

Atari chairman quits Kassar replaced by cigarette exec.

Atari chairman and chief executive Raymond E. Kassar resigned last week and was re-placed by an official from a tobacco company.

James Morgan, currently executive vice president of Philip Morris USA, will assume his new post at Atari September 6. In the meantime, the company will be run by Emanuel Gerard, the Warner Communications executive who engineered that company's purchase of Atari in 1976.

Kassar had been under fire for allegedly using insider information to sell some of his Warner stock only hours before the announcement that Atari was scaling back its 1982 earnings projections by nearly \$100 million.

But Warner executives said Kassar's departure was triggered by continuing management problems at Atari, and not the stock probe or the \$100 million loss. Warner has backed several other officials who made stock sales similar to Kassar's. Morgan said he was selected

by an executive search firm and was contacted for the first lime

only two weeks before the deal was finalized.

He did not visit Atari's Sunnyvale, California headquarters, and admitted, "I don't know one single person who works for Atari.'

He said his top priorities include emphasizing product quality, avoiding price discounting and stabilizing the work force.

Atari has recently experienced a rapid turnover-in high-level executives.

Philip Morris has a reputation as a well-managed company, and Morgan was praised by a tobacco industry analyst as a good marketing executive.

Kassar joined Atari in 1978, and is credited by Warner officials with building Atari from a disorganized money-loser into the company it is today. But over the last year, analysts had complained that Atari's management seemed blurred and awkward.

Kassar will stay on with Atari



11 142 6443 ... See Page 3 as a consultant. The terms of Video TV. . . Morgan's contract were not

Can a Dragon save Cinematronics?

Castle collapses

WESTLAKE VILLAGE, California-Castle Entertainment, a major operator of video games in California, New York and Florida and owner of the Tex Critter's Pizza Jamboree restaurant chain and Castle Park amusement parks, filed for protection under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptev Act.

Castle said it expects to show losses in the third quarter ending

June 30 that were "substantially more" than the \$1.5 million the company lost in the quarter before. Revenue that quarter was \$4.4 million.

Castle Chairman William Rameson was replaced by President Thomas Clark. Clark's spot was taken by Executive Vice President Marvin Lotz. Rameson was retained as a consultant. **Continued on Page 7**

What Fortune magazine called "a new generation of video games" arrived on the market this month in the form of Dragon's Lair, the first videodisc

game. "The response is pheno-menal," said Patti Hoff, menal," said Patti Hoff, marketing assistant at Cinema-tronics, the game's manufac-turer. She said the game had gone "over the 5,000 mark in sales" by July 7, and said games already on location are "earning

very well...over \$100 a day." The good news comes none too soon for Cinematronics, which has been operating under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Act since 1982. Hoff said that if sales of Dragon's Lair hold up, the company could be out of bankruptcy within two months.

Cinematronics filed for Chapter 11 last October, when-according to the company-it had difficulty collecting money owed. it by domestic distributors and in dealing with foreign letters of credit.

But Rick Dyer, President of Advanced Microcomputer Systems and creator of Dragon's Lair, said some of Cinematronics' managers were "incompetent." However, he praised president Jim Pierce as "really a wonderful person to work with" and credited him with turning the company around.

Dyer said he spent about five years developing Dragon's Lair. We ended up spending close to two million" dollars, putting the game through seven generations before it was ready for the arcades.

He said \$1.2 to \$1.5 million was spent on the software alone, compared to about \$200,000 for a typical game. The twin videodiscs in Dragon's Lair can hold fifty million times more information than the standard 64K (64,000) bit video game memory.

Star Wars and Dragon's Lair may be the games of the summer. Story inside.

Most of that memory space is used to hold the televisionquality images that are the game's main selling point. Dragon's Lair looks like a viewer-controllable Disney cartoon.

That shouldn't be too surprising, since the animation was provided by Don Bluth Productions. Bluth is a former Disney animator who founded his own company after quitting the Disney staff over disputes with management.

Dyer said he picked Bluth to animate the game after he saw one of the company's movies, The Secret of NIMH. "1 just pointed at the screen with my wife and said, 'that's going to be my partner,'" Dyer said.

Cinematronics was chosen to build the games (long before the bankruptcy) because of Dyer's confidence in Pierce and the company's location in El Cajon between Los Angeles and San Diego. AMS is in Pomona, a couple of hours away by car, and Dyer wanted the manufacturer to be as close to his company as possible.

