YESTERDAY'S NEWS

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30 Years Ago...

Historical Information taken from Bill Gaskills TIMELINE

MARCH 1991:

Bill GasKill annouces the release of THE TI-BASE USER (newsletter for TI-Base owners), TIMELINE 99 (a 120-page "must have" history booK for serious TI'er), and MEMBERSHIP MANAGER/NEWSLETTER EXCHANGE (two separate TI-Base applications for the price of one, tremendously useful to officers of TI User Groups).

The TI-BBS in Whittier, California, formerly operated by Roger Davis, moves to Covina, California with Larry Hoffman as sysop.

On March 15th, Jeff Guide, owner of DisK Only software, announces that he has purchased all rights to Tony Lewis' Interface Standard and Design Guide for the TI- 99/4A, and that DisK Only Software will become the exclusive distributor for this document.

Steve Hoshield releases CSGD Label MaKer v1.1. The program contains complete documentation and a fully functional assembly language program that can use Dave Rose's CSGD style graphics for inclusion in customer label maKing. The program also features a graphic editor to design your own graphics to use with custom labels. Up to 127 CSGD graphics can be stored.

Asgard Software releases a Page Pro 99 productivity chart showing how Page Pro products relate to each other, to let you create a wide variety of different things on your 99/4A - from banners to signs to greeting cards to labels to anything else you can thinK of.

Jim Miller releases the Shareware program StocK TracKer for the TI-99/4A. The program allows tracKing of stocKs or comodities and it will tracK buy, sell, input values, stocK splits etc.

Jim Peterson releases version #5 of his TI Public Domain Sofftware catalog, containing listings for over 500 disKs, available at $1.50 each.

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MICROPENDIUM
November 1993
Volume 10, Number 10
By Charles Good

AUDIO CALCULATOR

Lots of "me too" applications and games exist in the TI world, software that does the same things as previously available software. Newer software may be faster, more user friendly or just slightly different, but the game formats and types of applications don't seem to change much. You don't often find software that does something new and different, a type of computer tasK that nobody thought of before. Audio Calculator is new and different.

Audio Calculator is for use by those who transfer music from CDs and phonograph records to cassette tapes. The software will calculate (with emphasis on the word "calculate") the maximum number of song titles that will fit on each side of an audio cassette tape and then will print a tape box label. Yes, I Know. Several public domain cassette tape box label printing programs exist, and you can use Bruce Harrison's Time Calc program to add up accurately the cumulative elapsed times of songs you add consecutively to an audio tape. Audio Calculator is different. It actually calculates the ideal fit of songs onto the sides of an audio cassette of any length so that you can squeeze the maximum number of songs onto the tape without leaving out part of the last song and with minimum unused tape time at the end of the tape.

You start out by inputting into the computer a tape title and date (or other information in place of the date, such as the name of the artist). Then you enter the titles and durations of all the songs you want to squeeze onto your tape. Duration information can be read directly from a CD player or found on the CD's documentation. The program then asKs you for an "autospace," a soundless time interval you will insert between songs. The default of

SEE "AUDIO", PAGE 3

TIPS FROM THE TIGERCUB NUMBER 22

By Jim Peterson

This challenge was printed in Tips #21 -

```
100!The Unprintable UnKeyabl
e Program!
110!To shuffle the numbers 1
 to 255 into a random sequen
ce without duplication
120!The strings contain the
ASCII characters 1 to 127 an
d 128 to 255
130!Most of the ASCII charac
ters below 32 or above 159 c
annot be input from the Keyb
oard
140!So how was this program
programmed?
150 M$="
            !""#$%&'()*+,-./0
123456789:;<=>?@ABCDEFGHIJKL
MNOPQRSTUVWXYZ[\]^_'abcdefgh
ijklmnopqrstuvwxyz{|}~"
160 M2$="




                            "
170 M$=M$&M2$
180 L=LEN(M$):: RANDOMIZE ::
 X=INT(L*RND+1):: N=ASC(SEG$
(M$,X,1)):: M$=SEG$(M$,1,X-1
)&SEG$(M$,X+1,LEN(M$))
190 PRINT N;:: IF LEN(M$)=0
THEN STOP ELSE 180
```

And here is the answer - It was written by a program that writes a program! Key this in and run it to create a MERGE format disk file. Then type NEW, then type MERGE DSK1.LONGSTRING and you will have a RUNable program consisting of lines 150-170 of the puzzle!

```
100 OPEN #1:"DSK1.LONGSTRING
",VARIABLE 163
110 LN=100 :: GOSUB 190 :: A
$=L$&"M$"&CHR$(190)
120 FOR J=1 TO 127 :: C$=C$&
CHR$(J):: NEXT J :: A$=A$&CH
R$(199)&CHR$(127)&C$&CHR$(0)
130 PRINT #1:A$
140 GOSUB 190 :: B$=L$&"M2$"
&CHR$(190)
150 FOR J=128 TO 255 :: D$=D
$&CHR$(J):: NEXT J :: B$=B$&
CHR$(199)&CHR$(128)&D$&CHR$(
0)
160 PRINT #1:B$
170 GOSUB 190 :: F$=L$&"M$"&
CHR$(190)&"M$"&CHR$(184)&"M2
$"&CHR$(0)
180 PRINT #1:F$ :: PRINT #1:
CHR$(255)&CHR$(255):: CLOSE
#1 :: END
190 L$=CHR$(INT(LN/256))&CHR
$(LN-256*INT(LN/256)):: LN=L
N+10 :: RETURN
```

