

NINTENDO NEWS NETWORK

VIRTUAL BOY HEADLINES AT CES



First revealed to the world in November 1994 at the Shoshinkai show, Nintendo's Virtual Boy received a savage lambasting in the press, with journals moaning about the single colour graphics and poor software. Nintendo of America aimed to put this right with their Virtual Boy display at the Winter CES. Have they succeeded? Our man on the spot, Richard Leadbetter, reports from Las Vegas...

Despite what you may have read elsewhere, Nintendo's Virtual Boy display was excellent, being split into two distinct sections. In the first part of the stand, Nintendo officials gave you special glasses and invited you to check out some of the forthcoming Virtual Boy attractions on huge projection monitors. After you'd had a look at that, you could check out two games on the actual machine.

THE HARDWARE

Running on six Walkman-size batteries, the Virtual Boy can't really be described as a portable system as it needs to be mounted on a table. The graphics are monochrome - red pixels on a black backdrop and the 3D effect can be superb - it depends on the talents of the coders. In *Teleroboxer*, the 3D effect can be extremely obvious - the layered graphics look a bit poor and the 3D effect cheap. However, the *Mario* and *Pinball* use the 3D much more effectively and subtly, with some quite startling results.

The sound is stereo with speakers mounted on the left and right of the unit - decent quality headphones are a must as the in-built speakers aren't exactly stunning in quality.

The joystick(s) are excellent. Both left and right-handed players are well catered for since there are two d-buttons. There are six main buttons mounted on the controller - four mounted around the d-pads, two more on top.



(ABOVE) The 3-D graphics are created by reflecting four shades of red on a black background off oscillating mirrors. The minute vibrations of the mirrors give the image its virtual thickness and density.

THE GAMES

Two games were on display - *Space Pinball*, which was very basic indeed, but quite entertaining along with a first person perspective robot boxing game called *Teleroboxer*. Neither title was particularly inspiring - still, it's early days yet and Nintendo reckon that each title is currently only 30% complete. Other games showed that Virtual Boy at least has some decent titles in the pipeline. The star of the show was undoubtedly the new *Mario* game. This wasn't the *Mario Bros* arcade game as revealed at the Shoshinkai show. This was *Mario* action as we like it. Bearing an uncanny resemblance to the Super NES *Mario World* (but with superior sprites, believe it or not), this game looked superb. The Virtual Boy hardware is put to great use in this game, with *Mario* being able to walk into the background and explore whole new parts of each level. There's even an overhead section a la *Zelda*. Another new title which looked really promising was a 3D shooting game looking very similar to a wire frame version of *StarWing*. Road racer fans should be well catered for too, with a forthcoming *F1 Virtual Boy* title. Using sprite scaling, the action is fast and fluid - odd enough it was reminiscent of the Megadrive version of *Super Monaco GP*, although the smoothness of the 3D looked a lot better.



SPECS

- CPU:** 32-bit RISC processor running at 20 MHz
- DISPLAY:** Dual mirror scan, high resolution, LED displays
- SOFTWARE:** ROM cartridge
- POWER SUPPLY:** Six AA batteries
- AUDIO:** Stereo sound with self-contained dual-speaker system
- CONTROLLER:** New double-grip controller with two plus-key buttons
- MEASUREMENTS:** 8.5" H x 10 W x 4.3" D
- WEIGHT:** 760 grams (head unit only)
- POWER ADAPTOR:** AC adaptor (sold separately), Rechargeable battery adaptor (sold separately)



DIY VIRTUAL BOY

Nintendo reckon that pictures can't capture the Virtual Boy experience, but we beg to differ. To get the full-on Virtual Boy 3D effect, get a hold of some old blue and red lens 3D goggles and replace the blue lens with another red one. Don your goggles and peer closely at the screen shots printed here.

MARIO!

This untitled Mario product looked like being the strongest Virtual Boy title at the CES - Some amazing sprite-scaling and Mode 7 type effects are in evidence should Mario fall through a hole. However, most of the 3D effects are used to show Mario wandering in and out of the screen in a new addition to the Mario formula.

SPACE PINBALL

Basic in the extreme - at the moment. Space Pinball has some great 3D tables - they actually look "solid" and in 3D, as opposed to the layered 3D sprites of Teleroboxer.

HUDSONSOFT DEMO

One of the world's greatest developers, Hudsonsoft, is on board for Virtual Boy and proved their mastery of the technology with an impressive 3D landscape, with moments of incredible full-motion video!

