

The Twice Monthly Publication
for the Coin Operated Entertainment Industry

PLAY METER

Volume 8, Number 6

March 15, 1982

INDUSTRY CONVENES IN CHICAGO

ATTACK INTENSIFIÉS
AGAINST VIDEO PIRATES

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COIN OP. ON THE CONTINENT TODAY

AOE Seminar Preview



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AOE Seminars Preview

In the "close encounters" of Amusement Operators' Expo 1982, a packed series of industry seminars will air operating ideas for the Eighties, provide a large component of technical workshops—and in the kickoff session of the AOE in Chicago, allow a forum for direct questioning of major coin-op manufacturers' representatives on the podium. Here's our report on the seminars menu.

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Video Piracy Under Attack

Major U.S. manufacturers are taking a harder and harder stance against the pirates of creativity, but operators over the country are still left wondering, "Where do I stand in the video copyright affair?" Associate Editor Mike Shaw files a report on developments from both sides of the wide question.

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England's Video Game Decline

From the venue of the ATE, Editorial Director David Pierson analyzes the dip in pure amusement games' fortunes in the United Kingdom. Does the trend there spell a forecast of the U.S. operators' future? The answer lies in how coin-op has expanded in Britain, where, and how fast.

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Talking to the Revolutionaries

Interchangeable games have been hailed by some as 'revolutionary'—but these have yet not taken off like a Fourth of July rocket, exactly. Our report from the marketers of convertible systems explains some of the misconceptions that may be slowing a very worthwhile games alternative for the operator.

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ABOUT THE COVER: Photograph of flying saucers visiting a city street was created by Michael Sullivan. There have been 21 different images produced as blank greeting cards and posters. For a catalog and order information, write to Northern Exposure, G.P.O. 216, New York City 10116. Copyright 1981. Other art by Sullivan in this issue appear on page 20 and 21.

UP FRONT

It won't be long before the Amusement Operators Expo (AOE) will open its doors to the industry. From all indications, this year's show will be the best yet. It certainly will be the biggest AOE to date.

To begin with, we've beefed up the seminar program considerably. There will be more topics of discussion; and each seminar will be extended to two full hours to allow more time for questions, and, more importantly, to encourage the open exchange of ideas and experiences. Operators have often told me that the sharing of information that takes place during the seminar sessions is the most helpful aspect of the program. Many operators use this opportunity to discuss mutual problems and find workable solutions.

Operators from the same area generally don't talk to each other. And when they do talk, rarely do they discuss intimate details of how they run their businesses. Considering the competitive nature of our business, this situation is understandable. But at the AOE show, it is common to see operators sharing ideas as if they were partners.

I suppose it is the combination of pertinent information imparted during the seminar sessions and the interaction among operators that has established the AOE seminar program as a highly successful endeavor. One thing is certain: there is an abundance of knowledge at the AOE show and it's yours for the taking.

I am pleased to report there will be more than three times as many exhibition booths as there were last year. This is a clear indication that the industry's major manufacturers and suppliers are now giving their full support to the AOE. Thanks to them and the yearly increase in operator attendance, the AOE has established itself as an important industry event.

I'd like to preview some of the exciting new equipment that will be on display at AOE '82, but I have been literally sworn to secrecy in that respect. I can only say that there are a significant number of

momentous surprises in store for attendees.

Last year *Pac-Man* and *Defender* reigned supreme in the amusement world. This year *Donkey Kong*, *Stargate*, and *Tempest* are the current leaders, but I have a strong hunch that we have yet to see the top earners of 1982. I suspect that some manufacturers have been holding back their hottest games for AOE debuts.

Those who will be in Chicago by the Thursday preceding the show should remember the free Early Bird General Session that will begin at 6:00 p.m. that evening. This year's offering is entitled "Manufacturers Face the Firing Line." A panel of manufacturer-related issues that operators are currently grappling with. This panel discussion will provide a rare opportunity to open the lines of communication between operator and manufacturer, and, hopefully, lead to substantive ideas of how manufacturers can help solve some of the problems operators are confronting.

I was recently discussing AOE '82 with an operator who complained that his business was in sorry condition.

"The way things are today, I can't afford to go," he told me.

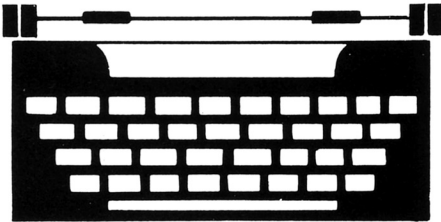
"The way things are today, can you afford not to go?" I asked.

He thought a while, but not too long. Then he nodded and said: "See you in Chicago."



Ralph C. Lally II
Editor and Publisher

Letters to the editor . . .



MOM dialog

This letter is in regard to your article in the January 1, 1982 issue, by Ray Tilley entitled "Local Bans On Juveniles Continue To Crimp Arcades." The article described the lack of support shown by the local, state, and national associations in the efforts of a Michigan operator. B&J Vending, to restrain a city from enforcing an ordinance restricting youths under 17 from playing amusement machines.

Some of our members have called questioning our role and I feel it necessary to reply on behalf of the Music Operators of Michigan Association even though other associations were also mentioned. You should know, and could have verified with us, other salient facts.

First, I have spoken to the owner of B&J Vending since the article was published. He claims the quote attributed to him—"They (the associations) say 'Good Luck,' and that's basically all they do," was not made.

Second, while MOM does not have the funds to sponsor lawsuits in local communities, we have been helpful to many operators statewide, both directly and indirectly, in organizing local lobbying efforts with city officials to defend against harmful proposals. We have provided operators, and their attorneys, with court decisions that have applied to a particular ordinance they were fighting. This in fact is what was provided to B&J Vending and company officials told me that this was very helpful to them.

Third, B&J Vending has been invited on two occasions to join Music Operators of Michigan. To

date, they have not joined, but we are hopeful they will.

Music Operators of Michigan was formed in 1974 to represent the amusement industry in the state legislature. The Association is responsible for two statutes benefiting the industry, 1) the law that allowed the placing of amusement devices in taverns, opening up over 8,000 locations to operators; and 2) the decriminalization of the giving of free play. In addition, we helped defeat last year a proposal to impose a 4% sales tax on amusement machine receipts.

I hope you will appreciate the need

for this rather lengthy reply, but I felt that criticism leveled in your magazine unfairly described what Music Operators of Michigan is doing.

Those operators in Michigan who are members, know what the Association has done for them, what our limitations are, and how we handle requests for help. Any association that would say "Good luck" to a member or non-member who called for help deserves to be described in the fashion you did. I can assure you that Music Operators of Michigan does not handle requests in such an off-handed way. If we can help, we do. If we can't, we tell the operator



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why and suggest possible alternatives.

Associations at any level—local, state, or national—can only be as good as the combined strength of their members. We must be honest about these strengths as well as our weaknesses.

Those from the outside who criticize become part of the problem rather than being part of the solution.

Walter P. Maner III
Executive Secretary
Music Operators of Michigan
Lansing, Michigan

[Ed. Note: The Michigan operator of B&J Vending, contacted again after Play Meter received the above letter, affirmed to us that he had expressed the statements attributed to him. Operator Brian Scopel added that, by lack of support, he meant lack of financial support in his court fight. "They gave me advice which did not help me, if that's support," he added.

However, the purpose of the January 1 article on local sanctions against arcades was not to degrade the MOM for its lack of a financial fund for legal action. It was simply to illustrate the go-it-alone fight which operators often have to make in order to survive against severe local restrictions. In B&J's case, a note of hope was more recently in the air after the county trial court remanded to the city council the matter of restricting under-17's play of coin-op games. This came after the operator agreed to drop damage charges against the city, he said.

Finally, Play Meter on many occasions has called for strong state and local associations, and this magazine has recognized their efforts when they have been effective. A strong stand by MOM against gray games operation is detailed in an article in the present issue.]

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

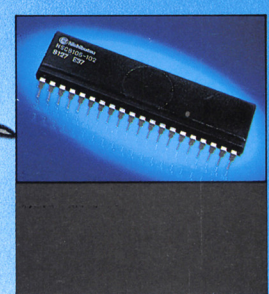
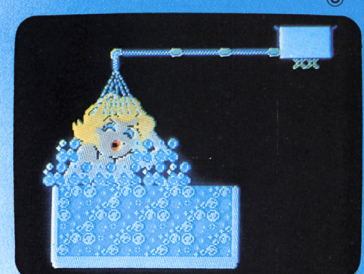
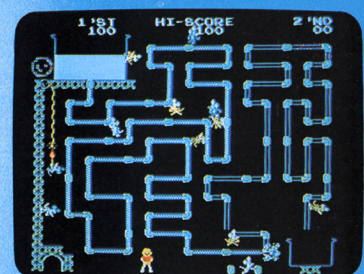
All letters must be signed; if requested, only initials will be used or the name withheld from print. Please include return address (although, for the sake of your privacy, addresses will not be printed.) All letters subject to standard editing. Be concise.

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PlayMeter

Equipment Poll

The following are rankings of the top videos and top pinballs making above average weekly gross collections nationwide. The dollar amounts appearing are the average weekly grosses as reported to Play Meter magazine through its regular national operator survey. Amounts are heavily weighted by averages reported from arcade locations; street locations are generally lower. Games with less than adequate responses (less than fifty percent) but with above average collections are so noted. Games not appearing on the poll either (1) did not generate over a ten percent response rate to provide an adequate representative sampling or (2) did not register weekly gross collections above the national average.

TOP VIDEOS

Fifteen of 48 videos (31%) with a response rate over ten percent have above average earnings.

	Mar. 15	Mar. 1	Feb. 15
National video average.....	\$151	\$155	\$163
1. <i>Donkey Kong/Nintendo</i>	\$250	\$255	\$260
2. <i>Galaga/Midway</i>	\$239	\$229	\$243
3. <i>Tempest/Atari</i>	\$217	\$228	\$254
4. <i>Frogger/Gremlin</i>	\$216	\$218	\$228
5. <i>Pac-Man/Midway</i>	\$209	\$209	\$218
6. <i>Qix/Taito</i>	\$207	\$230	\$241
7. <i>Centipede/Atari</i>	\$204	\$214	\$225
★ 8. <i>Stargate/Williams</i>	\$202	\$235	\$259
9. <i>Defender/Williams</i>	\$198	\$197	\$215
10. <i>Omega Race/Midway</i>	\$181	\$188	\$214

TOP PINBALLS

Eight of 22 pinballs (36%) with a response rate over ten percent have above average earnings.

	Mar. 15	Mar. 1	Feb. 15
National pinball average	\$ 96	\$ 93	\$ 90
★ 1. <i>Haunted House/Gottlieb</i> ..	\$209	\$190	\$178
2. <i>Black Hole/Gottlieb</i>	\$165	\$157	\$169
3. <i>Eight-Ball Deluxe/Bally</i>	\$136	\$133	\$ 98

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

Provisionally Rated Pinballs and Videos

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

VIDEOS

Provisional Ratings

	Mar 15	Mar. 1	Feb. 15
<i>Turbo/Gremlin</i>	\$278	\$250	—
<i>Ms. Pac-Man/Midway</i>	\$256	—	—
<i>Grand Champion/Taito</i>	\$213	—	—
<i>Mousetrap/Exidy</i>	\$198	\$206	\$224
<i>Kick-Man/Midway</i>	\$194	—	—

PINBALLS

Provisional Ratings

	Mar. 15	Mar. 1	Feb. 15
<i>Centaur/Bally</i>	\$150	\$146	\$120
<i>Barracora/Williams</i>	\$131	\$100	\$107
<i>Elektra/Bally</i>	\$120	\$150	\$127
<i>Catacomb/Stern</i>	\$107	—	—
<i>Medusa/Bally</i>	\$100	\$110	—

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

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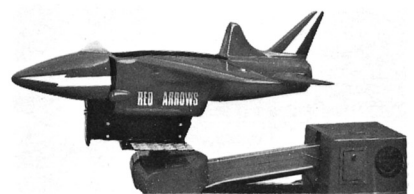
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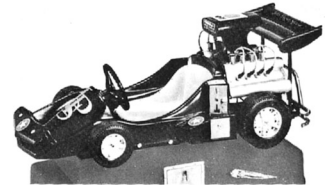


NEW

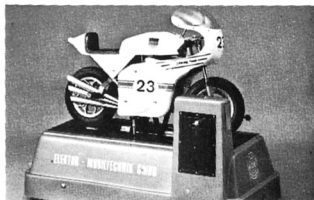
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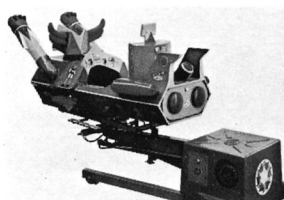
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Midway, Stern winners in copyright cases

In two separate landmark decisions, Midway Manufacturing and Stern Electronics have won battles against infringers of their copyrighted games.

Midway's victory came January 18, when the International Trade Commission served interlocutory orders against eighteen companies to cease and desist the importation and/or sale of copies of *Pac-Man* video games or components of the games, including the printed circuit boards and semiconductor chips. The eighteen companies were among the original respondents against whom the investigation was initiated on July 1, 1981. (See related article on copyright, this issue.)

The decision in favor of Stern was rendered by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit sitting in New York, and affirmed an earlier district court decision in which Stern was awarded a preliminary injunction and impounding order against several defendants.

The two decisions serve to establish that copyright protection is available for the visual images displayed by video games.

In the Midway action, a large number of additional companies were charged with infringing the company's rights in *Pac-Man* after the initial investigation had already begun. Those companies have been added as respondents in the ITC proceedings and Midway will be seeking permanent orders to cease and desist against all of the respondents, which now exceed fifty in number.

The eighteen respondents subject to the present orders in the Midway

decision are: Artic International, Inc.; Omni Video Games, Inc.; Stan Rousso, Inc.; Ferncrest Distributors, Inc.; K & K Industrial Services; Morrison Enterprises Corp.; Carlin Tiger Shokie, Ltd.; Formosa Products Industrial Corp.; Friend Spring Industrial Co., Ltd.; International Scientific Co., Ltd.; Jay's Industries; Kyugo Co., Ltd.; Loson Electrical Co.; Nippon Semicon, Inc.; Seagull Industries Co., Ltd.; Sepac Co., Ltd.; Shoen Co., Ltd.; and SP-World Amusement Co., Ltd.

In the Stern case, the order was levied against Bay Coin Distributors; Omni Video Games, Inc.; and Ferncrest Distributors, Inc. and principals of that company Frank Gaglione and Kevin McIntyre.

The Stern case involved *Scramble*, which has been the subject of a number of other copyright lawsuits brought by the company in which injunctions, seizure, and impounding orders have been issued by various federal courts.

The U.S. Court of Appeals is the highest court that has ruled in favor of copyright protection for the sights and sounds of video games. Federal district courts throughout the United States have consistently ruled in favor of such copyright protection, but the industry has awaited a ruling from the Court of Appeals.

George H. Gerstman, Stern's copyright attorney, pointed out that the Court of Appeals faced the issues squarely. The court clearly held that the audiovisual work is "fixed" in the memory devices of the game, stating:

"The audiovisual work is

permanently embodied in a material object, the memory devices, from which it can be perceived with the aid of the other components of the game."

The Court of Appeals agreed with Stern and the District Court in ruling that "the player's participation does not withdraw the audiovisual work from copyright eligibility."

The Court of Appeals also held that the visual display is copyrightable separate from the underlying computer program "which has an independent existence and is itself eligible for copyright."

The case also involved trademark infringement charges, and the Court affirmed the District Court's preliminary injunction against the use of the mark *Scramble* by Omni. The Court of Appeals held that Omni's early use of the trademark was in bad faith and that "the equities abundantly justified issuance of an injunction against Omni's use of the mark."

Stern's Gerstman stated: "This decision should help the industry in combating bootleg video games, and the issuance of injunctions, seizure orders, and significant penalties against infringers should now be even more easily obtained than before."

Midway's attorneys in Chicago have stated that any person or company assembling, selling, or operating infringing copies of *Pac-Man* games may be subject to civil action under the federal copyright laws, and may suffer liability for damages, profits, and attorneys' fees. Additionally, they warn that such infringing games may be impounded by the U.S. Marshal.

Ohio moves against five "blue sky" firms

Attorney Patricia Mell of the Ohio State Attorney General's office indicates that office is filing action against five business opportunity "blue sky" operators. The companies are based in Ohio, but are selling game and drink machine franchises in and out of state.

"They are selling franchises promising location finding, servicing, bookkeeping assistance, and

management advising," Mell says. "They are offering the businesses as a second income, an investment, and even arranging the loans.

"The problem is the people never get the games. The companies take the money and fade into the woodwork," he said.

Because the actions have not yet been filed, the names of the companies against which the action is

being taken were not released, but the Attorney General's office indicated that these were just a few of the "blue sky" salesmen that they were closing in on. In a recent talk delivered to the Ohio Music and Amusement Association, Barbara Roman, assistant chief on Consumer Fraud for the state, detailed plans to crack down on business opportunity fraud.

Chicago ordinance would ban play

In the heart of the industry's home-ground, movement is afoot to further regulate the presence of amusement games. Chicago Alderman Patrick Huels of the 11th Ward (south side of Chicago) has introduced an ordinance that would ban play on the games for anyone under eighteen years of age and would redefine the term "arcade" to mean any place that houses even one game. Each location would be forced to secure a license as a "public place of amusement-class II-arcade."

On January 21, Huels appeared on the Phil Donahue show in Chicago to criticize the arcades as a major force in the corruption of America's youth. Huels also lambasted single machine locations as contributing to moral decay and included accusations that operators were less than respectable citizens. He even indicated that arcade operators might be loaning money to kids and collecting enormous interest rates on the loans.

On February 4, the Chicago City Council Committee on License met to consider the ordinance. Although the meeting was adjourned without a final declaration on whether or not the ordinance would become law, there is feeling among those who attended that the outcome will contain some restrictions applicable to children of school age during school hours.

Apparently, Huels has softened his stance on the under 18 ban. At the February 4 meeting, he indicated that he had found most arcades were well run and well supervised and he had lost his inclination to push for an under 18 ban.

Industry sources told *Play Meter* that the meeting was attended by in excess of 60 industry backers, of various ages and economic backgrounds, whose presence was a positive factor in allowing the Committee to take a more favorable stand to the industry on the ordinance.

Lite Beer pouring bucks into pool

Labeled as the "best thing that has happened to pool in its long history," the Lite Beer \$200,000 World Series of Tavern Pool is the largest, richest, "surest" event of its kind ever scheduled.

To date, over 6,000 locations have signed up to sponsor over 180,000 qualified players who will vie for local bragging rights. More than 110,000 taverns received information about the tournament and responses are still coming into the Sports Tournament of America offices.

Originally, the final date of registration was to be February 25, but humbling weather conditions have so impeded mail delivery that operators were allowed to register as late as March 1st.

"That means that we will move the final date for location finals to March 11," said Mike Smith at Sports Tournament headquarters. Regional activity will take place April 20-29, and the finals will be held in Las Vegas, June 2-8.

The event is certainly gala. It will culminate within Las Vegas' most

reknown center of glamour, Ceasar's Palace.

Valley has signed a contract to supply more than 100 Cougar coin-operated tables for use in the national championship finals. Valley President Chuck Milhem indicated: "The Miller people have put this program together at just the right time. Our pool table industry is gripped by the economy as is everyone. In addition, interest in coin pool tables has been adversely affected by video games. But this Lite Beer tourney will help us all by refocusing attention on pool and the coin-operated pool table."

Milhem also sees the tournament as an opportunity for operators to diversify into pool tables or to intensify interest in the tables they now have in locations. It is expected that more than \$10 million in additional pool table revenue will be generated for locations during the local and regional tournaments.

The tournament is soundly backed by Miller Brewing Company who is guaranteeing the cash and prize awards.

Elcon acquisition completed

Micropin Corporation has completed the acquisition of Elcon Industries. R. Bruce Stewart, president of Micropin, announced February 9.

Stewart said Elcon will be operated as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Micropin and will continue to be headed by its founder, Andre R. Dubell.

Micropin, a fast-growing participant in the large and still-evolving leisure industry, is believed to be the only publicly owned company engaged exclusively in the manufacturing and operation of electronic amusement games, Stewart said.

In the quarter ending December 31, 1981, Micropin registered a net loss of \$43,708, or one cent per share, from a loss of \$267,966, or 10 cents per share in the comparable period of the prior fiscal year.

Revenues rose to \$177,518 in the December quarter from \$27,410 in the like period of the previous year. The company's fiscal year ends March 31.

Revenues for the latest nine months totaled \$526,743, up 548 per cent from revenues of \$32,367 in the previous year's nine months.

Headquartered in Pasadena, California, Micropin operates electronic amusement games throughout Los Angeles and Orange counties. Games operated include a machine of the company's own design and many of the most popular games made by other manufacturers.

Through Elcon, Micropin will market video games nationally. Elcon's present customers include Pizza Time Theaters, Leisuretron Corp., Showbiz Pizza Place, and other major operators of video games.

Elcon's sales are running at an annual rate of \$3.5 million, Stewart noted, and pre-tax earnings for the next twelve months should come to at least \$600,000. With a tax loss carry-forward of about \$3 million, Micropin won't have to pay any taxes on earnings in the near future.

The acquisition of Elcon involved the exchange of 500,000 Micropin shares for all of Elcon's stock. Micropin will issue as many as 170,000 more shares of Elcon, depending on Elcon's future earnings.

Gray areas to cloud AOE

Despite attempts by the show's sponsors to block the exhibition of gaming-oriented video equipment at the 1982 Amusement Operators Expo at the Chicago Hyatt Regency Hotel March 26—28, the "gray area" machines will be allowed to be exhibited, the show's sponsors announced.

