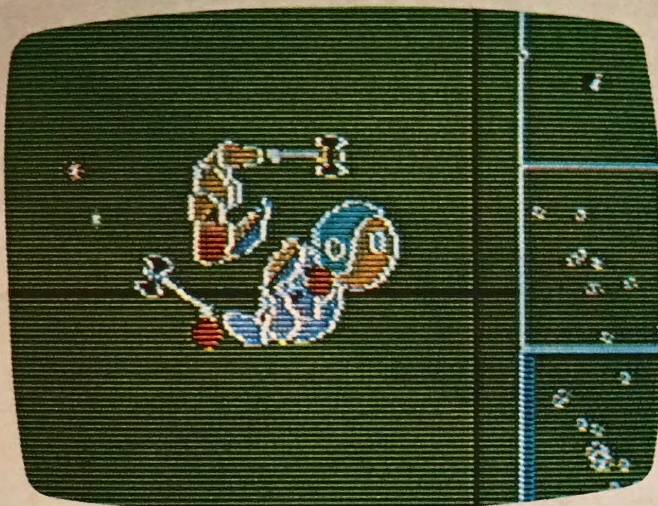


THE BILESTOAD 11111

Datamost/Apple II

By William Michael Brown

D&D fanatics, wargame and martial arts freaks, chess masters and fantasy/science fiction fans, lend me your ears. If you've been holding out for a computerized role-



playing game that combines really tough tactical/strategic challenge with stunning graphics, haunting sound effects, and a truly creative fantasy storyline, then *Bilestoad* is your dream monster. Quite simply, *Bilestoad* is a beautiful, bloodthirsty, uncompromising new standard in the role-playing genre.

The *Bilestoad* (phonetic German, meaning "Axe Death") itself is an arena/network containing 44 nearly bare islands, the whole composing a kind of nightmarish "amusement" park where the bored and angry citizens of a bleak 25th Century work off their frustrations via remote-controlled gladiatorial combat. Hooked up by computer to an endless supply of armoured, shield-and-battleaxe-wielding androids called "meatlings," they either take each other on in equal contests in the two-player version, or battle a succession of similarly armed but super-intelligent robot warriors.

A battleaxe is an extremely nasty weapon, and *Bilestoad's* on-screen depiction of the damage it can do is realistic to a fault: sparks fly as axes bite through dented metal, you hear bones crunching, see blood spilling, heads rolling, and torn limbs littering the field. Along with a strong stomach, you'll need plenty of practice to make a good fighter: Controlling your meatling's movement, facing and use of shield and axe involve nine keyboard commands and your paddle button. Three different radar screens (in addition to the main overhead view) track your and your opponent's positions on the island, as well as the locations of the "Shyben"—magic power points that can teleport you

around the island, send you skimming across it at high speed, or let you escape your opponent entirely (and thus win a round). It is these Shyben that make the game much more than a realistic simulation of a peculiarly barbaric form of combat. Without going into their complexities, knowing where the Shyben are, how to exploit them, and how to avoid being forced into combat before you can get to them is the whole key to the game.

But whether you play on this strategic level or just hack away, *Bilestoad* is a unique experience. The animation of characters is spectacular, the sound effects are equally well done (they include a rather foreboding rendition of Beethoven's *Fur Elise* piano theme, keyed to player movements), and the gameplay is an outstanding blend of adventure/strategy themes and unprecedented combat realism. Whoever the pseudonymous author of *Bilestoad* is ("By Mangrove Earthshoe?" Come on!), he's a designer to watch.

Use the escape key to halt the game and make maps of each new island.

RAT HOTEL 1111

Creative Software/VIC-20

By Art Levis

He's no Tony Perkins, but weird Waldo has enough terrifying tricks up his sleeve to make you wish you'd stayed at home. Stolid Waldo, the maintenance man at the seedy Hotel Paradiso, is an unsubtle brute who tramps the hotel's hallways in search of rats.

Since the player is a rat, the object is to avoid Waldo's traps (and Waldo himself), nibble up little bits of cheese and other goodies hidden in dingy, dark

