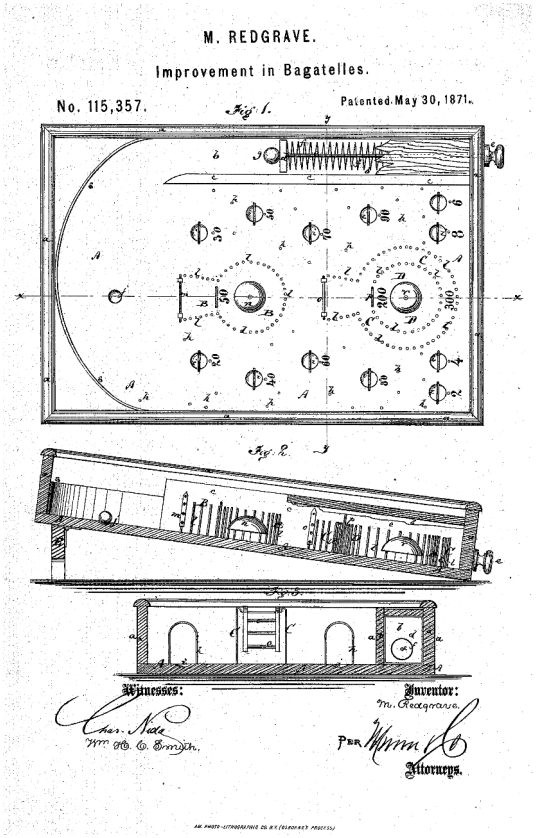
Videogiochi, informatica per l'intrattenimento

Storia dell'Informatica
a.a. 2025/26

contenuti

- Videogioco, un tentativo di definizione
- Alcuni titoli storici (alcuni!)
- L'epica stagione degli home computer
- La cultura dei videogiochi
- La dimensione di un mercato

1870–1930, macchine da gioco



M. REDGRAVE.

Improvement in Bagatelles.

No. 115,357. Patented May 30, 1871.

Witnesses: Inventor: M. Redgrave.

Per Munn & Co. Attorneys.

BINGO

A GAME OF SKILL — 5 SHOTS FOR 1c

Dimensions 24x16x7 inches — Shipping Weight, 24 lbs.

A fascinating game chock full of fun and thrills in a well constructed cabinet of solid walnut. A simple mechanical construction made of the best and most suitable materials.

A thousand machines already in operation in Chicago and making real money for the local operators.

SAMPLE PRICE $16.50 (F. O. B. Chicago)

Write for quantity prices

To the operators comes an important announcement from D. Gottlieb & Company that production on their Bingo Machine has reached a stage whereby they can fill all orders promptly, and they ask that the operators place their orders with their nearest distributors, who are as follows:

BINGO NOVELTY COMPANY, 1832 So. Trumbull Ave., Chicago, Ill.
ATLANTA AMUSE U COMPANY, 210 Garett St., S. W., Atlanta, Ga.
AUTOMATIC AMUSEMENT COMPANY, 2329 W. Pico, Los Angeles, Calif.
683 Linden Ave., Memphis, Tenn.
IRVING BROMBERG, 7 Miami Court, Brooklyn, N. Y.
F. C. EWING COMPANY, 116 E. 15th St., Fort Worth, Texas.
KEENEY & SONS, 100 E. 10th St., Chicago, Ill.
SILENT SALES COMPANY, 309 Gorman Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn.
VENDING MACHINE COMPANY, 309 Franklin St., Fayetteville, N. C.

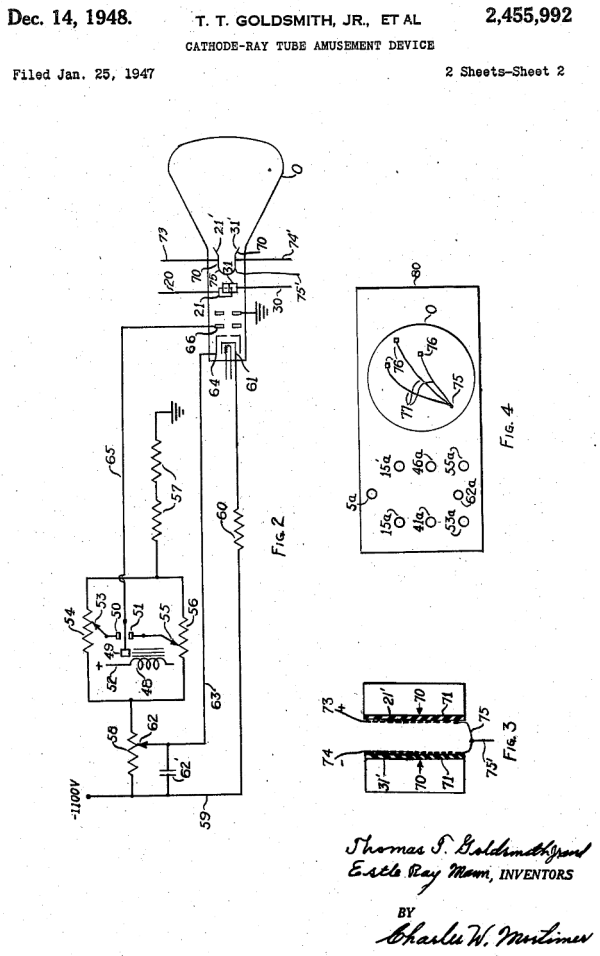
D. GOTTLIEB & CO.

4318-24 W. Chicago Avenue — CHICAGO, ILL.

GUARANTEE: To refund full purchase price if dissatisfied after 10 day trial.

1948, CRT Amusement

- Goldsmith & Mann
  - Si spara
  - Sagoma meccanica
  - Proiettile elettronico
  - Collisione meccanica
  - Esplosione elettronica
- Video sì, programma no
  - Meccanica
  - Elettronica analogica
  - Interazione in tempo reale



1948, Turochamp

- Alan Turing & David Champernowne
  - Programma per giocare a scacchi
  - Eseguito “su carta” da Turing e Champernowne
  - Circa mezz’ora per ogni mossa
  - Perse con Alick Glennie
  - Vinse con la moglie di Champernowne
- Algoritmo sì, programma no, video nemmeno
  - Manca proprio il calcolatore, in effetti
  - Un tentativo di implementazione sul Mk1

1950, Bertie the Brain

- Canadian National Exhibition
  - Josef Kates (UTEC)
  - Tic-tac-toe
  - Per il pubblico
  - Macchina dedicata (demo Additron)

- Un arcade?
  - Programmato
  - Grafico
  - Interazione a turni

1951, ancora scacchi

- Dietrich Prinz
  - Manchester/Ferranti Mk1
  - Problemi di scacchi del tipo “matto in due mosse”
  - Programmato, su un calcolatore generico
  - Risoluzione in 15-20’, con ingresso su nastro
  - A “giocare” è in realtà solo il calcolatore...
- Sempre Prinz
  - Ancora su un Ferranti, ma a Roma (1955/56)
  - Musikalisches Würfelspiel