Now type in the remaining lines, and you will have a speeded-up version of the Tigercub Scramble which was published in Tips #10. It is still not as fast as the CALL PEEK versions but is much more useful because you can modify it to scramble a sequence of any length anywhere between 1 and 255. For example, to shuffle the numbers 100 to 150 into a random sequence without duplication, just add a line 175 M$=SEG$(M$,100,50).

The method of writing a "program that writes a program" was fully explained by John Clulow in the 99er magazine Vol. 1 Nos. 3 and 4. It is a little-used but very valuable technique.

For instance, Tips#9 contained the following routine to turn the alphabet upside-down.

```
100 FOR CH=33 TO 127 :: CALL
 CHARPAT(CH,CH$):: FOR J=1 T
O 16 STEP 2 :: X$=SEG$(CH$,J
,2)&X$ :: NEXT J :: CALL CHA
R(CH,X$):: X$="" :: NEXT CH
110 INPUT A$ :: GOTO 110
```

The only trouble with that is that it takes about 50 seconds to run. Try this instead -

```
100 FOR CH=33 TO 127 :: CALL
 CHARPAT(CH,CH$):: FOR J=1 T
O 16 STEP 2 :: X$=SEG$(CH$,J
,2)&X$ :: NEXT J :: CALL WRI
TE(CH,X$):: X$="" :: NEXT CH
1000 SUB WRITE(CH,X$):: IF F
LAG=1 THEN 1010 :: FLAG=1 ::
 OPEN #1:"DSK1.WRITE",OUTPUT
,DISPLAY ,VARIABLE 163 :: LN
=3000 :: GOSUB 3000
1010 X=X+1 :: L$=L$&CHR$(200
)&CHR$(16)&X$ :: IF X<5 AND
CH<127 THEN L$=L$&CHR$(179):
: SUBEXIT
1020 X=0 :: PRINT #1:L$&CHR$
(0):: L$="" :: IF CH=127 THE
N 1030 :: GOSUB 3000 :: SUBE
XIT
1030 PRINT #1:CHR$(255)&CHR$
(255):: CLOSE #1 :: GOTO 301
0
3000 L1=INT(LN/256):: L2=LN-
256*L1 :: L$=CHR$(L1)&CHR$(L
2)&CHR$(147):: LN=LN+10 :: R
ETURN
3010 SUBEND
```

RUN that, type NEW, then MERGE DSK1.WRITE, and you will have a program consisting of DATA statements containing the hex codes for all the upside-down characters. Add a line 100 FOR CH=33 TO 127 :: READ CH$ :: CALL CHAR(CH,CH$):: NEXT CH, and you can turn everything upside-down in only 12 seconds.

Someone sent me a classified ad, clipped from an unknown publication, which read -

TI-WRITER COMPANION. Loaded with ingenious ways to make your TI-Writer more effective. Well written. Send $6.50 to Dr. Bill Browning, 7541 Jersey Avenue North, Brooklyn Park, MN 55428. Money back guarantee.

I sent off my money and have just received 29 pages, 3-hole punched, loaded with useful and ingenious tips and ideas for getting more out of TI-Writer. I recommend it - it's worth twice the money and then some! NOTE! Now $6.50!

