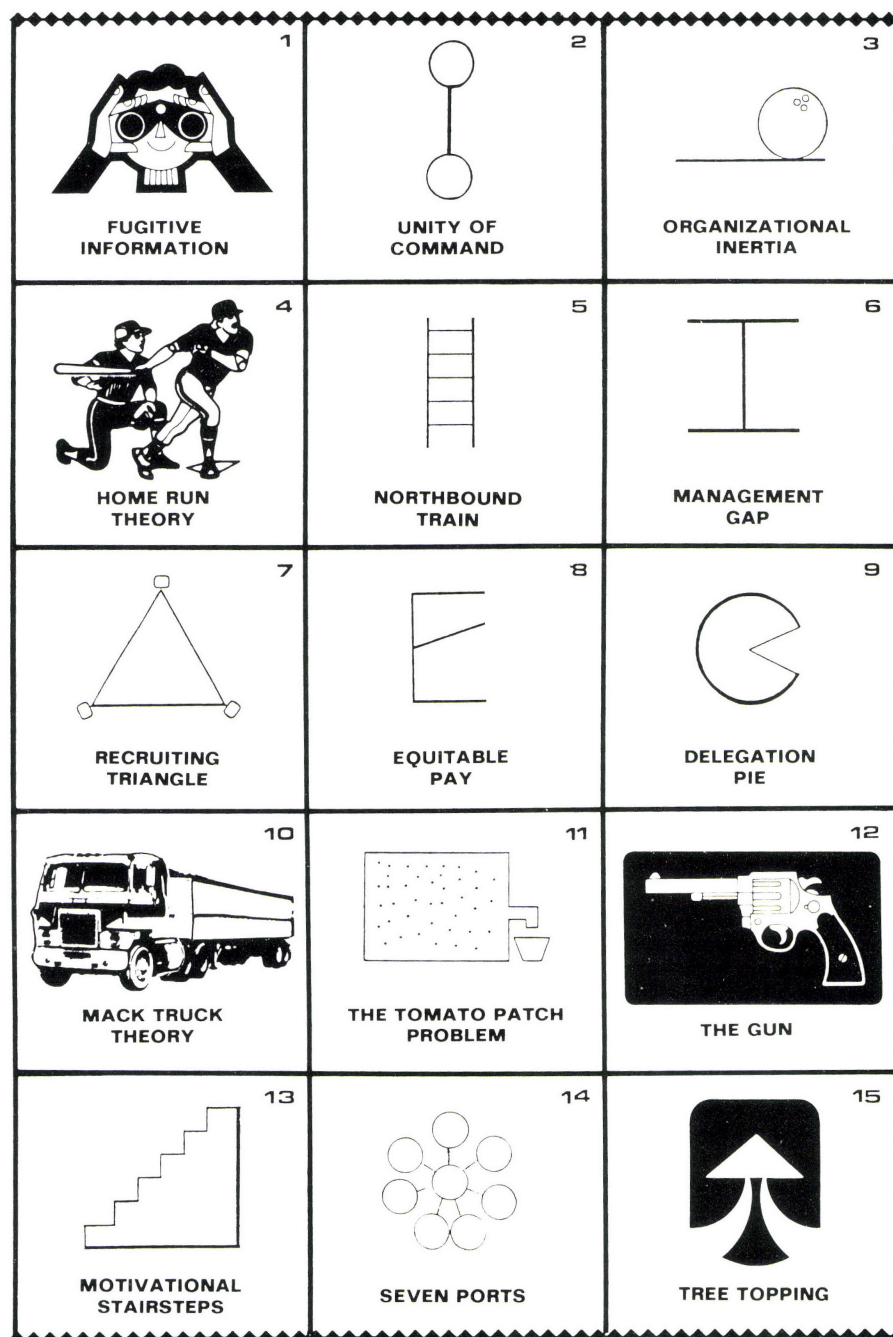
pie and give it to others.

When delegating to others remember to clearly define the job to be done, provide sufficient authority to the employee so he can perform the job, then hold that person accountable for the way the job is done. Though you can never rid yourself of final accountability, it's desirable to reward and reprimand others according to the way they do their jobs.

Model #10: Mack Truck Theory

Key employees may not be there tomorrow. For whatever reasons, including Mack Trucks, even key employees may leave.

The model suggests that you should



*When hiring employees: Don't look where it's convenient.
Look where you're going to find people.*

distribute your risk by distributing the knowledge and know how. By training other employees to fill the shoes of key personnel, you can assign key employees more valuable tasks. Ask yourself whether your key route collectors being challenged. Remember the Management Gap? It's your job to challenge them.

Model #11: The Tomato Patch Problem

The model represents a tomato patch and the dots represent individual tomato plants. In the lower right corner is a water faucet and a bucket. Your job is to maximize the production of the tomato patch, but there is a limit to how many plants you have time to water. How then do you best manage the tomato patch? How many tomato plants should you have? Should you let some die? Should you hire others to help you water them?