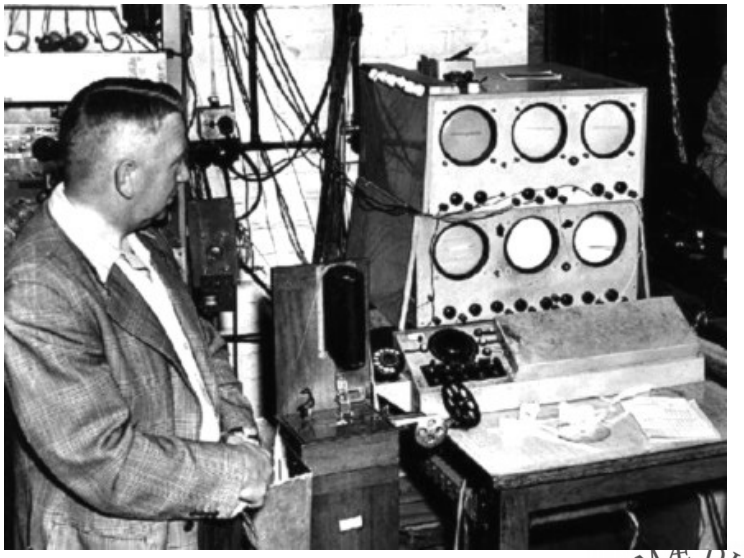
1951, Nimrod

- Il Nim della Ferranti
  - Per il Festival of Britain
  - Poi al Berlin Industrial Show
  - John Bennett
  - Buona matematica
  - Gran divertimento
- Antenato elettromeccanico
  - Westinghouse Nimatron
  - New York World Fair, 1940
  - US Patent 2215544

1952, ancora tic-tac-toe

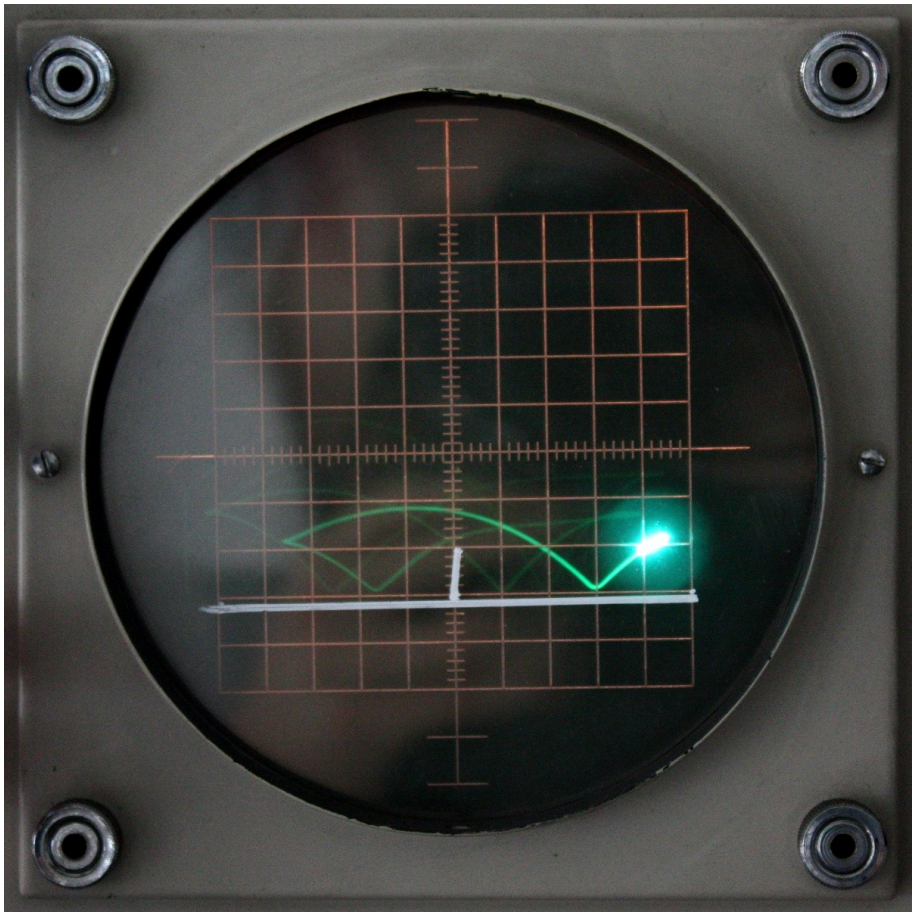
- Sull'EDSAC di Cambridge
  - Alexander S. Douglas
  - Dottorato su interazione uomo-calcolatore
  - Tubi catodici per visualizzare le memorie (a ritardo)

- Caratteristiche
  - Programmato
  - Grafico e a pixel!
  - Interfaccia dedicata
  - Interattivo, ma a turni



