BLAST FROM THE PAST

THIS MONTH, WE REMEMBER...VIRTUAL BOY





Back in 1995, heady after years of continued handheld success with Game Boy, Nintendo decided, in a fit of Sega-like hardware excess, to release a system called Virtual Boy. Created by the father of handheld games, Gunpei Yokoi, Virtual Boy seemed like a lock to be Nintendo's next huge hardware success. After all, Yokoi (who died in a car accident in 1997) was responsible for the Game & Watch series and the original Game Boy, and seemed to know gaming-to-go better than anyone. But when Virtual Boy finally launched, it quickly became a virtual pariah. Taking the handheld concept to the limit, Virtual Boy failed largely because it was too big. Requiring a tripod-like device for support, the system featured an awkward controller that had an overly short cord and required six AA batteries to run. The launch games included *Mario's Tennis*, *Red Alarm*, *Galactic Pinball*, and *Teleroboxer*. The subject of games is also a sore point for past and present Virtual Boy owners. By the time of the system's quick and not-so-painless death, Nintendo had released a worldwide total of fewer than 35 games, with under 20 actually making it to the States.

The biggest disappointment was the graphics, which ironically was the system's selling point. Less than practical, Virtual Boy's 3D monotone red graphics were better at inducing headaches than anything else. It's a shame that poor Gunpei's legacy ended on this note, but like its creator, Virtual Boy may be gone, but it's certainly not forgotten.

Key titles: *Mario's Tennis*, *Red Alarm*