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SUPER PLAY

ISSUE

36

OCTOBER 1995



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WELCOME BACK MARIO!

EXCLUSIVE review of Yoshi's Island PLUS first pics of the new Mario RPG!

INSIDE!
The definitive reviews

Is this the surprise hit of 1995? We test out the
VIRTUAL BOY

KILLER INSTINCT and DOOM

PLUS! Weaponlord, Batman Forever and Primal Rage!

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YOSHI'S ISLAND

EXCLUSIVE
REVIEW

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Incredible!
Until
recently
it was one
of
Nintendo
of Japan's
best-kept
secrets and
now it's one
of *Super*
Play's highest
scoring games
of all time.
Discover
why...



VIRTUAL BOY

The Virtual Boy has only just hit the streets in Japan, and in true *Super Play* style we've pipped the other mags to the post to bring you RED HOT EXCLUSIVE Virtual Boy news and reviews. Prepare to experience a new dimension in gaming.

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IRRESPONSIBLE PICTURES

All the latest Manga news and reviews. This month *Project A-KO 3*, *Bubblegum Crisis 3* and *Angel Cop 5*, among others, get the *Super Play* treatment.



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VIRTUAL BOY

ON TEST

Nintendo's 32-bit virtual monster finally hits the streets, and *Super Play* is on hand with a full report on the unit itself and its current games line-up, plus a look at future releases.

A sweaty postie waddling into *Super Play's* grime-laden delivery bay signalled the long-awaited arrival of our Virtual Boy this month.

We've spent the last few weeks stripping it down in our special, conducting leading-edge experiments into its peculiar and intriguing 3D capabilities. That and getting very sore eyes, coming away from the machine with amusing pressure marks across our faces, and fighting each other over whose turn it is next on *Red Alarm*.

THE UNIT

Controls – along the top of the unit is the focus knob, which slides back and forth, and the, erm, other knob, which goes round and round. This is used during the Veebee's startup sequence, where you can fiddle with its 3D-ness until it's just right.

More controls – along the underside of the Veebee can be found the headphones socket, volume control, multiplayer link-up socket (a seemingly exact replica of the design used on the Game Boy) and the joypad/power delivery socket, which, strangely, uses the same design as the joypad socket of a UK NES.

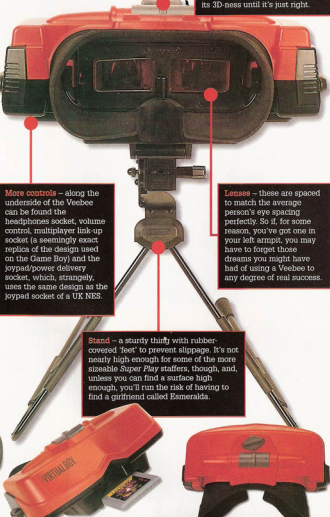
Lenses – these are spaced to match the average person's eye spacing perfectly. So if, for some reason, you've got one in your left armpit, you may have to forget those dreams you might have had of using a Veebee to any degree of real success.

Stand – a sturdy thingy with rubber-covered 'feet' to prevent slippage. It's not nearly high enough for some of the more sizeable *Super Play* staffers, though, and, unless you can find a surface high enough, you'll run the risk of having to find a girlfriend called Esmeralda.

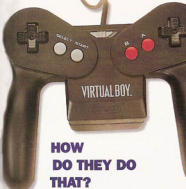
Joypad – measuring roughly 6" x 5" x 2.75", this is both controller – being slightly reminiscent of that of the PlayStation – and power source to the Veebee. Six AA/HP7 batteries slot into the rear of the 'pad and give it a weighty but still remarkably comfortable feel.

Cart slot – the games slide easily into this here aperture. There's no cart lock, making it possible to remove them while the system's actually in play. We aren't sure if this will damage the unit yet, but our money's on the consequences being generally unpleasant, so we can't recommend it.

Visor – the bit which endows immersability (sort of) upon the system. It's made of a soft but stiff foam rubber compound and can be completely removed from the unit. So if you've friends with notoriously greasy foreheads, it might be best for them to buy their own – they sell separately in Japan and should be available from importers.



Marvel at the wonder that is the Veebee joystick. The triggers lie underneath.



HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

And how, you may be wondering, has Nintendo's Gumpel Yokoi and his team managed to create a system producing proper 3D images? We'll try to explain.