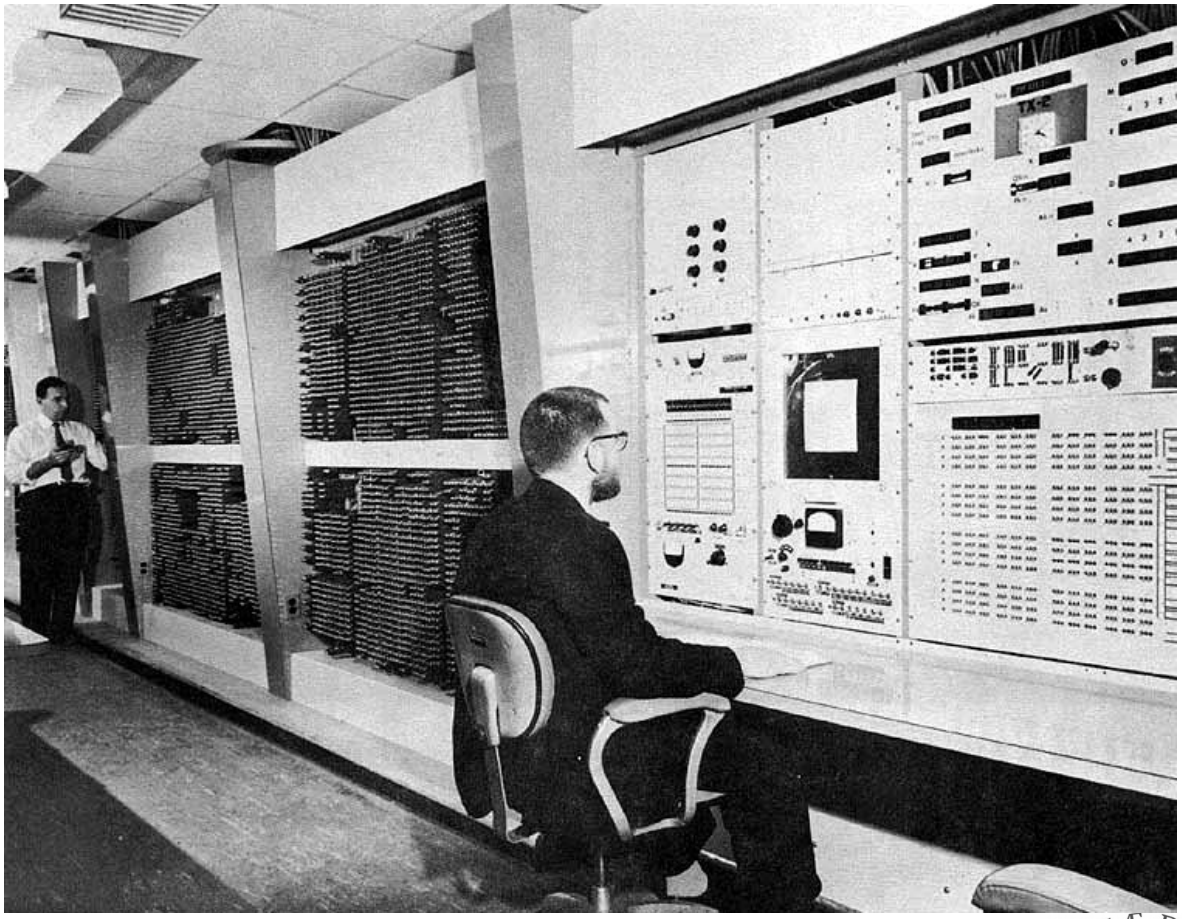
1958, Tennis for Two

- William Higinbotham
  - Donner Model 30
  - Per il pubblico del Visitor Day al Brookhaven Nat. Lab.
  - Allestito due volte
- Niente programma
  - Multigiocatore, suono
  - Tempo reale
  - Ma analogico

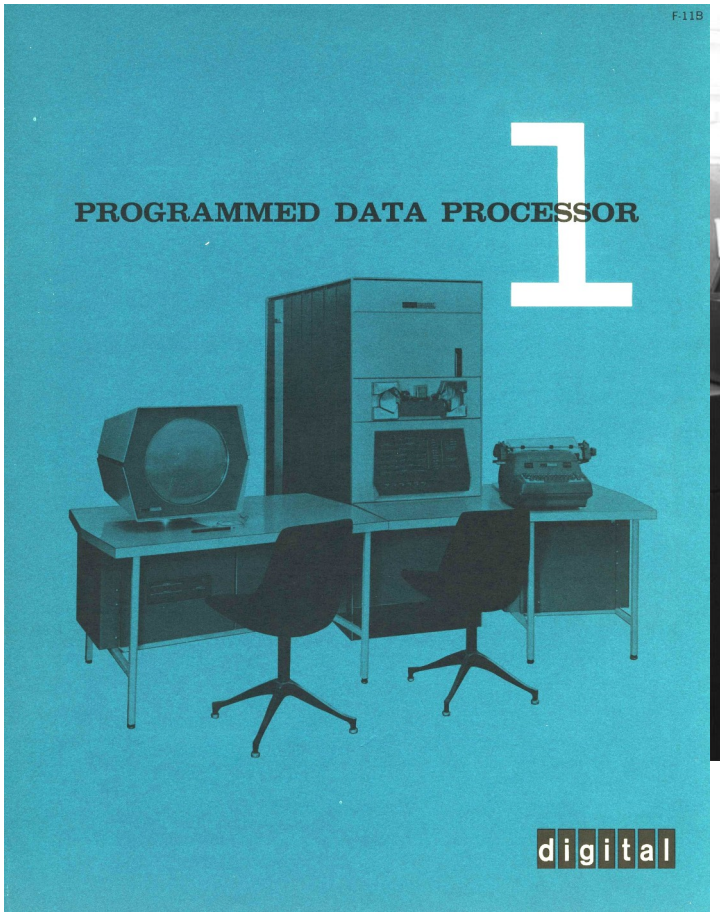


1958, prove d'interazione

- MIT TX-0/2
  - Wirlwind project
  - Interazione in tempo reale, grafica
  - AN/FSQ-7
- Giochi
  - Maze
  - Tic-tac-toe (!)



1960, Digital PDP-1



1962, Spacewar!

- Hingham Institute (finto)
  - Steve Russell, Martin Graetz, Wayne Wiitanen
- Il Gioco
  - Grafico
  - Programmato
  - Interattivo
  - Fisica mediata
  - Multigiocatore
  - In tempo reale

Theory of Computer Toys

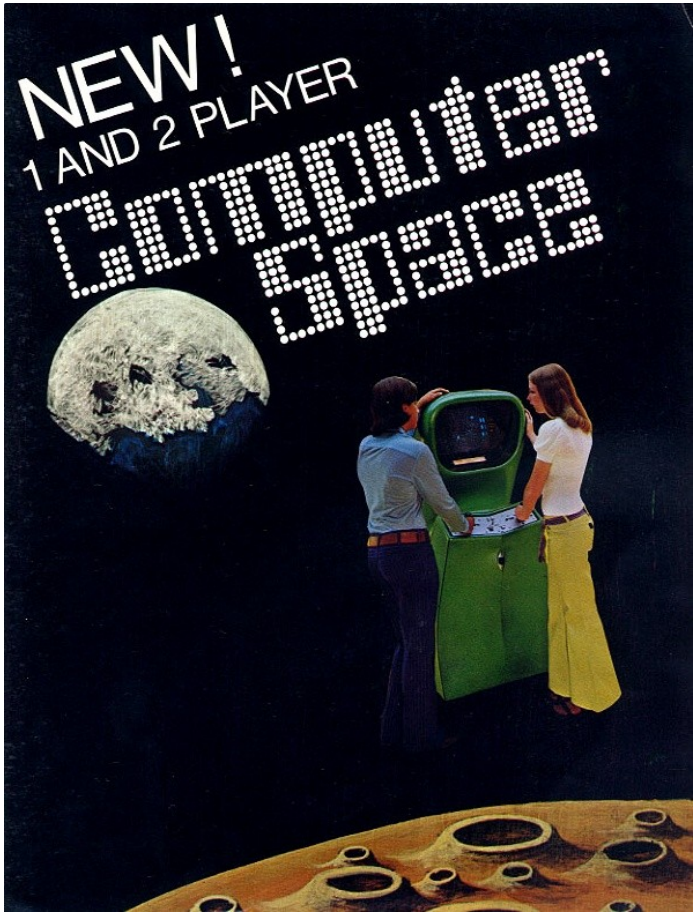
- Requisiti per la demo perfetta (Hingham Inst.)
  - It should demonstrate as many of the computer's resources as possible, and tax those resources to the limit
  - Within a consistent framework, it should be interesting, which means every run should be different
  - It should involve the onlooker in a pleasurable and active way - in short, it should be a game

1971, Galaxy Game

- Su un PDP 11/20
  - Solo a Stanford
  - 10 c a partita (25 per 3 partite)
  - Multiterminale
  - 8 anni di servizio

1971, Computer Space

- Nutting Associates
  - Nolan Bushnell, Ted Dabney (prima di Atari)
  - Primo tentativo sul Data General Nova
  - Poi hw dedicato
  - In sala giochi
  - Ma troppo complicato per i bar



1972, Olimpiadi Intergalattiche

OggiSTI n. 180, F. Talarico, L. Montgnani

SPACEWAR

Fanatic Life and Symbolic Death Among the Computer Bums

by Stewart Brand

THE FIRST "INTERGALACTIC SPACEWAR OLYMPICS" WILL BE HELD HERE, WEDNESDAY 10 OCTOBER, 1200 HOURS. FIRST PRIZE WILL BE A YEAR'S SUBSCRIPTION TO "ROLLING STONE". THE GALA EVENT WILL BE REPORTED BY STONE SPORTS REPORTER STEWART BRAND & PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANNIE LIEBOWITZ. LET'S BEGIN!