The home rights to Dragon's Lair have already been sold to Coleco, for "about \$2 million." As part of the sale, Coleco agreed not to release the home version for one year, in order to avoid hurting receipts on the arcade game.

Meanwhile, AMS is developing a next-generation machine, with improvements that Dyer would not discuss. There will also be a new videodisc adventure released every three months for the Dragon's Lair machine. Dyer said the first one will be out by October.

He said Dragon's Lair is designed for easy convertibility to the new games. All owners will have to do is replace the faceplate, slip in two new discs, and

Continued on Page 4

GAMES PEOPLE P. O. Box 67897 Los Angeles, CA 90067; (213) 474-6445

Florida games tax? Try again next year

Florida's "Pac Man" bill, which would have imposed a registration charge on video games and a five percent gross sales tax on receipts, died when the state Senate adjourned late last month.

The Florida Amusement Vending Association had campaigned against the bill, sending telegrams and urging members to speak with any legislators they could.

The bill had already been amended to reduce the annual registration fee from \$120 to \$5, but the association was unable to keep it from passing out of the House, 77 to 38. The Senate never got around to considering the bill.

FAVA Executive Secretary Janet Howarth said this was the first video game tax proposal in Florida. "They were looking for someone to tax," she said.

The association expects the proposal to come up again in the next year's legislative session.



• JERSEY CITY, New Jersey-The Jersey City Council voted to defer action on an ordinance to curb the spread of video games and similar amusement devices. Councilman Thomas Hart said he wanted to table his video game ban in order to compile more information about how other municipalities are dealing with the problem. Hart's proposed ordinance would ban video games and related amusement devices from all residentially-zoned areas and some commercial areas, as well as ban them from all areas adjacent to schools.

• SALEM, Oregon—A bill designed to turn arcade mana-gers into "tattle tales" was presented by Rep. Annette Farmer, D-Portland. Under the proposed law, video game operators would be required to report to authorities any students aged seven to 16 who illicitly visit their arcades during school hours.

Members of the House Education Committee chaired by Farmer, however, are balking at the idea, politely suggesting the issue isn't worth their time.

Lobbyists for game owners said they would be happy to post catchy signs encouraging students not to touch the games during school hours. That gesture apparently satisfied most members who hinted they'd quietly kill the bill when a formal vote appears.

• NORTH HEMPSTEAD, New York-On July 28, the North Hempstead Town Board will hold a hearing on a proposed law that would regulate video games, pinball machines, billiard tables, shooting galleries and electronic bowling games.

Under the proposed ordinance only two such devices would be allowed in any public place and only as accessories to an existing business. They would be restricted to commercial areas, and the premises housing them would have to be at least 500 feet from a school's property line.

Their use would be permitted only between 9 AM and 9 PM except in taverns, inns and diners. Separate licenses, costing \$50 each, would be required annually for each device. Prizes would be held to \$1. Violations would carry a fine of up to \$250

Also, establishments that currently have more than two devices would have to comply with the new law by getting a variance for the additional devices.

It will be up to the Town Board to decide whether to pass the ordinance as is, to approve any new amendments to the law, or to reject it altogether.

• SPRINGFIELD, Massachusetts-On January 17, the City Council voted to grant a special permit to R & R Marketing to turn an old A & P store into a video arcade and a restaurant. Thirteen conditions were attached that councilors said would prevent any negative effects on the neighborhoods around that location.

According to law, the public had 20 days to legally challenge the Council decision; however, the 20 days passed and there was no organized resistance to the permit.

On February 22, however, more than 200 people attended a meeting with the council protesting the awarding of the permit, and picketing of the site, organized by a group of churches began March 7. A petition drive, still ongoing, aimed at getting an ordinance calling for neighborhood approval of video arcades adopted in Springfield was launched April 11

According to one city council member, a non-binding question that will most likely appear on the next town ballot polling townspeople as to their choice of having an arcade in their town or not.

Religious leaders have been at the forefront of the protest, and sponsored a "pray-in" at the site of the proposed arcade on Sunday June 17

Gottlieb

Gottleib 800-942-1620 (Illinois) 800-323-9121 (outside Illinois)

NAMCO AMERICA INC. Namco America Inc. 800-538-1610 (outside California)

Nintendo Nintendo 800-633-3236



Taito 800-323-0666 (outside of Calif.)



