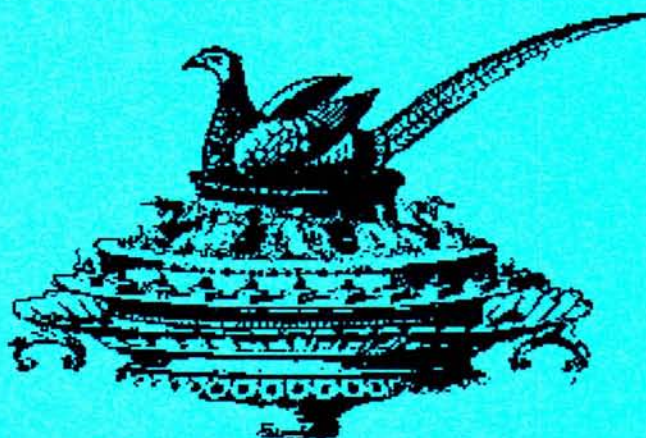


SLCC JOURNAL

SAN LEANDRO COMPUTER CLUB

November, 1988



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Dot Racing - Parallel Drive - News
Broderbund - Freebies



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SLCC JOURNAL

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Editor	Bob Woolley	865-1672
Asst. Editors	Frank Kliever	536-7431
	Jennie Kliever	
Cover Title	Jim Hood	534-2197

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TETRIS

Game Review

For the color or mono Atari ST
By MirrorSoft, created in the USSR
suggested retail: \$39.95 but the club gets a
25% discount at Winner's Circle.
Review by Frank and Jennie Klierer



Different shaped blocks fall one by one, you rotate them before they hit the bottom and try to create complete lines of blocks to score points. The directions made the game sound not only easy but rather boring. I really couldn't understand how this game could gain so much popularity and be sold out when I first asked for it at Winner's Circle. Frank played the first couple of rounds and I watched the screen. I could see that it certainly wasn't as easy as one thought. Frank made a score in the 300's and challenged me to beat his score. The background music is a little hypnotic as you methodically march along with the beat placing your blocks. I found myself thinking: "I can do better than that-I'll try again!" and started to play round after round with Frank.

We finally got up to scores around 600 and were crushed to find that the memory resident scores were up around 2900. We weren't even in the ballpark! Fortunately, you can remove the memory resident scores and supplant them with your own by typing in a short code. But since this disk was only on "loan" for review, the high scores are still there to taunt us. Frank has now reached scores of 1600 so he is getting close. The night that Frank demonstrated the game at the ST meeting was the first time he had gotten into the 1000 point area:

(Frank) I was really getting on a roll at the meeting. Everything was going right, except that I thought I was making it look so easy that the audience was getting bored and felt I was taking up too much time. What frustration, to be making my best score yet and feeling guilty about it. So I had to finally let the blocks pile up to end the game, only to have a guest speaker brag about a high score he achieved later in the evening. If I could have finished that roll I was on maybe he wouldn't have opened his mouth about his score. Oh well, we'll never know now. Anyway, I've improved my game play by doing wrist exercises and am ready to travel to the Soviet Union to challenge the creators of this great program. Which brings to mind an article I read the other day about the change of attitude toward things Russian. It

seems that the once "Evil Empire" is now becoming a hit on charts, with a bullet. Russian art sales have doubled at Christie's in the past year. The Gorbachevs seem so friendly and almost Americanized. Tourism to the U.S.S.R. is way up. Although it beats me why people would want to go over there just to stand in longer lines. Who knows, with all this glasnost and perestroika jazz, perhaps TETRIS is just the beginning of a flood of titles to leak out of the Iron Curtain (watch out Michtron). Back to Jennie...

There are several levels of play. The level you want is selected during the opening screens by tapping the seven key for lower number levels and the eight key to go up in difficulty. The higher the number the faster the blocks fall and you are rewarded with higher scores for making the lines. I found the most comfortable level to be 2. The levels are numbered 0-9. When you are ready to begin, tap the space bar.

