

Land of the rising fun

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The Nintendo 64 comes from Japan, as do most of its best games. But Japanese games developers are an intensely secretive bunch of fellows. N64 Magazine penetrates their keypad-secured steel doors.

LAND OF THE RISING FUN

by Mark Ramshaw

inside Japan's games industry

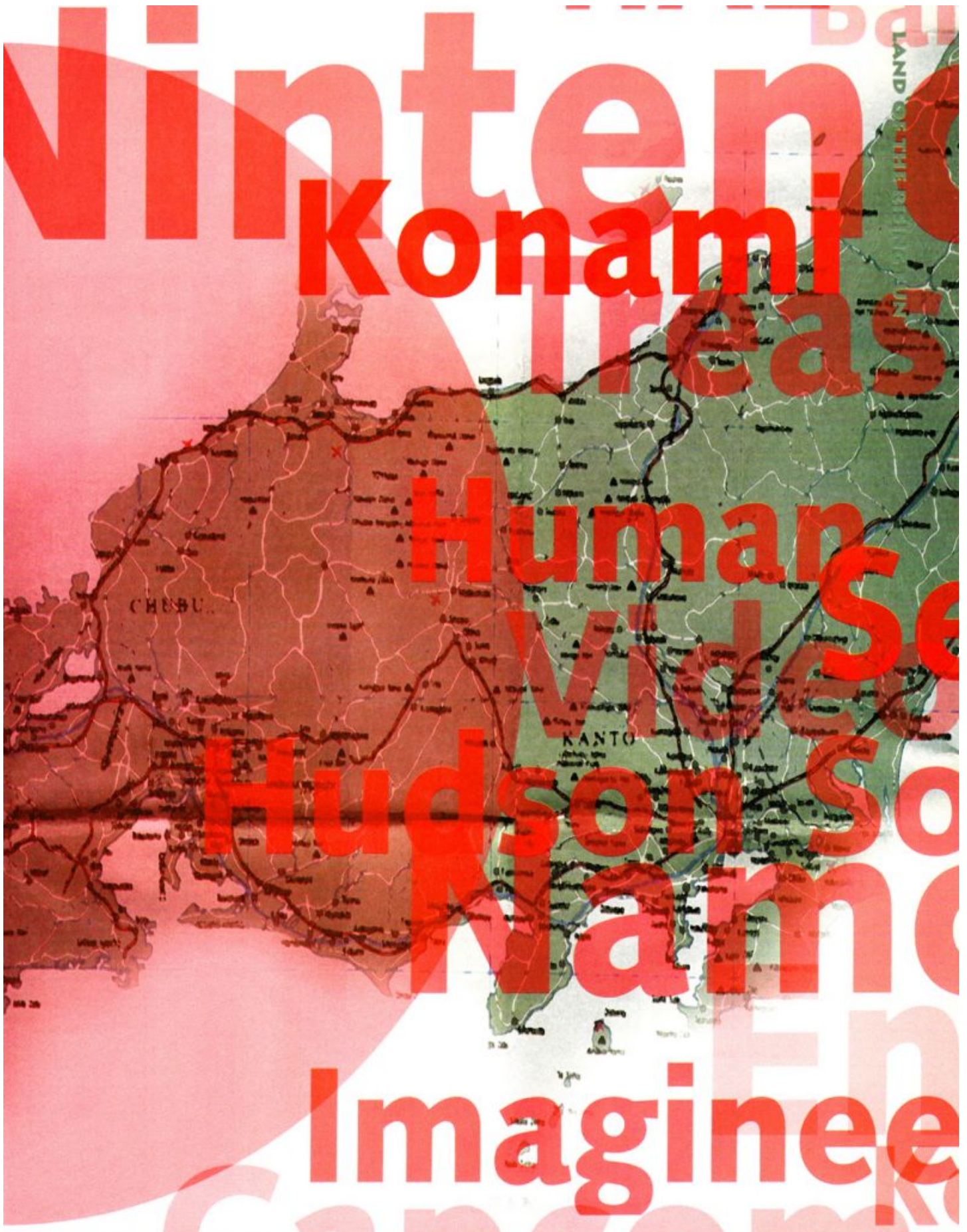
Japan is responsible for most of the N64 games we enjoy best here in the West. And yet it's governed by radically different market forces and influenced by a culture wholly different from our own. As a result, its developers design and code games in a very different way to their British and American counterparts.

