Vol. 2, No. 36

The news weekly for operators of video and pinball games

July 30, 1983

Morgan looking ahead

Hopes to bring Atari stability, better management

"I had reached a point in my life where I wanted to do some-thing different with myself," said James J. Morgan, a senior vice president with the New York-based tobacco giant Philip

So he quit his job and agreed to become chairman of Atari, a video game manufacturer which has been losing money all this year and expects to lose more in the near future.

'That's the challenge and the fun and the opportunity," Morgan said. "I'm absolutely exhilirated about it."

Morgan had spent twenty years at Philip Morris, and was considered a candidate to eventually run the company. He said he was very happy in his jobso happy that, he recently discovered, he took only four days

of sick leave during his entire time there.

He said he was sick more than four days, but "I loved my job enough to come in."

Morgan said he brings two important qualities to Atari: marketing insight and general management technique.

Atari had been criticized over the last year for what some called directionless management, and there was a very high turnover rate among the company's top-level managers.

Morgan said he hopes to emphasize teamwork, compatibility, harmony and a non-political atmosphere, and make Atari a company "That's best at what it does rather than big-

When he was hired, Morgan admitted that he did not know

anyone at Atari. He has since remedied that, spending several days on a tour of the company's facilities in Sunnyvale, Califor-

Morgan would not discuss what specific impressions he formed on that trip, but did say, "I think there are three things that I have to concentrate on right away.'

First, he said he has to "define what Atari should be as a company." Morgan said the company has to diversify into areas other than games, in order to insulate itself from market fluctuations like the one that is currently pumelling it.

The company will keep on making games, but Morgan wants to diversify Atari into



Continued on Page 8 James Morgan

Castle Entertainment owned five amusement parks, four video arcades, and big ideas in

So in 1982 the company went public, selling 1,000,000 shares

of stock at \$6.50 per share. By 1983, Castle has seven parks, 14 areades, and 12 pizza restaurants-and had declared bankruptey. Today its stock sells for a little over a dollar a share.

The expansion didn't work. Several of the arcades lost money, and are now for sale. The same goes for all the restaurants.

Castle dumps its restaurants

Castle's plan had been to any Roxy the fox, Country Cal the build a large chain of Tex Crit- cougar and Skeeter the snake ter's Pizza Jambopree Theater Restaurants, similar to the successful Pizza Time Theatres. The Jamborees featured areade games, computer learning activities and were equipped with "four life-like computer-con-trolled robotic characters," according to the 1982 annual

Tex Critter the dragon, Foxy

just didn't draw people in. Cas-tle lost \$1.5 million in the second quarter of this fiscal year, and expects to report even greater losses in the third, which ended

Newly-appointed Castle President Marvin Lotz said the restaurants and losing arcades will be sold or, if they cannot be sold, closed down. He said the company had to file for Chapter 11 protection because it may have to get out of the leases associated with several of the franchises.

On the other hand, the parks which have always produced most of Castle's revenues-actually turned out a little more money last year, and will be re-

"The parks are good business for us," said Lotz, who replaced

President William Clark when he replaced .Chairman William Rameson.

Rameson was retained as a "consultant.".

Lotz blamed the problems on poor management and industry conditions. He said the company's main creditors have been very understanding throughout the situation, and had not tried to liquidate Castle's assets.

"We have a wonderful arrangement with our two largest creditors," he said.

Don Bluth

How important are videodiscs?

Editor's Note: This is the conclusion of a two-part series on videodisc technology and how it is changing the game industry.

"I believe that one person's success is the success of many. The triumph of Dragon's Lair as the first laser disc game is the triumph of all companies.'

Those are the words of Don Bluth, head of the animation company which invested over a million dollars in Dragon's Lair.

While many companies might agree that, in the long run, the development of laser disc games may benefit everyone, most of them probably wish they could get more of those benefits in the

As reported last week, the early financial returns on Dragon's Lair have been impressive. In spite of a host of technical prob-

lems, the game has been bringing in over \$100 a day in many arcades.

"Jesus Christ," said a Castle Park arcade supervisor in Los Angeles. "You have to wait in line just to see the game.'

Most of the country doesn't have Dragon's Lair yet, though, so it remains to be seen whether the game will hold up once its novelty wears off.

Another important question is going to be whether it actually brings in new business, or just takes money that had been going to other games. So far, according to the arcades contacted by Games People, Dragon's Lair has not hurt the business of the rest of the arcade. One owner said play has even gone up slightly on his other games.

The second videodisc game is

due this September, from Sega. Called Astron Belt, it uses a completely different operating system from Dragon's Lair.

The Dragon's Lair game is completely animated. The player's control is limited to deciding at critical points which way to run, or to fight. The computer does the rest.

This lack of continual control has been one of the main criticisms of the game. Mike Hally, supervisor of the project office at Atari (see interview, this issue) said, "the animation is very good. It's like watching a movie. It's a very good first step, but it lacks player interaction. A lot of the time you're watching.

He also mentioned the game's momentary delay in displaying

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Things People

"With the help of God almighty, we will see that it (a new arcade) doesn't flourish here, if in fact it even opens," said Carmecita Jones, chairman of

the Old Hill Neighborhood Council and one of the speakers at a "pray-in" at the site of a planned Springfield Massachusetts arcade. The Reverend Frank Darling also spoke to the 200 people participating at the Sunday afternoon pray-in, calling on God for support of their opposition to the arcade: "Unless the Lord blesses the house, the one who builds, builds in vain."

The Reverend Gordon O'Neal of the Pastors' Council led the faithful in a prayer, "Help us Lord as we have sought to band together as churches, Catholic and Protestant, black and white, Jewish and gentile." Picketers "have come united in the Lord to march around" the arcade site, and will continue to do so, he said.

· Spokane Chronicle reporter Sherwood Anderson's assessment of video games: "... The Air Force might do well to keep an eye out for Zaxxon hotshots. Anyone really able to best this game should be able to walk across flak, dodge SAMS, mix it up with MiGs, interdict ground targets and have plenty of time left over to skim the latest Air Force Times on the way to a target."