A line of LEDs (light-emitting diodes) controls each of the images you see when you poke your head into the Virtual Boy. Each generates a vertical line of dots (pixels) which are then projected through a magnifying lens and onto a mirror (or, as it's officially called, a 'counterbalanced resonant vibrating scan mirror', for what it matters), which in turn bounces the image onto the screen. Now, the LEDs are only generating one vertical line at a time, but they sweep across the mirror – and therefore the screen – altering the data as they go to make up a proper rectangular image. And they obviously do this incredibly quickly.

The 3D effect is achieved by making the two screens display slightly different data. In *Mario's Tennis*, for example, through the left lens Mario might be standing one centimetre to the left of the court's edge, while he may be, say, only half a centimetre in the right lens. Your eyes bring the two together, et voilà – Mario in 3D. And stuff.

THE SIDE EFFECTS

After the videogame epilepsy storm, it's unsurprising that Nintendo are well aware of treating customers with care. With this in mind, each Veebee game features an optional auto-save. This is for those people who, along with probably having trouble with tying shoelaces, can't remember how long they've been 'immersed'. When selected, a separate 'screensaver'-type image pops up after a shortish period of play to remind you to take a break.

We can't, of course, speculate too much over the potential eye problems risked by users of the Virtual Boy for fear of incurring the weight of Nintendo's expensively upholstered lawyers, but we can at least tell



THE GAMES

And the most important component of a new system's launch – the actual games; those wee nuggets of entertainment that'll ensure either a big pile of spent Duracells in the coming weeks, or a hastily scribbled entry to the 'Hardware For Sale' section in Supermarket, depending on their worth. And who to judge them? Here, let Super Play's internationally renowned part-time playboy pop stars Will and Tony deftly guide you through the entire range of launch titles. The marks are out of ten, mainly because we just say so.

Red Alarm

T&E Soft

It's no surprise, of course, that one of the first Veebee games is a proper 3D affair, with a full polygon-generated playing environment. What is perhaps surprising is that T&E Soft, a company not famed for such work, should be the developers responsible for it.

But they've done a relatively good job. Though not as fast as *Star Fox* running at full steam, *Red Alarm* is nevertheless a very fluid game, which, even with a packed screen, doesn't noticeably suffer from slowdown.



Shoot those little stickmen in T&E Soft's *Red Alarm*, one of the best Veebee games yet.

It's an out-and-out shoot-'em-up, presented in the form of linear levels each leading to a 'Danger Zone', the area where a boss character resides. The levels vary from simple space station-type constructions to subterranean caverns, and feature many different touches to wonder over. Our favourite so far has to be the launch bay section on level one, where little stickmen ground crew members scatter at your arrival allowing you to round them up and blow them away.

Unlike *Starfox*, you have complete freedom of movement within a level's confines, so you can even turn around and head back the way you've come if you've missed a bonus or whatever.

Four views are selectable: behind far, behind near, in-craft and external pan – the latter being a view which moves around your ship in response to your own movements.

The actual 3D effect in *Alarm* is less impressive than we were expecting, mainly because the graphics can't be

The pin connectors concept seen on Veebee carts is a far cry from the SNES equivalent.

Carts

Veebee carts are approximately 3" x 2.5" x 0.25" in size, and have bare edge connectors. Because these exposed edges have no less than 60 pin-sockets, you also get a snug-fitting protective cover with each cart. These covers are also particularly good for scraping encrusted food spillages off desktops, we've found.

presented in very obvious layers the way flat backgrounds and sprites can.

The '3D-ness' is still there, of course, and approaching sections of landscape look convincing despite their wireframe nature.

Alarm is one game which makes full use of the Veebee's pad. The left D-pad controls normal craft movement; the right performs similarly, albeit in larger increments (this function isn't vital in play, as it happens). The right trigger shoots, while the left engages hard turns, and, finally, A and B control speed.

A good launch title, then, and one that's bound to sell in huge quantities mainly because it's the only Veebee game so far to use polygons. We'll have to wait a while to see something rivaling *Starfox*, but this'll do in the meantime.

7
Tony

Mario's Tennis

Nintendo

The pack-in game with the Virtual Boy in the States, Mario's

Tennis is a relatively straightforward update of one of first ever Game Boy titles.

After choosing to play as Mario, Luigi, Princess Daisy, Yoshi, Toad



or Donkey Kong Jr., you take to the court in either a singles or doubles match. Setting up to play is dead simple, with two types of match available – one-off or tournament – and only one type of surface.

In play, A performs a lob and B a standard stroke (fore or backhand, depending on where you're standing in relation to the ball), but it's also possible to perform an overhead smash and even a dinking drop shot if you're close to the net.