READY OR NOT, computers are coming to the people.

That's good news, maybe the best since psychedelics. It's way off the track of the "Computers—Threat or Menace?" school of liberal criticism but surprisingly in line with the romantic fantasies of the forefathers of the science such as Norbert Wiener, Warren McCulloch, J.C.R. Licklider, John von Neumann and Vannevar Bush.

The trend owes its health to an odd array of influences: The youthful fervor and firm dis-Establishmentarianism of the freaks who design computer science; an astonishingly enlightened research program from the very top of the Defense Department; an unexpected market-flanking movement by the manufacturers of small calculating machines, and an irrepressible midnight phenomenon known as Spacewar.

Reliably, at any nighttime moment (i.e. non-business hours) in North America hundreds of computer technicians are effectively out of their bodies, locked in life-or-death space combat computer-projected onto cathode ray tube display screens, for hours at a time, ruining their eyes, numbing their fingers in frenzied mashing of control buttons, joyously slaying their friends and wasting their employers' valuable computer time. Something basic is going on.

Rudimentary Spacewar consists of two humans, two sets of control buttons or joysticks, one TV-like display and one computer. Two spaceships are displayed in motion on the screen, controllable for thrust, yaw, pitch and the firing of torpedoes. Whenever a spaceship and torpedo meet, they disappear in an attractive explosion. That's the original version invented in 1962 at MIT by Steve Russell. (More on him in a moment.)

October, 1972, 8 PM, at Stanford's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Laboratory, moonlit and remote in the foothills above Palo Alto, California. Two dozen of us are jammed in a semi-dark console room just off the main hall containing AI's PDP-10 computer. AI's Head System Programmer and most avid Spacewar nut, Ralph Gorin, faces a display screen which says only:

THIS CONSOLE AVAILABLE.

He logs in on the keyboard with his initials: Click clickclickclick click.

LI, REG
CSD (FALL PICNIC, SATURDAY 11 AM IN FLOOD PARK . . .

He interrupts further announcements, including one about the "First Intergalactic Spacewar Olympics" at 8 PM, with: Click ("run") clickclickclick ("Space War Ralph") click ("do it").

R SWR
WELCOME TO SPACEWAR.
HOW MANY SHIPS? MAXIMUM IS 5

Stewart Brand, 33, is a graduate of Stanford (biology). From 1968 to 1971 he edited the Whole Earth Catalog.

Click: 5 (Five players. This is for the first familiarization battles in the Spacewar Olympics, initiated by me and sponsored (beer & prizes) by ROLLING STONE. Friends, I won't be able to explain every computer-technical term that comes by. Fortunately you don't need them to get the gist of what's happening.)

KEYBOARD BUTTONS? (ELSE REGULAR). TYPE Y OR N.
"Yes." Click: Y

THE STANDARD GAME IS:
1 CONSOLE, 2 TORPEDO TUBES, (NORMAL) SCORING, NO PARTIAL DAMAGE, NO HYPERSPACE, KILLER SUN. SHIPS START IN STANDARD POSITIONS.
TYPE Y TO GET A STANDARD GAME.
Ralph wants other features. "No."
Click: N
HOW MANY SPACE MINES DO YOU WANT?
CHOOSE FROM ZERO TO 4.
Click: 4
PARTIAL DAMAGE?
Click: N
DISPLAY SCORES?
Click: Y
TWO TORPEDO TUBES?
Click: Y
HYPERSPACE?
Click: N
RANDOM STARTING POSITIONS?
Click: Y

Immediately the screen goes dark and then displays: Five different spaceships, each with a dot indicating torpedo tubes are loaded, five scores, each at zero, a convincing starfield, and four space mines orbiting around a central sun, toward which the spaceships are starting to fall at a correctly accelerating rate.

Players seize the five sets of control buttons, find their spaceship persona on the screen, and simultaneously turn and fire toward any nearby still-help-less spaceships, hit the thrust button to initiate orbit before being slurped by the killer sun, and evade or shoot down any incoming enemy torpedoes or orbiting mines. After two torpedoes are fired, each ship has a three-second unarmed "reloading" time. Fired torpedoes last nine seconds and then disappear.

As kills are made the scores start to change. +1 for a successful kill, 1 for being killed, +1 for being lone survivor of a battle. Personalities begin to establish themselves in the maneuvering spaceships: The pilot of the ship called *Pointy Finx* is a dead shot but panics easily in cross fire. *Roundback* tries to avoid early dueling and routinely fires two torpedoes "around the universe" toff the screen, so they reappear lethally unexpected from the opposite side). *Birdie* drives for the sun and a fast orbit, has excellent agility in sensing and facing toward hazard. *Funny Finx* shouts a lot, singling out individual opponents. *Flatback* is silent and maintains an uncanny field-sense of the whole battlesky, impervious to surprise attack.

A game is over when only one or no survivors are displayed. The screen then blanks out, counts down 5-4-3-2-1, and redisplays a new battle with ships at new random positions equidistant from the sun and showing scores accumulative from previous games. A spaceship that is killed early in a battle will reincarnate after 16 seconds and rejoin the fray, so that a single battle may last up to five minutes with a weak player perishing several times in it.

The twenty or so raucous competitors in the Spacewar Olympics quickly organize three events: Five-Player Free-For-All, Team Competition (two against two), and Singles Competition. The executive officer of the AI Project, Les Earnest, who kindly OKed these Olympics and their visibility, is found to have no immediate function and is sent out for beer.

The setting and decor at AI is Modern Mad Scientist—long hallways and cubicles and large windowless rooms, brutal fluorescent light, enormous machines humming and clattering, robots on wheels, scurrying arcane technicians. And, also, posters and announcements against the Vietnam War and Richard Nixon, computer print-out photos of girlfriends, a hallway-long banner SOLVING TODAY'S PROBLEMS TOMORROW, and signs on every door in Tolkien's elvish Feanorian script—the director's office is Imladris, the coffee room The Prancing Pony, the computer room Mordor. There's a lot of hair on those technicians, and nobody seems to be telling them where to scurry.

The games progress. A tape recorder kibitzes on the first round of Team Competition, four ships twisting, converging, evading, exploding.

