

# Players Guide To Electronic Wargames

# electronic GAMES

Videogames · Computer Games · Stand-Alone Games · Arcades

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Move Over Guys,  
Here Come the Gals  
**Women Join  
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Baseball  
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**Preview--  
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**Stalking the  
Lefthanded  
Joystick**



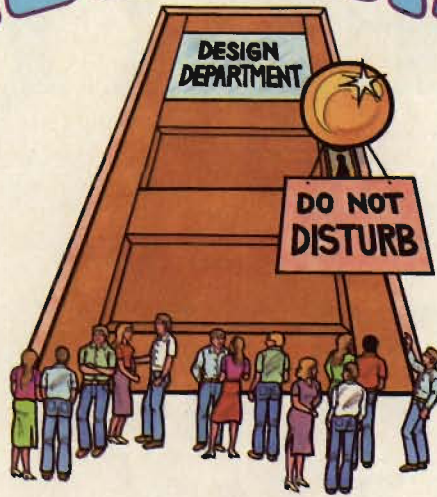
# INSIDE GAMING

By Arnie Katz

It takes three things to make a good designer," says Bob Ogdon, President of Action Graphics and a vital force at Dave Nutting Associates. "First, I look for people who have other interests besides computers, things like photography or carpentry. We don't want the stereotypical 'computer nerd.' Then, of course, a good designer needs a lot of creativity. And a designer should love the field."

Unconsciously, the soft-spoken 26-year-old had described himself perfectly. Since graduating from the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Wash., with a degree in psychology, Ogdon has produced an impressively varied array of games for both the coin-operated and home arcade fields. His latest achievements, **Space Fortress** and **The Wizard**, both for Astrovision, stamp him as one of today's truly outstanding game creators.

Ogdon is unstinting in his praise of Dave Nutting, who, with Jeff Frederick-



## Meet Bob Ogdon, the Man Behind the Wizard

son, designed what is now the Astro Professional Arcade for Bally Manufacturing Co. "He is my mentor," Ogdon asserts. "I've learned everything from him." He credits Nutting with the inspiration for two of Bally's greatest coin-op hits, **Gorf** and **Wizard of Wor**.

As with many of us, the designer entered his chosen career as a result of a lucky accident. Bob Ogdon's wife Julie in-

troduced him to Dave Nutting, who flew him to Chicago for a mutual look-see. Excited by this exploratory trip, the couple threw everything they owned into the back of their Datsun and headed for the Second City.

Under the direction of Nutting, Ogdon joined the 20 designers working on games for what was then called the Bally Professional Arcade. His first assignment was to create a version of the ball-and-paddle wall-bashing game for the system. Of **Brickyard**, he notes, "There were no copyright laws covering electronic games at that time. It was common practice to adapt existing ones to new systems."

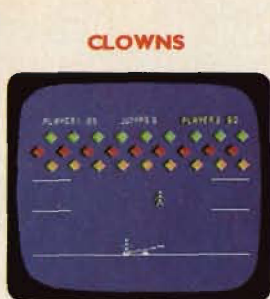
The same cartridge also included **Clowns**. Bally purchased the design from Exidy and had Ogdon perform the translation of the coin-op original to the home screen in a form that has still not been surpassed.

*Brickyard/Clowns*, even apart from the fact that it represents Bob Ogdon's debut, has had a far-reaching effect on the hobby. It was the first ROM cartridge

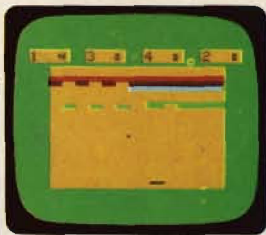




FOOTBALL



CLOWNS



BRICKYARD



SPACE FORTRESS



BASEBALL

utilizing 4K of memory. "At first ROMs were too expensive, so we had only 2K games," he recalls. "Clowns was the first 4K. Now all our games for the Astro system are 8K."

Once acclimated to the demands of his new career, Ogdon really began to hit his stride. "I had always played football in high school and college," says the electronic game artist, who still has the lithe build of a quarterback or free safety. "They had a football game, but I convinced them to try mine." State-of-the-art when introduced, Astrovision's **Football** has only Intellivision's **NFL Football** to rival it for pigskin supremacy.