Have you taken on too many projects to give each one sufficient attention? You should frequently evaluate all of your activities and maybe let some projects die to devote more time and attention to those that seem most fruitful.

Occasionally you can justify hiring others to help but sometimes maximizing overall performance requires losing a few pet projects.

Model #12: The Gun

In the early 1400's a Spanish warship was sailing the open sea. Each sailor had been assigned specific duties and one sailor's job was to lash down the hugh cannons lining the ship's sides. One night a violent storm raged; and, to the horror of the sailor, he heard the sound of one of those two ton cannons rolling across the main

deck. The sailor ran topside; and, as the ship tossed, he saw the cannon rolling back and forth, smashing the main mast and crushing the walls of the ship. Risking his life, the sailor was able to rope the cannon down as it hesitated against one wall. The next morning the captain assembled all hands on deck and presented a commendation to the brave sailor, then had him shot.

The lesson is never reward someone for solving a problem he created in the first place.

Model #13: Motivation Stairsteps

Few people can give a simple definition of motivation. The Motivation Stairsteps model provides a definition of motivation and what it takes to motivate employees.

Here are five steps on the Motivation Stairsteps and an example of each.

The first step is simply to be aware of the problem (I know I'm overweight!).

The second step is to understand the problem (I know why I'm overweight, I eat too much!).

The third step is to be concerned about the problem (I know this isn't good for me!).

The fourth step, the critical one, requires that you be truly dissatisfied with the current condition (I definitely do not like being overweight, and I'm going to change it!).

Only then can you be motivated. So, motivation is dissatisfaction in action. It sounds a bit corny but think about when you really act to change things.

Consider the following, does it fit you? "I am aware that my company's revenue is down. I understand why my

company's revenue is down. I am concerned about my revenue being down. Am I sufficiently dissatisfied about my company's performance to be motivated to change it?"

Model #14: Seven Ports

This model has more to do with managing yourself than your business. It suggests seven roles which we must manage as individuals. The seven ports in life are defined as job, family, education, religion, health, leisure, and community service. Each role demands time, some more than others. The challenge is to maintain a balance since each is important.

Model #15: Tree Topping

The final model is used to refresh our memory about all the others. Tree Topping is taking a quick overview of all the models presented; here they are in quick review; Fugitive Information, what you forget; Unity of Command, only one boss; Organizational Inertia, manage the momentum; Home Run Theory, don't swing for the fence; Northbound Train, personal vs. company goals; Management Gap, maintain a challenge; Recruiting Triangle, picture, locate, and compare; Equitable Pay, compensation matches contribution; Delegation Pie, decide what's yours, delegate the rest; Mack Truck Theory, train to replace key employees; Tomato Patch Problem, manage your time and tasks; The Gun, don't reward those who solve their own problems; Motivation Stairsteps, dissatisfaction in action; Seven Ports, manage your own time. •

Some models were adapted from Model Netic Concepts, Main Event Management Corporation.

*Never reward someone for solving a problem
he created in the first place.*

CRITIC'S CORNER

By
Roger C.
Sharpe

Enticing players; plus six games to ponder

Being tired of hearing how bad business is and that there's nothing anyone can do to turn things around, I like to see how the shrewd operators work their equipment, moving it from place to place, to maximize earnings. When it's a single location operator, some extra care and promotional tricks have a positive effect.

There's a lesson here that not everyone is picking up on. Basically, selling customers on the idea of playing is almost as important as the equipment. Obviously personalized attention and sensitivity to trends and player demands isn't for everyone. However, those who still believe they can make a living in this business are turning to more aggressive tactics designed to entice players.

Enticements might include organized leagues, special pricing during normally slow period, contests on older equipment, and parties or entertainment if the location is large enough to have a magician or clown perform. But no matter how big or small an operation is, better understanding of the target audience and doing everything to get them in is crucial.

Fortunately, some of the newer releases are inventive, challenging and downright entertaining, as the industry prepares for summer when only the strong will survive.

Atari's *Marble Madness* and *Paperboy*

Maybe it's fitting, considering industry changes, that two leading

manufacturers in the video game explosion, Atari and Namco, should finally join forces. Domestically, what can be said of Atari that hasn't already been documented? It's a saga upon which legends are made, sometimes, industries are born. Nolan Bushnell and a talented team of exceptional people, started it all only a decade ago. Meanwhile, Namco slowly built a name for itself via the licensing route, giving Bally, for one, the opportunity to parlay *Pac-Man* into fame and fortune.

And now the two are together. We have two interesting efforts from Atari, which have generated a great deal of attention.

Marble Madness leads off the System I concept that delivers the brilliance and graphic look of Motorola's 68010 16-bit processor unequaled in its detailing. From resolution clarity, depth of field, object movement, color hues, and excellent sound effects, *Marble Madness* is a singular achievement.

Utilizing dual trak-ball controls for single-player or head-to-head competition, the machine resurrects the classic labyrinth where a ball (or in this case a marble) must be maneuvered around obstacles through a maze. Here the challenge is based on time and the skill of knowing how and when to move the marble from one point to another. Realistic in its presentation, *Marble Madness* provides a textured world of strange creatures and the laws of gravity.

