



intendo's success in the games industry is unparalleled by any other company. From filling everyone's pockets

with Game & Watches and Game Boys to bringing the first true 64-bit machine to the market, Nintendo seem to have a magic touch. Unfortunately, even Paul Daniels would have had a difficult job preventing the company's biggest flop. The Virtual Boy was released in Japan a couple of years ago, with a release in the US a few months later. Despite strong support from Nintendo and a few third party companies, production of the machine was stopped at the end of last year.

If you haven't seen or heard of the VB, then imagine a virtual reality headset mounted on top of a tripod. Games are displayed on two eye-sized screens set inside the unit, with sound being aimed into your ears through adjacent stereo speakers. Spend your money on a Virtual Boy and you'll be seeing red, literally, although the monochrome screens do display many shades of the colour. The 3D effect the 32-bit machine creates is excellent, allowing for impressive special effects and genuine gameplay enhancements. In addition, the twenty-five games available for the machine include some essential Nintendo classics.

The reason for harping-on about the Virtual Boy is that it's one of the fastest-growing formats in the Retro Scene. While the machines are still quite easy to obtain thanks to the glut of unsold American units, many games were released in Japan that weren't released in the US. These include Taito's official *Super Space Invaders*, *Virtual Fishing* and *Gundam*. In the inevitable Japanese VB clearout, machines dropped to £25, while games fell to the equivalent of £1.75! The rapid sell out of these games has resulted in a very quick rise in collector's prices, with *Super Space Invaders* now fetching £50-plus.

With recent rumours of a VB Mario Kart prototype cartridge, and the existence of a SNES-style VB development console capable of playing VB games on a TV using a standard controller, the format will remain one of the most collectable for years to come.