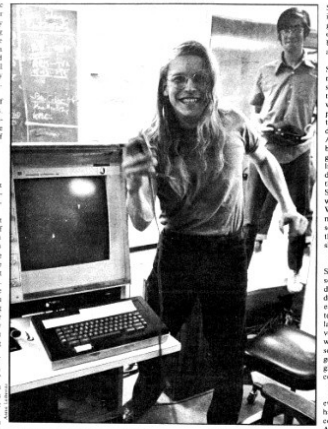
Where am I? Where am I? Click clickclickclickclick
Agh! Clickclickclick clickclick
Glitch. Clickclick
OK, I won't shoot. Clickclickclick
Good work Tovar. Revenge. Clickclick clickclick
Cease fire. Click clickclick
Ohhhhhh NO! You killed me, Tovar. I'm sorry. Clickclickclick
Being partners means never having to say you're sorry. Clickclickclick
Get him! Get the mother! Clickclickclickclick
Sacrifice. Clickclick click
Lemme get in orbit. Clickclick
Way to dodge. Click clickclickclick
Ouchh!
Get tough now. Clickclickclick
The other guy was out of torps. I knew it and waited till I got a good shot. Clickclick
A beaut. O lord. Clickclickclick
I shot him but then I slurped. Click-click clickclick
Ohoo!
We win! Tovar and Rem!

Control, Tovar and Rem won the Team Competition (Rem is how Robert E. Maas is known to the computer and thence to his friends). Bruce Baumgart, who by day builds sensing intelligence into a robot vehicle, won the Free-For-All with a powerhouse performance. And slim Tovar took the Singles.

Meanwhile, your photographer, Annie, was tugged all over the lab to see the hand-eye rig, the number half-tone printer, various spectacular geometric display hacks, computer music programs, the color video image maker . . .

Falling into orbit around the central point, 'Birdie,' at lower left, defeats 'Funny Finx' in single combat, then attempts flank attack on 'Pointy Finx' (upper right), who has caught 'Roundback' napping & outfought 'Flatback' head to head. As kills are made the displayed numbers keep score.

Bruce Baumgart, winner of the Five-Man Free-For-All at the First Intergalactic Spacewar Olympics, brandishing control buttons in triumph



Four intense hours, much frenzy and skilled concerted action, a 15-ring circus in ten different directions, the most *bzz-bzz*-busy scene I've been around since Merry Prankster Acid Tests . . . and really it's just a normal night at the AI Project, at any suitably hairy computer research project. Something basic . . .

These are heads, most of them. Half or more of computer science is heads. But that's not it. The rest of the counterculture is laid low and back these days, showing none of this kind of zeal. What, then?

The Hackers

I'm guessing that Alan Kay at Xerox Research Center (more on them shortly) has a line on it, defining the standard Computer Bum:

"About as straight as you'd expect hotrodders to look. It's that kind of fanaticism. A true hacker is not a group person. He's a person who loves to stay up all night, he and the machine in a love-hate relationship . . . They're kids who tended to be brilliant but not very interested in conventional goals. And computing is just a fabulous place for that, because it's a place where you don't have to be a Ph.D. or anything else. It's a place where you can still be an artisan. People are willing to pay you if you're any good at all, and you have plenty of time for screwing around."

The hackers are the technicians of this science. "It's a term of derision and also the ultimate compliment." They are the ones who translate human demands into code that the machines can understand and act on. They are legion. Fanatics with a potent new toy. A mobile new-found elite, with its own apparat, language and character, its own legends and humor. Those magnificent men with their flying machines, scouting a leading edge of technology which has an odd softness to it; outlaw country, where rules are not decree or routine so much as the stark-er demands of what's possible.

A young science travels where the young take it. The wiser computer research directors have learned that *not* trusting their young programmers with major responsibility can lead immediately to no research. AI is one of perhaps several dozen computer research centers that are flourishing with their young, some of them with no more formal education than they got at the local Free School. I'm talking to Les Earnest, the gent who went for beer. He's tall, swarthy, has a black and white striped beard, looks like a Sufi athlete. He's telling me about what else people build here besides refinements of Spacewar. There's a speech recognition project. There's the hand-eye project, in which the computer is learning to see and visually correct its robot functions. There's work on symbolic computation and grammatical inference. Work with autistic children, "trying to get them to relate to computers first, and then later to people. This seems to be successful in part because many of these children think of themselves as machines. You can encourage them to interact in a game with the machine."

Another window on the interests of AI and of the hackers is a posted print-out of the file of AI's system programs, some 250 elaborate routines available. Scanning: *Hand Eye Monitor . . . Go Game . . . DPY Hack Broom Balancing . . . Comparison Portion of Soup . . . Retrieves Selected AP News Stories . . . Display Hack . . . Mad Doctor . . . New TV Editor . . . Fortune Cookie Program . . . Another Display Hack . . . Kalah Game . . . Oh Where, Oh Where Has My Little Job Gone . . . Paranoid Model . . . Pruning Program . . . The Wonderful News Program . . . Old Spacewar . . . New Spacewar . . . Send Everyone a Message . . . Old Version of Daemon . . . Tell Everyone the System Is Going Down . . . Music Compiler Sort Of . . . New Music Compiler . . .*

A distinction exists between low-rent and high-rent computer research, between preoccupations of support group (hackers) and of research group. The distinction blurs often. Les Earnest: "Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference between recreation and work, happily. We try to judge people not on how much time they waste but on what they accomplish over fairly long periods of time, like a half year to a year." He adds that Spacewar players "are more from the support groups than the research groups. The research groups tend to get their kicks out of research."

Spacewar is low-rent.

Spacewar

Low-rent but pervasive. Alan Kay: "The game of Spacewar blossoms spontaneously wherever there is a graphics display connected to a computer."

The first opportunity was at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Electrical Engineering Department back in 1961-1962. The earliest mini-computer, Digital Equipment Corporation's PDP-1, was installed in the kludge room with a cathode ray tube display hooked on. ("Kludge"—any lash-up, often involving chewing gum, paper clips, scotch tape, it works if no one trips over a wire; unadaptable, a working mess.) There it was that Steve Russell and his fellow hackers Alan Kotok, Peter Samson and Dan Edwards introduced Spacewar to the world.

I phoned Russell at the sprawling old fabric mill in Maynard, Massachusetts, where Digital Equipment Corporation manufactures the most popular research and education computers on the market. Russell currently is a researcher for them working on man-machine interface problems—adapting computer nature to fit human nature. Back in 1962 he was a hacker, 23 or so, a math major two years out of Dartmouth working in the brand new field of computer science for John McCarthy at MIT.

His account of the invention of Spacewar is not only intriguing history, it's the most sophisticated analysis of good game design I've ever run across—elegant work. But that's in retrospect; back then it was just kids staying up all night.

"We had this brand new PDP-1," Steve Russell recalls. "It was the first mini-computer, ridiculously inexpensive for its time. And it was just sitting there. It had a console typewriter that worked right, which was rare, and a paper tape reader and a cathode ray tube display. [There had been CRT displays before, but primarily in the Air Defense System.] Somebody had built some little pattern-generating programs which made interesting patterns like a kaleidoscope. Not a very good demonstration. Here was this display that could do all sorts of good things! So we started talking about it, figuring what would be interesting displays. We decided that probably you could make a two-dimensional maneuvering sort of thing, and decided that naturally the obvious thing to do was spaceships."

Naturally!