There are six different waves in all, increasing in difficulty if the player can survive against another player or an ever present black marble controlled by the computer. It will take time and dedication for a player to gain mastery over the different courses and, because of this, might appeal to a more sophisticated audience.

At first sight, I was impressed by the game and felt it was a leap ahead for the industry. However, the sheer game play hasn't been enough to overcome 50-cent play.

Marble Madness has potential to improve with age and deliver steady earnings, but not at 50 cents per play. For the execution and entertainment value, I'll go with a solid #### and congratulations for those responsible in the creation of the game. However, *Marble Madness* may not have a fair chance to gain the success it deserves.

Paperboy, heading up Atari's System II, brings to life the world of the paperboy delivering the morning news.

Featuring a handlebar bike controller, players can choose from three difficulty levels, East Street, Middle Road, or Hard Way in an attempt to deliver papers using a throw button at the right time. The game spans a seven-day work week, with special bonus rounds that present a jam-packed obstacle course to test reflexes and handlebar control.

Along the way, the paperboy must avoid ill-tempered dogs, crowded sidewalks, unsafe cars, and other comical

characters. Once again, the graphics and sound effects are exceptional. But, 50-cent pricing is bound to be resisted no matter how good the game. *Paperboy* deserves a ####, but operators will have to change to 25 cents with another 25-cent buy-in feature.

With two separate systems and the lack of operator confidence in follow-up titles for either, Atari is going to find it difficult to move the quantity of machines that could have been expected. It's hard enough now to move a single game from a given manufacturer, let alone two, even if they have the capability of delivering a double-play wallop. What may be Atari's saving grace is the annual rush by resort and beach locations to stock up on equipment for the summer crowds.

Bally Midway's *Demolition Derby*

The novelty video game isn't dead; it's been resting and waiting for the right opportunity to strike again. Here's a natural for the slam-bang action crowd as Bally brings the fender-bending excitement of *Demolition Derby* to coin-op. Maybe not since Exidy's *Death Chase* has a video game concept seemed so well suited to the inherent aggression of video play.

With a cabinet design that should stir memories of the *Sprint* and *Indy* classics from Atari, *Demolition Derby* can accommodate up to four players who must rely on their ability to manipulate a steering wheel and control stick. The solid graphics and sound package conjure up images of a Wide World of Sports spectacular and should find a receptive audience in the teen crowd looking for something different, competitive, and action-packed.

Demolition Derby gets all the right ingredients into gear and crashes ahead with a ####. Bally Midway, though suffering from the fall in coin-op activity, and rumors that it might be abandoning the amusement game arena, should find there's still life in the old coin-op wars. *Demolition Derby* delivers the kind of entertainment value that the business so desperately needs.

Digital Control's *Lode Runner*

It's a complex story, but provides

insights into the quirks of fate surrounding the video game rise and fall. Not long ago, arcade game manufacturers provided the inspiration and alliance that helped launch a home video game/computer explosion.

Then the bubble burst and both sides began to retrench, wearing the scars of the fierce battle which claimed an alarming number of victims. In an act of poetic justice, one of the original home software producers, which hadn't caved into the unstable trends, went about business in a rather methodical fashion.

Broderbund success and reputation was built upon entertainment titles, before the focus of the company shifted to other computer software areas. One of its games, *Lode Runner*, topped best seller lists and spawned a loyal legion of followers.

Recognizing something extra in the game, Irem of Japan decided to reverse the process and gobbled up rights to produce an arcade version for Japan. The results were positive and Digital Controls, maneuvering through Taito, brought *Lode Runner* to these shores hoping to capitalize on the name recognition and playability of the piece.

With two action buttons, players face the challenge of getting through 24 different levels of underground mazes, picking up various treasures along the way. While avoiding the guards of the Bungeling Empire. Similar in theme and presentation to the old arcade game *Space Panic*, it's the simplicity and strategy of play that is enticing and challenging.

Broderbund has released a new, more complex *Championship Lode Runner* for the home which should help get the name back out into the marketplace. Although the graphics and effects aren't up to the levels of an Atari, for instance, *Lode Runner* is a viable piece for the summer and we'll go with a ### and wait to observe the final outcome.

Tehkan's *All American Football*

With an impressive display at ASI, an associated press coverage of *All American Football*, Tehkan is posed to take a more visible and aggressive posture in the coin-op industry, having been content (or constrained) as a licensor to other manufacturers.

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Except for cosmetic touches and an advanced program, *All American Football* is similar to Atari's *Football* which introduced the track-ball controller.

Tehkan's track balls glow a bright red and blue and the screen is richly animated with full color graphics and complementary sound effects. Players are able to select from one of eight offensive or defensive formations with on screen visual prompts providing a crib sheet of sorts for those needing extra reference on what to do.

The action is either single player against the computer or head-to-head competition. This updated rendition, like *Demolition Derby*, offers competitive play when kids will be traveling to the arcades in groups during the summer.