Tuni Electro Service, Inc. 800-426-4790 800-528-1409

VENTURE INE, INC. Venture Line, Inc. 800-528-1442

AMOA optimistic about '83 convention

The AMOA announced that dants. its 1983 International Exposition of Games and Music has allo-cated all its booth space, and that this year's convention will be the biggest ever.

The convention will run October 27 to 30, in the New Or-leans Rivergate Hilton. There will be 257 exhibitors, in 541 booths. Among them will be 33 new exhibitors, mostly service companies, but also Sente Technologies.

AMOA Director of Communications and Research J.D. Meacham said the keynote speaker will be Senator Edward Sorensky, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He will discuss international copyright protection.

Other speakers will include Chris Kerby, author of the Bernstein Report on the games industry, who will discuss the state of video gaming. Sue Birely of the London School of Economics will talk about how to pass on a small business to your descen-

Doctor Richard Hunter of Notre Dame University will discuss contracts, and the National Association of Police will conduct a seminar on security, both for arcades and for individual games.

In addition to the exhibits, there will be educational seminars covering the interests of managers, technicians, new owners and administrators. "This year more than any other we have more people coming in from outside the industry" to run the seminars, Meacham said.

He called this year's exposition, "certainly the finest line-up that this association has ever presented."

In fact, AMOA had to turn away some of those applying for exhibit space. Meacham said the space was allocated "strictly on the basis of the postmark date of the request." The only preference was given to companies which had exhibited last year.

Gottlieb gets a new name

CHICAGO, Illinois-D. Gottlieb and Company has changed its name to Mylstar Electronics.

President Boyd Brown said "the name change reflects our plans to grow in the coin-operated field as well as expand our opportunities to enter other high-technology segments of the entertainment industry.'

"The Mylstar name was chosen because it evokes the image of an organization where exciting new products are being created to meet tomorrow's entertainment needs."

The name was chosen by a professional search firm. Marianne Linn, secretary to the vice president of marketing at Mylstar, said the company's owner, Columbia Pictures, made the final selection.

She said the reaction to the change has been "very favorable.

Until 1976, Gottlieb was owned by the Gottlieb family. It was then sold to Columbia,



Page 2



The hosts of Video Game Previews: Mark Ganzel, Teal Roberts, and Michael Leon.

Video gaming invades television

Two flamboyant millionaires have their offspring companies busy this summer producing television shows about video games.

Ted Turner, founder of the 24-hour Cable News Network, defender of sailing's America's Cup, and owner of Atlanta's baseball and basketball teams, will be unveiling a game show using video games.

Meanwhile, Nolan Bushnell— Pong designer, erstwhile Atari executive, and head chef of the Pizza Time restaurant chain—is turning over a syndicated video game news show.

Apparently, televised competition for the videophile audience is just getting under way, which may be surprising given that the initial video fever cooled off a couple of years ago.

Why has it taken so long for a show like this to hit the airwaves? "I don't know, a lot of people have been asking me the same thing," said Pam Lundquist, director of the Bushnell show, Video Game Previews.

Produced by Vistar Productions, in association with Golden West, the show's format will be similar to that of the nightly feature show *Entertainment Tonight*. The program will rate games, introduce new products and technology, interview game designers, give on-location coverage of video events, and keep the consumer informed of state-of-the-art news in a fastpaced format.

Twenty-six shows are scheduled for the first season, and about 25 stations around the country have already agreed to carry it. A complete list of the carriers for the fall debut, however, won't be known until later.

Despite its affiliation with Sente Technologies, a Bushnell company now producing new kinds of video games, Lundquist said that there would be no preferential exposure given to Sente or its games. On the contrary, she stressed that the show is designed to promote the industry as a whole.

The first show, recently completed, will include a segment on the new video disc technology and some words from Craig Kuby, author of *How To Beat Pac-Man*.

Each show will also include a spot with Eric Ginner, the resident video game reviewer. Ginner, whose picture was in Atari's *Arabian* ad posters, will play new video arcade games on the show and give his comments and ratings.

By Scott Nunnerv

The hosts of the show will be Mark Ganzel, Teal Roberts, and Michael Leon.

