THE HARD FACTS

ColecoVision is the first product in the history of modern advertising to actually surpass its pre-release hype. This third-wave super-system offers dynamic graphics and audio capability, and comes pre-sold with a library of outstanding software.

The unit itself is sleek and trim, with a top-mounted cartridge slot and a recessed area at the left side into which the controllers can be laid. The front of the unit contains an interface slot into which the numerous game modules, keyboard and exotic controllers can be plugged.

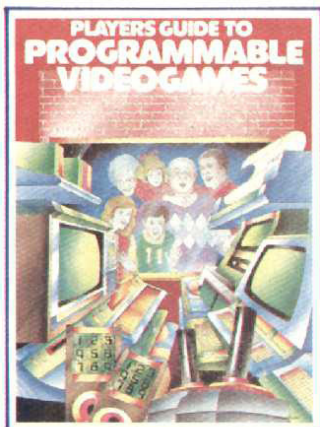The system's clearest weak point is its controllers: A combination keyboard/joystick with twin side firing buttons that can turn even a nimble gamer's hand into a claw. However, the real problem with the Coleco controller is the short, fat, stubby nob.

Despair not, however, since the gourmet ColecoVision-compatible controllers are on the way. Amiga has an excellent adaptation of its VCS joystick on the way as does Supr Stick, the latter from D-Zyne Corp. of Waterford, CT, using jet-fighter type micro-switches. Both of these controllers should be here soon.

SOFTWARE AND SUCH

The ColecoVision's multitude of screen-RAM allows it to faithfully duplicate virtually every major coin-op title the company licenses, whether the game was originally in raster or vector graphic form.

COLECO
THE THIRD WAVE

firefighter in **Scraper Caper**), are preparing to widen the scope of the system's library.

While arcadians revel in such super coin-op translations as **Mr. Do**, **Subroc** (not in 3-D, but looking good!), **Wizard of Wor** and **Frenzy**, fans of new and original gaming concepts can expect to be well satisfied.

Sports fans are apt to enjoy **Rocky Battles the Champ** and **Baseball**; movie buffs will probably like videogame versions of **Dracula** and **Sword & the Sorcerer**; just-plain-home-arcaders can challenge **Front Line**, **Skiiing**, **Smurf-ette's Birthday**, **Destruction Derby**, and many others.

CAVEAT DEPT.

One curious thing about the ColecoVision is its off-on compatibility with Atari peripherals. While many 2600 joysticks fit nicely into the ColecoVision slots and work with games that don't need keypad input and only one action button, almost as many do *not*. Early reports indicate that the Wico tracball, as an example, doesn't interface correctly with C-V software, nor do any joysticks that do not use all nine of their pin sockets.
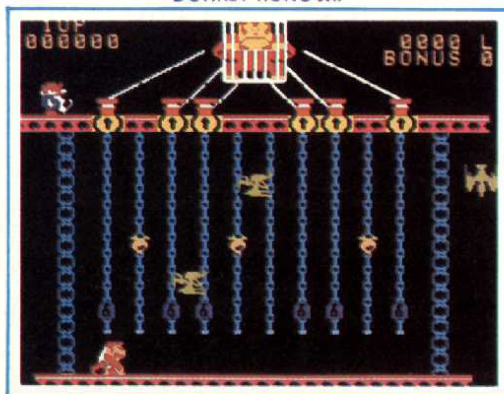
The question of cannibalizing Atari equipment for ColecoVision use will become a moot point when Coleco and

a horde of peripheral support companies throw themselves into the breach. Coleco's own tracball should be released with their version of GDI's **Slither** and the prototypes given hands-on testing at a recent trade show tested well. The lightweight unit fits over the top of the Coleco console.

