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**New Products** 

## Atari's CX2600 video computer game system

The new Atari CX2600 "video computer system" shows just how far video games have developed from the first simple products to hit the market. By means of plug-in cartridges and interchangeable hand controllers it offers a bewildering range of challenging full-colour games — and the promise of even more to come.

To emphasise the vast difference between the CX2600 and earlier generations of video games, Atari calls it a "video computer system". And it doesn't take you long to see why. Even when you unpack it from its box you realise that it's more than "just another video game" when you find two different sets of hand controllers and a sample plug-in games cartridge.

When you connect it to a colour TV set and fire the two up, the difference becomes even more apparent. The "Combat" games cartridge supplied with the system provides no less than 27 different games, all in brilliant colour and with sound effects. There are five tank battle games, four "tank-Pong" games with "billiard" or ricochet hit, two "invisible tank" games, three invisible tank-Pong games, six "biplane" combat games, and seven "jet fighter" games!

The games aren't just minor variations on the same theme, either. The tank games give a choice of an open field, a simple maze or a complex maze, and either simple or guided missiles. Similarly the biplane and jet fighter games offer a choice of open skies or clouds, simple or guided missiles, a single plane or a group in "formation", and also a "machine gun" option in the case of the biplane games. And of course all games have on-screen scoring.

The same sort of complexity is also evident with the other game cartridges. Take for example the "Outlaw" cartridge, which provides a total of 16 games all with a "Western shoot-out" theme. Twelve of the games are for two players, and the other four for a single player. In the two-player games you can have either a cactus, a stagecoach, a series of moving stage-coaches or a brick wall between the two gunmen, and in each case you have a choice of "Blowaway" (the ability to shoot away the obstacle), "Getaway" (the ability to move the gunman immediately after firing his gun), and either single-shot or "six shooters". All games involve twoaxis movement of the gunmen, control over shooting angle, changing graphics as the gunmen shoot or are hit, sound effects and on-screen scoring.

It's much the same with the "Air-Sea Battle" cartridge, which offers a further targets change in shape as they reverse direction, all independently!

What about all of the "traditional" video ball games? Well, Atari cover virtually all of these with a single cartridge, the "Video Olympics" cartridge. This has no less than 50 different games, for 1, 2 and 4 players. There are eight versions of Pong, four of Super Pong, six of Soccer, four of FoozPong, two of QuadraPong, four of Handball, four of Volleyball and eight of Basketball. The variations cover number of players, ball speed-up, hit angle control, the ability to capture a ball, and the ability to "spike" or jump up and hit the ball suddenly. There is also the option of



27 "target shooting" type games. Here there are six anti-aircraft games, six torpedo ("sink the ships") games, three "shooting gallery" games, three "ship to air missile" games, three "bomb the ship" games, and six "ship-with-missile vs bomber" games. These games have graded field colouring, a wide variety of target shapes, random target movement, simple or guided missiles and moving mines or "barrage balloon" obstacles. All again feature sound effects and on-screen scoring. One of the things which we particularly noticed about the "shooting gallery" games is the way the graphics for the moving

reducing the paddle size to one-half, for greater difficulty. These games use the "paddle" type hand controllers, and again feature sound effects and onscreen scoring.

There are a total of 20 different games cartridges available at the time of writing, with a further 10 likely to be available by the time you read this. Some of the new cartridges have names like "Bowling", "Slot Machine", "Sky Diver", "Human Cannonball", "Video Chess" and "Video Backgammon", indicating the degree of sophistication available already. There is also a rumour that Atari will soon be coming

## Atari CX2600 video computer ...

up with a full alphanumeric keyboard option, together with cartridges which convert the CX2600 into a full-scale home computer (it is of course based on a microprocessor).

Apart from this tremendous flexibility, the CX2600 also offers the advantage of Atari's long experience in the video games field. For example unlike earlier games, it involves minimal risk to the TV set's picture-tube screen phosphors: if you don't use the controls for about 15 seconds, it automatically begins to cycle the field colours so that no one phosphor gets the game pattern "burnt in." Of course all of these wonders don't come cheaply. The basic CX2600 system will cost you \$339.00, including two "joystick" controllers, two "paddle" controllers, a mains power supply and sample "Combat" games cartridge. Additional keyboard or "car driving" controllers cost \$26 a pair, while the various games cartridges cost \$33.95 each. But then you're getting a lot of entertainment value for the money.

The Atari CX2600 video computer system is available from Futuretronics Australia Pty Ltd, 79-81 Levanswell Road, Moorabbin, Victoria 3189. Telephone (03) 95-5536. (J.R.)



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Sound: Four independent sound synthesizers. Variable volume and tone. Internal speaker (in addition to audio through T V.) Memory: 16K bytes of Random Access Memory (RAM) included. 10K ROM fitted Accepts cassettes or ROM cartridges. Utilises full range of peripherals & accessories.

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