

PERSONAL COMPUTING

A Beginner's Guide

David Bunnell

HAWTHORN BOOKS, INC.
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preset up to eight programs a day. The television has a built-in digital clock, an electronic tuner, and remote control. It will turn the evening news on at exactly five o'clock or "Happy Days" at eight or "CHiPs" at seven-thirty, depending on how you program it.

Video games are, of course, the most noticed of all the microprocessor-controlled appliances. Many of these products claim to be computers but really aren't. They have memory and can be programmed by the manufacturer, but they can't be programmed by the users and usually don't have keyboards for entering alphabetic characters.

One of the most popular of these is the Channel F Video Entertainment System manufactured by Fairchild. Its programs are on plug-in memory boards, which are cleverly disguised to look like tape cartridges. At the time of this writing, Fairchild offered 18 different kinds of these "Videocarts" at \$19.95 each.

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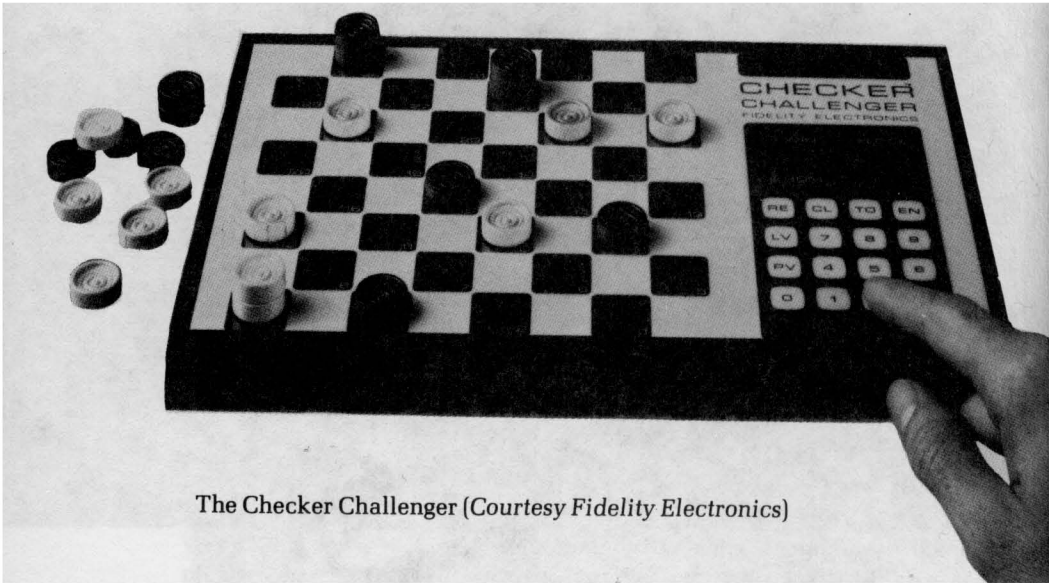
The Bally Professional Arcade (Courtesy Bally Manufacturing Corporation)



puters as the technology advances, while some personal computers are also beginning to look more like video games. The most glaring example of the merger of these two products is the Bally Professional Arcade, which claims to be a "video game/computer system" capable of "remembering more and doing more than any other system now available."

Actually, the Bally appears to have started out as a video game and gradually has become more like a computer with the introduction of optional programming capability. However, its keyboard is a calculator style keyboard. Entering alphabetic characters requires two strokes of the keys. Perhaps, Bally will offer peripherals such as simple line printers and real keyboards and the game will become a real computer. But at the time of this writing, I can't say this is certain.

Not all microprocessor games are video games, of course, and one of the more interesting of these is the Checker Challenger manufactured by Fidelity Electronics, which, like Bally, is headquartered in Chicago. It is packaged in an attractive walnut case and has many interesting features including a "verification" key that displays the board position of each piece in case the pieces are knocked off the board or you get confused as to whether you've made a proper move.



The Checker Challenger (Courtesy Fidelity Electronics)