ATARI GAMES PLAYERS CLUB

HOT NEW VIDEOS FROM ATARI GAMES!

Legend

Objects players can collect.
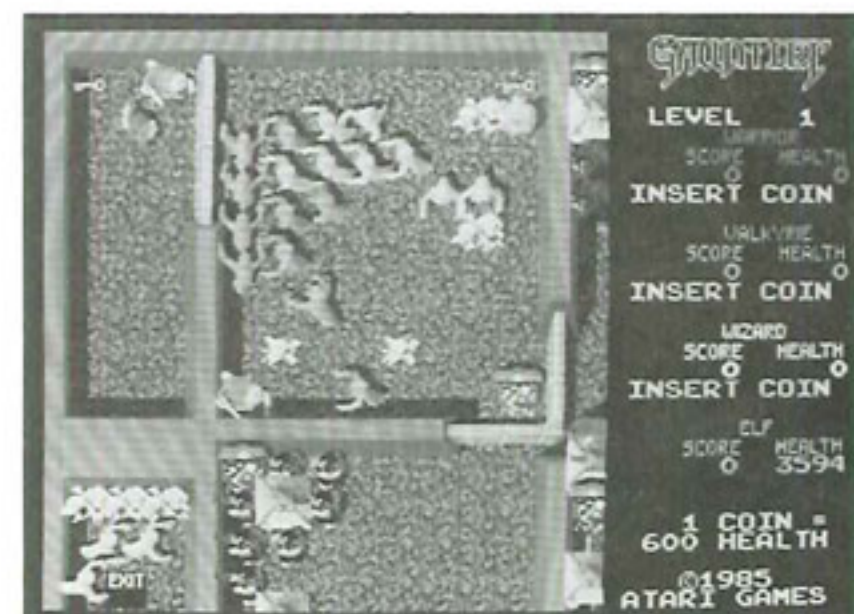
Atari Introduces Gauntlet™

Gauntlet is the latest hit video game from Atari Games. Gauntlet incorporates many of the attractive aspects of today's popular fantasy role-playing games. Players can portray one of the four Gauntlet heroes, each with their own unique capabilities. Thor the Warrior is especially skilled at hand-to-hand combat, Thyra the Valkyrie has strong armor, Merlin the Wizard has the best magic and Questor the Elf has the fastest speed. Up to four players can play at the same time, competing for food, treasure and magic potions while cooperating to fight off waves of attacking monsters. Complete instructions, character descriptions and special hints for game play can be found on the enclosed leaflet, Gauntlet Player Tips.

Players can enter a game in progress at any time.
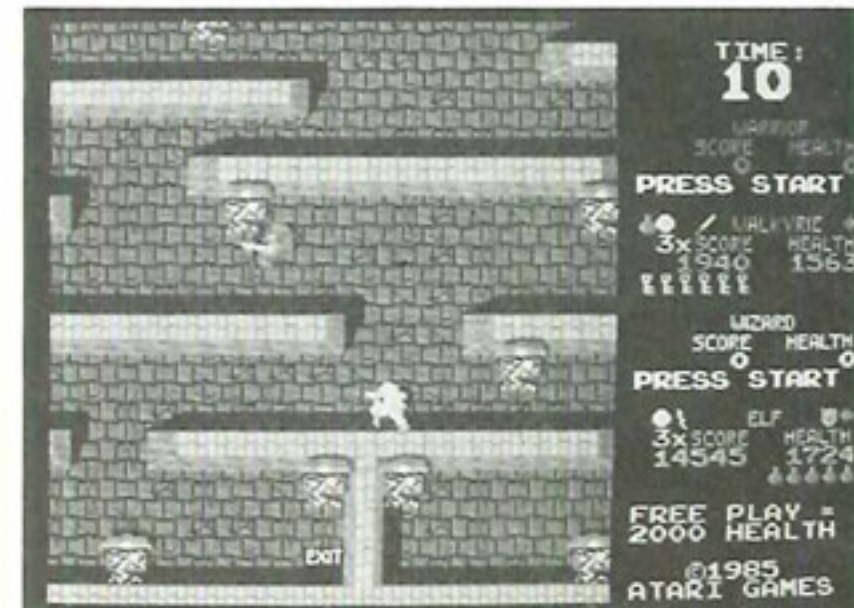
Treasure room for bonus points.