Anderson took his eight-year old son Jason to a local arcade and got some straightforward reviews on some of the latest ar-

Jason liked Pole Position best. "You've got the gas pedal and the steering wheel. It's like you're really driving. I like

What, if anything, would he change about it? "I'd add brakes, and a clutch maybe."

Jason liked Super Pac-Man next best: "Even if you don't win on something like that, if you keep playing it after a while you get better at it. So you learn how to do something. It had pretty good action too.'

Of all the games, Jason picked Sprint as his least favorite. "The steering didn't work. You turn the wheel and use up all your time before you move around and get started again.'

Anderson felt there should be more education games and fewer games where the object is simply to wipe out hordes of aliens. "The technology has made it possible, for example, for a ... computer ... to set up a remarkably real and exciting Boeing 747 cockpit flight simulator. The object of the game, of course, is to land the plane in one piece.

Had such a game been available during our outing, I would have gladly spent one or a few quarters on it. When asked about it Jason said he'd like to try one like it, too."

Commenting on video arcades in general, Anderson wrote: "No dens of iniquity, these centers tend to be clean, neat places where "no smoking" signs are more in evidence than black leather jackets. Some believe hi-tech, high-cost electronics and smoke residue don't get along. And besides, the hands are going to be busy.

- "Don't shake the table-unfair," Orthodox Rabbi Mayer Schiller warns his oppoents, two teenagers in jeans and speakers. To the din of organ music, the rabbi spins a rod controlling a tiny plastic player and scores the winning goal with no time left on the clock. Rabbi Schiller passes by other arcades that do not have "Chexx", the new miniature hockey game. "It's the only game I play."
- · Reacting to the recent decision of the Massachusetts Supreme Court to uphold a ban on video games in the town of Marshfield, selectwoman Sheila Gagnon commented, "I feel bad because (the ban) will affect the livelihood of some businessmen...I'd rather see the kids playing video games than sitting on the corner selling pot."

Video games invade China

Distributors looking for new markets might do well to consider China, according to reports now coming out of that nation.

On the streets of Kunming, in remote Yunnan province in southern China, an open-air arcade has young Chinese lined up "five or six deep," according to Chicago Sun-Times reporter Jack Schnedler.

He said one of the games was "Puck-Man," a name commonly attached to illegal Pac-Man copies. Schnedler said he thought the game looked like Pac-Man, but the arcade was "so busy that you couldn't really

get up to the machine."

Another Pac-Man game or look-alike was reported in an arcade in Changsha, a city in Hunan province. Film maker/ journalist Irving Drasnin, whose documentary on China was recently shown on the Public Broadcasting System show Front Line, said the arcade cost the equivalent of about ten cents to enter, and "something like ten or twenty cents" to play. "Things like that in China are very inexpensive," agreed Schnedler.

UCLA China specialist Professor Richard Baum said the

games are not very common in China, an observation shared by Drasnin. "I don't think I would call them common," he said. 'There have been video games put into some of the hotels used by foreigners.

Drasnin said the arcade was especially unusual because it was for Chinese. "I don't know how common those are," he said. But he added that even if arcades became a usual sight in Chinese cities, the 80 percent of the population that lives in rural areas would remain out of their reach. Maybe they could get home consoles

Digital claims copyright violation

Digital Controls, manufacturer of the Little Casino countertop card game, has accused Entertainment Enterprises of violating its copyright and says it will take legal action against the New York manufacturer.

But Entertainment Enterprises and one of its main distributors, Games Galore of Texas, contend that their product, called Reno Games, is simply a lower-priced game than Little Casino. They said Digital Controls is complaining because it is losing market share to a more efficient competitor.

Mike Macke, president of Digital, said Reno Games is an ohvious copy of Little Casino.

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He claims the EE copied out the read-only memory of Little Casino and fed it into Reno games, only changing the name of the game, the copyright no-

tice, and some of the details.

He said Digital has lost "a considerable amount...several million dollars" as a result of the

counterfeit game.
"That's bullshit," said Ron Markis, President of Games Galore. "There's no way that he could copyright a poker game ... We all damn well know you can't copyright a poker game. That's been around since Caesar's time."

He said Digital has never contacted him in any way trying to stop distribution of Reno Games. He said he only found out about Digital's concerns when he was sent a copy of a threatening letter Digital allegedly sent to some of his customers.

"The only think I've ever seen is the letter," agreed an official

at EE, who declined to be identified and said Markis could speak for both companies.

"Our legal staff says that we don't have a problem," Markis said. "So who am I to believe? I'm caught in the middle." He said most of his income comes from sales of Reno Games.

Macke meanwhile said he is preparing to initiate legal action against the game.

"His game has been overpriced for two years now,' Markis said. "He's been raping the market." He said Reno Games sells for several hundred dollars less than Little Casino.

"He's crying because his profitability has been going down the tubes...That's cold competi-tion. Free play. This is the United States of America."

"He sent threatening letters but yet he has never sent a letter to either myself or to the manufacturer. He's never so much as phone called the owner of Reno

GAMES PEOPLE

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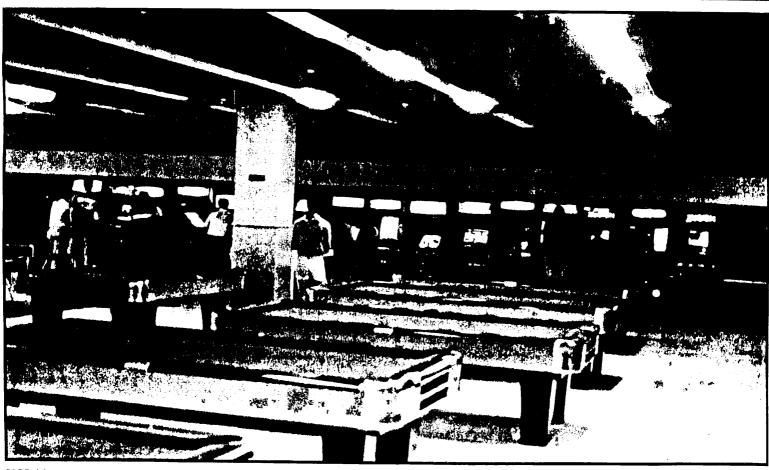
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GAMES PEOPLE is published weekly by James T. A. Babington-Johnson, Jr., 3002 Midvale Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90034. Annual Subscription rate: Continental U.S., \$65.00. Other, \$85.00. Current back issues of GAMES PEOPLE are available for \$1.50 each. Application to mail at second-class postage rates is pending at Los Angeles, CA. Vol. 2, No. 35 Copyright 1983 by James T. A. Babington-Johnson, Jr. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Postmaster, please send changes of address to GAMES PEOPLE, P.O. Box 67898, Los Angeles, CA 90067



UCLA's campus game room

College game rooms

By Suneel Ratan

Most arcade owners are suffering declining income and burned-out games, but on college campuses—supposedly the refuge of impoverished hippies and struggling artists—students are dropping quarters into games at an impressive rate.