From the early days, when Nintendo attempted to emulate the game styles of the US console and coin-op manufacturers, the company has been instrumental in creating a new breed of video gaming. Mario creator Shigeru Miyamoto has paved the way for a far more imaginative, irreverent and immersive style of gaming that's now evident in so many games that emerge from the

Far East, be they from Nintendo or independent developers like Hudsonsoft and Konami. It's ironic, really, given that traditional Japanese culture looks down on frivolous leisure time.

Just as Japanese developers can take much of the credit for the popularity of the original NES and the SNES, so the success of the Nintendo 64 will be due, for the most part, to the labours of love emerging from these creative hotbeds. Join us as we cast a beady eye over the Japanese games industry, taking in the past glories, current activities and potential of every single one of these developers, from Nintendo itself right down to newcomers such as Treasure, and even those yet to officially admit they're working on N64 games.







Nintendo and Japan

The story so far

From its humble beginnings, the Japanese games industry has been created to Nintendo's design. It was Nintendo that saw a fresh market there for the taking, first in the coin-op arena, and then again in the home console market, with its NES (or Famicom) machine, in 1983. By this time several home entertainment systems were available, including the Intellivision and the MSX, but it was Atari's 2600 that had become the dominant format. A surplus of titles, nearly all of poor quality, was soon to kill off the Atari, however, allowing Nintendo to step in.

Even then, NCL president Hiroshi Yamauchi realised that a cheap system not only brought bigger sales, but made the main unit secondary to the software. So it made brilliant business sense for Nintendo to initiate a licensing program that enabled the company to exercise complete control of NES cartridges, taking a royalty cut of around 20 percent on every third party title. Namco and Hudson were the first to sign up, with Konami and Capcom following soon after. These privileged developers were initially allowed to produce the cartridges themselves, but it wasn't long before Nintendo removed that right. All production, it was decided, would be handled solely by Nintendo.

Yamauchi even structured the licence so developers had to order a minimum of 10,000 cartridges with payment required upfront. This meant that even if a title didn't sell, Nintendo would still make a profit on the deal. While such practices

incensed third parties, they had no option but to sign up if they wanted to jump on the NES bandwagon. Cartridge rationing (during the chip shortages of the late '80s) and even a limit on the number of games any developer could release in a year were all eventually added to the already restrictive contract.

Sega's success with the Megadrive/Genesis system came as a genuine surprise to Nintendo, so some ground was lost before the arrival of the 16-bit SNES. This meant that Nintendo had a harder time gaining the lion's share of the market (although 2 million SNESes were sold in Japan in the first six months alone), and consequently had to loosen the stranglehold on developers. Most NES developers signed up again to work on SNES software, this time without the restrictions on developing for other systems, and sometimes even with the freedom to manufacture their own cartridges.

Although Japanese-centric games based on Go, Pachinko and other Eastern pastimes were already popular on the NES, it was with the arrival of the SNES that the differences between Japanese and Western games became most pronounced. The improved graphics capabilities of the machine gave rise to lots of anime-influenced games, many family-orientated titles (using cute graphics, female characters), and a plethora of near-impenetrable role-playing or adventure games. Indeed, although the RPG concept was introduced to Japan by a Westerner, they have become the dominant style over

there, exploration-based gaming appealing to the Japanese more than the violent designs European and Americans come up with.

Now, not only does Nintendo face competition – faltering though it is – from Sega's Saturn, but there's also the threat posed by Sony. While the Japanese electronics giant was once an ally – producing the sound chip in the SNES and even working for a while on a SNES-compatible CD-based console – its PlayStation is now the N64's biggest competitor. But while Sony's policy of saturating the market with games has ensured strong sales of its system, Nintendo's more selective release policy has already given its machine the upper hand in terms of quality.

The gulf between Eastern and Western games styles looks set to continue with the N64. Already there are a great many oddities in Nintendo's Japanese release schedule, games that will never see the light of day in Europe or America. Granted, some won't make it over because Nintendo of America tends to pick only the better titles from its mother company's line-up, but most won't make it because horse-racing, mah jong and weird anime adventures haven't got a hope in hell of crossing the cultural barrier. But alongside such oddities, there are some incredibly inventive titles under development, with graphical and gameplay styles that could only ever originate in Japan.

