

From Pac-Man to chess, the home video game boom is upon us

Video games worth \$3 billion

When "Pac Man Fever" makes the top of the pop charts, you can count Pac-Man - and all the other games bleeping and buzzing in arcades and living rooms - among major cultural phenomena. Video games are not only a fast-growing hobby but a big business, expected to ring up \$3 billion in sales this year.

First popular as quarter-in-the-slot arcade machines, Pac-Man and other arcade-type games are now available as cartridges for home video-game systems, too.

Playing some of the games becomes so addictive that adults, as well as children of all ages, want to extend the competition beyond beating the game computer or a single opponent. Both Mattel Intellivision and Atari will conduct separate regional and national video-game playoffs, this year, with prizes of up to \$25,000. And they won't be the first - there have already been national tournaments of such games as Space Invaders and Pac-Man.

Building up a bankroll to spend on your dreams can be accomplished - in play money - with a new Wall-Street game from Magnavox, or with casino-type games: Magnavox's Odyssey 2 programmable video game system also offers Las Vegas Blackjack for its programmable video game system and Mattel's Intellivision has Poker-Blackjack and Roulette-Slots combinations.

Sports competition, without braving the elements or incurring aches and sprains, comes in all variations, from individual games like skiing, golf, and bowling, through team sports that test strategy and coaching skills. Officially sanctioned games by the National Football League, National Basketball Association, and National Hockey League are a feature of the Mattel sports series, while baseball and other sports are in all lines.

If your fantasies lean toward intellectual

competition, there are backgammon, chess, and checkers, plus an assortment of word games that will challenge experts, let beginners learn, or hold the attention of so-so players. Mattel Backgammon is endorsed by the American Backgammon Players Association, while the Atari Video Chess was programmed by a ranking U.S. chess master. All are designed to allow play at different levels, so players can learn or be tested to the limit.

Exploring the world of video games can also lead into computer programming, not to mention those educational games designed to help children learn but which are still diverting enough for family or adult entertainment. In this group, you'll find such time-tested games as Hangman, three-dimensional Tic Tac Toe, and Nim, one of the oldest mathematical games. Variations of these games are offered with most brands of programmable video games.

If you want to learn how to talk to a computer, you can learn with Basic Programming for Atari or Computer Intro from Magnavox. These are educational games that give you some of the basics of computer language and programming, letting you experiment with printing messages, playing games, or creating computer tunes.

Combat games take varied forms to test your reaction, speed and eye-hand coordination. You can play at tank combat in Armor Battle from Intellivision, blast away boulders in a canyon or ships at sea with Bombs Away from Atari, or battle alien invaders in Spacechase or Space Cavern by Games by Apollo.

Master Strategy is the name of a new series of computer video games from Magnavox for the Odyssey 2 system. In this series, a gameboard and the computer video game keyboard are used together, requiring a high degree of skill to win.

Improvement funds for Mountsberg

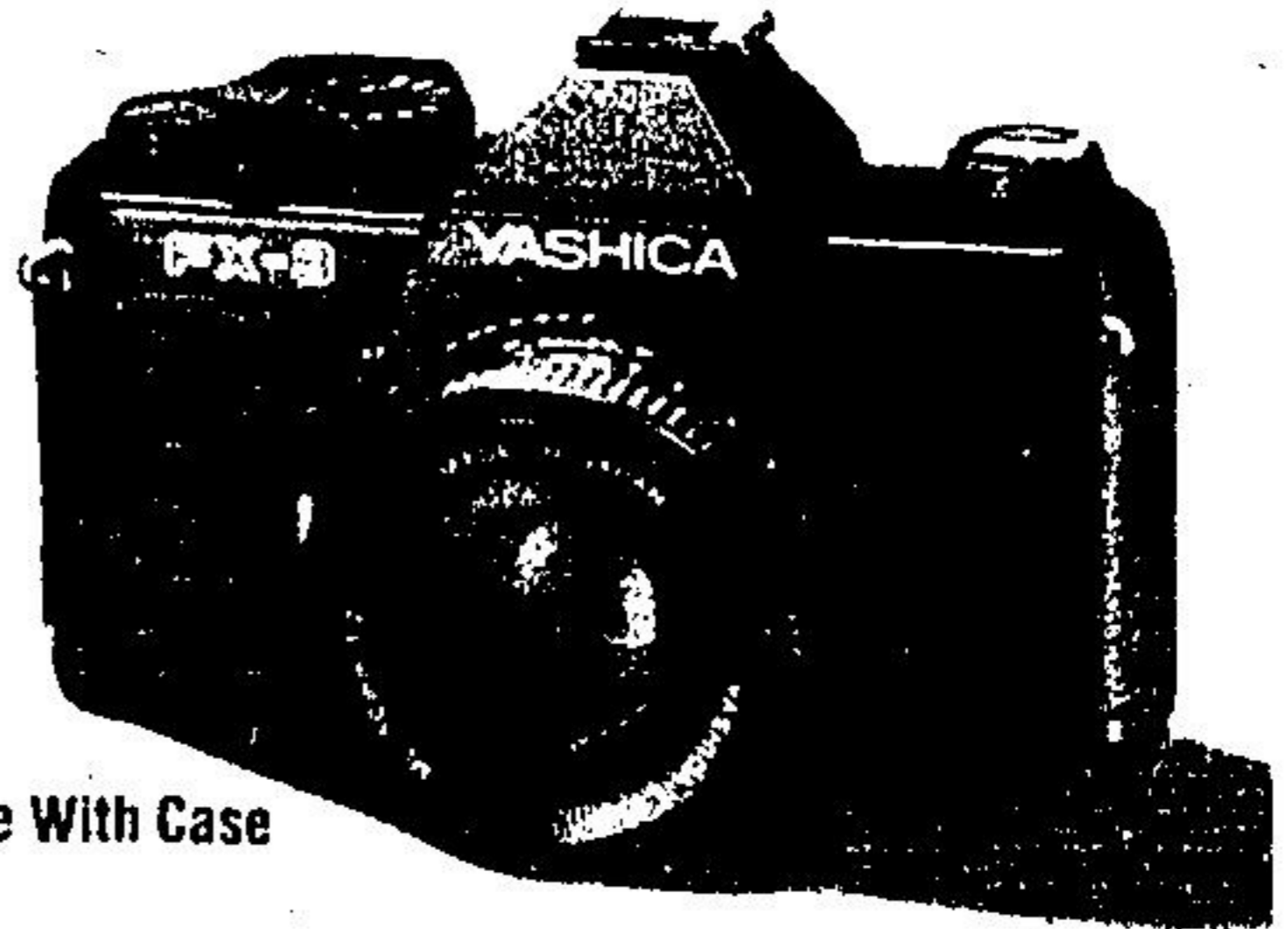
The Halton Region Conservation Authority has been granted \$81,375 by the Ontario natural resources ministry for improvements to its field operations centre at the Mountsberg Wildlife Centre near Campbellville. Additional storage space, staff parking facilities, fuel handling facilities and a woodworking shop are among the improvements planned at a total estimated cost of \$150,000.

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