

Timeline 99 - preserved for the benefit of the TI-99 Community

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REPORT ON THE SUMMER 1983 CONSUMER ELECTRONICS SHOW

As most 99ers know, or have at least heard, I enjoy digging into and writing about most aspects dealing with the history of our computer, but none more than the cartridge software that was announced, produced or planned for the TI-99/4A. This article, which is reprinted from the July 1983 issue of the Houston User Group's HUG newsletter, is a treasure trove for both history and cartridge information. The original report was written by Jane McAshan, a Houston area computer retailer and business owner, who was also a member of the Houston 99ers. My sincerest thanks go out to Mr. Richard Lumpkin of the Houston Users Group for providing me with back issues of the club's newsletters so that I could uncover such jewels as this McAshan treasure.

Bill Gaskill Dec 1995

Chicago, IL-The 1983 Summer Consumer Electronics Show was held here from June 5-9 at McCormick Place, McCormick West, and assorted hotels around town. More than 80,000 visitors were present for the giant convention to see the latest and greatest items for audio, video, games and computers.

Of course the items which were of interest to me and the HUG were at McCormick West. Here there were 150,000+ square feet of exhibit space devoted to computers and video games. There were a few companies who had booths at McCormick Place (Atari, Panasonic), but the ones displaying the items relating to our computer were at McCormick West.

When I arrived on Sunday afternoon, the first place I looked for was the TI booth, and as you can tell from the photo (sorry, I couldn't duplicate the photo, BG), I didn't have to look far! The huge 2-story exhibit was the first one inside the door of McCormick West. There was a large display of assorted software, from TI and their authorized 3rd party people, Scott-Foresman, Adventure International, Milton Bradley, Scholastic, Addison-Wesley, Milliken and DLM Arcademics. TI's major hardware announcement was a Direct Connect Modem compatible with the Hex-Bus for \$99.95. There had been many rumors in the press, and were in the Show Daily papers (sic), about other new hardware items, however no official announcements were made. TI has a new policy in the Home Computer Division that they will not announce ANY new hardware until they are certain they will be able to ship it within approximately 60 days. Future announcements will not be made solely at the Consumer Electronics Shows, but at appropriate times during the year. TI did announce several new software items.

TI MINI-WRITER -- a mini-word processor with features including; full screen text editing (24 x 40 character window, 80-character line); 9500 characters stored per file; add/delete characters or line; maveable copy; upper and lower case characters; save/load to and from any storage device; print via the Peripheral Expansion System or Hex-Bus RS-232 to printer; search for desired information; scroll screen; purge text buffer; and cancel commands. Requires cassette recorder and Mini Memory cartridge. PHT 6103 \$19.95.

EARLY LOGO LEARNING FUN -- Contains a selection of the best LOGO procedures in a format designed for preschool children (not a scaled down LOGO, but some of the Lamplighter procedures from the Curriculum Guide, useful for 2-5 year olds). \$39.95.

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WORD INVASION -- A friendly alien octopus protects her underwater territory from a screen full of invading words with a magic ring that moves from arm to arm, firing at approaching words. The player must match the appropriate word with the part of speech that appears below the alien octopus. Players practice identifying the six major parts of speech. (DLM Arcademics). PHM 3169 \$39.95.

WORD RADAR -- You're a control tower operator scanning for words in four quadrants. The words appear for a few seconds then disappear. You must use the radar beam to scan the quadrants and match the words at the bottom of the screen with one of the words in far quadrants (sic). A challenging visual memory and discrimination skills builder for players of all ages. (DLM Arcademics). PHM 3185 \$39.95 (At the DLM booth, they said there will be 4 more word games available within the next year).

MOONMINE -- You are the captain of the U.S.S. MoonMine and your mission is to capture treasures stolen from Earth. Battle against the mighty Zygonaut and his menacing creatures to save the world's most valuable treasures! A one-player game which tests your skills in strategic planning and quick thinking. This package was featured in the Software Showcase at CES. PHM 3131 \$39.95.

SNEGGIT -- Save the eggs! Hungry snakes are in the barnyard, devouring your eggs by the dozen. You must survive the reptilian attack and save as many eggs as possible. PHM 3145 \$39.95.