The show's sponsors (*Play Meter* magazine and Conference Management Corp.) said they had encountered a "threshold" problem in trying to eliminate gray games from this year's show. Because some of the gray game exhibitors had already contracted to appear at the 1982 AOE before the show's policy was revised to exclude the exhibition of such equipment, the show's sponsors were advised to allow the equipment to be displayed.

However, the show's sponsors added, plans are still being made to exclude the gaming-themed equipment from future Amusement Operators Expos. Also, *Play Meter's* advertising policy regarding gray area games remains unaffected by

this decision to allow the gray games into the 1982 Expo. The magazine will continue to refuse gray game advertisements, said *Play Meter's* publisher, Ralph Lally.

Play Meter magazine raised the issue with an editorial by Lally in the January 1, 1982 edition. Lally announced that the magazine wished to "further the line of demarcation that will end the conflict between amusement and pseudo gambling" and, to further that case, the magazine would refuse any advertisements for the gray games. Lally also announced at that time that the policy had been extended to the show, saying the gray area games would not be allowed to be exhibited at the show.

In conjunction with that, a letter from Lally and David Cheifitz, president of Conference Management, was sent to all exhibitors officially notifying them of the policy change.

But the AOE organizers had to backstep from excluding the games from this year's show because,

according to the show's sponsors, some gray game manufacturers had already contracted to exhibit their machines at the show prior to the announced policy change.

Play Meter's editorial director, David Pierson, said the gray area stand was necessary for the industry to take because of the public's general confusion about the nature of video games. He pointed out that recent charges levelled at video games by anti-games people have alleged that video games are gambling devices.

"It's important that we, the amusement industry, make a clear distinction between what is amusement and what is not. Otherwise, how can we defend ourselves if our house is not in order?" he asked.

"For that purpose," he continued, "despite this setback, we're still dead set against the proliferation of these types of games which are being operated in countless municipalities under the auspices of amusement machines."

Lund and Deutsch form Challenger

Challenger Products is a newly organized supply company for the coin industry, formed recently by Mark Lund and Terry Deutsch, who bought controlling interest in O.B.A. of Dallas. The new owners were president and sales manager, respectively, of O.B.A.

"We plan to stay in business and to get more in tune with the industry by dropping certain lines (i.e., foosball tables) and adding other items (i.e., electronic parts)," said Deutsch.

Challenger Products located at 2522 Irving Blvd., Dallas 75207, will soon be issuing a new catalog of its service parts, chemicals, and cleaners line, the owners announced. A toll free line is open to customers: 1-800-527-5853; in Texas, call 214/630-8004. Deutsch added, "We plan on improving the line we do have, such as billiard supplies, chemicals, and cleaners, by adding to those and making the selections we offer more varied."

Former owner and chairman of O.B.A. is Bill Ohland.

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Copyright societies agree to divide jukebox royalties

Broadcast Music, Inc. and the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers jointly announced January 14 that they have reached a voluntary agreement on the distribution of jukebox copyright royalties through 1982.

The Copyright Royalty Tribunal had temporarily withheld \$1.3 million in royalties until BMI, ASCAP, and SESAC had reached agreement on how they would be dispersed.

BMI had conducted an in-house survey to determine how royalties should be dispersed and the Tribunal, although negating the BMI survey, ruled that a joint effort on sampling would be appropriate in confirming proper distribution.

Terms of the agreement were not disclosed, parties agreeing that they were to remain confidential. The fees are paid by jukebox operators for the right to perform copyrighted works pursuant to the 1976 Copyright Act. The law provides for their distribution to copyright owners or their representatives under voluntary agreements, or in the absence of such agreements, by the Copyright Royalty Tribunal.

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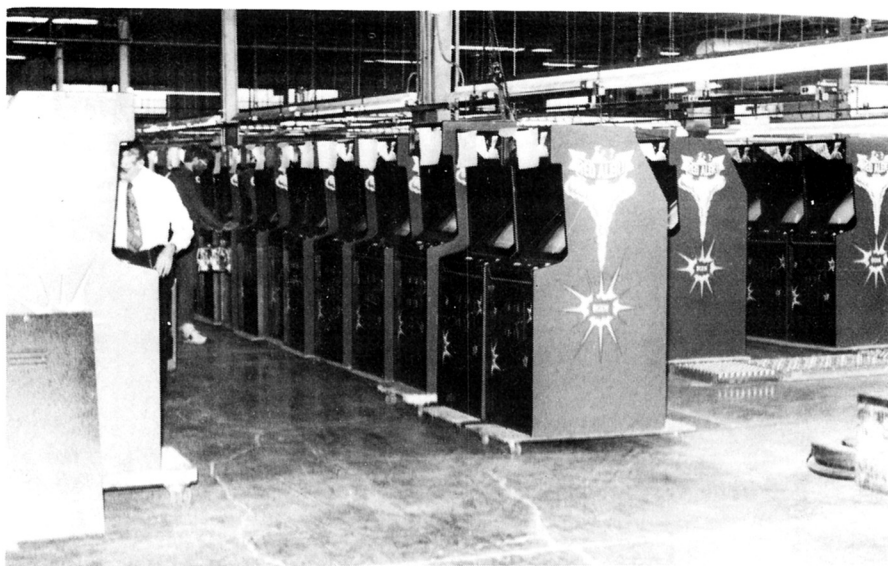
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Production line quality observed at GDI.

GDI maps games development

A success story is claimed for the initial entry into the coin-op video game competition by Chicago-based GDI. That claim centers on the introduction of the debutante *Red Alert*, receiving exceptionally good field test reports, said a GDI statement.

The game broke into *Play Meter's* Equipment Poll (January 15 issue) in the provisional ratings, with earnings above the national average for video.

"We were relatively sure that *Red Alert* would do well for our distributors and their operators from the start," asserted Bob Breither, director of marketing for this subsidiary of Xcor, International.

"The success comes from the universal appeal of the game as well as its progressive skill levels. It is just as

challenging to the tournament level contestant as to a beginning player," continued Breither.

"Actually, you could call it six games instead of one. The player may become the defender of six different countries, as *Enemy Strike Forces* attack key targets in each country in increased difficult modes."

Future GDI plans will also include the introduction of games of its own design and development which it predicts will have "a degree of technology heretofore alien to the industry."

Further information may be obtained from Bob Breither, Director of Marketing, GDI, 5945 North Rogers, Chicago, Illinois 60646; telephone: 312/286-6722; telex: 20-6088.

U.S. Billiards absorbs Irving Kaye

U.S. Billiards has bought out Irving Kaye Company. Richard Simon, U.S. Billiards executive, affirmed that the deal was completed during the second week of February. Although Simon would not detail the financial arrangements that surround the deal, he indicated that U.S. Billiards paid a substantial amount of cash for the company.

Under the agreement, U.S. Billiards assumes the entire coin-operated products division of Irving Kaye. Other sections of that company will be dissolved.

The Kaye name, however, will continue to appear on products, as

U.S. Billiards will produce the Kaye pool table line under the same name.

"This move reaffirms our commitment to the pool table industry," Simon offered. "The industry has become stronger in the last few months, and this move shows our faith in its continued growth."

Simon also indicated that the Irving Kaye line would complement the existing U.S. Billiards line of pool products.

As Irving Kaye Company folds, so will its facilities. All equipment and some personnel will be moved to U.S. Billiards headquarters in Amityville, New York, Simon said.

Electrohome announces new United States production facility

Electrohome Limited, makers of video monitors, has announced it plans to open a new electronic products facility in the United States. The plant will be located in Morristown, Tennessee.

H. H. LaPier, vice-president and general manager of Electrohome's Electronics Division said the new U.S. facility would be a modern, one story, 50,000-square-foot building in Morristown's Industrial Park (about 30 miles from Knoxville). It will be used for electronic product assembly and the warehousing of Electrohome's commercial electronic products.

The plant, which is being leased, will employ up to 50 people, the company said, and will be operational in March.

LaPier cited several reasons for Electrohome, based in Kitchener, Ontario, establishing a U.S. plant and for the Morristown location.

"Recently our experience in the United States and export markets has shown a growing customer preference, sometimes government influenced, to buy products made in that particular country. This is true in the United States. Also, significant savings accrue when duties are eliminated on some products when they are made in the United States. In addition, Morristown is central for the distribution of finished product in the U.S. and for the procurement of many components, thereby reducing transportation costs," he said.

Company executives acknowledged that expansion into the United States was taking place during a slow economic period and that start-up costs associated with the move would have a negative impact on 1982 operating results, especially the first half. However, it was pointed out that, if present business was to be "solidified" and new

opportunities advanced, action had to be taken now.

LaPier also said he expects that over the longer term a U.S. production facility will have little impact on Canadian operations. "The mandate for the U.S. operation is to become self-sufficient as quickly as possible and attract new customers for electronic products currently not a part of Electrohome's product range."

LaPier also announced that John J. Molloy had been appointed vice-president/United States operations, with complete responsibility for bringing the Morristown plant on stream as quickly as possible. Molloy's extensive background in the U.S. electronics industry, especially high-tech product engineering and manufacturing, is a significant benefit in attracting new business to Electrohome's U.S. plant facility, he said.

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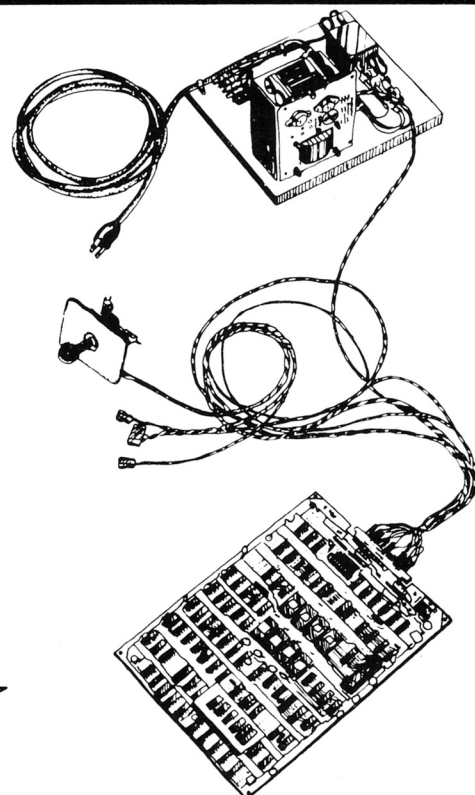
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NEW-GAME P.C.B. AND CONVERSIONS

Exhibit space is numerous for AOE/Chicago '82

Amusement Operators Expo in its third year goes to Chicago at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, March 26—28, with exhibitors in quadruple last year's total of booth spaces. Many new exhibitors have supported the show, a marked contrast to relatively weak booth sales last year.

Exhibitors have expressed high optimism in the success of AOE '82 for them, according to the conference organizers. At least ten exhibitors will have six or more booths each, the total is four times the 1982 exhibition booths commitment, and in all, the Exhibit Hall of near 300 booths "will be staggering," commented Rich Reiter, exhibit sales manager for Conference Management Corp. which organizes Amusement Operators Expo.

The Exhibit Hall will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. during all three days of AOE '82 and will represent virtually every manufacturer in the United States in the coin-op field. Towards fostering the business-only atmosphere in the hall, children will not be admitted, said Conference

Management.

Hyatt Regency accommodations, Reiter noted, are "a practically new facility, a contrast to the (Chicago) Conrad Hilton. Incidentally the Hyatt will be the site of the 1982 AMOA Show," he added.

"Exhibitors like the time period of the year, with AOE," Reiter continued. "They reach a sector of buyers they cannot in another national show."

Among the new exhibitors not seen in last spring's AOE are: Bally/Midway, Centuri, Konami Industry, Namco America, Rock-Ola, Rowe/AMI, Stern Electronics, and Williams Electronics. Support equipment and services firms will compose a large contingent of exhibitors, along with distributors and repeating exhibitors on their stands.

Comments from exhibitors after the 1981 AOE were edged with excitement. Ron Judy, marketing manager of Nintendo of America, commented last year: "The show was very beneficial to us. It was very well organized, relative to other

shows. The turnout of operators was strong, but it was the distributor turnout that really surprised us...It was unfortunate that there weren't more heavy-hitting exhibitors at the (1981) show, but maybe that was to our advantage this time around."

These industry majors will be in the company of returnees on exhibition stands including Gremlin/Sega's, which was termed "unprecedented" by Conference Management. Gremlin's booths number twelve, an entire aisle at AOE '82. This manufacturer and numerous others are planning first-time spring arcade season showings of new product lines.

As the conference organizer termed the general feeling to the AOE: "It's young and growing."

Growing as well is the seminar program at the AOE. (See related article.) Several exhibitors have stated frankly that they have early indications that their customers will be streaming to AOE '82 from all sections of North America.



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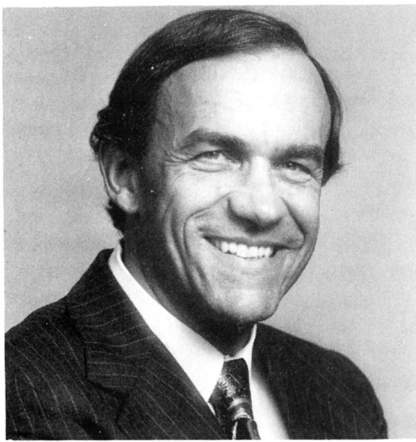
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Kenneth H. Harkness

Atari names prexy

Kenneth H. Harkness, 48, has joined Atari, Inc. as president of the company's Coin-Operated Games Division, effective January 29. Harkness goes to Atari from a background of marketing games and sporting goods.

Raymond E. Kassar, chairman and chief executive officer of the company, said: "Harkness has tremendous expertise in the marketing and sales areas." "His experience will be of great value as Atari continues to lead the industry in technological advancement and innovation."

For the two years prior to joining Atari, Harkness was president and chief executive officer of Revell, Inc., one of the largest toy companies in Europe, headquartered in Venice, California. Before that, he spent ten years at the Racquet Sports Division of Wilson Sporting Goods, a division of PepsiCo, where he mapped out the strategic direction of Wilson's tennis business. There, he held various management positions and eventually became president of the division.

Harkness received his bachelor's degree in economics from Williams College in 1956 and received his master's degree from Harvard in 1962.

AMOA 10th seminar to be held

AMOA in cooperation with the College of Business Administration and the Center for Continuing Education of the University of Notre Dame will present its tenth annual AMOA seminar April 2 and 3.

The complete registration fee for the seminar is \$140 for AMOA members and \$175 for non-member. The fee includes all materials, lunch both Friday and Saturday and dinner Friday evening.

Distrib restrictions allowed

U.S. manufacturers will be permitted to place certain restraints on distributors such as a mandatory list price or a strict sales territory, which were previously considered antitrust violations, under policy stated by the Reagan Administration.

These curbs on distributors, referred to by the Department of Justice as vertical restraints, can be beneficial if they eliminate the duplication of distributors' efforts. A manufacturer must be able to prove that the controls actually help it market more efficiently and do not simply freeze out competition or fix prices, said a report in the business press.

According to Ronald G. Carr, U.S. deputy assistant attorney general in the antitrust division, the report said

the Department of Justice will automatically assume the restraints are rooted in marketing efficiency if any one of three situations is shown:

—That only a few manufacturers (or only those with a small combined market share) impose distributor restraints;

—that many manufacturers are competing, even if all have similar restraints; or

—that a company's product has a different market image from its competitors' either because of quality or because of service that buyers associate with it.

With any one of those situations, a manufacturer is said to be safe from antitrust charges if it imposes strict sales territories or refuses to deal with discounters.

THE CALENDAR

March 26-28

Amusement Operators Expo '82, Hyatt Regency, Chicago

March 31-April 2

Coin-Op '82, Irish Amusement Trades exhibition, Leopardstown Racecourse Centre, Dublin

April 2-4

NAMA Western Convention-Exhibit of Vending and Food-service Management, Brooks Hall, San Francisco

April 2, 3

AMOA/Notre Dame Advanced Seminar, Center for Continuing Education, Notre Dame, Indiana

April 14-23

Milan Fair, Internat'l Business and Meeting Center, Milan, Italy

April 16-18

FAVA/music, games, and vending show, Curtis Hixon Convention Center, Tampa, Florida

April 30, May 1

Wisconsin Music Merchants Association exposition and annual membership meeting, Milwaukee

May 7-8

Ohio Music & Amusement Operators, annual convention and show, Columbus

June 3-5

Amusement and Music Operators of Texas, Americana Hotel, Ft. Worth

June 20-25

Bowling Proprietors Association of America, 50th annual convention and trade show, Town and Country Hotel, San Diego, California

July 16-17

Montana Coin Machine Operators Association convention, Outlaw Inn, Kalispell, Montana

September 10-12

Joint North and South Carolina associations meeting, Radisson Plaza Hotel, Charlotte

September 24-25

West Virginia Music & Vending Association convention, Ramada Inn, South Charleston, West Virginia

October 7-10

NAMA convention and exhibit, The Rivergate, New Orleans

October 8-9

Amusement & Music Operators of Virginia, Richmond

November 18-20

AMOA Exposition, Hyatt Regency Downtown, Chicago



Marshall Caras, Boyd Browne, and Gil Pollock (left to right) give new meaning to the saying: "Things go better with Coke."

Coke goes better with games

Coca-Cola and Columbia Pictures have reached an "agreement in principle" wherein the soft drink giant will acquire the film firm and its holdings by merger. Although the parties are in agreement on the substance of the merger, the companies must complete audits and detail the agreement for Columbia's stockholders who must vote on the merger.

In a Columbia second quarter earnings report released recently, CEO Vincent indicated that the

merger should be complete by June. He offered that management at each company was pleased with the agreement.

Coca-Cola is also pleased that their new subsidiary includes D. Gottlieb & Company and the intention of management at Coca-Cola is that the Gottlieb firm will continue to operate in the same manner as it does currently. In fact, a spokesman for Coca-Cola indicated that all of the Columbia operations will remain the same.

Scheer forms The Alpha Group, Ltd.

Ross B. Scheer, who recently announced his resignation from Bally Manufacturing Corporation, has formed his own consulting firm, specializing in management and marketing consulting for the gaming, amusement, and leisure industries. Scheer's new firm, The Alpha Group, Ltd., will headquarter in Chicago, but its operations are expected to be world-wide.

"I perceive there to be genuine need for the kind of experience and expertise I have in the gaming and amusement fields. I expect to be very active in the licensing to manufacturers of new video games from designers with whom I already have made arrangements to represent."

Scheer pointed out that he intended to provide a 'whole gamut

of service' to gaming and amusement manufacturers, from licensing of games, trademarks and logos; to assistance and consulting in the coin-machine business; sales promotion and development programs for manufacturers; and to develop understanding of the gaming legalization process for lotteries.

Initially, Scheer will be servicing eight clients—among them, Bally Manufacturing Corporation.

Scheer said he thought that smaller manufacturers, in particular, would be seeking out his new firm, 'because they don't always get the first shot at the potentially big, new games.' He also said he would be representing manufacturers of components for coin-operated products.

Konami names licensees

Konami Industries of Osaka has awarded exclusive licenses on two new games. *Amidar* has been acquired by Stern Electronics for a region that includes the United States, all other territories in North and South America, and in the Caribbean.

Centuri procured the same rights for the same region for Konami's *Guttany Guttany (Locomotive)*.

Lowen Automaten was awarded exclusive rights for both games in West Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

Williams earnings rising

Williams Electronics, Inc. reported higher revenues and earnings for the initial three months of the 1982 fiscal year as compared with the same period in the prior year, according to Michael R. Stroll, president of the firm.

Revenues reached \$34,496,000, 48.5 percent above the \$23,224,000 attained in the comparable quarter of fiscal year 1980. Net income rose 123.1 percent to \$4,352,000 or 55 cents per share on a fully diluted basis, compared with pro forma net income of \$1,951,000 or 26 cents per share achieved in the like period of 1980.

Net income and per share data for the first quarter of fiscal 1980 have been reported on a pro forma basis to show the results independent of Xcor International, Inc. which was the parent of Williams until May 29, 1981.

Per share figures also have been adjusted for the issuance of \$2,500,000 shares in connection with the three-for-two stock split on January 5, 1982.

Stroll also announced that the company's securities have been approved for listing on the New York Stock Exchange, effective Thursday, February 11, 1982.

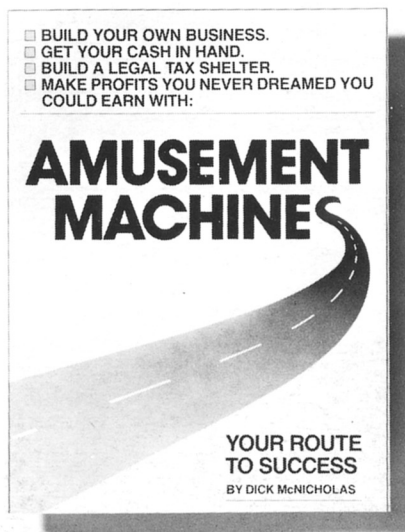
"We are very pleased that we can announce a substantial increase in first quarter profits and our listing on the New York Stock Exchange at the same time," Stroll commented. "While it is still too early in the second quarter to be able to realistically determine results, we do know that the continued lack of demand for pinball games, coupled with a temporary delay in the production of *Hyperball* will cause revenues for the month of January 1982 to be as much as one-third lower than those of January 1981."

'How to' book gives new operators benefit of experiences

With the right breaks, the right games, and the right kind of knowledge, a new operator can make a success of an amusement route. Yet, attaining that knowledge without losing too much valuable time or money is a necessity, early on in the coin-op business.

