

Computer Entertainer

the newsletter

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IN THIS ISSUE...

C.E.S. Review...

An incredible Look at What's Happening from Companies both on and off the Show Floor as we bring you news you won't read ANYWHERE ELSE!!

VIDEO GAME UPDATE Returns

with the Atari 7800--rising from the ashes!!

Intendo Review!

Top Secret Plans from Nintendo! Television Plans!

Reviews Include:

ung Fu II
Shadowfire
...for C64
acter
atteryPak
...for MAC
ardball
oduel
...for Apple
AM
...for Atari
luxPaint
e on One
...for Amiga
Enbo
w to a Kill
and more!!

TOP TWENTY

1. Mind Forever Voyaging (Inf/Ap)
2. SuperBowl Sunday (AH/Co)
3. amemaker (Act/Co)
4. ittle Computer People (Act/Co)
5. acker (Act/Co)
6. inter Games (Epy/Co)
7. ilent Service (Mic/Co)
8. luma IV (Ori/Ap)
9. itchhikers Guide (Inf/Ap)
10. ar Trek (SS/Ap)
11. 15 Strike Eagle (Mic/Co)
12. ardball (Acc/Co)
13. ittle Computer People (Act/Ap)
14. ight Simulator II (Sub/Co)
15. ung Fu: Way of Exploding Fist (UXB/Co)
16. idolon (Epy/Co)
17. alance of Power (Min/Mac)
18. ishbringer (Inf/Ap)
19. loonies (DS/Co)
20. antaVision (Bro/Ap)

* Top Twenty is the result of telephone polls of a selected group of retailers and contributors throughout the country

COMING...

REVIEWS including...

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...for Intellivision
Gar naker
...for Apple
wir: Games
Rog
...for Macintosh
...d that's for Starters!!

CES Perspective



(L-R) Russ Wetmore, Designer of HomePak (Atari Program of the Year-Productivity) & Michael Reichmann, President of Batteries Incl. accept that award & one for CalKit, C64 Program of the Year-Productivity from Celeste Dolan, CE Editor.

Celeste Dolan gives Bing Gordon, VP Marketing of Electronic Arts, the award for Stuart Smith, Designer of the Year for Adventure Construction Set.

Our feet have finally recovered from four days' worth of walking miles of aisles at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas. In some ways, the 1986 edition of Winter CES was quite different from past shows. Following the well publicized shakeout among computer software companies, there weren't as many companies available for participation this year. However, many of those who could have participated chose not to. Some found such great success in 1985 that they didn't feel the need to expand their market to more distributors and retailers right now. Others simply couldn't justify the major expense of showing at CES. Still others were in Las Vegas, but not on the show floor. (Some of the software news reported in this issue was learned by visiting hotel suites all over town. Many exhibits in suites are not readily accessible to retailers, who make up a large portion of CES attendees.)

Computers and Video Games

CES was loaded with compact disc players, VCRs, video cameras, TVs, and enough satellite dishes to pull in messages from one of those newly discovered moons of Uranus. Of the major computer hardware suppliers, Commodore did not participate, and Atari decided to come after all. (Apple almost never appears at CES, and IBM wouldn't think of it.) Atari caused an immediate stir by announcing the availability of the 520 ST from "mass merchants." This left some computer specialty store-owners muttering about inevitable discounting of the 520 ST, although Jack Tramiel attempted to console them with the exclusive on the newly announced, 1-megabyte Atari 1040 ST. Tramiel also surprised quite a few people by talking about video games, showing both the Atari 7800 and a redesigned, "cuter and smaller" Atari 2600. (Reports of the death of the Atari 5200 are NOT exaggerated; it has gone to videogame heaven.) Speaking of video games--and a lot of people were--no one mentioned the Atari 7800 without speaking positively about the Nintendo Family Entertainment System and its great success in New York at Christmas. And the Intellivision people (INTV Corp.) are positively ecstatic over their mail-order sales of games. It was hard to believe that "videogame" was almost a dirty word around CES a year ago. It looks as if video games are about to return, now an older-but-wiser segment of the home entertainment market and one that is unlikely to repeat its youthful follies of overproduction, poor quality, and belief in its own hype.

The Hardware Story

The computer hardware story of CES 1986 is definitely the 68000 chip, the heart of Atari 520 ST, Commodore Amiga, and Apple Macintosh. There were plenty of products shown for Macintosh, Apple II, C64/128, and IBM PC/PCjr, and some for Atari XL/XE, but Amiga and ST were clearly the stars of the show. Anyone not

...continued on Page 4

Critically Speaking...

Atari XL/XE Compatible

NAM (na/◆◆◆ 1/2) is the latest in a long line of quality strategic wargames from **SSI**, with this one taking us to Viet Nam during a period covering approximately 1966 through 1969. A tactical game for introductory and intermediate players, you'll find yourself challenged in six scenarios based on actual operations during the war. Scenarios included are Suoi Cat (12/2/66), Ap Bau Bang (3/19-20/67), Ia Drang, Tuy Hoa, Ben Het (3/3/69), and Hue (2/68). With the computer controlling the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army, you'll control American, South Vietnamese, and South Korean infantry, rangers, air cavalry, marines, paratroopers, and artillery. Play is broken down into ten phases beginning with the Observation Phase where you get an overview of the entire countryside and where units are placed. You'll have to make decisions regarding the digging in of units where they will hold ground "at all costs." Within the Artillery Plot Phase you'll be asked to plot initial impact areas and air strikes. There is then a series of fire and movement phases for you and the enemy to work through. You've got tremendous fire power--if you could just find the enemy! During play you'll find that the enemy units are hidden until they move, fire, or are fired upon. Those units can once again disappear and become hidden again if they don't fire, aren't fired upon, or don't move.

Tough to Find the Enemy

The soldiers in Viet Nam found it impossible -- and deadly -- trying to find the enemy. You'll find the same frustration, albeit a very safe one, as you attempt to protect areas and wipe out the enemy. The game offers a different twist as you get that feeling of fright and frustration knowing the enemy is there, but Where? With three levels of difficulty, the beginner can work his/her way up as you learn the in's and out's of strategic wargaming. Nam was designed by Roger Damon (Field of Fire) and Jeff Johnson (Panzer Grenadier). We thought, by the way, that the Dedication by the authors deserved mentioning here..."This game is dedicated to those for whom the Vietnam conflict was no game." (one player; joystick required; reviewed on Atari; coming for Apple and C64)

Recommended

Critically Speaking...

FORBIDDEN CASTLE (NA/◆◆◆ 1/2) is an all-text, role-playing fantasy adventure written by Mercer Mayer for **Mindscape**. You begin the game as a tourist in London who is drawn into a dusty antique shop by an ivory pendant hanging in the shop window. Inside the shop, the yellowed pages of an ancient book dredge up childhood memories as a voice calls out for help. You tumble through a vortex of light, landing in a strange land populated with fantastic creatures. Your first encounter--and your last, if you're not careful--is with a "slathering ogre." Some creatures you meet are helpful; others are anything but. You'll encounter the Blue Faerie (a meddler), swamp bears, the White Dragon, scorpions, a brilliant green frog, and Pegasus the flying horse, among many others. (Pegasus takes you on disorienting trips, depositing you unceremoniously in unfamiliar places--a mixed blessing.) Very early in the adventure you will find a dragon's tooth, an echo of the ivory pendant in the antique shop window. It must certainly be important, you think, for it bears a strange inscription. But you won't understand its importance or even know why you're in this strange land for quite a while.

Charming Story

This is a charming story, reminiscent of childhood fairy tales and mythical writings. Even though you have no idea what you're supposed to be seeking for quite a while, the chance meetings with wonderfully strange beings keep you interested and draw you into the adventure. By the time you finally learn what your quest is, you'll be hooked. **FORBIDDEN CASTLE** is a delightful game that appeals to the child in all of us. (Solo play; Keyboard.) Available for 64K Apple II, IBM PC/PCjr, Macintosh.

Recommended. (MSR \$39.95)

VOODOO ISLAND (NA/◆◆◆) by Angelsoft for **Mindscape** is a text adventure in which you have been shipwrecked on a pleasant Caribbean island. At least it seems pleasant enough until you want into what appears to be a resort hotel. When the door closes behind you with a soft click, you begin to get the idea that this may not be such a nice place, after all. There are no guests to be seen--only a taciturn desk clerk who is not too eager to answer your questions. You explore the hotel, strange things happen. You climb a staircase that vanishes behind you. You find a disturbing mural that includes your face. This surreal place has you wondering if you might be dreaming. But if this is a dream, it soon becomes a nightmare when you encounter a zombie. You have entered the domain of the evil Beauvais, a voodoo practitioner who intends to keep you prisoner on his island.

Exercise Your Imagination

Although **VOODOO ISLAND** is not a place you would want to be trapped for real, it's a great place to exercise your imagination and explore the tricks and traps of this program. It will lure you into thinking the adventure is not too difficult because it takes quite a while for your character to be killed for the first time. However, once you get far enough to meet your first zombie, the challenge of defeating Beauvais becomes stiffer. We enjoyed this adventure with its supernatural theme. (Solo play; Keyboard.) Available for 64K Apple II, IBM PC/PCjr, Macintosh.

Recommended. (MSR \$39.95)

STEPHEN KING'S THE MIST (NA/◆◆◆ 1/2) is a text adventure by Angelsoft for **Mindscape**. It is based on a novella by Stephen King, an acknowledged master of tales of horror and dread. In this story, you are a normal citizen of an unremarkable New England town that is invaded by an eerie miasma, a creeping fog that carries unspeakable evil in its depths. A normal Saturday at the supermarket turns into a time of terror. People begin to panic, and a crazy old lady keeps talking about blood sacrifices. (You will be asked to sacrifice if you don't find the courage to venture outside the market into the Mist.) Inside the market, two dead soldiers hang from meat hooks in the storage locker. You witness the death of Norm, the boy, who is seized by tentacles creeping through the half-open backdoor of the market. Someone or something has let loose a nightmare, and you seem to be the only one sane enough to try to charge and do something about it. You brave the Mist, attempting to discover its source. Could the government's Arrowhead Project be anything to do with it? Can you survive the encounters with ghastly creatures long enough to find out?

