Big Name Hunting in America *Continued from pg. 80*

my new untitled creation could be adapted to fit the *Ghostbusters* storyline, so I agreed to do the project. Unfortunately, another complication was added to the scheme of things. I was getting married in August and my wife wouldn't let me go on the honeymoon until the game was completed.

In the following weeks, I found myself attending several showings of *Ghostbusters*. Looking back, I wonder what the people in the theater thought I was doing—here I was seriously studying the movie, taking notes and drawing diagrams. Later in the project, Columbia (under strictest security) provided me a video tape of the film. They also sent a copy of the shooting script and hundreds of slides and stills from the movie.
Jermaine: Why did you purchase the rights to *Howard the Duck*?
Lehrberg: Early in 1986 we read the script for the *Howard the Duck* movie and fell in love with the character. After all, Howard the Duck was the subject of a major film and had been in comic books since the 1970's. The game itself picks up where the movie left off. Our game designers examined the situation and felt that they could do more with the character if we made our program a sequel to the movie. Universal Studios was concerned about how Howard would look on the screen, so we worked closely with them to make him look his best. In the end, everything went pretty smoothly.
Jermaine: I mentioned the Transformers™ license in part one of this feature. Can you tell us about this?
Lehrberg: The Transformers appealed to us because they were the subject of toys, cartoon shows and a movie. David Crane was also experimenting with a new animation technology at the time which allowed him to change the appearance of large shapes very quickly. The Transformers fit the bill perfectly as a vehicle for David's new technique. Hasbro was also making sure that we accurately portrayed the characteristics, personalities and graphics of each Transformer character. A final thought that convinced us to buy the license was that the Transformers game would provide entertainment for our younger followers. Sometimes software companies tend to neglect them.
Jermaine: Can you give me some information about *Aliens*?
Lehrberg: We became interested in

"Personally, I view a license when it's used in conjunction with software to be a marketing ploy. I want a program to be able to stand on its own merit."

Aliens, like *Ghostbusters*, after we read the film script in late 1985. Our people were concerned with the graphic violence of the movie, but we still believed we could take the basic elements of the story and turn them into a presentable product that would appeal to our largest computer audience—early teen males.

Aliens was so popular with the Activision designers that totally separate programs, using the same title, were developed in the United States and England. I know of no other case in which two different games were developed concurrently by the same company in different countries based upon the same property.
Jermaine: Consider for a moment your licensed ventures versus your original programs. Is software containing licensed characters more successful than original material?
Lehrberg: I don't believe licensed software is more or less successful than products containing original themes. It all depends on how good the program itself is. The license helps, but it also makes a project more expensive, and a good license won't help a bad product.
Jermaine: Would you like to make a final comment about the use of licensed characters of themes in your software?
Lehrberg: Licensed products tend to sell well around the world, but each individual property can have a different level of appeal in one country as opposed to another. David Bowie, for example, is extremely popular in Europe, so *Labyrinth* had a little extra going for it there.

Lucasfilm Team Effort on *Labyrinth*

Speaking of *Labyrinth*, I interviewed several individuals at Lucasfilm Games, the developers of *Labyrinth*, about how they feel about licensing. I spoke with Stephen Arnold, director of Lucasfilm games division, and David Fox and Charlie Kellner,

designers/programmers.
Jermaine: Tell me about your licensing activities.
Arnold: When the *Labyrinth* film project was being discussed, we were asked if we would like to design a game based on the story of the movie. We agreed to do one. Since the film was developed as a joint venture between Lucasfilm and Henson Associates and programmed by Lucasfilm Games, we were the licensors of the film properties. Activision purchased the license to market and distribute the product. The game itself was designed by a team consisting of Lucasfilm Game Division, Activision and Henson Associates. Neither George Lucas, Jim Henson nor David Bowie were directly involved in the creation of the program.

Until recently, the rights to make video game software based on the *Star Wars* film were licensed to Parker Brothers. A few years ago, they marketed cartridge games for VCS units (like the Atari 2600 system) and created some microcomputer programs, including one for the Commodore 64. Atari's coin-op division also developed some *Star Wars* related arcade machines. The marketing/licensing branch of Lucasfilm sold limited software rights to use the Indiana Jones character in some educational programs being produced by Mindscape. Lucasfilm did not contribute anything to the Mindscape software directly.

Lucasfilm has not considered directly purchasing the rights to any outside film character or idea for game development. From time to time we are approached by various software publishers and film companies asking whether we would be interested in designing a game based on a popular movie or character. If the right project came along, however, we might get involved.
Jermaine: Could you give me some background information on *Labyrinth*?
Fox: We started working on *Labyrinth* in November of 1985 and completed the program by August of 1986. It contains four megabytes of source code and about 260K of object code. Stephen Arnold, Charlie Kellner and I represented Lucasfilm Games. Brenda Laurel, the director of Learning and Creativity Products at Activision, added her special talents to the creation of the program.

We also brought Chris Cerf and Douglas Adams into the group. Both of these people are very creative and also are familiar with Jim Henson's work. Since the *Labyrinth* film script was based on a