

COIN INDUSTRY

# PLAY METER

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Barkeep, mah table sprouted knobs

Balmy blossoms and busy boards

Who's audio-visual assault

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Wurlitzer whammy



## video converters welcome

It is with interest and some mild degree of surprise that we report to you this month about the emergence of the video cocktail table as one of the most popular forms of coin-operated entertainment in America today.

In researching and writing the story, for example, we learned that the reluctance of "conventional" operators and distributors to accept the cocktail table game has brought "new blood" into the industry — new blood which some argue helps the industry and some argue hurts the industry.

But there still remains to a large extent the problem of resistance to the concept from operators and distributors who still point angrily to their warehouses, stockrooms and garages littered with the long-cold ashes of the upright video tennis type games whenever a cocktail table representative approaches them.

"Why can't you give me something to make that thing pay again?" they point at the cobwebby uprights. We agree. Why can't manufacturers provide operators with techniques, kits or the actual services to convert the now-useless uprights into money-making machines once again?

A couple of companies, in fact, have done exactly that. They provide conversion kits or will convert the games themselves. We commend them for their efforts and hope they will be able to alleviate to some extent the frustration and anger long-felt by operators and distributors toward the upright video tennis-type game.



# Cocktails, anyone?

## *the boob tube pays off*

By Gene Beley and  
Sonny Albarado

Operators who cringed when they paid \$2,000 for a sophisticated video piece at the turn of the decade laughed aloud three years ago when marketers began selling video cocktail tables for \$2,400 and more.

Experienced game vendors, who had weathered through the proliferation of new video games during the past three years, put their blinders on simply at the glaring gall that someone would even conceive a video cocktail table.

Their memories still simmered over the financial burns they received from the horizontal, elimination-type table video games, which were similar to the cocktail table models. The overpopulation and sameness of many of the video games almost forced a "flash-in-the-pan" attitude from operators and distributors' showrooms, conventional distributors buried their heads in their pingames, too.

After all, the cocktail table featured nothing more than the bouncing ball of the relatively old Ping Pong game, didn't it? And the Ping Pong game had run its course, hadn't it?

No.

Sure, distributors and operators poked fun at the suckers buying those video cocktail tables at astronomical prices from professional marketing salesmen. But those same distributors and operators fretted over the unwanted competition those newcomers would bring. Now their laughter has diminished to fearful silence.

The laughter first changed to grumbles as conventional operators and distributors realized the need to compete in the burgeoning marketplace. Another stage of the industry's evolution was rising and the established professionals were stuck at the ground floor.

Video cocktail tables were springing up in locations that never before

would consider anything with a coin chute on it. Hotels, yacht clubs, country clubs and posh cocktail lounges were beginning to groove on the video cocktail tables by mid-1974.

An entire new market was opening to the industry while most of the industry was "OTL" — out to lunch.

As an operator, I began to watch the Sunday *Los Angeles Times* business opportunities advertisements closely by late 1974, appalled at the idea that some unsuspecting people outside the business, looking for an investment, could be lured into paying \$2,400 for a video cocktail table from one of these new "promoters" — for lack of a better name — while they could buy the same product from conventional distributors on Pico Boulevard ("Amusement Machine Row") in downtown Los Angeles for nearly half that price.

I could just see salesmen showing prospects the first week's gross from a video cocktail table without telling the innocent prospect how the grossing power of a game diminishes with time, rather than increasing, like most other businesses. Each Sunday there were more such ads in the *Time*. By the time I read a Jan. 3, 1975, business page article on Bristol Industries of Woodland Hills, calling them "among the largest" of a dozen companies in the "space-age pinball machine field," I knew I must start researching this article.

The financial writer referred to Bristol's newly-recruited operators as "distributors" and never once mentioned long-time conventional distributors in Los Angeles like C.A. Robinson, Portale Automatic Sales, or See-West. The *Times'* millions of readers were left with the impression that the legitimate distributors' didn't exist and the only way to buy these over-priced video games was through companies

like Bristol Industries, founded by Allan Glezerman, pictured alongside an Atari upright Pinpong game, with a caption that made it sound as if Bristol manufactured that product, too.