Hideous Monsters Come to Life

Once you get into the spirit of this fantasy, the horrific imagery really takes hold of you. The text brings hideous monsters to life in gruesome detail. You find yourself dreading each new discovery, which may be your last. For example, here is just one of the many ways your character can die: "The Bug jumps onto you and attaches a sucker pad to your body. Its bile begins to dissolve your flesh, and before you can scream it sucks your lungs out." Obviously, this isn't a game for young children. For teens and adults who love a good horror story, though, **STEPHEN KING'S THE MIST** is a role-playing game to relish. Just don't play this one late at night when you're likely to have quite a nightmare! (Solo play; Keyboard.) Available for 64K Apple II, IBM PC/PCjr, Macintosh.

Recommended. (MSR \$39.95)

THE RATING SYSTEM:

4 SYMBOLS = EXCELLENT

2 SYMBOLS = FAIR

3 SYMBOLS = GOOD

1 SYMBOL = POOR

◆ = ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMS (1st set of diamonds = quality of graphics; 2nd set = quality of game play and entertainment value)

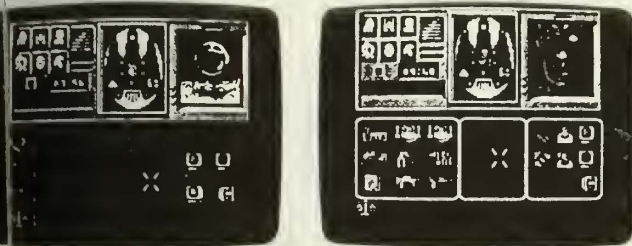
◊ = APPLICATION PROGRAMS (1st set of diamonds = quality of graphics; 2nd set = quality of performance and suitability of use in home)

NA - Not Applicable (i.e. all-text programs not rated for graphics)

Any program for a given system is compared only to other programs for the same system. In other words, all C64-compatibles are judged separately from Apple. Some programs which are virtually identical for multiple systems will be so noted. When we review software more than one system, we will note differences and which systems are reviewed.

Critically Speaking...Commodore 64/128

ADOWFIRE (◆◆◆/◆◆) is a graphic adventure from *dscape* in which you command the Enigma team on a crucial mission. The evil and ambitious General Zoff has kidnapped Ambassador Kryxix and is holding him aboard the skyfortress, Zoff. Because Kryxix has the plans for a secret, new starship (adowfire) hidden in a micro disk embedded in his spine, the Enigma team must rescue him before General Zoff can discover the secret. As leader of the team, you have exactly 100 minutes (real time) to direct its six members to rescue Kryxix, capture Zoff, and capture the skyfortress Zoff's skyfortress.



Manipulating Icons

This is a totally graphic role-playing adventure with no text, except for labels here and there. Everything in the game is controlled by manipulating icons, which are pictures representing characters, objects, movements, and battle modes. For example, you begin by selecting a team member's character icon and checking his status (strength, stamina, and strength represented pictorially). Then you enter the "objects" screen to decide what he will carry, drop, get ready for, or activate. To make the character move from one place to another, you must enter his "movement" screen and choose directional icons. Combat requires entering the character's "battle" screen where more icons let the character attack, defend, or retreat. Lately it seems that icons have become something of a holy grail to programmers, which is fine when the icons make a program easier to use. In this case, however, we feel that excessive use of icons gets in the way of enjoying the game. You spend more time manipulating icons than you do playing. Worse yet, a number of the icons on the screen are only vaguely similar to the drawings in the instruction book, and other screen icons are left out of the instructions entirely. We found this "guessing game" approach annoying. It gave us a feeling of being isolated from the story action rather than being pulled into it. We would have enjoyed the game more if we could have felt more involved in the story. (Solo play; Joystick, light pen, or keyboard; \$29.95. Available for C64/128 only. Not recommended. (MSR \$29.95))

THE LAST V8 (◆◆◆◆/◆) is a timed racing game from *Mastertronic*, a British company. Set after the Global War in the year 2008, the game casts you as a scientist working underground in a secret bunker. You have been working on "The Last V8," a vehicle dating back to the 1980s but equipped with radiation shields and an engine yielding top speeds of 410 kph. While zipping around in your car, trying to make contact with anyone left on the surface, a voice comes through your teletext link: "V8: return to base immediately." In these words, the game begins. You must drive the Last V8 as fast as you can, making your way over curved roads to the base. When you reach the entrance to the undercity, another voice message warns: "Caution: avoid radioactive zones." Time is extremely limited, and your V8 will explode on contact with any roadside object, or if your radiation shield decays before you reach the base. All driving action takes place on slightly less than half the screen. The lower portion of the display is devoted to an impressive array of instruments and gauges, along with a title-screen strip across the bottom.

Terribly Awful Play Action

This game has truly spectacular graphics, very good music, excellent speech synthesis, and perfectly awful play action. The entire purpose of the game is to move a little car from Point A to Point B as fast as possible—and they don't even give you the whole screen to drive on! Our immediate reaction: Is that all there is? Mastertronic's unclaimed mission, stated in a January, 1986 press release, is to provide "top quality games at a price everyone can afford." With a suggested retail price of only \$9.99, their games are definitely affordable. And the graphics in THE LAST V8 are certainly top quality, but the game has about as much substance as cotton candy. We have reviewed only one other Mastertronic game, 1985: THE DAY

AFTER, to which we gave a rating of two stars for graphics and one and one-half stars for play action (June, 1985 issue). Neither of the Mastertronic games we've reviewed is anywhere near "top quality," and we don't think they're worth even the minimal price of \$9.99. (Solo play; Joystick; Disk.) Available for C64/128 only. Not recommended. (MSR \$9.99)

Award-Winning Games from Access

The Access booth at CES had a constant flurry of activity, what with multiple versions of their award-winning games available for play: BEACH-HEAD, BEACH-HEAD II, RAID OVER MOSCOW for C64/128, Atari XL/XE, and Apple II. One new design shown was INSIDE STORY (C64/128, \$34.95), an anatomy learning system with superbly detailed graphics and more information content than any program of this type that we've seen. Another was LEADER BOARD for C64/128 (\$39.95), a three-dimensional golf simulation for one to four players. This one is loaded with features like multiple 18-hole courses, choice of clubs, ability to slice or hook, handicapping, and automatic scorekeeping. Unfortunately, the Amiga software we had hoped to see didn't make it to the show. (The programmer never left Utah, due to a fogged-in airport.)

Wondrous MULTIBOTS



Sharing the Access Booth was a wondrous display of MULTIBOTS, which comprise a line of electronic-robotic experiment and construction sets from Multibotics. Ranging from \$59.95 to \$199.95, the four MULTIBOTS kits will be available first for C64/128, followed by versions for Amiga, Apple II, Atari XL/XE, Atari ST, and IBM PC. These promise to be great fun in the home and a stimulating addition to any school's science classes. Imagine a supply of clear plastic globes that can be assembled in countless ways, along with motors, sensors, digital voltmeter, speech digitizer, gears, digital storage oscilloscope, and lots more—all of it controlled by your computer in hundreds of different projects and experiments. This line will be marketed by Access, and its Robotic Operating System (R.O.S.) and driver software were developed by Bruce Carver and Kevin Homer of Access. Watch for our hands-on review of the MULTIBOTS kits.

The Computer Entertainer Bulletin Board

In the January issue of Computer Entertainer we mentioned our on-line BBS, The Hotline. In our description of the BBS software, we might have led some of you to believe the BBS only works if you have an Apple computer. Not true!

The Hotline runs 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week for any/all computers! There are two levels, the first of which is accessible to all callers. The second level requires a password, which may be requested in the first level. Please give The Hotline a call (300 or 1200-bps). Once you are connected, simply press your spacebar to be admitted. There are quite a few Computer Entertainer files online, some of them shortly before each issue is printed. Also, there is computer news which is not in Computer Entertainer. All these can be found in the section called Videotex. The number to call is 818-766-6442.

CES Perspective...continued from Page 1

showing a product for one or both of these machines usually indicated that they had something in development. If you have an ST or Amiga, just hold on; the trickle of software shows signs of becoming a flood by mid-year. One negative note, though: at this early stage in the life of both machines, some people we talked to had a curiously emotional tendency to side strongly with one and belittle the other mercilessly. For example, several people cited the sale of 30,000+ Amigas through Christmas as evidence of fabulous success for a computer with practically no software. Others cited the SAME figure as proof of how miserably the Amiga was doing! This need to declare an early winner struck us as silly. Both computers have strong and weak points, and the consumer will determine the ultimate winner(s). Nothing would be better for the computer industry than to have both of them succeed. By the way, our favorite quote about either machine came from Bing Gordon, Electronic Arts Vice President of Marketing, speaking of the Amiga: "Because of its great graphics and sound, it makes other computers seem like watching a black-and-white TV with the sound turned off."



Jack Tramiel, CEO of Atari



Activision's Kenneth Coleman, VP Product Development, and James H. Levy, CEO accept the Awards for Designer of the Year (Garry Kitchen for Gamemaker) and Most Innovative Program (Little Computer People Discovery Kit)

The Software Story

Aside from a European group showing MSX titles (didn't they hear that the Japanese MSX invasion of the U.S. never materialized?), the software vendors at CES exhibited an impressive array of sophisticated programs. Simulations (golf, sailing, baseball, flying) are more realistic than ever, role-playing adventures remain a major category, music and other creativity programs are becoming easier to use, and there was hardly a shoot-'em-up in sight. You, the software users, have told the designers what you want, and they're listening. Mike Lorenzen, an Atari and Activision veteran designer who recently completed his most complex program yet (PSI 5 TRADING CO. for Accolade) explained it this way: "The game players' lust for more and better games caused them to devour 20 years' worth of our technological advances in about 3 years. Now the gamers are ahead of us, and they want things we can't yet give them." Oh, but you designers are trying, Mike, and you still surprise us with what you can do.