Dick McNicholas, successful operator in the Pacific Northwest and owner of the Olympic Games Company, saw a need to provide thorough, competent information to newcomers in the amusement route business. He was successful in his route, and many newcomers sought his counsel, McNicholas reported.

Seeing a pattern develop, McNicholas kept a journal of his business activities, and later wrote a manual. He entitled his book, "Amusement Machines: Your Route to Success." In it, McNicholas explains many areas, from financing to servicing of units.



Handbook for new operators

Having learned the route business both in the United States and Australia, McNicholas experienced

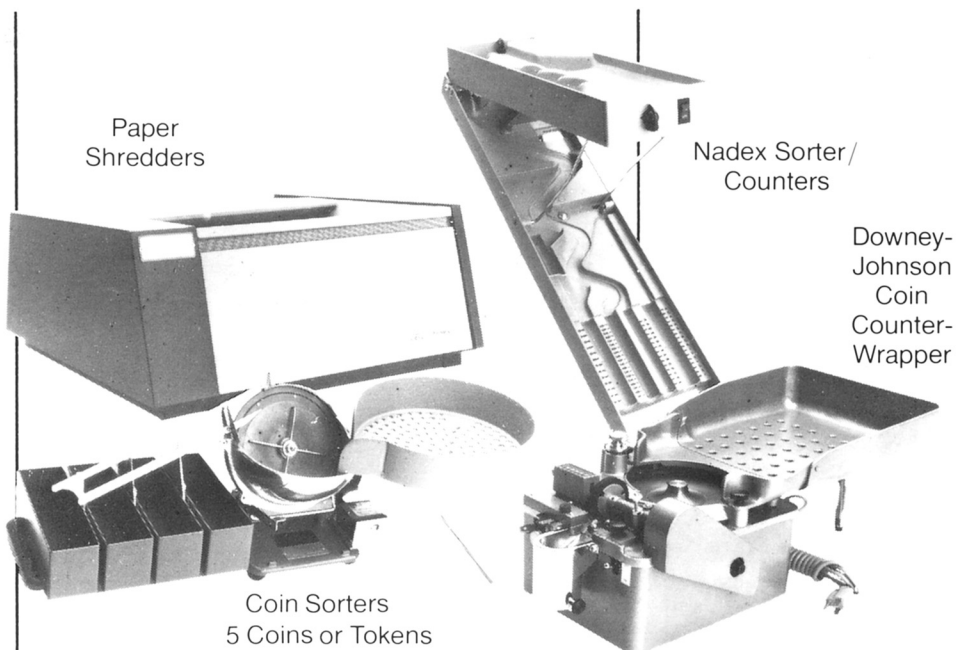
firsthand many of the problems encountered by newcomers today. He has dealt with such specific procedures as machine rotation practice, collections, financing, simple accounting, maintenance—all the items which can make or break a business.

"Because many people should be aware of some of the rip-offs that can turn up in the industry, the book addresses and helps prepare the newcomer for many of these challenges," said its publisher. A reference for anyone thinking of going into the business, or as a refresher for those already in it, "Amusement Machines: Your Route to Success" provides information to help build a business quicker, or keep a current business more profitable.

Questions about the book can be answered by writing Publishers' Press, 1935 S.E. 59th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97215.

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MOM takes gray-area stand

Although gray area gaming devices had not come to a court test in Michigan by the first of this year, the Music Operators of Michigan has taken a stand and announced its position on the pseudo-gamblers.

Walt P. Maner III, executive secretary of MOM, said the growing placement of gray area games in Michigan was brought to the association's attention by operators "who have been seeing these games in out-of-the-way locations, primarily private clubs. Their main question is: 'Are they legal?'"

No police seizures of poker-type videos had yet been carried out in Michigan, but the state association's board of directors at mid-1981 were already concerned with local cases in other states, including Ohio (*Play Meter*, April 15, page 48-49) where police agencies were "not discriminating between gray area games and straight amusement devices," said Maner.

He noted that in many localities it has become increasingly hard to defend coin-op games against anti-arcade laws. In other states, ordi-

nances have been passed by cities outlawing the gray area games and by reference these ordinances have included the non-offending pinball and video games used for pure amusement.

MOM invited operator calls to its Lansing office with any "questions regarding gray area games and their impact on the legitimate amusement industry." Operators in those states where confusion has arisen between pure amusement and gambling machines, it was noted, have had to go to court to have their games declared legal or have had to engage in extensive deliberations with various city councils to amend their ordinances affecting their route.

With the aim of "defending and preparing for a problem before it becomes a critical issue for operators" in Michigan, the MOM Board of Directors in 1981 passed the following resolution:

"Whereas, the coin-operated amusement games industry has spent many years and large resources to win acceptance in the legitimate parts of the amusement

industry and,

"Whereas, the advent of certain coin operated devices as popular amusement games has also made it possible for gambling to take place due to the nature of the devices and,

"Whereas, the use of such devices for gambling purposes tarnishes the good reputation of the entire coin-operated amusement game industry.

"Now therefore, be it resolved by the Music Operators of Michigan Board of Directors that gambling machines shall be defined to include those machines or devices whose primary purpose is the direct or indirect award of chance-determined prizes but shall exclude those authorized by law, and strongly condemns the use of coin-operated devices for gambling purposes and urges its members and other amusement games proponents to resist such usage;

"Be it further resolved that MOM hereby urges the appropriate public authorities to take such steps as may be necessary to prevent the usage of certain coin-operated devices for gambling purposes."

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Sega/Gremlin joins distributors in showcase of "Eliminator"

Sega/Gremlin has joined with key distributors in eight major U.S. markets to showcase the company's new video games *Eliminator*, *Turbo*, and *Frogger* to operators.

"The Sega/Gremlin Showcase is a key part of the company's new marketing program whereby operators are exposed and oriented to Sega/Gremlin's latest product offerings," said David Rosen, chairman and CEO of Sega Enterprises, Inc.

With the cooperation and support of regional distributors, the Sega/Gremlin Showcase was designed to enable operators to meet factory representatives and learn first-hand about the company's new products. Each orientation program concludes with a cocktail reception and buffet.

Sega/Gremlin's new four-player model of its space-themed game, *Eliminator*, was being unveiled at each Showcase stop.

Operators who attended the Showcase also could play upright

and cockpit models of *Turbo*, Sega/Gremlin's newest grand prix racing game. Also on hand were upright and cocktail table versions of *Frogger*, another of Gremlin's popular games.

Bob Harmon, Sega/Gremlin sales manager, conducted the Showcase in Dallas January 18 at the Dupont Plaza; in Columbus, Ohio January 20 at the Marriott Inn North; and in Atlanta January 21 at the Holiday Inn Downtown.

Jack Gordon, Sega/Gremlin director of sales, was Showcase host in Chicago January 26 at the Marriott O'Hare; in New York January 28 at the Marriott La Guardia; and in Boston February 2 at the Sheraton Downtown.

Harmon and Gordon co-hosted the program in San Francisco February 9 at the Jack Tar Hotel and in Los Angeles February 12 at the Ambassador Hotel.

Participating distributors in Dallas are Southwest Vending Sales,

O'Connor Distributing Company, and Commercial Music Company. Columbus distributors participating are Shaffer Distributing Company, Cleveland Coin International, and Monroe Distributing, Inc.

In Atlanta, Greater Southern Distributing Company and Peach State Distributing Company are the participating distributors; Empire Distributing, Inc. is participating in Chicago; and Albert Simon, Inc., Coin Machine Distributors, Inc., Betson, Inc., and Mondial International were co-hosting in New York.

Boston distributors participating include Bally Northeast Distributing, Inc. and Rowe International, Inc. In San Francisco, Advance Automatic Sales and Betson Pacific Distributing Company were the co-hosts.

Participating distributors in Los Angeles include C.A. Robinson Company, Inc., Betson Pacific Distributing Company, and Circle International Company.

Apology due Status Games

In our January 15, 1982 issue we reported that Dominic Sanzo, chairman of Game-A-Tron Corp., New Britain, Connecticut, has pointed to the principals of a new games company, Status Games, as being responsible for Game-A-Tron's loss of certain blueprints and schematics, implying that this was the reason Status Games was able to enter the market with a PC board shortly after this new company was formed. Actually, we now recognize that there is no basis shown for this assertion.

While Status Games was able to enter the market with a PC board shortly after its formation, Irv Jeffries, president of Status Games said that his company's board is different from Game-A-Tron's and that none of the principals of Status used any of Game-A-Tron's sche-

matics or blueprints.

Jeffries said he was not aware of any schematics or blueprints missing from Game-A-Tron, his former

employer.

Play Meter apologizes for any confusion following the report in January 15's issue, page 57.



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Operators blow whistle on “blue sky” parties

Due mostly to the alert reactions of the nation's video game operators, local media throughout the country are beginning to tell the “other side of the story” in the world of video madness.

Several television network affiliates have recently contacted *Play*

Meter for information about “blue sky” salesmanship in the video field. These stations have discovered that video fraud is so prevalent that they are, almost without exception, developing continuing series of news programs to deal with the subject.

Jack Cloherty, Channel 4 in

Washington, D.C., an NBC affiliate, broadcast a segment on the presence of Leisure Time Electronics in the area offering questionable business opportunities.

“People began ringing the phone off the hook to tell us how they had been cheated by Leisure Time,” says Cloherty, who became so interested in the topic that he flew to Chicago to track down Leisure Time's (and their related company Fascination Ltd.'s) original home office. Cloherty reports that one individual dropped \$60,000 to the company pitch. Cloherty's subsequent investigations led him and his station to expand their attack on the problem into a five part series within their nightly news program.

In Saginaw, Michigan, an alert arcade owner, Memory Lanes Arcades' Dennis Atkinson, contacted WNEM-TV and reporter Doug Bunze began an investigation of “blue sky” firm Potomac Mortgage. He found that company setting up shop at a hotel show, promising “shock absorbers” (trade name for business opportunity investors) two to eight hundred dollars a week grosses on their games. Bunze's work has led him to plan a series of telecasts on the topic.

In Albuquerque, New Mexico, *Journal* reporter Doug Des Georges contacted *Play Meter* for a story he wanted to write about the fraudulent game pushers.

But most impressive of all, Chicago's Ted Albert is in the process of putting together a segment on video business opportunity fraud for the NBC network show *Magazine*. Albert began his investigation with an interest in pirated games. He was keeping a close eye on Stern's case against Omni Games when he stumbled across the business opportunity scam.

“It is really more interesting than our original story,” says Albert, “because it applies more to the general public.”

Finally, the realistic side of doing business in the world of video game operation is getting media exposure, and it is due to the interest and alert watch-dog tactics of the industry's operators.

—Mike Shaw

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Close Encounters with Industry Experts:



AOE Seminar Preview

By Ray E. Tilley



In what may be called "the town meeting of the industry," the Early Bird general session will lead off the fact-filled seminar series of Amusement Operators Expo 1982 in the downtown Chicago Hyatt Regency, March 25.

The general session, free to all attendees, will place coin-op manufacturing representatives on the firing line for any questions posed by operators. Possibly a preview of the future of the games industry will be offered in the firing line session, and the panel of major factories' spokesmen will be open to hard-punch probing on the state of the coin industry today.

In a conversation with *Play Meter*, Early Bird panel moderator Joseph Dillon, Williams Electronics director of sales, touched on some of the key points which may be expected to be raised by conference attendees.

"The cashbox gives the vote," he said, pointing to the increasing sophistication of players today and the implications that the increasing savoir faire of the consumer has on the industry pipeline of games development and production, the distribution channels, and the competitive business of operating.

Dillon will be joined on the firing line by Larry Berke, Midway Manufacturing Corp., director of sales; Jack Gordon, Gremlin Industries, director of sales; Ben Rochetti, Stern/Seeburg, director of sales; and David Stroud, Cinematronics Corp., vice president/marketing.

Dillon said that in operating today, "there is definitely room for small enterprise and room for the small entrepreneur." In fact it is difficult for a major chain operation to stay in touch with the ground-level demands of the playing public, he

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said in response to the often-voiced fear of operators, that games operation is becoming more and more of a high-capital, chain-type concern, such as those invested in by some subsidiaries of the manufacturers themselves.

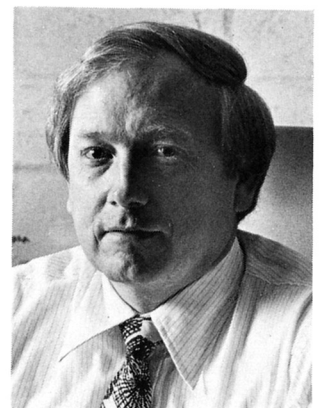
On the manufacturers' end of the pipeline, Dillon indicated that a pact with the operator is implicit, for the factory to invest in the development—and legal protection—of a product that is reliable at the customer level. "Equipment must be made to be abused," in Dillon's phrase.

"All of us see the industry as going through a settling-down period. Players are very sophisticated and like to play new games," he observed. Toward the satisfaction of the player, then, the factories must constantly invest in "progressive, upward future growth of the industry."

To the operator who cites the rising cost of new game product comes this answer, that the manufacturer is faced with constantly returning part of its profits into "research and development to keep the caliber of the games the players are demanding. There is a limited amount of talent available. The manufacturer is obligated to plow a lot of money into research and development."



Dillon



Fogelman

Additionally, he pointed out, there is the legal expense to the factory of protection of its creative product in this age of game piracy. The copyist has created a climate wherein the owner-operator of games may find himself holding, in effect, an item of contraband—an illegally copied creative work which may be subject to lawful seizure. So, while the manufacturer is protecting its own interest in an original product, it is also absorbing the expenses of insuring that the operator will handle a computer game that an operator across town is not operating at the advantage of having bought a knock-off at knock-down prices.

Should the arguments about factory rights to its original product sound altruistic and too self-serving, Dillon would remind the doubtful that copy games pay no research and development costs—"and if the copy flourishes...there will not be any new games. Operators run a risk of losing everything" in handling the rip-off, Dillon stated.

These and other issues will be given a sound workout in the Early Bird program of the AOE. For example, on the operator concerns for game warranty, Dillon said: "I think most manufacturers believe that for a certain period of time we are trying to protect the operator from 'out-of-the-box' defects." Again the role of the manufacturer meshes with the aims of the operator, he indicated, in producing a reliable product—that machine which "must be made to be abused."

Dillon indicated that he and his fellows on the panel

expect lines of questioning on the future of the industry, the growth projects and programs in the planning stage now.

Living with legislation

The coin machine operator has become often acutely aware that local ordinances and taxes on the equipment has come to the forefront around the nation. Toward providing for the common defense against local legislation, seminar session 207 (March 26, 3:30—5:30 p.m.) will provide some guidelines and supply a model ordinance that may be introduced locally even before restrictive governing measures are proposed.

Frank Fogelman, vice chairman of Sega/Gremlin, leads this session and proposes "slight planning to confront issues before they arise." He will focus on the bank of background information that can serve local cases in the legislative defense. For example, Fogelman suggested the operator, through his state association or another formal group to face the ordinance issue, should be in touch with local authorities on the social aspect of coin games playing—a college psychology professor, minister, school principal, or others—who can give their testimony on the beneficial nature of games before a city council considering local ordinances on game rooms.

In addition to discussion on how to face the political crises, Fogelman will provide a data bank of information gathered from around the United States with regard to ordinances, licenses, or "anything pertinent to legislation," he told *Play Meter*. For example, having found the extremes of hours that arcades are allowed to be open, the attendees at this seminar will be armed with the "norm," the reasonable hours that would fit into a new ordinance.

"How to be prepared for shocking ordinances to be proposed," Fogelman said, is the theme to his political-ammunition session.

Why a distributor?

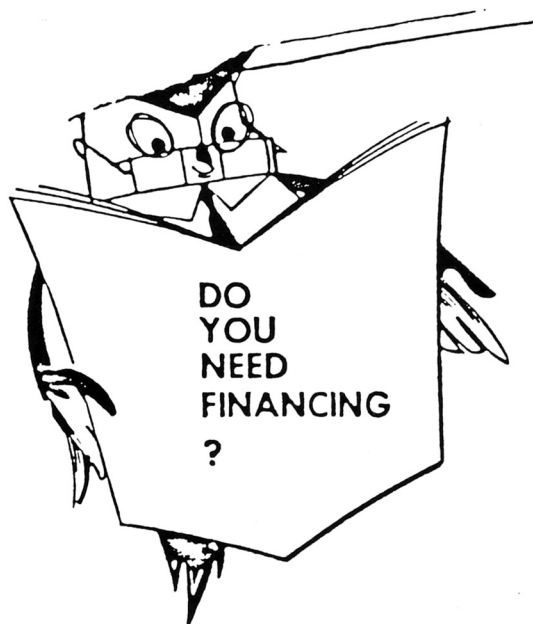
The range of services a coin-op distributor can provide will be under discussion by Jerry Marcus, industry veteran and present president of Empire Distributing, in seminar session 402 (March 26, 3:30—5:30 p.m.). Possibly some highly useful and untapped support a distributor can give an operation will be explored. From "knowing the losers" to financial services, to cooperation with local charities and civic groups, the distributor serves a pivotal role in the industry. Those after-the-sale functions of a distributor will be discussed by attendees in the seminar, "Why a Distributor." Marcus said he plans to invite other distributor reps to join him in the session.

Marcus talked with *Play Meter* shortly after addressing a citizens' group in Chicago. That very activity, the opportunity to speak to a Rotary or Kiwanis club and to address ordinary citizens on the subject of the business of coin-op, may well be an overlooked aid to the operator when his industry needs eloquent spokesmen whenever an audience is available.

From the standpoint of experience, Marcus will address the AOE group on the direct benefits derived from doing business with a distributor; for example, whether to lease equipment and for how long a term.

The "rip-off" game

"People are being duped, and those people have a place in this industry." That is how Stan Jarocki, marketing vice president of Midway Manufacturing, sees the problem of game copies being produced and sold to operators.



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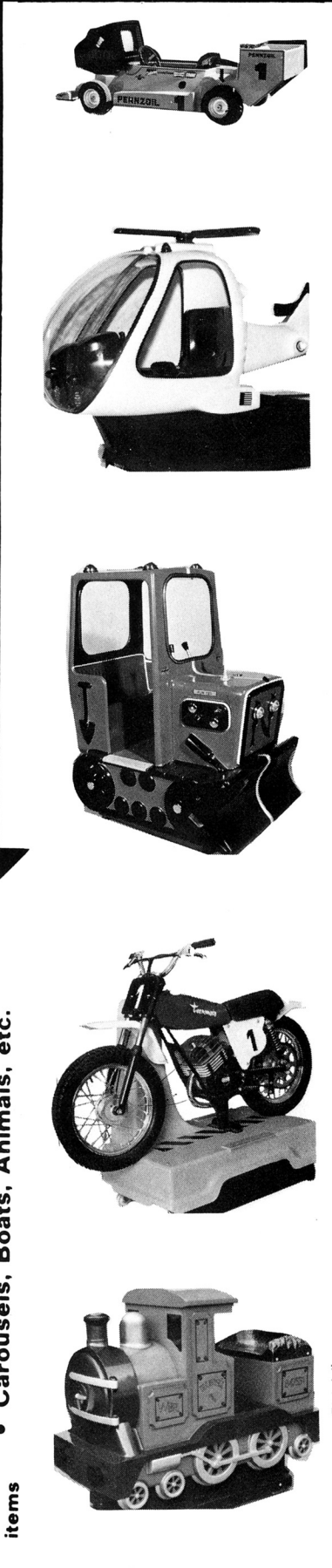
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A thorough treatment of issues developing in the area of video game copyright protection will be offered in seminar session 601 (March 28, 3:30—5:30 p.m.), "The Copied Games and their Effect on the Industry," with Jarocki at the podium. The seminar will cover a number of district court rulings impacting on video copyright, Midway's stance on the problem, the recent landmark International Trade Commission ruling (see related story in this issue), the effect of importation of the clone machines, the Customs penalties invoked by the U.S. Government when I.T.C. orders are violated, and the effect of the copies on the industry and on operators who may feel favorable toward the copy games.

Criminal procedures will be the next step in the fight against game copiers, Jarocki told *Play Meter*. As in the cases of music recording and theatrical videotape piracy, criminal penalties will be invoked against bootlegging in games, he said, and noted that in those related cases, jail terms as well as fines have been handed down.

The seminar may serve to clarify the issues for the operator who has any degree of confusion over where the copy-game problem leaves him.

Parts inventory control

Should an operation have its own parts stock room? There are definite advantages, Bill Ray, Jr. will explain in seminar session 103 (March 26, 9:00—11:00 a.m.). Vice president of Penn-Ray International supply firm, Ray has nine years' experience in the coin-op industry. From his vantage, he will explain the cost effectiveness of obtaining universal game parts from a parts house.

Comparisons between manufacturers in parts price savings will be shown by a number of examples, Ray said. "It's to the operators' advantage to have a stock room, and we will show them how to set one up, with indexing of the interchangeable stock parts and game manufacturers' reference numbers for the parts." The seminar attendee will be given advice on how to interchange parts between machines from different factories.

Through the management of parts inventory, the operator will be able to insure delivery of his equipment when it is most needed and to avoid late deliveries. The result of this type of control, Ray said, should be better service to the operation's customers.

Effective equipment buys

In the operation's largest expense area, the equipment itself, there is no room for a bad game, said Alan Bruck, Jr., of Banner Specialty Company, who will lead seminar session 401 (March 27, 3:30—5:30 p.m.). Wise purchasing decisions are therefore crucial to the prosperity of the operation, and advice on effective purchasing is the offering of this seminar.

Bruck will discuss demographic factors, such as the growing number of female players and the over-21 age group, that impact on game buying decisions today. The seminar will analyze "when to get the hit game as soon as possible so as to maximize earnings," said Bruck.

