

Computer games

Bit by bit, no chips off the old blocks

by TOM LONERGAN

Behind the toy store counter were games named "Melody Madness," "Touch Me," "Quiz Whiz," "Brain Baffler" and "Maniac."

Besides the intriguing names, they all share a common part — a thumbnail size microprocessor chip which according to one Detroit area toy retailer, "makes the games do what they do."

THE PORTABLE games have memories and simulate a variety of sounds from explosions to beeps. In their fourth year on the market, the games are expected to be heavy Christmas sellers.

Back in those ancient days known as the 1960s, the only electric games you could find were of the football, baseball or basketball variety.

Just plug them in the wall socket, get that metal surface vibrating and watch your players move in the wrong direction.

It always messed up your strategy.

Nowadays, the electric games, even though they are still available, have taken a back seat to the portable electronic and video games that connect to the TV set.

MORE THAN 300 electronic games are made by a variety of toy manufacturers, said a spokesman for Circus World Toy Stores Inc., a Taylor-based company with 13 stores throughout the Detroit area.

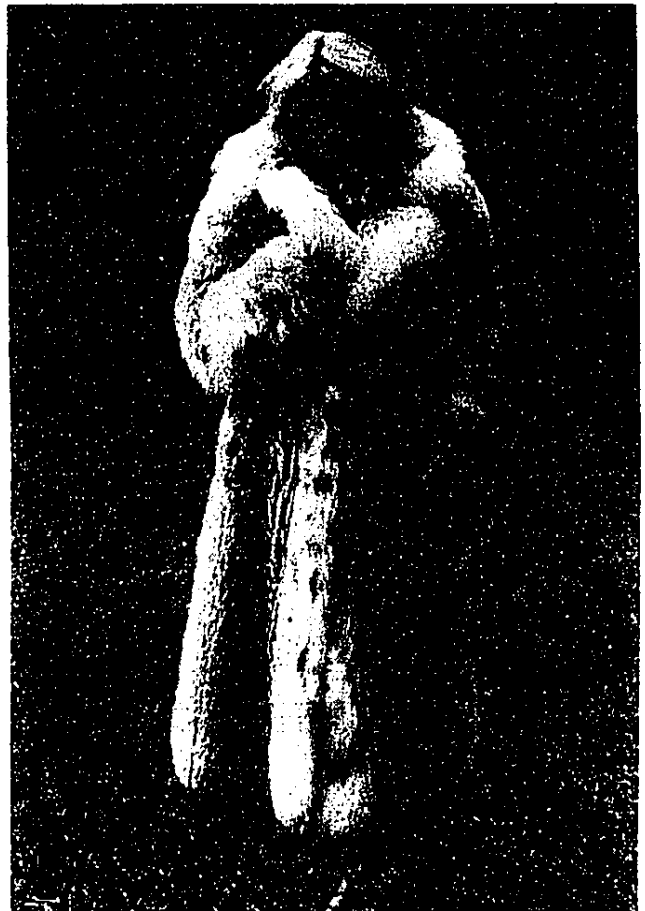
The price tags range from \$7-\$10 for electronic games to amuse an infant to \$100 and up for serious items like a Horse Race Analyzer for the refined track bettor. The video games, which were first introduced in bars, sell for between \$140 and \$300.

Many of the portable computer games are in the \$30 to \$50 price range and require either a nine volt or AA size battery. Most of the games can be used with wall plug adaptors.

"Electronics have just come into their own the last two years and are still on the upswing," said the Circus World spokesman. He said the games comprise "roughly 10 to 12 percent" of the toy market.

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