

It's here! The Nintendo 64 finally makes its U.S. debut!

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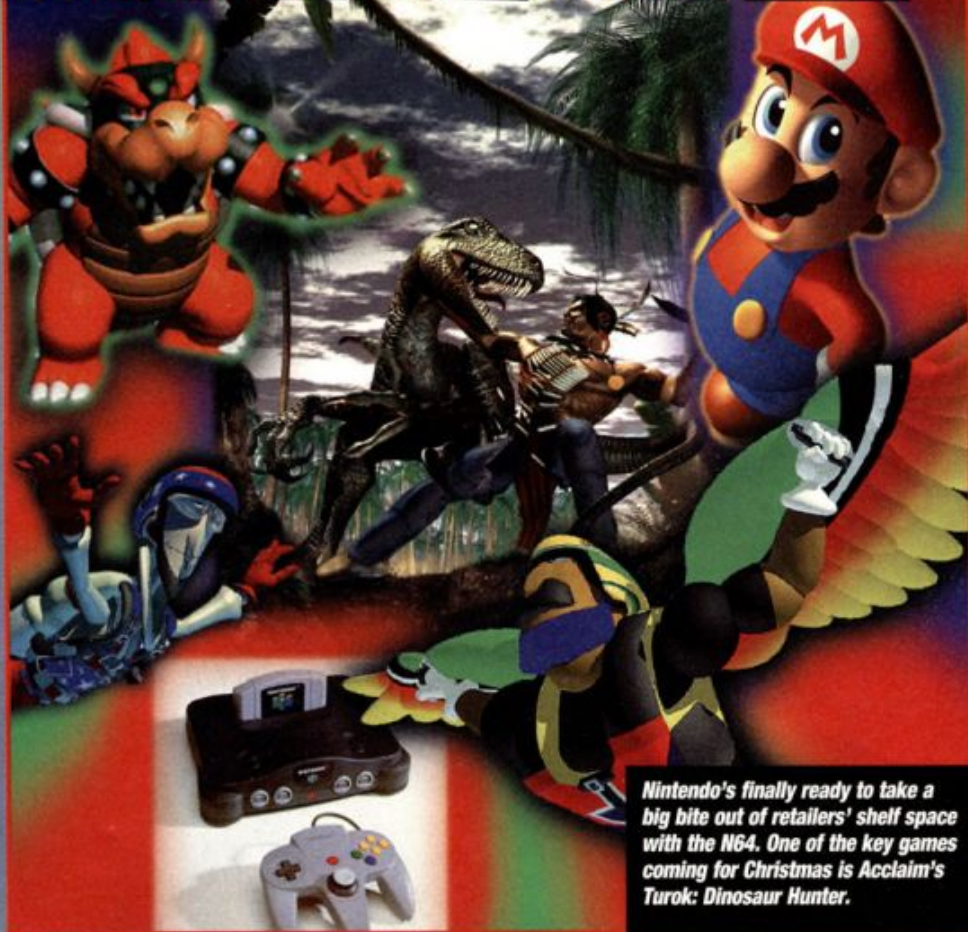
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It's Heeeeeere!

THE NINTENDO 64 FINALLY MAKES ITS U.S. DEBUT.

After years of promises and delays, the Nintendo 64 finally makes its North American debut on September 30. Record sales in Japan, a waiting list of pre-orders in the U.S., and one of the biggest marketing blitzes in history ensure that the new system will get off to a running start. For Nintendo, the future's so bright, it's gotta wear shades!

That bright future contrasts with the N64's murky past. Nintendo has a hit-and-miss record as far as promises for the N64 go. At least Nintendo got the price right: As promised 1,134 days ago, the



Nintendo's finally ready to take a big bite out of retailers' shelf space with the N64. One of the key games coming for Christmas is Acclaim's *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*.

price is indeed under \$250 (at \$199.95, it's under by fifty bucks). But Nintendo got the pack-in game wrong: Despite rumors that Super Mario 64 or Pilotwings 64 would come with the system, there is no

pack-in game, so having a great new game to play on your \$200 system will cost you an extra \$69.95 (Mario's suggested retail price).

Even worse is the paucity of launch titles. As recently as

four months ago Nintendo claimed seven games would be ready on September 30: Super Mario 64, Pilotwings 64, WaveRace 64, Body Harvest, TetrisPhear, Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire, and

To Buy or Not To Buy

We asked our editors this question: Given the facts about the N64 launch (\$200 price, no pack-in, only three \$70 games available), should gamers buy the system now, should they wait to buy it, or should they buy a different system? Here are their answers.

Air Hendrix: "Definitely buy one now, if money is no object; but if you have a PlayStation and don't mind waiting, patience now may pay off later."

Black Widow: "Mario 64 is amazing, and the games slated for year-end release are solid. If you can afford it, it's worth being the first one on your block to have an N64."

Bro' Buzz: "Buy one as soon as you can, because there are great games coming and there'll be a mad rush for the system at Christmas."

Bruised Lee: "Buy it, because we've waited five years for a true sequel to Super Mario World; if you loved that game, you'll love Super Mario 64."

Captain Cameron: "Buy it now. You don't want to miss out on the biggest thing Nintendo's done since they launched the SNES five years ago."

Scary Larry: "You might not be able to get an N64 for months, so get one now if you can; the first dozen N64 games will be worth your whole PlayStation library."