"I had just finished reading 'Doc' Smith's *Lensman* series. He was some sort of scientist but he wrote this really dashing brand of science fiction. The details were very good and it had an excellent pace. His heroes had a strong tendency to get pursued by the villain across the galaxy and have to invent their way out of their problem while they were being pursued. That sort of action was the thing that suggested Spacewar. He had some very glowing descriptions of spaceship encounters and space fleet maneuvers."

"Doc" Smith.

"The *Boise* leaped upon the Nevian, every weapon aflame. But, as Costigan had expected, Nerado's vessel was completely ready for any emergency. And, unlike her sister-ship, she was manned by scientists well-versed in the fundamental theory of the weapons with which they fought. Beams, rods and lances of energy flamed and flared; planes and pencils cut, slashed and stabbed; defensive screens glowed redly or flashed suddenly into intensely brilliant, coruscating incandescence. Crimson opacity struggled sullenly against violet curtains of annihilation. Material projectiles and torpedoes were launched under full-beam control, only to be exploded harmlessly in mid-space, to be blasted into nothingness or to disappear innocuously against impenetrable polyecyclic screens."

—Triplanetary (1948)

Steve Russell: "By picking a world which people weren't familiar with, we could alter a number of parameters of the world in the interests of making a good game and of making it possible to get it onto a computer. We made a great deal of compromises from some of our original grand plans in order to make it work well.

"One of the important things in Spacewar is the pace. It's relatively fast-paced, and that makes it an interesting game. It seems to be a reasonable compromise between action—pushing buttons—and thought. Thought does help you, and there are some tactical considerations, but just plain fast reflexes also help.

"It was quite interesting to fiddle with the parameters, which of course I

—Continued on Next Page

1972, Atari Pong

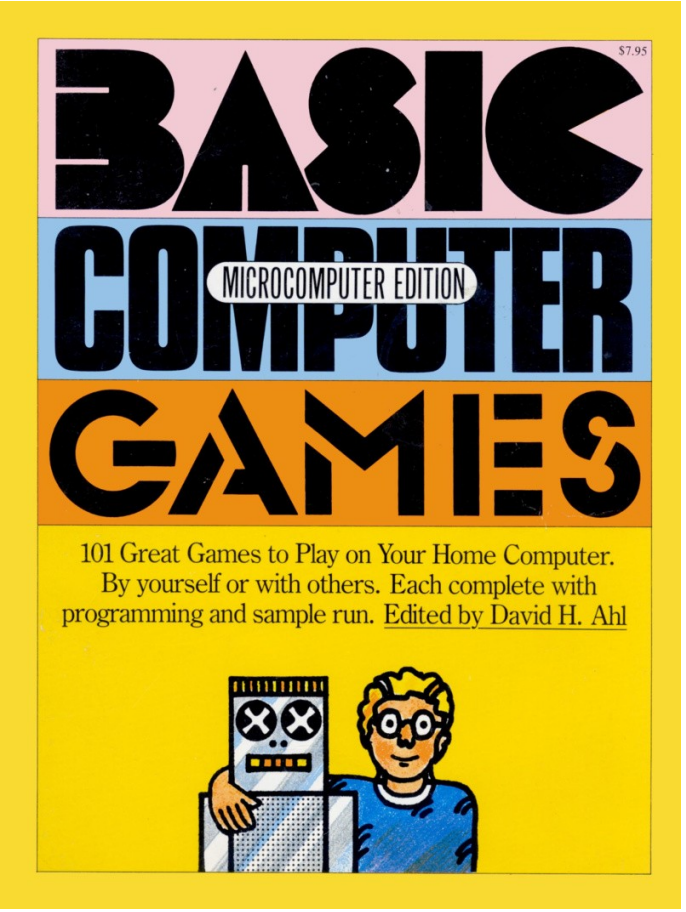
- Un marchio notevole
  - Allan Alcorn, Nolan Bushnell, Ted Dabney
  - In sala giochi
  - Sofisticato, ma intuitivo
  - Grande successo
  - Causa con Magnavox
- Di nuovo niente programma

1972, Magnavox Odyssey

- Un lungo progetto
  - Dal 1966
  - Ralph Baer, William Harrison, William Rush
  - Domestico
- Niente programma
  - Elettronico
  - Logica nelle cartucce

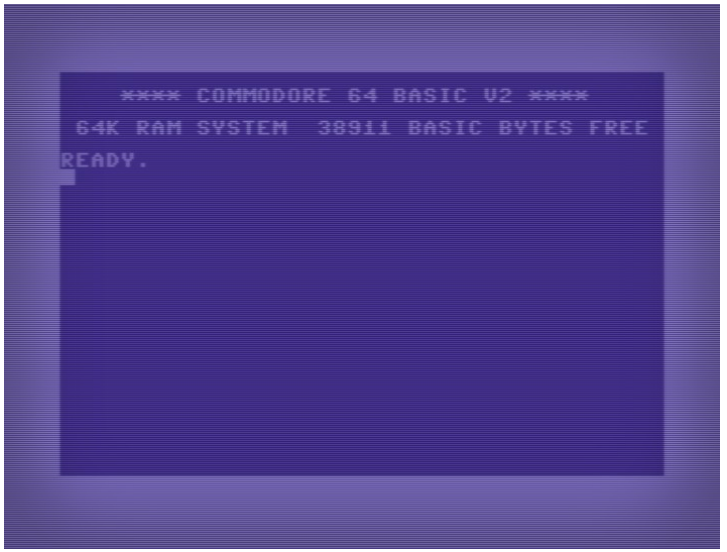
giochi (programmi) da leggere

- 101 Basic Computer Games
  - 1° ed. 1973, Digital
    2° ed. 1978
  - David H. Ahl
  - La newsletter
  - Creative Computer
- Le macchine
  - Digital PDP 8 e succ.
  - Data General Nova
  - HP 2100



gli home computer

- READY!
- Programmabili subito
- BASIC,
  ma solo per iniziare
- Non solo C=64



computers for the masses

- Un motto di Jack Tramiel
- Una storia interessante
  - Imprenditore nel settore delle macchine da ufficio
  - Fonda la Commodore nel 1954, a Toronto
  - Nel 1975 incontra Chuck Peddle, il 6502 e il KIM
  - Con il capitale di Irving Gould compra MOS Tech
  - Nel 1977 inizia con i PET/CBM
  - Nel 1980 entra nelle case con il VIC-20 (1M venduti)
  - Nel 1982 arriva il C=64 (12M venduti)

