

## DIG DUG



**A**t the Whistle-Stop Family Entertainment Center, the lively and sprawling game arcade in New York's Penn Station, you sometimes have to line up to play the more popular games — PAC-MAN, MS. PAC-MAN, CENTIPEDE, and DONKEY KONG. Because the arcade offers several of each of these machines, the wait is seldom a long one.

In recent weeks, customers at the Whistle Stop have been lining up to play another game. It's DIG DUG. Atari manufactures and distributes the game. They're fond of saying, "People dig DIG DUG."

Dig Dug also happens to be the name of the game's hero. He's a determined little guy who wears a miner's cap and a fixed expression as he tunnels through several layers of multi-colored earth. By so doing, Dig Dug creates an under-

ground maze.

As Dig Dug tunnels, two enemies pursue him. There's Fygar, a fierce, fire-belching dragon, and Pooka, a creature that looks like a red beachball wearing sun goggles. If either Fygar or Pooka makes contact with Dig Dug, he's done for.

Dig Dug isn't quite as empty-headed as he seems to be at first glance. In fact, he has a few tricks up his sleeve. He is able to tunnel beneath an underground boulder, causing it to come crashing down on an enemy.

He's also equipped with an air pump and a long hose which he uses to either stun or pump up the bad guys. He can keep pumping until they explode.

The game's control system is simple. There's a single four-directional joystick that sends Dig Dug north, south, east or

west. There's also a pump button. You press it to stun a monster, and hold it down to explode him.

DIG DUG is one of the few games to recognize that the world is made up of left-handers as well as right-handers. There are actually two pump buttons, one on each side of the joystick. A leftie can work the joystick with the left hand, and the pump button with the right.

When you're successful in clearing a board of all the monsters, another board pops up, and you begin again. With each board you complete, the game gets harder and harder, with Dig Dug and the monsters moving at faster and faster speeds. You're forced to make decisions faster, and there's a greater chance you'll make a game-ending mistake.

What seems to first attract players to DIG DUG is its resemblance to PAC-MAN. There are no enemy aliens, no sinister robots. There are no warp buttons or hyperspace buttons. It has nothing to do with war or outerspace. Dig Dug simply tries to outwit the monsters before they do him in. It's the PAC-MAN scenario all over again.

There are other similarities. The DIG DUG monsters move ghoulishly about, floating through the soil layers in random fashion. PAC-MAN monsters move in much the same way.

The joystick control is the same. The scoring system, with points awarded for devouring monsters, is the same.

Some enthusiasts prefer DIG DUG to PAC-MAN. "It's like PAC-MAN," says one, "but it's more interesting. Besides the joystick, you have the pump button. That helps to make DIG DUG more challenging."

Other players complain about the joystick used in DIG DUG. "It's not like the joystick in PAC-MAN," says one critic, "which moves Pac-Man instantly in whichever direction you want him to go. In DIG DUG, there's a pause. After you move the joystick, you have to wait a split second before Dig Dug begins to move.

It takes time to get used to that. I wish the joystick was quicker."

It's not difficult to do well at DIG DUG right from the beginning. This is another reason for the game's wide appeal. "You don't have to worry about a lot of different kinds of boards, like in TEMPEST," said one player. "You don't have to be able to manipulate a Trak Ball, like in CENTIPEDE. It's not like QIX, which requires pouring several dollars worth of quarters into the machine before you begin to score well. The first time I played DIG DUG, I got to the third board. That puffs you up."

This may suggest one of the game's drawbacks. If you're a top level player, someone who feels at home behind the controls of STARGATE or ROBOTRON, you may doze a bit when playing DIG DUG.

Novice players usually get through several boards and achieve scores between 5,000 and 10,000. Good players score between 25,000 and 50,000, and experts over 150,000.

None of these standards really matters to one 16-year old who's a DIG DUG fan, even though MS. PAC-MAN is her favorite game. "I like DIG DUG," she says, "because it's the only game in which I can get my initials onto the high-score board."

When DIG DUG comes to your neighborhood, as it's sure to do, be certain you watch someone else play it before you try. Watch four or five games. Learn how the controls work. Watch how the monsters move. Notice what achievements lead to the highest scores. For example, the deeper the level you're at when you zap a monster, the more points you'll get.

Here's a tip that may save you a quarter or two. Dig Dug can't move when he's looking to blow up and pop an enemy. So never attempt to pump up one monster when there's another nearby. You'll be a goner. When a monster gets close, release the pump button and flee.

FEB.  
1983  
\$1.00  
CAN. \$1.25  
02903

# BLIP™

The Video Games Magazine

TV Star  
Matthew  
Laborteaux

**NEW  
FROM  
MARVEL  
COMICS!**

**BLIP TIPS: How to beat CENTIPEDE  
& MISSILE COMMAND  
Win a Video Game Prize!  
Donkey Kong Comics!**