MODERN SHOPPING

While many arcades felt the quality of ColecoVision's software declined slightly after the initial rush of 10 titles, a little time has made believers of many former skeptics. Let's look at the newest release quite critically.
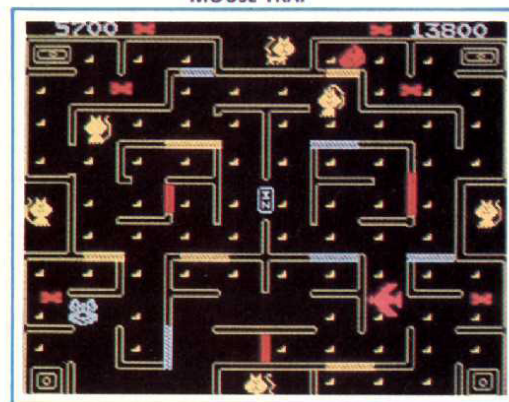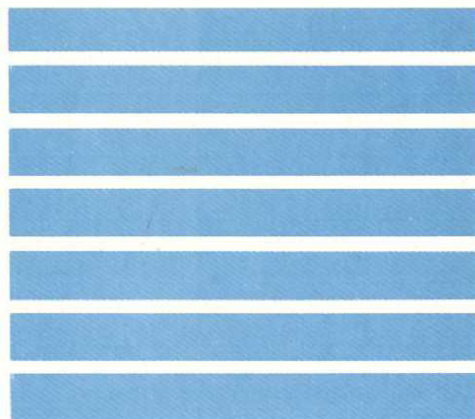
DONKEY KONG JR.

TURBO

SWORD & THE SORCERER

MOUSE TRAP

So far, Coleco has progressed through a series of arcade adaptations that range from **Donkey Kong Jr.** to **Turbo** (complete with steering wheel and gas pedal), with **Smurf** the sole original title. Coleco, along with independent software producers such as Micro Fun (offering **Time Runner**, **Miner 2049er**, **Globe Grabber** and Bounty Bob as a

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PLAYERS GUIDE TO PROGRAMMABLE VIDEOGAMES
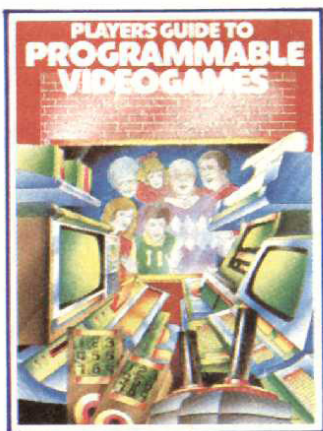
Space Fury: Though a marvelous imitation of vector graphics in raster-scan, nothing can disguise the fact that this Sega coin-op was a novelty success. The first talking coin-op, the haughty boastful alien can only be "heard" by lip-readers in this home version, of course, with the creature's imperious insults being broadcast TV news bulletin-style in subtitles across the bottom of the playfield. The game itself is an **Asteroids** variant with a series of four bonus racks that rank as the most ridiculously easy challenge ever to insult a gamer's skill.

Mouse Trap: Exidy's clever maze chase coin-op blossoms in this home format into a compulsive contest involving cats chasing cheese-eating mice around a playfield filled with color-coded doorways. Pressing the corresponding color on the controller-keypad opens that hatch. The mice can also eat bones and become energized, turning into daunting bulldogs for a few seconds, but the metamorphosis is dictated entirely by the gamer. Each time a bone is eaten, it registers at the top of the playfield. Thereafter, the little mousie can become a junkyard dog by the player simply activating the "dog" button.