College game rooms range in size from a small Missouri college which has no permanent games but only takes periodic left-overs from a distributor, to the University of California, Los Angeles' mammoth game room which features 62 video games and 15 pinball machines, all owned by the school's student association.

Most colleges and university arcades get their games by contracting with distributors in the area for installation, rotation and maintenance of the machines.

Of the game room operators and distributors contacted, most indicated these contracts usually split gross receipts 50-50, with maintenance included.

"When we bid, we try to make more than a 50-50 split," said Jim Abbett of Central Music, Inc. of Indianapolis, which supplies games for the University of Indiana at Bloomington.

"Usually colleges seem to

want a 50-50 split," Abbett continued. "College game rooms are very good, but they are good only half the year because all of the students leave during the summer. (In the case of U of I) we had to tell them to put their contract out to bid. I advised them to take a 50-50 split. I'm not even going to try to survive on 40 percent."

Abbett said he does not have a fixed number of video games in the facility year-round, but the university requires that he have at least 18 games in the room.

Kent State University in Ohio, whose 40-game arcade last year grossed more than \$100,000, has in the past contracted with local distributor Bell Music, but has sent its new five-year game contract out to bid.

Kent State game room manager Jim Sharp said the present Bell Music contract stipulates a 50-50 split, and a new sharing arrangement will depend on the bids submitted, which were due luly 19

Bell Music President David George would not comment because of his company's contract negotiations with Kent State.

While college game rooms have seen explosive growth in the

last several years since Pac-Man's debut, the boom may now be slowing as interest ebbs.

Mark Mou, game room manager at the University of California, Irvine, said his game room is budgeted to gross \$68,000 for the fiscal year ending July 31, and will actually take in \$71,000.

This figure, however, also includes a revenue from a recent addition of a "candy bar" at the gameroom. Last year, the room took in \$67,000 without the candy shop, signalling that there has been somewhat of a dropoff in game usage.

"This year's revenue dropped considerably," Mou said. "Video games are not as popular as they used to be. It used to be a fad with everyone playing the games, now it's more like just regular customers are playing."

Arizona State University's Tony Maresca agreed with Mou's assessment, but added that while use of the machines "may be slacking off a little bit," video games are still one of the biggest monew makers for ASU's Student Union, which also features 18 billiard tables and an eight-lane bowling center.

Maresca said video games, because of low overhead costs,

produce three times as much net revenue for the Associated Students as the pool tables and bowling.

ASU's game room includes 40 video games and 15 pinball machines to serve the school's 40,000 undergraduate and graduate students. The school is located in Tempe, Arizona, a suburb of Phoenix.

Maresca said ASU gets its games from a local distributor in Phoenix. The five-year contract between ASU and the distributor is reviewed every year, and stipulates that 60 percent of the money taken out of the machines goes to the school, with the remainder going to the distributor.

The game distributor covers maintenance out of his share, and Maresca said the distributor "keeps us happy" by giving ASU the best and latest games.

Because colleges and universities very often have a "captive audience" made up of students who live on campus or who are merely "eating up time" in between classes, Maresca said college game rooms are in a better position than commercial game rooms.

"We are our distributor's largest customer," Maresca said.

"We have a better location than most arcades because we are located right in the middle of a college campus, and there aren't many other arcades in the immediate area anyway. We also have a better atmosphere than most arcades."

Maresca said that while his game room was used mostly by campus residents, a lot of foreign students, many of them from the Middle East, also used the games frequently.

To stem the revenue loss Maresca said his game room is experiencing, ASU is redesigning its game room area and reducing the number of pinball games from 15 to 8.

Video game promotion will also be stepped up, including special featuring of one or two games each week.

UCLA game room manager Chris Goddard said he has not had to promote his student union game room because the games promote themselves.

The few promotions UCLA has sponsored have included tournaments, the most recent of which publicized the introduction of the pinball machine Q*Bert's Quest. Otherwise, Goddard said, he has been con-

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centrating his promotions on the UCLA bowling center.

'Business in the arcade is ong,'' Goddard said, and strong," added the game room took in \$400,000 in the 1982-83 fiscal year and is expected to take in \$450,000 during the coming

Unlike most colleges and universities, UCLA buys its own games at an average cost of \$2,700. The machines are purchased through three separate

distributing companies in the Los Angeles area, and are maintained by students trained in game repair at UCLA.

Because of this arrangement, UCLA is able to keep all of the money taken out of the machines.

On an average, Goddard said, 20 new games are brought into the campus arcade each year.

When a game has run its money-making course in the game room. Goddard said he tries to recoup as much money from the machines as he can by selling them, and added he aims to get at least book value for the used machines.

The machines are first offered to employees of UCLA's Associated Students, which owns and operates the arcade and the student union mostly independent of the university. If none of the employees want the game, it is then offered to a distributor for buy-back. Goddard said he will take a loss if he has to on an old machine, a loss which is then hopefully recouped in the first few weeks after a replacement game is installed.

UCLA's stock of 62 video games and 15 pinball machines for 32,000 graduate and under-

graduate students is large by college standards, compared to ASU's 40 games for 40,000 students. Goddard said the most popular games are of the 'shoot-em-up'' variety, and current strong performers in the UCLA arcade include Atari's Pole Position and Star Wars and Bally-Midway's Ms. Pac-Man.

Other game room managers reported the same favorites as Goddard, and agreed that college students tend to favor shoot-em-up games, with skill games such as Atari's Arabian performing well in the first weeks after installation but after that dropping off quickly.