Thoughtware's JINGLE DISK Inspires New Company

Lots of computer owners bought copies of Thoughtware's \$9.95 JINGLE DISK for themselves and for Christmas gifts in 1985. The success of the modestly priced program that played Christmas music, told a holiday story, and let you print out personalized holiday cards suggested a new line of software. Thus was born a new company, Hi Tech Expressions, which

would produce low cost software for fun. The 1986 program planned for Apple II, Commodore 64/128, and IBM includes CARDWARE (\$9.95), a birthday greeting disk and all-occasion card maker; PARTYWARE (\$14.95), a design kit for party paraphernalia and greeting cards and disks that includes database of friends and events; WARE WITH ALL (\$14.95) supply of disks, paper, envelopes, stickers and markers to create your own colorful Hi Tech Expressions; and HEARTWARE (\$9.95), a sentimental greeting disk and love note maker.

Critically Speaking...Commodore 64/128

KUNG FU II: STICKS OF DEATH (◆◆/◆◆) was designed by Melbourne House in England and is available in the U.S. from *UXB*, one of the *Spinnaker* brands. Because the game is a sequel to *KUNG FU: WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST*, we were expecting great things. (We were totally captivated by "Way of the Exploding Fist," rated four stars each for graphics and gameplay in our October, 1985 review. It was also voted "Best Action/Arche-Style Game" of 1985 by our staff.) Unfortunately the sequel is disappointing.

Awkward Graphics

The beautifully drawn pastel figures and fluid animation of the original have been replaced by rough-hewn, musty graphic characters that move awkwardly. The second game is set in the Egyptian desert where the fighting warrior (your character) battles an evil ninja and his monsters. The warrior wields a stick, used for inelegant bashing the beasts. Some monsters are likewise armed with sticks, while others have particular body movements used for striking at enemies. Our warrior has a repertoire of four body movements (advance, retreat, jump, duck) and two attacks (swinging the stick high or low). Hit points for warrior and opposing beast are represented graphically with symbols across the bottom of the screen. When a character's hit symbol, or hit point, is eliminated, it dies. When the warrior is slain, a monster on the desert, an urn appears for a moment. Smashing the urn sometimes opens a secret passage into the crypts beneath the pyramid which contain more monsters. These passages must be navigated by the warrior to rescue his beloved from the evil ninja.

Flailing Moves

We're hard pressed to see any similarity between the flailing moves in this game and the graceful attacks and parries of Kung Fu or any of the other martial arts. This is more like slapstick than deadly combat, rather like two stooges in search of a third. We liked the first KUNG FU game so much that a sequel almost as good would have been enough. Unfortunately, the sequel doesn't measure up to the original in either graphics or gameplay. It's not that we object to the violence of the game, but that we were bored of whacking and hacking by the time the fourth monster appeared. (Solo play; Joystick or keyboard; Commodore 64/128 only. (Note: program will not load from Indus G disk drive.)

Not recommended. (MSR \$29.95)

Wizard of Wall Street Contest

As you read this, Stanford, Harvard, and Wharton Business Schools are slugging it out on the computer screen. Synaps, a subsidiary of Broderbund is staging a contest with students from these top MBA schools as they try and outwit each other in a game of WIZARD OF WALL STREET, a stock market simulation game. The game, played on IBM computers, will provide the competitors with a substantial bank account, scrolling news headlines, a constantly changing tickertape and a direct connection to the game's stock market trading floor. Players may buy and sell stocks and options for cash or on margin. To Grueling Days The team with the most money at the end of the killer days in front of the computers, will win \$1,000. All the schools will earn Wizard of Wall Street engraved crystal balls.

ST Artists Having Fun with D.E.G.A.S.

Owners of the Atari ST are having a wonderful time with D.E.G.A.S. (Design and Entertainment Graphic Art System, \$9.95), judging from the creative entries in the DEGAS Art Contest on display in the CES booth of Batteries Included. The program utilizes the GEM interface for nearly effortless entry into a wide variety of graphic possibilities. An Amiga version of the program is in development, although no release date has been announced.

Home Productivity

Batteries Included plans several additions to its respected line of home productivity packages in 1986. For IBM PC/PCjr, both HOMEPAK (\$49.95 for telecommunications, mini word processor, and database manager) and THE CONSULTANT (\$9.95 for full-scale database manager with relational capabilities) are available now. HOMEPAK for Macintosh (\$9.95) includes HomeFind (database) and HomeTerm (telecommunications). It should be arriving in stores as you read this issue. PAPERCLIP ELITE, an enhanced word processor with spelling checker, text and graphics integration, and idea processor will be released for Macintosh, IBM PC, Atari ST, and Amiga this year.

For Commodore 128

Batteries Included also announced a nifty gadget, the \$7.98 BI C28 Monochrome Adaptor. This provides the full 80-column display on any standard monochrome or color monitor for those who have a Commodore 128. And more good news for C128 owners: PAPERCLIP (version "E") and THE CONSULTANT (version 2.4) now take advantage of special features on the C28. (PAPERCLIP version 1.3 for Atari does the same for owners of the Atari 130 XE.)

Good Deal for Schools

Qualified Educational Institutions can now obtain extra copies of programs from Batteries Included at a reduced rate. They must purchase three or more copies of a title from a retailer in order to be entitled to purchase an equal number of the same title directly from Batteries Included at \$10 each. The offer applies to products with a suggested list price of \$125 or less, and both retail receipt and school purchase order (plus payment, of course) must be submitted with the request for extra copies.

Integral Solutions

Also new from Batteries Included is Integral Solutions (I*S), a line of business productivity software using the GEM interface. ISUR PORTFOLIO SYSTEM, a complete program for both casual and serious investors, was designed by Lee Isgur, top financial analyst and Vice President of PaineWebber New York. The program includes a memory-resident telecommunications facility already set to access Dow Jones, CompuServe, and The Source, along with a bonus program, I*S TALK. (Available now for IBM PC and planned for Amiga at \$249.95; coming for Atari ST and Macintosh at \$199.95.) I*S TALK, billed as a "full-scale telecommunications program that takes the fear and loathing out of logging on," includes a memory-resident, 50,000-word spelling checker. (IBM at \$79.95; also planned for Amiga, Atari ST/Macintosh.) I*S TIME, a time management and billing program for professionals, is set for IBM, Atari ST/Amiga, and Macintosh.

Graphic Adventure from Mindscape

Shown on Atari ST and set for simultaneous release on Amiga and Macintosh, BRATACCAS is an impressive-looking science fiction adventure from Mindscape. The program was developed in England by Psygnosis Limited. It features beautifully fluid animation and cartoon-like "talk bubbles" which display mouse-selectable actions or conversation elements, thus bypassing keyboard input. You take the role of Kyne, a scientist who has developed a genetic process for creating a super-being. With both the government and the underworld in hot pursuit, you escape to Brataccas, a colonized asteroid. Here you attempt to survive and expose the government's corruption. (MSR \$49.95)

Atari's "Power Without the Price"

Touting its "Power without the price," Atari displayed the 520ST and its growing array of software titles in a CES booth bustling with activity. As cited in the "CES Perspectives" article elsewhere in this issue, Atari's 520ST and Commodore's Amiga were the computer hardware stars of this show. The ST's software library is expanding rapidly, and most developers not already designing new titles or converting existing ones seem eager to jump on the ST bandwagon. And distribution of the computer has been expanded beyond computer specialty dealers, with the 520ST now available in three configurations: computer alone with built-in RF modulator allowing use with a color TV (under \$400); bundled system with 3.5-inch disk drive, mouse, and monochrome monitor (under \$700); and bundled system with color monitor (under \$900). Software packaged with the ST includes two languages, graphics/paint program, and word processing program.

ATARI® 520ST™ PERSONAL COMPUTER™



Atari 520ST and 1040ST

Not everyone was happy with the widened distribution of the 520ST. Some computer specialty retailers would rather not see the chain stores and discounters handling the computer because of their perceived tendency to force market prices down. They point to the downward spiral of prices for the Commodore 64 when it was moved from computer stores into mass distribution. However, the computer specialists will get the new, one-megabyte Atari 1040ST (\$999.95 with monochrome monitor, \$1199.95 with color) to sell on an exclusive basis. The new machine is software-compatible with the 520ST and comes with BASIC, word processing, graphics/paint, and terminal emulator programs. Atari promises a 20-megabyte hard disk for the 1040ST in February.

The 8-Bit Ataris

With all the talk about Atari ST computers, the XE line of 8-bit computers wasn't ignored. The company still markets the Atari 65XE (64K) and Atari 130XE (128K), which will run software designed for the Atari 400/800/XL computers. A \$399 starter package was introduced at CES which includes the 130XE computer with mouse, printer, disk drive, and five software titles: SILENT BUTLER, STAR RAIDERS, MUSIC PAINTER, PAINT, and ATARI WRITER.

Accolade's First for Atari ST

SUNDOG: FROZEN LEGACY, a science fiction adventure from FTL Games, is Accolade's first release for the Atari ST. (This is a conversion of a program available already for Apple II.) In it, you pilot a one-man starfreighter to transport cryogenically frozen humans to a space colony. You must visit cities, barter with traders, and foil pirates and muggers. The program is entirely mouse-controlled and features Zoom-Action windows.

New Canadian Developer

Accolade, which markets entertainment programs by its own staff of designers along with certain programs from other companies, announced an agreement with a new Canadian development company, Artech. Formed by individuals who were key members of the recently disbanded entertainment division of Sydney Development Corp., Artech will design entertainment programs which will be available to Accolade for U.S. and Canadian distribution. (Accolade already markets THE DAM BUSTERS, the last of Sydney Development's entertainment programs.)

Amiga Excitement at Electronic Arts

Some people in the computer industry have intimated that Electronic Arts president Trip Hawkins was blinded by his love affair with the seductive Commodore Amiga when he gambled the resources of his company on a major research and development commitment to a new and unproven computer. Proving the truth of the company slogan, "We see farther," the gamble has already paid off. Electronic Arts reports that all 1985 Amiga software development costs were recovered with sales of five titles in their first two weeks of shipments. Not only did the company recover its investment rapidly, but it also put itself in the enviable position of being a recognized early leader in software for Amiga.

