Five VIC Games From Nufekop

David Malmberg

This latest batch of Nufekop games once again proves the company is worthy of its name. The word *Nufekop*, according to the firm's early ads, has a Druid origin, and means putting an extraordinarily large amount into a small pocket or enclosure, possibly through the use of magic. This is an apt name for a software company that can pack so much fun, excitement, fantastic sound, and colorful graphics into its programs and get them to fit into the VIC-20's relatively small memory.

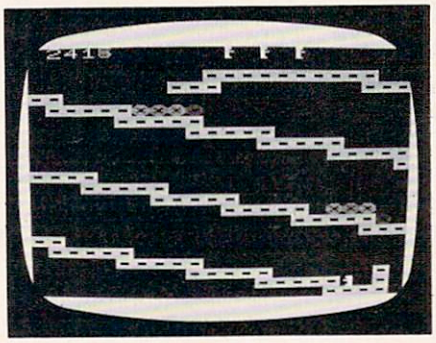
Before describing the individual games, let me explain the evaluation criteria. I believe the most important attribute of a great game is its "lasting power." It should be just as much fun to play the game the hundredth time as the first or second time. You shouldn't become bored or jaded. Ideally, the game should have multiple levels of difficulty. The game shouldn't be too easy for the expert or too hard for a beginning player. A great game will make you want to play it again and again – or as they say in the coin-operated video game trade, a great game is one which will keep you "pumping in the quarters."

In evaluating these games, I made use of a panel of expert consultants – the neighborhood children from 8 to 14 years old. Each was asked to comment on the things he or she liked and disliked and to rate each game on a scale from zero to ten. A zero rating means it is a waste of time to play the game even *once*. A ten means it's as good as the best full-fledged arcade games, for example, *Centipede* or *Pac-Man*. The comments and ratings that follow reflect the consensus of these experts, as well as my own opinions.

Krazy Kong

The object in this game is to rescue the maidens from the evil Kong's clutches while he tries to stop you by hurling barrels down at you. There are various configurations of steps to climb. You may use either the keyboard or a joystick to climb the steps and jump over the barrels. As you save each maiden, you are presented with a new set of steps – each harder than the last. The game ends when you are killed by a falling barrel, run out of energy, or have rescued all three maidens.

Krazy Kong is well done. It has great graphics, sound effects, and music. The action is very fast. There are four levels of play that govern the number of barrels and the length of your jumps. The highest level is tough enough to challenge even the most seasoned gamester.

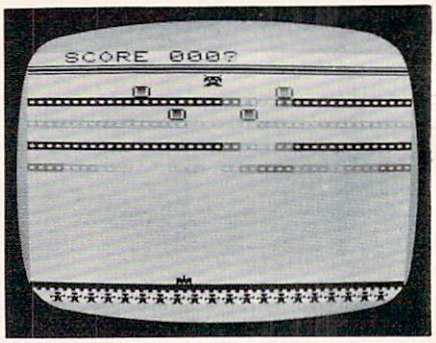


Barrels tumble down the stairways as the little man begins his ascent to rescue the maiden in Krazy Kong .

However, my experts were a bit disappointed that *Krazy Kong* didn't have a little more variety in the paths up to the maidens and in the obstacles to dodge. Challenging though it was, they quickly became bored with climbing steps and jumping barrels. *Krazy Kong* doesn't have the lasting power of a really great game, so the consensus rating was seven out of a possible ten. *Krazy Kong* works in a standard 5K VIC and is priced at $12.95.

Anti-Matter Splatter

This game is difficult to describe. Anti-matter "bombs" are falling to earth. You control a splatter-matter cannon using either the keyboard or the joystick. You try to shoot the bombs with your cannon before they hit the people at the bottom of the screen and make them disappear. (What else would you expect an anti-matter bomb to do to a person?) As the game progresses, the action gets increasingly frantic



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with more bombs and greater speed.

You lose the game whenever a bomb hits your cannon or whenever all of the people have been reduced to anti-matter. You score points by shooting down the bombs, but the high score is not saved. No one who tried this game was ever able to "win," so it is not clear how (or if) it is possible.

Anti-Matter Splatter is written entirely in machine language so the speed is incredibly fast. The graphics and sound are outstanding. This game has good lasting power; the kids played it again and again.

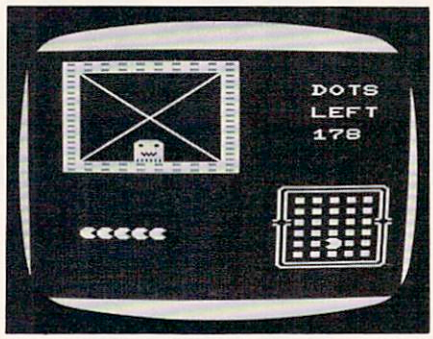
However, the game could have been improved. You get only one cannon, so the game is often over before it has barely begun. The high score should be displayed, so players would have something to try to beat. A variable level of difficulty would be a nice improvement. This could be done by varying either the speed and/or the number of cannons.

Anti-Matter Splatter was rated an eight out of ten. The program works in a standard 5K VIC and retails for $24.95.

3-D Man

3-D Man is a very clever idea for a game – you move through a maze that is displayed in three dimensions. Long corridors with occasional passageways on the sides are displayed in perspective. The object of the game is for your 3-D Man to eat all of the dots, before he is eaten by one of the four ghosts that randomly roam the maze. During the game, the screen shows what your 3-D Man sees ahead of him. At the same time, a small radar screen shows the overall maze and your 3-D Man's location and direction within it. The score corresponds to the number of dots gobbled. You get five 3-D Men before the game is over.