"We still have die-hard pinball fanatics," UCLA's Goddard added.

A video arcade is constructive on a college campus, Goddard said, because the games can provide a valuable emotional outlet

for students.
"People come in here during finals week to relax, or to take a study break, or to congratulate and reward themselves if they did well, or to blow off steam if they didn't," Goddard said. "We try to do a good job-we keep the place clean, we don't allow smoking, and we try to provide a good atmosphere.

UCLA arcade users said they liked the on-campus game room more than off-campus arcades because of the facility's convenient location and the wide variety of games offered.

"I like video games and it's something to do in between classes," said UCLA junior Jim Greene. "Video games are fun, and they're also inexpensive.'

Many schools also have a student, faculty and staff-only use policy for the machines. At UCLA, however, the restriction is being experimentally relaxed summer slump traditionally experienced by college arcades.

for summer to lure in non-UCLA gamers and alleviate the

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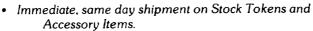


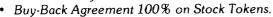






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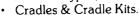




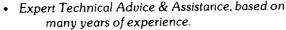


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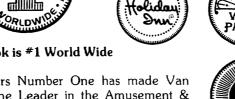








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Videodiscs

Continued from Page 1

the results of a player's actions. The delay occurs while the computer is searching for the correct sequence on the videodisc.

The "black pauses" were also one of the faults cited most often by arcade players themselves.

According to Sega's vice president of marketing, Bob Rosenbaum, Astron Belt will avoid

those faults.
"Our system has far greater capabilities and flexibility. The prime area of difference is that our system...allows real-time interactive game play."

In Astron Belt, a computer-generated graphic is superimposed over the videodisc-generated background. This way the player can control the action more specifically, and get an immediate response when something happens.
"Astron Belt is doing extreme-

ly well on test in the San Diego

marketplace," Rosenbaum said. "It has been extremely well received in Europe as well as in Japan. We're very optimistic."

Astron Belt is similar to Dragon's Lair in one respect: the price. Both are high. Rosen-baum said the game will sell for one and a half to two times the price of a traditional arcade game, making it even more expensive than Dragon's Lair.

Both games also feature the fifty cent play. Victor Penman, one of the designers of Dragon's Lair, said inflation has made the increase both reasonable and necessary.

Rosenbaum said, "I think that from a factory's point of view the prime consideration is entertainment value. That is first and foremost...It is extremely important that we must provide good entertainment value." In other words, if you want the best, you have to pay for it.

Trying to sum up the differences between Astron Belt and Dragon's Lair, Rosenbaum said his competition is a good cartoon, while Sega's is a good game.

The developers of Dragon's Lair would probably content that their game is good because it is a good cartoon.

They see themselves as innovators who are bringing the future to the industry. Penman said Dragon's Lair "goes beyond a bit of a rut which the in-dustry has been in for a while." It is a departure from the "shoot em up bang-bang type of thing.

"It's like reading a book or watching a movie...there's a real story there, he said. It needed "to appeal to people who might not regularly go to an arcade.

Bluth was even more optimistic. "The visuals and the arcade are going to take a quantum leap foreward," becoming "more like a movie.... "It's going to be a race now to see who can put the most beautiful thing in the arcade.'

He said the responsibility for game design will move away from engineers and toward artists and writers.

He said he had to take over the design of Dragon's Lair partway through the work on it. His company, Don Bluth Productions, had already spent much of the \$600,000 it had agreed to spend doing the animation in return for a share in the game.

Bluth was to begin the animation while Advanced Microcomputer Systems in Pomona designed the game. But Bluth said he saw the game when it was partly finished, and said to him-self, "I don't think this is a very good game."
"I remember the day when

everybody stood up and said, 'there's no game here'." He was angry. Bluth said he spent four days redesigning the game, trying to "salvage the \$600 thou-

Bluth employees working on the next videodisc game, Space Ace. Counterclockwise from left: Animator Lorna Pomeroy, Assistant Inker Karen Stork, Background artist Don Moore, and Assistant Director Dan Molina, using a sound synchronizer.

sand." He said he gave it its episodic form, in which the player encounters a rapid-fire seriesd of threats, and has to react to them with the help of visual clues like different colors and flashing lights.

"We threw out quite a bit of animation," Bluth said. "The game design and the animation are so connected together that they have to come out of the same house.

Among the things he said he inserted into the game were rhythm, both in the visuals and the audio, and pacing so the player will not react to a situation prematurely.

The employees at AMS don't necessarily assign Bluth the credit for designing the game. They describe themselves as the designers, outlining the game in storyboards and sending them out for the detailed animation only. "Watch this," said Penman, demonstrating a room in which the protagonist, Dirk the

Daring, does a flip. "Patented Captain America tuck and roll. I designed that."

Meanwhile, Don Bluth Productions' Press releases describe the game as "Bluth's Dragon's Lair.'

But the competition, if any really exists, is low key. Bluth is thinking more about the future than the present.

The next game from the Dragon's Lair people is due in October. It will be compatible with the Dragon's Lair cabinet, allowing owners to update that game if its revenues have dropped off.

Tentatively entitled Space Ace, the second game will allow the player more choices than Dragon's Lair. While that game forces the player to go directly from room to room, Space Ace will feature choices like branching corridors.

Bluth said it will also play bet-

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G

iame Doctor

The information for this edition was provided by Steven Joseph, owner of Starship Video arcade in Upland, California. Joseph was one of the first owners of Dragon's Lair.

Clinical history: Like any new technology, the videodisc game Dragon's Lair has a lot of technical problems. What follows is an informal list of some common maladies.

Symptom: On the pay-as-you-play option, the game occasionally requires too many or too few coins.

Diagnosis: Faulty controller chip. Several versions of the main chip for Dragon's Lair have been issued (Joseph calls it the "chip of the month club"). If you got one of the two earliest versions, the pay-as-you-play option may not operate correctly. It is supposed to require an additional fifty cents after the first and second thirds of the game.

If you have the first chip issued, the game will, about 20 percent of the time, require eight quarters total instead of six. This seems to happen if the player dies in the 24th room; the death causes the game to recycle back to before the last quarters were inserted.

