

Players Guide to Electronic Adventures

electronic GAMES

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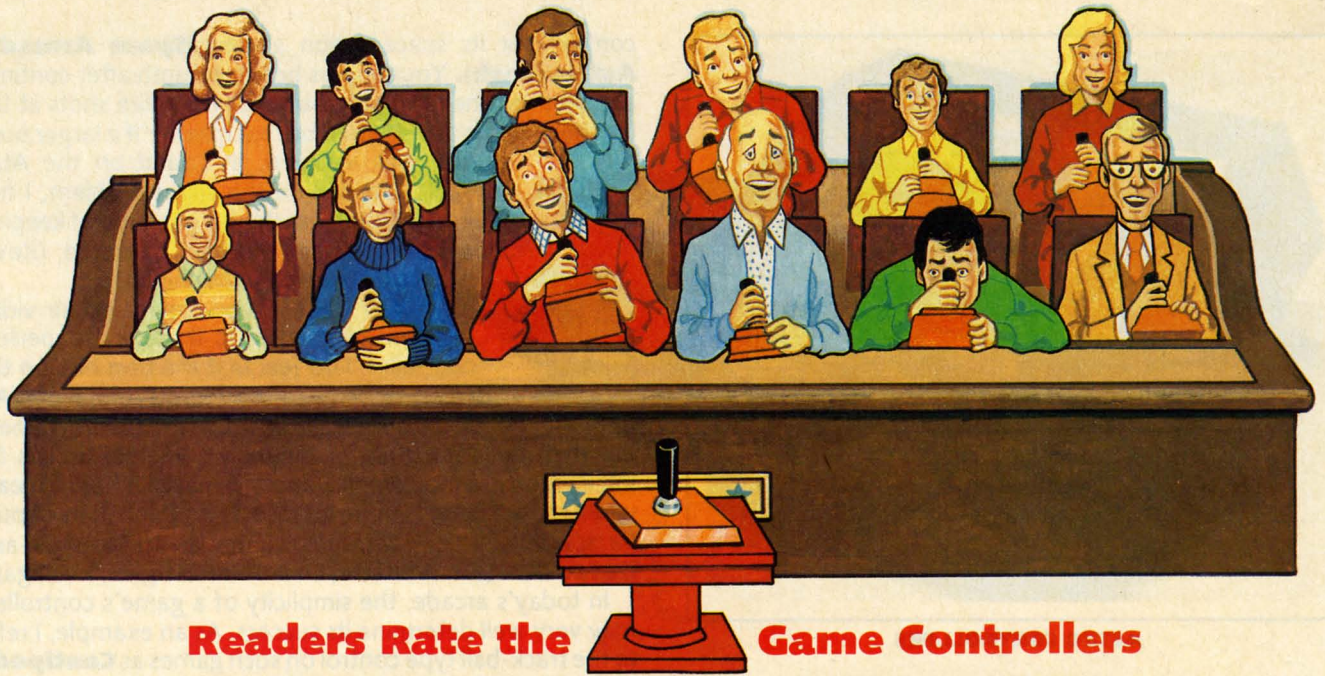
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Readers Rate the Game Controllers

JOYSTICK JURY

No one ever accused gamers of lacking opinions. We expected a good response when we announced the creation of the "Joystick Jury", but even we did not anticipate the more than 100 mini-essays our first topic, game controllers, generated.

Although our jurists really out-did themselves, our choice for the \$25 prize this time goes to John McGuire of Spencer, Ind., for his cogent comments about interchangeability of controllers.

And so, without further preamble, let's call for order in the court and get our jury's verdict.

I for one do not like the coin-op games that have so many buttons, such as **Defender**. I find them to be unnecessary and confusing in play, although I do find the game fascinating. I also have similarly negative feelings toward Mattel's Intellivision, because of its disappointing controller and the manner in which I have to constantly keep looking at it in order to do anything. (Edwin Tuazon, Troy, Michigan)

I believe the Atari controllers and the Odyssey joysticks rate the best because they give the best responses. Intellivision is very hard to control and takes more time to learn than play the game. TRS-80 has very poor response and I