MUNCHMOBILE -- Not your average car! It has arms which you can use to grab at goodies along the highway. But don't forget about fuel...or you won't have a nice trip. PHM 3146 \$39.95.

ENTRAPMENT -- You are in command of a space ship that patrols Earth's atmosphere. Suddenly, the Earth is under attack. A legion of hostile larvae is entering the atmosphere. These creatures turn into ravenous insects and attack the Earth. Unless you immobilize the creatures and form an impenetrable shield, they continue to threaten the planet. Requires Mini Memory cartridge and cassette recorder.

Milton Bradley announced 10 new games, 4 of them are for young children; Terry's Turtle Adventure and I'm Hiding will require the MBX Expansion System which retails for \$129.95. The other games are:

CHAMPIONSHIP BASEBALL -- Dazzling diamond action with a computer umpire to call out the plays. Realistic player movements and ballpark music. Requires the MBX Expansion System. PHM 3148 \$59.95.

SPACE BANDIT -- Snatch up space crystals in a 3-D maze, chased by deadly droid guards. 3-D movements and visual effects. Activate shields or be hurled into space. PHM 3149 \$49.95.

BIG FOOT -- Can you dodge eagles and boulders to climb high to capture Bigfoot? Six mountains, each more challenging than the previous. Pick up supplies and gold for binus points. Throw out rope and align your climber. PHM 3151 \$49.95.

SUPER FLY -- Destroy the alien spiders before the next batch hatches and gets you! Watch eggs develop into spiders before your eyes. Maneuver your fly into position and zap the spiders. PHM 3153 \$49.95.

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SEWERMANIA -- Defuse a time bomb in a sewer filled with killer rats and alligators! Pick up a shovel to bash the rats. Turn generator to flood sewer and drown rats. PHM 3150 \$49.95.

METEOR BELT -- Let your computer co-pilot warn you of enemy ships in this daring space duel. Destroy meteors and rival spaceships. PHM 3152 \$49.95.

An aggrement was announced with Fox Video Games to license their games for the TI. The first one to be released will be-.

M*A*S*H -- Airlift soldiers wounded on a battlefield to the 4077 MASH unit. Time is running out for the wounded and you must save their lives. 1 or 2 players. PHM 3158 \$39.95.

TI also announced a major license agreement with IMAGIC to make certain of their games available on the 99/4A. On display at the TI booth were DEmon Attack and Microsurgeon. Also at the IMAGIC booth were MoonSweeper, Fathom and Wing War.

You can be sure that TI has more license agreements up their sleeves, and more software coming from present companies. Even if we were to rely on TI cartridges alone there is a lot of new, quality software coming out in the next 6 months. However, as I found when I ventured further in CES, there are a number of companies releasing software for the TI-99/4A, cartridge and cassette based.

A visit to the Emerald Valley Publishing booth found Gary and Pat Kaplan busy promoting not only the 99er (magazine) but several new books (the Best of 99er really looks great!), but also their new line of cassette based software. You'll find pictures of the covers in the back of the June 99er. Several of the programs look good, and the idea of combining a game program with a programming tutorial is good.

Scholastic Inc. announced a series of new cassette based educational programs for the TI (and others).

TURTLE TRACKS -- Use simple commands to draw pictures and patterns and make melodies.

ELECTRONIC PARTY -- 2 games, Surprise...open the presents on the screen for surprise activities; (and) Make A Card...create original electronic greeting cards.

SQUARE PAIRS -- Matching games of memory and imagination, use theirs or create your own. Scholastic promises more packages to come.

As I explored the exhibits, I saw more and more companies with cartridges for the TI-99/4A! This despite TI's stated opposition to non-authorized 3rd party cartridges. For those of us who have the current 4A there will be no problem (just don't let TI touch it, or they will "upgrade" your 4A!). Future versions of the 4A, such as the cream colored ones coming off the lines in July, will supposedly not run 'foreign' cartridges without violating one of TI's patents. It should be interesting to see how the whole thing comes out. Some of the more interesting developments are as follows.

