

THE PLAYERS GUIDE TO FANTASY GAMES

# electronic GAMES

Videogames • Computer Games • Stand-Alone Games • Arcades

DELL 04114

JUNE, 1983 • \$2.95

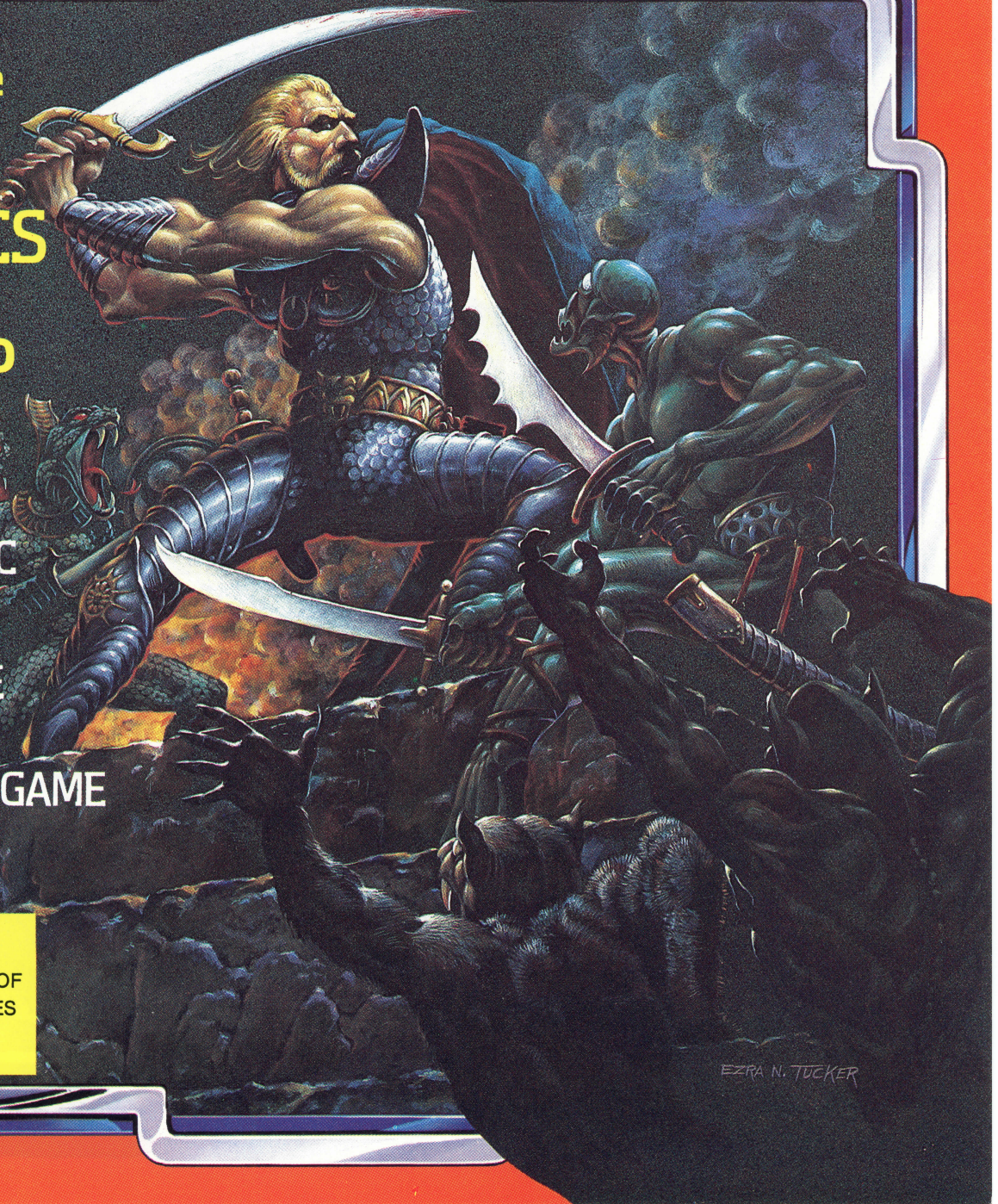
Don't Miss  
Out on These  
Games

**CLOSET  
CLASSICS  
OF THE  
COIN-OP  
WORLD**

PLAY  
ELECTRONIC  
GAMES ON  
YOUR  
TELEPHONE

EXPANDED  
COMPUTER GAME  
COVERAGE

**REPRINTED**  
WITH PERMISSION OF  
ELECTRONIC GAMES  
MAGAZINE





# What Mother Bell Never Told Us About Fun on the Telephone

By ARNIE KATZ

**R**each out and play someone is the slogan of GameLine, a division of Control Video Corporation, that will soon offer the nation's electronic gamers a so-far-unique new service. Properly equipped with GameLine's Master Module, any home arcader who owns an Atari 2600, Sears Video Arcade or Coleco ColecoVision Module #1 will be able to buy playing time on any of more than 30 cartridges each month, at a bargain rate that works out to roughly \$1 for 40 minutes of action.