Admittedly, I approached this entire subject with a negative attitude, intending to expose the "frauds" taking place. I corresponded with the California Department of Justice. Herschel T. Elkins, deputy attorney general, replied:

"... we are aware of the many illegitimate companies that are advertising vending machines. There are more fraudulent operations in this field than in any other. This, of course, makes it quite difficult for the legitimate sellers. Lack of adequate personnel has hampered district attorneys' offices and the attorney general's office. By the time we discover the fraud, the company has usually disappeared. Some actions have been brought, but an adequate job has not been done.

"We are searching for a solution which will both protect the legitimate merchants and rid this state (California) of the predators who feed on people's dreams. This will be one of our 1975 projects and the Los Angeles District Attorney's office, our office and other law enforcement offices will attempt to solve this problem."

Although there *are* a lot of fast-buck and fly-by-night artists embracing the video cocktail machine to fleece their victims, I discovered in the process of researching this article that there are two sides to this controversial topic of marketing methods and that there is a vast potential for the operators of the tables — an immense, unharvested territory with millions of new, quality locations ripe for plucking. The climate now existing in the industry because of video cocktail tables and their acceptance by a new



audience can be compared to those times in the industry's history when games or innovations of lasting importance bubble up the grapevine from laughed-at Tinker Toy to touted standby, according to some industry analysts.

Video cocktail tables are "not a flash in the pan," Len Schneller, sales manager for U.S. Billiards Inc., Amityville, N.Y., proclaims. "They are introducing new blood into the industry," he adds. Because the average operator has been afraid to move from the security of the bars, because the average operator generally does not know how to deal with large corporate chains or "quality" locations, the early manufacturers of the games have been forced to retail directly or through what Schneller calls "blue suede shoe men," often to persons who have never operated coin amusement machines before, but who are not afraid of electronics technology or of dealing with corporation presidents or chain officers to establish new locations.

For the first time in a long, long time, Schneller says, the coin industry is getting a vigorous supply of "new blood" where it counts — the grass roots level, the operator level. Admittedly, there have been some cases of unscrupulous "blue skying" on the part of some new video table manufacturers and their promoters. But Schneller is confident that the overall effect of the different marketing techniques will be a good one.

He does not think the new operators will be turned off to the industry or feel they've been had when they find out they can often obtain the tables for less through normal channels. "They're businessmen" for the most part, Schneller says, many of them out-of-work stockbrokers or doctors, professional men looking for another income source. And, he adds, they know business involves risks. But they can also see the income these tables are producing for others and for themselves.

Nolan Bushnell, Atari's chairman of the board, echoed some of Schneller's ideas. He criticized regular operators for "dropping the ball." "The video cocktail table market's development symbolizes a basic weakness in the industry's area of aggressive operations," he says. "There is a lot of money being made in this market. It is inconceivable to me how the operators and the legitimate distributors dropped the ball," he adds.

Yet, when asked if Atari intends to



**AS THESE PLAYERS** in the Americana Hotel Rotunda Lounge in Los Angeles seem to suggest, a good video

cocktail table game can be as enthralling as a great basketball game or a knockout mystery.

market a video cocktail table, Bushnell replied in late March, "That is confidential."

Historically, however, Atari was involved early in the development of the video cocktail table, producing a modified Pong for one of the first companies to market the new product — National Entertainment Co. Inc. of San Jose, Calif. With an investment of \$90,000, the firm went to Atari in late

1973 and asked the company to produce a cocktail table based on the Pong unit, according to Dick Januzzi, a company officer.

"They laughed at us," Januzzi said. "But we felt we had a good idea and a good product." Later, however, quality problems forced National Entertainment to give up the Atari unit and go with a cocktail model of Meadows' Games Flim Flam, a product which Januzzi now feels is the best and most reliable cocktail table on the market today.