The game will also occasionally ask for ten quarters, for reasons that are still unclear. It may also sometimes allow the adventure to be completed for only two.

Treatment: Call your distributor about getting the most recent chip.

Symptom: The game displays flickering Fs in all the lightemitting diode score windows. Game also gives more lives when more quarters are inserted on pay-as-you-play.

Diagnosis: You have the second chip, issued to correct the problems of the first one. The Fs are produced by electronic noise in the system, and only appear in windows not being used. They do not affect play.

Treatment: Get the latest chip. The extra likes lead to much higher scores than the designers intended. One of the games designers, demonstrating it, pointed to a score of 300,000 and said, "look at that. You'll never see that in an arcade." With the second chip, the high score at Starship Video was 488,000.

Symptom: Game does not beep when powered up, and will not operate.

Diagnosis: Balky reset mode. The beep indicates that the videodisk is ready to go.

Treatment: Turn the game on and off until you get the beep.

Symptoms: Distorted pictures: black and white, flipped, fluttering.

Diagnosis: Two possibilities—machine could be overheated, or disk could be dirty.

Treatment: Are two games back to back? They must have room for air circulation. These games are more heat-sensitive than most.

Also be sure to clean the disks every two weeks. In spite of the filter system in the game, they get dirty.

Star Wars creator uses the Force

When Mike Hally started working for Atari in 1976, the movie *Star Wars* had just been released. "I always dreamed that we would have the technology to do that sort of stuff," he said.

No one did at the time; and besides, strange as it may sound today, "I don't think seven years ago anyone really thought about the movie media and the game people getting together. Tron really kind of sparked it."

Ever since the game Tron came out—and made more of a profit than the movie of the same name—manufacturers have been hunting for movie tieins for their games. This summer, Krull goes with a movie to be released at the end of the month, and Atari is working on an E.T. game.

But the biggest movie series of all time didn't spawn an arcade game until this month, when Atari released the first of what will be three Star Wars-related games it has licensed from the movies' owner, Lucasfilm Limited.

Hally, supervisor of the project office at Atari, was head designer on the Star Wars project. He said the six people in the core design group spent "six long, hard months" developing the game, using systems from a number of advanced design projects Atari had already been conducting.

ducting.

"What they (Lucasfilm) wanted wasn't really possible until one or two years ago," he said. "The display is a medium resolution, medium speed display, which is new." It produces "cleaner color and the ability to draw more things on the screen."

"The game hardware has a full 3-D map box. The control is a totally new style, new type which allows ease of flight." There are also new sound chips to handle the game's music and dialogue.

Although "there's a few little things here and there" Hally said the game has no major technical flaws. He called it, "one of the most sophisticated, detailed coin games on the market."

But it won't be the most



Mike Hally frowns in concentration while playing the game he designed.

sophisticated for long. Halley said projects now in the works will improve game hardware, make them process information faster, have more memory, and operate in stereo and 3-D. "Anything that will add to the environment" of a game is being tried.

"I'm working on some really bizarre type player interaction games" including systems to link arcade games together so players can compete against one another

He said Atari is "most definitely" going to come out with a laser disc game fairly soon. "We haven't always been first, but we always try to be best," he said. "We're looking at doing a fullblown string capability" which would allow players to control the action at every point in the game—something videodiscs games cannot

do now.

(Hally's evaluation of the first videodisc game, Dragon's Lair, appears in the story on videodiscs in this issue.)

Hally said he started out as a mechanical engineer working on pinball games, but was frequently asked to assist with the design of video games because "I have a knack of picturing things in my head...l just liked doing it. It was easy for me."

The first game he designed was Gravitar, followed by one he said was a terrible failure and was never released.

Star Wars was an extra-difficult project. "It was no small feat to get the game, so I was under a lot of pressure to make the game go over well." The pressure from Atari was simple: make the game good. What

Continued on Page 8

Videodiscs

Continued from Page 5

ter. He said the first was a guaranteed success because it is a novelty. The second "must be a better game, and I do believe it is."

In the long term, Bluth hopes to use the arcade business to help his film production work. His first film, The Secret of NIMH, was released in 1982. Two more are now in the works. "This is a diversification of our company," he explained, comparing the revenues of arcades and the movie industry. "The audience I believe is larger" in arcades, he said. The revenues are 100.

Bluth hopes kids will recognize the Bluth name from the

Continued on Page 8

How videodiscs work

The videodisc is important to video games because of the amount of information it can hold: literally millions of times what is stored in the solid-state memories of most games.

Information storage and processing determines the complexity of a video game's images. Most home video games can hold only a relatively small amount of information, and as a result their pictures are very rough, made up of a series of small squares arranged to approximate the image the game designer wants to display.

Arcade games, with their greater storage capacity, can produce more detailed and realistic-looking pictures. But even the objects in a game like Xevious—one of the most detailed on the market—still look like computer pictures.

But videodiscs, originally designed to compete with video tape in the sale of pre-recorded television programs, literally change the picture.

Each videodisc looks like a silver-covered long-playing record. From the right angle, a rainbow sheen is visible on the



Framed: One of the first laser discs produced for Dragon's Lair hangs in the offices of Don Bluth Productions.

Williams profits down

NEW YORK—Micheal R. Stroll, President of Williams Electronics, Inc. announced July 14 that while final results of operations would not be available until completion of Williams' physical inventory, it was anticipated that revenues and earnings for its third quarter ended June 30, 1983 would be significantly lower than those of the third quarter of the prior year and of both the first and second quarters of the current year.

Income before taxes for the first nine months of the current year could be as much as 20% lower than that of the same period last year. Mr. Stroll indi-

cated that the industry-wide weakness in the market for coinoperated amusement games had continued through the quarter.

Despite encouraging initial test results, unit sales of Sinistar and Bubbles had not reached expectations. The quarter's results would also be affected by costs incurred in moving Williams' printed circuit board assembly operations from Menasha, Wisconsin to its Gurnee, Illinois plant.