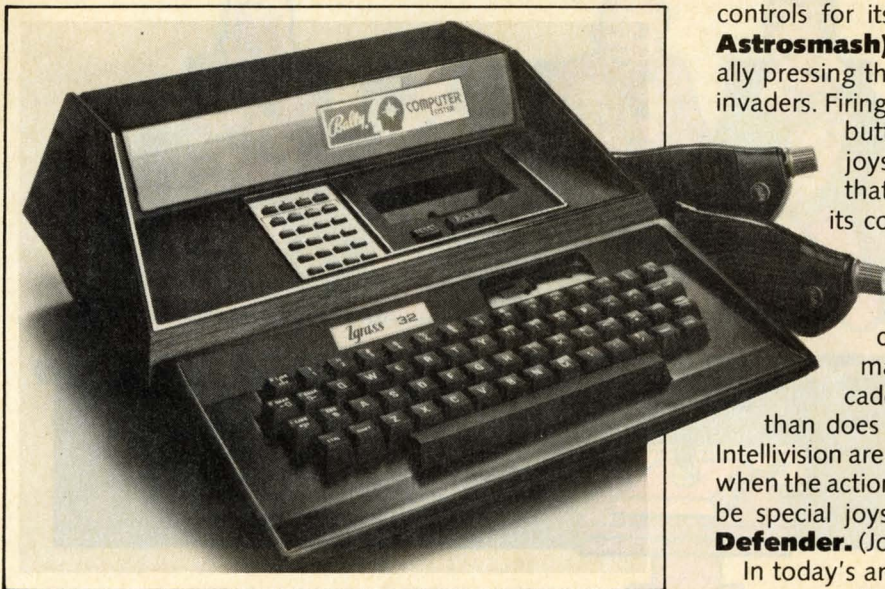


find their joysticks to be rather small. This is also the case with Bally's joystick/paddle controller, along with its poor grip. Because of Atari's and Odyssey's ease in handling and grip, I find these give the best responses of all. (Richard Allen, Brooklyn, New York)

I think Odyssey joysticks rate best because they allow one to do hard maneuvers with relative ease. My only reason for putting Odyssey's joystick ahead of Atari's is because Atari's joysticks seem to break more easily. I find Atari's paddles to be better than Intellivision's controllers (especially for driving), because Atari's are easier to maneuver. I would generally rather have joysticks for most of Intellivision's games than a disk, again, because it is much easier to use and gives much more excitement. (Michael Lencioni, Newton, Massachusetts)

Most coin-op games have a type of controller designed to work optimally with one particular machine. In order to keep realism in the original home videogames, I feel that controls should be interchangeable, such as the case with Atari. This concept allows individual piece repair without loss of the total unit. I would also like to see Atari introduce several other controllers that allow for even more accurate control and sturdier





ASTRO CONTROLLERS

existing controllers as they seem to be short-lived in their mechanical existence.

(John McGuire, Spencer, Indiana)

I prefer the Atari and Intellivision controllers because Atari is simple to use and Intellivision gives you unlimited flexibility. Unfortunately, they also both have drawbacks: Atari games may sometimes be too simple while Intellivision's get too difficult. Atari has more controllers, which means spending more money. The common bond between the two is their unfortunate tendency to break so easily. (Scott Engel, Flushing, New York)

I feel controllers should be complex, and that a perfect controller would have a joystick with three buttons. A modular key-pad with custom overlays would help simplify the game and remote-control operation could untangle the sets. Atari and Odyssey both have excellent systems but lack the graphics and key-pad of Intellivision. A combination of all of the aforementioned units would, in my opinion, result in the ultimate home arcade system. (Paul Kelly, St. Clair Shores, Missouri)

Having previously played the three major programmable videogames extensively, I feel justified in stating that Atari has made the right decision by using interchangeable controls with the VCS. I think Odyssey and Intellivision have unfortunately limited themselves by using hard-wired controls. In many instances, a good game such as Intellivision's **Auto Racing** is turned sour by having to use the disk to steer. (Matt Myers, Coniopolis, Pennsylvania)

Regarding the commercial Arcade games, I like the Trak-ball and push-button controllers. I find these give me more accurate control than the others.

I dislike some of the joysticks and paddle controllers because sometimes they stick in the middle of a game, thereby blowing your quarter. I also like the unique type of joystick with a built-in trigger which enables your defending object to move forward, back, left, right, and fire with the same hand, as in Bally. (Kevin Crawford, Lexington, Massachusetts)

I have just recently purchased an Intellivision system and have to admit that the controls are very effective and essential in its sports games. At the same time I feel that Intellivision should have also furnished an additional set of

controls for its space action games (**Space Armada**, **Astrosplash**). Your fingers become numb after continually pressing the small side buttons which fire shots at the invaders. Firing shots would be much easier if a larger push button was installed, as found on the Atari joystick. Other than this slight problem, I feel that Intellivision has done a good job of keeping its controls compact and easy operated. (Kevin Miller, Bay City, Michigan)

My opinion concerning home video controllers is that there is no perfect controller. I do feel that the best one on the market belongs to the Astro Professional Arcade because it allows much greater movement than does the Atari or Odyssey². The controllers for Intellivision are too complex and this makes it hard to react when the action gets more intense. I also think there should be special joysticks for such games as **Asteroids** and **Defender**. (Jon Whitfield, Dearbourn Heights, Michigan)