The K-Town newsletter recently published a utility routine that is so useful that I want to pass it on to everyone. If a program is not resequenced after it is modified, this will compare it with the original and prepare a MERGE format file of all the changes, for the use of others to update their copy.

```
100 !**********************
110 !*  COMPARE PROGRAM     *
120 !    by Mike Dodd       *
130 !**********************
131 ! In K-Town 99'er V.2 #1
      April 1985
140 !Version 85.0406.1XB
     Requires disk drive.
     Compares two programs,
     gives list of all diff-
     erences.
150 !SAVE old program in
 MERGE format (SAVE DSK1.(ol
 dfilename),MERGE). SAVE up-
 dated program in MERGE for-
 mat(SAVE DSK1.(newfilename)
,MERGE)
160 !RUN this program, answe
r prompts for OLD FILE name,
 NEW FILE name, and a differ
ent OUTPUT FILE name.
170 !When finished, type NEW
```

```
, then MERGE DSK1.(outputfil
ename) and ENTER
180 !Can be MERGED into othe
r copies of OLD program to
update them
190 DEF @(@$)=ASC(SEG$(@$,1,
1))*256+ASC(SEG$(@$,2,1))
200 A$=CHR$(255)&CHR$(255)::
 DISPLAY AT(1,1)ERASE ALL:"O
LD    FILE:": :"NEW    FILE:
": :"OUTPUT FILE:"
210 ACCEPT AT(1,13)BEEP:B$ :
: ACCEPT AT(3,13)BEEP:C$ ::
ACCEPT AT(5,13)BEEP:D$ :: OP
EN #1:B$,INPUT ,VARIABLE 163
220 OPEN #2:C$,INPUT ,VARIAB
LE 163 :: OPEN #3:D$,OUTPUT,
VARIABLE 163
230 LINPUT #1:@$ :: LINPUT #
2:E$ :: F$=SEG$(@$,1,2):: G$
=SEG$(E$,1,2):: A=@(F$):: B=
@(G$)
240 IF F$=A$ AND G$=A$ THEN
CLOSE #1 :: CLOSE #2 :: PRIN
T #3:A$ :: CLOSE #3 :: STOP
250 IF B>A THEN PRINT #3:F$&
CHR$(131)&" **DELETED LINE *
*"&CHR$(0):: LINPUT #1 :: @$
 :: F$=SEG$(@$,1,2):: A=@(F$
):: GOTO 240
260 IF A>B THEN PRINT #3:E$
:: LINPUT #2:E$ :: G$=SEG$(E
$,1,2):: B=@(G$):: GOTO 240
270 IF @$<>E$ THEN PRINT #3:
E$
280 GOTO 230
```

Thanks to some ideas from Joyce CorKer, I have made some more improvements to the Tigercub Menuloader, and I have used the above utility routine to list all the changes made since it was published in Tips#15.

```
100 !by A. Kludge/M. Gordon/
T. Boisseau/J. Peterson/etc.
modified in Tips #22
102 OPTION BASE 1 :: DIM PG$
(127),VV(127),VX(127):: GOTO
 110
105 @,A,A$,B,C,D$,FLAG,I,J,K
,KD,KK,N$,NN,P$,PG$(),Q$,S,S
T,T$(),TT,VT,VV(),VX(),W$,X,
X$,K2,S2
106 CALL INIT :: CALL LOAD :
: CALL LINK :: CALL PEEK ::
CALL KEY :: CALL SCREEN :: C
ALL COLOR :: CALL CLEAR :: C
ALL VCHAR :: CALL SOUND :: !
@P-
150 ! **DELETED LINE **
160 T$(1)="d/f" :: T$(2)="d/
v" :: T$(3)="i/f" :: T$(4)="
i/v" :: T$(5)="pro" :: ON WA
RNING NEXT
170 IMAGE ###
180 DISPLAY AT(1,4):"TIGERCU
B MENU LOADER"
210 D$="DSK1." :: OPEN #1:D$
,INPUT ,RELATIVE,INTERNAL ::
 INPUT #1:N$,A,J,K :: DISPLA
Y AT(1,2)SIZE(27):SEG$(D$,1,
4)&" - DisKname= "&N$;
230 FOR X=1 TO 127 :: IF X/2
0<>INT(X/20)THEN 260
240 DISPLAY AT(24,1):"Type c
hoice or 0 for more 0" :: AC
CEPT AT(24,27)VALIDATE(DIGIT
)SIZE(-3):K :: IF K=0 THEN 2
50 :: IF VV(K)<>5 THEN 411 :
: IF K>0 AND K<NN+1 THEN 420
 ELSE 240
290 DISPLAY AT(X+4,2):USING
170:NN :: DISPLAY AT(X+4,6):
P$ :: PG$(NN)=P$ :: DISPLAY
AT(X+4,18):USING 170:J :: DI
SPLAY AT(X+4,22):T$(ABS(A))
291 VV(NN)=ABS(A):: VX(NN)=A
BS(B)
295 X$="  "&STR$(B):: DISPLA
Y AT(X+4,26):SEG$(X$,LEN(X$)
-2,3):: VT=VT+J
350 DISPLAY AT(X+6,1):"    C
hoice?" :: ACCEPT AT(X+6,16)
SIZE(3)VALIDATE(DIGIT):K ::
IF K<>NN AND K<>NN+1 THEN 41
0
410 IF K<1 OR K>127 OR LEN(P
G$(K))=0 THEN 320
411 IF VV(K)=5 OR(VV(K)=4 AN
D VX(K)=254)THEN 420
412 ON ERROR 417 :: CALL CLE
AR :: OPEN #2:D$&PG$(K):: CA
LL SCREEN(16)
413 LINPUT #2:W$ :: IF EOF(2
)THEN 416 :: PRINT W$
414 CALL KEY(0,K,S):: IF S=0
 THEN 413
415 CALL KEY(0,K2,S2):: IF S
2<1 THEN 415 ELSE 413
416 CLOSE #1 :: CLOSE #2 ::
END
417 DISPLAY AT(12,10):"UNLIS
TABLE" :: CALL SOUND(200,110
,0):: RETURN 400
430 ON ERROR 417 :: CALL INI
T :: CALL PEEK(-31952,A,B)::
 CALL PEEK(A*256+B-65534,A,B
):: C=A*256+B-65534 :: A$=D$
&PG$(K):: CALL LOAD(C,LEN(A$
))
```

