

ELECTRONIC FUN · GAMES

ECTREKKING!

Are you tired of having to share the TV with people who want (of all things) to watch programs instead of playing video games? Do you want to play arcade-quality games in your room, your friend's room or someplace where you won't be annoyed by (a) your parents, (b) your kids, (c) your baby brother who drools on the cartridges, or (d) your sister who always wants to know what you did with her Clash album? If you answered "Oh God, yes!" to any or all of the above, have we got a system for you! It's an all-in-one game system with its own TV screen, an arcade-type control panel, arcade memory and graphics chips and 12 cartridges (so far) plus one resident game. And it only costs \$200—about the same as any



home video game. What is the name of this apparent answer to the video gamer's prayer? Vectrex from GCE.

Vectrex looks just like a portable television but has several advantages a portable TV does not—for example, no *Brady Bunch* reruns. Of course, there are other advantages. Let's start with the screen.

What really sets Vectrex apart from other home video games is the type of screen it has. Rather than being a raster type—that is, using

graphics which are composed of pixels or blocks of dots like your own television screen— Vectrex has a vector screen. Vectors don't rely on pixels and therefore the graphics are smoother and slicker, resembling those found on arcade games such as *Asteroids* and *Tempest*. The vector screen also gives Vectrex the advantage of depth. This definitely enhances many of the games available for this system, most notably the space games in which ships can disappear into the distance.

The control panel is closer to the arcades than any other system currently out. It doesn't consist of a joystick or a disc-and-calculator-type unit. Instead it is a true panel with a small joystick on the far left and four pleasantly concave function buttons to the left, each one controlling a different action in a different game.

The panel folds up neatly into the bottom of the unit, doing away with messy wire tangles. It is attached by a 6-foot coil cord, allowing you enough room to

GCE's Vectrex uses a vector screen, which gives smoother graphics than a TV.

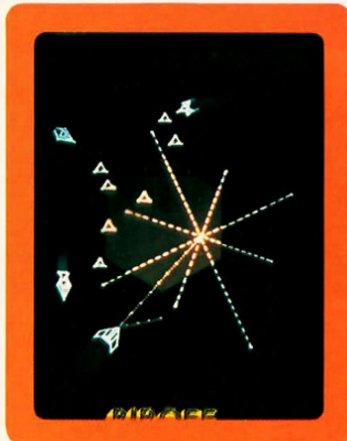
ELECTRONIC FUN - GAMES

move back and really enjoy the special effects. Although Vectrex only comes with one of these panels, a second one for two-player games is available at a cost of only \$35.

Vectrex also offers you 64K of memory, which naturally results in higher-resolution graphics, considerably more complex games and a greater number of variations available in each game.

If there is one drawback to the Vectrex system it is that the graphics are black and white. But each game comes with its own

RIPOFF



brightly colored overlay. And these are not as tacky as they sound. They are durable plastic and fit neatly over the screen, adding a surprising amount of color to the graphics. Each color overlay also has a key printed on the bottom which defines the function of the four buttons on the control panel. So in *Hyperchase*, for example, the joystick is for directional control, the first button for upshifting, the second for downshifting, the third for braking and the fourth for accelerating.

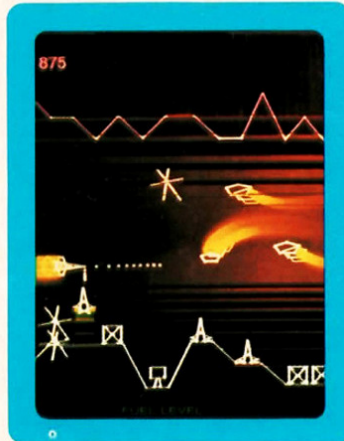
The knobs—on/off and volume (each Vectrex game plays a little tune before it starts up and sound ef-

fects faithfully duplicate those in arcades)—are on the front right, underneath the screen. They're small, unobtrusive and recessed so you can't hit them accidentally in the middle of a furious game. The brightness control is located on the back of the unit.

Cartridges are inserted on the right side and the basic drill is the same as in any other home video game system: Be sure the power is off, plug in the cart and then turn the power on. All of the games feature an accumulator which displays the highest score for that game as long as the unit remains on and the same cartridge remains in the slot.