Pepper II: Okay, so there wasn't a **Pepper I** (the coin-op was actually Exidy's own revamp of **Victory**, which really hadn't done much in the arcades). This is still a devil of a videogame with irresistibly cute graphics and a truly innovative theme. This is about as good as a home version of a coin-op gets.
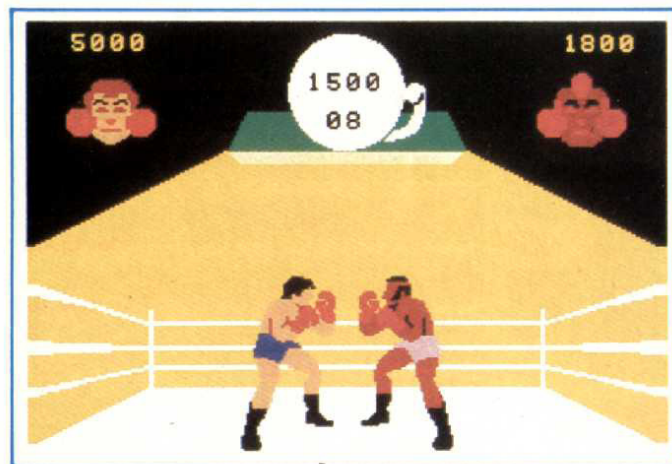
ROCKY BATTLES THE CHAMP
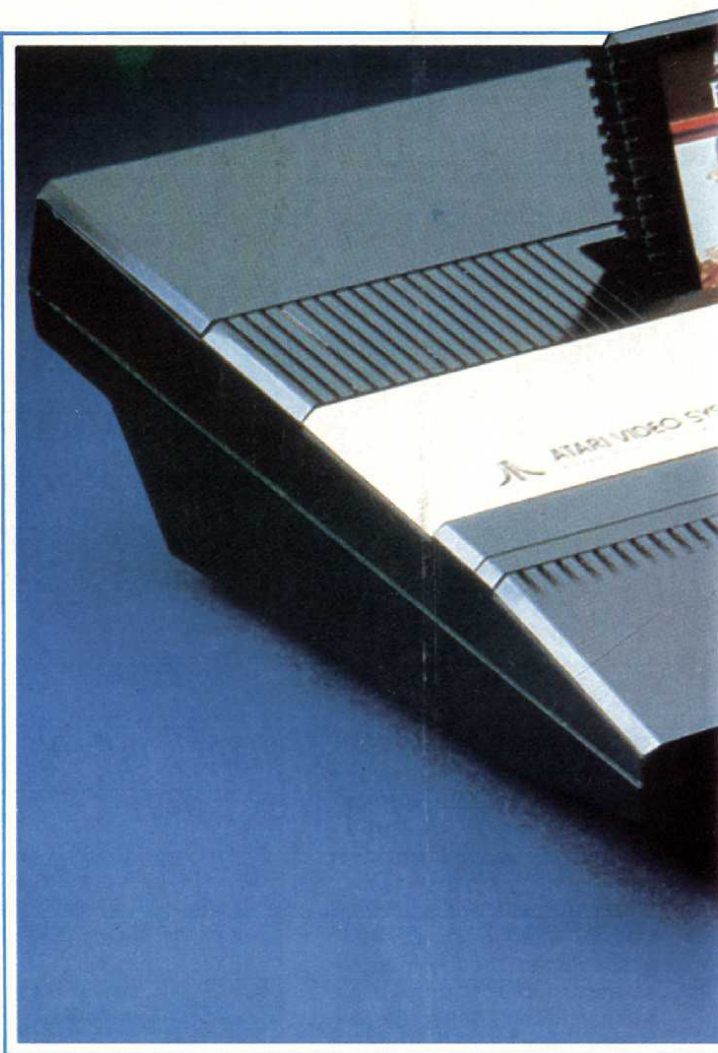
ATARI'S TOP OF THE LINER

Unique among all existing programmable and computer systems with game-playing applications, the 5200 is essentially a computer with all the strengths and memory implied by that description. The difference is that this is a computer built for only one purpose: playing the best videogames a home TV screen has ever broadcast.

That certainly doesn't sound like a simple task, but daunting projects have never stopped Atari. The exact specs regarding RAM and ROM capabilities still remain somewhat clouded.

The stylized, slanted console is a sleek, black box with a minimum of gadgetry and clutter. Aside from the power switch, the controller inputs and cartridge slot are the sole input devices on the console itself. The use of multi-function joystick-keypad controllers transfer a multitude of functions over to the gamer's