"I try to recreate reality," Ogdon explains, "and I wanted something more than blips on the screen." That's why, though his game offers a wide variety of possible plays, coaches can still ad-lib at the line of scrimmage just like Dan Fouts or Joe Montana. "You can give a lot of power to the players," he adds. The first use of horizontal scrolling greatly enhances Astro's *Football*, opening up the ac-

tion by providing a larger gridiron.

A three-quarters perspective was considered for *Football*, but ultimately the decision was to stick with the overhead view. "Football takes a lot more exactitude than a sport like soccer."

The circumstances under which **Pinball** came into being are still vividly etched in Ogdon's memory. "Our home is out in the country and rather isolated," he says. "We had a big snowstorm that kept us in the house for about a month." When he emerged from this enforced seclusion it was with the basics of this two-playfield cartridge in hand.

Shortly thereafter, Bally got a case of cold feet and withdrew from the home arcade sweepstakes to concentrate on the business it knew best—coin-op amusement machines. Mindful of Ogdon's success with *Football*, Dave Nutting Associates put him to work on **Extra Bases**, the latest in a distinguished line of Bally baseball machines. "Hardware problems prevented it from becoming a true success," he observes.

The same could hardly be said of Ogdon's next major effort, *Gorf*. The guiding concept in this case was to give good players a little more variety than found in the usual invasion game. The result was the first multi-field commercial arcade unit.

And then came *Wizard of Wor*. "We wanted to get away from simply moving the gun left and right and shooting upward, and we wanted a game which two people could play together or against each other," he says. "We decid-

ed on a maze, because mazes introduce strategy."


"When we put a voice into the machine, that got us into the mythology of who, exactly, was doing the talking. So we invented the Wizard. We used the Wizard to disrupt the flow of the game."

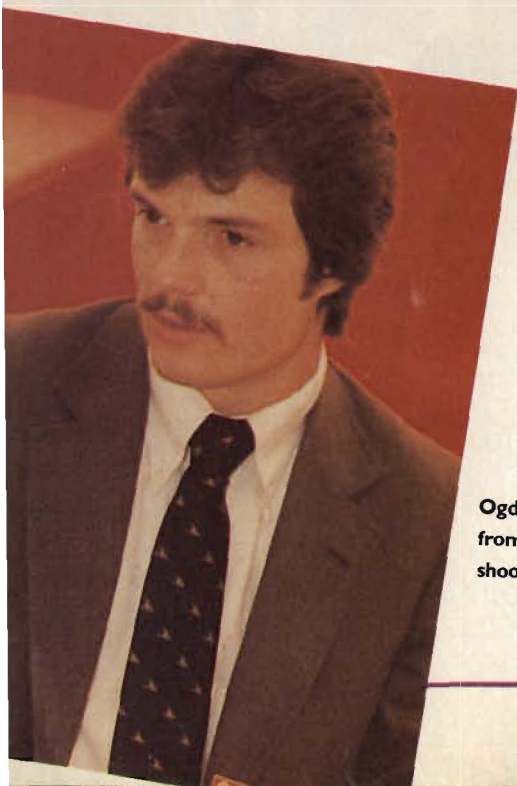
Ogdon and the crew working with him on the project next decided to make the Wizard a mystery, "so that players would have to work to get at him." Then to make the game increasingly challenging, they started subtracting the walls of the maze at the higher skill levels. "That way, there's a whole series of goals," he says. "Of course, getting to the pit is the ultimate."

Originally, *Wizard of Wor* had relatively small on-screen characters. Somehow, it didn't look just right. After Ogdon and staff saw a then-new coin-op called **Pac-Man**, they switched to much larger characters for their game.

Great advances in technique are speeding the game-design process, according to Ogdon. Now it is possible for a company to get a game from a new addition within six months, instead of the two years it once took. After drawing a picture of what he'd like on the screen, a graphics programming language similar to FORTH allows him to animate it in less than an hour! "With this language," Ogdon boasts, "you don't have to be a nitty-gritty bit-biter."

Right now, Ogdon is supervising a new designer, Dave Armstrong's first project using this secret, patented system. He confidently predicts great success for Armstrong's **Quest for the Orb** program for the Astro Arcade, due out later this year.

And when those promised innovative designs reach the commercial arcades and retail electronic game stores, it's a safe bet that several of them will bear Bob Ogdon's stamp of creativity. 



Ogdon's design successes run the gamut from sports titles like *Football* to SF shoot-'em-ups like *Space Fortress*.