



Cyberplay: Virtual Boy -collect it, don't play it

By Steven L. Kent

There's a secret to making money as a video game colle rid of good games, and hold on to only the really bad on

It's true. Games that were hits on the Nintendo Entertainment System, such as Mario 3, Mike Tyson's Funch Out, The Legent 20dd and Double Dirbble, may have been fun to play, but they have absolutely no resale value. Why would anybody pay hig money for them? You can find them in any used-game store. Specialized games, such as fishing and gambling, were not nea as of no as Zodda, both they re-earce and worth a 10 more money.

The same can be said about game systems. Atari sold more than 2 million video Computer Systems (also known as the VCS and the 2600) - nearly 10 times more units than its nearest competitor. Today you can find a VCS in most Goodwill stores selling for \$5. On the other hand, the Vectrex, a stand-alone console with its own built-in monitor, sells for as much as \$250.

Though it wasn't a lousy game system for its time, Vectrex played only black-and-white games with vector graphics. Vector graphics agames are games in which everything is shown as lines, as opposed to fully drawn pictures. Asteroids and Battlezone are raphics games.

Manufactured by General Consumer Electronics, the system appeared during the video game craze of the early '80s and disappeared after less than one year on the market. If there is a modern-day equivalent to the Vectrex it's Nintendo's Virtual Boy, short-lived system that many retailers are now clearing out of their inventory at the reduced price of \$29.95.

Like the Vectrex, Virtual Boy is a stand-alone console with its ow built-in, single-color light-emitting diode (LED) display. The entire system consists of a visor and controller perched on the top of wire-frame legs. To use Virtual Boy, you place the visor on a table and press your face into it.

Virtual Boy does not play virtual-reality games; instead, using d optical displays, it fools players into believing they are seeing three-dimensional images. Images created by Virtual Boy's light emitting diodes are shown in stereo and appear to pop out of the visor.

That's the good news

The bad news is that the light-emitting diodes produce only one color: red. Some people complained that Virtual Boy's red graphics gave them headaches. Others said they couldn't see red images after a long session of playing Virtual Boy.

Another problem was the fact that in order to see the stereo effect, you have to adjust the focus on Virtual Boy before every game. It once watched a 10-year-old in a toy store play Virtual Boy without once watched a 10-year-old in a toy store play Virtual Boy without focusing it. When his mother called him away, 15 minutes later, he looked up and almost fainted, which is not an uncommon result of staring at blurry objects for several minutes.

Virtual Boy's biggest weakness is that nobody knew how to harness its strengths. No one seemed to know how to make games that took advantage of its 3-D imaging.

Virtual Boy comes with Mario Tennis, a wonderful game in which players control 2-D images of such Nintendo mascots as Mario the plumber and Princess Toadstool as they play tennis on a 3-D court Mario Tennis takes a little getting used to, but once you catch on, it's great fun

Most of the games for the Virtual Boy, however, aren't much fun. The worst Virtual Boy game, and probably the worst game I've ever seen, is Waterwold, from Ocean. If had games become good investments, I suggest you pick up dozens of copies of this one. They'll be worth their weight in platinum. In Waterwold you drive a jet skil through enemy waters shooting bad guys and picking up good guys. There are no levels, no changes in scenery—just more and more shooting and picking up.

Most Virtual Boy games suffer a different problem, however: They are nothing more than 2-D games with 3-D images. Panie Bomber is Bomberman with a 3-D look; Ward Cand is a typical Martio side-scrolling game in which Martio's evil cousin Wards conceines jumps into the background of the screen, Martio Cash is a remake of Mario Brothers, a game in which Martio and Luigi throw things at each other, and Effectoboxer is a boxing game in which your opponents hand, get bigger at they if you work of the proposed about any of them.

The strange thing is, even though its graphics are composed of juone color and most of its games are dull, I am very fond of the Virtual Boy, My only explanation is that the whole of Virtual Boy far exceeds the sum of its parts.

Taken in doses, Virtual Boy can be a pleasure. The American pr never gave it a chance, and the technology-hypnotized Japanese gamers never forgave the system for its single-color display. Nintendo sold less than 100,000 Virtual Boys in Japan and only 250,000 in the United States

I'm not claiming that Virtual Boy has more play value than a PlayStation or an N64, but I will go on record to say that it is unique among game systems, and due to its low sales figures, IG years from now it will be a hot item with video game collectors.

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