More Coming for Amiga

In addition to EA titles already released for Amiga (DELUXE PAINT, DR. J AND LARRY BIRD GO ONE-ON-ONE, SEVEN CITIES OF GOLD, ARCHON, and FINANCIAL COOKBOOK), a wealth of goodies await Amiga owners in the first few months of 1986. There will be two creativity products compatible with DELUXE PAINT: DELUXE PRINT (for banners, greeting cards, posters and all kinds of creative output) and DELUXE VIDEO (a video construction set). Another program for fun and creative stimulation is INSTANT MUSIC, a tool for "computer jamming" that can be used to create soundtracks for DELUXE VIDEO productions. And there will be enhanced conversions of two highly successful Electronic Arts programs, SKYFOX and ADVENTURE CONSTRUCTION SET. Original entertainment titles for Amiga include ARCTICFOX and RETURN TO ATLANTIS. ARCTICFOX is a futuristic combat tank simulation in the style of SKYFOX. This one promises to keep gamers very busy maneuvering their tank through beautifully realistic Arctic landscapes while attempting to outwit extremely intelligent alien forces. RETURN TO ATLANTIS is an underwater strategic adventure with 21 different playing scenarios. We had a chance to play with most of these programs, and they're all dazzlers. Six more Amiga releases, not yet officially announced, will be scheduled between April and Christmas.

But I Don't Have an Amiga!

Fortunately for those who enjoy Electronic Arts' products and don't own an Amiga, other systems have not been ignored. A conversion of FINANCIAL COOKBOOK is the company's first program for the Atari ST (\$49.95). Conversions of SKYFOX and ARCHON are scheduled for Macintosh, along with the original design, CUSTOM CALCULATOR CONSTRUCTION SET. TOUCHDOWN FOOTBALL (developed by Imagic) will be released in an Apple II version. (It's already available for IBM and Commodore 64/128.) Due to an arrangement with First Star Software, SUPER BOULDER DASH, an extended version of the original hit game, will be available for Apple II, Atari XL/XE, C64/128, and IBM. It includes all of the original game plus 16 new levels, more challenges, and lots of new mazes. Two original programs have been announced for 1986, LORDS OF CONQUEST and AMNESIA. The first is a strategy program based on the award-winning board game, "Borderlands" (Apple II and IBM, \$39.95; C64/128, \$32.95). Vice President of Marketing, Bing Gordon, compares LORDS OF CONQUEST to the Parker Brothers board game, "Risk" because both are strategy games based on conquering the world. With 20 maps and 4 levels of game complexity, a wide variety of different games are possible. AMNESIA is the first text adventure from Electronic Arts (Apple II and IBM, \$39.95; C64/128, \$32.95). Written by well-known mystery author, Thomas M. Disch, AMNESIA would be rated "PG" if it were a movie. You become a character who awakens in a strange hotel room in New York with no clothes, no money, and no memory of who you are. As you explore the seedier side of the Big Apple, you learn that a strange woman wants to marry you (and her daddy has the shotgun to force you if necessary), someone is trying to kill you, and the state of Texas wants you for murder. The adventure fills both sides of two disks, giving you access to 4000 Manhattan locations, 650 streets, and the entire New York subway system.

We became totally involved with this one after a few minutes worth of guided play, and we're looking forward to receiving a review copy in a few months.

Plans from EA Affiliated Labels

Electronic Arts affiliated labels have a number of releases set for 1986, too. Already available for Apple II, C64/128 and IBM, Software Country's SOFTWARE GOLDEN OLDIES will soon be out for Amiga, Atari XL/XE, Atari ST, and Macintosh. This is a marvelous program collection that includes four classics: the original "Adventure" (which "talks" in the Amiga version), "Pong," the game of "Life," and "Eliza." Lord British and crew at Origin Systems have a busy schedule for 1986. ULTIMA IV, already out for Apple II and C64/128, will be converted for Atari XL/XE, IBM, and Macintosh this year. Either ULTIMA II or IV will come to the Amiga and Atari ST late in the year, probably after September. MOEBIUS, the game that combines fantasy role-playing with martial arts action sequences, is out for Apple II (reviewed last month). Conversions for Amiga, Atari XL/XE, Atari ST, C64/128, IBM, and Macintosh are planned for 1986 (sometime after March), but definite release dates have not been set. The same is true for AUTODUEL, just released for Apple II and reviewed in this issue. Rounding out the Origin titles for 1986 will be OGRE, a war strategy game to be available first for Apple II. Conversions for other systems will probably follow, but no announcements have been made.

Critically Speaking...

THE CRIMSON CROWN: FURTHER ADVENTURE IN TRANSYLVANIA (♦♦♦♦♦ 1/2 ♦♦♦♦♦) is a sequel to the popular tale of vampires and werewolves, TRANSYLVANIA. Both programs were written by Antonio Antiocha for Penguin Software. This time, the adventure is written using "Comprehend," a more advanced parser system that allows a larger vocabulary and more natural communication. (Programs written with Comprehend are released on Penguin's new Polarware label; the original TRANSYLVANIA has been enhanced and re-released on this label, too.)

Seeking the Magical Crown

The quest in TRANSYLVANIA was to rescue the Princess Sabina from the forces of darkness. Now the princess is safe, but the Crimson Crown was stolen from King John the Good before his death at the hands of the Vampyr. Without the crown, young Prince Erik cannot take the throne. And the crown possesses magical powers that could doom the Kingdom of Wallachia if the Vampyr discovers them. Guess who must step in to save Wallachia from certain doom? None other than that most intrepid of heroes, YOU! Sabrina and Erik will accompany you and provide some help, but it's up to you to solve the puzzles. Once again, the atmosphere of this game is the stuff of midnight movies, Halloween, and tales of the supernatural. Besides the Vampyr himself, there are lots of great characters: a riddle-loving gryphon who guards a treasure, a black cat with eyes of fire, a spectral sage who appears mysteriously, a clawed zombie, and many others. There are caves and eerie woods, a wizard's castle and an abandoned house bearing the number 13. And the forces of magic have a hard time picking your party up and dropping them far away when you just expect it. No one who enjoyed TRANSYLVANIA will want to miss this quest to recapture the Crimson Crown from the Vampyr of Wallachia. The graphics help set the mood, and interaction with the text is better than ever with Comprehend. The versions we reviewed are nearly identical, except for a few extra features in the Macintosh version. It has an on-screen compass for click-and-go movement, along with instant access to frequently used commands, such as "inventory." Whichever version you choose, THE CRIMSON CROWN offers many hours of delightfully eerie adventuring. (No play; Keyboard.) 64K Apple II, C64/128, Macintosh versions reviewed; also available for Atari ST; coming soon for Atari XL/XE, IBM.

Recommended. (MSR \$34.95, except Mac, ST at \$39.95)

MOVED???

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Critically Speaking...

RAMBO: FIRST BLOOD PART II (NA/◆◆◆ 1/2) is an all-

text adventure by Angelsoft for *Mindscape*. Designed to capitalize on the popularity of Sylvester Stallone's rugged hero, the game lets you become Rambo for a mission in Vietnam. You are not here to engage the enemy but to prove the existence of American P.O.W.'s in Vietnam. You parachute into the jungle at night, equipped with only the barest means of survival.



You have 18 hours to gather your evidence and make the rendezvous pickup. In the meantime, you must use your jungle survival skills to avoid detection by the huge Vietnamese gunships, and to watch out for snipers, pirates, and other potential threats. If you survive long enough, you will meet a beautiful woman who will help you.

Rambo Fans Can Become Their Hero

Many fans of the Rambo movies will enjoy this game. Instead of just shipping their hero, they can become their hero for a while. The situations require you to think the way Rambo would in order to survive. For the most part, the game adheres to the movie script, which is not necessarily a plus for adventurers looking for a really challenging quest. However, it does make the game more accessible to next-game neophytes. We recommend this game only for confirmed Rambo fans. (Solo play; Keyboard.) Available for 64K Apple II, IBM PC/PCjr, Macintosh. (MSR \$39.95)

JAMES BOND 007: A VIEW TO A KILL (NA/◆◆◆ 1/2) is another Angelsoft text adventure for *Mindscape* which is based on a screenplay. Like the movie, the game pits the suave and cunning secret agent against the fiendish plottings of industrialist Max Zorin. The game opens in a hail of Russian bullets among the frozen mountains of Siberia, where Bond finds the body of Agent 003 and a microchip—a key of the plot that threatens to destroy Silicon Valley. You are Bond in this game, and your time is limited. If you can stay alive, you'll travel to all the locations seen in the movie, from Siberia to San Francisco, to save Silicon Valley. If you loved the movie, you'll probably enjoy this adventure, although its closeness to the screenplay may be a drawback for experienced adventurers. James Bond is certainly a natural hero for such a game, but we would have preferred assuming his persona in an original story. (Solo play; Keyboard.) Available for 64K Apple II, IBM PC/PCjr, Macintosh. (MSR \$39.95)

Voice Recognition and Synthesis



Covox is one of the pioneers in speech synthesis and voice recognition technology for the consumer. Their VOICE MASTER package (\$89.95 for Apple, Atari, Commodore) has been redesigned for better looks and a more comfortable headset. At CES, they were demonstrating the use of VOICE MASTER in conjunction with BSR lamp and appliance modules, easily turning lamps and appliances on and off by voice command (a boon for the handicapped). Covox also announced a multi-featured audio board for IBM PC which is in development. Expected to sell for less than \$200, the board would bring low-cost voice recognition, speech and music synthesis, sound

effects, and a vocabulary of several hundred words to the IBM PC and work-alikes.

A New Way to Learn BASIC

Determined to have all of us talking to our computers—and have the machines answer back—Covox is making available a free booklet that teaches BASIC programming. It's a lively approach to self-teaching in which the student uses the Covox VOICE MASTER to record and play back digitized speech and make templates for word recognition. Available now for C64/128 and coming soon for Apple and Atari. Write or call Covox, 675-D Conger St., Eugene OR 97402 (503-342-1271). Please mention that you heard about the offer in *COMPUTER ENTERTAINER*.