Lundquist said the show is aimed primarily at youths in the viewing audience, although it is far from being a children's program. The half-hour show will most likely be aired once a week late on Saturday mornings. Exact schedules will depend on the local stations.

Starcade, a different kind of video game show, is now being produced by the Ted Turner camp. Starcade is essentially a video "game" show, and will be aired five days a week starting in the fall. The show has been airing once a week since December on Turner's syndication service, but starting in the fall a different show will be aired each week day.

According to Henry Gillespie, Chairman of Turner Broadcasting Services, veteran game show personality Geoff Edwards will host the new expanded format. Edwards will lead contestants through video game competition and test their knowledge of the games with related quizzes.

Starcade will feature the latest arcade games as well as some old

favorites such as Pac-Man. There won't be any home games included.

For its fall debut, Starcade will feature two new program elements. Home viewers will be selected by a random computer drawing on the show and "paired" with a contestant. If the contestant wins, the home participant will also win a prize. In addition, Starcade will present a 20-second news update in each show covering the latest trends and developments in the video game industry. Starcade is presently being of-

Starcade is presently being offered to stations across the nation for its 26-week fall release, to begin September 5. Starcade is distributed by Turner Program Services, the syndication arm of Turner Broadcasting. Starcade and Video Game

Starcade and Video Game Previews are the first videorelated television shows for the national markets. But since 1981 there have been local experiments in cable programming aimed at bringing video games directly into the home.

Most prominent is *PlayCable*, a program produced in New York City by Mattel and General Instrument Corporation, which has attracted a small but select user audience. Select, in that viewers have to first own a Mattel Intellivision System in order to use the program.

PlayCable is now available in 13 cable markets across the country, with about 650,000 subscribers. The program includes 20 different video games that change each month, and subscribers pay on the average about \$20 a month to use the system.

Starting in December of this year, Games Network of Los Angeles will begin taking the *PlayCable* idea a step further. Games Network will be premiering in eight to 12 markets in Orange County, California. Its initial advertising blitz is expected to reach about 700,000 people.

The concept is the same as *PlayCable* except there will be no need to purchase an expensive home computer to get plugged into the network. *Games Network* will lease and install a minicomputer system in the home of each subscriber.

The computer, the Wizard 1, comes with 64K memory and has plugs for peripheral equipment such as a printer, disc drives, a video disc player, joysticks, and

Continued on Page 5

GAMES PEOPLE/July 23, 1983



Some responses to the recent Supreme Judicial Court ruling in Massachusetts that upheld a decision by the town of Marshfield to ban video games:

"This is a progressive step in that it protects life in a small town from an urban-type honkey-tonk environment...the fewer distractions of that type, the easier it is to transfer my ideas and values to my youngsters," said Jim Judge, a father of three girls and one of the initiators of the ban.

Ira Zaleznik, the attorney who represented nine Marshfield businesses in challenging the ban: "If a town can kick out an entertainment medium, it isn't long before other mediums (are attacked) too."

Edward Ziegler, a law professor at the University of Dayton and an authority on video game regulation: "Other courts may or may not follow the ruling...but it looks like in the future it's unlikely the court will uphold bans in large urban areas... It's possible, though in a residential community (where the activity could alter the atmosphere)."

• Randy Smith, the new world champion on Robotron with a record score of 5 million points, recalls his moment of glory. "My arms were ready to fall off and there were callouses on my hands. The standing score was 3 million and when I broke it, it was a grand event...Once in a while, I like to think of myself as the superhuman out there trying to save the human race. I have a vivid imagination."

• Brian Keith Goodwin, a master video game player from the state of Nevada, has a distinctively local perspective on the merits of video game playing. "My mom says they're (video games) a waste of money, but I tell her they're better than playing the slots. They last longer and it's exciting."

• Another quotable quote from the Harvard University symposium on video games and human development: Herbert Kohl, a computer teacher, said the video-game boom may further divide the United States' rich kids from the poor. "Poor kids will end up popping quarters into video arcade machines while the rich ones are learning to program, and that's not fair."

•"It's good for the reflexes. When I started this job, I had absolutely no reflexes," said 45 year old Ruby Deskins, who works for Acme Music and Vending in Niles, Ohio. "Now I just can't believe how quick I am...Contrary to all the negative publicity, these aren't bad things," said Deskins as she finished her qualifying lap on Pole Position. "They're putting them in old folks' homes. How can they be?"