Company president Bill von Meister's description of how the GameLine concept came into being is a classic case of a good idea that only needed the proper fine-tuning to be successful. The mechanology that makes GameLine possible was originally developed for Home Music Store, which hoped to provide music to cable services via satellite. When scared retailers mounted a campaign that dulled the enthusiasm of the major record companies for this service, Von Meister and the other CVC honchos asked themselves, "So now what can we do with the technology?" The company had all kinds of expertise in the transmission of encoded data, but suddenly found itself looking hard for an opportunity to utilize it.

One field that immediately attracted CVC's attention was the growing electronic gaming hobby. "If we can build a modem cheaply enough," Von Meister told his cohorts, "we could download software. We could pump 300 games a second through a cable."

The idea struck sparks, but there was still a big hole in it. To make the projected game software download operation economically feasible, GameLine would need something that didn't exist, a truly inexpensive modem. A hefty chunk of the new company's \$2-million research and development budget went into clearing out that particular bottleneck. When CVC vice president of engineering,

Ray Heinrich, and consultants, Seven Systems of Huntsville, AL finished applying their brand of super-science to the project, GameLine had become the proud possessor of an auto-dial modem, that is, in the words of Bill von Meister, "the cheapest auto-dial 1200-baud modem on the market by a factor of 100!"

It is this technological breakthrough which, more than any other factor, makes it possible for GameLine to offer its fun-on-the-phone service at a price that should be well within the reach of most home arcaders. If tele-gaming had to depend on people going out and buying a \$300-\$500 computer modem, the whole idea would be totally impractical.

As things stand, however, GameLine can be enjoyed by anyone who has the following four items: a TV set, an Atari 2600 (or a 2600-compatible system such as the one sold by Sears), a credit card and the GameLine Master Module.

Getting hooked up could not be easier. CVC is mindful of the fact that many members will have had no previous experience doing anything more complicated than connecting their videogame system to the television



wi  
fro  
to  
ev  
co  
are

pic  
he  
fo  
lar  
pla  
ing  
ad

Ma  
Lin  
ser  
ma  
"ta  
Ata  
ma  
15



and shoving a cartridge into the slot. Accordingly, they've made the process of getting started about as simple as anyone could imagine.

The Master Module, which will carry a suggested list price of \$59.95, will be sold by leading retailers all across the country, including mega-merchant Sears Roebuck. The module is inserted into the 2600's slot just like a typical ROM cartridge and connects to the telephone's base with a standard connector. The modem has the ability to

determine if it is connected to a dial or touch-tone phone, and works just fine with either type of instrument.

Turning on the 2600 automatically puts the instructions for completing the registration process right on the screen. Briefly, the would-be Game-Line calls an 800 number, registers, and receives a personal identification number. From then on, the system will know to whose credit card the charges should be added after a play-session. Initial registration costs \$15, and there



# GAMES ON THE PHONE





will be an annual service charge of \$10-\$12 beginning in the second year of membership.

Each month, every member will get the latest issue of *GameLiner*, the service publication. Along with articles, interviews and the like, *GameLiner* carries a monthly menu. This listing indicates both the titles of the games available through the system, and the order number for those players who don't want to use the electronic menu that can be summoned at the start of each play-session. When a videogame is offered for the first time, the *GameLiner* will publish an easy-to-follow set of instructions, including basic strategy hints and a photo of the playfield, to acquaint members with what may be an unfamiliar title. New members will also get a GameLine library catalogue that contains 25-30 instruction sheets for the cartridges already on the system.

GameLine expects to increase its selections by approximately five new games each month, including some so new that they just may be heading toward the stores for the first time. A few software publishers plan to sneak preview new entries from time to time, considerably in advance of their actual publication, to give the manufacturers a chance to see how their audience of hyper-interested gamers likes a vid-

# GAMES ON THE PHONE



eogame, before risking commercial distribution.

So, what do you get for your buck? A dollar buys a play-session with any cartridge available through the system. The exact length of time will vary, depending on how long it takes the average home arcader to play the contest in question. That means the member might get "only" one round of video chess for the dollar, but might get a chance to play some super-tough shoot-'em-up five or six times before the clock runs out. Naturally, if a game is in progress, you'll always be able to fight it to the finish.