Funware was exhibiting several new programs, they guarantee that their programs WILL run on all future versions of the 99/4A (they have an agreement

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with TI which covers at least some of their line). That agreement might have something to do with the reason Creative Software recently purchased Funware! Driving Demon and Ambulance should be out in July, with other titles such as St. Nick and Cave Creatures to follow shortly. Creative Software plans Astroblitz, Trashman and Rat Hotel for us.

One of the new entrants to the 99/4A market was Thorn EMI, and it looks like their titles should be available by August or September. The games were actually RUNNING on 99/4As and the graphics looked super!!

RIVER RESCUE -- Navigate a treacherous river and save the refugees! 6 game variations, 1 or 2 players.

SUBMARINE COMMANDER -- Sub patrol simulator to hunt and destroy enemy shipping.

WAR GAMES -- Save the world from a nuclear holocaust! Their newest game and the graphics have to be seen to be believed.

Epyx Computer Software plans to make several of their programs available for the 4A, seven on cartridge and six on cassette. The cassette titles include Seawolf, Spectar, Gun Fight, Circus, Starfire, and Fire One. The cartridges are:

JUMPMAN JUNIOR -- 12 screens featuring electrocution traps, moving walls, hellstones, and other dangers.

PITSTOP -- Fast paced racing action plus the strategy of the pits.

GATEWAY TO APSHAI -- 8 different screens with 50 chambers per screen. Explore the dark labyrinth of rooms and twisted caverns which lead to the fabled Temple of Apshai. Glorious treasures and nasty monsters.

LUNAR OUTPOST -- Alien invaders are preparing a full scale invasion of Earth, and your Lunar Outposts are all that stand between the invasion force and ultimate defeat. Strategy and 3-D graphics are featured.

SWAT RESCUE -- Police action plus strategy and planning are combined in this new high-resolution graphics game.

SILICON WARRIOR -- 3-D graphics, characters that disappear and reappear and real time competition for up to 4 players.

FUN WITH MUSIC -- Learn and play music on your video screen, easy to use with its handy keyboard overlay, the perfect blend of education and fun.

Completely new to the home market is SEGA, maker of arcade games. After licensing ZAXXON to DataSoft, they decided to enter the market for themselves. Their first titles will be available for the Atari, VIC-20 and TI.

CONGO BONGO -- Climb impossible cliffs, cross treacherous lakes, dodge coconuts, leap over poisonous snakes and outsmart charging Rhinos in your attempt to capture Congo Bongo.

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BUCK ROGERS: PLANET OF ZOOM -- Terminate the evil enemy Source Ship, but first fly through enemy infested surface channels and smasher tunnels, around city spires and against an endless array of bizarre alien ships.

STAR TREK -- You decide when, where and how to use the Enterprise's Warp Drive, Impulse Power, Photon Torpedoes and Phasers as you battle with the dreaded Klingons, the Federation's deadliest enemies.

One of the major announcements at the CES was the formation of a new division, Atari Publishing. They will be producing proven programs for a wide variety of machines, IBM, Apple, Commodore 64, VIC 20, and TI-99/4A. The first programs to be offered should be available by early fall, and include not only familiar titles from Atari, but 4 which are licensed from Synapse Software.

CENTIPEDE -- Armed with a bug blaster, zap through an invasion of creepy crawlers who threaten the mushroom patch.

DEFENDER -- The only protection left to the humanoids, the target of the crazed invaders.

DIG DUG -- The search beneath the earth yields a bounty of fruits and vegetables, but also Fygars and Pookas.

PAC-MAN -- Gobble the dots, and avoid the goblins.

DONKEY KONG -- Rescue the Fair Maiden by helping Mario negotiate girders, elevators and treachery.

SLIME -- The diabolical alien plan is to raise the level of the Earth's oceans to drown out all life so the slime breathing invincibles can colonize.

PROTECTOR -- The Frauxillian Slimehordes are attacking your cities and carrying off their citizens. Can you get your people to safety as volcanoes erupt and enemy forces conspire to thwart your every effort?

PICNIC PARANOIA -- Can George be fast enough with his swatter to keep the ants and other pests from walking off with his meal?

SHAMUS -- The Shadow is there - in one of four levels of 32 rooms, each with bristling danger.

Jane McAshan

preserved by William Gaskill and Tom Wills on January 8, 2011