• The following statements appeared in the report *Racket-eering in Legitimate Business Industries: Two Case Studies*, which was published by the National Institute of Justice in January 1983:

"During the course of our investigation of the vending industry we were unable to find anywhere in the country any significant labor union activity...the point is that labor racketeering in the vending industry as we have studied it has simply ceased to exist."

"We have learned of no case within the last twenty years of conviction of an industry figure of a crime of violence connected with the business."

"Although the industry can be highly profitable to the legitimate investor, a major incentive for outsiders appears to be its potential for tax evasion. At the same time, we were told by the legitimate people already established in the industry that they have found the negative image of the business a significant barrier to the obtaining of credit from banks and other finance institutions."

"The reputation of certain individuals as being racketeers may make even the threat of force unnecessary. When a wholly legitimate vending business operator can collect on a debt by 'talking like an Italian' rather than getting his attorney to issue a summons, then it seems that law enforcement efforts have actually entrenced racketeering.





And the winners are...

Atari's Star Wars and Cinematronics' Dragon's Lair appear to be the early hits of the summer, according to an informal survey of distributors conducted July 8 by *Games People*.

Although the games have still not been delivered to many parts of the nation, they are attracting attention everywhere.

Bob Maxey, a salesman with Rowe International in Denver, Colorado, said his company is "committed very strongly" to buy both games. He said early revenue returns on Dragon's Lair make it "the strongest-starting game we've seen in three years."

"The pre-shipment hype has been pretty successful," agreed Bill Arden, a manager at Monroe Distributing in Hialeah, Florida. Distributors in Georgia and Illinois agreed.

In Los Angeles, C.A. Robinson sold its entire supply of both Dragon's Lair and Star Wars in the first day they were available.

In New York, "Star Wars is selling like hotcakes," said Rick Mahre of Coin Machine Distributing. He said Dragon's Lair, while it is attracting a lot of interest, is not selling as quickly.

Mahre said buyers are cautious about Dragon's Lair in his area because business in New York City is slow during the summer, and because many owners are "still paying their notes on the recent games."

Dragon's Lair sells for roughly \$4,000, depending on the distributor. Mahre said many owners are waiting to see how the game does before putting down that much money. "They won't want to take a gamble until they see it" doing

"They won't want to take a gamble until they see it" doing well, he explained. Arden agreed, saying that many owners are wary of the entire laser disc technology, and fear that it might turn out to be a flash in the pan.

Nevertheless, Cinematronics says Dragon's Lair is selling very well, and officials at Advanced Microcomputers in Pomona, the company that designed Dragon's Lair, claimed that people in a nearby arcade were becoming so fascinated with the game that some spent "hours playing the game." And each play costs fifty cents.

The people who design videodisc games claim to be introducing a revolutionary new technology to the arcade. Will television-quality images and the fifty cent game make a new boom in video gaming? *Games People* will examine that question next week.

Dragon

Continued from Page 1 the game will be ready to go.

Another revolutionary aspect of Dragon's Lair is its price: 50 cents for a single play. Victor Penman, Director of Creative designs at AMS, said inflation has made a higher price necessary. "Arcade games have been 25 cents for a long time," he said. "The industry depends on the operators making a profit."

The second adventure will feature a superhero in outer space, Dyer said.



Page 4

Video

Continued from Page 3

game paddles. There will be a one-time cost of about \$35 to \$50 to get hooked up, and the monthly subscriber fee will be about \$15. As with *PlayCable*, there will be a choice of 20 unlimited-use games each month.

Games Network points out that the Wizard I console will eventually be adapted to include "videotext" capabilities, enabling users to do such things as shop or make banking transactions from their homes. The Games Network was cofounded by the entrepreneurial team of Larry Dunlop and Thom Keith. Keith was in fact the first provider of regularly scheduled cable programming in the United States, but is probably best known as the creator of the *Boob Tube* in 1973. So, whether people want to

So, whether people want to play games at home, watch other people playing video games, or simply be informed of changes in the video business, they will be able to find a show to please them by the end of the year. It remains to be seen whether these shows will be able to peacefully co-exist with each other, or if, through over-saturation—the nemesis of the arcade business they will cancel each other out.