Stroll said, "It is difficult to predict the timing of any industry-wide market improvement. Early summer has been tradi-

Continued on Page 8

Financial News

Video Game Industry Stocks

Closing figures for July 20, 1983

NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE

	ANNUAL	ANNUAL		
	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING	NET CHANGE
BALLY MFG. CORP.	28 1/8	19 5/8	25 3/8	+ 1/4
COCA-COLA	57 3/8	45 1/2	47 5/8	- 7/8
COLECO INC.	65	16 3/4	40	- 4 1/8
CBS	77 5/8	5 5	66	- 1 1/2
WALT DISNEY	84 3/4	60 1/8	64 3/4	- 1/2
GULF & WESTERN	30 1/8	16 1/8	27 5/8	- 1/4
MATTEL 16 7/8	10 5/8	11 1/4	10 7/8	- 1/4
MCA INC.	42 1/8	32 3/4	37 1/4	- 1/4
WARNER COMMUNICATIONS	35 1/4	35	25 1/2	- 1/4
WILLIAMS ELECTRONICS	17 1/4	10 7/8	14 1/8	- 1 3/8
WARNER COMMUNICATIONS WTS	13 3/4	8 1/8	* 8	- 1/4

* NEW LOW

Explanation

disc's surface

The rainbow is caused by tiny indentations all over the disc. It is "played" by a laser in the models being used in arcade games.

The laser reads the pictures off the disc, converting them into a television signal that can be displayed by a regular television monitor.

In the case of Dragon's Lair, a controller monitors the pictures that are being shown and times them. When a player had the option of reacting, the game checks to see if he does the right thing at the right time.

If he does, the laser pick-up head moves to the spot on the disc where the game continues. The time necessary to move the head produces a momentary blackout of the screen when it is not receiving a signal. The blackout should be eliminated by the next generation of games.

If the player fails, the game displays a sequence showing Dirk the Daring being smashed against a wall or electrocuted or experiencing any of about 30 other horrible deaths.

OVER-THE-COUNTER

	ANNUAL HIGH	ANNUAL LOW	CLOSING	NET CH	ANGE	
					BID	ASK
CENTURI	3 11/16	2 1/8	2 7/8	NC	2 7/8	3
GAME-A-TRON CORP.	17/32	1/4	6 3/4	NC	5/16	3/8
STATUS GAME CORP.	7 1/2	4 1/2	16 1/4	+ 1/4	6 3/4	7
PIZZA TIME	26 5/8	14 1/2	9	+ 1/8	15 3/4	16 1/4

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



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Ways People Move

The National Coin Machine Institute has elected new officers and directors for fiscal year 1984.

The election took place at the association's first annual meeting at NCMI's Survival Seminar held in Orlando for representatives from all three major divisions of the vending industry.

The new Board of Directors chosen for a one year period through June 1984 are: Norman Borkin, The AAV Companies, Cleveland, Ohio; Donald Brink, Parina Enterprises, Inc., San Jose, California; Charles Snelson, Standard Vending & Music, Inc., Amarillo, Texas; and Millie McCarthy, Catskill Amusements, Inc., Hurleyville, New York. Ms. McCarthy is also president of the New York State Coin Machine Association.



Van Myers, Arthur Fein and Sonny Silverstein

Chosen for a two year NCMI directorship were Sonny Silverstein, Silco Corporation, Los Angeles, California; Herbert A. Sternberg, ARA Services, Inc., Miami, Florida; Stan Harris, Stan Harris & Co., Inc., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Jack Kerner, Melo-Tone Vending, Inc., Somerville, Massachusetts.

The new National Coin Machine Board of Directors chosen for three years terms were: Arthur Fein, The Wainwrite Group, Farmingdale, New York; Van Myers, Wometco Enterprises, Inc., Miami, Florida; B.H. Williams, B&B Vending & Music Co., Dallas, Texas; and Melvin H. Grossberg, The Rowe Corporation, Wyckoff, New Jersey.







Melvin Grossberg Millie McCarthy Jack Kerner

As its first official act, the newly elected board of directors of The National Coin Machine Institute, elected its first slate of full term officers. Those elected were: Melvin H. Grossberg, president; Arthur Fein, first vice president; Norman Borkin, second vice president, Jack Kerner, treasurer, and Donald Brink, secretary.



Atari publicist Jamie Pinto looks startled, but actually she's just trying to tell Darth Vader how to spell someone's name. Vader signed souvenir photos at the Star Wars preview in Los Angeles.

Videodiscs

Continued from Page 6

games, and then go to his movies. "If we can't get the youngsters and teenagers to come to the theater to see the movie, we'll go to the arcade."

He said the games will also serve as a training ground for animators, allowing them to experiment in ways they could not for films. This role used to be filled by cartoons which ran in theaters before the main feature.

The biggest danger he sees in the development of videodisc games is that the "Saturday morning cartoon houses" will become involved in them. That would be "an enormous mistake," he said, because the games should have high-quality animation. The industry needs to "pull the whole quality of it up as high as we can."

"The teenagers that are going to the arcade are running away" from their childhood, he said. "They do not want kiddie food."

Discussing the future of the industry, Bluth cited the book 1984, which predicted "feelies"—movies that stimulate all the senses—would replace traditional films. He foresees a simi-

tionally slow due to planned

vacations and plant shut-downs

for the taking of physical inven-

tories. We are particularly opti-

mistic about the prospects of two

new games we plan to introduce

in mid-August, and hope that

our fourth quarter will benefit if

an early resurgence of customer

NEW YORK-The Board of

Directors of Williams Elec-

tronics, Inc. declared a regular

quarterly dividend of \$.15 per

on August 17, 1983 to stock-

The dividend will be payable

share of common stock.

demand occurs.'

Continued from Page 7

lar development, but without the sinister overtones.

"Any experience with the theater that you can become involved with"—in which you can influence the outcome—"can only help our experience of learning."

He said the main question for a game designer should be "how do you increase the quality of our life on this planet? If we can make the 'theater games' help us learn...then I believe we are going to wind up better people."

Bluth said the main cause of evil in the world is ignorance. "We're not aware of what we're doing." He believes the new games can remedy this.

He said recent research, showing that autistic children may react to games even though they will not react to people, prove "there are uses that are very practical."

He said the games can also help normal people by improving their memory capacity.

ing their memory capacity.