All American Football is a winner, although Tehkan might find competition from the Atari *Footballs* still in operation. But the cosmetics alone are more in keeping with the current market expectations. We'll give it a well-deserved ###½ for a long overdue

reprisal of a basic arcade attraction.

Data East's Kung-Fu Master

Following its success with *Karate Champ*, Data East is hoping for two hits in a row, with this advanced effort licensed from Irem. With the special allure of the Kung-Fu/Karate enthusiast, who made Bruce Lee and Chuck Norris legends, this multi-level game features multiple button controls and a joystick for maneuvering an on-screen character through a series of thrusts, kicks and punches as foes are met and defeated.

The graphics and sound effects are solid and attractive, although one questions the wisdom of returning to this theme so quickly in light of the number of similar themed games. However, Data East and Irem have done an admirable job with *Kung-Fu Master* and it should be popular with fans of USA Network's *Kung Fu Theater*. We'll go with a ###.

Konami's Yie Ar Kung-Fu

This long time industry manufacturer has achieved its own presence in

this country and should be able to build upon its success. Konami has introduced a solid piece distinctly different from *Karate Champ*.

With superb graphics and sound effects, *Yie Ar Kung-Fu's* multi-button and joystick control are used in a scenario similar to Nintendo's *Punch-Out!!*. There are eleven challengers waiting to be taken on in battles that include all the gizmos and gadgets that have become a staple of big screen movies. There are poles, chuka sticks, and all the trimmings sure to keep players on the alert in an effort to master this highly taxing game.

It's obvious that Konami has poured a great deal of effort into *Yie Ar Kung-Fu*. Players have already shown support of this type of game, but it's questionable whether there's sufficient variations of the same theme to keep them coming back for more. *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* should make an impact and we'll go with a ###½ for the caliber of the overall package.

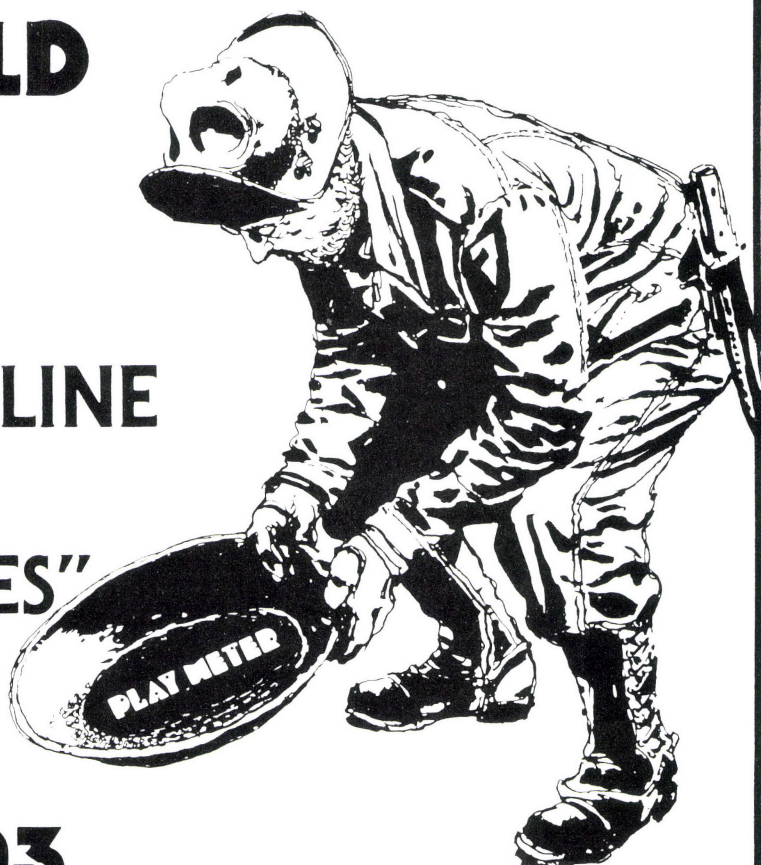
Until next time, hang in there, and, as always...be well and prosper. •

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NATIONAL PLAY METER

Poll Information

The following are rankings of the top games in the coin-operated amusement industry. The games are ranked according to an index formulated from a regular survey of operators of coin-operated amusement equipment. Games not appearing on this poll either (1) did not generate a five percent response or (2) did not rank among the top 50 games in the country. The games are further identified by their general equipment classification type: Video, Pinball, and Novelty. The average index rating for all surveyed games for this individual survey was 74.