Behind the Scenes: The Making of INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM*, the Video Game!

By now, we hope you have had a chance to play the INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM* video game, introduced by Atari Games in 1985. Today, it continues to be very popular with all types of game players. The mythical figure of INDIANA JONES* first appeared in the 1981 blockbuster movie, RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK*, and almost overnight he became everybody's hero. The long-awaited sequel was released in 1984, and it has turned out to be the same big success as the original.

If there ever was a movie that captured its audience with all-out action and adventure, this was it! Both movies seem to guarantee a lot of fun to be had by all . . . and that's what makes it such a perfect tie-in with a video game. The settings, the INDY* character, and the adventures all add up to be the essential ingredients for a successful video game.

In 1984, prior to the release of the movie sequel, Atari Games starting working on an INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM video game concept, under a license agreement with Lucasfilm Ltd. At Atari Games, a project team was quickly assigned to jump in and create a video game that would take in all the popular elements of the movie. After a sneak preview of the film, the team started the game design by highlighting the key scenes from the movie, those that would fit in well with game play. Many, if not most of our club members, have probably seen the movie . . . remember the spine-chilling scenes in the TEMPLE OF DOOM*? How about the spectacular roller coaster-like sequences in the mine carts? And don't forget the final escape scenes, crossing

over the rope bridge to safety. From these unforgettable scenes, the game design evolved.

According to Mike Hally, the project leader, and one of the senior game designers at Atari Games, ''We started work on this game by gathering a lot of reference materials which Lucasfilm provided. Photos of action scenes and movie sets for our animators, the movie script so we could select which voice phrases we would use in the game, and the original sound track so our audio engineers could start writing the music for the game.''

''We had a group of six animators working on the graphics. Some animators worked on the backgrounds, like the different paths, tracks, and the TEMPLE OF DOOM graphics. Others worked on the animation for INDY*, MOLA RAM*, and the THUGGEE GUARDS*, as well as all the other motion objects, like the bats,'' says Mike.

Peter Lipson, the programmer, adds ''Once some of the graphics were complete one of my big challenges was to create unique playfields from the

graphics we had. It's a lot like working on a jigsaw puzzle, since any one video screen could use up to 100 separate graphic tiles to complete one section of the mine car track. I'd have to create new tracks by mixing tiles around for each new screen.'' Peter also says that another difficult task in developing the game play was to program all the characters in the game to allow the player to go in any direction, exploring the playfield. ''It was very tricky trying to give the bad guys enough intelligence to track the player. Each bad guy in the game had to be able to search the entire playfield looking for the INDY character. Otherwise, they could easily wander off the playfield, and that wouldn't provide the necessary challenge for the players.''

Mike comments, ''About half-way through the development, we realized

Final screen from the video game

Creators of the INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM video game: Mike Hally, project leader (left) and Peter Lipson, programmer

Photo reference from movie, featuring the TEMPLE OF DOOM scene

that some players, especially the higher-skilled players, might be able to get through all the waves in the game after about a month of playing it. We wanted to give these players a little more to keep their interest, so we added a lot of new features in the game. We put in some hidden challenges, like getting bonus points for whipping all the objects in the TEMPLE OF DOOM scenes. We also added other new things that may only show up in the medium or hard level select waves, like jumps along the tracks and a lot of chutes and conveyor belts in the mines. This seemed to add a lot of depth to the game, but we still heard a lot of comments from players about the ending of the game. Our original idea was to have the game end after all three SANKARA STONES* were collected, and INDY escapes over the rope bridge, which was pretty much like the movie. We thought it wasn't fair for players to have the game end if they had any lives remaining at this point. I wanted to add something more so the game would not have a definite ending, but we weren't sure if Lucasfilm would approve.''