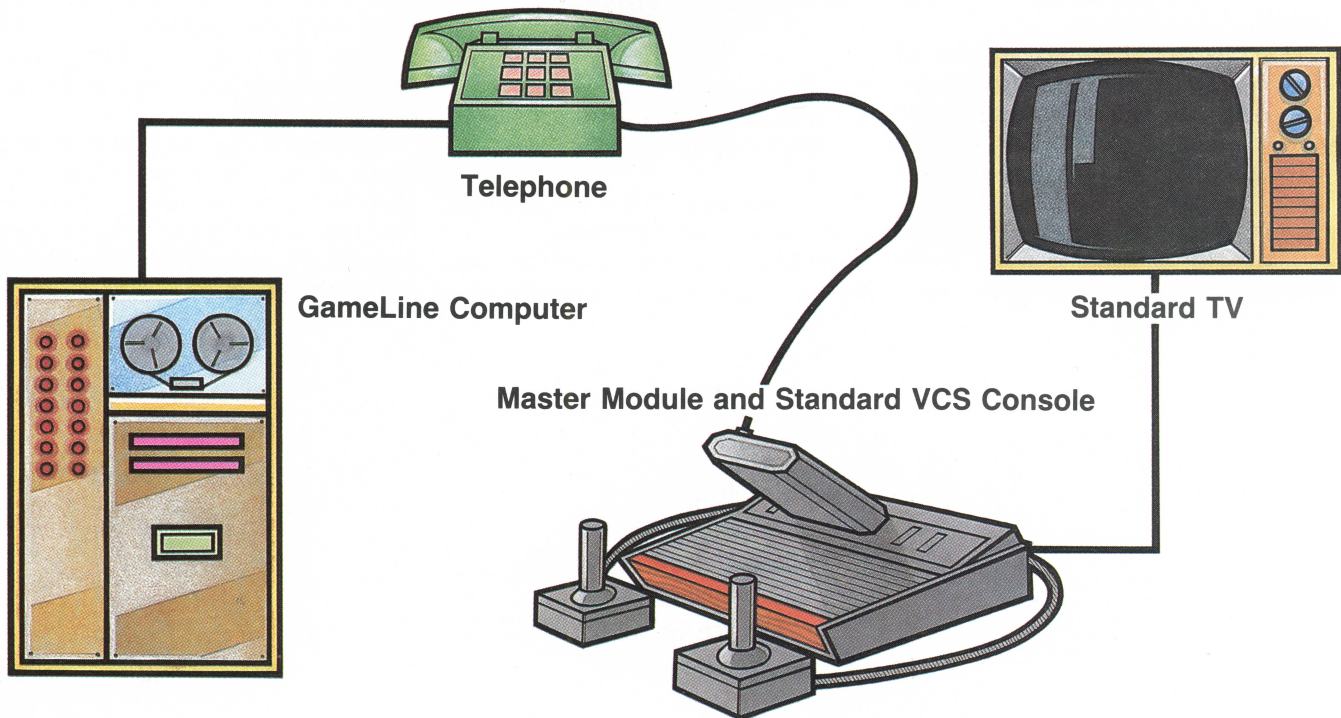
Speaking of money, the use of credit cards might be a red flag to some, especially in these tight money days. GameLine's set-up makes a sincere attempt to keep things from getting out of hand. Each player in a house-

hold connected to the system will get an individual personal identification number. A parent can set a monthly limit for a child during the registration procedure, and that player will not be able to spend any more during the 30-day cycle. GameLine avoids any potential "hidden" costs of long distance telephone charges by making use of toll-free (800) numbers. The family won't even have to worry about the line getting tied up by the service, since every cartridge can be downloaded in a matter of seconds, after which the telephone is once more available for other uses.

The fires of competition surely burn brightly in the GameLine universe. Members will be able to participate in a minimum of two contests per month. One will usually involve a classic cartridge, while the other will be built around a newer title. A small additional fee — an extra quarter looks like the tab at this juncture — for the session will enter the arcader's score in the tournament.

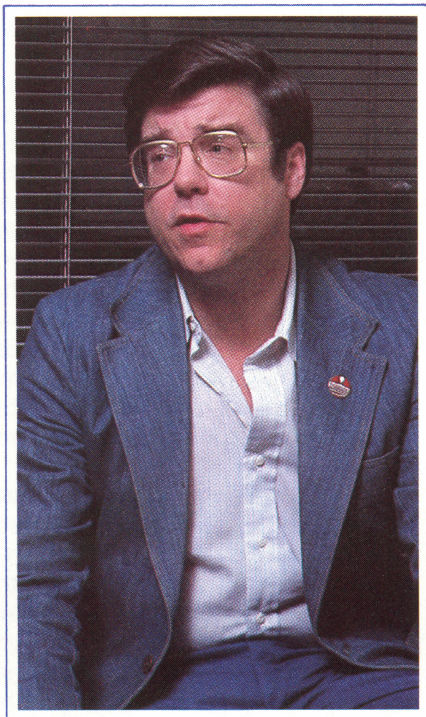
A pyramiding series of competitions is planned, starting on the local level through the GameLine system and culminating in a face-to-face shoot-out for a prize of \$100,000. Even if you can't aspire to winning the crown as the best in the land at a particular game, thousands of local and regional