And Dragon's Lair's role in all this? Bluth said most arcade games do only three things: "They drive, they fly, they shoot."

Dirk the Daring does other things. "Can a little knight go in there and fight off all the problems?...This is a resolution game."

holders of record at the close of

business on July 25, 1983. STATUS:

Status Game Corporation of Hartford, Connecticut will be holding a series of presentations around the country before brokers and analysts in key U.S. cities.

The meetings will be to review Status' plans and projects for 1983 including expansion into non-video amusement games, and entree into the consumer electronics market, and industry trends.

For information as to times and locations call the Haft Group at 212-752-8826.

Hally

Continued from Page 6

Lucasfilm wanted was tougher.

"They require very elaborate overview of the Star Wars universe. It has to fit" in the style of play, its sequence, and the options open to the player. "You couldn't kill Darth (Vader, the archenemy of the series, who does not die until the third movie). Luke (Skywalker, the hero of the films) can't really get killed."

"We had to create the game within that environment...We worked with them very closely."

Hally said he wanted especially to avoid what happened to Parker Brothers, manufacturer of the Star Wars home games. Hally said Lucasfilm rejected much of Parker Brothers' initial work because it had little to do with the movie.

The second and third games, to be based on *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*, are now under development "on a decent priority."

The next one won't be out until after the AMOA convention in October, although "there's no guarantee" that the games will be released at all if they are judged not playable.

Meanwhile, the movie/game connection marches on. The E.T. game is "coming along well on its development... When it gets done is really a matter of when we need it," to fill a gap in Atari's release schedule, Hally said.

And he plans to continue working in what he considers to be his niche in life, or "something like it."

"It's an interesting sort of art form, and I really get a kick out of being able to design some thing that I can watch so many kids enjoying themselves on."

Morgan

Continued from Page 1

other areas of electronics.

Second, he wants to "provide stability in the organization. Settle people down." Morgan said he will "make the word career mean more than a year" at Atari.

Finally, Morgan said the company's offices are spread out all over the Silicon Valley. He is already having offices built in one location, where the company's managers can be brought together for several hours a day to just "see eachother."

"I'm very optimistic," Morgan concluded. He called the company well-financed, with "great technology" and an "agreesive attitude."

gressive attitude."
"It's a fundamentally sound company."

Morgan takes office September six. In the meantime, he plans to study the computer industry more.

If he gets bored, he has an Atari 2600 console at home for diversion. "I am the Pac-Man champion of the household," Atari's new chairman declared.

Game Reviews

By Michael Mace





DRAGON'S LAIR (Cinematronics/Starcom)

Here it is, the first videodisc arcade game. You've heard about it on the radio, seen it on TV, and read about it in the papers. Now, for only a thousand or so more dollars than your average game, you can have Dirk the Daring, the evil dragon and the bimbo princess in your very own location.

If this is, as all the hype contends, the future of arcade gaming, then that future is promising. Although Dragon's Lair has some problems, the videodisc technology is so different, so new, it almost guarantees that Dragon's Lair will be a winner.

First, the good parts. The videodisc system (see page enables the game to display television-quality images on its monitor. The animation is abso-lutely fantastic, and looks a lot like something out of a Disney movie. People watching Dragon's Lair will feel almost compelled to try it at least once. And the lure of exploring more and more of the 30-room castle should keep them coming back.

In its play, Dragon's Lair is basically a pattern-memorization game. Each room offers a different challenge to the hero, Dirk, along with hints to help him get through. Generally, a door or tunnel will flash in the direction he should move. Without this, the player would find it almost impossible to survive very long.

If he completes all 30 randomly-ordered rooms, the player then confronts the dragon and tries to rescue the princess.

The problems with the game are products of its technology. The most obvious is the delay in translating the player's actions into movement on the screen. Once a player pushes the joystick (to show which direction he wants to move) or pushes the sword-use button, he has to wait a moment while the screen goes black and the machine searches for the sequence on the videodisc which displays what happens.

While the delay is annoying, you learn to ignore it after a



The dragon

while. More difficult to avoid is the game's severe limitation on player choices. Videodiscs can hold a lot of information, but not an endless amount. Thus the player is walked automatically into each room, presented with a dilemma and, whether he knows it or not, given as little as half a second to react. All he can do is

males are familiar with D & D. as they call it, they will undoubtedly look at this aspect of the arcade game unfavorably.

On the other hand, Dragon's Lair offers things you can't get anywhere else: pictures and sound. The audiovisual effects will be very seductive to a kid who usually has to rely on his

Dirk the Daring detailed in this week's Games

Doctor. Another item any potential owner must ponder is the price of a play on Dragon's Lair: fifty cents. Since, with 30 rooms, the game can last a long time, the

price may not be unreasonable. I worry, though, that the price will scare off a lot of people, especiDragon's Lair is a bit of advice on the owner settings. There is an option under which, after a while, the game stops and displays a message saying, "Congratulations. You have completed one-third (or two-thirds) of the castle. Please deposit fifty cents to continue. This option will make you more money, but I don't advise you to use it-unless you're prepared to pay for a new monitor after some angry player puts his fist through the one you have. If you do use it, put up a sign to warn players in advance.

Graphics: For the animation, 10. But with the delays, "just" a

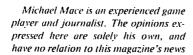
Sound: 7. Actually, although it's subtle, the noises add a lot to the game. Dirk doesn't say any-thing except "uh-oh" a few times, but the music enhances the reality of the game and adds to the cartoon-ish feel of play. The princess—who talks all the time—is a riot.

Controls: 4. What we need here is a more advanced version of the game, which would allow more subtlety of movement and action. Wait a year or two and it'll arrive.

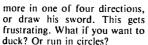
Originality: 9. No comments

Evaluation: One of the nicest things about Dragon's Lair is that Starcom is putting out a new adventure every three months or so. Thus Dragon's Lair will be convertible into a new game as soon as revenues start to drop off. This will allow you to keep the cabinet paying off for a long, long time. It will also help make up for the aggravation you'll probably get from the game's temperamental equipment. I think the game itself will hold up well, though. In essence, each room is a different screen. In order to get to the dragon, the player thus has to memorize and execute, say, about a hundred different moves. This is no 30-day wonder.