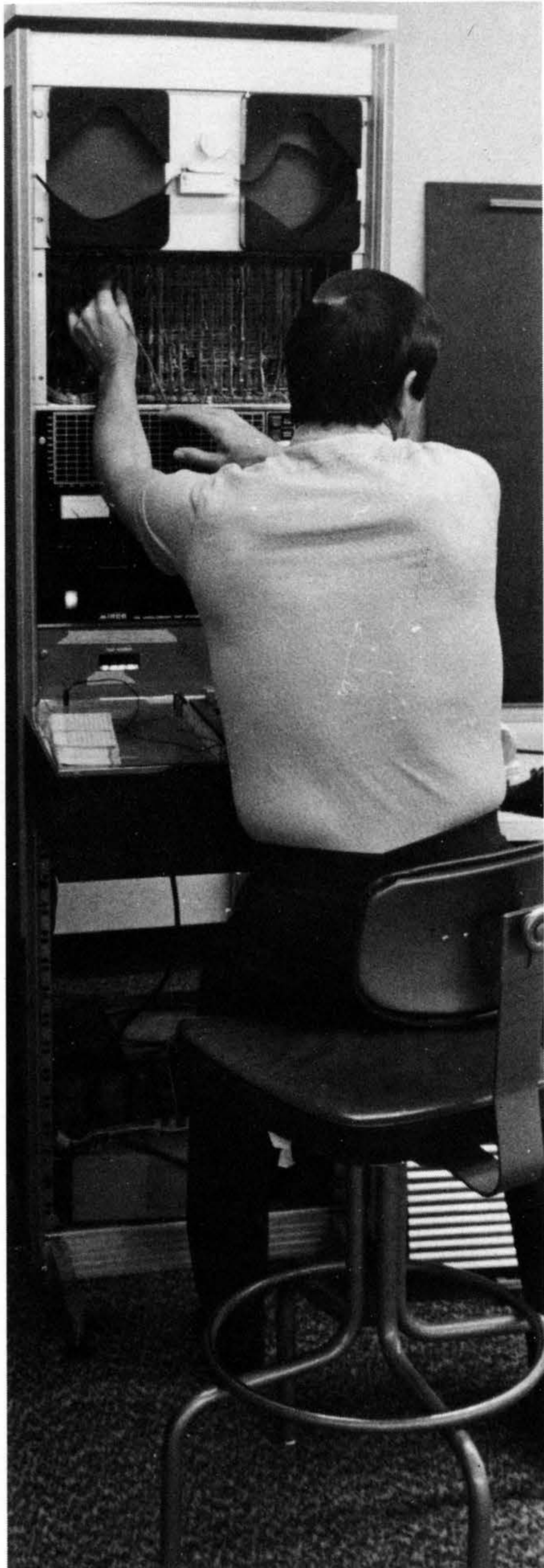
Initially, the company had the same problems other early cocktail table manufacturers had: They had to convince conventional distributors and large operators of the earning power and attractiveness of their product. That task was difficult, according to salesman Jerry Schubert.

"They wouldn't buy the tables," he said, "so we were forced to market the product in a different way. We spent a tremendous amount of money to develop the market — \$86,600 in newspaper advertising alone last year. We established our own service trucks in many areas and recruited some very capable, new operators and taught them the business."

That procedure paid off for the firm, Januzzi says, and the growing trend among conventional distributors and operators has turned National Entertainment's initial retailing gambit into a 99 per cent wholesale marketing situation. "We started retailing it ourselves," Januzzi says. "Then we set up our own wholesale network, doing a helluva lot of volume. We've continually improved the table and there's not a better board in the industry. Last year we did a million-six. This year we're gonna do \$9 million."

Another firm that claims to have started in late 1973 and says it was the first to market a video cocktail table is Fascination Ltd., which began as National Computer Systems Inc., and Sales Manager Bob Runte feels the direct retailing marketing method made his company more successful





**A MIRCO TECHNICIAN checks out the circuits of one of the data units in the company's computer data room.**

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than it would have been by going through the "normal" channels.

"The vending distributors want everything," Runte said, adding, "... 110 per cent financing, kickbacks, the works. We decided to go a different route."

Like National Entertainment Co., Fascination Ltd. began by building up its own network of operators and distributors. But Fascination Ltd. has never used a single newspaper or magazine advertisement yet. They have

relied upon business opportunity seminars and trade shows, but the core of their success in this area was classified as a "trade secret."

"The biggest single factor in our success has been people seeing our product and giving us word-of-mouth advertising," Runte said. "We have developed our entire market outside the U.S. by foreigners seeing and playing our game in this country."

A third early 1974 company that had to go the direct retail route was Technical Design Corp. of Edina, Minn., according to President Bob Mallick.

"Up until now," he said, "we've been selling more or less direct to operators in our general area because of the resistance of the big distributors to handle any table. They just say, 'There isn't a place for it. It's a fluke.' A lot of them are also tied up with one of the big companies.