The familiar Nintendo characters have been realised



It's a fine little puzzle game is *Panic Bomber*, but you'll finish it in no time at all.

accurately and with good humour – they all waggle their hips as they wait for a serve and show both delight and disgust depending on the outcome of a point.

The game's 3D isn't perhaps as effective as we'd expected – the court looks, well, virtual(ish), but the characters don't quite achieve the same kind of effect.

It's one of the easiest to play tennis games yet, and especially fun in doubles mode, where, having missed the ball from a close-to-the-net position, you just hope your team mate behind you gets to it, never actually knowing what's going on behind you.

If not as enduring as the likes of *Super Tennis* or *Super Family Tennis* on the SNES, *Mario's Tennis* offers bags more character and certainly a feel like no other example.

Tony

Panic Bomber

Hudson Soft

Also, not the 3D version of *Bomberman* with a four-player link-up (can you imagine the scene?) you were maybe hoping for, but a *Puyo Puyo* clone featuring everyone's favourite fuse

fetishist and a host of other characters from *Super Bomberman 3*.

Although you'd be forgiven for thinking that the *Tetris* genre wasn't perhaps the best choice for the virtual treatment, Hudson Soft have done a surprisingly good job here.



While the game itself is still flat, there are plenty of little embellishments and characters floating around and popping out in front of you to liven up the whole shebang. Your opponent, who appears in the middle of the screen, is split up into lots of levels that all move

separately, something akin to watching *Captain Pugwash* live, and even fizzing bombs have sparks that fly out towards you.

The game itself is standard *Puyo* fodder. You have to match up sets of three icons (you can choose from five different sets, ranging from characters to simple shapes) vertically,

horizontally or diagonally and they'll disappear with varying effects – usually it'll be something to do with filling up, or doing something nasty, to your enemy's stack. This often results in unbombable bricks or, sometimes, something special like a little

Bomberman popping up in the foreground, firing a laser into the distance and getting rid of a load of blocks for you.

The problem with *Panic Bomber* is that battling against a host of bizarre adversaries and vaguely horror-themed *Bomberman* until you beat them all should only take you the best part of twenty minutes.

Amazingly, Hudson Soft have even seen fit to include a password at certain points in the proceedings should you find the going a bit too tough, but

that's highly unlikely.

True, this could have been so much better, or at least longer, but it's fun while it lasts and uses the Virtual Boy's 3D to good effect.

Wil



you that you'll get a disorientated feeling – somewhat akin to stepping from a cinema into the daylight, or perhaps leaving the Dog and Duck after spending a lunch hour there.

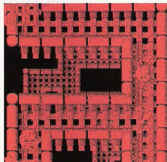
THE FUTURE

The games on their way to the Veebee are a pleasingly varied bunch. If bowling's your bag, Athena's *Virtual Bowling* looks a competent sim, with a full 3D alley. Smaller balls can be found in T&E Soft's *Virtual Golf*, which offers *Daliesque* hoots aplenty, albeit with red greens, obviously.

Straight action games are a bit thinner on the ground. IMAX are working on a game with a realtime *Dungeon Master*-style maze environment, plus there's Atlus' *Jack Bros.* and Hudson Soft's *Vertical Force* (both covered in SP34).



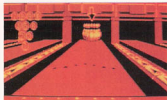
Drooft At Ocean's *Waterworld* – one of the only Western-developed Veebee games on its way.



Gasps! At Atlus' *Jack Bros.*, offering mazes, puzzles and strange goings-on by the wheelbarrowful.



Smile snarmlily! At T&E Soft's *Virtual Golf*, the only golf game in history with red greens.



Get not at all excited! By T&E Soft's *Virtual Bowling*, which offers, yes, 3D ball-on-pin action.



Can you see one of these babies gracing your tabletop?

One game that should sell well is *Mario Clash*. Although similar to the original *Mario Bros.* coin-op

(which dates back to 1983), Nintendo have spruced up the game in the obvious areas – the higher platforms, for example, are further 'into' the screen – and it's nippier than the original. It's an ideal candidate for the link-up treatment, though it's currently not known whether it will be compatible.

Wario's Cruise is the other Mario-related title, and it involves exploring an underground cave network. The action looks predominately platformy, and it plays host to the usual Veebee 3D sprite effects.

THE VERDICT

The most important thing to bear in mind when appraising the Virtual Boy is that it is a gaming system like no other. It's not intended to compete with next generation machines such as the Saturn – nor the Ultra 64 or the SNES, of course – instead, it has created its own market niche.