The graphics of *3-D Man* are extremely fast and superbly



In 3-D Man, *players must eat dots in a three-dimensional maze (upper left) while watching out for pursuers on the bird's-eye view map (lower right).*

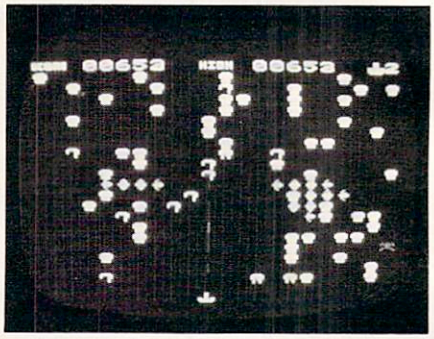
done. Sound is very effectively used, with different noises for such events as eating a dot, being eaten by a ghost, or trying to make an illegal movement (i.e., bumping into the maze wall).

3-D Man, however, is an example of a game that lacks lasting power. Everyone loved it the first couple of times. As they continued to play, they discovered its major flaw – that the ghosts' positions are truly random; they do not move from one location to a contiguous one. As an example, it is quite common to encounter a certain ghost (e.g., the red one), then turn around and attempt to flee in the opposite direction, only to find the same ghost there, too. Because of the random nature of the ghosts, *3-D Man* is not really a game of skill. With success so dependent on luck, all of my experts soon lost their enthusiasm. The consensus rating was a five.

3-D Man requires a 3K memory expander and a joystick. It is priced at $19.95.

Exterminator

This is one of the best games I've ever seen for the VIC or any other computer. The object is to shoot everything that moves and everything that doesn't. You normally have three shooters, but you can get a free one at 5000 points. Spiders speed up when you get to 20,000 points. The screen changes color combinations whenever you annihilate all of the pieces of the current centipede.



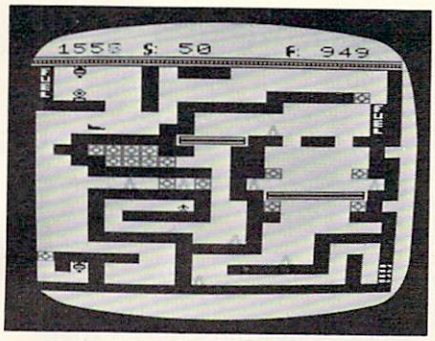
Blasting away at centipede sections, spiders, mushrooms, and other obstacles in Exterminator.

Exterminator is an absolute marvel! Written entirely in machine language, it is unbelievably fast. The graphics, sound, and music are all fantastic. This game is clearly the most popular in my library. The fact that Nufekop was able to fit all of this action and fun into a standard 5K VIC without any additional memory is a tremendous accomplishment. The rating was unanimous among my panel of experts – ten out of ten. *Exterminator* is a great buy at $24.95.

Defender On Tri

The object of this game is to save a group of scientists who have become trapped while exploring an abandoned space station (with the code name "Tri") before the station crashes into the sun. Using the joystick, you control a small rescue vessel. Unfortunately, your ship has room for only one passenger – so you must find the scientists and bring them safely through the maze of machinery in the space station one at a time. This is a very hazardous journey, since the machinery is moving very fast and will destroy your ship unless your defense shields are activated.

However, you cannot have your shields energized too often because they drain so much of



In Defender On Tri, *players must maneuver a tiny ship (upper left) through a maze of machinery in a huge space station to rescue scientists.*

your ship's fuel that you would be unable to complete your mission. You are in a dangerous race against the clock. Time is running out. As Tri moves closer and closer to a collision with the sun, the machinery begins to speed up. You have precious little fuel left and have to make every drop count as you thread your way through a maze where one false move means sudden death.

This game, too, is exceptionally well done. The graphics are great. The action is fast. The sound effects are good. The game is quite exciting, although it is very difficult. The only complaint anyone had was that the game was probably too difficult. None of the neighborhood kids was ever able to rescue all of the scientists. Several kids got frustrated and gave up on the game. Still, the consensus rating was a high nine out of ten.

Defender On Tri requires a 3K memory expander and a joystick. It retails for $19.95.

Nufekop games are widely distributed. The games may also be purchased directly from the company.

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3-D Man
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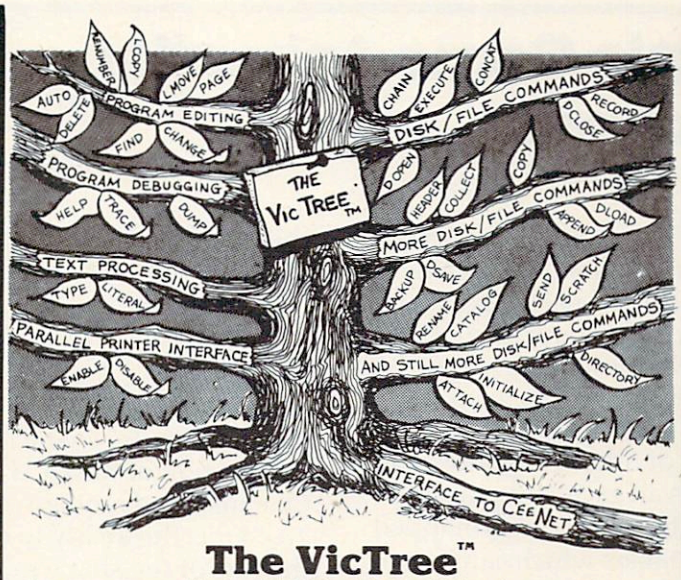

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