

# of the bells

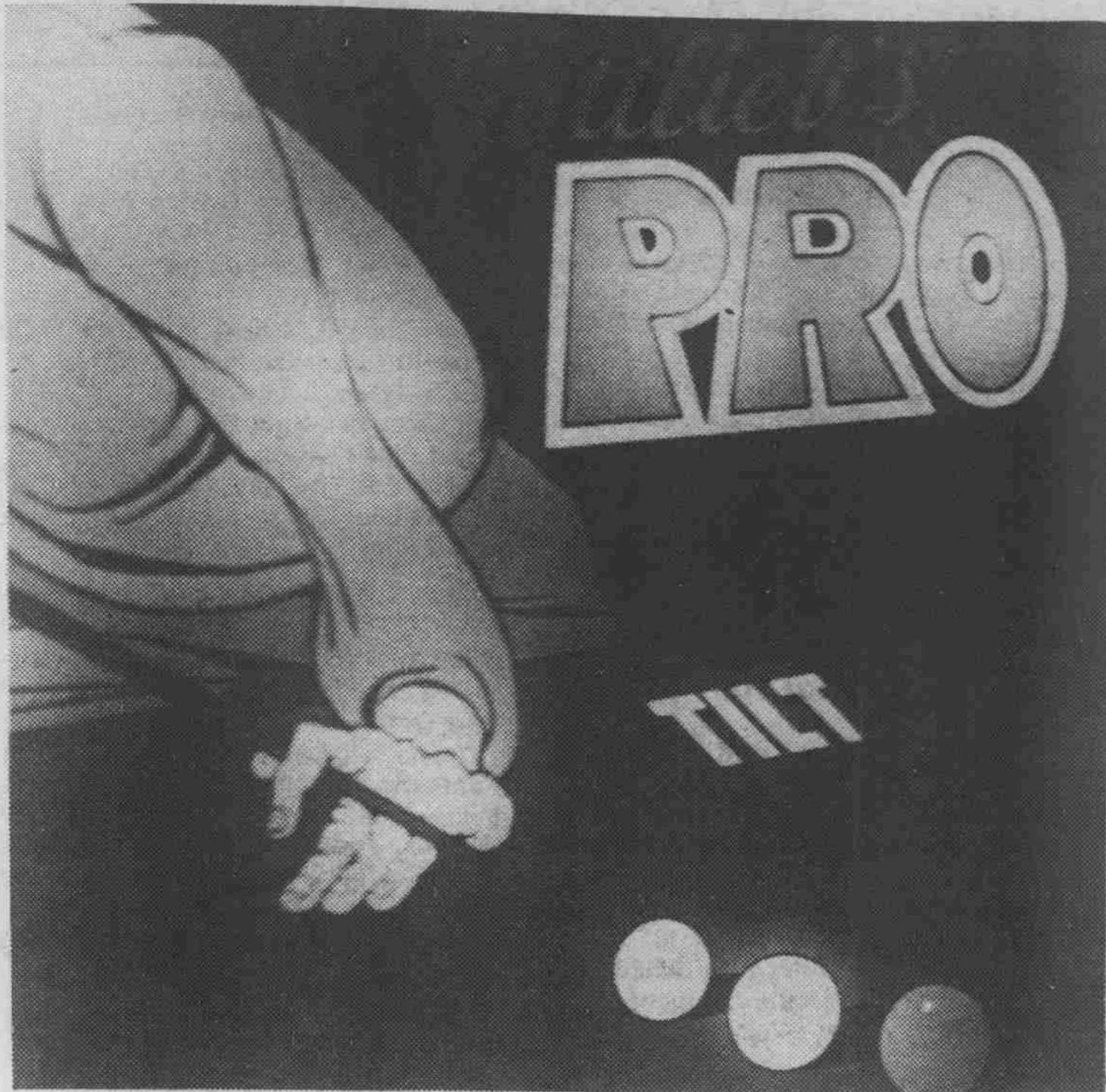


Photo by Phred Vultee

unique quirks that make life interesting shown so clearly. It is the only skill game where a rank amateur can knock off an experienced flipperman. There is no human so frustrated as the wizard whose ball shies away from the flippers to drain away without so much as a fare-thee-well. This is not to assert, as do some, that pinball is entirely a game of chance. There is a place for knowledge, for knowing when to shake Amigo so your no-point turkey becomes a fifteen-thou humdinger, for hitting the point-giving spinner five shots out of five, for a good double-flipper save. But a registered pinball junkie can do no more about a clean stovepipe than scientists can do about vampires.

(Well, you almost turned old Wizard over. Not bad, but it's only ten o'clock and you're thirsty and maybe with another game you'd... But there are no more quarters, and George Washington's face does not grace the inside of your wallet. Just that five that was

reserved for tomorrow's food. Looks like there's no choice. You head for the bar.)

If pinball did not exist, it would have been necessary to invent it. Its no-limit scoring, rowdy audio-visual traits and charming/frustrating twists of fate make it characteristic of modern American life as no other beer game is.

(After a moment, you realize that you're seeing double, so you count up your cash and divide by two. The result is not encouraging, but there's enough for a Big Mac and maybe you can bum some bread and peanut butter from your roommate, who has a refrigerator and doesn't play. Who cares? The last game, that moment when you held the machine down and poured castor oil down its throat, when you hit double bonus on 15,000 and popped the center target three times in a row, was enough. 265,910. Two hundred sixty-five thousand, nine hundred and ten goddamn points.)

With a score like that, who needs to eat?

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