Game/Manufacturer	June 15	June 1	Video	Pinball	Novelty
1. <i>Hat Trick</i> /Bally Sente	148	0	•		
2. <i>Kung Fu Master</i> /Data East	146	188	•		
3. <i>VS. Golf</i> /Nintendo	140	0	•		
4. <i>Marble Madness</i> /Atari	128	138	•		
5. <i>Trivia Whiz</i> /Merit	128	152	•		
6. <i>Super Punch-Out!!</i> /Nintendo	125	75	•		
7. <i>Space Shuttle</i> /Williams	121	130		•	
8. <i>Triple Strike</i> /Williams	120	0			•
9. <i>Pub Time Darts</i> /Nomac	115	62			•
10. <i>Karate Champ</i> /Data East	113	132	•		
11. <i>VS. Excitebike</i> /Nintendo	108	117	•		
12. <i>Video Trivia</i> /Greyhound	106	135	•		
13. <i>Birdie King III</i> /Coin-It	105	0	•		
14. <i>Spy Hunter</i> /Bally Midway	104	128	•		
15. <i>Yie Ar Kung Fu</i> /Konami	92	137	•		
16. <i>Cheyenne</i> /Exidy	91	108	•		
17. <i>Face-Off</i> /Entertainment Enterpr.	88	0			•
18. <i>Pole Position II</i> /Atari	85	93	•		
19. <i>VS. Baseball</i> /Nintendo	84	67	•		
20. <i>Triv Quiz</i> /Status Games	83	72	•		
21. <i>Pole Position</i> /Atari	82	85	•		
22. <i>Bomb Jack</i> /Tehkan	79	76	•		
23. <i>Shoot Away</i> /Namco	79	99			•
24. <i>Ice Climber</i> /Nintendo	79	0	•		
25. <i>Eight Ball Deluxe</i> /Bally Midway	76	87		•	
26. <i>English Mark Darts</i> /Arachnid	76	61			•
27. <i>Strike Zone</i> /Williams	75	75			•
28. <i>Galaga 3</i> /Bally Midway	74	62	•		
29. <i>Gaplus</i> /Bally Midway	74	0	•		
30. <i>Crossbow</i> /Exidy	74	115	•		
31. <i>Road Fighter</i> /Konami	74	101	•		
32. <i>Birdie King II</i> /Coin-It	73	73	•		
33. <i>Spy Hunter</i> /Bally Midway	73	68		•	
34. <i>Hero in the Castle of Doom</i> /Crown	70	50	•		
35. <i>Triv Quiz II</i> /Status Games	70	0	•		
36. <i>Return of the Jedi</i> /Atari	69	76	•		
37. <i>Punch-Out!!</i> /Nintendo	69	86	•		
38. <i>1942</i> /Williams	69	0	•		
39. <i>Super Basketball</i> /Konami	67	68	•		
40. <i>The Empire Strikes Back</i> /Atari	66	87	•		
41. <i>Firepower II</i> /Williams	65	83		•	
42. <i>Millipede</i> /Atari	64	60	•		
43. <i>Two Tigers</i> /Bally Midway	64	87	•		
44. <i>Major Havoc</i> /Atari	63	66	•		
45. <i>Black Pyramid</i> /Bally Midway	62	92		•	
46. <i>Up and Down</i> /Bally Midway	61	59	•		
47. <i>Elevator Action</i> /Taito	61	51	•		
48. <i>Jacks to Open</i> /Gottlieb	61	107		•	
49. <i>Time Pilot '84</i> /Konami	60	47	•		
50. <i>Seicross</i> /Nichibutsu	60	43	•		

GENE'S GUDGEMENTS

By
Gene
Lewin

Games for fair ROI

Kung Fu Master/Data East

Licensed from Irem. Available as a dedicated game only.

PLAY: The player is represented as a young man who is a master of Kung Fu. The object of the game is for him to rescue his girlfriend who has been kidnapped. He has to battle five floors of enemies to get to his girlfriend. Each floor is more difficult than the previous one with a vicious enemy at the end of each floor.

CONTROLS: The game uses a long lasting, reliable Coin Controls joystick with punch and kick buttons on both sides.

GRAPHICS: The graphics are good. There are several different enemies, while the backgrounds are very similar.

SOUND: There are a few different sounds and background music. When the vicious enemy gets you, you hear a nasty laugh.

ORIGINALITY: It is a martial arts game. They are popular now.

OPTION: *Kung Fu Master* is a powerhouse earner. This game is an exceptional earner now, but may drop off. If this game was available as a conversion, it would be by far the best investment in the industry. Ironically, Data East had a system game before anyone else thought of it, and seems to have abandoned conversion.

RATING: 8

Yie Ar Kung-Fu/Konami

Available as a conversion for any horizontal screen game. A custom kit

The Return on Investment (ROI) RATING SCALE

- 10 Fantastic. Cream of the crop. Should make Number One in the chart.
- 9 Great. Will make the top 5 in chart.
- 8 Good. Should make the top 10 in the chart.
- 7 Better than average. Might make the top 10 but won't stay there for very long.
- 6 Slightly above average. It's lucky if it makes the top 10. A good investment as a conversion only.
- 5 Just average. Only worth considering at a bargain price or as a conversion.
- 4 Slightly below average.
- 3 A 30-day wonder.
- 2 Poor. Not worth considering at all.
- 1 Absolutely terrible. Not even worth playing.

is now available for Williams games.

PLAY: The player is represented as a Kung Fu expert battling enemies. The style of play is similar to *Punch-Out!!* because the player fights one enemy at a time. After defeating an enemy, the player moves up to more difficult opponents. There are 11 enemies each using different weapons

or tricks.