"We sold a couple of operators directly on the West Coast. What we call 'blue suede boys' go out and sell them. We, of course, sell it to them at the same price we would a distributor. We would prefer to set up a nice national distributing set-up. We're hoping to do that with our new games," Mallick said.

The firm, he explained, plans to produce three new models of its table soon. "There's definitely a place for the distributor," he went on, "but the distributor is going to have to accept the product."

He also added that Technical Games plans to establish a service center "to service everybody's boards" soon. The service would provide 72-hour turnaround, he said, with a flat rate charged to everyone, excluding parts.

But not all video cocktail table companies have relied so heavily upon direct marketing (a technique which tends to drive up the price) to get their product before the consumer. Two companies that started in early 1974 — Electromotion Inc. of Bethlehem, Pa., and Nutting Associates of Mountain View, Calif. — were able to gain distribution in most areas through established, conventional distributors.

"We market our product by means of protected territories," Electromotion Vice President Eugene Smith says of the company's Lexan (TM)-topped, copper-surfaced unit. "In other words, we are not overlapping territories whatsoever. In some parts of the country, where we haven't

been able to get out to the regular, established distributing network, we have marketed through marketing companies. But these are confined to particular parts of the country. We don't use that method when we are able to go through the regular network."

Bill Nutting, president of Nutting Associates, thinks about 10 per cent of his round, smoked-top, simulated-color tables found their way to the ultimate marketplace through promotional, specialty salesmen, who bought from conventional distributors. Nutting's table was one of the first so-called "glamour girl" models in the race to the cocktail lounges and though the idea was slow to catch on, Nutting says, "the trend is up, with a current heavy concentration in the western United States, with cities like Los Angeles, Denver and Phoenix taking the lead."

Another important midwife to the birthing of the cocktail table was Mirco Games of Phoenix, which introduced its model in July 1974. Mirco Sales Manager Bob Kaiser sees a great parallel between the historical development of the cocktail table market and the 1930's.

"There is a negative economic situation today, although not as severe," Kaiser begins. "Whereas coin-op pinball and pool tables came into prominence in the 1930's, the recent technology has had a great impact on today's market. I think it is lasting and rather great.

"At the same time, the conventional distributor who has been in the business a long time has developed certain attitudes that caused him to overlook the tabletop game concept." Electromotion's Smith called it complacency and noted that the video cocktail table market has revolutionized the games industry.

"And it's not going to go away," Smith added, "because the table manufacturers are going to come back and sell new products to their original customers. The distributor-operator network is still going to have its headaches."

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***Times get good - times get bad.  
Meanwhile  
Kiddierama gets bigger and bigger.  
Somebody must be buying them.***



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Kaiser's first experiences trying to sell Mirco's cocktail table coincide with that harsh view of the initial situation: "At first, I offered our video cocktail table to every conventional distributor in the nation. One distributor said, 'You've got a nice little company making foosballs. Stick with that.' Only one conventional distributor, C.A. Robinson Co. of Los Angeles, would take on our tables.

"Since none of the conventional distributors would touch our product," Kaiser continues, "there were people with proven professional sales ability who needed a product to sell and I introduced them to our video cocktail table. Many of these people were doctors and lawyers, unsatisfied with their money sitting in the bank and inflation gobbling it up. Many of these doctors and lawyers are out collecting from 20-30 machines themselves and are happy as hell about it."

Two other early dabblers in the budding video cocktail market were Bill Prast and Steve Holder, who became deeply involved in the revolution in early 1974 by establishing a repair shop in Los Angeles called Amusement Device Engineering. The catalyst in their shared thoughts about a video table was Ken Berger, an investor who came into their shop one day and asked them to make games for him. Holder and Prast had also met Bill

Bailey, Junior and Senior, who had been manufacturing some video games for Circle International and who recommended the two men contact Circle about availability of manufacturing space. The result was the formation of Digital Games in June 1974.

At first, Holder recalls, they made their first big sales to the promotional salesmen, who were reselling them at the high prices. "This is what helped us get on our feet," Holder stresses. Later, they began selling to Seeburg on a national basis and to other conventional distributors.