SHOOT 'EM UP

There's nothing like a good blast, and there's nothing like this overhead scrolling blaster. There are different layers of 3D to the landscape, and you can dodge and weave between them.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Price is going to be the main problem with Virtual Boy. At \$200 it's certainly not cheap, and the price of the software is going to be an issue as well. The games looked and "felt" very similar to Game Boy titles with some extra 3D effects. Is the extra money really going to be worth it - especially with Ultra 64 out two months later and (allegedly) at the same price?

It would really be predictable to slag off the machine like everyone else seems to be doing at the moment. I'm not going to do that because I think Virtual Boy has potential. The 3D works, and some of the games in development look very good indeed. Nintendo of America are certainly confident as they expect to sell two million VBs and four million pieces of software in 1995 alone.

It's difficult to draw firm conclusions at the moment because the software is so early on in development - look out for more coverage in future issues of NMS.

(BELOW) A Starwing-type game for the Virtual Boy. Shame you can't see it in its full glory.



ROAD RACER

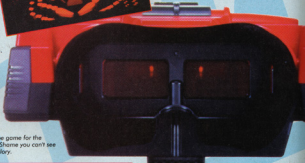
Shades of Super Monaco GP with this impressive looking, extremely fast racing game. As you would expect, some great 3D effects and super-smooth sprite scaling.

VECTOR BLASTER

Looking very similar to StarWing, but using vector graphics, this probably looks like quite a mess in this 2D screenshot - but in 3D, with Virtual Boy, it's quite impressive with some very nice camera angles.

TELEBOXER

A first-person perspective robot boxing game. Probably the weakest title of the lot - even the 3D graphics aren't up to much - but it is still early in development, so who knows how it might change?



Nintendo PEOPLE SYSTEM



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NMS MAN OF THE MONTH: Ooof! Aargh! Cantano! And if you ask us: that guy deserved it.

NMS WOMAN OF THE MONTH: Michiko, Paul's new Betmate who he fancies loads. (Paul's got a girlfriend! Paul's got a girlfriend! etc....)

NMS STOAT OF THE MONTH: Winky the lesser-spotted Peruvian blue.

So what do you want first? The great news or the really horribly atrocious news? Good news first, then - Nintendo UK have announced after much speculation that they intend to release both the Virtual Boy and the long awaited Ultra 64 - hooray! And now for the bad news - we won't see either machine on these shores until 1996!?! Not fair! Japan and the States will be getting the VB as early as April this year whilst both are expecting the Ultra 64 in September. Still, every cloud has a silver lining and on the positive side there are some truly excellent Super NES titles lined up for the year ahead with games such as *Starwing 2*, *Fighting polygons* (or *FX Fighter* as it was previously known), *Comanche*, a host of Kirby Products and the recently announced sequel to *Dankey Kong Country* - *Diddy's Adventures*. It's also worth bearing in mind that a couple of years ago we were in very much the same situation with the Super NES and Nintendo did a complete about-face and released the machine months ahead of schedule. Well, we can dream can't we...

Andy

IT'S YOU!

Forget the ping-pong balls in the tumble-dryer, with NMS you get the compos — you get the prizes! Over the past couple of months the compo action has been reaching fever pitch, and now we have the results. So hold onto your horses, hit the drum roll and prepare to see if you've won!



NINTENDO PEOPLE SYSTEM

ANDY MCVITTIE

Ever wondered why some people go around telling you to 'use the force' just because you can't open a biscuit tin, or start whistling irritating tunes whenever it starts to rain perhaps even going so far as to jump in and out of puddles and swinging on lamp-posts? Perplexed when a colleague's face loses all expression before uttering the words 'I'll be back' in a dead sort of voice, prior to disappearing for a quick epic? Well it's all explained here as the NMS team divulge their best loved films from their childhood.



Aham... Andy says he used to like Planet of the Apes because he wanted to be Gekko - the chimpanzee doctor played by Roddy McDowell.

Though we've tried to work this one out, even consoling ourselves with the vague similarity in surnames, Andy's admission has us all stumped.

However we have noticed a slight tendency of Andy's to limp around the office, twitch his nose and jump on desks. This we can handle, but we absolutely draw the line when Andy whips out his lasso and tries rounding up the humans for experiments in the interest of science!

FAVOURITE GAMES: NBA Jam T.E., Super Tetris 3, International Superstar Soccer