C=64, rappresentante di un'epoca

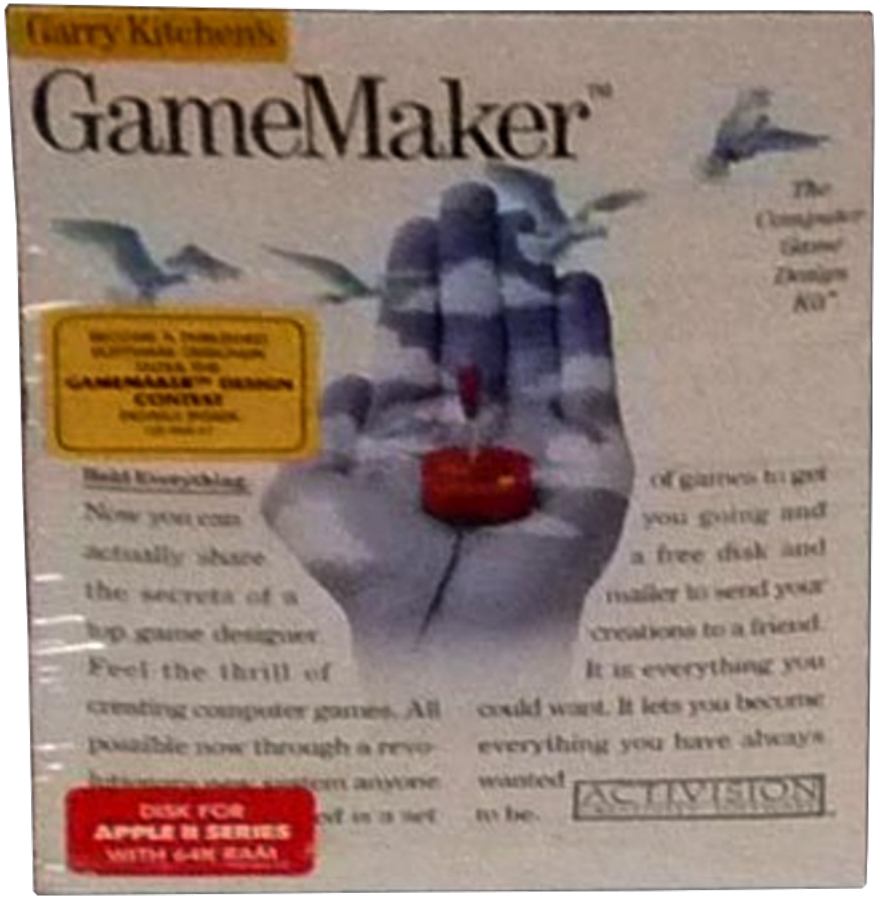
- Oltre al C=64
  - Texas Instrument TI/99, dal 1979, 16 bit
  - Sinclair ZX 80, 1980, il primo di una stirpe inglese
  - Sinclair ZX Spectrum, 1982, l'antagonista
  - Gli MSX, dal 1983, una vana santa alleanza
  - E poi Mattel Acquarius (1983), IBM PCjr (1984), gli altri Commodore: Max/10, 16, 116, Plus4, 128
- Caratteristiche tipiche
  - Versati per i giochi, come le console (Atari 2600, NES)
  - Paragonabili ai fratelli "maggiori" (Apple][)
  - Spesso più sofisticati

programmazione C=64

- Il BASIC di default (Microsoft)
  - Non eccezionale, meglio, per dire, il Simons' BASIC
  - Lento, un interprete in fin dei conti
  - Comunque un bel giocattolo per cominciare
- Poi Assembler, Forth, C, Pascal...
- Accesso alle funzioni avanzate
  - VIC-II e SID, i chip per grafica e sonoro
  - Attraverso locazioni di memoria
  - POKE <locazione>,<valore>

1985, Garry Kitchen's GameMaker

- Activision
- C=64, Apple][, IBM PC...
- The Editor
  - + SceneMaker
  - + SpriteMaker
  - + MusicMaker
  - + SoundMaker



1987, SEUCK

- Shoot'em up Construction Kit
  Sensible Software
- Jonathan Hare
  Chris Yates
- C=64
  Amiga
  Atari ST

il mondo dei videogiochi

- Tecnologia
  - Da sempre i calcolatori sono stati sfruttati per giocare
  - Tuttora un settore tecnologicamente interessante
- Industria
  - Hardware, software, merchandising
  - In USA ha sorpassato cinema (2005) e musica (2007)
- Riferimenti culturali
  - Derivazioni, contaminazioni, citazioni
  - Dimensioni narrative nuove: partecipazione diretta
- Utili a incuriosire e oltre (gamification)

un esempio: Mario, che storia

- Prima apparizione nel 1981, Donkey Kong
  - Shigeru Miyamoto
  - Protagonista, ma senza l'onore del titolo
- Una trama
  - Fra i primi giochi ad avere una storia
  - Originariamente pensata per Popeye, Olive e Bluto
- Una identità
  - Jumpman, Mr. Video, infine Mario
  - Carpentiere, poi idraulico italoamericano di NewYork
- Since '81. And still jumping!

alti e bassi di un mercato

- Il crash del 1977 delle home console
  - Magnavox Odissey, Fairchild VES, Coleco Telstar
- Il successo dell'Atari 2600 (già VCS, 1977)
- Il crash n. 2 del 1983, di arcade, console, software
- La ripresa made in Japan del NES (1983)
- La concorrenza degli home computer
- Il dominio di Playstation (1994) e Xbox (2001)
- Smartphone, altri intrattenimenti, ritorni
- 2024: >180 G$ in crescita...

arte?

- Cos'è "arte"
  - Qualcosa capace di esprimere idee, impressioni, sentimenti *oltre* l'oggetto stesso
  - Incluse le provocazioni, i *ready-made*...
- Posizioni varie sui videogiochi
  - Come il bingo o il cricket, non sono arte
  - Ci può essere arte nei componenti di un videogioco
  - 2006, a Miyamoto l'*Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*
  - 2011, Smithsonian, *Art of Videogames*, con polemiche
  - 2012, il MoMA acquisisce 40 videogiochi famosi

nuova narrativa?

- Trame complesse a cui il giocatore partecipa
  - Da Zork ai titoli di Bethesda, CD Projekt, Rockstar G.
  - Da spettatori a protagonisti, azione ed effetti
    ma anche scelte, di trama, etiche ed emotive
  - La grande eredità dei giochi da tavolo e di ruolo
  - Una narrativa più coinvolgente di letteratura e cinema
- Ma c'è anche chi dice
  - Story in a (video)game is like a story in a porn movie, it's expected to be there, but it's not that important
    John D. Carmack II, cofond. id Software (Doom, Quake...)

OggiSTI n. 260, A. Cateni, L. Montagnani

The Name of the Game is Death Race

THOUSANDS of pedestrians are killed and injured each year by cars, and safety experts everywhere are doing their best to diminish the slaughter.

In view of their dedication to saving lives, it's understandable that their concern is turning into outrage today – because of a popular new electronic game that actually teaches a motorist how to kill a pedestrian.

The game is called "Death Race," and it's one of the hottest-selling coin-operated games in the country today.

Manufactured by Exidy, Inc. in Mountain View, California, "Death Race" can now be found in amusement parks, arcades, taverns and pool halls. Here's how it works:

After inserting a quarter in the machine, two electronic, stick-figure pedestrians (called "Gremlins") zigzag across a screen. The player depresses an accelerator and steers a wheel to run down a "Gremlin."

When a "Gremlin" is hit, a loud shriek is heard and the "Gremlin" is immediately replaced by a cross-shaped grave marker. The player then reverses his car, shifts back into a forward gear and proceeds to run down another "Gremlin."