Time to see what Japan's N64 development community has up its rather baggy collective sleeve, then.



JAPAN

The Developers

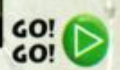
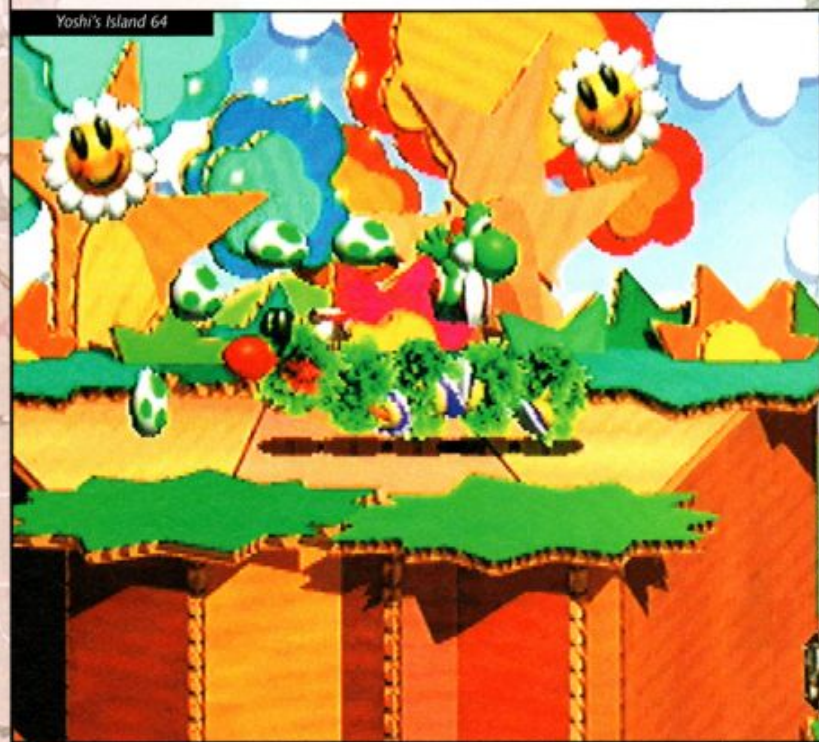
Nintendo

The big cheese, home of the Mother Brain (that's Hiroshi Yamauchi to you and me), and employer of the best games designer in the world, Nintendo has a reputation for quality software that remains high above that of even its best third-party licences. Aside from a few notable exceptions – *Donkey Kong Country*, *Tetris*, *Starfox* (although that was a sort of halfway affair, with UK based Argonaut providing the 3D engine and NCL adding everything else) – the very best games for Nintendo systems have always come from Nintendo itself. Having already established supremacy with *Super Mario 64*, *Mario Kart 64* and *Wave Race 64*, the challenge is now to maintain the lead, showing the way and setting the standard for other developers to aspire to.

Much of this responsibility falls on Shigeru Miyamoto's shoulders, as he oversees key titles such as *Starfox 64* and the mammoth *Legend Of Zelda 64*, now looking set for a standard cart release prior to a 64DD incarnation. And the buzz is already building on the next Mario outing: *Super Mario RPG 2* (also for the 64DD), which will hopefully prove somewhat more expansive than the original inventive-but-shortlived Square-penned SNES version. There's also the promise of a *Mario Paint* on DD next year, though the shamelessly 2D *Yoshi's Island 64* should appease Mario fans well before that. No word on a new *Metroid* adventure yet – the team are still hard at work on *Pocket Monsters 2* on the Game Boy – but lots of other games – from *Sim City* to *Tetris* – are getting a revamp for their N64 outings. The second of these will be released as *Tetrisphere*,

although it's actually being coded by US programming outfit H2O. There's also a new *F-Zero* game in the pipeline, even if *Wave Race* did swim in vaguely similar, er, waters. *Kirby's Air Ride* seems to be back on schedule, with a release in Japan as early as this summer being talked about. And there's also the mysterious *Climber*, *Buggie Boogie* (developed by graphics house Angel and strangely quiet of late), 64DD design package *Creator* (actually written by Brits Software Creations), and eventually *Pocket Monster 64DD*. Finally (for the moment at least) there's *Jungle Emperor Leo*, produced in tandem with animation house Tezuka Production (studio of the late Osamu Tezuka, creator of *Astro Boy*), and another collaboration with Rare called *Dream*. Not much about *Dream* is known beyond the title, other than NOA chairman Howard Lincoln's