The Menu Loader will now list up to 127 programs and files, showing the number of sectors in each and the file type, record type and record length of each file. It will stop at the end of each page, and continue on a default value of 0, or will stop for selection when any Key is pressed. It gives disK name, number of sectors used and available. It adds up sectors actually used and gives a warning if all sectors are not accounted for. It will load and run any program which can be loaded from Extended Basic, displaying the program being loaded. It will delete any program or file, after first displaying the filename and requesting verification. It will list any listable file to the screen, pausing on any Key input, and can be very easily modified to list to a printer. If a file is not listable, it will inform you so, and restart the menu selection. It has the pre-scan option to speed it up.

(See further improvements in Tips 23, 2, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 32 - Ed.)

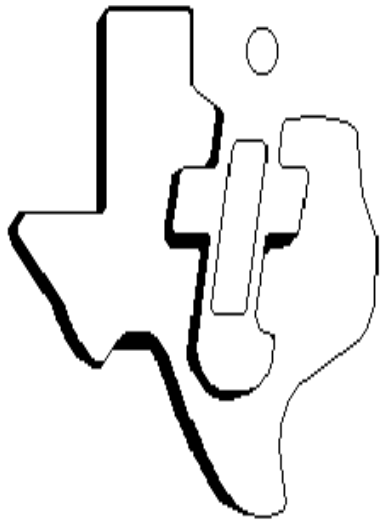
Fairly often, the disK directory will lose tracK of one or a few sectors during the process of loading records, even though the DisK Manager showed all 358 were initialized. That's why I put the checKing routine in the Menu Loader. The figure shown as "used" is actually 358 minus the number of sectors still available, and is checked against the total sectors of all files.

The loss of a few sectors is no serious matter, but once in a great while you may notice that the "available" and "used" sector quantities have obviously been reversed. I have found that this is a signal that the disK is about to go haywire and you had best backK it up immediately!

Programs and files are loaded in the first available sector, and continued in the next available sector. If a number of small files are deleted from a disK, and a long file is then loaded, it may thus be fractured into many parts. If you have a workK disK on which you continually add and delete files of various lengths, it will become badly fractured. This can cause disK errors, and it also badly overworKs your drive. It is a good idea to recopy your workK disK occasionally - file by file, not sector by sector with a quicK copier.

MEMORY FULL!

Jim Peterson YN



AUDIO CONTINUES...

four seconds usually works well. Finally you enter the tape length (e.g,. enter "90" for a C90 tape), and Audio Calculator begins to calculate.

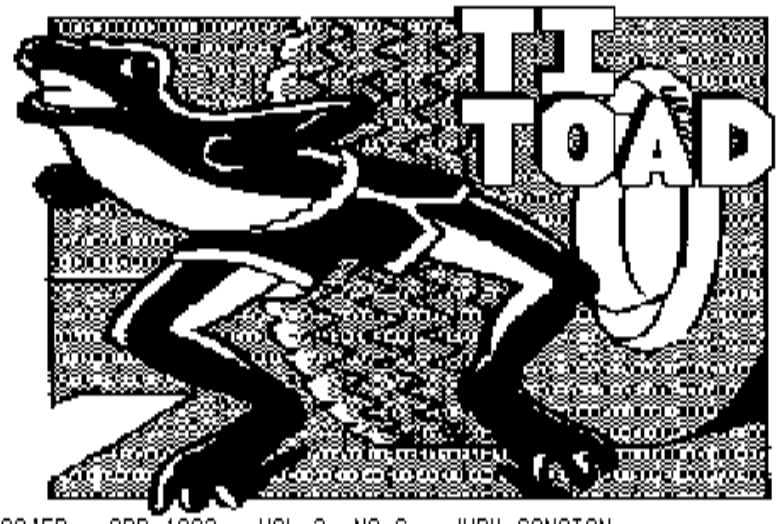
A suggested list of songs (title and individual durations) for side 1 and 2 of the tape, a statement of total used and unused time (after the last time) on each side, and a listing of which songs will NOT fit on the tape appear on screen. At this point you have the opportunity to edit your song entries. Maybe you have a lot of room left and want to put more songs onto the tape. Or maybe you really want to put some of the "won't fit" songs onto the tape and must delete some of the fitted songs to make room. When you finish editing, Audio Calculator will recalculate based on your new data.