The effect of new tax law which elongates depreciation life of the equipment will be discussed. Bruck will also cover the timing of equipment rotation when a piece is found to be tapering off its earning power in a given location.

"Frank's cranks"

Play Meter technical contributor and New Jersey arcade operator Frank Seninsky will host a pair of seminars: one on the business side of operating (seminar session 303; March 27, 9:00—11:00 a.m.) and one on a

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Will calculate your congeniality with that special person.

(From the birthdays of you and your special person, comments and congeniality percentages will be printed out for physical, sensitivity, intellectual and total congeniality.)

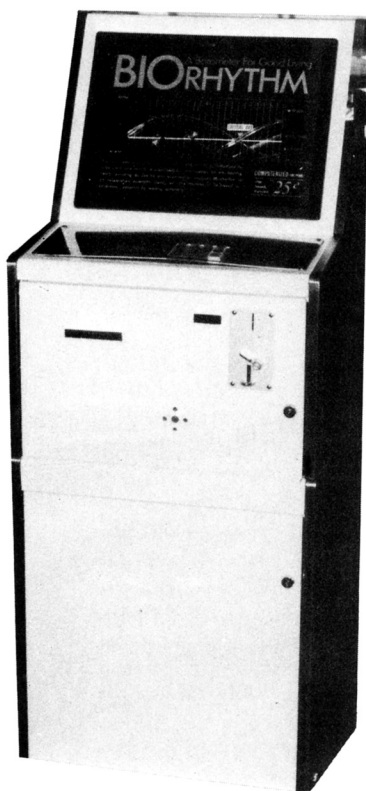
Procedures:

1. When you want your biorhythm.

- 1) Insert a coin.
- 2) Input your date of birth with the keys.
- 3) Input the day that you want to know about, using the keys.
- 4) Push the start key. (For two weeks START 1; for a day, START 2.
- 5) Cut the sheet of paper dispensed.

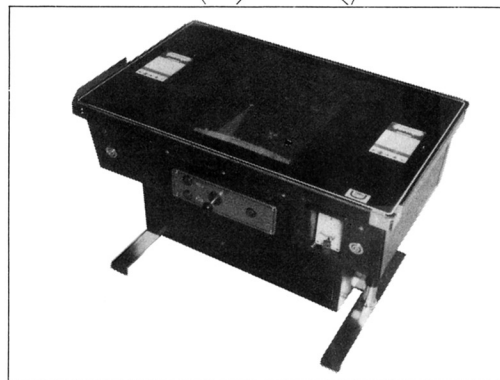
2. When you want to know your congeniality.

- 1) Insert a coin.
- 2) Input your date of birth with the keys.
- 3) Input your special person's birthday with the keys.
- 4) Push the START 3 button.



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technical overview of game reliability (session 605; March 28, 3:30—5:30 p.m.).

In "Negotiating Commissions with Locations," Seninsky covers how to explain the economics of operating to the location owners in a logical and straightforward manner. Establishing weekly minimums and assessing service charges will be discussed in detail. Also, Seninsky will emphasize the use of contracts in carrying out the most favorable commission split.

In the "Frank's Cranks" seminar, discussion will center on game design, reliability and service support. Seninsky will also lead discussion on how the operator can effect change through dialog with the manufacturer, how he can be a factor in the future of the industry, and how he can guide the operation to achieve the best results.

In session 605, Seninsky will also cover the latest innovations in the industry, and he will speak on what innovations he sees as needed on behalf of manufacturers to improve the industry.

Moving to tokens

"As a promotional device, the token is the shape of the future." That's the assessment of Virgil Vance, president of token manufacturer Van Brook of Lexington, who will discuss many proven promotional devices through the use of tokens in seminar session 203 (March 26, 3:30—5:30 p.m.). The "tremendous use" of tokens, both in street locations and arcades, has been effective both throughout the United States and abroad, said Vance.

"New frontiers just continue opening up," he said, pointing to creative locating methods such as in doctors' offices where the well-behaved little patients are given tokens to play the coin-op game placed in the waiting room.

"Tokens allow for 'multi-level' pricing," he added. "Three different game play prices for three different times of the day is easily possible, by adjusting your coin changers and using tokens." Pros and cons of adjustable pricing will be detailed in session 203, as will be the methods of converting to a token system.

Further guidance on tokens will be available in seminar session 506 (March 28, 9:00—11:00 a.m.), "Tokens; A Complete Concept," with its faculty members Phyllis Bohrer, sales manager of Green Duck Corp.; David Appel, an operator with General Amusements; and Ray Nicholson, vice president of Coin Mechanisms, Inc. Examining the importance of tokens to the industry, the panel will guide the attendee from the concept of tokens to their implementation on routes today. Some of this panel's topics will be: What is the proper token for a given operation, mechanism adjustment to keep yours in the cashbox and others out, and operator Appel's experiences and recommendations on tokens.

Other seminars

The above are but a few of the 40 seminar sessions available at the AOE, with their morning and afternoon hours scheduled not to conflict with the open hours of the Exhibit Hall (10:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily, March

*40 AOE workshops will
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26—28). A dozen sessions on technical topics alone are offered.

On tap also are:

—“Location Cost Analysis”/Charles C. Ross: Session 101, repeated as Session 206.

—“How to Read Schematics”/Bruce Minus (of D. Gottlieb & Co.): Session 102.

—“Signature Analysis: An Error Detection Test System”/Jim Sneed (of Kurz Kasch, Inc.): Sessions 104, 204, 304, and 404; an attendee must register for all four parts.

—“Arcade Design and Construction: A Practical Approach”/Steven J. Bodenstein (of Six Flags Amusement Centers, Inc.): Session 105 and 205; registration is required for both parts.

—“Electronics: How Times Have Changed”/Jay Hanna: Session 106.

—“When You Want to Buy a Computer— What Do You Do Next?”/Donald Glendening (of the University of Florida): Session 107.

—“The Digital Multimeter: Methods for Use in Troubleshooting”/Randy Fromm: Session 201 (suggested to be preceded by Session 102).

—“Business Forms and Record Keeping”/Stephen B. Goot (of Total Vending Services, Inc.): Session 202, repeated as Session 502.

—“The Future of the Pinball Machine as a Profitable Part of the Business”/Marshall Caras (of D. Gottlieb & Co.): Session 301.

—“Troubleshooting for the Conventional Video Game System”/Randy Fromm: Session 302, repeated as session 603.

—“Advertising and General Promotion for Amusement Centers”/Carol J. Kantor (of Business Builders): Session 305.

—“Return on Investment and Business Profitability”/Charles C. Ross: Session 306, repeated as Session 405.

—“Troubleshooting Techniques for the Pinball Machine”/Lou Rudolph (of Stern/Seeburg): Session 307.

—“Troubleshooting in the XY Video Game System”/Randy Fromm: Session 403; Sessions 201 and 302 are suggested as prerequisites.

—“Shopping Centers and Arcade Leasing”/Robert Stone (of Time Out Family Amusement Centers): Session 406.

—“The Computer, the Program, and the Amusement Operator”/Richard Priesmeyer (of Innovative Management Consultants): Session 407.

—“The Profitable Distributorship”/Chuck Arnold (of Rowe International), Rubin Franco (Franco Distributing), and Arnold A. Kaminkow (of Bally Northeast): for distributors only; session 408.

—“Starting and Managing the Arcade”/Steve Isaacson (of S.L. London Music Co.): Session 502 and Session 602; registration is required for both parts.

—“Depreciation Facts and Fallacies”/Charles C. Ross: Session 503.

—“The Technical Side of the Business: Where We’re Headed in Electronics”/Lou Rudolph: Session 504.

—“Effective Management”/Richard Priesmeyer: Session 505.

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Pac-Man or Puckman?

Video piracy is under attack

By Mike Shaw

I am a new arcade owner, having bought the arcade little over a month ago. I am writing to you with something I fear might be a serious dilemma, that I don't quite know how to handle.

I have a suspicion that one of the games housed in the arcade may be slightly "illegal."

The game itself is called Cosmic Attackers. Personally, the only difference between it and Space Invaders that I can detect is the cabinet in which it is enclosed. The cabinet has no manufacturer's name or logo, inside or out.

WHAT DO I DO? (unsigned letter from a reader)

A competitive operator, seeking to place his games in a location, spots another operator's game there, a game called *Gobbler* or *Puckman*, one that is strikingly similar to Midway's *Pac-Man*. A call is made to Midway, and Midway files a com-

plaint in a court of law to have the illegally copied game seized. The operator who placed the game not only loses his game and his location but even stands in line for possible criminal action.

Although no criminal action has been filed yet by any manufacturer against game copiers and the purveyors of such machines, Midway and other major U.S. game manufacturers are taking increasingly harder stances against copy mongers. Whereas in the recent past, the manufacturers have waged mainly psychological warfare to arrest the problem, it appears now that recent court decisions have given the majors the necessary fodder to load their cannons for an impressive war to stop copy imports as well as domestic sales and leasing of the offending machines.

The growing magnitude of the pro-

blem is one more interesting by-product of the massive explosion of the video game industry over recent seasons, and, some suggest, a harbinger of the industry's turn around toward a leaner future.

"Just a few short years ago, there were forty operators serving the Miami, Florida area," a *Play Meter* subscriber reports. "Now there are 350 of them."

With that kind of competition, the traditional mode of operation—that is, maintaining a huge inventory of expensive games—has become too much for that Florida operator. He insists that buying less expensive copies or any pirated PC boards is an alternative to maintaining a stable of expensive games that are increasingly difficult to place and that become obsolete too fast.

In spite of the growth of the industry, this tearful operator contends, "I'm taking the worst beating of my life."

He adds: "I don't want to operate copy games, nobody does. We just have no choice, we can't go any other way and survive."

Back orders

Not only are operators strapped with high video game costs and increasing competition, but they are also having problems just acquiring the popular games. Midway consistently faced a back-order situation with *Pac-Man*, and it is no wonder that operators were tempted to buy copies that were immediately available and less expensive than Midway's original (and phenomenally popular) game.

Mike Stone, who operates Signatron in Glendale, California, is outspoken in his support for the copiers and is seeking to define recent copy-related court actions to determine the rights of copiers. He feels, most importantly, that strong definitions of what is copyrightable in games will be forthcoming from the courts and that these definitions will give rise to



'Copy' of Midway game under court-ordered seizure.

a different branch of the industry which will offer "legal" copies, just different enough from the originals to satisfy legal requirements.

While it might appear that any effort at copying should not be condoned, Stone offers some interesting rationale for his support of the copyists.

Stone envisions the big manufacturers as the industry's conquerors in the video explosion of recent years. While the number of operators expands with the popularity of the games, he points out that the major manufacturers have been able to retain control of the supply end of the business. Stone contends these giants are becoming less and less competitive with each other, becoming more linear in their approaches, even to the point of universally raising prices, and protecting the *status quo* of the manufacturing community. Those are weighty charges—all of them made, because, as Stone contends, video game copyrights have the effect not only of protecting a manufacturer's property but also of excluding competition and guaranteeing monopolies on specific hit games.

He indicates that others who would manufacture or import games imitate

the popular trends instead because they cannot compete with the larger manufacturers, their capital, and their advertising campaigns.

And he points to the fact that—as was recorded in an initial U.S. International Trade Commission investigative analysis presented to the court in October—there is no significant "immediate and substantial" harm to Midway's business posed by the copiers. The estimated total of some seven or eight thousand *Pac-Man* copies, most imported from Japan, are not at this point biting significantly into Midway's success, he insists.

However, the Trade Commission has granted Midway's request for temporary exclusion and cease and desist orders against some 20-25 companies involved in manufacturing or trafficking copies of *Galaxian*, *Pac-Man*, and *Rally-X*. Some 20 more firms stand in line for a similar fate. These companies are Japanese, Taiwanese, and American distributors, manufacturers, and importers of games and boards—and even some are operators of the games. (One company is listed as selling an imported *Pac-Man* copy for only \$1,108 and selling the game's printed circuit board for just \$390.)

I.T.C. finding: a landmark

By a 4 to 1 vote, the Commission concluded that companies "...who have imported or sold audio-visual games' printed circuit boards that are substantially similar to complainant's (Midway) audio-visual works known as *Pac-Man* or *Rally-X* have infringed complainant's proprietary interest in those audio-visual works..." and that "...there are unfair acts or methods of competition...in the importation of audio-visual games known as *Pac-Man* or *Rally-X* or audio-visual games substantially similar thereto."

And in a full week of hearings leading up to the recent commission decision, Midway's attorneys were able to change initial opinions that there was no harm done to Midway by the copiers. The Commission decided there was "immediate and substantial" harm to Midway in reference to *Pac-Man*. But *Rally-X* offenders were omitted from the order, the commission finding that there was no "immediate" harm to the marketing of a Midway game that was already out of production.

In leveling its decision—a historically weighty one in light of the fact that only once before has the International Trade Commission levied



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such a exclusion order—the Commission also helped to establish that a game is copyrightable. The essentials of the game are the possibilities of expression determined by the electronics and computer programming capabilities of a ROM. It is these internal electronic works, then, that are copyrightable—the expression of which is seen in the characters and their behavior on the monitor screen.

Other important decisions are cementing the case against the copyists. While the International Trade Commission was agreeing with Midway's stance on copy prohibition, Stern Electronics was finding

success in a district court in New York in its case against Omni Video Games, Warwick, Rhode Island. There, Stern and the court were firming up the concept that indeed a video games expression—its ROMs and circuitry—was copyrightable.

Battle fronts

Previous to Midway's appearance before the Trade Commission, that same company had won a momentous battle in Hawaii. There, in August, on territory where the Japanese companies felt unthreatened, Midway won its case against 42 defendants. Some 200 to 300 known

copy games were located and relieved of offending parts.

What these legal decisions mean to operators is that there should be a lot fewer copy games available in the near future.

"Most of the circuit boards are printed in Taiwan and Japan," offers Midway attorney Sidney Katz, "and then assembled in the United States. Our efforts now will be to try to stop imports of the boards."

Midway will also pursue a harder line within the United States. "Where this (selling or leasing the games) has become a practice, Midway will continue to file actions. They do so reluctantly, but it is almost compelling. Where exclusive rights are being ignored, they can't stand back, even though they are suing an existing or potential customer. They tried the soft approach with the initial *Galaxian* copies, and it didn't work. Some feel they actually encouraged piracy by being too soft," said the attorney.

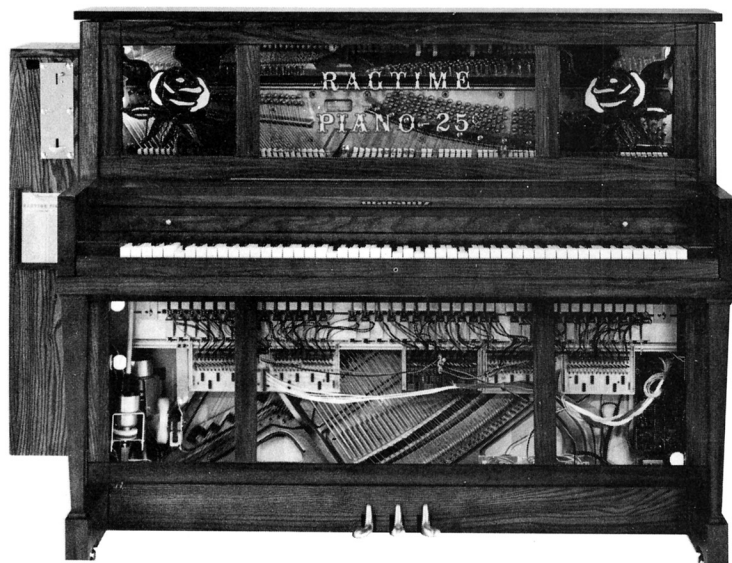
Although the courts have cleared the way for a more aggressive stance by major manufacturers whose copyrighted games are being pirated, the recent legal decisions rendered might jolt some operators with even greater waves of dilemma over the situation. Operators who have bought and are currently operating copy games might be in a quandary as to what steps to take.

While the copiers insist that the number of actual seizures of copy games is insignificant, the increasingly aggressive stance of the manufacturers might indicate that statistics will not be too favorable to copy game operators in the near future. Midway's Katz suggests the games be returned to the point of sale for refund. He sees the sale of the games as a breach of warranty and encourages returning them on that basis.

Perhaps, in light of the court decisions, Katz's suggestions are good ones to follow. But the factors that led to the success of copying have not been solved by the courts. Almost universally, the popular games are difficult to profit from because at high costs and brief life expectancies, and the explosion of the video game industry has created an awful headache for operators, distributors, and manufacturers alike when it comes to acquiring or supplying original "hit" games or replacement parts.

Now that the majors are seemingly winning their battle, will they be able to service the territories they have conquered?

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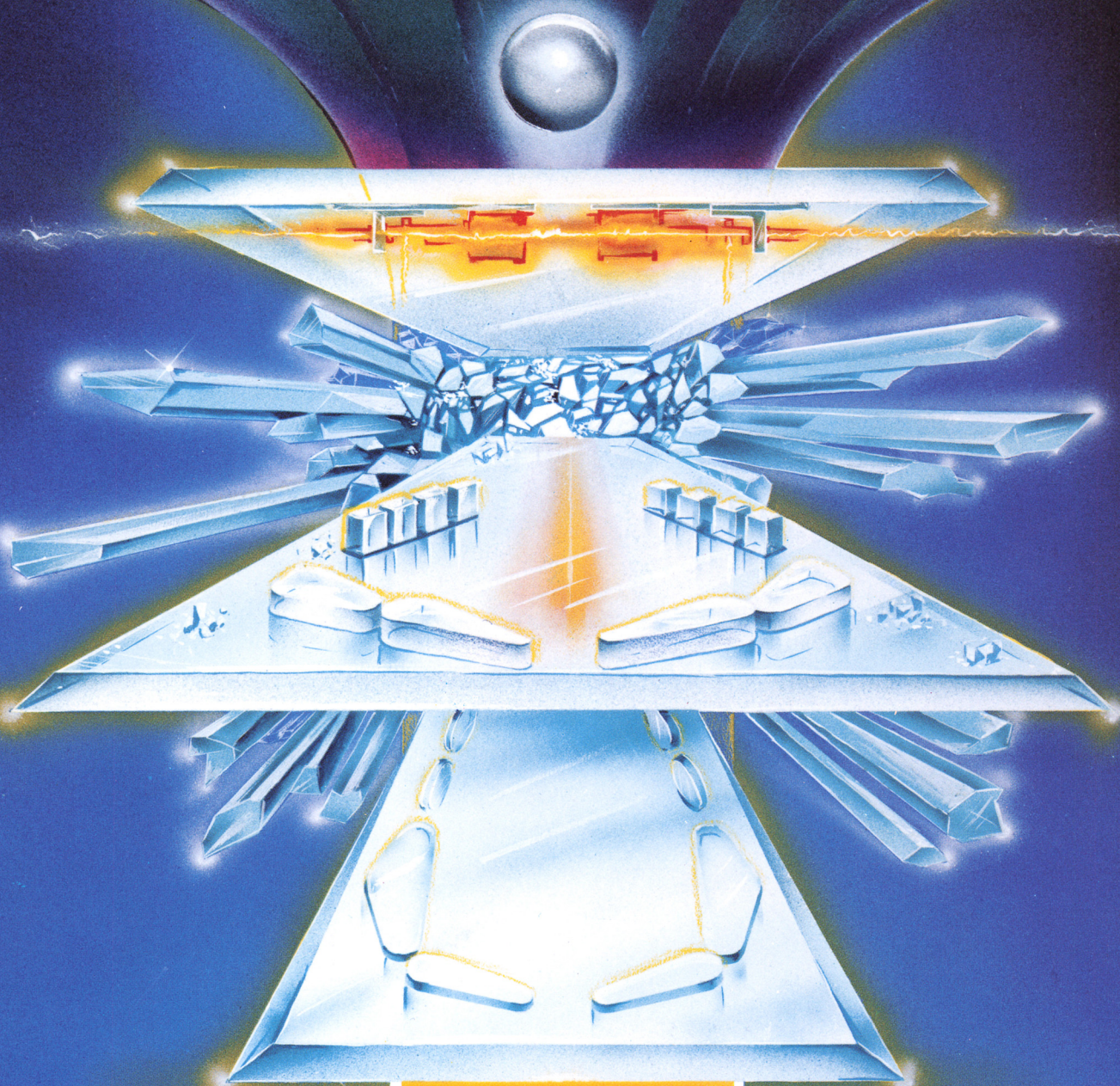
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2ND LEVEL

CENTER TARGETS

Completing the Center targets the first time will open the lower gate, the second time lights the Bonus Collect, releases the right captured ball upon the third completion, and advances the left targets the fourth. The out lane Special will light if the left targets are lit, and alternates from side to side.

BLUE TARGETS

The left blue targets have a flashing light that can be rotated with the left flipper button. Making that target flashes 3 lights; making those flashes all 5 lights. The right captured ball saucer and left outlane special are lit by making all 5 lights. Two Elektra units are gained by each flashing target scored. Repeating the light cycle releases the captured ball.

MULTI BALL

Multi-ball play is achieved by unlocking the top captured ball when the 1-2-3 targets are hit, or by unlocking the lower captured ball by making the center or left target light cycle. Both captured balls are released when one ball is captured and the second is locked in.

UPPER LEVEL

STAND-UP TARGETS

Two Elektra units are gained by hitting the 1-2-3 stand-up targets, when flashing. This will also light the left rollover buttons, and if activated in the direction in which they move, 4-5-6 will flash. Making the 4-5-6 targets lights the saucer arrow for a captured ball.