As for Turner and Bushnell, if their new shows turn out to be less than overnight sensations, it would probably still be a bit too early to start throwing benefits for them. They could, after all go out sailing and eat pizza together, and try to think up some new ways to make money. The News Weekly for Operators of Video and Pinball Games

Games People



Page 6



-William Peltier was made vice president of corporate communications at Bally Manufacturing in late June.

Formerly senior vice president of Bozell and Jacobs, a national advertising agency, Peltier is now responsible for all Bally communications, including advertising and press relations

Bally Chairman Robert Mullane said, "As Bally becomes more and more an important factor in the family entertain-ment business, an outstanding communications capability is increasingly critical to us, and we regard Bill Peltier as one of the best.'



Financial News

Video Game Industry Stocks

Closing figures for 7/8/83

NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE

	ANNUAL HIGH		CLOSING	NET CHANGE
BALLY MFG. CORP.	28 1/8	19 5/8	25 1/8	-1/8
COCA-COLA	57 3/8	45 1/2	48 1/2	+ 1/8
COLECO INC.	65	16 3/4	44 5/8	-3/8
CBS	77 5/8	55	65 1/2	-3/8
WALT DISNEY	84 3/4	60 1/8	64 3/4	-1 1/4
GULF & WESTERN	30 1/8	16 1/8	28	NC
MATTEL 16 7/8	10 5/8	11 1/4	11 1/4	-1/8
MCA INC.	42 1/8	32 3/4	38 1/4	-1/4
WARNER COMMUNICATIONS	35 1/4	35	27 1/4	+ 1/2
WILLIAMS ELECTRONICS	17 1/4	10 7/8	14 3/4	NC

OVER-THE-COUNTER

	ANNUAL HIGH	ANNUAL LOW	CLOSING	NET CH	ANGE	
					BID	ASK
CENTURI	3 11/16	2 1/8	2 15/16	-1/16	2 5/16	3
GAME-A-TRON CORP.	17/32	1/4	3/8	NC	3/8	13/32
STATUS GAME CORP.	7 1/2	4 1/2	6 3/4	+ 1/4	6 3/4	7 1/4
PIZZA TIME	26 5/8	14 1/2	17 1/4	NC	17 ·	17 1/4

Courtesy of Bob Saunders, Account Executive, Dean Witter Reynolds Inc., Beverly Hills, CA

Status collects a big payoff

necticut-Status Game Corporation announced in late June that its net earnings for fiscal year 1983 were up 295 percent over 1982. Sales were up 169 percent.

Chairman Irving Yaffa attrib-uted the increase to growing demand for the company's payout and non-payout gambling games

WEST HARTFORD, Con-ecticut—Status Game Corpora-on announced in late June that in bars, arcades and restaurants. "The upswing in the national economy and the resulting increase in consumer spending are very positive factors, not only to our business, but the leisure in-dustry in general."

He said a recent marketing agreement with International Game Technology also helped

the statistics. He said that contract may produce several million dollars in sales over the next two years.

Status sales were \$2,543,000 in 1983, compared to \$945,000 in 1982. Net income almost quadrupled from 102,000 in 1982. Earnings per share of stock went from eight cents to 26.







The company is about \$35 million in debt, against assets of \$50 million. The company's main creditors, Crocker National Bank and California First Bank, said they had not called in their overdue loans prior to the filing. Castle missed a \$700,000 loan payment in June. Castle said the losses reflect



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mostly reserves and write-offs of unprofitable operations, but also include losses on the arcades and restaurants. Revenues from its parks, on the other hand, were

up five percent over a year ago. In over-the-counter trading July 11, Castle's stock dropped 58 percent, closing at 1 3/8.



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Page 9

Game Reviews

By Michael Mace

Michael Mace is an experienced game player and journalist. The opinions expressed here are solely his own, and have no relation to this magazine's news reporting, its advertisers or staff. The rating system is as follows: 10: The greatest of all time. 5: Average. 1: Pong was more sophisticated.



MINEFIELD (Stern)

The player controls a tank which runs across a field avoiding mines and collecting missiles. The tank also has to avoid and shoot at attacking planes, jeeps, helicopters and so on. The object is to save the missiles and use them to shoot the buildings of the enemy headquarters as they go by.

After the player finishes one level, a helicopter comes down, picks up his tank, and transports it to a new level. Graphics: 71/2. Very nice, but

nothing spectacular. The ani-mated vehicles are highly detailed, and this increases the appeal of the game. The clouds and landscape move past in a pleasant, semi-three dimensional manner.