"When we first started," Holder adds, "we couldn't provide the 30-90 days credit required from conventional distributors. We weren't in a position to carry 'paper' on even 30 machines for any length of time. We needed the cash and the direct-sales people provided it." Digital Games recently moved into a 30,000-square-foot assembly plant in San Dimas, Calif., (a Los Angeles suburb) and is shipping about 100 games a week as far away as Germany and Japan, Holder says. They have progressed already to offering a variety of games and they plan to sell customers logic boards for \$200 that can be interchanged in the same table to provide a different game without having to purchase another table.

Almost every company involved in the early development or marketing of the video cocktail tables has since undergone a process of rapid maturation,

including Bristol. Regardless of how they started, they all have left some impact on the marketplace.

Bristol Industries recently reorganized and appointed Saul I. Brooks as executive vice president and chief operating officer. When Play Meter visited Bristol's office in Woodland Hills, Brooks claimed a network of "over 200 owner-operators." He had just returned from a recruiting program in the Cleveland area, where business editor of the Cleveland Press Ray DeCrane featured a six-column, half-page article on "Electronic Tennis for the Drinking Set," complete with a photo of two persons playing the game. Again, there was no mention of conventional distributors, or an overview — just Bristol Industries.

Brooks refused to divulge how much his company has spent on advertising, except for saying, "a lot, searching for people-talent."

Brooks, like Kaiser, sees parallels to the Depression era, when, incidentally, most distributors came into being, taking over functions formerly performed by jobbers.

"The entertainment field always makes a buck — even during the Depression when people would dig into their pockets for 15c to see a movie," Brooks comments. "It's escapism and getting away from their troubles."

At first Bristol used Digital Games' table in their marketing, but now manufactures their own brand.

All of the companies, of course, have continually improved upon their equipment, changing components, changing appearances, changing the games offered. Electromotion will soon market a table with the capability of offering 12 different games, according to Gene Smith. The table will make use of a modular concept whereby all games have a common "mother" board for common IC's and for those IC's that make each game

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**BROTHERS JOHN AND MIKE McEntee, owners of A-1 Manufacturing, look over a piece of circuitry that goes into their video cocktail table.**



**Why don't you try  
5 Kiddieramas.  
That won't break you.  
It might make you.**

**PLAY METER**



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individual, smaller interchangeable boards. "You can carry a complete inventory of games in a briefcase," he said.

National Entertainment's Dick Januzzi said his company has continually refined their table and will probably introduce a new product later this year.

But as the cocktail table pioneers have matured, others have noticed their success, including older manufacturers, and now there seems to be a threat of a market glut. Already there is accusation and counter-accusation that one company copied another's table and some of these accusations have already resulted in lawsuits. Yet, the pioneers are not disheartened. They believe their products to be the best available and they believe wholeheartedly in the extended earning life video cocktail tables offer over other types of games.

From these manufacturers' comments it is obvious that conventional distributors and operators, nursing bitter memories and afraid to risk another electronic game, made for a difficult birth for the cocktail table market. But eventually distributors realized the market's potential and realized that they had better compete if they didn't want to be locked out of the market entirely. As this realization hit home, a curious thing began to happen — the video cocktail table phenomenon spread, but it didn't spread from East to West, as have most industry phenomena.

"It all began in California," Len Schneller said, "and now it's spreading to the East." Distributors bear him out:

Will Laurie, salesman for Advance Automatic Sales in San Francisco, remarked, "It began the latter part of 1974 here. We began selling Mirco first, then Nutting, then Meadows. The operator was hesitant at first and bought primarily to protect his locations. The ones who have bought have been surprised at their grossing power. Ones out a long time have been in the same locations."

In Dallas, Bill O'Connor, sales manager for O'Connor Distributing Co. noted video cocktail tables are a "strong market here. It began gaining momentum in early February." In Houston, the "market is just beginning to boil," H.A. Franz's Larry

Twardowski said. "The sophisticated restaurants and night clubs are discovering it is a money-making device to fight inflation."

Leroy Kitch, sales manager for Culp Distributing in Oklahoma City, Okla., said, "They're just now starting to gain some popularity. The market appears to be growing real good. In some locations, they do real good; others, they fall flat. The advertisements placed by promoters in Sunday papers have probably helped us by exposing the tables to locations. The locations tend to ask their regular amusement machine operators for the cocktail tables, rather than buying direct at that high price."