Throughout the development of the game, Lucasfilm was involved in the review of the graphics, audio, and game play to insure that the game would be very representative of the movie properties. On a closing note, Mike adds, ''When we asked them if we could add another wave to the game, a challenge round where players could collect a lot of bonus points, they gave us the okay, so we put it in and added some new characters from the movie which weren't already in the game, and this created a new goal for this wave. Once the game was finished, I thought it ended up being very much like the movie, and besides that, it turned out to be what we hope is a fun game.''

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Paperboy™, The Most Hilarious Game You've Ever Played!

Paperboy is quickly becoming one of Atari Game's line-up of classics, following past hit games such as Asteroids, Centipede, Pole Position*, and Star Wars**. Introduced this past summer, Paperboy has created a new wave in video game playing.

Many of our club members have voted Paperboy as their favorite game, and here's some of the technical reasons why it is a bit different from other games: First, the higher-resolution graphics provides 512×384 pixels compared to most other games which have 256×256. This allows much more detail in view and movement. Another key feature is the number of motion objects used in the game. The hardware and software capabilities allows over 2000 motion object pictures for the entire game, plus another 3000 background pictures, which provides the level of player interaction in the game. With this type of interaction, players are constantly in control of the events which occur in the game.

The design and development of Paperboy took nearly two years to complete. The ''Paperboy Team'' included a staff of engineers, game designers, programmers, animators, and audio experts. Two people, in particular, spent most of their waking hours on the creation of this game: John Salwitz, the lead programmer, and Dave Ralston, the game designer. Together, John and Dave have a total of 10 years experience working at Atari Games.

AGPC: WHAT WAS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF DOING PAPERBOY?