I enjoy playing it on the color monitor more than the mono. One drawback is the gold flashing background behind the blocks. It almost suggests subliminal messages being transmitted to you as you play. I have this strange desire to visit Russia and spend lots of money on my tour...just kidding, but I wish they had made the background a solid color which would be easier on the eyes.

I think you'll find this game to be stimulating without being so intense that you burn out on it after playing once or twice. It's something you can pop in the disk drive in the morning and "rev" up your awareness level in preparation for your day. Or if you mess up too many times, a good indicator to call in sick that day. We hope you enjoy it.

Ratings



worth spending your
hard earned money on



Save you money

Freebies



Reprint from CLEVATARI newsletter. I don't know the author or issue because I picked this up from the B.A.C.E Line newsletter of Bakersfield.

If you like to get computer magazines, here's a list of computer trade magazines which will be sent to you for just the asking. You will have to renew your request every year and since many of these publications depend greatly on advertising, their reviews and opinions will be a little one-sided. Some will provide timely information and are worth thumbing through:

Business Computer Systems
P.O. Box 17452
Denver, CO 80217

Computer Decisions Management Magazine
Hayden Publishing Co., Inc.
P.O. Box 1417
Riverton, NJ 08077

Computer Design
Reader Service Dept.
P.O.Box 591
Littleton, MA 01460

10th Floor Reader's Service
1515 Broadway
New York, NY 10109-0163

Datamation
875 Third Ave.
New York, NY 10022

Digital Research News
P.O.Box 579
Pacific Grove, CA 93950

END
P.O.Box 5262
Denver, CO 80217

Electronic Design
Hayden Publishing Co., Inc.
P.O.Box 1418
Riverton, NJ 08077

Electronic Engineering Times
Subscription department
111 East Shore Rd.
Manhasset, NY 11030

Infosystems
Hitchcock Publishing Co.
P.O.Box 3007
Wheaton, IL 60189-9933

Mini-Micro Systems
P.O.Box 5051
Denver, CO 80217

Office Systems
P.O.Box 7459
Philadelphia, PA 19101

Small Systems World
950 Lee St.
Des Plaines, IL 60016

Solutions
INTEL Corporation
3065 Bowers Ave.
Santa Clara, CA 95051

Systems & Software
Hayden Publishing Co., Inc.
P.O.Box 1411
Riverton, NJ 08077

END

When we were up in the Chico-Paradise area last, we found a new Atari store in Chico: Omni Computer Services run by Archie Koenig. It is located at 1925 The Esplanade. (916) 893-3458.

8 Bits at a time

A Parallel Disk Interface for your XL/XE

Once you have taken the plunge and purchased a computer, you soon learn that the computer itself requires a number of additional devices in order to be really useful. Of prime importance is the disk drive. The computer contains 64K of Random Access Memory that is wiped clean when you turn on the power. Therefore, after power-up, you need to enter whatever program you want to run into all this memory. The XEGS uses cartridges that contain the programs and thereby allows you to play games without a drive (which will work on most any 8-bit, by the way). For almost any other activity on your system, you must load a program from your drive (called booting the system).

The path that the data must take from the drive to the system is called the Serial Input Output interface, SIO. The input/output refers to the fact that data travels in and out of the system on this buss. Serial refers to the method used to send each group of characters, called bytes. A character is a group of 8 bits that define a symbol or command to the system. And, a bit is just a two position flag that signifies *on* or *off*, *one* or *zero* - a two state indicator (*Binary Digit*). In order to transmit these bits from one place in the computer to another, we need a conductor, or a path. Each conductor (a piece of wire in our case) can only send one bit at any moment in time, so if we want to send one byte (eight bits), we will need eight wires (referred to as a *parallel* interface). Because of the cost and complexity of producing multi-conductor cables and connectors, a simpler method was devised to transmit data outside the computer, *serial* transmission. Instead of sending all eight bits at once, the byte is broken down into individual bits which are sent in a specific order at regular intervals. The destination assembles this series of bits back into a byte for use by the system or device. This operation only requires one wire, not eight and is the preferred method of transmission outside the computer. The problem, of course, is that the serial method takes about eight times longer to transmit a character than the parallel scheme. Not such a big deal for a printer or modem, but significant on a disk drive.

