

# FEATURES

## Owners mum over video earnings

By **BOB KIMPLETON**  
Staff Writer

Video games are a way of life in Chapel Hill.

With four video arcades on Franklin Street, not to mention games in bars, restaurants and even supermarkets, almost everyone knows *Pac Man*, *Donkey Kong* or *Defender*.

But the business end of the video craze is less visible. Who owns the \$3,000 machines, who gets the money from this billion dollar industry, and



how much do the machines make?

One reason that little is known about the video business is that some people in the business don't want anyone to know.

Chris Maroldy, manager of Noel's Sub Machine, wouldn't say where the machines in his arcade come from or how much they make. "That information is classified," he said.

He did say that there are several arrangements used to place games in establishments. Machines can be bought outright from a distributor, leased from an operator, or leased with an option to buy. Also, some machines are leased on a percentage basis, where the operator and property owner each take a cut of the gross.

In a high-volume situation, where machines are expected to pay for themselves, ownership is often the preferred route. Soaps manager Carey McCloskey said all the video games in the bar-laundromat were bought from a distributor

in Philadelphia. She said that on a good night one of her better machines (like *Ms. Pac Man*) might be good for 100-150 plays, \$25-\$50.

Bars use video games as both a draw and a source of revenue. "It's a means of recreation," Tim Kirkpatrick, owner of The Henderson Street Bar, said. "It also adds income to my business." Kirkpatrick leases his games from Dossett Music in Durham on a percentage basis. Dossett Music empties the machines, counts the money and splits it 50-50 with the bar.

Barry Huff, owner of The Upper Deck bar, said he prefers leasing his eight video machines to buying. "Video games are rather faddish," said Huff, who also leases from Dossett Music. "A lot of the machines come and go... there's a lot of speculation in it."

While some machines may fade from popularity, Huff said the video games will be here "till something comes along and replaces them."



Video games line the wall at area bars... owners won't say how much they take in

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