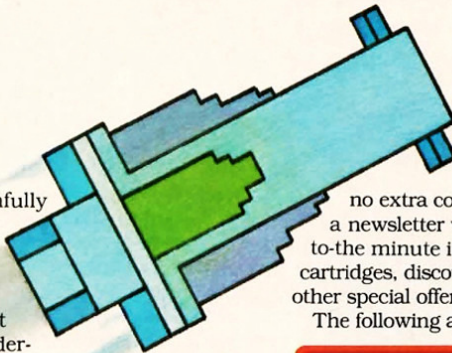
The system can be played on any hard surface, but it is wise not to place it on a bed or carpet unless, of course, you *want* to block the ventilation ducts—which does nothing

SCRAMBLE



for the system except ruin it.

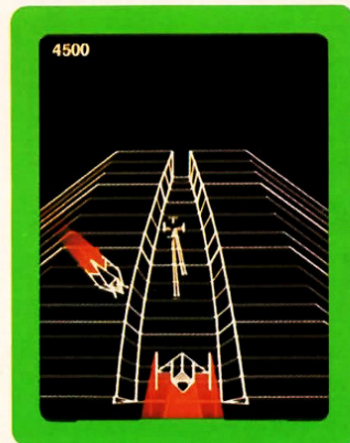
Any owner of Vectrex is automatically eligible for membership in the Vectrex Owner's Club at



no extra cost. Members receive a newsletter which features up-to-the minute information on new cartridges, discount coupons and other special offers.

The following are previews of the

STARHAWK



Vectrex games—*Mine Storm*, *Armor Attack*, *Berzerk*, *Clean Sweep*, *Hyperchase*, *Star Trek* and *Scramble*.

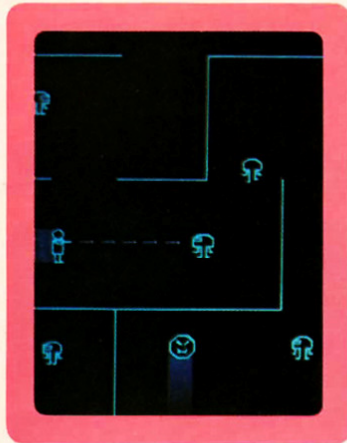
Other cartridges that will be available soon include: *Space Wars*, *Star Hawk*, *Rip-Off*, *Solar Quest*, *Blitz!* and *Cosmic Chasm*. They all are expected to sell for about \$30 apiece.

MINE STORM

This is the resident game. To play, you use the joystick and buttons two, three, and four. Number four is the firing button, number three is thrust and number two is the escape key which warps your ship to another part of the screen, similar to the hyperspace tactic in other games.

The game is very exciting and makes spectacular use of Vectrex's 3-D capabilities. After a brief and appropriately galactic musical introduction, an enemy ship moves through the playing area seeding a mine field and gradually disappearing in the distance. It plants four

ELE FUN - GAMES

BERZERIO

large mines. This is only the beginning of your problems.

Rotating the ship with the joystick, you fire at the mines, but do you destroy them? No. Each one you hit becomes two smaller mines. Curses. And after awhile, the enemy ship reappears and tries to either destroy you or plant additional mines. If, in fact, you manage to clear the mine field entirely, you will warp to another mine field and this one's more difficult. In addition to the dumb mines' the second field also contains fireball mines which, when hit by your laser, explode, hurling lethal fireballs in all directions. You either have to destroy them or get out of their way quick.

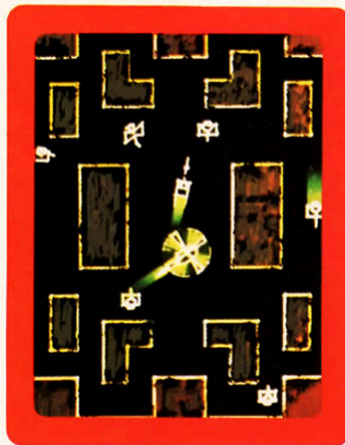
If you get really good and clear out the second mine field, you warp to a third which has magnetic mines as well as the other types. These mines are nuisances, following you around wherever you go. The object here is to destroy them at once. These mines also have the disconcerting ability to multiply. The fourth field brings you a fireball/magnetic mine combination and the fifth field presents you with a mixture of all of the above.

