

BOOK REVIEW

Innovative Computing & Tricks for VICs *by Michael Quigley* *Vancouver, B.C.*

Considering the popularity of the VIC 20, the number of quality books available for it is pretty small. *Innovative Computing* by Clifford Ramshaw (Melbourne House, 1982, price around \$15.00) does little to change that situation.

This book contains 30 programs--mostly games--for the unexpanded VIC. Its author, according to the jacket, is "recognized as one of the most creative programmers of computer games."

On the whole, the book is a big disappointment. Experienced programmers will find most of the games too simple. The version of Squash, for example, makes some of the public domain Pong and Breakout games look like Spiders of Mars by comparison.

People with less experience will face another kind of disappointment, thanks to errors in the listings, which occurred in practically every one of the programs which I completed. Most of these errors affect the graphic displays, and since the point of many of these programs seems to be how one can make very intricate displays with the VIC symbols, one can expect considerable frustration here, unless you're the kind of person who likes to play detective.

Over half of the games are concerned with death and destruction, as their titles suggest: Space Fight, Dragon's Lair, Earth Attack, Bomber Attack, Nuclear Attack, Invasion, Seige. One of these, Assassin, deserves some kind of prize for bad taste. Its synopsis asks: "Have you ever wanted to be a lone sniper, hidden from view, but able to see your targets? Well, now here's your chance as you play assassin in this exciting new game! Not only are people your target but cars, trucks and aeroplanes." Supposedly this will appeal to all the Oswalds and Hinckleys of the world. Ironically, this is one of the better games, despite some illiteracies in the screen

messages ("This contract has ran out."; So your a dead man!!").

Another recent book for the VIC which actually makes *Innovative Computing* look good is *Tricks for VICs* (Elcomp Publishing, 1983, cost about \$12.50). This book, which is printed in West Germany, is "published as a service to VIC 20 personal computer users worldwide."

Although the book's cover says its author is Sam D. Roberts, it is actually written by Winfried Hofacker (an example of Xenophobia, perhaps?). While the book is not a complete waste of time, its typesetting is mediocre and there are numerous errors in grammar and spelling. There are some programs for "3.5K RAM" and others for "8K RAM". Does 8K here refer to the basic 5K VIC plus 3K expander? One of these 8K games--Bird Attack--doesn't work at all, while another Motodrom (a car race) is too hideous for words.

In addition to games, there are several hardware projects which are described in a kind of gobbledygook English which makes them all but inaccessible to the average VIC owner.

In short, this is no "friendly" book, and should be approached with caution. ●

A Ylimaki

Things I'd like to see:

- an I.C. plant in upper New York State called Buffalo CHIPS
- a weight reduction program called METRICALC
- a new computer called TOLLHOUSE because it is loaded with CHIPS.