claim that it'll do for the N64 what *Donkey Kong Country* did for the SNES (and we'll have much more in a couple of issues time). But Leo (or Kimba if you ever caught the Westernised version) is far more important than you might realise. The adventures of the little white lion cub were recently in the news when Disney's *The Lion King* came suspiciously close to duplicating the 25-year-old anime's storyline. Not that important, you may think, but when you realise the enormous popularity of the cub's adventures in Japan, you begin to realise the sort of mega-hit Nintendo would have on their hands if they got it right. Needless to say, Miyamoto is again on the case. What with two *Zelda* games, updates to SNES favourites and some top secret projects on the go, you can't help but be comforted by Nintendo's future plans.



Konami

Nintendo developers tend to fall into one of three categories: companies originally set up to publish NES or SNES games, multi-interest companies keen to get a finger in the huge video game pie, and existing names in the world of coin-ops.

Kobe-based Konami is one of the latter. Having started up in 1973 it found its first real success with arcade machines such as *Scramble*, *Frogger* and *Super Cobra* as well as in the hand-held game market. As with many others, it was a deal with Nintendo that led to real profit, sales increasing from \$10 million in 1987, prior to the release of first NES offering *Gradius*, to \$300 million just five years later. Much of this can be attributed to Western licence *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, the first game selling 4 million copies alone. Troubled times just a couple of years back now seem to have been overcome, with the Japanese HQ and the Chicago offices now focusing on the next generation consoles, particularly the N64.

The Japanese-centric *Mah Jong*



Dracula 3D



Ganbare Goemon 5

Master has already seen the light of day in Japan, along with top hit *Power Pro Baseball 4* and the brilliant *J-League Perfect Striker*, now getting an official UK airing under the *International Superstar Soccer 64* title. Now they've revealed the highly anticipated *Dracula 3D* (which will no doubt end up over here as *Castlevania 64*), an update of the classic SNES formula that's still some way off, along with a new *Hyper Olympics* game. *Final Round 64* and 3D fighter *Battle Dancers* are also scheduled for release in Japan this year, but it's *Ganbare Goemon 5* which is really turning heads. (There're pics on p23.) It's another updated SNES favourite and takes on *Mario* head-on with a full 3D 16th



J-League Perfect Striker

Mah Jong Master

century Japanese setting to play in.

Konami's general manager Nagata Akihiko has previously indicated that games using traditional Japanese characters such as *Goemon* and *Parodius* are unlikely to make it to Europe (even though he's been wrong with both the aforementioned titles), but the guys at Konami UK are adamant that if *Goemon* comes up to scratch they'll fight for its release over here.

What else can we look forward to from Konami? More updates of

classic titles! Watch out for announcements on *Twin Bee*, *Parodius*, *Gradius*, *Contra* and even an N64 version of recent RPG release *Suikoden*!

Enix

Established in 1975, Enix has publishing and novelty toy interests in addition to its video game history – hence a staff of nearly 150 and an annual turnover of around 33 billion yen (£170 million). It's Yuji Horii's *Dragon Quest* games (the first of which appeared on the NES in 1987) which have gained most attention – the *Dragon Quest* merchandising machine could keep Enix going indefinitely.

Sadly, after *Dragon Quest VI* (and the updated *III*) on the SNES, Enix has turned its attentions to the PlayStation for the seventh instalment. Nintendo's new machine is to receive support, but there are no plans at the moment to bring the



Wonder Project J2

Dragon Quest series back where it belongs. Instead, we've had to make do with the interesting but flawed *Wonder Project J2*. Not to worry, though: Enix plans to bring more games to N64 by taking on board and publishing third-party games. The first fruit of this decision is *Treasure's Go Go!! Troublemakers*, which hits Japanese stores at the end of June.

Koei

SNES fans will remember Koei as a developer who specialise in not-very-dynamic wargames, RPGs and strategy simulations like *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Yet Koei actually employ over

500 people worldwide, and rake in something like \$150 million a year. Which explains why they've been given an N64 licence. Their strategy-minded development team have only come up with *Mah Jong 64* so far. Historical wargames will follow.