But in Philadelphia, Morris Shine, sales manager for Active Amusement Co., reported that the cocktail table has a "very limited market here. The tables have not generated enough in-

come for my customers to be buying them. And the price is too high. The video cocktail table demand has been generated by the manufacturer, rather than by the location or operators who are our customers. The promoters have hurt us. They have sold to people who have no concept of how much it takes to repair or operate the games. They have also gone directly to locations, which I consider a negative approach."

In upstate New York, the reaction to the tables has been similarly cool, reported John Nicasastro, assistant general manager for Davis Distributing in

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Albany. "The feedback we get is operators and location owners are apprehensive about people sitting at the tables and not playing the games."

The market in North Carolina is also limited, said Jon Brady of Brady Distributing Co., Charlotte. "Blue sky" operations exist there, he added, but promoters try to sell the games "to us for \$300 more than I'd sell them to the operator."

With the video cocktail table phenomenon bouncing between the paddles of our coasts, the question remains: What marketing method is right?

The amusement machine industry is suffering from being locked into the antiquated 50/50 percentage split with locations as the price of machines soar, along with operating costs. In many cases, new operators of video cocktail tables have done a better job of getting 60 per cent for themselves than have old-time operators. And seasoned operators, approaching this virgin territory, should keep in mind the need to try for higher percentages because in most cases, you are dealing with people new to the games business, who feel fortunate to have the service and a brand new table in their establishments.

The choices are up to the individual operator. He can ignore a seemingly significant trend in his own industry and an opportunity to boost income tremendously. Or, he can stick with the traditional commission system that has portions of the industry in a cancerous grip.

But operators like Larry Greenspan of General Amusement Co. in Ocean-side, Calif., realized the video cocktail table's magic early. "These tables are opening doors for us," Greenspan says.

I began my research on this article by venturing into the market. When I decided to purchase my first table in January, C.A. Robinson was selling Mirco's table and Portale Automatic Sales was cautiously starting to test the market with a new manufacturer's product. Portale's Sales Manager Stan Rousso worked closely with A-1 Amusements, headed by two young engineers, John and Mike McEntee of Los Angeles. Although other operators recommended Mirco's table for its reliability, I felt the octagon-shaped A-1 table had a superior appearance for the cocktail lounge trade I intended to try.

After loading two tables on my truck, I stopped to eat in Santa



Monica at an establishment called The Old Venice Noodle Company, which specializes in lasagna and spaghetti dinners at low prices, yet has an elegant, antique decor, complete with an old cable car inside. I was told that Wednesday evening that it would be a 30-minute wait for dinner and watched the people jam the restaurant and small bar-waiting area.

Immediately, I thought about the video cocktail tables on my truck and how they would be perfect for a place like the Noodle Company restaurant. I asked for the manager, who was not in, but Assistant Manager Doug Barron kindly gave me his time and listened to my proposal.

"We've been thinking about some kind of a video game," Barron replied, then offered to walk across the street to see the cocktail tables sitting on my truck.

When he saw them, he gave permission to let me put one in on a trial basis — immediately. By the time my name was called for dinner, I had installed one video cocktail table!

