



## Special Review: Atari's Missile Command....

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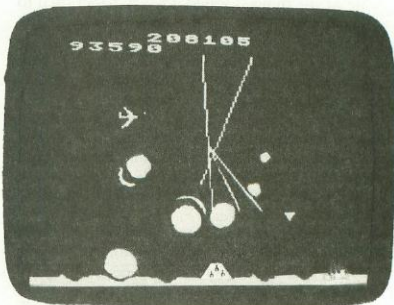
Shown at the Consumer Electronic Shows this year in Las Vegas and Chicago, the Missile Command(tm) cartridge from Atari looks really great! Next to Star Raiders I personally feel it to be the best action game on the home computers I have seen yet. It includes the same features as the arcade version: you must protect six cities at the bottom of the screen from the onslaught of dozens of ICBM's (some with multiple warheads which split up at certain points). As the game progresses the missiles come down faster, and the dreaded 'smart bombs' start to bug you. These are triangular in appearance rather than the diamond shape in the arcade version. These also come down faster as the game continues and in greater numbers. Of course you also have the fly-bys of planes and satellites which drop even more missiles if you don't blow them away in time. And like the arcade Missile Command, the colors on the screen becomes more furious as you rank up your points.

The major difference between the arcade and computer versions are the number of missile bases under your control. The arcade version, as you probably know, has three launching stations; one in the bottom center and one laterally on each side of it. The home computer version has one in the center. When I first saw this I thought, "forget it; this is no good," but on the VERY FIRST GAME I played, I didn't even miss the other two bases I grew accustomed to at the arcade. You have six missiles at the base at a time, and are replenished five times for a total of 30 missiles. A 'woink' tone is heard whenever you use up a group of missiles (6), so you can keep a mental check on how many missiles are remaining. The only problem with one base remains in the fact that when that base is struck, you have to wait a couple of seconds for a new one to reappear. And well into the game with the missiles and smart bombs descending rapidly, your base may get blown away, only to reappear just as another missile strikes it! To me, this just makes the game more challenging — you MUST protect your base!

The colors and graphics are very good, although the cities aren't made up of three colors each as in the arcade model, also the satellites don't 'pulsate' as they traverse across the playfield. The sound effects

are at least as good as the commercial version (make sure you crank up the volume when you play this game!); the 'woink' whenever you run out of missiles, the noises of the satellites and smart bombs, the 'ffffff' of a missile being launched, the sounds of the saved cities and unused missiles appearing on the screen for extra points, and the explosions. One thing that is neat about the explosions: when a detonation occurs it 'flashes' in bright hues; there isn't just a white colored blob on the screen.

At the games end, there is an explosion filling the whole screen, with the letters "THE END" flashing at you. There are other options but I won't mention these, as they may change when the final version is released. Missile Command is a one or two player game using the joystick controllers (to move the 'firing cursor' around), and is due in July/August on ROM cartridge retailing for \$39.95. □



MISSILE COMMAND FOR THE 400 and 800