Bandai

Best known over here for *Power Ranger* toys, this now-global company actually handled Nintendo's UK distribution for a couple of years at the start of the decade, as well as overseeing the Stateside distribution of early NCL products in the '70s. Bandai now pulls in around \$1.2 billion a year, with interests in every area from electronics to TV shows to toiletries to being half of Sega!

As for their N64 plans, there's been no word on any games licensed from the *Power Rangers* (and, if there is, you can expect it to be a hideous American game rather than one based on the original

Japanese TV sentai series that *Rangers* was derived from) or any of their other properties. Instead, gamers can expect *Lode Runner 64*, an update of a legendary but very old platform game from the '80s. The original featured little more than platforms, ladders, and the ability to dig holes, so which direction the update will be taken in is anybody's guess. (Er, 3D? – Ed)

Top anime mecha SLG *Super Robot Spirits* is to follow, published under their Banpresto banner, and don't discount the possibility of games based on *Dragon Ball Z* and *Sailor Moon* at some point, either. Don't know what Sega will make of it all, mind.

Epoch

Having failed to do anything particularly interesting with the famous (he's been popular in Japan since just after *World War Two*) *Doraemon* character in any of his various SNES outings, Epoch are back out of hiding to bring the propeller-headed blue cat to the N64.

But the N64's *Doraemon* game

is similarly vacuous, except with *Mario 64* style viewpoints with which to admire the odd cartoon fella and his magical pockets.



Doraemon

Namco

What began life as a company devoted to operating rocking-horse rides on the roof of a department store in Yokohama flourished as a coin-op manufacturer, with legendary titles such as *Pac Man* (which translates as *Eat Man*, fact fans) and *Xevious*, gaining further weight when it became one of the first two Nintendo licencees.

Since then Namco has published a whole slew of NES and SNES titles, although NCL's decision to remove their special developer status soon after the initial agreement was made started a feud between Hiroshi Yamauchi and Namco head Masaya Nakamura that's never really been resolved. There's no doubt that this is one of the reasons why Namco allied so closely with Sony when the PlayStation was launched. The arrival

of the N64 has brought the two Japanese giants together again, with *World Stadium Baseball 64* and supposedly an RPG (although probably not the rumoured *Tales Of Phantasia 64*) both in line for release this year. It's doubtful that we'll see N64 versions of top fighters *Tekken* and *Soul Edge* or the classy car acts *Ridge* and *Rage Racer*, but don't rule out further *Pac Man* adventures. Mark our words.

Hudson Soft

With Namco, Hudson started the third party licence ball rolling with Nintendo, committing to the NES format way back in 1984. Prior to that, Hudson actually worked on Spectrum software, releasing the immortal *Stop The Express* and even a forerunner of *Pang*, the perennial balloon-busting fave. The switch proved to be a wise move – their first NES effort *Roadrunner* selling over a million copies, whereas sales for its computer software version were around 10,000.

It's *Bomberman* that the quietly-brilliant developers are best known for, though, many citing it as the world's greatest multi-player game (not something we're about to dispute – you've not heard cursing until you've been involved in a heated *HJ-Ten* session). There have now been five versions released on the SNES, never really deviating from that original formula too much. All that's about to change with *Bomberman 64*, however, which does more than give the game a new lick of paint. The whole thing has been reworked to feature a solid 3D environment, although Hudson stress that the principle will be the same: to blow up opponents using bombs, environment quirks and a big box of power-ups. Needless to say, this has the potential to be ranked up there with *Mario Kart 64* as a multi-player classic.

Interestingly, a role-playing



Baku Bomberman

version has also been mooted, as has the possibility of a multi-player option that goes beyond the regular four N64 slots, with eight, possibly even ten humans fighting it out on one machine at once, as in the Saturn version. "A multitap for the N64 is a possibility," a Hudson spokesman admits. "Remember, we created a multitap before for the Super NES, and look what happened as a result." Quite.