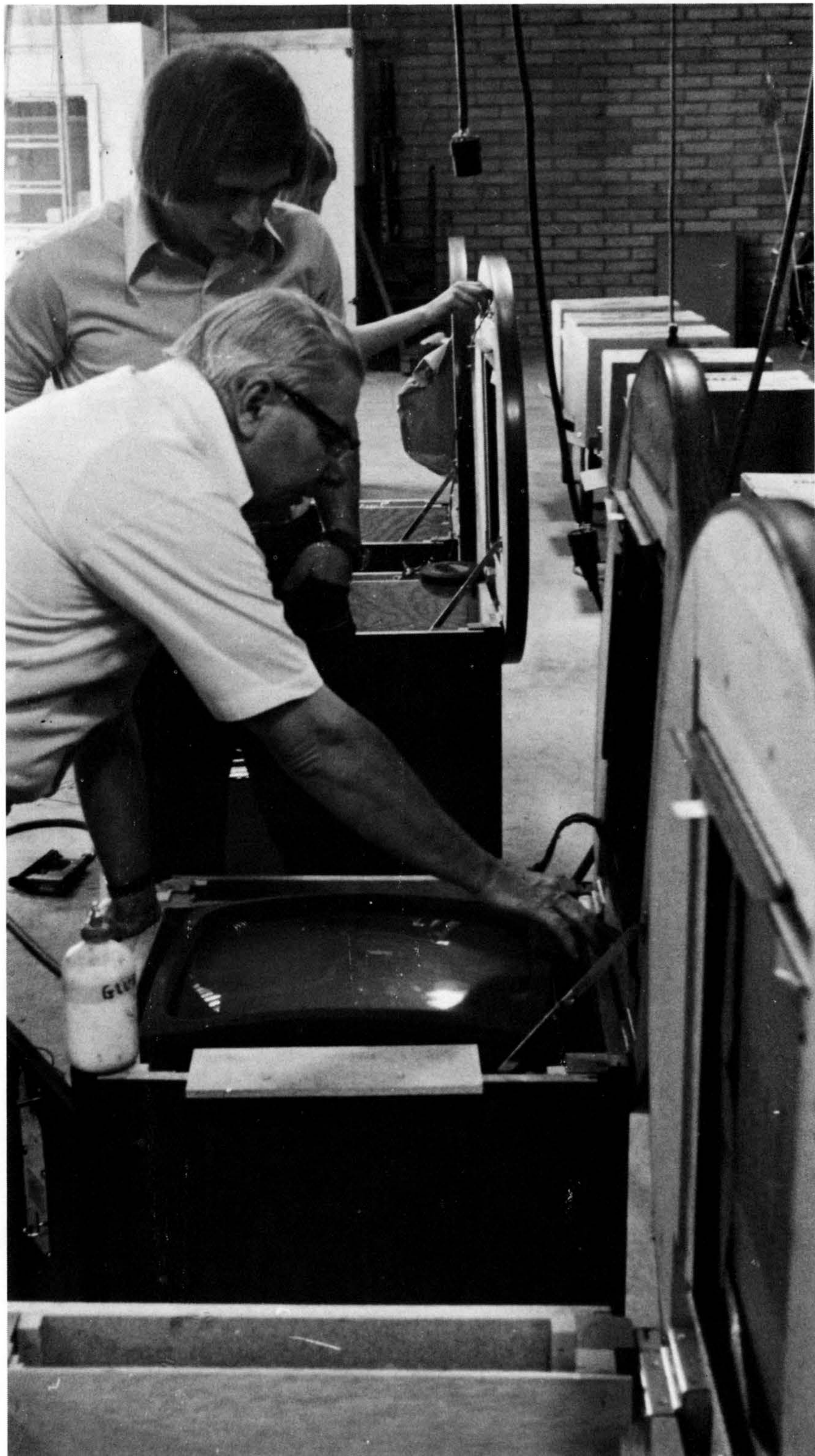
The next day when I returned to meet Manager Frank Lutz, I took along an Atari Trak 10 car game — the small version with the wood-grained cabinet designed for prestige locations. Lutz, somewhat more conservative than his assistant, nixed the upright car game emphatically. He didn't even want a demonstration.

"But I love the cocktail table," he said. "You can keep it in. We needed a low-profile game like that to keep our customers from getting bored while waiting for dinner."

Within three months, my company added a second video table and a Wurlitzer 1050 Limited Edition (clas-

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**ON THE ASSEMBLY** line at Mirco, two employes inspect a nearly completed table before adding final touches and shipping it to its new owner.





sic style) jukebox for the Noddle Company. Between January and March, without adding any additional labor, I placed 20 video cocktail tables in high-volume locations to maximize the grosses and lessen the gamble.

The initial, unanswerable question: "How long will they last?"

Bob Hathaway, veteran operator and owner of Ventura County Amusement Service near Santa Barbara, Calif., believes they'll be around a while. "I think the video cocktail table is going to be around like a piece of furniture for years to come," he comments. "The cocktail table is like a jukebox. If they want to play it, the game is there," he adds.

Hathaway began in late 1974 with Mirco tables, purchased from C.A. Robinson. He admits they started out with a bang and dropped to one-half within four months. "However, the majority of them are still in their original locations — mostly cocktail lounges," he says.