The Atari SIO interface can only transmit about 1000 characters per second under normal conditions, which means that a 22,000 byte file will take 22 seconds to load or save. A 45,000 byte dictionary for a spelling checker will take 45 seconds. A 192K ramdisk will take 192 seconds. A ramdisk? 192 seconds? I could go eat lunch while that loaded! Even these times assume that the data is sequenced properly on the diskette. If the drive has to search around on the disk for the data, the data transfer time can be much, much higher. This is why a ramdisk is so useful - when you have a ramdisk, data is instantly available. But, what can be done about the 192 seconds it takes to load the

ramdisk? If the ramdisk is going to save you time, we can't be taking over three minutes to change a couple of "diskettes", right? You bet.

The solution is to load the data into the ramdisk using a parallel interface, eight bits at a time - eight times faster than the SIO. Then, it would take 24 seconds to load two standard Atari diskettes into a ramdisk. This, I can live with. You could also use the parallel interface directly in a program (to save a file someplace not likely to be bothered by a power surge, for example). While some of us don't mind doing a little soldering inside our computers, I think a number of users would rather not open up the nice computer and turn it into a box of rocks, so this interface will plug into the PBI connector on the back of your XL or XE. You don't need to open up your computer. You don't need to rip up your XF551, either. Or your 1050..... You did get a couple of those neat-o Radio Shack \$99 drives, didn't you? This interface will run up to four of the R/S drives, or four SF314s, or SF354s, or XF551s, or..... 3.5 or newer style 5.25 drives can even be mixed together.

The schematic for the interface is presented this month. The software required to run the system will hopefully be finished by next month, although a number of options may take longer than that to write. As it presently stands, the drive will only read single density, 128 byte sectors. Double density sectors do not allow enough time between bytes for the system to refresh memory and handle the non-maskable interrupt without losing data. I can read most of the 512 byte ST/IBM sector before getting lost, but that is obviously not good enough. This will limit normal operation to 360K of data per drive instead of 720K and about 8,000 bytes of data per second. Not too bad, considering. Once the DD problem is solved, each drive will hold 720K and transfer over 10,000 bytes per second.

I used a Radio Shack drive #25-1061 and a Coleco power supply also available from R/S as #277-1022. You have to remove the existing cables from the drive and make up a 34 pin cable for the interface, as well as splice the power connector from the power supply. If we are lucky enough to get one of the Atari specific suppliers to produce these things, a complete kit may be available for the project. That would be a lot faster than waiting for me to make a PC board for this thing. Until then, those of you that thrive on flux vapors can get busy.

Until next month!