In today's arcade, the simplicity of a game's controllers may very well determine its success. As an example, I refer to the track-ball type control on such games as **Centipede** and **Missile Command**, which are my favorites for accuracy and speed. In both games, the ball is used as an aiming device, making accuracy essential and speed necessary for those high scores. However, in the home arcade it is important to have a controller that will work well with many games. I especially like the controller on Mattel's Intellivision. The 12 keys, four buttons and disk give Intellivision a much higher capability than other systems, leading to more interesting and action-filled games. (Tony Kremer, Matteson, Illinois)

I purchased an Odyssey in December, 1978 and after three years of exciting two-player fun, one of my joysticks broke. I then tried buying another at numerous stores and was told that my particular type of joystick was being discontinued, and that the new Odyssey² systems had the joysticks already wired in. Since Magnavox stopped making the old line of joysticks that I needed, I was left with a "bum" controller. I think Magnavox should still produce the old joysticks for all the owners of the original Odyssey version. (Lenny Mcabee, Hammond, Indiana)

The most effective controller for videogames should be designed to be "gripped" by the entire hand. Once the player raps his hand around a joystick, knob, etc., he has involved himself in a psychological manner.

The acader now becomes an effective and interacting part of the game and will develop "body english" as a subconscious gesture. The graphics on the screen react to the player's actions and are no longer simply a case of the game playing the player.

In effect, the player has put himself into the game and is not only involved mentally but physically as well. (John Sisker, Huntington Beach, California)

Many controllers of coin-operated games affect the way we play. For example, levers are most useful for battle games and some space games. Track-balls and/or cursor-balls are also very useful for games dealing with speed and fast reflexes. I prefer the track balls for certain games that mostly involve speed. As for home videogames, Intellivision offers the paddle-type keyboard, which annoys me because in certain games such as **Baseball** and **Football**, you must be able to press certain buttons to make the players move while also using the paddle at the same time. (Vijay Reddy, Jackson Heights, New York)

No matter which of the major videogame companies are investigated, the problems with controllers cannot be escaped. The fancy metal-framed controllers manufactured by Intellivision are sleek looking and styled in calculator fashion complete with buttons, but are also permanently connected to the back of the unit. This will pose a problem to the owner, should anything break and need repair, because the whole game unit must then be checked into the shop.

The Odyssey² controllers seem to be the best made with their ball-socket design, but they, too, are hard-wired to the back of the computer, so one must hope they may never need repair.

Atari's controllers are interchangeable into the system and I think that this is just great. However, they are not made as well as the others and if a small plastic part inside of the system breaks, the entire controller is rendered completely worthless.

I feel that inside parts should be sold and the warranty on the controllers should be voided, so people won't have to pay the price of another cartridge to get a new one. If the controllers are permanently connected, the tops of them should be made interchangeable so as to fit every game situation. (Ron Kramer, Glassport, Pennsylvania)

If the tremendous response to **Electronic Games** proves anything, it's that you are an unusually knowledgeable and opinionated bunch. That's good. It means you care about this hobby and really feel strongly about the things that affect it.

Here's your chance to air your views on electronic arcing in front of this magazine's entire readership. "Joystick Jury", a column of reviews by readers, will begin publication in the next issue.

All you've got to do to participate is follow few simple rules.

1. Type (or clearly print) your comment on a separate sheet of paper that also includes your name and full address.
2. Keep comments brief and to the point—no more than 100 words.
3. Observe the rules of fairness and courtesy. "Joystick Jury" should be a forum for reasoned opinions, not an arena for name-calling.

Each issue we'll print the most interesting responses to create a symposium on the topic under examination by the jury. The issue's best comment, as judged by the editors of **Electronic Games**, will win a cash prize of \$25. (All submissions become the property of **EG**, and none can be returned.)

Here are the next two installments of "Joystick Jury".

"Joystick Jury # (for Electronic Games #): One of the biggest current trends in home arcing is the translation of games that have found success in the commercial amusement centers to cartridges for programmable videogame systems and home computers. Would you prefer to see more and more of such transplants, or is your primary interest in games created especially for the home market? What do you think about the quality of some of the home versions of famous coin-op hits? Is this the way you'd like to see the hobby go on the future?

Deadline: June 1, 1982

Joystick Jury #4 (for Electronic Games, September). Every electronic arcader has his or her particular set of likes and dislikes. Of all the great videogames available these days, which is your personal favorite, and what *exactly* is it about that particular title that keeps you coming back for more.

Deadline: July 1, 1982

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