He reported weekly grosses began around \$100 a week and dropped off to about \$50 in good locations. Hathaway, like many other operators, obtained a \$25 a week minimum for his company with the understanding if the tables dropped below that level, he could move them to a more profitable location.

"Our main object is to provide our locations the service and prevent outside competition," Hathaway concluded.

Chuck Fagelson, Jones Music, North Hollywood, Calif., does not put video cocktail tables in beer bars. His company has set a policy of sticking to cocktail lounges.

"The beer bars attract more blue collar workers who'd prefer to shoot pool," Fagelson explains. "The cocktail lounges have a more sophisticated clientele."

Jones Music entered the video cocktail table market in late 1974 when they began getting calls from their locations under contract, asking about the games. Direct sales personnel were soliciting the locations or the location owners had seen advertisements in newspapers and became interested in the game.

"So in a way, I think the 'promoters' have helped us," Fagelson philosophizes. Already, they have placed 80 tables on a commission basis."

Fagelson remembers one location owner, whose establishment provided

good yields on a cocktail table, saying "I wish I would have bought the machine directly from that salesman who was here."

"The first time we had a breakdown," Fagelson chuckled, "I asked the man, 'What would you have done now?'"

"They can't go to a tv repairman because the repairmen don't know enough about the games and the tv involved and their repair rates are comparatively very high. Nor can they go to the manufacturer because, in most cases, the manufacturer is not local. At best, there would be a great deal of delay, which would mean lost revenue," Fagelson said.

Jones Music has established a corner in their shop for repairing video games and has made several of their own modifications to the Mirco tables they are using. These include a cardboard over the PC board (that lays flat) "in case the cash box overflows" (which would cause a short circuit).

"The future for this market is good," adds Fagelson. "It can only get better. There are nine million people in L.A. alone. This is going to be a case of survival of the fittest."

One video cocktail table operator, who asked not to be identified, was introduced into the field through National Entertainment Co., San Jose, by direct retailing.

This operator, whom we shall call Jim, saw an ad in April, 1974, advertising the machines. Jim's occupation was a computer programmer and thought the idea sounded like an attractive investment.

He bought one for \$2,200, which grossed \$100 the first week and was fairly steady for about three months, which he felt was a sufficient trial period. He ordered nine more on credit terms by using the cash payment for his first machine as a down payment.

"One of the inducements to order 10 was a discount," Jim remembers.

The discount brought the price down to around \$1,800, with 10 per cent add-on financing.

"I'm negative about the way I got into the field," Jim is quick to add. "I thought I researched the field and was fairly careful, but when you lack knowledge and are impatient, you tend to get yourself into trouble."

Jim said National Entertainment appointed a tv shop in his area to help him fix machines. "When I was so naive about the machines that I took

one in with a dropped yoke, which dropped the video, the tv shop charged me \$18.50 to put the yoke back in."

Locations frequently told Jim of having a "professional operator" in the business. "They realized I was coming into service the machines with a blank stare.

"Finally I told one location that I wouldn't blame him for replacing me with a professional. And the location did."

Jim also criticized the quality of locations found for him by professional "locators." He had paid \$100 extra per location for spots provided for his machines. He now feels he has learned to find better locations himself.

"I dream of building it up more," says Jim, "but realistically, even if I keep it as an avocation, I think I will at least come out on it, eventually."

But to get a final perspective on the growth of the cocktail table market, *Play Meter* interviewed Roger Sherman, the first customer of Fascination Ltd., one of the two companies claiming to have marketed the table first in 1973. Sherman said he bought his first machines in October of that year and added that they "have definitely proven themselves."

"I'm reinvesting all the money I make because they're just getting bigger and bigger all the time. I was a little shaky at first," he admitted. "It was a new business. I was convinced, I guess, by the salesman that every business has to start someplace and there was a great future for this one. I was leery, but I took a chance."

"I started out with a few units, but I'm only sorry now I didn't start with many more because I would have made that much more that much quicker. Right now I have 22 units in 17 good locations. I heard about the machines originally through a business opportunity seminar and that's how I got started."

Cocktail tables are very popular in Illinois where Sherman operates, he said, and interest is not waning. "In fact," he said, "interest is probably stronger now than initially. That was one of my big worries; if it was a fad. But I've determined to my satisfaction that it is definitely not a fad. If I were better capitalized, I would not have 22, I would have 122 because they make that kind of money."