Hudson is also doing its bit for beat-'em-ups with *Dual Heroes*. Incredibly, this is the first 3D beat-'em-up announced for the N64, though with Hudson's trademark slick design, some terrific polygon characters and the promise of spectacularly advanced opponent AI routines, it could well become the benchmark. And that still leaves two sports titles – *Power League 64* (a baseball game) and *Soccer 64* – as well as unknown quantity *Taiken*



Dual Heroes

Road: Brave Spirits (sounds suspiciously like a platform beat-'em-up to us) and plain unknown *Kindaichi Shonen No Jikenbo* (*File of a Boy Named Kindaichi*). A busy and very probably award-winning time for one of Japan's best loved developers, then. Now, if only somebody could convince them to do a 3D update of *PC Kid*.

most promising, with some amazing scenery and a split-screen mode already in place. But, while *Blade and Barrel* can't boast similarly exciting visuals, it does promise some *Blast Corps*-style destruction. Which suits us, er, down to the ground.

Bottom Up

Fittingly named *Bottom Up* are the developers behind *64 Ozumo*, the Sumo wrestling game premiered on N64 issue 1's video.

Which is probably all you need or want to know, really, given the limited nature of the sport and the fact that not one computer simulation of it has ever been remotely playable. (Well, there was that Sumo segment in *Epyx's Winter Games*. – Wil)



Tecmo

Tecmo were responsible for *Ninja Gaiden Trilogy* and the many incarnations of Japanese football

management game *Captain Tsubasu*, but it was *Tecmo Super Bowl* which really got SNES owners going. Some corners of the World Wide Web still devote far too much time and space to promoting this cult sports series.

Which is undoubtedly why work is already underway on *Tecmo Super Bowl 64*. Bigger news for the likes of us is that 3D fighter *Dead or Alive* seems to be making its way to the N64 – famous for its female character's pneumatic breasts, if nothing else. Nice, if you like that sort of thing.

ASCII

Europeans may be unfamiliar with ASCII – a SNES conversion of old Amiga classic *Spindizzy Worlds* and truly appalling versions of the *Dungeon Master* clone *Wizardry* are all you might have seen of them.

At the moment they're having great success on the ailing Super Famicom (the Japanese name for the SNES) in Japan, with a seemingly never ending array of RPGs and the mega hit *Mini 4-Wheel Drive Shipping Scorpion*. Rumours abound that *Derby Stallion 64* for the 64DD will be their first N64 project, and while that may not sound all that exciting to us, it's certain to make a very big splash in Japan.

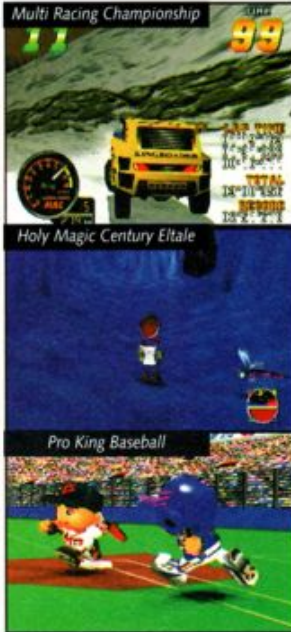
GO!
GO!

Imagineer

Previously Imagineer seem to have made a comfortable living handling SNES conversions of popular computer titles, such as god sims *Populous*, *Mega Lo Mania*, *Powemonger*, *Sim Earth* and *Sim Ant*, as well as *Wolfenstein 3D*.

Their N64 line-up is a very different kettle of carts, however, with the amiable *Pro Baseball King* already available in Japan, *J-League Dynamite Soccer* due there soon, and *Multi-Racing Championship* coming to the UK very soon via Ocean (check out pgs6-9). *Sega Rally* is the template for this one, with some lovely looking off-road sections and good use of translucency for smoke effects. It's also likely to be the first of the serious 3D road racing games to make it to the UK, which will undoubtedly give it an advantage over *Top Gear Rally* and *Rev Limit*. Equally promising is *Holy Magic Century Eltale* (known in the West as *Crystal Stories*), which with a name like that could only be an RPG. Echoing the now familiar *Mario 3D* style, it promises all the usual role-playing staples – inns, weapon shops, spooky forests and turn-based combat. Given those

enticing visuals and the lack of RPGs on the N64 its likely to do very well, in Japan at least. That leaves just *Reason*, which in time-honoured Japanese secrecy fashion, nobody has yet seen anything on.



Vic Tokai

Nintendo's decision to grant Vic Tokai an N64 licence surprised many, particularly given that its previous efforts, including recent forays on the PC and Saturn, have never been that great.

But *Dark Rift*, under

development in the US, does look quite impressive, with good use of the machine's translucency effects and combat moves that allow for projectile attacks. Quite what sort of game lies behind the title of Tokai's other N64 game, *Wet Corpse*, is, as they say, anybody's guess.