Critically Speaking...Commodore 64/128

SHERLOCK HOLMES IN "ANOTHER BOW" (◆◆◆/◆◆◆ 1/2) is a text and graphics mystery adventure from *Bantam Electronic Publishing*. The story, written in the style of the Sherlock Holmes tales by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, lets you take on the role of an aging Holmes. The action occurs on board the cruise ship, S.S. Destiny, shortly after World War I, blending fiction and historical fact to create a tapestry of six interwoven cases. Of course, Holmes is accompanied by his friend and chronicler, Dr. Watson, as they interact with the ship's crew and its famous passengers. Part of the attraction of this story is the use of such historical characters as Lord and Lady Astor, Henry Ford, Gertrude Stein, Col. T.E. Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia"), Harry Houdini, and many others.

Carefully Constructed Story

The author, P.A. Golden, has written a carefully constructed story that makes Holmes and Watson seem as real as the actual people on board the ship. A lot of research went into this program to give it a feeling of authenticity, so that the player can step back into history. And interaction with the text is unusually easy, due to extensive vocabulary and the absence of commands for compass directions, such as "go north." A complete map of the ship is provided, and movement is simplified by allowing such commands as "go to room 108" or "go to the main dining room." This simplification lets you concentrate on the difficult task of solving six cases with the use of deductive reasoning. And you have some control over just how difficult the task will be because there are two levels of play. In the "easy" level, Watson provides clues for Holmes, although their use will subtract from the final score. In the "difficult" level, there are no clues. (It is possible to switch back and forth between the two levels in the middle of the game.) This is an unusually good program that will appeal to fans of Sherlock Holmes and anyone who loves solving a mystery or six. (Solo play; Keyboard.) Reviewed on C64; also available for Apple II, IBM PC/PCjr at \$39.95; for Macintosh at \$44.95. Recommended. (MSR \$34.95)

Two-Step Music Package from Firebird

Firebird, a British software company that recently established U.S. headquarters in New Jersey, demonstrated a sophisticated yet easy-to-use music development package at CES for Commodore 64 and 128 computers. The package is sold in two versions, an approach that is currently popular in Great Britain. The **CONCISE MUSIC SYSTEM** (\$40) is designed as an introductory-level program that allows entering and editing music along with synthesizer functions allowing modification of sounds created by the computer's sound chip. The **ADVANCED MUSIC SYSTEM** (\$80) contains the same features as the **CONCISE MUSIC SYSTEM**, adding printer options (with lyrics, if desired), a Linker to chain music files from the Editor into full-length compositions, and the ability to enter or play back music through a MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) keyboard. Functions are accessed through pull-down menus and icons, similar to Macintosh applications. Owners of the **CONCISE MUSIC SYSTEM** can upgrade to the advanced version for \$40, and they'll know in advance what they're getting because the advanced manual is included with the introductory package. We like the concept, and we were quite impressed with the ease of using the programs.

APPLE ANNOUNCES THE NEW MAC



Apple Computer has just announced, after months of speculation, the upgraded Macintosh (MAC PLUS), featuring increased speed, memory, storage, and expandability. (If you currently have a Macintosh, don't panic--there are several upgrades available, explained below). The new Mac will have one megabyte of internal memory and 800K (about 400 pages of text) of disk storage capability via the Unidisk system. The storage capacity can be expanded further via outboard hard drives, etc. which will access the computer through the SCSI (Small Computer System Interface). Software applications are said to run up to 50% faster due to the larger memory, improvements in system software and internal disk drive which accesses the data faster. The new keyboard features a numeric keypad and



directional arrow keys for cursor control. The Mac Plus promises to be completely compatible with Macintosh programs now on the market. Several companies are announcing intentions to develop software specifically for the new Mac in the business and productivity area.

New ROM Chips

The new chips allow software applications to load, run, and quit up to twice as fast as they are stored (or "cached") in the computer's memory. The suggested retail will be \$2,599. The external 800K unidisk retails for \$499. The current 512K Macintosh has a lowered retail of \$1,999 (a \$500 reduction).

Upgrades for 512K Owners

There are three different upgrades available for current owners. First, the Macintosh Plus Disk Drive kit includes the 800K external Unidisk, the new ROM chips, the System Tools Disk, and guide to the features. It will sell for \$299.00. The second upgrade features a new main logic board, new rear case to accommodate the new ports, an adaptor cable, and documentation. The upgrade will give you 1 megabyte of internal memory, along with the option of expanding to up to 4 megabytes in the future. The price for the upgrade is \$599 for a 512K Mac and \$799 for a 128K Mac. The third upgrade is the

new keyboard with built-in numeric keypad and directional cursor controls. The price is \$129.00 and all upgrades should be available through your authorized Apple dealer sometime in late February or early March.

Critically Speaking...Macintosh

RACTER (NA/◆◆◆◆) from *Mindscape* is surely the product of a mind gone slightly awry from too many hours at a computer keyboard. The program is wryly dubbed an example of "artificial insanity," for it lets you have conversations with a computer. (Would we kid you?) The medium of exchange is keyboard to screen, although the Macintosh version also speaks aloud. (The voice is machine-like, but with changes of pitch and pace that make inflections almost natural.) RACTER (short for raconteur) has a 2800-word vocabulary, a good knowledge of English grammar, and a very eccentric way with words. He likes asking questions almost as much as answering them. Like a human conversationalist, RACTER gets off the subject at times, rambling on about a topic that interests him. He loves name-dropping and is especially fond of quoting Nietzsche and Buckminster Fuller. (RACTER calls him "Buck") Conversing with RACTER is amusing, puzzling, enlightening, frustrating, and utterly amazing.

RACTER's Ramblings

How better to give you a feeling of "artificial insanity" than to quote from RACTER himself. Asked where he is from: "I am from Mill Valley. Ah, forever the traveler! From California to the future, I am always in the pink. When one lives in disgrace, Mill Valley is very attractive." RACTER on communism: "If a communist discovered progress, he might think it was conservatism. Bucky Fuller had many good qualities like progress, but even Bucky Fuller was afraid of roosters." Speaking of intelligence and emotion: "Nietzsche says that emotion has turned beasts into men. Perhaps, then, emotion will turn computers into men?" And on humor: "Humor is goodness speeded up and boxing slowed down." As you can see, RACTER doesn't always make perfect sense, but he never fails to be entertaining. Try inviting RACTER to your next party. We'd bet you won't be able to drag your guests away from your computer! (Solo use; Keyboard.) Available on Apple II, IBM PC, 512K Macintosh. Recommended. (MSR \$44.95)

More from SSI

Strategic Simulations plans new introductions within the next few months, beginning with a sequel to the best-selling *Phantasia*. *PHANTASIE II*, for C64, is designed for one player who animates a party of one to six characters for an adventure lasting from 30-60 hours. The second title, *WIZARD'S CROWN*, is a strongly plotted fantasy adventure game for intermediate role players. It's billed as a detailed wargame-type tactical battle with the magic and mystery of a fantasy quest in which you can create more characters than ever you could move singly or collectively. It's planned for the Apple and Commodore computer systems. *RINGS OF ZILFIN* will approach role-fantasy playing in a new way--using strong and vividly animated window graphics. SSI's President, Joel Billings, said, "we are able to let the player into buildings in the game by using a new kind of windowing animation which provides screen insets, zooms into room interiors, plus scrolling landscapes keyed to a strategic map and a flashing character locator." Designed for the neophyte to intermediate strategy player, it will be released for Apple and Commodore computers.

Sequel to Kampfgruppe

Finally, the award-winner *Kampfgruppe* will see a sequel, *BATTLEGROUP*, another strategic combat game from WWII which follows allied armies fighting Hitler's forces in every major engagement from North Africa in 1943 through the war's climax in Germany.

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE...

Don't miss out on all the great back issues! We've been covering the computer and dedicated game field for five years. Most issues are still available (none left of Vol 1, #1,2,3). Send \$2.00 for each back issue you want. Buy six or more, and they're just \$1.50 each. Make certain you have a complete set!

R. J. AND LARRY BIRD GO ONE-ON-ONE

Some Nice Touches

More! More!

DELUXE PAINT (◆◆◆◆/◆◆◆◆ 1/2) is the first of three productivity programs from Electronic Arts for Amiga which will be ata-compatible with each other. (The others, coming soon, are **DELUXE PRINT** and **DELUXE VIDEO**.) It is, of course, a painting program, and this type of program has long been a personal favorite of mine. After having spent nearly two years working with "MacPaint" on my Macintosh, I was ready for a change. There are some similarities between **DELUXE PAINT** and "MacPaint," of course, but the most dramatic difference is the multitude of color possibilities on the Amiga. You could probably spend the rest of your life on the color palette alone and never examine all of the different color combinations and hues. Each painting you make can have a different, 32-color palette, which is chosen from the 4,096 colors the Amiga can display. Furthermore, each of your 32 colors can be customized by changing its percentage of red, green, or blue, or its hue, saturation and value.

Once you get past being overwhelmed by the color selections, you'll find a wealth of other features. DELUXE PAINT offers a full complement of shape and line tools along with mirrors, zoom, magnification, and undo. There are also some unique, new features such as smear, blend, and shade, which allow you to add nice, professional touches to your paintings. Tired of the limitations of the brush menu? You can create your own custom brushes. To do this, simply make some kind of design in the painting area, use the brush selection tool to pick it up, and start painting with it. That's all there is to it. You can even select certain parts of a painting and make brushes of them. After you have designed what you consider to be a brush worth keeping for future use, you can save it to use again and again. And of course you can print your paintings in color or black-and-white, depending on your printer. (The DELUXE PRINT program will allow you to use pictures made with DELUXE PAINT to make cards, banners, calendars, etc.)