## THE COMPLETE GAMELINE SYSTEM





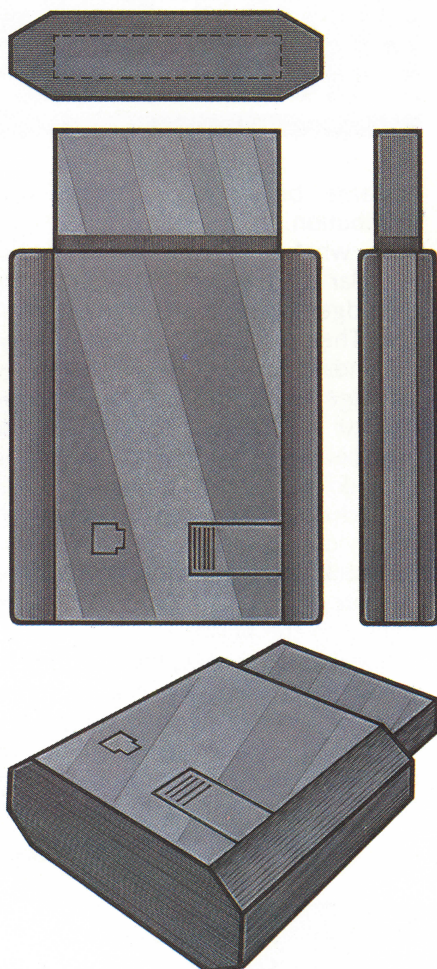
## "GameLine Ties the Hobby of Electronic Gaming Together!"



winners will haul away loot ranging from pins, hats, jackets and patches to computer systems, fancy cars and even a complete scholarship to the college of your choice, whenever you are ready to enroll.

As befits one of the acknowledged pioneers in computer networking — he made his first big splash as a founder of *The Source*, the nation's largest network — Von Meister has plans that go far beyond "just" playing games. Other services will be added.

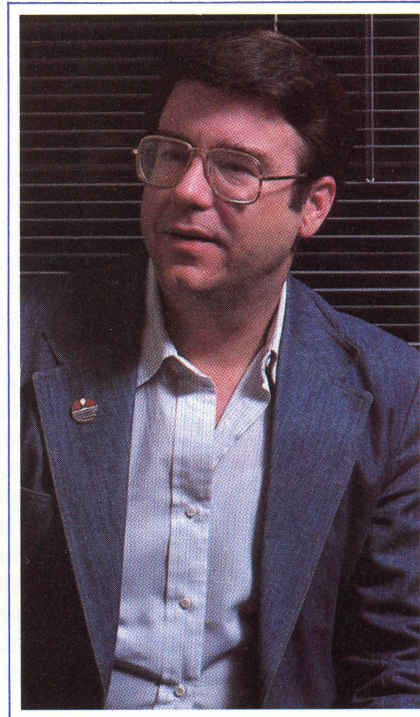
The first of the enhancements is MailLine. This service permits GameLine, a retailer, or a manufacturer, to send a message to members or can make it possible for two gameliners to "talk" to each other through their Atari 2600 consoles. A message up to a maximum of 8,000 characters costs 15¢ to send to the first address, and



The heart of the GameLine service is the Master Module, which plugs into the Atari 2600 cartridge slot.

10¢ for each copy of the message sent to any additional addresses.

The electronic letter is entered into the system by use of "videotyping".



There's a keyboard on the screen, and the writer uses a joystick to manipulate a cursor on this display, picking out one letter at a time.

Other services scheduled for the GameLine system include SportsLine and StockLine. More to the point as far as home arcaders are concerned, the ability of GameLine to offer members a chance for "real time" communication opens the way for the development of role-playing games, in which the players manipulating the heroes and heroines might be scattered across the country, with each one participating through the family's videogaming machine.

"GameLine ties the hobby of electronic gaming together," claims Von Meister. "It lets people try before they buy and, once they've bought, compete locally, regionally and nationally for decent prizes." G

Reprinted  
With Permission  
from the June, 1983  
Issue of  
Electronic Games  
Magazine



# GAMELINE<sup>TM</sup>



**CONTROL VIDEO CORPORATION**

8620 Westwood Center Drive  
Vienna, Virginia 22180  
(703) 448-8700