STAR TREK

Video games—the final frontier. In this game, you are Captain Kirk on the bridge of the starship Enterprise,

searching the universe for evil Klingons and Romulans to destroy before they destroy you. You use the joystick to maneuver the ship through space and to aim your gun-sight. You move from sector to sector, each with more enemy ships than the last, until you reach sector nine where you have to face the dreaded Klingon mothership, which is anything but maternal and fires all kinds of torpedoes at you. It can only be destroyed by being hit directly on its nose and only when the nose is lit up. If you do somehow manage to destroy her, you warp back to sector one and start all over again.

In the event that you are a glutton for punishment, you can always use

ARMOR..ATTACK

one of the Black Holes as a shortcut to the Klingon mothership. You may select the sector in which the Black Hole will appear but, if you don't want to do that, it will automatically appear in sector one.

Your perspective is from the cockpit and if you are hit by enemy fire, the windshield cracks and that ship is out of the game. You start with three ships and earn a bonus ship each time you destroy a Klingon mothership.

Your laser power and shield strength are limited and each new

sector uses up laser and shield energy at a faster rate than the previous one. Gauges at the bottom of the screen tell you how much power you have left for each and, when you get low, you have to refuel at your space station. Refueling can be tricky. You must align yourself with the door of the space ship (which is rather small) and then hook up with it by pressing

SOLAR QUEST

button two, the power link. You only have one space station per sector.

The game is fast, difficult and challenging. Beam me up, Scotty.

ARMOR ATTACK

Imagine being the only person in a bombed-out city with only one armed jeep to protect yourself from two enemy tanks and a rather vicious armed helicopter. This is the scene you must face in *Armor Attack*. And the graphics, swinging tank turrets and arcade-quality sound effects all add up to realism and pleasant frustration.

Although there are buildings which you can duck behind when things get rough, you still have to be really adept at controlling the jeep's very sensitive aiming and maneuvering controls if you want to destroy your attackers. Hitting a tank once will only succeed in stop-

ELECTRONIC FUN - GAMES

ping it from moving. It can still shoot at you. You must hit it a second time in order to destroy it. And as you destroy tanks, new ones come rolling in and a battle

STAR TREK



helicopter flies overhead. Unfortunately, you cannot hide from the chopper, although you can shoot at it. A bonus jeep is awarded for every five helicopters you destroy.

You can select any one of three game options: In games one and two, the buildings can be seen, while in game three, they're invisible, creating a blind maze.

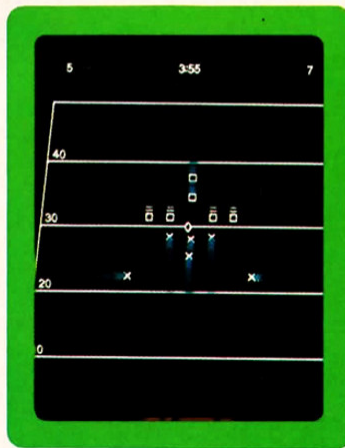
DERZERK

You are a humanoid in this great arcade translation and must run through mazes dodging bullets and shooting at robots. You can only shoot in the direction in which you're moving, so a lot of retreating and rushing in is necessary. You also must be very careful not to walk into any walls or try to shake hands with robots (no matter how cute you might think they are). They are electrified and contact will kill you. You can escape from the maze at any time simply by running through any of the exits.

The idea, is to stay in the maze as long as possible, shooting up robots and running up points. Leaving a maze, however, doesn't get you any relief. You simply find yourself in another maze facing more aggressive robots than before.

You'll be pleased to hear that Evil Otto has been successfully transferred to this format. As you may know, Evil Otto is a malevolent variation of those little round smiling faces, only behind Otto's grin

BLITZ!



lurks a rather unpleasant personality—he wants to kill you.

Although the graphics are smooth and clear, no 3-D effects are present in this game so, in comparison, it is rather plain. However, the game play is faithful to the arcade game and the action is quick and precise.