CONTROLS: The game has an 8-way joystick and two buttons for punch and kick.

GRAPHICS: The graphics are cartoon-like with average detail.

SOUND: The sounds match the game theme with kicking, yelling, and punching sounds.

ORIGINALITY: Another martial arts game.

OPINION: I feel Konami made a very smart move by putting this game out against *Kung Fu Master*. While it is questionable whether it will gross as much as *Kung Fu Master*, an operator can buy three *Yie Ar Kung Fu* conversions for the price of one *Kung Fu Master*. Even if it only grosses one-half of what *Kung Fu Master* does, the return on investment is higher and depreciation will be less. In one year, *Kung Fu Master* will lose almost \$2,000 in value. *Yie Ar Kung Fu* will probably lose about \$400 in value. Thank you Konami for coming out with a good conversion.

RATING: 10

The UNI System/Nintendo

Available for all Nintendo games except for the wide *Mario Bros.*

The Uni System converts an old Nintendo to a single screen VS. System. Everything is identical to the VS. System except that it cannot accept the games where the two screens interact. These are *VS. Tennis* and *VS. Baseball*. *VS. Golf*, *VS. Excitebike*, *VS. Pinball*, and *VS. Ice*

Climber will work. The kit comes with a VS. board, wiring harness, hardware to turn the monitor, complete control panel with two sets of joysticks, and buttons for games with two simultaneous players (*Ice Climber*). An extra advantage of two sets of controls is if one joystick breaks, the other will work.

OPINION: This is an excellent opportunity for operators to get into the VS. System for under \$1,000. With the selection of low priced games, you are getting a system game for half the cost of any other system on the market. There are already several games available and more planned. With the success of *Excitebike*, an operator can buy a top earning conversion and a system at the same time for about \$200 more than an average conversion. The more good games Nintendo makes for this system the better the investment.

RATING: 10+

VS. *Excitebike*/Nintendo

Available either as a conversion for an existing VS. System or a VS. Uni System, as explained above.

PLAY: The player is represented as a motocross racer, on an obstacle course competing against other computer racers. The player must first qualify on each track to go into the competition.

CONTROLS: Although there are two sets of controls, only one player can play at a time. Either set of controls will work.

GRAPHICS: Simplistic, but adequate. The VS. System does not have the capability for real sharp graphics, but they get the point across.

SOUND: The music and sounds fit the game theme well.

ORIGINALITY: A motorcycle racing game is not a new idea, but the motocross adds a new twist.

OPINION: This is a top earning game, and if you already have a VS. System it is an absolute must. If you do not already have one, the Uni System conversion is a good buy. It only costs a little more than any other conversion, and it gives you a top game along with a system.

RATING: 10

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For more information on *Cybernaut*, contact your authorized Bally Midway distributor.



Trivia Whiz II

Merit Industries, Inc. of Bensalem, Pennsylvania, announces *Trivia Whiz II*, the follow-up to *Trivia Whiz*. *Trivia Whiz II* is available in all cabinet styles, upright, cabaret, full-size and mini-countertop, two-player cocktail, and horizontal and vertical monitor kits.

With new features and a complete new 10,000 question module, *Trivia Whiz II* now has one to four player capability, new attract mode screens that show the players category selections and over 30 topics, and play enhancements. The explanation feature displays further interesting information for selected questions once the correct answer is revealed.

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Even players who bust continue playing, but only scoring speed bonus points. Players losing the first question have an opportunity to get back into the betting if they get the second question correct. Big winners get additional questions. Winners reaching the *Trivia Whiz II* Masters Level can key in their names for display.

For further information on *Trivia Whiz II*, contact your Merit distributor or Merit for referral.



Commando

Date East's new video game, *Commando*, takes the player on a secret mission behind enemy lines. The game was licensed to the Santa Clara, California, manufacturer by Capcom of Japan.

The player, as a highly trained commando, must negotiate all types of terrain and obstacles while combating enemy troops. The enemies, in bunkers and on bridges, come by vehicle and foot from all angles, taxing the player's reaction and cunning. The player controls the route and the fire power, and becomes a hero when he penetrates enemy headquarters and frees the captives.

For more information, contact your local Data East distributor.

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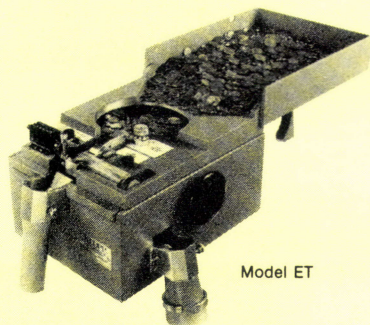
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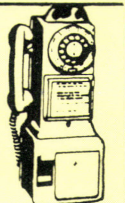