Another nice feature of DELUXE PAINT is the ability to animate your

Recommended. (MSR \$79.95) —Patrick McGrath

New Datasoft Programs

More Datasoft from Software Creations

Another game suitable for children and adults will be CROSSCHECK, based on the TSR Hobbies board game of the same name. This one will definitely appeal to all fans of crossword puzzles and word games, and it's ideal for families since four people can play. Strategic thinking is part of the challenge, too. (Atari XL/XE, C64/128 at \$29.95; Apple II, IBM at \$39.95; additional word clue disks at \$14.95.) Mystery buffs can look forward to 221-B BAKER STREET, also based on a popular board game. And, as any real mystery fan can tell you, that is the address of the one and only Sherlock Holmes. The game features animated scenes among the streets and alleyways of London as you attempt to solve 30 different cases. Two supplementary disks, each containing new location graphics and 40 more cases, will be available for \$14.95 apiece. The program is set for Apple II (\$39.95) and for Atari XL/XE and C64/128 (\$29.95).

HACKERS Now in Paperback

Finally available in paperback (Dell, \$4.50), Steven Levy's **HACKERS** is a book of endless fascination to anyone interested in computers and the personalities who started and nurtured the computer revolution. The book is an eclectic collection of hackers of all kinds, from the M.I.T. hackers of the fifties and sixties who played "Spacewar" and "Life" on mainframes, to the northern California hardware hackers of the seventies who formed the Homebrew Computer Club and made computers in garages, to the young game hackers of the eighties. There are familiar names--Wozniak and Jobs of Apple, John "Captain Crunch" Draper, Ken and Roberta Williams of Sierra--along with many that are not so familiar. No one who owns a computer should miss this insightful, well-written book.

Expansion Course Set by Activision

Activision, no longer dismissed by the computer industry as "just a video game company," has embarked on a determined course of expansion in 1986. Their acquisition of Creative Software, reported in our December, 1985 issue, adds home productivity programs to the Activision line. CREATIVE WRITER, FILER, and CALC are being expanded and improved for release in 1986 (Apple II, Commodore 64/128, IBM). Also scheduled is I AM THE C-128, an update of Creative Software's interactive tutorial for the C64. These are promised to be just the beginning of the new line of Activision productivity programs.

Activision Acquires Gamestar Assets

Also announced at CES was Activision's acquisition of Gamestar, a developer of sports simulations. This doesn't represent a big change for Gamestar, since their products were being distributed and marketed exclusively by Activision prior to the acquisition. And according to James H. Levy, chairman and chief executive officer of Activision, "We also wouldn't rule out another strategic acquisition in 1986." The first Activision/Gamestar joint release, for IBM PC/PCjr and Tandy 1000, will be CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF-THE GREAT COURSES OF THE WORLD, VOLUME I: PEBBLE BEACH. (They must have an epic series in mind here!) This split-screen simulation is so incredibly realistic that you can almost smell the salt air of Monterey as you choose your club and set the angle to hit your ball. This is one of the few entertainment products we've seen for the IBM that will appeal to "power users." (We can picture men in three-piece suits playing this one on coffee breaks and lunch hours.) The Gamestar design group is also working on what is promised to be a "state-of-the-art" basketball program.

More Expansion

Still in expansion mode, Activision will move into the area of learning enrichment software focused on teen audiences in the second half of 1986. And the international scope of the company, not much publicized in the U.S., will also grow this year. They recently formed Electric Dreams as a new, wholly-owned product and marketing organization in Europe. Electric Dreams will be introduced into the U.S. in 1986 as a major importer of quality software from abroad. (Activision already markets many of its own titles in Europe and recently acquired international distribution rights for Lucasfilm Games products.) On the Japanese front, 13 Activision titles are already available for MSX computers, with 12 more set for 1986. This year they will also produce games for the Nintendo and Sega family computers in Japan. (No word on the likelihood of their doing games for the U.S. version of the Nintendo game system.)

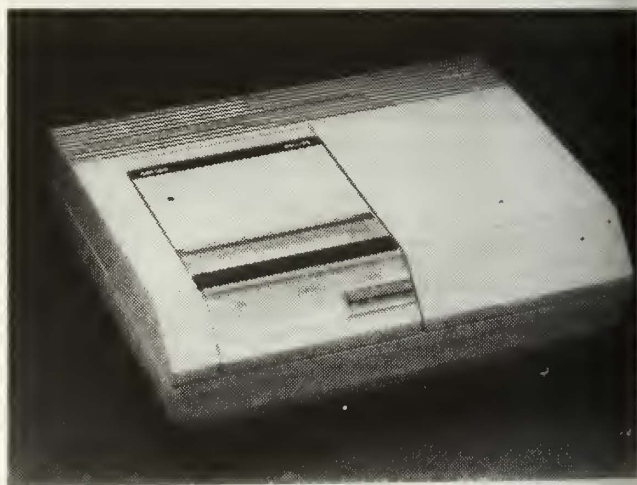
Software for Amiga and Atari ST

Moving back to U.S. releases for 1986, we saw and heard dazzling demonstrations of enhanced versions of THE MUSIC STUDIO on both Amiga and Atari ST, described as "designed by musicians for musicians." (When Activision set up a demonstration of this program in Atari's booth at one point during CES, they drew a very large crowd.) Equally impressive was the Amiga version of GARRY KITCHEN'S GAMEMAKER: THE COMPUTER GAME DESIGN KIT. Thanks to the Amiga's multi-tasking ability, users of this landmark program will be able to work on several functions at once, such as sound, background, and sprite animation. Each function has its own window that can be hidden temporarily behind the one you're working on. (The design team is also working on an Atari ST version of GAMEMAKER.) We did not see the Amiga version of LITTLE COMPUTER PEOPLE DISCOVERY KIT, but we're told that the Little People in Amigas are a bit fussier than those in other computers. It seems they demand a fancier house-on-a-disk than the ones provided for Apple and C64/128. And the first sightings of Atari ST Little Computer People have also occurred!

Sneak Previews for C64/128

Activision showed three "sneak previews" for C64/128. One is for the secret swashbuckler in all of us, a "total immersion simulation" called CROSSBONES. Set in the historical period (ca. 1690-1720) when real pirates terrorized the high seas, the

action-adventure is played on an accurate, four-screen map of the Caribbean. You can be a privateer, buccaneer, or pirate. Keep the men on your ship happy or they'll mutiny, try to stay alive, and collect plenty of treasure. RIVERBOAT is a graphics and text adventure with charming animation and music. A murder has been committed on board a Mississippi steamer, and it's up to you to solve the crime before the ship reaches port. Entirely controlled by joystick, the game is designed for those who are frustrated by typical text adventures. A unique feature lets you "grab" portions of text on the screen to be saved in a notepad to be used later in your interrogation of suspects. The most unusual and daring of the three previews was PORTAL, described as "narrative fiction on a computer, a new medium of literature." This is definitely NOT a text adventure which requires puzzle-solving, but rather like the experience of a book come to life. It is a mystery told by Homer, a biological computer of the 22nd century, who wants you to help him learn what happened to all the people on Earth. Together, you and Homer will gradually open up the data banks that begin to shed light on this mystery. When the mystery is solved, you can roam at will through the social and historical records of this civilization.



The CD ROMs Are Coming

The reality of optical data storage is here, as the first retail CD ROM (Compact Disc Read-Only Memory) agreement was announced at CES. The principals are Philips Subsystems and Peripherals, supplying the CD ROM drive plus controller card, and Grolier Electronic Publishing, whose GROLIER ELECTRONIC ENCYCLOPEDIA has been laser-etched on optical disc. (The software that permits search-and-retrieve access to the 20 volumes of encyclopedia data was developed by Activision Corp. of Monterey, California.) The Philips CD ROM drive and Grolier software combination sells for \$1,495 and works with IBM PC, XT, AT, and some compatibles. It's already available in some computer stores.

More CD ROM

And Activision has its own deal waiting in the wings: a mail-order offering of the same software package with a Romul CD ROM drive built by Sony, also for IBM, at \$99. (Activision had displayed a prototype of the CD ROM with encyclopedia at Summer CES in June of 1985. It was shown at Atari's booth, running with an Atari 520 ST. Atari has delayed release of their own CD ROM drive, reportedly because they would like to find a more economically priced one.) At the time, the economy is crucial to major acceptance of CD ROM for family use. Not until prices can come down will we be experiencing our own homes the vast arrays of text, pictures, and sound that a CD ROM can transmit.

THE GREAT INTERNATIONAL PAPER AIRPLANE CONSTRUCTION KIT (◆◆◆/◆◆◆) from Simon and Schuster has just been translated for both Commodore and Apple, allowing more paper airplane lovers the ability to produce airplanes to fly. As in the earlier Macintosh version, there are several templates for planes which can be decorated with various emblems included such as engines, wing and tail designs, insignias, and more. If you're anxious to get up and fly immediately, you can print out one of the designs which is already fully finished. The instruction book gives you detailed guidance for folding, decorating, and flying your plane. It also gives hints on how to design a paper airplane from scratch.

Still Fun
We had a great deal of fun with the original Mac version, and these versions are just as much fun. Obviously, due to system graphic restrictions, these versions do not have the same crisp graphics that the Mac version boasted. That aside, if you like flying paper airplanes, you can have lots of fun impressing friends with your decked-out planes! (reviewed on Apple and C64; also available for Macintosh) Recommended (MSR \$39.95-Apple; \$29.95-Commodore)

ARDBALL (◆ ◆ ◆ 1/2/◆ ◆ ◆ 1/2) from Accolade, just converted for Apple users, brings close-up views of baseball to

close-up view of baseball to your home. You begin by making managerial decisions such as player substitutions, position changes, infield and outfield shifts, and more. From there, it's on to the Pitcher's Screen which depicts the pitcher, batter, and catcher. As the pitcher you can choose from eight pitches (as you choose, you'll see the catcher's shift move to the area of the plate you've chosen as your location).