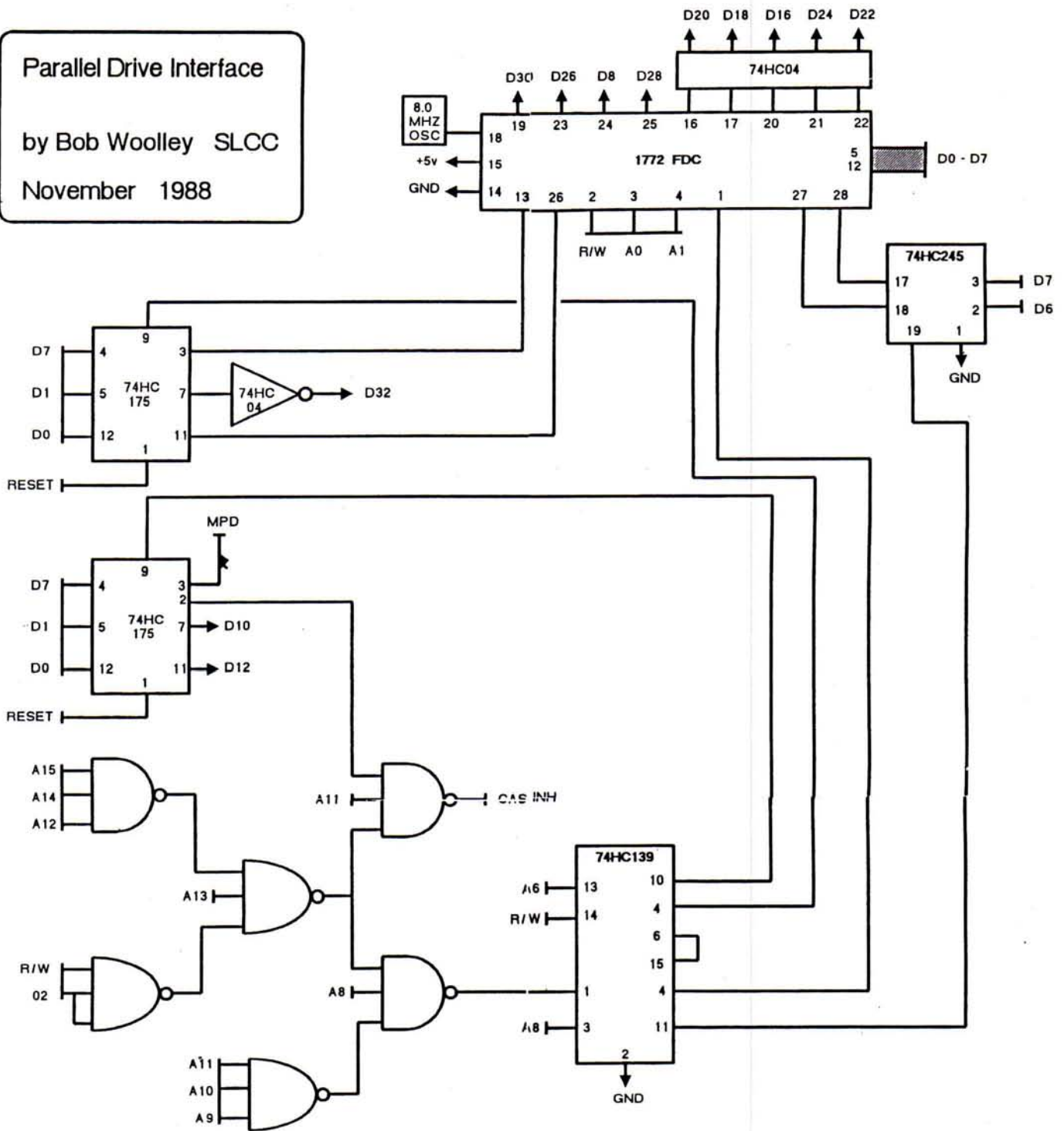
Bob Woolley SLCC

75126,3446

Parallel Drive Interface

by Bob Woolley SLCC

November 1988



A0 | REPRESENTS A CONNECTION TO THE PBI 50 PIN BUSS

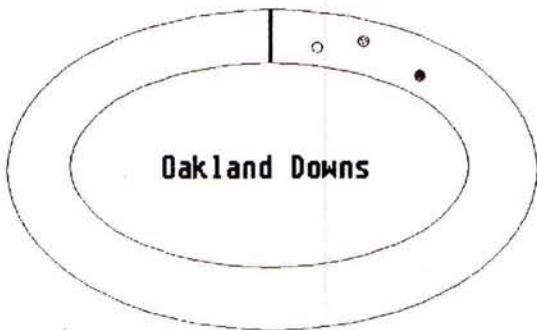
→ D24 REPRESENTS A CONNECTION TO THE 34 PIN DRIVE CABLE

DOT RACING FOR FAME AND...?