BOOT-A-BALL MULTIPLIER FEATURE

A series of in-line drop targets and a stationary target with a boot-a-ball multiplies scores 2x, 3x and 5x. Hitting the stationary target a second time scores 10 Elektra units, and 25,000 points each time afterward. Knocking down the in-line targets will also light the 4-5-6 arrows when 1, 2 and 3 are lit.



SPECIAL FEATURE

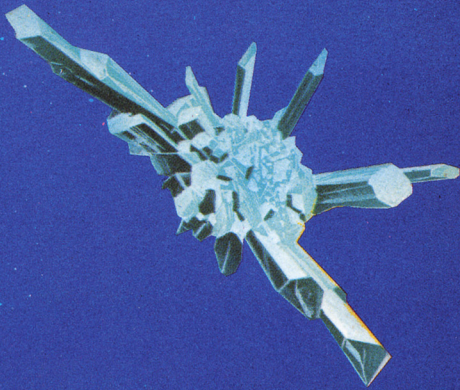
Making the 1-2-3 targets and the 4-5-6 arrows lights the top right rollover button for Special. Flashing on and off every 10 seconds, a Special is scored if players hit the button when lit.

MINI PLAYFIELD

Passage to Elektra's lower mini playfield is achieved by collecting Elektra time units on the upper levels. The upper levels 1-2-3 stand-up targets, and captive ball feature, along with the second level's blue targets are the key to third level play.

Third level play begins only after the mini playfield's ball in play has drained and minimum of 6 Elektra units has been earned. Players can earn from 5 to 195 thousand points on the mini playfield's Bonus feature. 2x the Bonus can be earned by hitting 1-2-3 or 4-5-6 in order, or by making all 6 targets in any order.





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Does England's video game decline forebode bad times ahead?

American visitors to ATE and IMA Shows found the answers

By David Pierson

The annual Amusement Trades Exhibition (ATE), once considered the largest industry-related trade show in the world, drew varied reactions from U.S. trade visitors this year.

"A disaster!"

"The pits of pessimism."

"I guess I'll go to the IMA a day earlier than I'd planned."

"At least the exhibits look nice, don't they?"

There was no denying that the 38th annual ATE at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham, England, January 18-21, was a disaster as far as coin-op amusements were concerned. Slot machines, draw poker videos (both with and without cash payouts)—well, that was a different story. Business there was brisk. But the amusement videos, with their Japanese and American ancestry, were roundly snubbed by the British trade.

And even the most loyal Tory would have been hard-pressed to say otherwise. Instead, as is their national psyche, they accented the positive about the show and politely restricted their comments to the decor, how nice the booths looked, and how fine an exhibition center the British Amusement Catering Trades Association had been able to find out here in the middle of nowhere—somewhere north of London and somewhere south...of Scotland.

But, for the more critical visitors from the Colonies, the 38th ATE called for some serious soul-searching, because the American trade doesn't extract the lion's share of its dollars from the public by gambling devices.

Was this a crystal ball foretelling of what lay in store for the U.S. market? Would King Video suffer a similar fate here?

The delegation from the American colonies thought about it, and they thought about it some more. And

then they answered in unison.

"No!" they said.

The decline and fall of videos in the United Kingdom is not a harbinger of what is about to befall the United States. They gave their reasons why. And every single one *Play Meter* spoke to, at one point or another in his analysis, explained that one of the major differences (if not *the* major difference) which explained why it happened thus and so in the United Kingdom and why it would not happen thus and so in the United States, could be found in booths such as DL 9 and DL 10. There in those two booths, they said, was the physical embodiment of what most American tradesters said was wrong with videos in the United Kingdom.

"It is not illegal to copy a video game, there is no (U.K.) copyright on computer programmes or display...It is in your interest to fight copyright..."

—ad poster at ATE

No copyrights

The occupant of booths DL 9 and DL 10 was a company from Surrey, England called Competitive Video. Headed by John Richards, the company flaunted what it saw as its competitive edge—that there is no video game copyright in England. Thus, they are free to copy any game and sell it to the operator at fraction of the price.

"It is not illegal to copy a video game, there is no copyright on computer programmes or displays,"

read a large poster displayed in the booth. "Do not be misled (sic) into thinking otherwise! Until someone wins a test case (which is unlikely), this will not change. It is in your interest to fight copyright—prices will rise without competition and cheap conversions (ours are not even direct copies). Can you survive without them?"

Despite the insistence that "ours are not even direct copies," to the American visitors, the games appearing in the Competitive Video booth appeared in most cases to be just that, direct copies—at least in American terms. There were apparent Xerox reproductions of *Donkey Kong* and *Qix*. There was also *Pocketballs*, a new name for a game that Dynamo is marketing in the United States under the name of *L'il Hustler*; *Painter* (which closely resembles Williams' *Make Trax*); *Hopperty* (which at least is a catchier name than the Gremlin *Frogger* game it reproduces); *Pigs* (which looked, smelled, and acted like Stern's *Turtles*); and *Cobra Attack* (which might suggest to the American reader a Stern game by the name of *Super Cobra*).

But the unkindest cut of all, the most flagrant attempt to assert that video game copyright in the United Kingdom is non-existent was reserved for a game, *Pac-Man*, that was marketed in the United States by the copyright sensitive Midway Manufacturing Company. Reproduced by Competitive Video, the *Pac-Man* copy was named simply, *The Copy*.

"I have no troubles with Midway," Richards told *Play Meter*. "They know there's no copyright law here."

He said British law is not exact and that nothing has yet been decided concerning various manufacturer's claims about what was "copyrightable." "The video display is not copyrightable," he insisted. "It has yet to

be proved in court.”

There were other dissimilarities in the English trade which Americans pointed to as contributing to the video game decline there—the preponderance of gambling machines, the lack of penetration of videos into new and different types of locations, a nationwide depression, and a significant difference in the makeup of the industries in the United States and England. But the American traders heaped most of the problem with the depressed video game market in the United Kingdom on the lack of a definable video game copyright. That, they claimed, has made it non-profitable for video manufacturers to pursue the amusement dollar in England.

“I would blame eighty percent of the problem with videos in England on copies,” said Frank Fogleman, vice chairman of Gremlin. “Nobody’s going to spend for research and development to capture only ten percent of the market.”

He continued, “Eighty to ninety percent of the *Froggers* over here are copies. A good portion of that, probably around seventy percent of that total, are conversions, which the manufacturer is not involved with in any way.”

By contrast, he said, in the United States, eighty to ninety percent of the video games sold on any particular game are originals.

One American visitor said that there would continue to be video games offered in England, but that because of the non-existent copyright laws England would remain a “parasite,” the implication being that if the same conditions were to prevail in the United States, where the major market for the equipment was, video game manufacturers would get out of the business of making new games and get into some other line of endeavor—like the mass production of personal business computers.

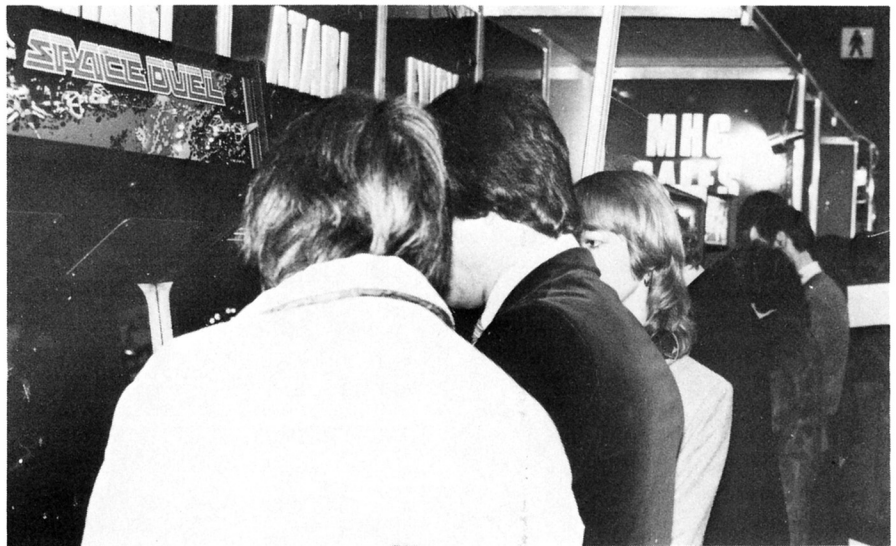
“The only thing keeping this from happening in the United States,” said another American visitor, Ray Hibarger of Hanson Distributing, “is continued legal action against the copiers.”

“Small manufacturers with no overhead are selling cheap, bootlegged boards that are coming from Japan,” said Elliott Stambouli of Stambouli Brothers. “They can undercut the legitimate marketer’s price by fifty percent because they have no R&D.”

“In the United States,” said the touring Ira Bettelman of C.A. Robinson and Company, “the manu-



“There is no copyright on computer programmes,” read a sign in the booth of Competitive Video at the ATE. John Richards (at right, with papers in hand) insists that there is no video game copyright law in England.



Atari introduced its new video *Space Duel*, a cross between *Asteroids* and *Tempest* at the Birmingham, England show.



Operator interest in Great Britain is obviously not on the amusement games. It’s on gambling equipment like this, which is heavily regulated by the British government.

facturers have exerted a strong effort to protect their original designs as well as to protect their licensed games. They've had the copy games confiscated on location and stopped at point-of-entry into our country."

"Manufacturers have a better control over their video copyrights in the United States," said Empire Distributing's Jerry Marcus. "And that's one of the reasons I don't think our market will suffer like this."

Player base

Another reason for the decline of the video game in Great Britain had to be the preponderance of gambling machines in the country.

In the simplest appraisal, it could be argued that the money spent to buy slot machines and other gambling devices would have gone to buy more videos—if gambling were illegal in England.

"Slots will hurt videos," said Bob Deith of Ruffler and Deith, a large British distributor. "Slots will outearn videos over a longer period of time."

Julian Bond of MHG Sales, another British distributor, concurred. "Slot machines are more profitable to operate," he said.

He also pointed out that "with the demise of videos, a lot of English manufacturers and assemblers [ed. note: *many of the units distributed in the United Kingdom are assembled by distributors from kits*] are realizing the difficulty of making a reasonable return on their videos; so they're showing their own slot machines."

Bond said that at last year's ATE, during the height of video's popularity, sixty percent of the equipment on display was video amusement. But this year the numbers were turned around. He estimated that about seventy percent of the machines on display at ATE '82 were slots and other gambling-type games.

"Where slots are more widely marketed," said Stambouli, "they will hurt videos. Wherever slots come into the picture, it hurts amusements. There's no question about it."

But what was probably less obvious concerning the slot machine's effect on videos—and another reason why a decline in the English video did not forebode a coming decline in the U.S. video game business—was that the operation of slot machines in England had necessarily restricted the player base in that country.

To wit: In the United States, video games can be found everywhere—

hotel lobbies, fancy restaurants, and countless other locations which only a couple of years before were off limits to videos. The result of this expansion to new types of locations was a corresponding growth of the player base in the United States. For instance, the designated video game target market for 1982 is, without a doubt, women. It's a target market the American amusement industry had no hopes of servicing two years ago.

By contrast, the coin-op industry in the United Kingdom doesn't enjoy the same widespread player base as it does here in the United States. American visitors, who stayed in London and opted instead for the long ride into Birmingham for the ATE, had ample opportunities to tour the capital city and notice exactly where the video games were deployed.

They weren't in restaurants. Not in hotel lobbies. Not in shopping malls.

Rather, the games were placed, for the most part, in pubs and something loosely related to arcades. The arcades in London more closely resemble dens of iniquity. Usually situated next door to adult book stores and/or pornographic theaters, these arcades are stocked with very few amusement games. Seventy to eighty percent of the machines were slots and other gambling devices.

The obvious question American trade visitors were left to ask themselves was this: Would our new target market, the ladies, venture forth into these types of locations to play games like *Pac-Man*? The answer is obvious.

And, as for the children, the pubs and arcades were off limits to them for reasons equally as obvious. Though the English pride themselves on their libertine attitudes toward such things as gambling [for instance, a recent survey revealed that more forms of gambling are permitted in England than anywhere else in the world], still the British recognize that gambling must be controlled. Children cannot be allowed to play slot machines. Slot machines and 12-year-olds simply do not mix. Thus, the British "amusement" trade, in order to operate the slots in their arcades, had to make some concessions. And those trade-offs were in the form of age restrictions which keep children away from the slots—and the video games.

Thus, the British trade appears to have forsaken the youth and female markets—the very markets which



"At least the exhibits look nice" was a comment more than one amusement trade visitor made about the ATE this year. The reason for the comment? Because the business itself was very poor indeed.



Exidy's Lila Zinter beams while an ATE visitor behind her tries his hand on the company's Mousetrap.



Brian Warkentin of Willis Industries could be found at the IMA Show in the Wico booth where his company's graphic offerings are being marketed.

combine to make the U.S. game market thrive and prosper. In the United States, the youth is still the major market, and women are the targeted growth market, but both markets are forsaken by the British trade—one because of the intimidating presence of gambling machines and the other by a governmental decree which guards against children spending their lunch money on gambling devices.

The trade-off for placement of these gambling machines—in a country with attitudes even more libertine than those in the United States—comes in the form of excessive governmental regulations, the very thing that is anathema to the U.S. industry.

In fact, the recent good fortune of slot machines, which has contributed to the rather depressive showing of videos in the United Kingdom, is due largely to governmental machinations, not technological innovations within the industry itself. A recent change in the law which allows higher payouts on gambling devices is directly responsible for the substantial increase in slot machine revenues, said one British trade source.

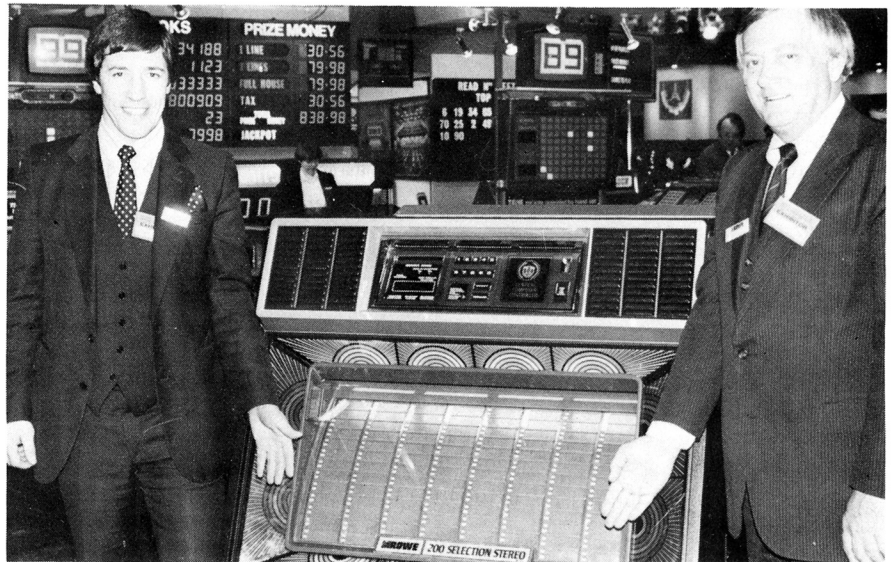
Though the slot machines regularly highlight new “play” features, these play features are dictated not so much by technological innovations as they are by governmental decrees as far as what the machines will be allowed to pay off.

The recent law change which spelled a thirty to forty percent increase in slot revenue, according to one source, allows slots to award players with two British pounds for their wager instead of £1½, as in the past. Also, with the size of the wager being allowed to be raised accordingly, the recent law change permits cash payments of up to £1 [winnings over that must be paid in tokens]. In the past, winnings over fifty pence had to be paid in tokens.

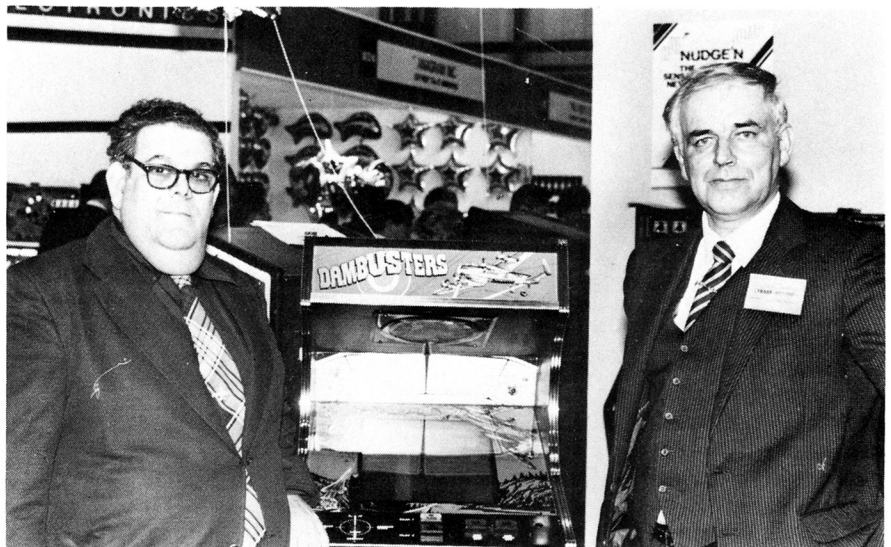
So not only has the British industry restricted the size of its market by opting for the gambling machines, the industry in the United Kingdom has placed itself in the unfavorable position of depending upon governmental decree for its continued good fortune. By contrast, the American trade, which is not the beneficiary of any special favors from government, is also not as dependent upon governmental decree for its continued prosperity. In fact, the Mesquite, Texas age restriction U.S. Supreme Court test case is an example of the American trade trying to keep its player base from being whittled



American abroad—Valley's Chuck Milhem, Hanson Distributing's Ray Hibarger, and Ken Anderson of Game Plan share observations about the German and English markets.



Julian Bond of MHG Sales and Chuck Arnold of Rowe show off the Rowe 200-selection stereo phonograph at the ATE.



Dambusters, which will be marketed in the United States by Game-A-Tron, debuted at the ATE. The game is based on an actual World War II bombing raid.

down to where the industry might need to resort to gambling to survive.

Pub gift horse

Another reason for the decline and fall of video games in the British market—and why that decline does not necessarily forebode a similar fate here in the United States—is the inability of the British trade to penetrate with any significance new types of locations. And the reason for that had a lot to do with a gift horse that the British industry felt it just couldn't pass up—the pubs.

The pubs opened up to coin-ops overnight. Because of the nature of English life, where industry and unions dictate nearly every transaction, when the breweries (which own the pubs) opened to coin-ops, they did so altogether. And the result of that was a gigantic pipeline opening immediately for videos at the same time when videos were peaking and were beginning to make their impact into new and different types of locations in the United States.

And since the British assemble their own games from kits and could hardly rely on mass infusion of already completed games coming from the United States and elsewhere, the total output of British videos found their way into these new locations, the pubs, to the exclusion of other types of locations which would have expanded the player base to women and children. Overnight, locations were available for the placement of an estimated 100,000 machines!

Julian Bond told *Play Meter*, "With the brewery setup, we had a case of one man making a decision for all those pubs. And when he made that decision, that opened up all those locations to videos at once."

When asked if perhaps the British industry had missed an opportunity to expand into new types of locations, Bond conceded that it was possible. He pointed out that British players are noted for not being as expert at the games as players in other countries, and this might be because of where the games are placed.

"The games are sited in the pubs," he said. "And there are not as many good players there. The pub players play to be sociable."

But he added, "With the pubs opening up, it was an easy opportunity to place games." So easy, in fact, that perhaps the British lost an excellent opportunity to broaden their player base.

And the broadened player base, it could be argued, would have



Chess, checkers, and backgammon? Could such games, which have withstood the test of time, succeed in coin-op? In fact, a couple of companies were trying their hands at it. Here Nichibutsu exhibits a coin-op version of the ancient game of Go.



Williams' Hyperball, which AMOA attendees could only see at a glance, got considerable play at both the ATE and IMA shows.



One game which was attracting inquiries and long looks from IMA attendees was Amidar, a game that can best be described as a cross between Pac-Man and Qix. The cute game, which could cut across the sex barrier, has been licensed to Stern.

softened the severe blow video games felt at the hand of slots.

Recession-proof

Most industry experts have described the amusement industry, which was born during the Great Depression, as a recession-proof industry. But in England that doesn't appear to be the case.

In the United States, an old saw that is often repeated is that when people are out of work they'll go to the bars to drink and forget their worries—and that's where the games are.

But, if that's the case in the United States, said one industry observer, it's certainly not the case in the United Kingdom where the unemployed don't go anywhere, except home, or maybe to church—neither of which has been a particularly strong market for coin-op videos to date. It seems they just won't go to the pubs when they're unemployed, said the observer. They can't afford it.

And this was pointed to as still another reason for the decline of videos in England.

"We just don't have the severe recession that they're experiencing in England," said Empire's Jerry Marcus, when asked for his observations about why the depressed games market in England didn't forbode bad times for the U.S. market.

Still, the British, as is their national character, refuse to concede anything, or at least that's the way they're perceived by outsiders. It's still not known whether it was really British determination which withstood the endless bombing raids of the Germans during World War II, or whether Churchill was actually flashing the peace sign 25 years before anyone knew what he was really trying to say. But, since history books are written by the winners, it was chalked up to British determination.

Likewise, it's hard to tell if the British trade realizes it's in dire straits or whether its defiance is merely a hollow echo of its own nationalistic pride, that it can withstand anything. Echoing this defiance-to-the-end stance, one company placed an advertisement in one of the British trade papers after the ATE which was headlined with the words: "Recession? What Recession?"

What is clearer about the British trade today is that it knows very well which side of their bread is buttered, and it's not the amuse-



Russ Strahan and Peer Von Oertzen reported strong interest in the new NSM phonograph line.



