

A Letter from the Publisher

At the height of a movie season marked by record-setting box-office successes, TIME's Cinema section this week takes note of one of the most innovative and significant of all the new entries: *TRON*. A fantasy-thriller about what it might be like to be trapped inside a video game, *TRON* not only is the first feature film to achieve its special effects largely through the use of computer-assisted imagery and animation, it also gives to the abstract world of computer technology a witty and dramatic visual form.

The story on *TRON*—and on the Disney studios that produced it—was written by TIME Contributor Richard Schickel. A film critic for 17 years, Schickel is also the author of 16 books, including an authoritative, independent study of Walt Disney and his organization, entitled *The Disney Version*. Says Schickel: "The studio has a lot riding on *TRON*, and so does everybody—inside the movie business and out—who remembers the sense of the visionary possibilities of film you got from the great days of Disney, and wishes somebody would make pictures like those again."

Reporting on these elaborate new techniques of computer graphics, which created the most imaginative of *TRON*'s sets

and props, were Los Angeles' Russell Leavitt and New York Reporter-Researcher Peter Ainslie. Says Ainslie: "It was only fitting that real computers were used to construct the environment inside the film's computer—and to do it better than any conventional graphics methods." Adds Leavitt: "While you know that a black box is producing what's on the screen—it's simply a machine—for a moment, you wonder."



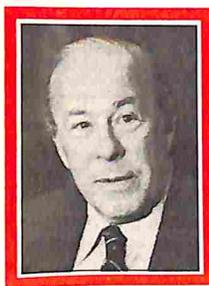
Director Lisberger with Critic Schickel

In Los Angeles, Correspondent Jeff Melvoin interviewed *TRON* Writer-Director Steven Lisberger. They soon realized that they shared a passion for the computer games that are the creative impulse for the film. Melvoin also visited the Disney studios in Burbank, Calif., and interviewed several top company executives. He talked with Disney alumni who have gone on to make their own animated films and with Director Steven Spielberg, the creator of *E.T.*, who acknowledges a spiritual debt to Disney. Says Melvoin: "Visiting the Disney studios was like an invitation into a childhood dream. Reporting on the story took me into the world of magic that Walt Disney originally created, revealing something of where the wizardry had come from, and where it might be going."

John A. Meyers

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Cover: Photograph by Curt Gunther—Camera 5



8 Cover: Frustrated by clashes with White House aides and by the course of U.S. foreign policy, Secretary of State Haig abruptly resigns. George Shultz, a respected team player in his fourth Cabinet post, replaces him.



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With computer-zapped effects and a plot set inside a video game, Disney's *TRON* opens a new era in movie technique.

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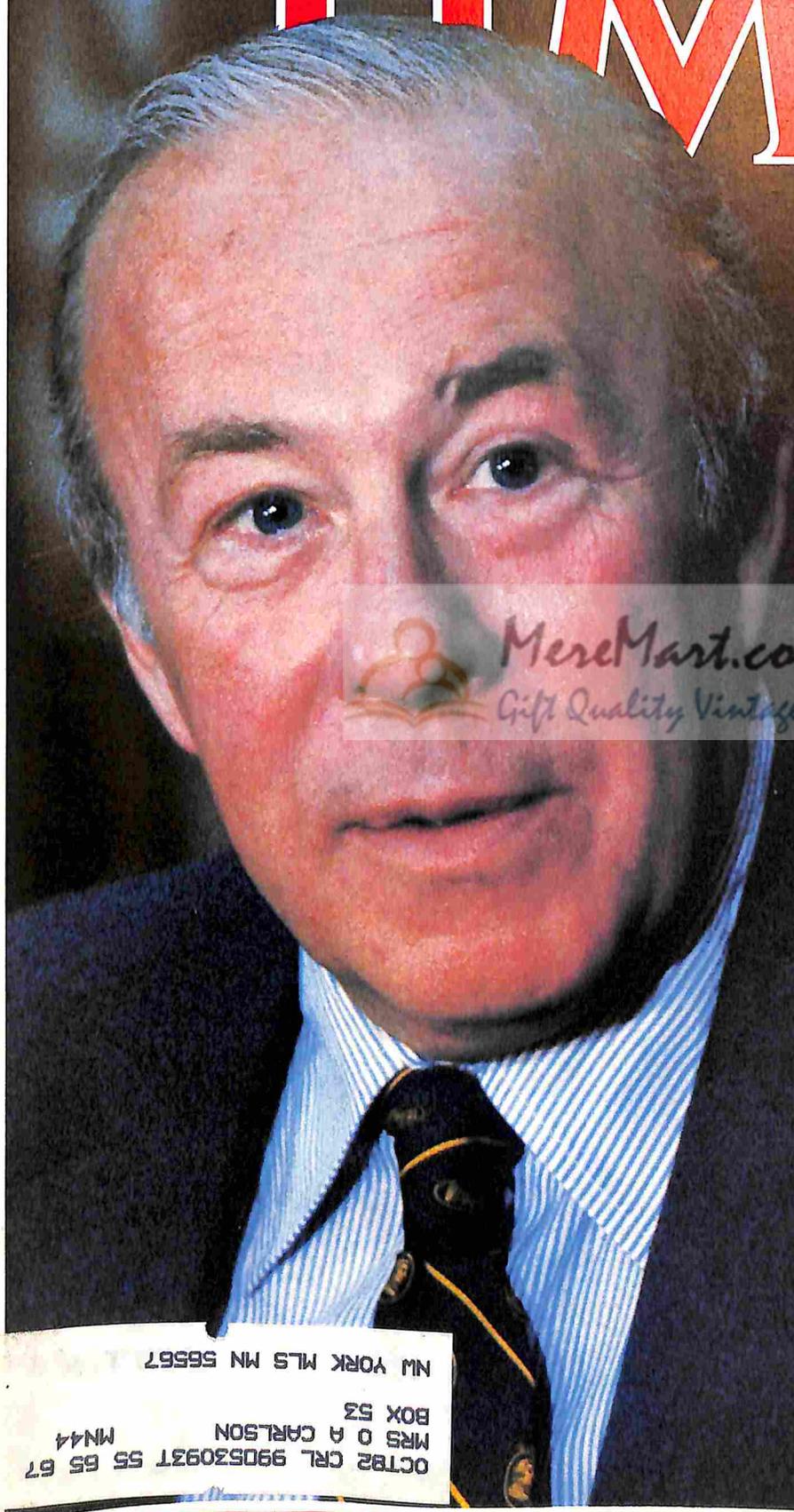
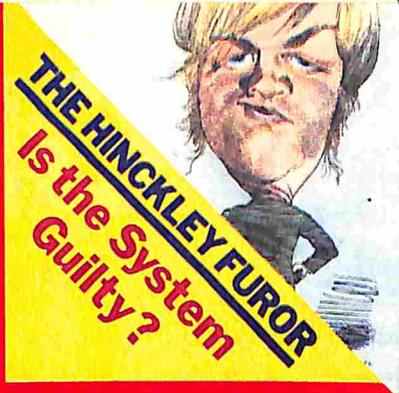
Loud and clear, the FCC opens a new market by okaying direct broadcasts from satellites to home-based dish antennas.

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TIME



Foreign Policy Shakeup

Out Goes Haig In Comes Shultz

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