As an example of what can be done; I took a favorite CD and typed in the names and durations of all its 13 songs, specified a four-second "autospace" and a C30 (15 minutes on each side) tape length. Audio Calculator told me it could put six of my songs on each side of the tape with unused time of 29 seconds on side 1 and 45 seconds on side 2. One song with a duration of 3 minutes 24 seconds would not fit.

When everything is set up as you wish you can print either a full 80 column listing or a cassette label to cut out and put in the cassette box. Each printout includes the tape title and date plus information about song duration and unused tape space. Each label contains room for a maximum of 25 songs per tape side. Then comes the hard part. You have to use your audio equipment manually to transfer music onto the tape in the sequence specified by Audio Calculator, which is not necessarily the same sequence you used to input the song titles. Don't forget to leave the "autospace" between songs manually. Wouldn't it be nice if this could be done automatically under computer control!

Audio Calculator is written in Extended BASIC and comes in 40- and 80-column versions, both of which come on the same SSSD disk and are almost functionally identical. The 80-column version (requires a Geneve or a 99/4A 80-column device such as TIM or AVPC) is written using Alexander Hulpke's X80. I am grateful for another really useful 80-column application for my 99/4A. Not many of them exist.

I highly recommend Audio Calculator to anyone who makes backup cassette music tapes. It is fairware, and the requested donation is only $5. If you just want to try it out before sending Larry his money, I will send it to you if you mail me a buck (pays for the disk and return postage). Why not save some time and postage by getting it directly from the author? Send the $5 fairware donation AND a disk with paid return mailer to Larry Tippett, 5826 Buffalo St., Sanborn, NY 14132.



99'ER - APR 1983 - VOL 2, NO 6 - JUDY SANDIAN

Picture an urban toad, tired of life in the fast lane, trying to hop his way back to the old pond. Imagine this ambitious amphibian executing a series of grand jetes across four lanes of rush-hour traffic, only to face a fast and treacherous river which he must cross by leaping log to log. One false jump and he's an hors d'oeuvre for a water moccasin.

TI Toad, from Software Specialties, Inc., offers just this scenario. After selecting either joystick or keyboard play, and listening to a catchy little tune, you will see your screen fill with four lanes of blacktop jammed with two-way traffic, a rushing river crowded with floating logs, and safe toad havens that await on the other side (except when inhabited by a roving alligator).

The first of your live toads will hop into place and poise for take-off. This plucky ex-polliwog can hop in four directions - up, down, right, left - to avoid the careening cars. It pays to limit the downward and side action, however, as you are also battling the clock. If your time runs out just as you reach toad heaven, you will have a happy toad, but no points; if it runs out before, you will have a dead toad on your hands . . . I found the best strategy was to look for a break and zip straight across - fast.

Once the little croaker has traversed the traffic, he faces the mighty river. There is something a bit strange about the river current - the logs are flowing fast in both directions. Don't let this disorient you, though; your timing must be precise as you bounce from one log to the next. Your toads belong to a mutant species of amphibian, and if they fall into the water they will drown. Also, don't let any moss grow on those webbed feet as you sail down the river. If your log goes off the screen, it will not wrap - resulting in another lost toad.

When you reach the last row of logs, your toad is ready to hop on home. There is a bit of strategy to selecting your toad's resting place. If you have some extra time on the

clock, you may want to ride out to one of the ponds at the edge of the screen. Once you are near the edge, it takes some slick maneuvering to catch the last log and jump home before you go off the screen.

Command Response: TI Toad's strongest point is that it is a hopping good action game. The obstacles are many and challenging, and the player response is quick. You, in turn, must be fast and aim carefully. (I preferred the joystick to the Keyboard for this type of split-second action.) Your speed determines both your score and your survival.

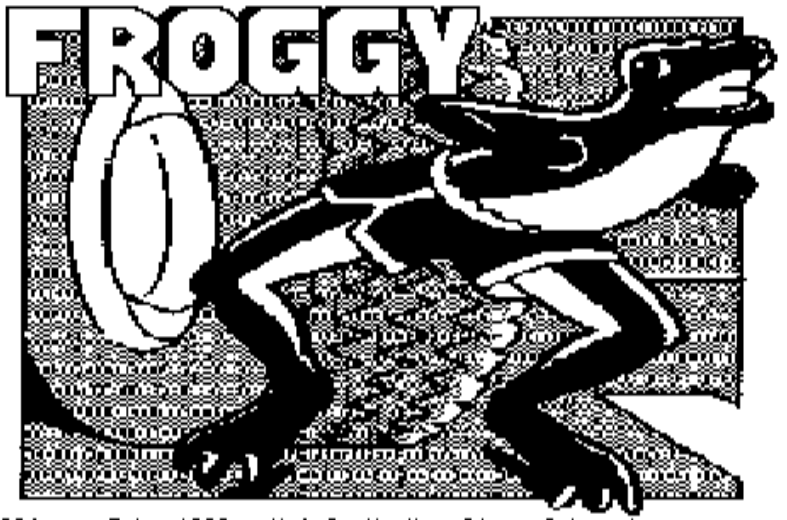
The game offers several levels of difficulty. After you get all five toads across, you progress to screen two (with undulating starfish in the river and faster cars), then screen three (with turtles and speeding police cars), and then screen four (as far as I got . . .), which displays bright red lobsters and race cars. While TI Toad is not a game you will master instantly, it probably won't take long before your toad is hobnobbing with the turtles and lobsters on a regular basis. The game's response is quick enough to let your toad dodge the cars artfully, once you get down the timing. At the same time, the increasing speeds on each level ensure the game will remain a challenge long after the "initial game thrill" is gone.