By Frank Klierer

Hey you programmers out there, here is a chance to become a part of that great American past-time, baseball. Now you won't even have to suit up to be cheered at every home game at the Oakland Coliseum next year when the American League Champion A's make another try for the World Championship. Yes, you could even be driving the fans crazy in the Fall Classic. If you've ever been to an A's game you know that no matter if the home team is winning or not the fans always have something to yell about come the middle of the contest. Good ole dot racing gets 'em to their feet.

Some die-hard baseball fans think it's disgusting, but this two year old phenomenon is definitely becoming a tradition. In the middle of the fourth inning, before the A's bat, you hear the blare of a racetrack trumpet, as if you were at Bay Meadows. Then a race track appears on the huge Diamond Vision screen, with three dots colored red, white and blue positioned at the starting line. A gun is sounded and they're off, moving four laps around the track to the finish line. It all takes about a minute.



The fans have picked their favorite color before the start (with many laying money on the outcome). Sounds like a simple program, right? Forget it. These guys are still in the dark ages. Not only that, but the situation is ripe for scandal.

So how do these guys in the booth run this supposedly randomly generated race? Glad you asked. After getting a video image of the track created in a studio (really just a crude oval shape) the guys back at the Coliseum animated each race by hand. You know, move a dot, take a picture, move a dot...give me a break. But these guys are into video not computers so they would spend up to three hours creating a one

minute animation. Then after creating a small collection of these "races" it would be a matter of "randomly" selecting one for each game. Supposedly, the fans can't tell which race they are watching, and I suppose by the forth inning most have ingested enough suds to reduce the chance of close scrutiny of the special effects.

You don't have to be Dirty Harry to figure out that this scene is ripe for corruption by the tape handlers. So hackers, the race is on to see who can come up with a program that duplicates this video idiocy, but with a truly infinite set of races waiting to be run. The director of Diamond Vision, Alan Ledford, said that during the off-season he'd be interested in looking at replacement dot racing programs that run on inexpensive personal computers. You can't get any more inexpensive than ours (are you listening 8 bitters)? Call Mr. Ledford at the Oakland A's office, (415) 638-4900.

The behind the scenes story on this dot racing expose hit the Oakland Tribune October 17, so don't drag your feet if you want to become a part of baseball's voluminous history and maybe at least a few free tickets.

Ok you out of shape hackers
here's one for you---

Winner's Circle

has donated another great stimulant to raffle at the next main meeting. If you have only dreamed of mountain climbing, or are tired of fighting off frost bite doing the real thing, buy lots of tickets and if luck is riding on your shoulder, then the next time you get the urge to leave the comfortable confines of your computer nest for some icy peak all you have to do is fire up the disk called:

CHAMONIX CHALLENGE

Created by one of the world's leading mountaineers, Eric Escoffier, this mountain climbing simulator is accurate to the finest detail. "The climb must be seriously prepared. Whilst preparing your rucksack, try and foresee what could happen at night and also consider the risk of bad weather. (especially in Winter). Don't forget food or something with which to quench your thirst, rum and red wine DO warm you up...but beware of side effects"!

If you don't win this graphic adventure for color monitors, you can always pick it up at Winners Circle for \$39.95, less our 25% club discount of course.

News Bits and Commentary

By Frank Klierer

No News Is Good News: Seems that Atari can't win for losing. It used to be that Atari was always getting rapped for its vaporware. Now they have a new policy of repressing information instead of announcing events too early. As you have probably already guessed, people are getting upset about the lack of new product announcements...Soooo, I'll have to fill the vacuum and help keep those rumor mills churning...Atari will be showing off TWO laptops at COMDEX this month. One with a 20 meg hard drive, the other without. Standard equipment includes all the goodies we have grown to love, including MIDI and a meg of memory with a mono monitor. Prices range from \$1000, to \$1500 for the one with the hard drive (see last month's News Bits and Commentary for other rumors about these models).