"It's got everything," say Steve Kaufman and Larry Siegel of Stern's new pinball offering, Iron Maiden.



A new concept in video game play, wall-type configurations was exhibited at the IMA.

ments' side. The British trade, after a short love affair with videos, has gone back to its fruit machines. Videos, according to one source, have been relegated to "support equipment" status.

It is this prime concern for the real revenue producers in the United Kingdom, the gambling devices, and the support equipment status of the amusement equipment which probably brings the whole problem with the British video games industry back into focus on video game copyrights. Since video games are hardly the major concern to the British trade that they are to the American trade, it follows that protection of the copyrights and the continued viability of the creative essence of those games is not as clearly cherished in Great Britain.

So it has become incumbent upon those American tradesters who want to fight Pyrrhic battles with video game copiers in the British courts to bring the whole thing to a head. Presently, at least two companies, as a result of what developed at the show, made it known that they were pursuing copyright litigation against copiers who displayed their wares at the ATE.

As one factory representative put it, when the market is as fragile as it is now, we've got to do everything we can to protect our distributor who can't compete with knock-off games at half the price."

BACTA's stance

And what is the position of the British operators' association which hosted the ATE? Quite frankly, its position on the video game copyright issue is reminiscent of the milque-toast stance its American counterpart, the AMOA, has taken on issues demanding industry leadership.

Timid and unassertive, the British Amusement Catering Trades Association (BACTA) would rather have this video game copyright cup pass from its lips than that it would have to take a position one way or the other.

Joe Burnip, exhibition manager for the ATE, told *Play Meter* that the national association was reluctant to take any position concerning video game copyrights, despite the depressing effect the copiers are having on the market, because some of the members of the association are in the video game conversion and piracy business

"We're trying to remain reasonably neutral on the issue," Burnip

told *Play Meter*.

He said the government is producing a "Green Paper" discussion document which the association hoped would answer all the questions for it. He further pointed out that BACTA would probably "seek a specialist's advice" about the "Green Paper's" findings.

Instead, the association concerned itself almost exclusively with the infinitely unimportant details of where next year's show would be held and how to convince people in the trade that the ATE was the biggest show in the industry when, in fact, another show running concurrently across the English Channel was getting a much more favorable review from the amusement industry.

As for the irrelevant topic of where the next ATE show would be held, the long and short of it is that the ATE will return next year to the Olympia in London. The big advantage of the Birmingham show was the additional exhibit space—actually the ATE didn't even fill the whole exhibition hall. In the Olympia in London, the space is more restricted, Burnip said.

And though Birmingham is supposedly more centrally located for the British trade, the fact remains that another show in Birmingham would probably chase away most of the remaining ATE visitors coming from the United States. (It's noteworthy along these lines, by the way, that overseas visitors dropped by nearly 500 this year, probably because of the unappealing attraction of Birmingham, an industrial city north of London.)

Most Americans attending the ATE were of the feeling that the ATE, which had always been in or very near London before this year, was moved to Birmingham as some sort of geography lesson for those of us who have, at one time or another during our lives, used the words *London* and *England* interchangeably, as though all of England is London and vice versa. Actually this is wrong, and foreign visitors were rudely reminded of this obvious misperception. Those Americans attending the show now realize that there are countless factories and crumbling apartment buildings interspaced by undulating fields and fences and walls that dot an entire land area which lies between London and Scotland.

As such, the geography class field

trip to Birmingham was very educational, but American tradesters, though they admired the fine exhibition center out in the middle of nowhere, probably would be less than enthusiastic about returning to such a place again, especially in light of the treatment their industry got at the hands of the British this year.

Foreign visitors complained of inadequate hotel accommodations, a difficulty in getting to the show, that the beds were too small, that there was no nightlife, the sun was in their eyes, and several other real and imagined reasons which, they said, indicated the ATE should move its show back to London where it belongs.

Those who stayed in London were further discomforted by another peculiarity of the British people—the national mania to go on strike. ATE visitors lodging in London scurried to make arrangements that would get them back and forth between London and Birmingham with a railway service that went on strike—on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays. An interesting concept that is totally British.

The attendance question

But tall tales cannot be called characteristically British, and the attendance figures turned out annually by the British trade concerning its big show are in that category of being very tall indeed. For several years now the ATE has been billed, especially by the British trade, as "the world's largest coin machine exhibition." The exhibition company reported a total ATE attendance at this year's show of 11,724—a figure which would qualify the show as the world's largest once again. But an attendance of 11,724 is so unbelievable that ATE's Burnip felt compelled this year to offer an explanation as to how so many people could have visited the show and the show still be such a flop.

Said he, "It may surprise some people that the figures of visitors are so high, but it should not be forgotten that we had 10,600 square metres at the NEC. For the first time, we had no problems giving everyone the space they required, which made the exhibition roomier. It's easy to lose a large number of people in such a large area—and the exhibit space does not include the cafeteria, restaurants, or bars."

To believe ATE's figures, one has to imagine that thousands upon

thousands of misdirected industry tradesmen must have travelled about the National Exhibition Centre after registering for the show without ever having found their way into the exhibit hall at all! There's no way 11,724 *different* people visited that show, unless there were some lost tribes somewhere.

Actually, it is quite possible 11,724 was the total attendance for the four-day show, but a different method must be used to make such an attendance claim.

During the second day of the show (which was reportedly the day when the attendance was highest), ATE's Burnip told *Play Meter* that past attendance figures were totalled daily—that if a person attended the show all four days, he was counted four times. U.S. trade shows count badges—not meter readings on turnstiles.

Apparently, in order to beat its last year's attendance and to show it had outdrawn its rival IMA (which one can only assume used the same attendance measurement this year), the ATE once again must have released these such padded attendance figures which counted a person as a new attendee each time he left then returned to the show.

The only conclusion this reporter can come to is that, contrary to claims by the British that the ATE is "the world's largest coin machine exhibition," industry people should be made aware that apparently there is a little numbers game these various shows are playing.

If the ATE drew 11,724, and the IMA (which apparently made the mistake of releasing its figures before the ATE) drew 11,085—then the AMOA Show in Chicago, which reported a draw of 10,917, must have drawn a total closer to 30,000!

Only blind nationalism could lead the British to claim the ATE is a bigger trade show than the annual equipment exhibition by the AMOA. Let it be said, and let the ATE or any other foreign trade show prove otherwise—presently the AMOA is "the world's largest coin machine exhibition."

But that would make sense since the market in the United States is several times larger than the market in the United Kingdom—with or without its slot machines!

The IMA Show may, in fact, have had an attendance that was marginally smaller than the ATE's; but, even so, the fact that the IMA (once passed off by the British trade as a

second-rate show) is a competitor to be reckoned with. It is noteworthy that the ATE is now trying to make sure its show doesn't conflict in the future with the IMA Show. In the past, the general opinion of the British trade was that the ATE was "Big Fish" and the IMA was "small potatoes." Suffice it to say that the two shows are now equal—if only they both used badge counts rather than turnstile meter readings, then we would be able to gauge from year to year which shows are growing and which are shrinking.

One positive point about both of the foreign shows which should be noted is that child attendance—a big headache at the AMOA Show where they dominate the games—is very low indeed, allowing operators to get a better feel for the play of the games. Of course, since the ATE, especially, is becoming more and more a gambling show, children may be no problem at all in the future.

But the IMA appears to still be a viable market for amusements—even though gambling is also permitted in the country. The reason for the more upbeat market in that country can only be that the copyright laws in Germany are stricter than the British laws. ●

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Amusement equipment stands at ATE/Birmingham

As for new equipment at the show, Atari used the ATE and IMA events to unveil its new *Space Duel*, a one- or two-player game which can best be described as a cross between *Asteroids* and *Tempest*. With four different game modes which the players can select, players can work in tandem—with two rocketships on the screen blasting away at asteroid-like objects that resemble the shapes of cubicles and other shapes which appeared in *Tempest*.

Other games attracting quite a lot of attention included two by Konami—*Amidar* and one that was being called *Locomotive*.

Amidar, which reportedly has been licensed to Stern, probably drew the most attention. Combining a novel maze-type play with some of the Etch-A-Sketch play of *Qix*, the game appears to have possibilities of appealing to both men and women.

Another game with potential appeal for the ladies which Konami showed was *Locomotive*. Players try to guide their train along a train track from one end of the screen to the other. Using a “black square” which the player has the ability to change by his controls, players try to avoid kamikaze trains and dead ends which would create an unpleasant end for the journey.

Taito unveiled *Alpine Ski*, a video game which may have more appeal in Europe where the sport is obvious.

Other games which attracted attention included *Jack's Beanstalk* by Hara Industries of Japan and *Naughty Boy*, a rather novel *Pac-Man*-type game, developed by Japan Leisure Company. Game-A-Tron showed off its *Dambusters* at the ATE. The British show as the ideal place for the game's unveiling since the game action was taken from British bombing raids during World War II—after the British determination had been pushed to the edge.

The Century Video System, which is being marketed in the United States by Tuni Electro-Service,

showed off its interchangeable game system, as well as some of the games—including a current release called *Dazzler*.

Artic Electronics released a game called *Devil Fish*, which promises to be an interesting maze-type game where the player tries to avoid man-eating fish by having the fish eat other fish, then maneuvering them into traps where they can be killed for additional points.

There were two new games from Gremlin/Sega which drew more than their fair share of attention. *Zaxxon*, a bombing raid game and *005*, a spy game where the player tries to elude counter-agents and steal secrets, got heavy play at both the ATE and the IMA.

Stern showed off two new videos of its own, *Armored Car* and *Jungler*. *Armored Car* is a solid maze-type driving game, and *Jungler* is a maze-type shooting game.

Additionally, Stern unveiled a new pinball *Iron Maiden*, which company reps described as having everything in it “including the kitchen sink.”

Bosconian, licensed by Namco to Midway, also made its showing at the IMA and got strong play. Nichibutsu introduced two new videos that it was testing at the show, *River Patrol* and *Percussion*.

NSM exhibited its new model phonograph which was prototyped at the AMOA. The phonograph was reportedly ready for shipping in February.

Other products which were introduced at the two shows included *The Star Video Jukebox*, a concept which was exhibited, but not marketed in the United States a couple of years ago; and a coin-operated chess game [the same game was also offering coin-op checker and backgammon variations]. Most American tradesters probably didn't even notice the latter exhibit by Comptuer Chessomat, whose games have the built-in advantage that they will never lose favor with players. Chess is perhaps

the oldest game in the world. Players buy time on the chess (or checker or backgammon) computer and can program the game to meet their difficulty level. The game exhibited at the show, with eight different play levels, appeared to offer chess players stiffer competition than home models such as Boris, Chess Challenger, and others.

While these games obviously would not fit into most existing game locations, a factory representative said, the unit is meeting with good acceptance in the German market by going into types of locations which wouldn't allow any other types of coin-ops. It should be noted, however, that in Germany chess is a more popular game than it is here in the United States.

Nevertheless, checker and backgammon games which would offer stiff competition for players might be a viable outgrowth in the U.S. market since backgammon is so widely popular and the rules to checkers are so widely known.

There was one other game innovation at the show worthy of note—a redevelopment of the pinball by a company called Micropin, which recently acquired Elcon Industries. The game is a bar-top pinball machine that weighs only 62 pounds and might become something of a novelty item in taverns.

The game features an automatic volume control which reacts to ambient noise levels and adjusts its sound accordingly. The game also features a “two-level” tilt mechanism. At the first level, the player loses the ball. For a major tilt, “second-level” tilt, the game is over.

Micropin features one- to four-player capability with full memory. It automatically calculates point spreads between players and teams. All bumpers, flippers, as well as the ball, are hard chrome plated so that no residue will accumulate on the playfield as happens with plastic and rubber parts, says company literature.

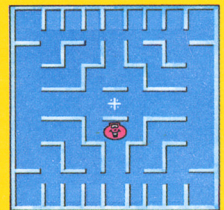
—by David Pierson



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The Changeable Game Revolution

Talking with the Revolutionaries

By David Pierson

Convertible (or interchangeable) game systems which allow operators to change games but re-use the same cabinet, monitor, harnesses, etc. have stoked the imaginations of operators industrywide. The reason is simple: Interchangeable games would mean enormous savings for operators as far as their new equipment purchases.

A recent *Play Meter* survey shows that a clear majority of operators (who are, for the most part, tired of the high cost of the rapidly-depreciating video games) favor such interchangeable systems. But their enthusiasm is apparently not shared by most distributors and manufacturers who depend on game sales for their continued viability.

Yet, in recent months, as the video game business changed from a sellers' market to a buyers' market, convertible game packages which appeal to the buyer, the operator, are starting to surface. Among those systems currently being offered are interchangeable packages from Gremlin Industries, Tuni Electro-Service, and Venture Line.

But, for all their avant-garde methods, none of these companies can lay claim to the title of being first to offer a complete interchangeable

game system. That tag has to go to a small company in Santa Clara, California, which started offering interchangeable games almost a year ago when the video game business was still very much a sellers' market.

That company, Data East, a wholly-owned subsidiary of DECO, a Japanese video game company, ran into almost immediate resistance from most quarters of an industry that was afraid—and is still largely afraid—of exactly what convertible games mean to the industry as a whole.

Prior to the introduction of its revolutionary cassette game system, Data East had earned a certain degree of industry acceptance on the basis of a particularly strong video game called *Astro Fighter*. The game, unveiled at the first-ever Amusement Operators Expo in New Orleans, eventually turned out to be among the big wave of hit video games which swamped pinballs and all other competing coin-op modes back in 1980. *Astro Fighter*, which was licensed early on to Gremlin, ended up the year in fourth place, behind only *Asteroids*, *Galaxian*, and *Space Invaders*—stiff competition.

On the strength of such an entry,

Data East's distributor network grew to 89, according to the firm's president, Satish Bhutani. It was quite a laudable penetration for a video game company which only a short time before had been a virtual non-entity in the U.S. market.

Then one year later, at the second annual Amusement Operators Expo in New Orleans, Data East began taking orders on its DECO cassette system, and distributor reaction was icy, to say the least. Distributors, feeling threatened by such a system which many felt would eliminate altogether the need for distributors and possibly even for operators, dropped the line, and Data East's distributor network shrunk to 17!

"And some of those distributors weren't even pushing the system," said Bhutani, "because they too saw the whole concept of interchangeable games as threatening." He said some of those distributors who were still reportedly carrying the line would oftentimes tell inquiring telephone callers that they weren't even carrying the Data East line!

Bhutani also pointed out that in some of the larger distribution areas, there was very little activity with the Data East cassette system, while in some of the smaller areas the orders



"No games!" Only weeks before this picture was taken, Watson and Bhutani of Data East said the warehouse behind them was packed with new game cabinets. But, after a brisk AMOA Show, sales depleted the company's stockpile of equipment. Data East will soon have to start manufacturing the games to keep up with the demand, Bhutani told *Play Meter*.



Data East President Satish Bhutani said that when his company first offered its interchangeable game cassette system to the industry, distributors dropped his line for fear it would destroy the industry. "It's just not so," insists Bhutani.

for the system were very great indeed. This, Bhutani claims, was a further indication that many of his distributors were just not actively promoting his product line.

What exactly is this DECO cassette system that has become something of a distributors' "black sheep"?

The DECO cassette system is based on a single master PC board which has the potential to produce countless, hitherto uncreated games. To tap into this master board, an operator must use one of the Data East game packages. These packages include—in addition to the decals, player instruction, and controls—a micro-cassette tape and a key module. The micro-cassette tape and key module work in tandem to decode and activate certain elements of the PC board, thereby creating a new and different game for the operator.

As for the master PC board, Data East's customer service manager, Lynn Watson, claims it has unlimited potential. Says he, "There's a lot of stuff on that board that's not being used today. The circuitry for player controls on games that haven't even been created yet have already been built into the games."

The sticking point with many oper-

ators, says Bhutani, is the cassette tape. And that reflects, he says, a misunderstanding of exactly what the system is doing.

Some operators think the whole game is on the tape, and that's what is projected on the screen. This is not the case.

Some operators think a single cassette tape can be used to program countless games. It cannot. The system requires full utilization of a cassette tape and key module to operate each game.

And some operators point to a usual operator objection—that of the tapes themselves. With as much play as a video game gets, they say, the tape is bound to get tangled, torn, etc.

But, to this, Bhutani counters that the tape is used for only two to three minutes a day—when the game is first plugged in and the tape, in concert with the key module, programs the master PC Board. Beyond that two- to three-minute startup, says Bhutani, the tape isn't used at all, though it must remain in the game to keep the PC board activated. With that little usage, it means the tape is used for less than twenty hours a year. And it's guaranteed for 4,000 hours, something which

should qualify the tape as having probably the longest factory warranty of anything in this industry.

The benefit of an interchangeable system is obvious—at least to the operator. In *Play Meter's* recent poll of operators, a resounding 56 percent of those polled said they favored convertible games. Noteworthy is that another 32 percent of the operators expressed no opinion. The big question with this 32 percent was whether or not a factory could produce a hit game within the parameters of an interchangeable game system. The big question remains unanswered today.

But apparently that hasn't discouraged operators from sampling what Data East has to offer.

"Operators say it's a concept that makes sense," said Watson. "We've had operators calling us up, saying, 'I knew someone was going to get smart and do it sooner or later. I'm sick and tired of moving cabinets.'"

Location adaptability

"Games are getting so high-priced now," said Bhutani, "and operators can't be assured that their investment in any one game is really that good. They're scared, and for a good reason, because they know

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Watson shows what it is the operator buys to change his cabinet from one game to the next. "These are the razor blades," he said. "Our cabinets are the razors."



Warehouse workers check out the orders for new games.



Operator interest in interchangeable games, such as Data East's, is very keen. Here a group of operators huddle around while Data East's Watson shows how to change from one game to the next.

only a couple of games will really make it."

Interchangeable games, such as those by Data East, says Bhutani, also offer—besides the cost-saving and the labor-saving advances—an opportunity for the operator to adapt easily to his location's needs. "The operator doesn't have to commit to the game itself, and then he can put that game into whatever Data East mode he already has out there in the field."

Bhutani explains that the people who seem to understand his interchangeable game concept best of all are vending operators who are also amusement operators. "They're used to the idea of operating equipment that has to be refilled from time to time," says Bhutani, "and that's the case with the interchangeable game system."

Bhutani also pointed out that there was a drawback to the "dedicated" or conventional game system for the factories. With the present dominant industry philosophy of "one cabinet, one game"—the risk is higher for the factory on each game, thus the price is higher for those dedicated games.

"But with the interchangeable game system," says Bhutani, "we can take some of that out of the manufacturing end by evening out the risk."

"Let's face it," he continued, "the operator is our bread and butter. Operators have made a lot of money off our videos, but there comes a point when operators run out of money to buy conventional games. And they run out of trade-ins because of the saturation of conventional cabinets. The ultimate relief of the operator has got to be interchangeable games where the operator doesn't have to be in the moving business."

And though the game is interchangeable in nature, Data East has gone through great pains to make sure the game doesn't appear interchangeable to the player.

Players are unaware of the interchangeable nature of the games themselves," says Watson. "The DECO cassette system is not any different from any other coin-operated amusement game. A layman cannot tell it's a cassette game." The reason is that, besides the decals, marquee, and player instructions which completely change the outward appearance of the game, the basic control panel comes equipped with a joystick, and a number of buttons, and each new control instruction panel

selectively blocks off some buttons or joystick directions to eliminate any player confusion.

In fact, Data East has been so successful in making the games appear non-interchangeable, says Watson, that even operators don't recognize one Data East game is interchangeable with another.

"Operators can't tell it's an interchangeable game either," he said. "We've shown the system at several shows now—the AOE, the AMOA, the IAAPA, and no matter what kind of sign we put up, we still have operators—operators, mind you—who will come up, play the games, then ask some questions about the games, totally unaware that the games are all interchangeable. And when they learn that, well, it really lights up their interest."

It's this overriding operator interest which has spurred Data East to persist in the face of its distributors' apparent refusal to push the Data East game line.

One of the first complaints from distributors to the DECO cassette system, distributors said, was that a convertible game system would bypass the distributor altogether and allow the manufacturer to sell directly to the operator. Because these distributors refused to represent the Data East line after the cassette system was introduced, Bhutani claims, they became, in effect, self-fulfilling prophets.

"They forced me to sell direct to operators and create my own distributors," he said. "Otherwise, I would have had to close my doors."

Distributors' role

But he points out that selling direct to operators has had its drawbacks, too; and those drawbacks reinforce the importance of distribution channels—even when it comes to interchangeable games.

"For instance," he says, "where we sold to an operator, we can't bill him and give him terms. But with a distributor, the terms have already been established between them."

For that reason Data East has been slowly rebuilding its distributor network, ordaining operators who want to try their hands at selling the Data East line to other operators. "We want to deal through distributors," insists Bhutani, "and that's what we've been doing wherever possible. We've been trying to establish distributors to represent our product line."

"Established distributors don't seem to understand they're just

hurting themselves by not supporting our system," he said, "because all they're doing is creating direct competitors for themselves."

As a result of his efforts, Bhutani says Data East's distributor network is now up to 65, of which 40 are described as "real active."

Another big fear which distributors have raised against the DECO cassette system, said Bhutani, is that it would eliminate operators, too, by making it easier for location owners to buy the games direct. Bhutani's answer to that is succinct and to the point: "Location owners are doing that right now with conventional games. They're buying games direct from these same distributors!"

A system such as the DECO cassette program, he said, also offers new possibilities for the operator/distributor relationship.

With the hit game syndrome that is rampant in the country today and with availability becoming a prime consideration and service backup becoming less and less a consideration, many industry observers say operator loyalty to distributors is at an all-time low.