Documentation: Unfortunately, you'll have to rely solely on experience to reach those higher levels. The game's documentation is a short, two-paragraph instruction sheet, which offers little helpful advice or explanation. It doesn't even tell you what equipment is needed to run the program, let alone offer any playing tips.

Graphics: I found the game aesthetically pleasing. The graphics are colorful and imaginative, especially as you reach the higher levels. I was particularly fond of screen fours lobsters with snapping pincers, and flashing police cars. All in all, the game designer made very effective use of animation and color.

Sound: The game's sound effects are also good - a satisfying "boink" for the hops and dunking noises when your toad falls in the drink. And you'll have some trouble getting the catchy TI Toad jingle out of your head. I found myself humming it for days.

Summary: Anyone familiar with computer games knows that TI Toad is just one of several "frog-crossing-the-road" type games. I found that it compared favorably with any of these, even the arcade version. TI Toad's player response, action, and graphics are right up there with the best of them. I can't help wondering, though, why there are so many similar frog-survival games. Do we really need TI Toad, Froggy, Froggie, and Frogger? Obviously, it's because game players are jumping to buy these games. No one can deny the scenario is a winner, but how about a little variation on the theme? In the meantime, I'll be among those leap-frogging the commuters with my TI Toad.YN



99'er - Feb. 1983 - Vol 2, No 4 - Steve Schwartz

Home computer games don't have to be exact copies of arcade games to be good. A fitting example is Froggy, a new program patterned after the very popular Frogger arcade game but with a challenge quite different from the quarter-eating original.

You start with five of the little beasts, one of which is ready to start jumping from the bottom of the screen across a multi-lane highway bustling with traffic. With either Keyboard or joystick, this phase of the game is a snap. Score 5 points for each successful forward (upward) hop.

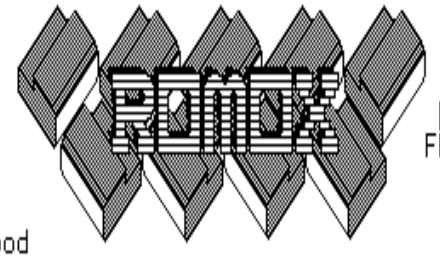
It gets tougher at the top half of the screen. Here you have to jump your pet from one moving log to the next - six of them altogether - until you get all the way to the top of the screen. Score 50 points for each successful jump and rack up a bonus of 100 points for making it all the way.

if you are talented enough to get all five of your frogs across (a truly amphibious landing) you'll be rewarded with another five frogs - something I've been able to accomplish only once. Since the logs are moving at different speeds and in different directions, it takes steady nerves and precise timing to jump at just the right time. If you miss the log, the little fly-breath will jump into the river and swim away. A hit from a car and your frog will croak. (Sorry, but I couldn t resist it). Either way, you lose!

Unlike the arcade original, you can stay on a log as it wraps around the screen, making it a bit easier to play, but in Froggy there's only one log per row. As I said earlier, the challenge is different from Frogger.

This is a colorful and action-packed game, sure to delight young and old, and it has lasting play value. The action

would be faster with a few more cold- blooded cars in each lane - perhaps more sound effects such as honKing horns - but I'm satisfied with Froggy, and am eager to see what Extended Software Company will do with my other arcade favorites. YN



MICROPENDIUM
FEBRUARY 1995
VOLUME 12
NUMBER 1

By Charles Good

When was the last time you purchased shiny new cartridge games for your 99/4A. I don't mean the "recycled and comes in a zip locK bag" cartridges you get at TI shows and by mail from TI dealers, I mean virgin "still in their original manufacturer's shrinK wrap container" cartridges containing games you and the Kids have probably never played. L.L. Conner sells Romox game cartridges that meet these criteria.

Romox was a Campbell, California, company that sold third party games for the 99/4A and other computers in 1983 and 1984. These games could be loaded into reprogrammable cartridges that were loaded at retail stores that had Romox's game center. Pay the clerK, insert your reusable cartridge into the machine, and load your game. Games were available for Atari game systems and Commodore computers as well as for the 99/4A.