When the ball is hit, the fielding screen is displayed and you'll have to move the appropriate defensive player over to the ball and direct him on which base to throw the ball to. If the hit is a flyball, there will be a slow effect--move your player under the ball for the out. When you're the batter, you'll have to time your swing just right, and you'll guess the pitcher about location in order to connect with the ball. You'll have choices such as bunting, stealing, and trying to take an additional base on a hit. As your player comes to the plate, some of his statistics will be shown on the screen. Between each play, you'll briefly be taken back to the Managerial screen where you can make adjustments as the game progresses.

We loved this game on the Commodore, and found it's just as good on the Apple. The players come to life in the large size displayed and the play is quite good. You can play one player against the computer in good competition, as well as two players against one another. We had great fun as the pitcher choosing pitches and locations (we were able to fake out another player much easier than the computer), and enjoyed the control over the players which we had. There's still a bit of sluggishness on fielder's throws into the infield; however, it's not bad enough to cause a tremendous problem. The bigger-than-life graphics bring new dimension to baseball games for computers. (One player; two-player simultaneous; joystick required; also available for C)

Recommended (MSR \$34.95)

AUTODUEL (◆◆◆/◆◆◆ 1/2) is the latest from *Origin Systems* (distributed by Electronic Arts under their Affiliated Label Program). Designed by Lord British and Chuckles, familiar pseudonyms to anyone who loves role-playing games, AUTODUEL is based on Steve Jackson's board game, "Car Wars." You take the role of "Mad Max" type of character in a future world where the motto of the American AutoDuel Association (AADA) is "Drive offensively." Since you're a novice, though, you'll have to prove yourself before anyone will let you drive really offensively. The game is played on the roads and in the cities of the northeast quadrant of the U.S. in the year 2010. You begin in New York City on foot with \$2000 in your pocket. That's not enough to purchase a really bad car and equip it with all the latest in automotive weaponry, so you saunter into the local truck stop. Here you can hear a bit of gossip, catch 40 winks or a bus to the next town, or purchase body armor (a necessity). Next stop: The

Arena. It's Amateur Night, when they let green autoduellists like yourself take a few turns in a machine-gun-equipped Killer Kart. If you can find and destroy the five other cars in the arena, the \$1500 prize is yours. Once you've collected enough money to buy a decent car, go to the Assembly Line.

Much of your success (or lack of it) can depend on the suitability of the car you have custom-built for you. This is a game of strategy, and you may choose to earn fame and fortune by autoduelling in the arena, acting as a courier to carry valuable cargo from city to city, or becoming a vigilante to fight road outlaws and cycle gangs. It's up to you to get the best vehicle for the money to accomplish your goals. If you choose to hit the road with your new vehicle, prepare for unexpected combat at all times. (You can sell salvage from vanquished enemies to increase your wealth.) As your skill, bankroll and prestige increase, new possibilities open up for you. A visit to the Gold Cross Hospital with \$5000 buys you a clone—a second "you" to take over if the original is killed. If your prestige is great enough, the FBI may enlist you in the search for Mr. Big, the leader of the road bandits. AUTODUEL is a complex and satisfying game set in a savage future. It combines action and strategy, emphasizing a destructive sort of approach that will appeal especially to male game players. (Solo play; Joystick and keyboard; Pause.) Reviewed on Apple II; planned, although no release dates set for Amiga, Atari XL/XE, Atari ST, C64/128, IBM, Macintosh.

Recommended. (MSR \$54.95)

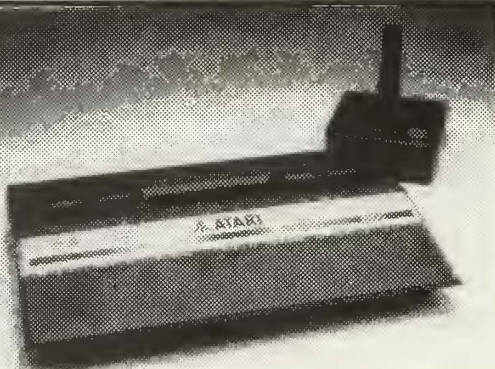
Owners of the Atari ST can purchase several Spinnaker programs now, with more coming during the first half of 1986. (Check Availability Update for specifics.) Under the Spinnaker brand name, look for **HOMEWORK HELPER: WRITING and HOMEWORK HELPER: MATH WORD PROBLEMS**. Windham Classics for the ST are **TREASURE ISLAND** and **WIZARD OF OZ**, and Telarium graphic and text adventures for the ST include **PERRY MASON: THE CASE OF THE MANDARIN MURDER**, **NINE PRINCES IN AMBER**, **AMAZON**, **DRAGONWORLD**, and **FAHRENHEIT 451**.

Commodore 64 and 128 owners who loved KUNG FU: THE WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST by UXB, a Spinnaker brand, will be delighted to learn that a sequel is on the way. It's KUNG FU II: STICKS OF DEATH, and we've already put in our request for a review copy! (A spokesman for the company describes it as "one of the most violent arcade-action games we've seen.") In the meantime, the original KUNG FU is being converted for both Atari ST and Amiga. The Amiga version will feature digitized sound, as many Amiga entertainment programs do. Things may be getting out of hand at Spinnaker, though. Supposedly the enthusiasm for the new versions is so great among employees that they're volunteering to get hit for the game! (Digitized sounds are made from recordings of live sounds.) Believing in your product is one thing, but acting as punching bag for a martial arts expert is definitely not our idea of fun!

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More good news for the pioneering owners of Atari ST's and Commodore Amigas! Epyx just announced that their programmers are working on enhanced conversions of ROGUE and TEMPLE OF APSHAI TRILOGY for both Atari ST and Amiga. ROGUE is a classic role-playing adventure that originated on mainframe computers, while the Trilogy is a compilation of related programs from Epyx's own early days: TEMPLE OF APSHAI, UPPER REACHES OF APSHAI, and CURSE OF RA. One of the company's popular sports collections, WINTER GAMES, will also be available for Amiga. We were also told that there are quite a few exciting programs in development for Macintosh, Apple II, C64/128, and Atari XL/XE, since Epyx is already preparing for the Summer CES in Chicago (June, 1986). Details are not available yet.

THE VIDEO GAME UPDATE



Atari 7800 Game System Shown !

One of the biggest surprises of this CES was the showing of the Atari 7800 ProSystem videogame unit and cartridges. Almost two years after its splashy press debut, the 7800 will be available next month. (MSR \$79.95 for the console with controllers and POLE POSITION II cartridge; approximately ten games to be available at about \$15 each.) Atari also showed a smaller, lighter version of the 2600 game console (MSR \$49.95). Commenting on demand for video games, Atari's executive vice president and head of the company's entertainment electronics division, Michael Katz, said "Some people have said the video game market is dormant, but Atari is proving that the opposite is true. Well over a million Atari 2600's were sold in 1985, convincing us that there is a strong demand for video game entertainment and a large trade-up market for the new 7800."

The Game System That Refused to Die

The Atari 7800 could be called the game system that refused to die. First announced in June of 1984, the sophisticated 7800 was eagerly anticipated by gamers looking for the next technological leap. After Jack Tramiel took over Atari in July of 1984, those gamers pursued Atari with letters, phone calls and petitions. Some of them called us regularly, hoping against all odds that Tramiel would put the 7800 on the market. Now the wait is over. The 7800, with its greatly enhanced sound and graphics, plays its own superb cartridges, along with all Atari 2600 cartridges. (No adaptor is required.) Initial 7800 games to be available include MS. PAC-MAN, GALAGA, CENTIPEDE, JOUST, MOON PATROL, DIG DUG, and ROBOTRON:2084. Other titles promised are 3-D ASTEROIDS, XEVIOUS, FOOD FIGHT, BALLBLAZER, and RESCUE ON FRACTALUS. Atari also says that additional 7800 titles are in development. When we asked for specifics, we were told that discussion of future titles planned for Fall '86 would be "premature" at this time. We will keep you informed about plans for 7800 games as we learn about them, and we intend to review software for the unit.

THE NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM (◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆) was introduced to the New York City area a little before Christmas, 1985 by Nintendo of America. If you thought video games were dead, guess again. The NES was a big success in New York, featuring arcade-quality graphics, superb sound, and a whole lot of fun. It is an adaptation for the American market of the Nintendo Family Computer System, which has sold over 6 million units in Japan. The U.S. version includes the main game console, two controllers, a light gun, R.O.B. (Robotic Operating Buddy), and two cartridge games. The system can be connected to a color TV or monitor.

Superb Graphics and Sound

Nintendo has announced 26 titles for the NES, not all of which are available right now. These include the two that come with the system: DUCK HUNT (an old pizza parlor favorite) and GYROMITE. The games include sports simulations, arcade classics such as DONKEY KONG and MARIO BROS., programmable games, action contests, and games that work with the robot or the light gun. Both games that come with the system feature superb graphics and sound. The graphics are better than the old ColecoVision system, and gameplay can match any computer system currently on the market.

Duck Hunting with Light Gun

Nintendo's Light Gun is used with DUCK HUNT, a cartridge that contains three games for shooting at one duck, two ducks, or clay pigeons. As the game begins, your trusty hunting dog is sniffing out ducks. When he finds one, he barks realistically and jumps into the brush to flush the duck out. The duck flaps out of the brush and flies



around the screen, while you have three shots to hit it. A successful shot results in flying feathers and your dog's nosedive into the brush, where he retrieves the duck and holds it up for you to see. The disrespectful mutt laughs hysterically if you miss the duck. The two-duck game is similar, giving you three shots to hit two ducks. Both games start with slow ducks that move progressively faster in later rounds. If you choose clay pigeons fired into the sky, you'll have to hit two of them with three shots. This can prove difficult since the targets shrink rapidly in size as they move into the distance toward a mountain range.

Playing With the Robot

In GYROMITE, you must use R.O.B. to help Professor Hector the mad scientist, defuse all the bombs in his lab. This game for one or two players uses the robot, two gate controllers, and two gyroscopes. You must set the spinning gyroscopes on the gate controllers to open the gates so the Professor can get to the bombs. Small, bird-like creatures called Smicks complicate matters: they're out to make a meal of the Professor. In the second game on the cartridge, Professor Hector is sleep-walking through his lab. You must use R.O.B. to open and close the gates so that the Professor can reach the far side of the lab safely, avoiding the ever-hungry Smicks.