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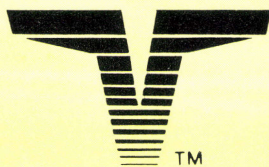
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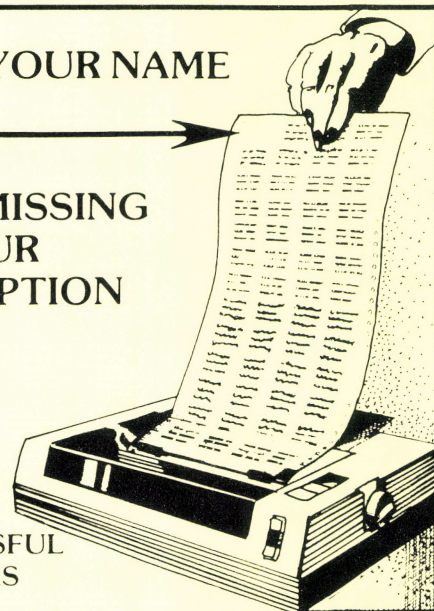
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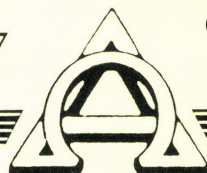
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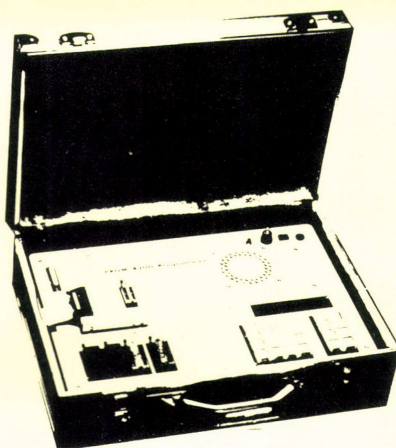
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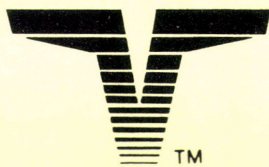
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I see a real willingness on the part of the manufacturers to work.

That reflects a complete ignorance of the entire industry. There are far more coin jams in the coin entry than with the coin mech itself. So, if that's the case, why are we staying with the standard coin entry? I saw a mech at a trade show a couple of years ago that was tremendous. It would push out a swizzle stick or anything else that was put into it. But apparently our manufacturers took the attitude that there was no way they were going to use it.

Another thing, it might sound like a small item, but on our pinballs, it would help to have the size of the rubbers under the plastic. If we have that, it's much quicker for a man to refurbish the top of the playfield because, even though it may be in the book, the books do get separated from the games. We always try to keep them with the game, but it doesn't always work out like that. Besides, it's much easier if you can look right there instead of having to look it up in a book. Little things like that can cut down our service time drastically.

What manufacturers have to realize is our operating costs are excessively higher today, percentage-wise, than what they were years ago. And today the operator is looking to cut his costs. The problem is that, during the boom, everybody was hustling to get games out; and nobody was worried about operating costs. But, with revenues dropping in half, all of a sudden, we're worried about these operating costs. And the manufacturers can help in this area. I should point out I see a real willingness on the part of the manufacturers to work. I think it's to the point where everybody realizes there's a problem. The manufacturers aren't doing very well, and a lot of emphasis has to be put on lowering our operating costs. Pinballs have to take in real good money to get beyond cash flow. And operators have to pull together because right now operators are running the business. It's an ideal time for us to let the manufacturers know what it's going to take to pull this thing together, what the operators' needs are; so we can get back to the point where everybody is making money again.

PLAY METER: At the AOE open forum, the Operator/Manufacturer Alliance meeting, you were a panel member and said then that standardization could also help an operator with bookkeeping. Could you elaborate on that?

ERICKSON: If manufacturers would standardize

bookkeeping, it would make it easier for operators to adjust their games to get the maximum return out of them. That would make it easier for us operators to get that 30-40 percent increase in collections I was talking about before. Also, by cutting down on generic defects, they could cut our operating costs by five to ten percent.

Now, what we need, as far as bookkeeping functions in our games, are our totals. And these should be the same for every machine. For that reason, it's very advantageous for all the manufacturers to get together. I like the idea of using all the displays with the systems they have. They can have it where it would scroll, or they can have it where it will read total dollars, total plays, total percentage of replays. That first function would have all our totals. From there, we could go further down where maybe on the second level we would have our replay level, and that would be followed by the percentage of replays at that level. Also, our bookkeeping should be structured so that one function is not resettable; so we'll have a cumulative total in bookkeeping since day one. Our second function will be everything that has to be reset. It has to become something where we hit one button and all our cumulative totals, except that one, are automatically reset. That would afford an operator an easier way of doing things.

PLAY METER: But all these changes you're talking about. Aren't they going to translate into higher manufacturing costs and that into higher equipment costs?

ERICKSON: Most of them are just a one-time software change, and that's really very minimal. As for some of the other suggestions, about standardizing components, if we can get away from this problem of having to warehouse a lot of different components for every different manufacturer, everyone comes out ahead. But we need greater cooperation from the manufacturers for this to happen. The operator has to be in a position where he can cut his costs. And, until we get to that point, we're going to have the problem of the manufacturers complaining that we're not buying enough games and the operators saying they can't afford to buy new games because excessive operating costs are making it uneconomical to buy new equipment. Quite frankly, I think we're beginning to take some positive steps. I see a real willingness on the part of the manufacturers. So I'm looking forward to things becoming increasingly better. ●

I think it's to the point where everybody realizes there's a problem.