Romox also sold stand alone (not reprogrammable) cartridges, and the rights to distribute these cartridges were licensed to Navarone Industries in February 1984. The cartridges reviewed here are original Romox products, purchased from the current L.L. Conner Enterprise catalog. These are unusually shaped and really good-looKing cartridges that were "made in Philippines." Each cartridge has a sloping top-front that contains a full color artist's picture illustrating part of the game action. They are certainly superficially different from the usual "official" TI cartridge, but, liKe the TI products, Romox cartridges plug into the 99/4a's cartridge port. Romox cartridges come in a shiny copper-colored box with holes in the box that reveal the artworK of the cartridge itself. These are not generic boxes, since each has the name of its particular game cartridge imprinted on the box along with specific game instructions printed on the backK of the box. If you lose the box you lose the only printed game docs. However, most games come with plenty of on-screen help as well as an automatic demonstration mode.

All the Romox games maKe good use of the 99/4A's bells and whistles. Some games use speech. Each has a catchy musical tune and various additional sound effects that play throughout the game. You have the option of turning off the music. All games can use joysticKs or the Keyboard for control.

I gave these four cartridges to my 14- and 16-year-old boys to play with. They turned off our 386 clone with CD-ROM, fired up the TI system next to the 386, and played with these cartridges for a weeK of afternoons before they got bored. At least one of the boys had the TI system going whenever they were home during this time. This is an indication of the entertainment value of these Romox games. Even though the games were made in 1983, they were new and interesting to the boys, for a while anyway.

L.L. Conner Enterprise will sell these new game cartridges to you for $10 each, or all four for $30. If you want, you can order the set of four wrapped up in a nice red ribbon with bow for gift giving.

ANT EATER By Romox
You are an ant (actually three ants) in a nest in the ground. You are supposed to tunnel up to the surface, grab some food, and bring it backK to the underground nest. Once all the surface food is obtained, you go on to the next level. On the surface is the deadly anteater, who will follow you on the surface and backK down into your tunnels trying to eat you.

The ant is armed with five eggs that it will lay and leave behind in a tunnel at the push of the fire button. The egg explodes seconds later, destroying a pursuing ant eater if things go as you hope. Also, ants can tunnel under rocKs in the ground that may then fall into the tunnel, squishing the pursuing anteater. When you advance to another level, you get an additional ant (life) and an additional anteater appears. At level 2 there are two anteaters, etc. The speed of the game increases with each of the nine levels.

HEN PECKED By Romox
Navarone's title for the exact same game is ChicKen Coop. This is my least favorite of the bunch. It has no demo mode and few on-screen instructions. Some aspects of the game seem hard for my little mind to figure out. In this one- or two-player game the rooster competes against the hens. You press the joystiK button (or Q Key) to flap your wings and go up, and you move the stiK (or arrows) in the desired direction of movement.

Apparently the object of the game is for the rooster to get onto the backK of a hen. I wonder what he does once he's there? Anyway, once contact is made in this manner the hen is captured and additional hens appear. If contact between rooster and hen is any other way (from the front or backK or bottom), the rooster dies. That's because the hen pecKed him, instead of vice versa. Things become tricKy for the rooster because after the first hen is captured two hens appear, when one of those is captured

two more appear, etc. There may be as many as four hens on screen simultaneously. With all these hens floating around randomly or chasing the rooster it is hard for the rooster to approach the hens in exactly the right orientation. In the two-player game, players take turns being the rooster and compete against each other for the highest score.

ROTOR RAIDERS By Romox

No, the word rotor does not refer to a helicopter. This is not a helicopter rescue game. In this game the word rotor refers to a remote control drainage pipe auger designed to clean gunk out of drains. The object is to move your rotor around in the sewer maze eating all the droppings (the docs call them footprints) left by mice. Of course, you have to catch the mice too, and this isn't easy because the mice can run as fast as your rotor. You have to trap a mouse in a dead end and then roto him to mouse heaven, but meanwhile more mice appear.

This is a maze game somewhat resembling Pac-Man. Instead of energy dots there are mice droppings, and unlike PAC-Man new droppings are continuously deposited by the mice as they run around the sewers. Sometimes your flashlight will go out and you can't see the maze. All you can see are the mice and your rotor. You can still move under these conditions, feeling blindly for barriers. Soon the lights come on again. There are speed levels, which accelerate the speed of both the rotor and mice. Of the group of games reviewed here this is my favorite. I like the music, and the fast action just goes on forever. It is hard to lose but it is also hard to win, because you can never quite keep up with the mice. Finally time runs out and the game displays your score.

PRINCESS AND FROG By Romox

This is your typical one-player "frogger" game with speech and some interesting variations. You move your frog across a field of jousting knights and into a moat filled with alligators and snakes. You jump from one moving animal to another until you get across the moat, but watch out! If you are on the back of an alligator it may submerge, taking the frog with it. In either the joust field or moat it is possible to jump both up/down and left/right to avoid obstacles. Left/right jumping over obstacles is, I believe, unusual in a "frogger" type of game.