DAVE: Since I'm an artist by training, the big thing for me was to figure out how to take advantage of the new graphic capability. We started off by doing some motion studies, which involved filming some kids on bikes so we could figure out how to animate an actual paperboy. Because of the higher resolution graphics, and the freedom
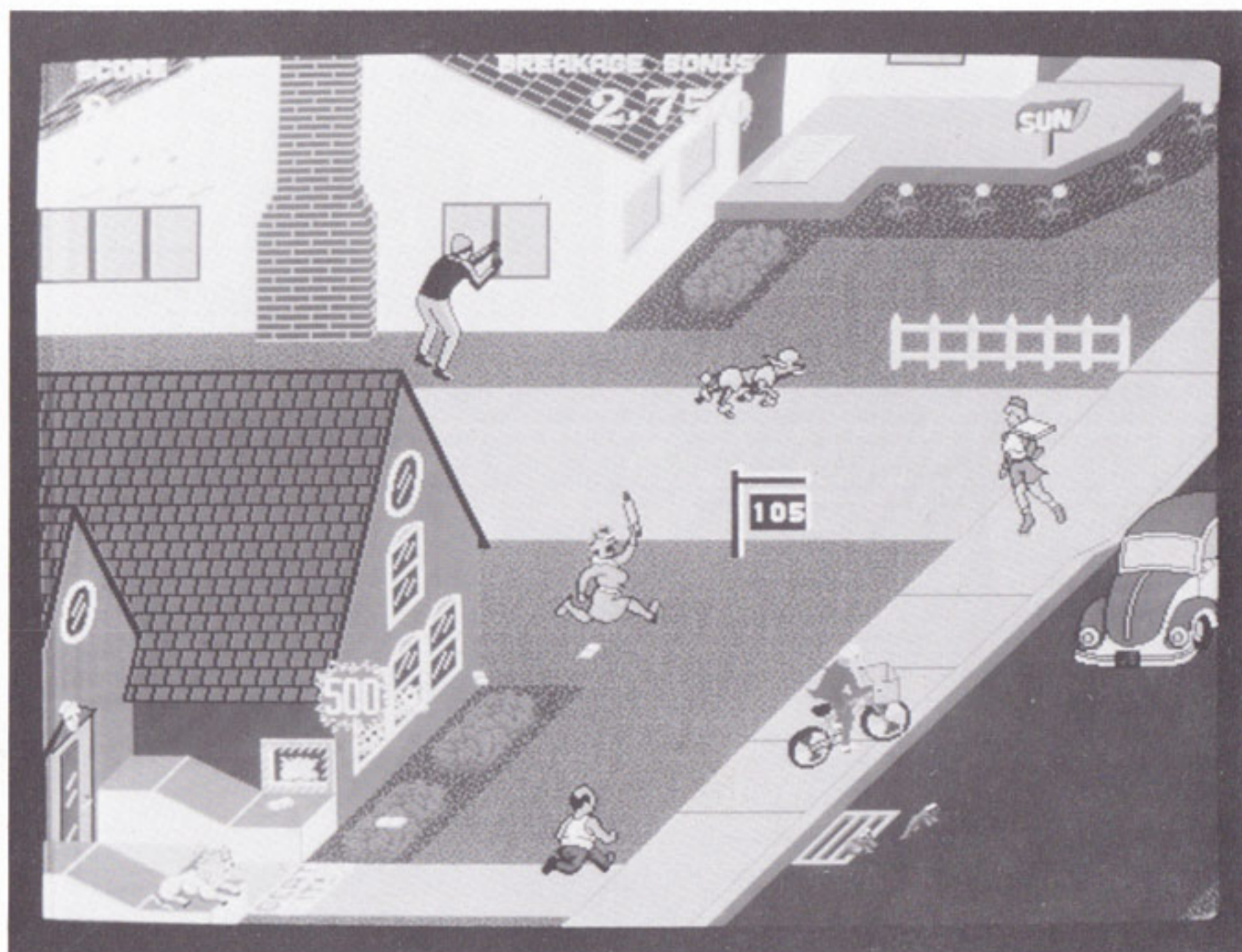

John Salwitz (left) and Dave Ralston of the Paperboy team

A typical scene along the Paperboy's route

of movement we wanted to give the player, we felt we had to use very realistic animation.

JOHN: My biggest challenge was to find a good way to organize and make use of all the data in the game. We've never had over 153K of program ROM to deal with!

AGPC: THE HUMOR IN THIS GAME SEEMS LIKE SOMETHING VERY NEW AND SOMEWHAT BIZARRE. HOW DID THIS COME ABOUT ON PAPERBOY?

DAVE: The theme of the game lends itself to a lot of humorous events. The idea of having some good houses and bad houses on the paper route was something that we wanted to do early in the game. We were a little worried about what to do if the paperboy broke windows on the bad houses, or ran over their lawns, and we didn't want it to look like vandalism. Eventually we added more comical scenes to lighten up the game and make it more like mischievous fun.

JOHN: At one point in the development, it was a very silly game with a lot of imaginary characters. Then we tried having all the bad houses being haunted. Toward the end, we came back to reality and added mostly things that you'd see in any neighborhood.

Another big event that helped us add some humor to the game was the sound effects. During the development of this game, a new Yamaha synthesizer became available and we added it to our games to do some radical music and sound effects. Then we added the TI speech chip to complete the paperboy environment. Our audio experts came up with phrases that a regular kid would say and they turned out great. It really surprises people when they play the game, and it usually gets a good laugh.

AGPC: DID THE TEAM EVER MAKE ANY MAJOR CHANGES IN THE GAME DESIGN, SOMETHING THAT REALLY IMPACTED THE WAY THE GAME TURNED OUT?