Sound: 5. Your standard explosions, tank-grumbles and machine gun spatters.

Controls: 4. Complex. Two four-way joysticks and a button to fire the missiles. One of these

days somebody will design a joystick that won't raise blisters. Meanwhile, the knobs on this game will, if anyone plays it for very long. The problem will be especially bad on the hand a player doesn't usually use for playing; it won't have the protective calluses you develop on the hand you normally use

Originality: 2. Very little new here.

Opinion: This game looks and plays a lot like that old favorite, Polaris, It has nothing new to offer, and will almost certainly be lost in the excitement surrounding innovative new games like Dragon's Lair and Star Wars. The people at Stern need to sit down and try to come up with something original.

The salesman at the distributor where I saw Minefield called it "cute." That's the best he could say, and that's the best I can say. Overall: 3.



Although it was released several weeks ago, Fax at first attracted little attention. But the game has slowly gained in popularity, to the point where even Exidy is surprised at the response. This review is intended for those who are only now hearing about the game.

Did you ever want to be on a television quiz show? Aside from the prizes, wouldn't there be a real thrill in showing off your smarts to the American public?

That seems to be the appeal of Fax, a video quiz game that has been doing good business during its first few weeks of operation.

To be honest, if I hadn't seen the reaction to a Fax game in a college gameroom, I would have written it off as one of the year's biggest turkeys. The graphics are cheap-looking, the sound bland, and the concept, well, something you can get on television every day.

So I was wrong, and the people at Exidy are chuckling.

The game consists of 3700 questions in four categories. The questions range from "What was the rank of James Kirk in Star Trek—The Motion Pic-ture?" to "Who was Helen of Troy's husband?" The game can be played against the machine or by two players.

There is a set time of play, and the players have a limited amount of time to answer each question. The quicker they answer, the bigger the bonus for getting it right.

After every few questions, the machine displays a graphic of people climbing ladders past different skill rankings. The more correct answers, the higher your little man climbs. Good players may even get above "average."

The players can choose from four categories, with three levels of difficulty. Those doing exceptionally well are awarded extra playing time. Although Fax is entertaining in the one-player mode, it is the two-player game that really attracts people. A large part of the attraction is probably that Fax allows true head-to-head competition, something almost impossible to get from a normal video game.

Competitive games like Joust, while permitting simultaneous two-person play, end in about five seconds if the players try to kill one another. But Fax is regulated by the clock, not by the number of lives a player is given. and so the players are free to go after each other.

Fax has drawn small crowds of onlookers where I have seen it in operation. People react to it the same way they do to game shows on television, although here they can participate in the competition.

The key to the long-term viability of Fax is the questions. They do (obviously) repeat eventually, and a few are even wrong. How long will players continue to feed quarters into the machine after they have seen most of the questions? Not long.

Graphics: 31/2. Lousy. The question format is okay, and I liked the way the game marks correct answers with a red bar. But the attract mode is pretty boring, and the climbing men are stupid looking.

Sound: 4. They could have been much more creative in terms of fanfares for correct answers and good scores

Controls: 9. Not for what they are, but for what they aren't. There are only two rows of buttons, with no joystick to break down. Although the buttons might eventually wear out, they can be replaced for much less money than a joystick.

Originality: 8. You have to give the Exidy people credit for

taking a chance on this one. It really stands out from the usual shoot-em-up pieces. Since the general consensus of the industry seems to be that new concepts are needed, maybe Fax is a glimpse of video gaming's future.

Opinion: You will want to get this game if your location(s) attract an older crowd (college or high school as opposed to junior high), or a lot of women. This game also appeals to adults. If you are taking heat from the locals for corrupting youth, you might want to buy one of these and invite the PTA in to play it. Arcade crowds will enhance the "game show" feel, so I don't recommend this game for street locations.

The biggest problem with Fax is going to be the staleness of its questions two or three months from now. But Exidy promises a new set of questions every six to twelve months, available at a "nominal cost." The first set is due out by the end of summer.

Exidy says this is the first of a new breed of games they are developing: games that won't wear out in six weeks. We'll see.

Overall: 7. Assuming they come through on the new questions, Fax should be a good investment





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ARCADE FOR SALE

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ROUTE FOR SALE.

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