On the other side of the moat is a castle with several open gates. Reaching any gate gives you bonus points, but in one gate is a pair of big red lips, the lips of the princess. If your frog manages to jump off a snake into this gate and kiss the princess, then the frog turns into a prince. Neat! And then there is this little extra, as quoted from the game box: "Bonus points are gained by mating with the female frog of the moat on the journey to the castle gates."

This is my second favorite of these four games. It is easily winnable, which is something an arcade game bimbo like me appreciates.

PYRAMID OF DOOM

By
Donald L. Wells

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Volume 1
Number 5

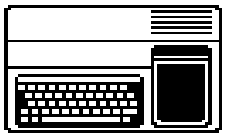
Pyramid of Doom, an adventure game from Texas Instruments and Adventure International - a game I was all set not to enjoy because it was all text and no graphics. I had seen adventure-type games on other systems with graphics that change as the story changes, so I thought, "Now how much fun can an adventure be without any graphics?"

Well, when I plugged in the master Adventure Command Module and loaded in the Pyramid data base, the completely unexpected discovery I made was something I really should have anticipated from my earlier experience with radio serials: The words provide the story line, but what's in your head provides the graphics! Now, by comparison, the graphics on that other system seem silly and childlike in their simplicity. And although I'm sure that your pyramid probably does not look a thing like my pyramid, I am equally sure that yours is the perfect one for you.

So here we are in the middle of the desert with an empty canteen and an unlit flashlight. If you go East, you find yourself at the pyramid. Fine, but now what? The "now what" is just the beginning of a truly fascinating journey - that is if you ever figure out how to get into the pyramid. And watch out for that small desert nomad! I wouldn't turn my back on him too often if I were you...

Once inside the pyramid, the mystery intensifies as you track down the treasures and accumulate points. There is a sarcophagus, a giant oyster, and a mad mummy to contend with if you are to find all the treasures. The Pyramid of Doom will provide a strenuous workout for your powers of logic and deductive reasoning - pitting you up against a very intriguing and demanding maze of clues and trails. When you finally drop that last treasure in the right spot and say SCORE - and are thus rewarded with the yellow screen - the euphoria you experience over this accomplishment is unbelievable. Get lucky, and you might finish Pyramid in a few hours; but a few days - or even weeks - is the more likely case, however.

One of the nicest features of the Texas Instruments implementation of the Adventure Series (consisting of eleven Adventures) is the ability to save the game at the point where you are, and to pick up again right at the point where you left off. This is also very handy for going into places where you know you shouldn't go. . . Just save the game up to that point, then go ahead and jump off the cliff or into the pit! If you meet an untimely end, you can pick up where you left off, remembering to avoid that hazard the next time around. YN



Yesterday's News Information

Yesterday's News is a labor of love offered as a source of pleasure & information for users of the TI-99/4A and Myarc 9640 computers.

TI-99/4A HARDWARE

TI99/4A COMPUTER
MODIFIED PEB
WHT SCSI AND SCSI2SD
MYARC DSQD FDC
MYARC 512K MEMORY
HORIZON 1.5 MEG HRD
TI RS232
CORCOMP TRIPLE TECH
1 360K 5.25 DRIVE
1 360K 3.50 DRIVE
1 720K 5.25 DRIVE
1 720K 3.50 DRIVE

TI-99/4A SOFTWARE

PAGEPRO 99
PAGEPRO COMPOSER
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PAGEPRO ROTATION
PIXPRO
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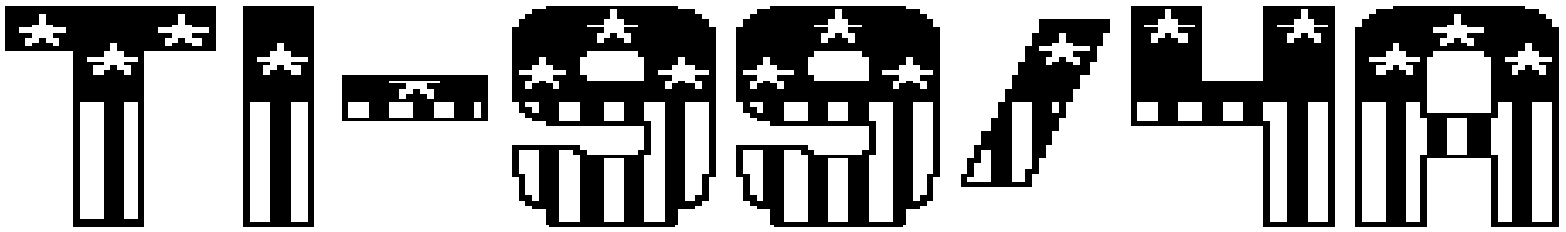

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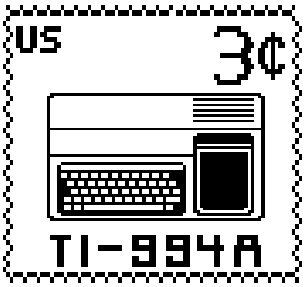

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