Each "Gremlin" hit counts as 1 point. For 1 to 3 points, the player is a "Skeleton Chaser"; for 4 to 10 points, a "Bone Cracker"; for 11 to 20 points, a "Gremlin Hunter"; and for 21 or more points (are you ready for this?) an "Expert Driver."

Although "Death Race" is classified as "amusement," a lot of people are not amused by it.

Officer Richard Todd, a press spokesman for the Los Angeles Police Department: "A game like this does nothing to help road safety in this country."

Dennis Rowe, safety consultant for the Automobile Club of Southern California: "This game is sick, sick, sick. We're trying to teach drivers how to take evasive maneuvers on the road, like avoiding pedestrians.

"And here this morbid game comes along and encourages people to develop the opposite skill – how to hit people."

Gilbert Kitt, president of Empire Distributing, Inc., a large, arcade-game wholesaler in the Chicago area: "I've decided to stop distributing it. It's too macabre."

Marriott's Great America is a huge amusement park in Gurnee, Illinois. Group Director of Marketing Richard M. Quinn reports:

"... we removed the game right after Mr. Marriott received the first complaint. The game was purchased in a lot and we certainly agreed that it was not in keeping with the taste of our theme park."

Finally, the strongest and most informed indictment of "Death Race" comes from Dr. Gerald Driessen, behavioral scientist and manager of the National Safety Council's Research Department:

"From a psychological and behavioral viewpoint, the device is definitely negative. It capitalizes well on the basic principles of mechanical games by capturing one's attention through loud sound, the need for rapid decision-making and immediate feedback of results.

"But 'Death Race' is not a 'game' and is certainly not humorous, as its promoters maintain.

"The objective is to hit symbols of persons and, in fantasy, crush and kill them. It is another gross example of commercial gain based on the aggressive and destructive tendencies in people. The shrieks emitted when a figure is hit add to its macabre tastelessness.

"One of its most insidious and probably unrecognized characteristics is its shift from imaginary visual images of destruction, as you have in TV violence, to actual behavioral actions taken by the player. The person is no longer just a spectator, but now an actor in the process of creating violence.

"Both skyjackings and robberies have followed rather closely the scripts of earlier TV dramatizations. The proportion of the audience so affected may be quite small, but *some are affected* in ways that lead to criminal action.

"Will this happen here, too, where there is even more direct involvement of specific sensory input, decision-making processes and muscular output?

"The device has gained popularity among children. As parents, can we not come up with ways of channeling the aggressive impulses of children into more constructive channels of expression?

"I think the device adds to an already widespread 'war and killing' mentality. It shifts a violent tendency into a form of behavioral action that carries no negative consequences for the actor.

"It plants the seed of disrespect for life, in all forms, not just in the area of motor vehicle operation and highway safety. It can potentially have negative effects on young and old, normal and psychopathic, drivers and nondrivers.

"I think the current device is gross, and shudder to think of what will be next if this one is not defeated by public opinion." ■

Back Pain
(continued from page 7)

is longer than the other, a frequent and unnoticed deformity in homo sapiens.

5. Get support while driving and sleeping

Driving puts great strain on the back. In a recent Connecticut study, Dr. Jennifer Kelsey of Yale University found that drivers are more likely to suffer from an acute herniated lumbar disc than those who don't drive. Men who spend at least half their working day driving are three times more likely to develop a herniated disc than those who don't hold such jobs.

"The drivers probably do not have adequate support for their lower backs," Dr. Kelsey says. "They may also be affected by the continued vibration of the vehicle and the mechanical stress of starting and stopping. And their legs are extended to the pedals, instead of resting on the floor."

Back experts recommend that you sit with the small of your back pressed against the back seat cushion. A firm, 1½-inch-thick pillow behind the small of your back may help. Or you can buy an orthopedic back support for this purpose. The Air Force issues an air-inflated lumbar support for pilots that can be found in military surplus stores. It is excellent for driving.

Move the seat up so that you can reach the pedals and the steering wheel easily without straining forward. Keep your head and shoulders erect. If you lean forward, you'll develop pains in your neck and back.

Never drive more than one or two hours at a stretch. Get out of the car and move around every chance you get. Shrug your shoulders to loosen cramped neck and shoulder muscles. Sit on something such as a picnic bench, grasp your ankles and pull your head and shoulders down between your knees.

Proper back support is just as important in bed, since you spend almost a third of your life there. Get a really good, firm mattress. A soft mattress can be murder on your back.

When sleeping, you want your back to assume a relaxed, natural position. Experts often advise against sleeping flat on the stomach, because it may promote swayback or lead to a stiff neck. If you sleep on your back, use a thin pillow (or none) under your head, and place a pillow or folded blanket under your knees to relieve the constant pull on your lower back muscles. When sleeping on your side, use a pillow thick enough to keep your head in line with your spine.

6. Relax

Tension is one of the most important causes of backache. A traffic jam, a blaring radio or TV, a crying baby, a tight schedule—your life is crowded with irritations that jangle your nerves and tighten your muscles. Emotional problems create tension, too—trouble at work or an unsatisfactory marital life.

Exercise can do wonders for tension. It's hard to worry when you're jogging or bicycling. And the physical exertion makes you breathe deeply, perks up circulation and loosens tight muscles.

Take a few minutes several times a day to practice relaxation exercises. Let your muscles go limp, with your head drooping forward. Lie down if possible and relax all the muscles of your body, starting at the feet and working up to the neck, the tongue and the forehead.

Creating the right mental attitude is important, too. Try to ignore petty aggravations, or look for humor in a situation. Concentrate your energies on one task at a time, and quit trying to do everything at once. Avoid situations that make you tense. If necessary, make changes in your life to root out major sources of tension. Not only will you have fewer backaches, you'll also live longer. ■

giocare con le regole

- Una caratteristica dei videogiochi
  - Luoghi del gioco, antagonisti, mosse, conseguenze
  - Schemi, trucchi e scorciatoie, dal *Furrer trick* in poi
  - Sorprese ed *easter eggs*
- Un dialogo sui generis
  - Da una parte sceneggiatori e programmatori
  - Fantasia e mestiere, quando intenzionali
  - Caso, quando bachi o conseguenze algoritmiche
  - Dall'altra i giocatori
  - Esperienza, studio e disciplina

partecipare, oltre che giocare

- Argomento di discussione
- Spettatori, come gli altri sport
  - Gameplay footage
  - Walkthrough
  - Speed run
- Lavori (oltre che sviluppo)
  - Prove, recensioni, performance
  - Costruzione e vendita di oggetti e personaggi
- Mod, la più creativa delle esperienze di gioco

Video Game High School

- Web serie
  - Kickstarter (75k → 270k)
  - 9+6+6 episodi, dal 2012 al 2014
  - Rimontati in un film

- In un prossimo futuro
  - Si studia per diventare giocatori professionisti
  - Da “Fame” in poi, un genere classico
  - Rivisitazione originale e di mestiere
  - Con le sue chicche (una per tutte: Chiba e Hanzō)

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