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Photo by John Stoops

*Tetris, a Soviet-designed video game, appeals to people who would rather play a non-violent game.*

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## Soviet-made game tests the mind

By Betsy Clayton  
 Emerald Associate Editor

The first ever Soviet-designed video game to come to the United States is now in Eugene, and it doesn't involve shooting, bombing, eating something or playing a sport.

Tetris is currently available at Rennie's Landing, 1214 Kincaid St. Played something like a fast-moving video Rubik's cube, Tetris was originally programmed by an 18-year-old at Moscow University and developed by a researcher at the U.S.S.R. Academy of Scientists.

Amusement Unlimited put the game in at Rennie's about

three weeks ago and plans to install others around Eugene as they become available. Currently there are two Tetris games at Oregon State University's video arcade.

"They are fairly scarce. This is the first one in Eugene, and within the next month or two there will be some more available in other locations," said Jerry Johnston, co-owner of Amusement Unlimited.

The table game can be played by one or two people simultaneously. The player uses a joystick and a button to move and rotate descending geometric blocks into the bottom of the screen, where the object is to fit the block pieces together to build solid, horizontal rows before the pieces land.

There are seven differently shaped characters in the game. One of seven appears randomly at the top of the screen and starts descending to the bottom. When a row is completed the entire line disappears and the intensity begins increasing.

"I like the game. Whereas a lot of games destroy things, in this you actually build," Johnston said.

The game lends itself to being a spectator sport, he said. "Even people who don't know how to play can watch ... and

offer advice," Johnston said.

Rennie's owner and manager Jon LaBranch said the game is very popular. "I've seen one person play it for three hours straight," he said.

"It's quite different from other video games. It's mellow. It's a video puzzle," LaBranch said. "You don't have to have a lot of video-game knowledge to play it."

Johnston said the game is also unique because women are attracted to it. "Our industry is dominated by men — 80 to 90 percent of those who play video games are male," he said. Not since Ms. Pac Man and Centipede have women taken to a video game this well, Johnston said.

Tetris has been released to IBM for personal computers and it will probably be available for Nintendo in about six months, Johnston said.

Many say the game is a challenge. The computer decides randomly which pieces to display, making it impossible to break the game by predicting a pattern.

"It's frustrating and challenging, but it's just enough so you can master it sometimes," Johnston said.

**Uncover Your True Potential...**

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**OREGON DAILY EMERALD**  
**Freelancer Meeting**  
 April 6, 1989 (Thursday)  
 4:30 pm  
 EMU BOARD ROOM (3rd Floor)

*All students interested in writing are strongly encouraged to attend. For more information contact Kelvin 686-5511.*

The Emerald is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Women, minorities and disabled students are encouraged to attend.

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