Video System

One of the lesser known Japanese outfits, Video System is the name behind SNES titles *F1 Grand Prix* and *Super Volley 2* (which we seem to remember being rather fond of).

With *Sonic Wings Assault*, however, the company have actually got *Pilotwings 64* authors Paradigm handling the coding, so needless to say it's shaping up rather well. Despite the use of flight sim style visuals, *Sonic Wings* looks to be a fairly arcade-minded blast, with American and Soviet fighters battling it out over impressively textured



fields and solid looking cities. Something called *XSW-1* is also currently under development, as well as an as yet unnamed 3D shooting game and the obligatory weird Japanese board game translation, *Honkaku Yonin Uchi Mah Jong*.

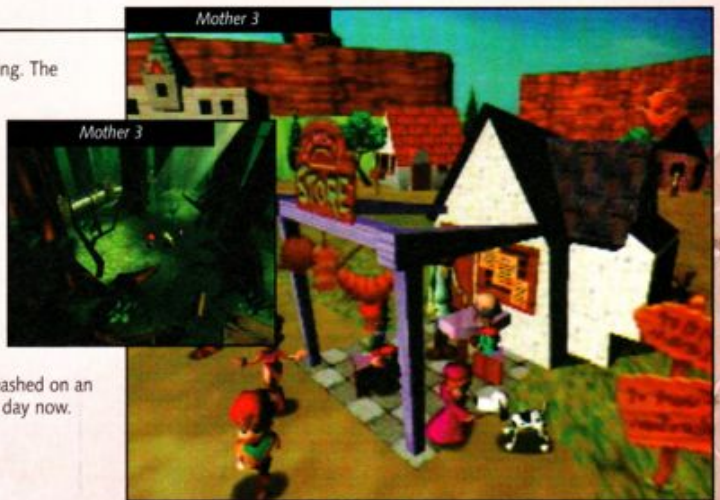
HAL Laboratories

Having carved a formidable reputation with the *Kirby* games, HAL is known to have at least three N64 titles in the works.

Fishing will definitely only make it over to Europe on import (*Boo!* – Wii), while *Mother 3* is already gaining a reputation as one of the most important Nintendo titles, helping plug that RPG hole as well as being the first scheduled 64DD release. As with the previous *Mother* games for the NES and SNES, it's the creation of Shigesato Itoi, though this time he's dropped the second game's '50s American feel in favour of a

more sinister fantasy setting. The combat sequences are still reportedly turn-based.

Itoi is also the man behind *Cabbage* (working title), which apparently builds on the computer pet idea first seen in '80s computer game *Little Computer People*, and recently popularised by Bandai's Tamagotchi toys which are to be unleashed on an unsuspecting Europe any day now. You have been warned.



T&E Soft

One of the less prolific developers to make the jump from SNES, T&E is best known for *Pebble Beach Golf Links*, and so not entirely surprisingly is working on an N64 version. Which means a whole new generation of golf fans can get confused about the concept of a

Japanese company working on a simulation based around an American course. (Hey, why not. It worked for *Seta* and *St Andrews*.)

No word yet on whether the *Waialae Country Club* and *Augusta Golf* games are to follow, but T&E still has the opportunity to wow us with *Cu-On-Pa*.

This is another slightly confusing effort, in that it's based on a game already released for the PC in Europe called *Endorfun*. It works like some weird blend of Rubik's Cube, Twister, and Checkers (look, just run with this one), with players flipping a multi-coloured cube, attempting to match the sides up with similarly coloured

blocks on the playing area underneath. This was originally slated to appear soon after the Japanese N64 launch, but umpteenth delays and the unexpected appearance of a perfectly acceptable SNES version lead us to think we might never see it. No doubt they'll sort something out soon.

Treasure

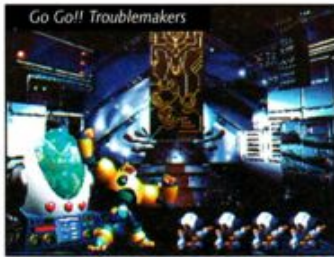
Formed some five years ago by a bunch of ex-Konami coders, the Treasure crew immediately set about applying the experience gained working on titles like *Contra Spirits* to produce highly individual games for Sega's Mega Drive.