Cruis'n USA. Actually, only Mario, Pilotwings, and possibly Cruis'n are debuting with the system.

Still, the system has had the whole video game world buzzing since its debut at the Japanese Shoshinkai show last November. It's also the system that's received the most pre-release exposure: the N64 and its games have been on more magazine covers in 1996 than Cindy Crawford. *GamePro* itself has featured the N64 prominently on five covers (March '95, June '95, March '96, September '96, and October '96). Not bad for a system that only came out within the last month.

The Tale of the Sale

The easiest way to predict how successful the Nintendo 64's U.S. launch will be is to examine the system's Japanese launch. The Japanese system and the U.S. system aren't compatible, but the sales fig-



The launch lineup: Pilotwings, Super Mario 64, and maybe Cruis'n USA

ures should be comparable. When the N64 came out in Japan on June 23, it was basically not buyable. That's because virtually every one of the 300,000 units released that day had already been sold via pre-orders. The few stores that did have unreserved N64s to sell were greeted that first morning by long lines of eager gamers who had camped out overnight. Unreserved systems sold out within minutes. Ultimately, all 300,000 systems sold out the very first day they became available.

Nintendo made another 200,000 available later in the week, but those were also gobbled up by pre-orders.

Thus, of the 500,000 units sold in Japan within the first week, virtually none ever made it to a store shelf. Ultimately, Nintendo sold 1.5 million units during the three months of summer.

Similar numbers are expected in the U.S. Nintendo plans a gradual rollout of 500,000 units across the

country from September 30 through to the holidays. This three-month allocation of a fixed number of systems should help sustain interest; at least that's Nintendo's hope. Come January 1997, another 500,000 systems will be trickled out through to March. Basically, Nintendo will be selling a half-million systems every three months. If the lessons from Japan apply in the U.S., there will be far more buyers than there will be systems for the first months. ■



Let the Games Begin!

Here are the latest scheduled release dates for Nintendo 64 games. Note that Sierra On-Line's Red Baron is no longer coming to the N64, some new titles have been added, and some of the long-awaited titles have shifted around on the schedule to leave a big hole in October.

All info is subject to change, unfortunately. An * denotes a new release date or a revised title.

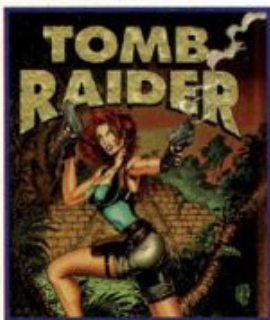
Expected Date	Title	Developer
September 30	Cruis'n USA—tentative	Williams
September 30	Pilotwings 64	Nintendo
September 30	Super Mario 64	Nintendo
November	Blast Corps	Rare
*November	Killer Instinct 64	Rare
*November	Mortal Kombat Trilogy	Williams
*November	NBA Hang Time	Williams
*November	TetrisPhear	Nintendo
*November	WaveRace 64	Nintendo
November	Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey	Williams
*December	Body Harvest	DMA Designs
December	Buggie Boogie	Angel Studios
December	GoldenEye 007	Rare
December	Ken Griffey Jr. Baseball	Nintendo
December	Kirby's Air Ride	HAL Studios
December	Monster Dunk	Mindscape
December	Shadows of the Empire	LucasArts
*December	Star Fox 64	Nintendo
*December	Super Mario Kart R	Nintendo
December	Turok: Dinosaur Hunter	Acclaim
*January '97	Robotech: Crystal Dreams	GameTek
*January '97	War Gods	Williams
February '97	Freak Boy	Virgin
*March '97	Mission: Impossible	Ocean
April '97	Doom 64	Williams
*April '97	FIFA Soccer '97	EA Sports

Mid-1997 and beyond:

Clay Fighter 3 (Nintendo)	Top Gear Rally (Kemco)
Creator (Nintendo)	*Ultra Combat—working title (GT Interactive)
*Dark Rift (Vic Tokai)	Ultra Descent (Interplay)
*DragonQuest (Enix)	Untitled golf game (Seta)
*Duke Nukem—tentative (GT Interactive)	Untitled rally racing game (Seta)
*Hexen—tentative (GT Interactive)	Untitled RPG (Natsume)
Robotron X (Williams)	*Untitled sports game in 1998 (BMG Interactive)
Silicon Valley in 1998 (BMG Interactive)	Untitled vertical shooter (Seta)
Super Mario RPG 64 (Nintendo)	Vegas Slots (Seta)

Sony's and Sega's Strategies

So how are Sony and Sega countering the N64 juggernaut? By touting the one thing Nintendo can't yet offer: a large number of games.



Sony's throwing more than 100 new PlayStation titles into the ring this year. After the resounding spring success of Resident Evil, Crash Bandicoot and Final Doom are ready to dominate the holidays. Other top games include Tomb Raider (shown here), Twisted Metal 2, and Duke Nukem 3D.



Sega doesn't have as many prospective titles as Sony, but it'll still have more out this year than Nintendo. Exclusive arcade conversions like Virtua Cop 2 and Virtua Fighter 3, plus the Saturn's first Sonic game (Sonic X-Treme), lead the charge. An Internet connection via the new Net Link (shown here) and a well-received analog controller for Nights could also steal some of Nintendo's thunder.