JOHN: Through much of the development of the game we were using a standard 8-position joystick to control the paperboy bike. Then we did our focus group (players are shown the game before it is finished, and after playing the game they talk about some of the strong and weak points of the game). We found out that players didn't like the feel of the control, and it added a lot of confusion for them. After that, one of our mechanical engineers came up with a new handlebar controller. This control was modeled after our flight controller which was used on Star Wars. We found out from later testing that this made all the difference in the game.

Right now, both Dave and John are working on another game that is on the same ''SYSTEM II'' hardware as Paperboy, and it's sure to be another great game. We'll let our members know more about the game in coming issues of this newsletter.

*Trademark and © Namco 1982.
**Trademarks of Lucasfilm Ltd. used under license.

Here's your chance to try your hand at video game design! We'd like to hear your ideas on how we could improve Gauntlet™. Any suggested enhancements are welcome. This might include a unique maze design, a new type of monster, a new playfield feature or changes in the way a monster or playfield feature works. With any new feature a player should submit at least one new level illustrating how this feature would function.

Design Parameters

1. The Gauntlet universe is a grid of 32 by 32 blocks.

2. The player's ''window'' scrolls so that only 14½ blocks wide by 15 tall is visible at any given time.

3. There must be only one start and at least one exit.

4. The top row of blocks must always be walls and any other block may be any one of the following: Floor, wall, destructible wall, trap wall, door, start, exit, treasure, destructible food, non-destructible food, destructible potion, non-destructible potion, invisibility, key, trap, transporter, ghost, grunt, demon, lobber, sorcerer, death or generator.

In addition to the above there are other special features which can be enabled. These include:

1. Stun: Players' shots stun other players.

2. Hurt: Players' shots hurt other players.

3. Pick an Exit: When the players enter this level only one of the exits will be placed in the level. The others will be transformed into floors.

4. Off Screen: Players are allowed to roam off screen. This can be dangerous because players can get lost.

5. V-Edge Scroll: Normally the screen stops scrolling vertically at the top and

Gauntlet™ Maze Design Contest

bottom of a level. Selecting this option would prevent this and allow the players to see what is on the opposite side.