Overall: 8. If you own an arcade, you just about have to get at least one.



reporting, its advertisers or staff. The rating system is as follows: 10: The greatest of all time. 5: Average. 1: Pong was more sophisticated.



The popular role-playing nonelectronic game Dungeons and Dragons, which obviously inspired Dragon's Lair, allows an almost infinite selection of actions. Since many adolescent

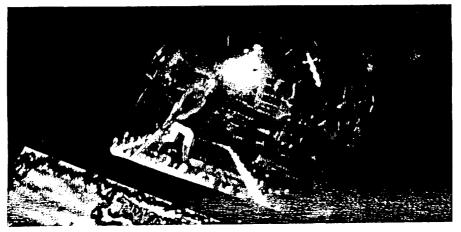
imagination to see this sort of

In sum, the play of the game is inferior to that of most arcade games, but the game makes up for it with its striking images.

The technical side is another matter. Dragon's Lair is full of glitches and mistakes. The problems-and their solutions-are ally as you die pretty quickly the first time you play.

Nevertheless, Dragon's Lair will undoubtedly work best in an arcade, where people can watch each other play and learn together some of the game's rather devious tricks.

The only thing I can say with complete certainty about



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Riverside, California. 27 games. Profit margin: 50% of annual gross. Inquire Item 19. Games People, P.O. Box 67898, Los Angeles, CA 90067.

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Los Angeles area. 25 games. 12 locations. Annual gross \$60,000. Net: \$50,000. Price: \$50,000. Inquire: Item 45. Games People. P.O. Box 67898, Los Angeles, CA 90067

ROUTE FOR SALE

San Jose, Calif. 60 games, 24 locations, warehouse lease. Annual gross: \$108,000. Net: \$27,700. Price: \$170,000. Inquire: Item 29. Games People. P.O. Box 67898, Los Angeles, CA 90067

ARCADE FOR SALE

Anniston, Alabama. 35 games, 30 leased. Miniature golf and Jupiter Jump Playground/outside. Annual Gross: \$80,000 Asking Price: \$46,000 Inquire: Mike Myhal, 217 Glade Road, Anniston, Alabama 36201.

ARCADE AND ROUTE FOR SALE Charleston, S.C. 17 arcades and 75 locations. 600 games owned, 600 leased. Annual gross: \$2.5 million. Net: \$500,000. Price: Negotiable, can be purchased in parts. Inquire: Item 205. Games People. P.O. Box 67898, Los Angeles, CA 90067.

ROUTE FOR SALE

Omaha, Neb. 12 games. 10 locations. All games on contract, some on guaranteed minimums. Net: \$35,000. Price: \$35,000. Inquire: Item 204. Games People. P.O. Box 67898, Los Angeles, CA 90067.

ROUTE FOR SALE

Central Florida. 38 games. 19 locations. Annual gross: \$118,000. Net: \$51,000. Price: \$76,000. Inquire: Item 203. Games People. P.O. Box 67898, Los Angeles, CA 90067.

ROUTE FOR SALE.

Dallas-Fort Worth area, 400 games, 50 locations. Annual gross: \$460,000. Net: \$250,000. Price: \$1,400,000. Inquire: Item 730. Games People. P.O. Box 67898, Los Angeles, CA 90067

ARCADE FOR SALE

Miami, Florida. 40 games. Annual gross: \$150,000. Annual profit: \$126,000. Asking price: \$250,000. Inquire: Item 211. Games People, P.O. Box 67898, Los Angeles, CA 90067.

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Houston, Texas. 22 games. Annual Gross: \$90,000 Net: \$50,000. Asking Price: \$110,000 Inquire Item 303. Games People, P.O. Box 67898, Los Angeles, CA 90067.

ROUTE FOR SALE

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ARCADE FOR SALE.

Los Angeles area. 28 games. Annual gross: \$130.000. Net: \$60,000. Price: \$150,000. Inquire: Item 102. Games People. P.O. Box 67898, Los Angeles, CA 90067.

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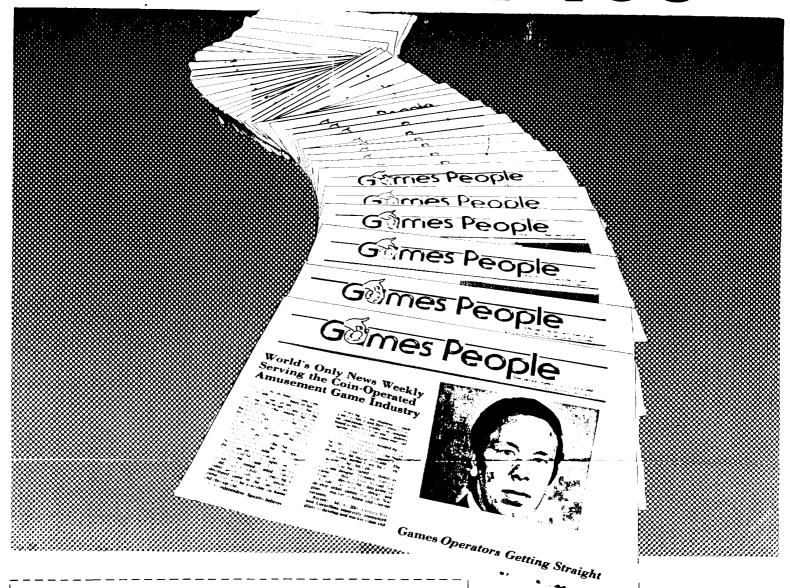
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TAE TAP TEA

The TOP TEN is a comparative poll. The #1 game in both Arcade and Street locations is represented by 5 game symbols. Relative earnings of the other games are expressed in symbols as a ratio to the #1 game on each list.

POLE POSITION		POLE POSITION	1666
DRAGON'S LAIR	EEE		666
GYRUSS		Ms. PAC-MAN	EE
STAR TREK	FF	GALAGA	EE
STAR WARS		CHAMPION BASEBALL	EE
FRONT LINE		MARIO BROS	
CHAMPION BASEBALL		DRAGON'S L	AIR 🗐
Q*BERT		E KRULL	
S MILLIPEDE	E	6 MILLIPEDE	
111 CHEXX	F	FRONT	F

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