Now to balance off fueling a rumor, I'll help pull the plug on another one, probably started by a jealous Amiga user. Anyway, it seems that the word on the street is that Atari is going down for the count. Well, don't believe it. Jack has tens of millions in cash sitting around and more orders than he has computers to ship. It also looks like he has a new source of DRAM chips and is getting closer to signing a long term lease on a new production facility in Texas, scheduled to go on line some time next year...Some developers are waiting for the new ROMs to be released, but are not jumping ship. TOS 1.2 is being installed on the new Megas while 1.4 is being sent to developers in disk form and will be released on chips soon...Tom Hudson is off to the 386 world to find more power, but says he will be back when the 68030 workstation machine comes out. Are you holding your breath?

Computer Foundation: If you were as lucky as I was to be watching a passive video tube October 21, and just happened to catch part two of a PBS Bill Moyers interview with Isaac Asimov, then you were blessed with an opportunity to appreciate a truly amazing individual. Closing in on the authorship of book number 500, this demystifier of human knowledge offered a pleasing view of the computer revolution. In the past, education was the sole domain of the rich and powerful. Only they could afford to have the specialized education and training that private tutors could offer. Then as public education arose, one teacher (all too often unqualified for the position) began instructing many pupils at a time, and at a pace too slow

for some and too fast for the rest. Hopefully in the future, according to Asimov, personal computers will become so common place, as telephones and cars are now, that everyone will have access to the entire knowledge base of humanity and be able to grow intellectually at their own pace. Let's all take a little time to dream.

Some kids obviously not spending a lot of time daydreaming are the nerds at Thomas Jefferson Jr. High. They just won a competition that carried along a prize of a super computer from Control Data Corporation. This electronic lightning bolt can execute 375,000,000 instructions per second...What a game machine! During the report on CNN, you could see in the background about a half dozen Mega STs scattered around the computer lab. I'm not sure, but it looked like a beta version of Dig Dug was running on one of them.

To Be Free Or Not To Be Free: I think I now know why we declared our independence from England. I mean, you wanna talk about getting things bass ackwards, check out these two items...First, did you know that in the U.K. you can not make a legal backup of a software program. Even if you are the registered owner it is against the law to backup protected software...Then I catch this goodie on CNN this morning; It seems that a major ring of hackers in the U.K. were broken up when a member of the group squealed on the others. These key jockeys, numbering around 200, wormed their way into most of the defense systems including those operated by U.S. agencies in England. So are these random access terrorists headed for a closed loop behind bars? Nope, gaining unauthorized access to a computer system is not illegal in the motherland. Can anyone explain this thinking, or lack thereof, to me?

Of course stupidity has made its way to our shores too, at least in Texas...Southwestern Bell has decided that ALL BBSs in Houston are businesses. Therefore it is now charging them business rates for their phone lines. Worse yet, some phone companies are being charged with blocking data transfers.

Your Computers NeXT Life: The big news of the month, of course, was Job's NeXT computer. Is it such a big deal? As they say on those sports commercials, "You make the call." It's a 68030 running

News Bits cont. next page

at 25 megahertz including a 68882 math coprocessor, with 8 megs expandable to 16. For storage, let's talk a 256 meg erasable optical disk drive with two circuits to speed up data retrieval impressively, while recording and playing back speech and music with CD quality output. The monitor is a 17-inch 1120 by 832 pixel high rez mono tube, capable of spectacular 3-D graphics. Programming is supposedly simple, while running in a MACH UNIX environment. It comes bundled with a bunch of software, currently priced around \$2,500 including the complete works of Shakespeare. What a game machine! All this for \$6,500...I'll be from Missouri on this one. Not to mention the \$2,000 laser printer that prints 8 pages per minute with up to 400 dots per inch. OK Steve, pull on my other leg for a while. Now don't get me wrong, I hope it's all true. It's just that this package makes Atari's vaporware look pretty solid. Two opposing quotes from industry gurus: Mitch Kapor, founder of Lotus Development, said the NeXT computer will "redefine what people expect from a personal computer." And Billy Gates, founder of Microsoft Corp. said, "In the grand scope of things, most of these features are truly trivial." Sure Billy, it's about as trivial as your fortune and the software you might be producing for this computer. Get real.