At this stage, we can't recommend the system to anyone other than the most hardcore videogaming nuts, who grab each and every new system the moment it becomes available (though we know of a few *Super Play* readers who fit into this bracket, and they should get on the horn to their favoured importer right now).

Games are the system's current stumbling block. Even the Game Boy plays host to a library of more sophisticated titles than are currently available for the Veebee, and it looks like being a while before that situation changes.

But the system holds promise, if only because it's a Nintendo product, which means Nintendo software. The potential is incredible – imagine *VB Mario Kart*, with tons of 3D tracks and gas-inducing effects as you breeze past Donkey Kong Jr., or a *VB Metroid*, stuffed with otherworldly aliens in corking 'virtual vision'. Certainly, if and when such games arrive you'll find out about them first in *Super Play*.



Galactic Pinball

Nintendo

Another unsurprising choice for Veebee game subject matter is pinball. The potential of presenting a pinball as you'd see it in real life began to be exploited in *Super Pinball: Behind The Mask* on the SNES, and now, with the 3D technology available, this should be as close to the real thing as possible.

But it isn't. No, *Galactic* suffers from a lack of attention paid to the real thing by its programmers. You see, when the ball is rolling down either of the side channels onto a flipper it doesn't run smoothly, pausing a bit as it blips over the fastest part. This, of course, gives it a horribly foreign feel to anyone who's played pinball (for real or otherwise), and you'll absolutely hate it for it during your first couple of goes – trying to predict what the ball's going to do (half of the skill required in silverball) is a nightmare.

Once you've gotten used to this nuisance, though, it starts to become natural and you concentrate on what else the game has to offer. The four tables – Cosmic, Colony, UFO and Alien – are a pretty varied bunch, one having just two flippers and a wide-open playing area, another will a full four and with lots more going on elsewhere.

Of particular disappointment are the game's bonuses. The completely separate bonus table section which pops up at one point is deathly dull, with no features on offer – the challenge being merely to eliminate groups of swishing stars. One clever bit stands out, though, when, after taking out a group of bumpers on the Cosmic table, Samus Aran's ship from *Super Metroid* pops up in the middle of the screen. You control it left and right with the left D-pad and proceed to take out little waves of alien craft, *Galaxians*-style, to rack up extra points.

All the usual table features are here, with targets, barriers, bonus holes and a tilt feature, but, given the opportunities afforded its designers by the Veebee, *Galactic Pinball* is lacking. Yes, its 3D is efficiently convincing.

5
Tony

Teleroboxer

Nintendo

If you remember those robot boxing ring games – where you and a pal held a pair of handles with thumb-plungers, attempting to punch each other's head off – which were first popular in the '70s, then you'll be at home with *Teleroboxer* in no time.

Presented with what is essentially a tournament deal, you work your way through seven opponents. Each has its



Teleroboxer was one of the first titles announced for the Veebee – it's also one of the most disappointing.



with a handy save game function and no shortage of challenge (in fact, it downright bloody hard work to get to grips with, it's just not the gnar's elbows that a Veebee version of *SPOII* could have been.

6
Tony

Virtual Boy games

Veebee games come in a very Game Boy-ish package. Each is packed in a familiarly styled box, along with brightly designed instruction manuals plus all the bumph familiar to Game Boy-ers.

own special moves and tricks, and, as is the case in *Super Punch Out!!*, learning when to expect them – and how to cope with them when they arrive – is the key to success.

Unlike most boxing games, you don't actually see your fighter on-screen. Instead, the viewpoint assumed is an in-head type thing. For those used to the likes of *Boxing: Legend Of The Ring* this obviously takes a bit of getting used to.

Punches are effected by using both triggers and both D-pads in conjunction, with each side of the joystick being dedicated to an arm. Head jabs, hooks, uppercuts, body blows and rapid punches are available, and picking up exactly what does what and when gets very confusing when you're starting out.

Of the launch titles, *Teleroboxer* probably puts the most effort into looking 3D. Each robotic fighter's body parts lies on its own plane, so that its chest, for example, appears more prominent than its legs. Its and your own swishing fists are when things start to come alive, of course, and the Veebee's unique technology is shown off to the full.

Packed with neat presentation, it's an entertaining little game, with a handy save game function and no shortage of challenge (in fact, it downright bloody hard work to get to grips with, it's just not the gnar's elbows that a Veebee version of *SPOII* could have been.

6
Tony



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