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Not being a great game player, Les sought out an expert to deliver judgement on Dick Smith's Wizzard games machine. He dragged Mark Burnicle out of the pub for long enough to write this report...

SOME TIME ago, at a somewhat hard to remember party, Les Bell turned to me and said something about me writing an article for *Your Computer*.

Upon my enquiring on what the heck I would be able to scribble about, Les muttered 'Wizzard'. This brought an instant quizzical look from me as I'd been called many things, but wizzard - never!

'No, you can review the Wizzard!' he beamed at me, presenting me (almost magically) with a black cardboard box about the size of a beer carton and splashed with colour. Although not having a clue what I was holding, but not wishing to appear ignorant, I returned

his excited banter about the black box with the pictures of Dick Smith, and muttered the word 'Wizzard' several times.

Eventually all appeared fine so, black box tucked safely under my arm, I set off to (as it turned out) review the Dick Smith Wizzard.

Once out of its package the Wizzard takes on the appearance of a quite simple, compact unit, complete with two joysticks, touch pads and firing buttons.

I decided, in a fit of irrational confidence, to connect the cords to their various points; but when all my efforts had failed, I reverted to the instructions and was soon under way.

To become accustomed to the machine I opted for a familiar invaders-style game called Sonic Invader. Since I was quite proficient at this style of game and had kept one particular hotel in Ultimo from going out of business with my patronage of its machine I decided this would provide a good idea of the Wizzard's ability.

To warm up I decided on battle number one of 16, a singles game which is Invaders at its most basic. The invaders move slowly from side to side, dropping slow moving tracers at you as they get cut to shreds. Definitely a good warm up. So on to battle number five, another singles battle - this time, however, the little devils kept disappearing. This was a bit tougher but I still managed to rack up points without much trouble.

At this point, full of confidence, I tried number 13, the hardest singles battle. The invaders move very quickly, rain you with bombs and disappear. This took a few goes before I managed to get the idea, but I soon had them under control.

I was impressed. The graphics were as good as the pub and milk bar versions, the controls moved quickly and accurately and it performed as well as you could hope for.

The doubles games were extremely

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challenging, with your opponent firing at exactly the same time as yourself

Having warmed to the controls and the enjoyment of the competition, I tried the next game, Planet Defender, a variation on another of the standard games found in pubs and the like.

It Gets Harder . . .

Planet Defender finds you appearing from hyperspace to confront aliens which bear a remarkable similarity to bats and Halloween pumpkins. The game itself is a step up in ability and reflexes. Not only do you get to eradicate these little nasties on sight, you also plan your defence with a 'radar' device at the top of the screen. This is a game which tests the reflexes to the limit at the maximum difficulty stage.

The multi-colour bats and the green Halloween pumpkins glide in and out and then engulf your craft until you disappear in a thousand little pieces. A good game with very good graphics, the

normal invaders type sound effects — though on the Wizzard these don't sound tinny but clear and crisp.

Finally (around 2 am the first time I played) I tried Tennis. This one really got me in. No longer is a video game of tennis restricted to two hyphens moving back and forth preventing a full stop from going past — no way! Things have progressed slightly.

I switched on the set and fell off my chair (*drunk again, Burnicle — Ed*) — there before me was a tennis court complete with net, crowd, Wimbledon sign (why settle for less?) and two little tennis players complete with racquets who run around actually hitting the ball over the net. The graphics are so damn great that the ball even casts a shadow.

The games got progressively harder, faster and more frustrating. You may compete against another player or (if you like a challenge) against the machine. Believe me, the machine likes to win.

Playing an early level game I had it under control: serve, volley, volley again and the machine hits the ball right into the net. So, feeling capable of wiping McEnroe off the court I progressed up a few grades and followed my successful game plan. Serve, volley, volley again, and the machine hits a top spin lob over my player. While the early games play fairly predictably, the higher level games appear to hit at random patterns.

This game will turn you on (for hours), it will enthrall your little sister, your big brother, your mum, your dad and anyone else you may happen to show Wizzard Tennis to.

But be warned, if you sit down and try to beat the machine before you go to bed, you'll be there for a while. You will need a good supply of Scotch, a very comfortable chair and the patience of a saint.

This one will have you playing for hours. It's a Wizzard. ☐

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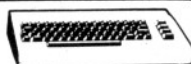


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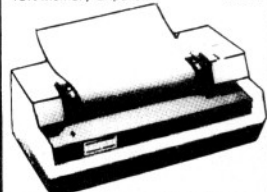
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