And as for distributor loyalty to operators, distributors have, for the most part, discontinued accepting

trade-ins on conventional games they've sold to operators because those games just don't have any resale value anymore.

"But with an interchangeable game system such as what we offer," says Bhutani, "operator/distributor ties could be strengthened."

He says that since much of the operators' original investment—i.e., the game shell—retains its value, interchangeable games should renew activity with trade-ins.

But the most interesting possibility the DECO cassette system offers to strengthen operator/distributor ties might put the distributor in the role of something like a librarian. The theory, as Bhutani explains it, is that the distributor becomes a librarian of sorts, holding a complete library of the firm's interchangeable game systems. And operators would lease or rent these game programs. Standard rental programs where operators would be allowed X number of game exchanges for a price might offer an innovative change to the present way operators and distributors do business.

In fact, Bhutani said a rental program such as this was being experimented with in the Great Lake's area.

Still, the major factor holding back

the expansion of the Data East system presently is the lack of a truly hit game. To date, none of Data East's games have broken onto the *Play Meter* Equipment Poll of top video games—some games because not enough units were sold to produce an adequate sample and some because they didn't produce above average earnings.

Yet the Data East system is actually immune to this hit-game thinking.

As Bhutani puts it, "Let's say an operator puts in *Lock 'N' Chase*, and it dies in two months, and then he puts in *Astro Fantasia*, then *Super Astro Fighter*, then *Pro Golf*, and so on. Well, the operator can keep his earnings at a higher level longer than he can with the average conventional game which will only last for a few months and then die forever."

Plus, he points out, the operator still has a "brick" as far as his trade-in.

"With convertible games," Bhutani argues, "the games don't have to be number one, or even in the top five, as long as they're fairly decent games, the operator will realize a better return on his investment than he would with a \$3000 conventional game."

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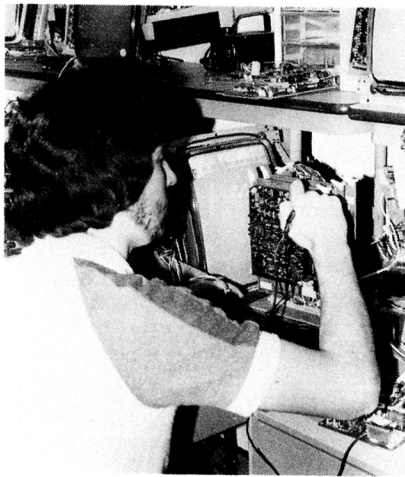
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Then he added wryly, "Can you imagine what is going to happen when we have an *Asteroids* or a *Defender* here? The distributors are going to beat a path to our doors. And you watch for the day. It's going to come. All we need is a *Defender*, *Asteroids*, or *Pac-Man*. Then our game cabinet will be established, and operators will be able to run between six and eight games a year and realize a far greater return."

The subject of where the next hit game is coming from is a favorite subject of Bhutani's. "Who's to say where the next winner will come from?" he asked rhetorically. "No one can say they'll have a sure-fire winner next month. Who could tell *Space Invaders*, *Asteroids*, and *Pac-Man* were going to be winners? No one has a monopoly on the winners."

Another reason (besides distributors' reluctance and the absence of any unqualified hit game) why Data East is not a big name in the industry right now, says Bhutani, is operator confusion and fear about what to buy and who to buy it from. Stringent copyright laws have scared operators from buying games from smaller companies such as Data East—even when those games are fully licensed, like DECO's. He also said operator



A technician in the Data East lab runs through his checklist.

misunderstanding of exactly what a cassette system does has created a lot of initial resistance which he is trying to overcome.

And the company is supposedly trying to improve its system without obsoleting it. Says Watson, "We're constantly working on upgrading the present cassette system to advance the technology in the field of video games. For instance, XY, voice synthesizers, and other special effects are being considered and are

being worked up to keep up with the technology of video games."

So it goes.

But the first order of business for this Santa Clara, California, video game firm has got to be the initial sale of the system to operators. Likening the game cabinet, monitor, and harnessing to a "razor" and the individual game programs to "razor blades," Watson pointed out that the company's first order of business has to be the sale of the "razors."

"Before we can sell the blades, we have to sell the razors. Selling the games is the easy part. It's the razors that's the hard part. We're trying to sell the industry on a system that is so revolutionary that many people at all levels of the industry feel threatened by it.

"The problem we're having with operators at the present time is that they're looking to buy individual games—since that's what they've been conditioned to do in the past."

"We've still got a long way to go," added Bhutani, "but you just wait for the day when we have the hit game, our system—our razors will be everywhere, and operators will be able to change their games at a fraction of the cost. It'll revolutionize this whole industry." ●

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MUSIC PROGRAMMING

by pat matthews

By our bootstraps...

Like the fallen athlete, the music business is about to pick itself up, if even by its bootstraps. There, indeed, has been a "recession" in the biz. Or has it been a "recess" for most of the performers? Whatever the case, let them not forget that in this type of work, absence does not "make the heart grow fonder." Just ask someone like Arlo Guthrie.

Tonight I'm Yours—Rod Stewart —Warner Brothers/49886

The subtitle of this one is "Don't Hurt Me," but it doesn't apply. The cut is the title cut from what was predicted and has turned out to be this Welshman's best and biggest-selling lp to date. *Young Turks* has barely become a "classic" when this up-tempo toe-tapper follows hot on its heels. It doesn't have the "cult appeal" of *Turks*, but what it lacks in that category it certainly makes up for it in instrumentation by the band. Good song. *10 out of 10* again!

Wanna Be With You—Earth, Wind, & Fire—ARC/Columbia/1802688

If you were asked to pick a follow-up to "Let's Groove," which cut from the album would you choose? Well, the group has picked the slow groove I'm writing about now. The vocals, horns, rhythm section, and arrangement are all trademark Earth, Wind, & Fire, and that should be enough to push this one over the top on more

than one chart. *9 out of 10* on highest chart.

Spirits In The Material World—The Police—A & M/2390

While we're canvassing the followup attempts to smash hits, let's try another. If you were to stack this one up against the first single release from the current album (which was *Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic*), it would pale by the comparison. *Magic* caught an unsuspecting world by surprise. Before it, only a handful of hardcore faithful appreciated the music by this extraordinary trio. But now that they've got 'em, The Police should keep 'em. Even with this catchy tune which is 99% Reggae. *9 out of 10* or better.

Rain Is Falling—ELO—Jet/02693

This is what "orchestral rock" is all about! Pastoral poetry and dramatic theater on wax; replete with sound effects. Jeff Lynne's vocals bring these wizards of music the attention they need to get all the necessary ears to listen. Let the sound surround you, too. *8 out of 10* or more possible.

Open Arms—Journey—Columbia/18-02687

Contrary to the belief of most, this quintet is at its best on ballads. At least sales figures seem to bear this out. The reason the fans of their harder side don't seem to mind when they get a little "mushy" is because

they still retain their electric sound on the slower numbers. Once again, all of the ingredients are here. Steve Perry's distinctive vocals will cause all the ladies to squirm in their seats when hearing this one. *10 out of 10* easy.

Another Sleepless Night—Anne Murray—Capitol/P-A-5083

It starts off like it's gonna be another one of her patented dreamy vocals which the world has become so accustomed to. Yet it develops into a refreshing change of pace for the Canadian balladeer. An excellent arrangement which uses violins, country guitars, and a toe-tappin' rhythm line, blends in perfectly with Murray's effortless vocals. Should do best in Country, yet could cross over to Pop and most easily to MOR. *10 out of 10* on one of 'em.

That Girl—Stevie Wonder—Tamla/1602TF

Sounds like a page right out of TV Guide in the Sixties, right? Well, not quite. What we do have is Stevie Wonder getting closer to the musical basics he helped fashion in that memorable decade. I don't think there's any musical style which he hasn't touched on in his many years in the business, and he blends several in this one. It's the first single from his soon-to-be-released *Stevie Wonder's Original Musicquarium*. One look at the title makes me wonder if he's trying to tell us something. Hmmm... *10 out of 10*. ●

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

- YOUNG TURKS**—Rod Stewart—Warner Brothers
- WAITING ON A FRIEND**—The Rolling Stones—
Rolling Stones Records
- PHYSICAL**—Olivia Newton—John—MCA***
- TURN YOUR LOVE AROUND**—George Benson—
Warner Brothers***
- LONELY NIGHTS**—Mickey Gilley—Epic
- BLAZE OF GLORY**—Kenny Rogers—Liberty***
- I CAN'T GO FOR THAT (NO CAN DO)**—Daryl Hall &
John Oates—RCA***
- HARDEN MY HEART**—Quarterflash—Geffen
- SOMEONE COULD LOSE A HEART TONIGHT**—
Eddie Rabbit—Elektra***
- CALL ME**—Skyy—Salsoul
- CENTERFOLD**—J. Geils Band—EMI America***
- HOOKED ON CLASSICS**—The Royal Philharmonic
Orchestra—RCA
- LEADER OF THE BAND**—Dan Fogelberg—Full Moon***
- SHAKE IT UP**—The Cars—Elektra***
- WAITING FOR A GIRL LIKE YOU**—Foreigner—Atlantic
- YOU COULD HAVE BEEN WITH ME**—Sheena Easton—
EMI America***
- TAKE MY HEART**—Kool & The Gang—DeLite
- SHINE**—Waylon Jennings—RCA***
- THE SWEETEST THING**—Juice Newton—Capitol
- COMIN' IN AND OUT OF YOUR LIFE**—Barbra Streisand—
Capitol
- OVE IS ALRIGHT TONIGHT**—Rick Springfield—RCA***
- SWEET DREAMS**—Air Supply—Arista***
- TAKE IT EASY ON ME**—The Little River Band—Capitol***
- COOL NIGHT**—Paul Davis—Arista***
- LEATHER AND LACE**—Stevie Nicks/Don Henley—
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Tax Tips

By Irving L. Blackman

There are leaders and there are followers. A recent tax case points to the taxpayer as a leader. Where the shoe fits, we can all become followers and make a tax profit in the bargain.

Many closely-held businesses own the real estate, rather than rent, in which they do business. It is common knowledge that in most cases, your best bet is to have one or more of the family members (say a family partnership) own the real estate outside the family corporation. The family partnership then leases the real estate to the family corporation at a fair rental. To hold up under IRS attack, the rent must be reasonable.

Now the case you will probably want to follow: In 1969, Davis & Sons decided that the company needed a new warehouse. The shareholders obtained the land and the loans, then built the warehouse themselves. They leased the warehouse to the corporation at a fixed rental plus an additional 1% of gross sales in excess of \$4 million per year. When the lease was drawn, the corporation had gross sales of only \$3 million. Six years later, gross sales were nearly \$10 million. Result: About \$60,000 in percentage rent was paid and deducted by the corporation. What a nice way to get additional money out of the corporation to the stockholders as a deductible expense instead of a nondeductible dividend.

The IRS had other ideas, claiming the percentage rent should be disallowed as excessive rent paid to a related party. The Tax Court struck down the IRS, holding the lease was reasonable when the parties entered into it. Further, the Court held that if the corporation wanted to keep using the property, it had to pay its rent. A full deduction was allowed for all the rent.

Like I said...“Leaders.” See *Davis & Sons, Inc. v. Comm.*, TC Memo 1981-178. •

Some Corolaries To Various Laws

You don't learn anything new the second time you “crow-bar” a power system. (anonymous)

If it works right the first time, you've obviously missed something. (Herman)

Most failure will reside in the most inaccessible places. (Sneed)

by Paul Thiele

'Winky' is overweight

Exidy has produced some off-the-wall games during its lifetime. *Death Race* was a classic. The tumult and shouting amongst concerned citizens about its theme (running over stick figures with a car) was a national news story during the game's heyday. The company is one of the survivors of the video-manufacturer purge of the late 1970's.

Exidy's most recent effort is *Venture*, a game that introduces a round animated character named "Winky," who is the player's surrogate in the game's color monitor, and who is slated to appear in the manufacturer's future products, as well.

One problem with Winky, though, is that he must be terribly overweight—something inside this game is very, very heavy (net weight 285 lbs., according to Exidy). If you classify Atari and Stern upright videos as "heavyweights," you'd have to put *Venture* in the Sumo division.

Seriously, besides the bulky cabinet, Exidy has used several hefty transformers in the game that, combined with the other necessary components, makes moving *Venture* similar to moving a well-stocked refrigerator.

The game is built with some serviceability in mind. The control panel is clasped and the power supplies

and transformers are not mounted to the bottom, which helps because the cashbox is neither enclosed nor protected from the back. The lock bar that slides through the slot in the cashbox lid is a thin, bendable strip of metal.

The only reason to lock the cashbox would be if you didn't trust your service man, because tearing the box from this wimpy lock bar would be a piece of cake. On this matter, Exidy must have subscribed to the school of thought that "you don't want to overprotect your game." Sometimes you have to consider that it's better to let thieves take the money and not risk having the game and its innards torn to bits.

Exidy still uses its bare-bone red coin mechanisms, whose main fault is why they have no holes for stringcutters. This makes them inferior to standard metal mechs, as well as the ever-proliferating plastic mechs that have stringcutting wires built in.

Venture's joystick is oversized in the *Targ* tradition, which I don't prefer because it is less comfortable to maneuver than smaller joysticks, and it is a sitting duck for abuse by heavy-handed hotheads. The stick actuates blade switches, which I like better than microswitches as used in *Targ*. A conversion kit for this big

stick would be welcome, though.

Play features in *Venture* are somewhat similar to Stern's *Berzerk*. Winky can move and fire in eight directions. Instead of speech as in *Berzerk*, the game plays upbeat musical scores orchestrated for each room entered by the player. The objective is to enter the rooms, avoiding threatening inhabitants therein, and seize a treasure before the appearance of a Hallmonster (Evil Otto's cousin).

The game multiplies the player's score after a screen of rooms is completed, and the faster this is accomplished, the higher the multiplier. Of course, following stages of the game get more difficult.

Although published earnings reports show initially sluggish acceptance of this game, Exidy might consider manufacturing the piece in compact and cocktail-table versions, not only because I think *Venture* has potential, but because we non-Charles Atlas operators might like to operate this game without thinking "hernia," whenever we place one of them. •

'Coin of vantage': "A position advantageous for action or observation." Contributor Thiele operates in the Los Angeles area.

Mali

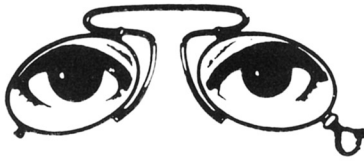
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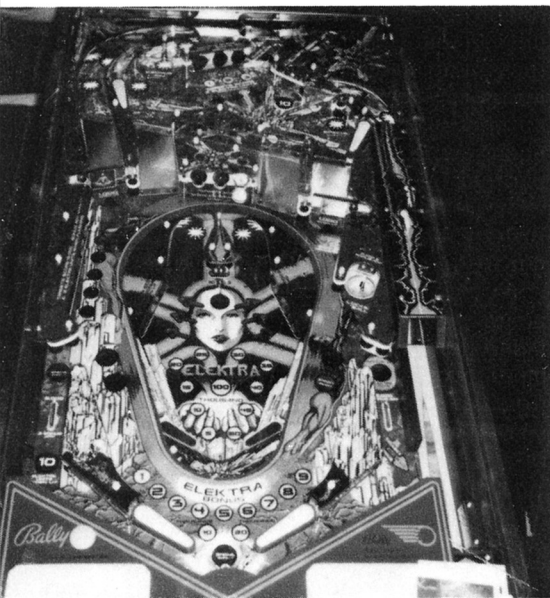


Critic's Corner

By Roger C. Sharpe

Bally's ELEKTRA on View

Triple Play



Bally's ELEKTRA

Maybe I am a throwback to another age, but for some reason I enjoy the fact that I've just finished playing a pinball machine. Even though it was a game in my apartment, it was still satisfying to win the free games and control the action off the flippers. The refinement of this unique skill may be too much to ask of today's player who wants instant gratification and repetitive action found on video games. It would appear to be this and more given the recent rebuttal by Charles Ross in the February 1st issue of *Play Meter*. I enjoy the dialogue we've been able to open, but am still puzzled by his ardent desire to cast all flipper games to the privacy of those who have the space and inclination to include them in their homes—for that is where the groundswell will arise if events come to pass, although the belief, seemingly held by Ross and myself, is that the machines are in fact here to stay.

Rather than offer a longwinded reply to his comments and observations, suffice it to say that we both agree, surprisingly, that the games will survive with "fewer companies making pinball machines." On this point we are of the same mind. There is even now a need for the machines at a variety of locations that cater to audiences who want diversity from their entertainment—and pinball is beginning to fit that bill more and more.

Granted, there are fewer games in most locations (pinball that is) than there were in the past, but those fewer games are drawing more play, which I have been seeing time and time again. Quality is finally overcoming quantity not only in terms of design, but also by the buyers having to select what they want in their

establishment, and pinball is becoming more of an integral part of the total package, maybe not by the newcomers to the trade, but the owners who have endured.

It is this last category that will allow the industry to survive, rather than the new crop of individuals looking to make a fast buck on the heels of the video game publicity blitz. But without any overall governing or regulating body to ride herd on the onslaught, things are pretty much going to have to get by on their own—which, in this day and age, doesn't bode well for the coin-machine business as a whole. It's the major reason some of the bad press had appeared, because of slipshod operations that tend to shade public opinion on every location, not just the trouble spots plagued by absentee ownership and lax security, let alone proper machine upkeep. However, it's only when things get really bad that there is any true change, so time will once again have to tell as to the outcome.

As for pinball, contrary to what many may think, it's alive and well and showing off even more faces than before. Stern has *Viper* ready to follow *Catacomb* and right after a Bruce Lee-inspired pin, while Gottlieb has *Haunted House*, a true triple-level game following on the heels of the successful *Black Hole*, not to mention the eagerly awaited *Caveman* pin-vid hybrid. And this isn't to forget Williams with its *Barracora* or Bally's *Elektra*, which takes the spotlight this time, only because it's a more evolutionary approach to three levels rather than the more revolutionary Gottlieb effort which we'll take a closer look at next time around in time for April

Fool's and the proof that pinball can exist for the time-being in its present form as well as other designs that should undoubtedly be tapped before too long.

The months sweep by and with them come the shifts in emphasis by the major pin manufacturers. Admittedly, less models are being given their due only because of the demand in the market place by distributors and operators; however, the equipment presently available can still find a home for discriminating buyers who are selective in the purchasing of games for their paying public.

The question is whether less can deliver more not only in games but also companies who have not forsaken this staple of the coin-machine industry. But now it's time for Bally and its newest effort.

Bally's Elektra

Following in the footsteps of the multi-ball, multi-dimensional *Centaur* isn't an easy task, but Bally is hoping that pinball fans will like the effects of this "elektrifying" game that has a bit of this and a bit of that to hopefully draw in players.

PLAYFIELD: Going by the action of the ball from entry, there's a top level playfield that has a flipper on the left, a ramp down or up just to the right of this, a stretch rubber and then another ramp, with access only from the lower main field, another ramp with a fronting spinner, and a right side flipper with a star roll-over just in front of it. Move up a bit and there's a captive ball with in-line targets for bonus multiplier, while the main attraction is a bank of three stand-up targets (1-2-3 & 4-5-6) which front a kick-out hole that locks a ball when lit. Farther over on the left is a long ramp curve with a fronting spinner for access to the top playfield from the main one.

As for the main playfield, a center three bank of targets is in the middle, while a bank of five more stand-ups is at the left. Over at the right is a short, recessed kick-out hole, which can either lock a ball when lit, or light the spinners alternatively. The bottom is a bit of a departure with a scoop to the flippers similar to that found on Stern's *Star Gazer* with a right side gate for getting back to the plunger when lit, and a center post for keeping some of the drains alive between the flippers.

Last but not least is the lower playfield, which isn't really integrated into the action during the course of play, but rather after a ball has

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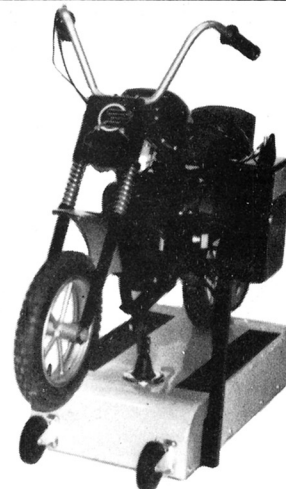
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drained and the appropriate values have been achieved. Here there's a center "shooter" up to the playfield between two small flippers and an array of three stand-ups on the left (1-2-3) and three on the right (4-5-6), with a center target at the top of the mini-field and a turn-around behind.

ANALYSIS: *Elektra* is a multi-ball, multi-level game with variations of action throughout, with most of the features tied into each other. The top field offers some good action by both flippers with the captive "boot-a-ball" feature holding in-line targets for 2X, 3X and 5X bonus multipliers, while the three stand-ups build up special Elektra units and points as well as lighting the kick-out hole for a locked ball possibility. The main playfield has those left side targets for double duty as well, including lighting the kick-out hole at the right for a locked ball, the building of Elektra units, and releasing the locked ball.

Meanwhile, the center targets open the lower gate at the right side, as well as lighting a collect bonus feature, or specials on the outlanes. Finally, there's the mini-lower play-

field, which is activated by achieving the number of Elektra units necessary (I've seen it by anywhere from 6 to 10 units) and the opportunity for a drained ball to have a second life for extra points of up to 195,000 points.

The action, however, due to the design, tends to be in one area or the other, with shots being fairly long to get back up on top and an empty center being an almost irresistible lure for the average player. Much of the layout is a redo of *Flash Gordon* in terms of placement and angles, which isn't a negative so much as it is a problem for those players who liked the compact layout of this prior game, compared to this reincarnation. The challenge, even with this factor, is still there for building points and strategies of play in mastering the game.