6. H-Edge Scroll: This is similar to V-Edge Scroll except this is for horizontal scrolling.

Using the *Key to Symbols* detailed on the official entry form, here is a sample level from Gauntlet. (example maze ½ scale of official size)
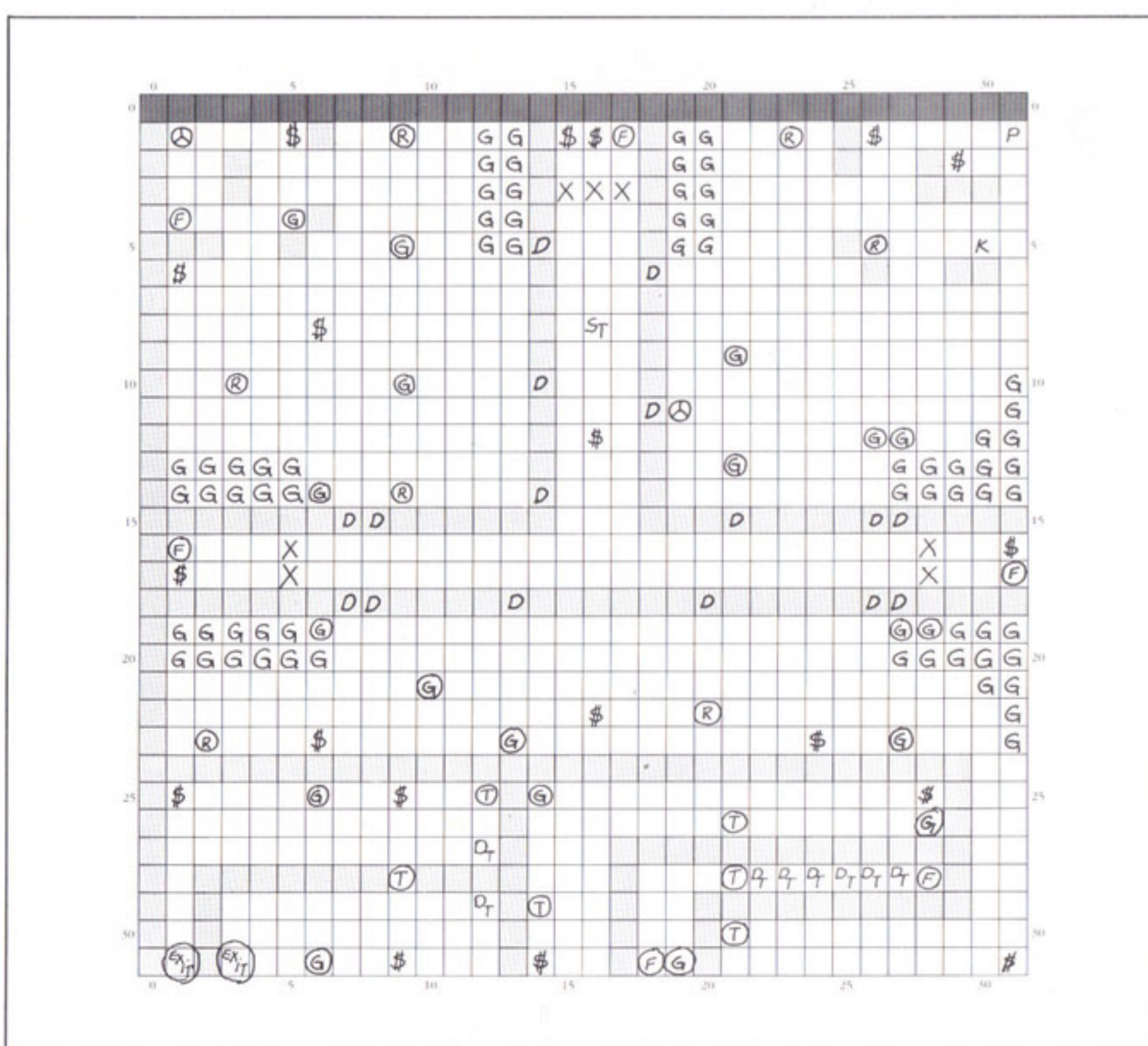
New Feature and its Function: None.

Player Objective of Maze: Shoot out the destructible walls, then shoot all the generators without setting off the traps. If you do hit a trap, be sure you are positioned to get the invisibility. Correct use of the transporters allows the player to find the path to the exit.

Special Features Enabled: Hurt, Pick an Exit.

CONTEST RULES

1. Anyone is eligible to enter except for employees of Atari Games Corporation and their immediate family members.

2. Fill out the enclosed official entry form with your name, age, address, phone number, t-shirt size and preferred t-shirt design (Thor the Warrior, Thyra the Valkyrie, Merlin the Wizard, Questor the Elf or the Gauntlet ''team'' t-shirt). Sponsor's name, address and phone number are not required.

3. Seal inside an envelope, affix postage and mail to:

Atari Games Corporation
Gauntlet Maze Design Contest
737 Sycamore Drive
P.O. Box 361110
Milpitas, CA 95035

4. All entries must be postmarked no later than March 31, 1986.

5. All entries must conform to the $8'' \times 8''$ size of the official entry grid. Photocopies or facsimiles will also be accepted for eligibility.

6. A total of 25 winners will be selected by our team of Gauntlet maze design experts. Winners will receive the Gauntlet t-shirt of their choice.

7. Limit one prize per person.

8. Multiple entries per person will be eligible.

9. In order to be eligible, all entries must conform to the game design parameters given and the example herein.

10. All 25 winners' names will be published in the next issue of the Atari Players Club newsletter.

11. Your entry constitutes permission to publish your name and city/town in the Atari Players Club newsletter. Your entry also constitutes permission for Atari to use your maze design without any obligation to you.