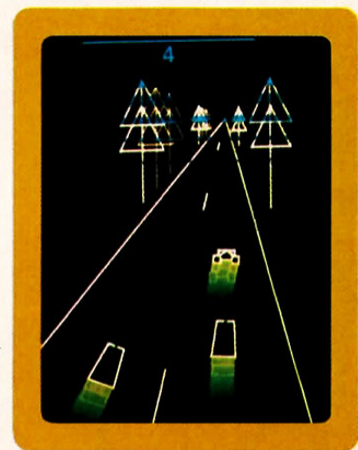
CLEAN SWEEP

A group of evil bank robbers have just blown a bank to smithereens. You, the bank president, have to recover all that money that is now mixed in with

Imagine being the only human in a bombed-out city while tanks try to kill you.

the rubble. Your tool is a vacuum cleaner and you've got to suck up all the bills before the thieves, who apparently have lost their getaway car, destroy you, too. In several game options, the lights are mysteriously doused, requiring you to gather the money in a blind maze.

HYPERCHASE



The bag on the vacuum cleaner has a limited capacity. This means that you have to run frantically to the deposit box in the center of the maze, drop off the money and then dash out to collect more. If you don't, the bag explodes.

Meanwhile, the thieves are stalking you. You have to avoid them or get your vacuum supercharged. This is done by entering any one of the four special rooms in the bank's four corners. Once you are supercharged, you can destroy the robbers. However, you can only use each room once. After that the door closes and you no longer have access to it.

Each maze gets successively harder, with more money to pick up and a vacuum that holds less. You start with five vacuums and earn a bonus vacuum every 10,000 points.

HYPERCHASE

This is a super-fast, super-action road race which exploits the Vectrex

ELECTRONIC FUN · GAMES

3-D effects to their fullest. The highway banks and curves, tiny cars in the distance grow as you overtake them, and you drive through a tunnel so realistic you'll feel claustrophobic.

There are two game options: Game One has you racing against time as you try to finish the course as quickly as possible. In this variation you get an unlimited number of cars, so you don't have to worry about crashing insofar as completing the course is concerned. But crashes do waste a lot of time.

Game Two allots you only five

cars and you've got to travel as far and as fast as you can before totaling them all.

The control panel adds a very realistic feeling to the game. The joystick controls the forward movement and direction of the car, and each button controls a different automobile function. Button one is for upshifting; button two for downshifting, three for braking and four for accelerating. What's particularly charming is that in order to achieve your fastest speed, you must shift into high gear. You can actually hear the engine laboring if

you try to go too fast in too low a gear. And if for some reason you slow down or come to a complete halt, you must downshift before you can speed up again.

SCRAMBLE

Relentlessly loyal to its arcade parent, *Scramble* is perhaps the best of the group. And the color overlay really enhances the playfield.

You're flying a rocket through very heavy and complex enemy defenses. Guided missiles, alerted by a radar warning system, fire straight up to try to get you. You can avoid the rockets, bomb them, or shoot them with a laser cannon. You also encounter UFOs and flamoids (which cannot be destroyed and therefore must be avoided) and some of the time you'll find yourself having to maneuver about in some very tight and curvy tunnels. Your mission is to bomb as many of the enemy's bases as possible and also destroy their fuel tanks. Each fuel tank you succeed in destroying replenishes your own fuel supply.

There are five levels to get through: the mountains, the cavern, the flamoids, the city and the maze. Each level has its own peculiar dangers: The city has missiles hidden in silos and the tight maze calls for really precise flying. Also, there's just no fuel tank location at the beginning of the maze, so it's best to fill 'er up before you start.

Once you have successfully traveled through all the levels, you will reach the enemy base. If you succeed in destroying the enemy base, the *Scramble* theme music plays, the game's difficulty level increases and you start again with a full tank. Each game begins with five ships and a bonus ship is awarded every 10,000 points.

A fast-paced, exciting and colorful game.

We feel the Vectrex system is excellent and so are its initial games. What remains now is for some major software manufacturers to make more games and give this system the only thing it lacks: an expanded library. □