GRAPHICS: It's a beautiful game, pure and simple. The color process offers some good tonal shades as well as enhancing the lighting effect with an almost Superman quality from the opening scenes of the first movie and the planet Krypton. All in all, it adds up to a total package that's eye catching to say

the least.

PLAY: The scoring on *Elektra* can be in the millions given the extra chance on the mini-playfield, so settings should reflect this and for extra ball areas you should be alright on a 1,000,000 first limit followed by 2,000,000 points. With free play, it should be safe to raise this by about 500,000 points depending on your percentaging and caliber of players.

PROS & CONS: Once again Bally falls victim to the quality of its flippers which seem sluggish and tend to take away many of the key shots necessary on this game. It's unfortunate that this nagging occurrence has to happen in this day and age and it is hoped that it can be rectified before too long. Otherwise, the game on its own isn't too bad, although the bottom playfield is almost an afterthought and less integrated into the actual play compared to Gottlieb's effort on *Haunted House*. But *Elektra* is a nice step which doesn't blaze trails so much as it continues to the next stages necessary for pinball's viability in the marketplace.

RATING: ## $\frac{1}{2}$



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Space station attack

Bosconian, a new 1 or 2 player, full color video game from Midway Manufacturing, pits a star destroyer space fighter against enemy invaders on a constantly moving interstellar course. The player is the pilot of the space fighter ship in deep outer space, defending his solar system against the on-coming Bosconian conquerors and their space station worlds. The mission is to avoid and destroy as many enemy obstacles and space stations as possible for score.

An eight-way hand lever controls and points the fighter ship in all directions. The fire button activates the fighter's missile fire in a steady stream that shoots from the front and rear of the fighter simultaneously.

Bosconian features a long range scanner that spots the positions of enemy bases. This scanner orients the player to his position in relation to the position of the enemy bases. The fighter is indicated by a flashing white square and the enemy base stations by green squares. By turning the control stick in any direction, the player can bring the enemy base stations in his line of fire or draw away as the action requires.

Bosconian features a special extended play option. At the end of a game, the player can insert another coin and continue to play. He has a countdown factor of about 20 seconds. If he elects to do so, he can continue play in the same round he left off.

Bosconian features a self-test display that can be activated with the flick of a switch on the inside of the cashbox door. The display presents the operator's guide to troubleshooting problems and adjusting the game set-up to suit his needs. The self-test menu indicates ROM and RAM conditions; the coins and credits and number of fighters for each coin or credit which can be adjusted by the operator.

The "rank," which represents the pace of the game, can be adjusted from "A," the standard level, "B," the easiest, and "C," the most difficult. "Auto" adjusts the game to match the skill level corresponding to the player's ability.

Bosconian is available in three Midway models: standard arcade, space saving Mini-Myte, and cocktail table.



Multi-level spooky rooms

Haunted House, Gottlieb's latest pinball offering, has been released to the playing public and according to Marshall Caras, Gottlieb's vice president/marketing, it will be "every bit as successful as our recent hit, *Black Hole*."

Haunted House features a lower playfield, located inside the game cabinet, which is viewed through a tinted plexiglass panel, and which operates on the same reverse-play-angle as *Black Hole* did. The main playfield contains a secret passage, a trap door, and another gate to provide three different passages to the lower playfield.

Additionally, the four-flipper main playfield features a ramp and an elevator to access the third upper playfield, located in the upper right hand corner of the game. Five ways to change levels, eight flippers, and three separate and distinct playfields create a challenge for the player.

Adding all these features to the stunning artwork and "creepy" sound effects (which Gottlieb claims is its finest sound system to date) has resulted in a game that is promised to "exceed the levels of excellence and performance which Gottlieb has already established."

Caras added, "Our market testing program indicates *Haunted House* is able to achieve and maintain high earning levels at 50¢ play and we have had to up our production rates again to keep us with the strong demand."

Gottlieb is currently shipping *Haunted House* to its United States and Canadian distributors.

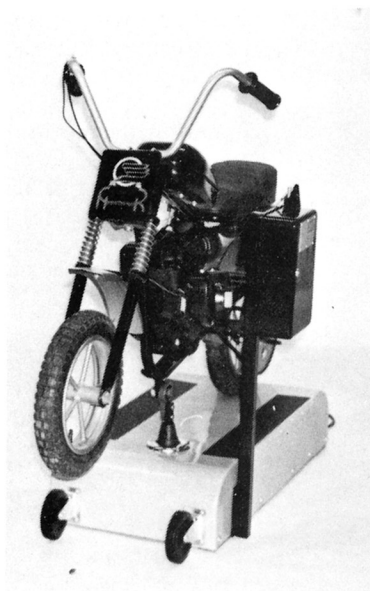


Easy riders

New from UTEC, Inc. are two motorcycle rides featuring the option of engine sound that allows the rider to "rev" the cycle engine by turning the right hand grip.

The mini-cycle *Thunderbird* and *Nighthawk* (the latter is pictured here) are authentic, being actual motorcycles rather than plastic copies. The cycles are mounted on an attractive base of gold or red color and will give the child "a safe, sound-filled ride," said the manufacturer.

For more information about the rides, contact UTEC, Cincinnati, Ohio; phone: 513/531-2800.



Kung-fu pingame

Stern Electronics, Inc. has introduced its latest pinball game *Dragonfist*, described as "the black belt in pin," a solid-state, one- to four-player game packed with skill shot opportunities that challenge the player's game strategy and playfield prowess. Artwork decorates the narrow-body game in a colorful martial arts design.

The game introduces a new twist to the traditional playfield spinner with an innovative play feature that, when activated, records the number of spinner revolutions on the back-glass. When the recorded number stops at 20, 40, 60, or 80 spins, "a special" is awarded.

In addition to lively audio effects, bonus/play features include:

- Maximum multiplier of 7X. Bonus Multiplier is achieved by completing series of target banks where flashing "X" is lighted.
- Extra balls are awarded when the player hits all stand-up targets or lighted center target on drop target banks.
- Maximum bonus of 100,000 points. Player is awarded up to 20,000 points when he knocks down a complete target bank. Bonus advances 1,000 points when drop or standup targets are hit.

Meet Pac-woman

Midway has announced its endorsement of the "Equal Play Amendment" in releasing the "female playmate of *Pac-Man*"—*Ms. Pac-Man*, a new video in three models, standard arcade size, mini, and cocktail table.

The game, Midway said, was designed especially with the female playing public in mind. Following the format, theme, and play appeal of the original *Pac-Man*, *Ms. Pac-Man* introduces new mazes and other special features. For example, in *Ms. Pac-Man*, the bonus "fruit" targets appear and float randomly in different places on the course. Monster "Clyde" is replaced with "Sue." There are more exit and re-entry escape passages, plus new musical-cartoon interludes between ascending scoring levels:

In Act 1, they meet—*Ms. Pac-Man* and *Pac-Man* meet and naturally fall in love. In Act 2 (The Chase), *Ms. Pac-Man* and *Pac-Man* chase each other back and forth across the screen until one catches the other. (Guess who?)

In Act 3, the stork presents the couple with a *Pac-Baby*. (The natural result of this kind of union.)



Third kind of pingame

It is a pingame...or is it a video? Whichever way you look at *Hyperball*, its creator Williams Electronics terms the game "an encounter of the third kind," housed in a pinball style cabinet with many video game play features.

Players control the game play by manipulating two trigger mechanisms located on the top front of the cabinet that control a Hyper-Cannon which shoots out with machine-gun-like action as many as 250 balls a minute. Lights flash quickly from target to target on the playfield, and if not shot down and extinguished immediately, become lightning bolts which streak downward to drain power from the Energy Center—which supplies power to the Hyper-Cannon and is the vital core of *Hyperball*.

Although players have unlimited balls and time, five lightning bolts will wipe out the power in the Energy Center. Players must keep a wary eye on a particularly virulent enemy, the Baiter, who jumps all over the playfield. Each Baiter Bolt that hits the Energy Center destroys one unit of energy and if the Baiter himself jumps to the Energy Center before being destroyed, the entire Center is wiped out.

Scoring is awarded for hitting lit targets or bolts. Smashing thirty bolts completes an attack wave and a bonus is awarded for each remaining Energy Unit. If destruction is imminent, a limited number of "Z-Bombs" can be activated to destroy all enemies on the playfield.

For highest scoring, players should follow the special instructions flashed on the alphanumeric display in the center of the playfield. Hitting an indicated target or spelling a specified word, awards Bonus Energy Units, Z-Bombs, or points.

The third and seventh waves score bonus points. A target lights randomly and a rapidly decreasing score value is entered in the alphanumeric display. Hitting the lit target stops the countdown and the remaining score is awarded. Players have twenty opportunities to score during a Reflex Wave.

Williams has designed *Hyperball* with micro-switches and opto-switches in all critical areas, and the wear-resistant plexiglass playfield is constructed to withstand heavy-duty action.

PLAY METER, March 15, 1982



How fast can you flip?

Features of Bally's new *Vector* pin-game include a digital playfield read-out to measure your flip speed against the fastest flip-to-date, two levels, four flippers and multi-plane artwork.

Beginning with a unique ball entry, *Vector's* main strategy is to gain entry to the Vectorscan ramp and measure the speed of your flip shot, which is then displayed on the center playfield's digital Flip-O-Meter. The Flip-O-Meter also shows the fastest flip to date, offering further challenge to players. Beating the fastest flip awards a Special.

To gain entry to the Vectorscan ramp, it is necessary to drop the Defender drop targets that guard the ramp. Dropping the Defending 1-6 targets qualifies the top saucers for up to three captured balls, or *Vector* energy units.

Energy Units can be released three different ways; by capturing all three balls; by making the H-Y-P-E targets in order, or by a special last ball feature. Only on the last ball the H-Y-P-E targets may be hit out of order, releasing one captured ball.

To further *Vector* play, a set of X-Y-Z drop targets on the upper level will drop the Vectorscan Defender targets by remote control when hit in sequence.

Vector's many features also include two Saving Saucers at the bottom playfield, four flippers for maximum ball control and multiple skill shots, five ramps, an exciting graphic package and a PAC, Play Analysis Computer Voice, to help plan *Vector* game attack.

Vector is available now at Bally's distributors.



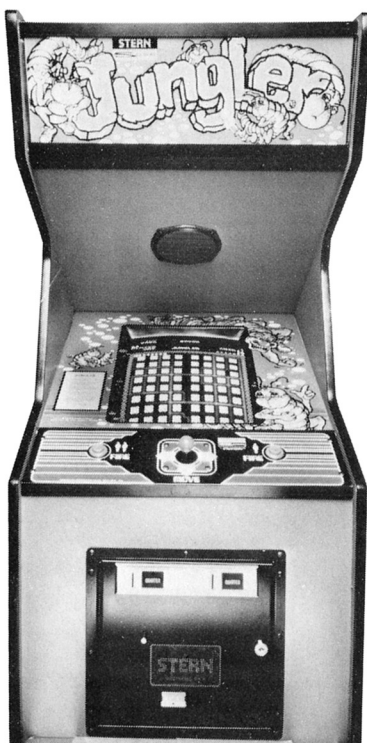
New generation table soccer

Tornado Table Soccer, Inc. has announced the production of its *Survivor* model of coin-operated table soccer games.

"This unique soccer machine offers many unique features never seen before by this industry," said Ed McCloud, president of Tornado, "Our ball trap, which rotates 180 degrees, assures the operator protection by dispensing only nine balls."

Elimination of needless ball ramps, elimination of glass on the playfield, and the quality wood used in the durable cabinet construction make down time and replacement parts "a thing of the past," said Tornado product literature.

"A durable soccer machine which stands on the operator's route with minute maintenance is now available," said McCloud. "*Survivor* truly stands on its own merit."



Jungle fighter

Stern Electronics, Inc. announced production of its latest video game, *Jungler*, licensed from Konami Industry of Japan. Scheduled for production by February 1, the solid-state game of jungle survival features slithering serpents in its colorful backglass and video screen display.

Jungler, a game for one or two players, challenges the player to navigate his serpent through a maze, avoiding attack by enemy serpents, and steering clear of dead-end maze traps.

Object of the game is to complete a series of challenging mazes by eliminating all enemy serpents. The player defends himself from enemy serpents by shooting off their body segments from behind, or by eliminating them in a head-on attack.

A special bonus feature awards player 500 points for a direct shot to the head of an enemy serpent after all his body segments are eliminated. Other innovative play/scoring features include:

Player using the fire button to shoot off enemy serpents' body segments, with 100 points awarded for each segment shot; bonus points are awarded when player passes his serpent over strawberry that appears at random in maze; play difficulty increases upon completion of each maze.

The player directs his serpent with "joystick" control.

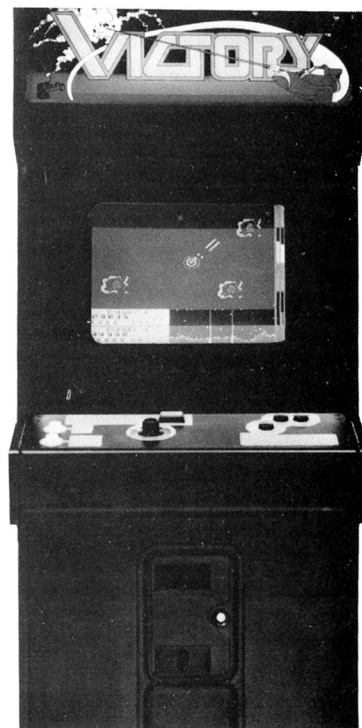
Victory in space


Exidy has introduced its realistic space game, *Victory*, a video that takes the player through colorful space combat on the Battlestar, "the most maneuverable spaceship in the universe."

The Battlestar is controlled to fly in any direction, at any speed to overcome a fierce enemy squadron. Once they are defeated, a promotion is awarded to the player, from Cadet to Flier to Squadron Leader to the highest level, Ace. With promotion comes more powerful capabilities to destroy more threatening enemies.

As an added danger, enemy ships drop up to ten Paratroopers that release deadly Quarks confined in land bunkers. If released, Quarks charge directly for the Battlestar. To stop these attackers, the player has at his aid the Doomsday Device, in limited supply but able to destroy all enemies seen from the Cockpit Window, and a shield capable of protecting Battlestar for three seconds, plus unlimited bullets or lasers.

Victory features the new high speed color video system, producing colorful, detailed graphics. Battery Backup memory gives complete accounting statistics. Software-controlled options allow the operator to design a game for the needs of his location. *Victory* also features Vivid Speech, Complete Self-Diagnostic Testing, and more.





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Before Midnight April 11

As part of an advertising test, Firestone Tarp Mfg. will send any of the above truck size tarpaulins to any reader of this publication who reads and responds to this test before midnight April 11. Each tarpaulin Lot (#Z-18, PVC) is constructed of high density fabric (with virgin grade ingredients, supplied by Gulf Oil Co., Dow Chemical Co., and Union Oil Co.) with nylon reinforced rope hems, double lock stitched hems, electronically welded seams, 100% water proof, #4 (1/2" dia.) metal grommets set on 3 ft. centers with reinforced triangular corner patches and are recommended for all heavy duty use and all bulk or pallet riding materials, and will be accompanied with a LIFE-TIME guarantee that it must perform 100% or it will be replaced free. Add \$7 handling & crating for each tarp ordered. Firestone Tarp Mfg. pays all shipping. Should you wish to return your tarpaulins you may do so for a full refund. Any letter postmarked later than April 11 will be returned. LIMIT: Fifty (50) tarps per address, no exceptions. Send appropriate sum together with you name and address to: Tarp Test Dept. #176G, Firestone Tarp Mfg., Inc., 6314 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90038. For fastest service from any part of the country, call collect, before midnight 7 days a week 213/462-1914 (ask Operator for) TARP TEST #176G and have credit card ready.

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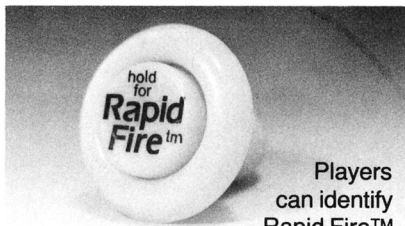
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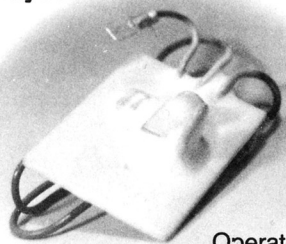
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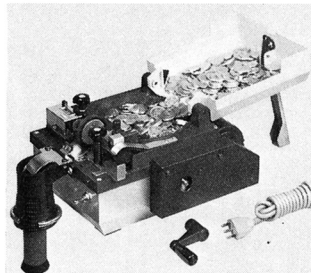
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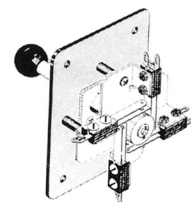
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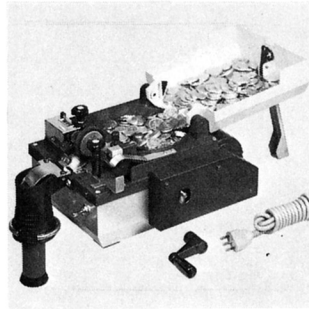
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PARKING SHOT

The trade returns to AOE

Is attendance at the 1982 Amusement Operators Expo worthwhile for the American operator?

We asked a number of returning attendees, who had gone to AOE 1981, and their answers were a resounding "Yes."

"We enjoy the show," said Jack Meyer, vice president of M&W Enterprises/Key West, who will be at the show in Chicago's Hyatt Regency Hotel on March 26—28 with his wife and "combine business and pleasure." As an operator in the tropical spur of the Florida peninsula, he is "isolated," Meyer noted and he attends as many trade affairs as possible "for an educational experience. Our arcade operation with a cocktail lounge combination is really a winner for us, so we try to stay as up-to-date as possible by the trade conventions," said Meyer.

The Meyers are like a number of husband-wife teams who divide up the business and technical seminars menu and attend one of each available session, for a total of six workshops apiece—at least 24 hours "in class" between the couple.

Bette Lockhart, arcade manager in Chicago, said the AOE is "one of the most informative" of the many industry meetings she has attended. "It's like no other business in being so open to exchange of information," she said. "I'm impressed, and I'm not impressed easily." The show which is becoming known as "The Show for The Eighties" is geared to inform the attendees, "who are really interested in learning, not just having a good time at a convention," said Lockhart.

Michael Gitlan from Hartsdale, New York, pointed to the seminars on equipment purchasing and promotions as being especially useful to him. Compared to the AOE, the AMOA Show of the fall is "totally different," he said. The national association show is geared more "for 5-to-10-year veterans of the industry," he observed. At the AOE, the hard-hitting seminars are his main interest; "The exchange of ideas is very helpful," he said, and he underscored the Chicago site as "a good, central location" for the industry gathering.

However, Bill Witsen, a partner in U-Neck Enterprises/Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, was not in favor of a Chicago show site and called for future shows in "any warm weather climate. We go to the AMOA in Chicago every year anyway," he said.

Witsen continued, "Your show is for the operator. The AMOA is for the manufacturer and distributor. The operator gets lost there." For his returning to the Amusement Operators Expo, the "primary reason" is the seminars, he said. "The display of equipment is a plus, but that is really a secondary reason for our attending."

He volunteered a comment on the "gray area" games on display: "They don't really belong in the same show. I operate very few of them because in a sense I was forced to—I had to use the equipment or lose the location," said Witsen. "But I have a tremendous fear that some day, government entities will fail to see the distinction and will ban all videos."

Of the pseudo-gambling videos, Witsen said: "I'd like to see them off the streets."

A Louisianan, Bill Atkins of Atkins Novelty/Jonesville, doesn't mind Chicago "a bit," he said. "I would go wherever you all have the show. The exhibits are great and super, but I attend for the seminars most of all." Atkins added that he likes the personal contact with factory and supply house representatives on the exhibit floor.

"The seminars were very good. All those I went to, gave me a lot of information I could use in my own business. In one, I ended up buying a little computer. I'm not flying by the seat of my pants anymore but looking at return on investment, by location," said Atkins.

Like many others, this operator attends the AOE, the AMOA, and all trade shows and seminars he possibly can, "for all the input I can get from talking to operators over the country."

Barbara Miller of Phoenix will be attending again with husband Kal Miller (Don-Bar Distributors) and they will divide the seminars "to get the most out of them. It's helpful, too, to see what's coming on the market before the competitors get them," she advised.

She noted the lesser number of seminars at the AMOA Show and said, "It's nice to have such a choice to select from" at the AOE. "We always seem to come up with more information. We're always looking for new ways of doing things, especially promotions."

Barbara Miller pointed to the present proliferation of games and operators in competition. "That's why, when it comes to the seminars it helps things I'm promoting and gives you ideas of places to look for new locations."

Key West's Jack Meyer said, "The seminars we went to were very informative. I try to sign for one of each session they offer. I believe the seminar program is really worthwhile; they have knowledgeable people who conduct them. I enjoy both aspects, the exhibits and the seminars.

"We combine business and pleasure," he added. "I take my wife with me and that doubles the dividends...Of course, while I'm in the seminars, she's taking in the Chicago shops."

Another returning operator summed up the AOE: "It's been all I expected it to be and more."

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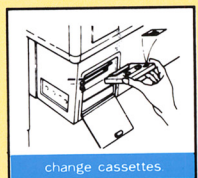
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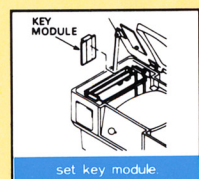
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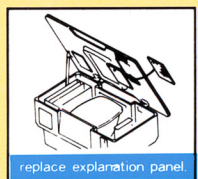
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