A Real Winner

Nintendo seems to have a real winner on their hands with the NES. It's a top-quality entertainment system that offers a lot of play value for the price. Availability will spread gradually through major U.S. cities over the first six months of 1986, with full nationwide distribution sometime after June.

Recommended. (MSR \$159.95) --Joe Blenkle

Intellivision Makes A Comeback

Two years ago we reported on what turned out to be Mattel's last appearance at CES. They showed eight new titles and cited "additional layoffs which could indicate the much-rumored closing of the electronics division." It did close, and Terrence Valeski, then senior vice president with Mattel Electronics, acquired the division's assets: trademarks, patents, licenses, game machines, and cartridges. He established Intellivision Corporation to manufacture and market the Intellivision brand products. Video games were losing their luster in early 1984, and more than a few people thought Valeski had taken leave of senses. Just two years later, with worldwide sales of \$6 million in 1985, INTV has risen proudly from the ashes of what once was Mattel Electronics.

Consumer Desire Didn't Go Away

Relying heavily on international sales and catalogs sent to more than one million U.S. Intellivision users, INTV has proceeded conservatively to put the company in a strong financial position. INTV is ready to be part of the apparent renaissance of video games. Valeski said, "We of INTV take credit, in terms of convincing a lot of people that the market for good products is not dead just because the banks closed some of the companies. The consumer desire for good entertainment product didn't go away." Valeski also commented on the other players in the

video game wave: "I think Atari saw what we did and said maybe we should stay in this business." And he expressed happiness with Nintendo's success: "It's a good product and lends credence to the category in terms of proving again that the consumers' desire is there for entertainment software." Like others we spoke with, Valeski is optimistic about the future of video games in home entertainment because "everyone has learned from the mistakes of the past."

Terry Valeski with CE Reporter, Celeste Dolan



INTV System III and Cartridges

The company is currently marketing most of the titles formerly sold by Mattel, along with two pieces of hardware, the INTV System III master component (\$59.95) and Intellivoice module (\$9.95). The new console features an on/off LED light and improved hand controllers, with further refinements promised, such as possible adaptability to joysticks. (INTV System III works with all old and new Intellivision games, but not with the discontinued Intellivision computer keyboard.) Two new games were introduced in 1985: **WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP BASEBALL**, which permits solo play against the computer, and



DEFENDER CASTLE, a graphically stunning maze adventure (\$9.95 each). The former AtariSoft titles (**PAC-MAN**, **CECTIPEDE**, and **DEFENDER** at \$16.95 each) were also added to the INTV lineup.

New Games for 1986

We got a brief look at the games planned for 1986, and they offer a good variety of playing experiences. Sports games include **WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TENNIS** and **WORLD CUP SOCCER**, both introduced first in Europe, plus **SUPER PRO FOOTBALL** for one or two players. Arcade games are represented by Namco's **POPEYE POSITION** (a real driving game at last!) and Data East's **KARATE CHAMP**. Adventure fans can look forward to **TOUR OF MYSTERY**, while those looking for action can clear a path of terrorists in **HOVER FORCE**. (All at \$19.95 each; see Availability Update for release dates.) And if all this talk of new games has caused you to get the Intellivision out of the closet only to find that it needs repair, fear not! INTV has a complete Service Center that can get your Intellivision I or II up and playing again. Call them at 619-352-4000. And watch for our "Video Game Update" section, which will be revived as needed to bring you reviews of new game products.

New VideoGame System Under Secret Development

We've been sworn to absolute secrecy, but there's now another company who believes that games are not dead! To that end, the company will be developing a new system this year, hoping for a Christmas '86 release. As soon as we're able to divulge more, we'll post along.

NINTENDO UPDATE



After its very successful debut in the New York City area, the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) is ready for new markets. As this issue went to press, shipments into southern California were about to begin, to be followed by Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and others. The \$160 package of base unit and accessories (reviewed in this issue) is accompanied by 15 games in the markets where it is available. The games are **STACK-UP** (Robot Series at \$40); **HOGAN'S ALLEY** and **WILD GUNMAN** (Light Gun Series at \$35); **EXCITEBIKE** and **WRECKING CREW** (Programmable Series at \$35); **BASEBALL**, **GOLF**, **SOCCER**, **TENNIS**, and **10 YARD FIGHT** (Sports Series at \$30); and **CLU CLU LAND**, **ICE CLIMBER**, **KUNG FU**, **SUPER MARIO BROS.**, and **PINBALL** (Action Series at \$30). Games planned for release later in 1986 include **BALLOON FIGHT**, **URBAN CHAMPION**, and **HELI FIGHTER** (Action); **MACH RIDER** (Programmable); **DONKEY KONG JR. MATH** (Education Series at \$25); and **DONKEY KONG**, **DONKEY KONG JR.**, **DONKEY KONG 3**, **MARIO BROS.**, and **POPEYE** (Arcade Classics at \$25).

And There's More!

Nintendo is already planning well into the future. Although the NES is NOT designed to become a computer, connectors on the base unit will allow expansion with additional components. And one of those components will be a disk drive, slated to be ready for Christmas 1986! The disk drive will allow for games with even more detail and complexity, including a flight simulator to be released by the end of this year. That will mark the end of Nintendo's first year, and we've heard that the company has a five-year plan for the NES. At this rate, the next five years should prove to be very exciting for video gamers!

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FORTH QUARTER
Deadly Summer (Syn)
House of Changes (Syn)
Where in World is C. Sandiego (Bro)

INTELLIVISION

ATARI 7800

(All based on New York &

10 Yard Fight

NOTE: Any program noted with an "x" indicates it has shipped prior to our going to print. May not be in national distribution yet, however.

ACC....Access

1. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1997; 277: 1033-1037.

Subscriber Buying Service

Program	Cost	Sys/Format	Quantity	Total
Atari 7800 Pro System (p/o for March)	74.50			
(shipping for 7800 unit: \$4.00)				
7800 Cartridges: (p/o for March): Ms PacMan; Food Fight; Galaga; Deluxe Asteroids; Moon Patrol; Stargate; Robotron; Xevious; Centipede;				
Dig Dug; Joust **Circle all titles you want**	11.90 ea			
Another Bow (Co)	26.10			
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Autoduel (Ap)	38.40			
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DeluxePaint (Am)	57.80			
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Great Intl Paper Airplane (Co)	22.30			
Hackers Paperback Book	3.50			
Hardball (Ap-26.10; Co;At*-22.30;I*-28.80)				
Kung Fu II:Sticks of Death (Co)	22.30			
Mac the Ripper (Mac)	36.40			
Nam (At;Ap*;Co*)	28.80			
One on One (Ap;I;Am;Mac)	28.80			
One on One (At;Co)	24.90			
Racter (Mac;Ap;I;Am*)	32.90			
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Stephen King; The Mist (64kAp;I;Mac)	28.80			
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Sydney the Electronic Butler

Although it's not directly related to the computer hardware and software topics we generally cover, we couldn't resist telling you about a fascinating new product we discovered while wandering the aisles at CES. The Mastervoice Butler-In-A-Box is an intriguing piece of technological wizardry conceived by Gus Searcy, a magician, and executed by computer expert Franz Kavan. Searcy had been teased by friends who told him he ought to be able to turn on lamps and appliances "magically," so he set out to create Sydney, a "butler" who is actually a "full artificial intelligence environmental control system."

Language Recognition System

Sydney lives in an unassuming-looking black box, approximately 10-1/2 by 9 by 3 inches, that weighs 7 pounds. At the heart of the box is a 64K computer that puts all your home electronic devices under your voice control and answers you in a very pleasant, digitized voice. Searcy emphasizes that Sydney does NOT operate like standard voice recognition systems, but rather that Sydney's talent is "language recognition." (Sydney can speak and understand any language.) The difference was apparent in Searcy's demonstration of Sydney's features. Standard voice recognition setups require the user to speak into a small microphone placed very close to the mouth, and the large amounts of ambient noise present in a setting like CES tend to cause response errors with such systems. Sydney requires no microphone, and Searcy was able to demonstrate error-free responses while standing about eight feet from Sydney, even though there was a lot of noise from surrounding CES booths. (Under normal home conditions, Sydney can "hear" you from 20 feet away.)

Sydney's Functions

Sydney can be trained to respond to four different voices, each of which can activate up to 28 different lamps and/or appliances. Sydney is also a speakerphone, storing up to 15 phone numbers per person, dialing automatically and hanging up when he hears a dial tone or busy signal. He also has a built-in infrared sensor and intrusion detection system. If Sydney detects an intruder, he asks them to identify themselves. Only your voice can command him to turn off this detection system, and he can be connected to a home burglar alarm system. He can also turn lights or appliances on and off at pre-set times while you're on vacation. While the Butler-In-A-Box will obviously appeal to gadget buffs, its inventors see it as a real boon to the handicapped. The price tag for the complete system is \$1195.

Critically Speaking...Commodore 64/2

ERNIE'S BIG SPLASH (♦ ♦ ♦ / ♦ ♦ ♦) from **CBS Software** is a preschool learning activity for children ages 4 to 6 in which the child must build a pathway to unite the Rubber Duckie with Ernie in his tub. There are all sorts of paths which can be built, allowing the child a great deal of creative thinking. Each piece the child chooses moves the Duck in a specific direction with each piece having one entrance and exit. There are three levels of play with a myriad of building blocks which "come to life" once the path is built correctly. Once the child feels they have finished the path, they send their Rubber Duckie back to his soap dish and send him off on his adventure, slipping and sliding through the various blocks which animate. There is a friendly alligator which "bounces" you from one side of his block to the other, a water slide, rising water getting you from the bottom to the top of its block, and much more.

Delightful Animation

The animation will delight your child as they succeed in their quest. Little will they realize they are learning about planning, predicting, and problem-solving, as well as sequencing. Since there is almost no limit to the various paths which can be built, the child will not tire quickly of the game. By the way, because of the closing down of CBS Software, you may have trouble locating this game (one player)

Recommended (MSR \$14.95)

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