. . .

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FLASH

BRODERBUND SOFTWARE NEWS RELESAE

Broderbund Software, Inc. is publishing two new action games -- **Operation: Clean Streets** and **Space Racer**. Both will be released for the Atari ST in October.

Operation: Clean Streets is a fast-paced, colorful fighting simulation with highly detailed graphics and 3-D animation. The game pits the player against an assortment of thugs, punks and hoodlums in an all-out effort to wipe the city's streets clean. As Cleanup Harry, an undercover cop, the player must track down individual criminals -- following them into the seediest parts of town -- and overpower them in hand-to-hand and foot-to-head combat. To complete his mission, Harry must then confiscate and destroy any drugs the thugs may be carrying.

Operation: Clean Streets, features five levels. As the player becomes more skilled...so do the criminals. At each new level, the criminals become more powerful, more devious and more numerous. In addition, other surprises are waiting.

"The depth of the gameplay is unprecedented in a program of this type," said Denis Friedman, Broderbund's producer for the program. "The backgrounds, the variety, and the freeform nature of the fighting combine to make the game exceptionally challenging."

Suggested retail price is \$39.95

Space Racer is a futuristic racing game with 3-D animation and graphics. The setting for the game is the 25th century. Life in space has become placid. To provide a little excitement for the masses, space races (in the spirit of ancient Roman gladiators) are held every three years among representatives of various planets. The winner becomes famous, achieving intergalactic honors and a life of luxury. The losers are never heard from again.

As Earth's sole representative, the player races through three alien worlds in a desperate attempt to stay alive. At the same time, the player must dodge other racers, force them into speed traps or blast them out of the sky.

"**Space Racer** would be exciting at any price, thanks to the colorful graphics and exceptionally smooth animation," said Latricia Turner, Broderbund group product marketing manager. "But at \$19.95 for all machine formats, we expect it to be exceptionally appealing during the holiday season."

NOVEMBER 1988

SLCC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 MAIN MEETING 8PM	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9 Executive Board Meeting	10	11	12
13	14 ST SIG 8PM San Leandro Public Library	15 Telecomm SIG 8PM	16 ST Software SIG 8PM	17	18	19
20	21 Music SIG 7:30PM	22 Pascal SIG 7PM Business SIG 8PM	23 ST Beginners SIG 7:30PM	24 	25 JOURNAL DEADLINE	26
27	28	29	30			

Now That It's Plugged In.....

The SLCC has two SIGs (Special Interest Groups) designed to introduce members to the operation of their Atari computers. System set-up, DOS, keyboard functions, and other introductory material is discussed. The ST group meets on the fourth Wednesday of every month, while the 8-bit sessions are scheduled on an as-required basis. Contact the appropriate SIG leader for information and directions.

Sig leaders and their phone numbers are located on page 3.

Those whom the gods
would destroy, they first
make President.

Kelvin Throop

SLCC **Journal**

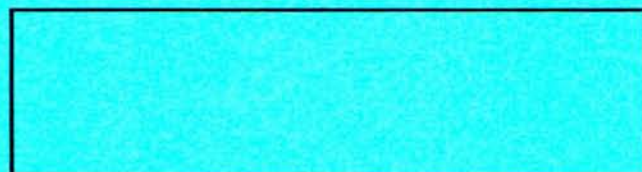


P.O. Box 1506 San Leandro, Ca. 94577-0374

Next Meeting:

November 1, 1988
8:00pm

-
San Leandro
Community Library
300 Estudillo Ave.



FIRST CLASS MAIL