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By Machine Number
By Machine Name
By Machine Type
By Maximum Return on Investment
By Minimum Return on Investment
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By Maximum Net Profit
By Minimum Net Profit
By Location Type

The basic financial reports appear as shown on this page.

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5	FROGGER	VID	LOC2	\$ 88.25	\$ 42.20	\$ 11.51	\$ 15.34	\$ 19.20	\$ 1600.00	62.57%	7.0					
6	JOUST	VID	LOC2	\$ 287.00	\$ 121.70	\$ 28.76	\$ 15.34	\$ 121.19	\$ 2500.00	252.77%	7.0					
7	JUNGLE HUNT	VID	LOC2	\$ 222.00	\$ 95.70	\$ 28.76	\$ 15.34	\$ 82.19	\$ 2600.00	164.83%	7.0					
8	BURGER TIME	VID	LOC2	\$ 123.00	\$ 56.10	\$ 28.76	\$ 15.34	\$ 22.79	\$ 2500.00	47.53%	7.0					
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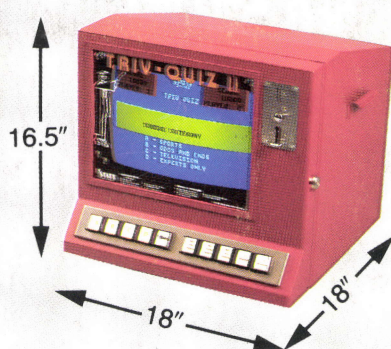
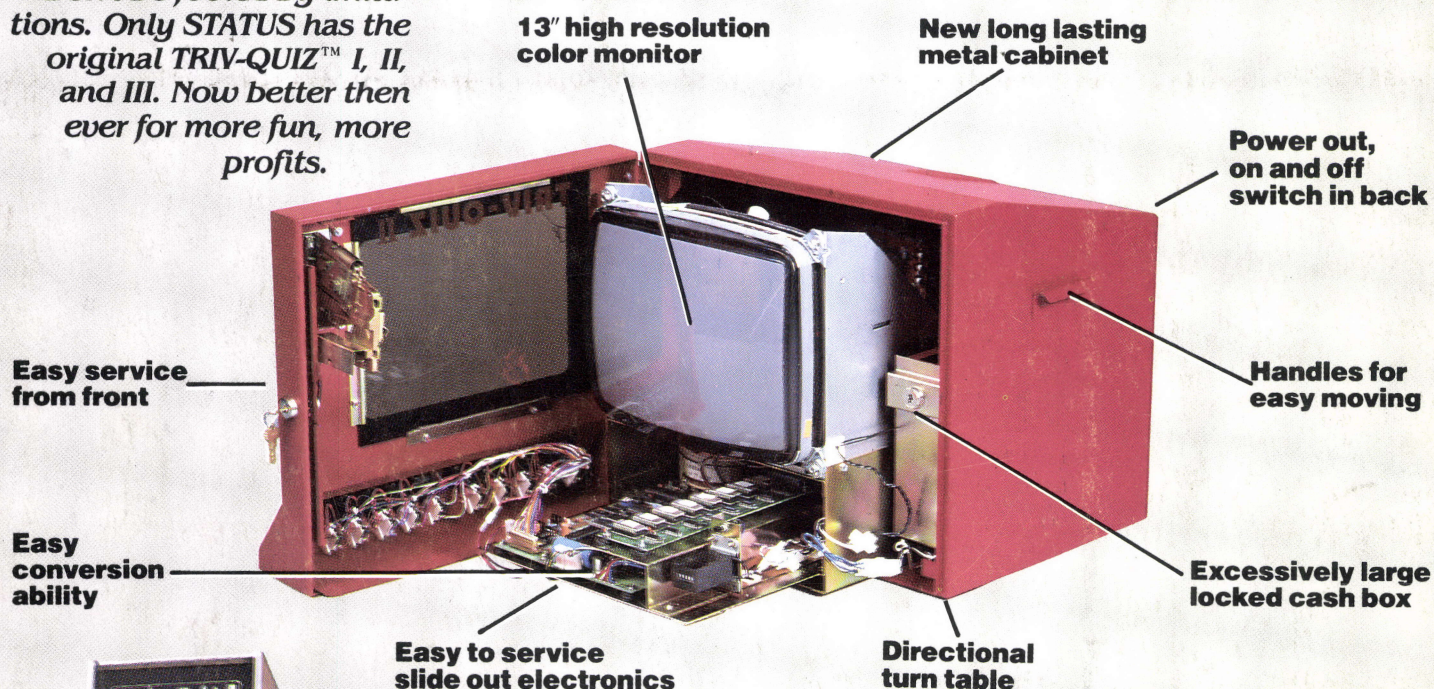
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