Gunstar Heroes set the trend, with super-fast sideways scrolling, brilliantly inventive multi-part bosses and moments surreal even by Japanese standards. Several other Mega Drive hits followed, including *Dynamite Headdy*, before the decision was made to work on software for Nintendo's new machine, with programming commencing even before the machine's chipset was finalised. Bet that was tricky.

Go Go!! Troublemakers (to be released via Enix) is the result, a game which mirrors the 2D game style of those early Sega hits, but adds a

thoroughly 64-bit coat of gloss and a game style which complicates matters by not letting you shoot anything!

Taking weirdness one step further, players get to control Marina, a female robot, as she travels to Nendoro in a bid to rescue Professor Gumbel. Needless to say, plenty of fast-scrolling, dayglo action ensues and you'd be mad not to check out our Future Look on pages 10 to 11.



Human

Although *Human Grand Prix* was highly rated by SNES players, its N64 incarnation is unlikely to gain the none-too-prolific developer much favour.

The Japanese version doesn't look that much better than the SNES game, the track detail is completely lacking in subtlety, and the audio comes off even worse than the graphics. There are fog and rain effects, as well as the ability to adjust tire types, fuel levels, and car aerodynamics, and it's generally quite good fun to play,

but *F1* on the PlayStation is regrettably much better. But there's still time for Ubi Soft to work some magic on it before it appears in the West as *F1 Pole Position* later in the year. While there's also *Human Wrestling* to look forward to, we're secretly hoping for a N64 version of *The Firemen*.



And there's more (maybe)

The current list of N64 developers is notable for the absence of one or two important names. While Capcom's *Street Fighter 2* was crucial in establishing the SNES, the company has yet to officially announce any 64-bit titles. That's not to say Capcom's coders aren't working on any, though. A 3D version of *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts* has already been seen up-and-running, and only a few months ago Capcom's Akio Sakai told a journalist, "Do not rule out the possibility of us converting games like *X-Men* and *Resident Evil*." Add the potential for conversions of *Street Fighter Alpha*, *Street Fighter III*, *Marvel Super Heroes Collection*, *Dark Stalkers: Vampire Saviour* and even a *Rockman* (Mega Man) title, and it can't be long before the respected Japanese developer officially pledges support for the N64.

And then there's Square, another producer of sizeable SNES hits that has so far failed to announce any Nintendo-related plans. Their decision to produce *Final Fantasy VII* for the PlayStation (up until then every *FF* game had been on a Nintendo system) has caused Nintendo more harm than they'd care to admit. It hasn't helped that, while other sequels to famous Square SNES games like *Front Mission* and *Romancing SaGa* are also set to appear on Sony's console, the N64 hasn't had the merest whiff that Square magic touch. Unfortunately you shouldn't expect to see much until the 64DD has proved itself but take solace in the fact that they haven't announced either *Chrono Trigger 2* or *Seiken Densetsu 4* (*Secret of Mana 3*) yet.

Taito is another developer notable for its absence on the N64 developer list. Updates of the *Bubble Bobble* games, *Chase HQ*, maybe even *Darius* would all be quite welcome. (Well, maybe not *Darius*.) Similarly, IREM's *R-Type* series could be given the 3D treatment, but there's been no word yet. *Fatal Fury* and *Art of Fighting* creators Takara are perhaps one developer whose absence nobody will mind, while Bulletproof Software, purveyors of countless *Tetris*-based puzzlers, seem to have all but disappeared. Which leaves just a few small Japanese developers in limbo, including Electro Brain, Sofel, Jaleco, Toei, Datam Polystar, and er, Chunsoft. Nothing to give the guys at Nintendo, Hudson and Konami too many sleepless nights, then.

Lest we forget...

More weird Japanese N64 stuff in the form of *Hiryu no Ken 64* from Culture Brain (who gave the SNES world *Golden Fighter*, *Ultimate Fighter* and top squid boss RPG *First Queen*), *Pro Mah Jong* by Athena (anyone remember their SNES shoot-'em-up *Bio Metal?*), *Super Double Yakuman* from Vap, *Cavalry Battle 3000* from Japan Supply System, Asmik's wrestling game *Ultra Battle Royale*, and - deep breath - *Jissen Pachis-Slo Hissyouhou* by Sammy Kougyou. Obscure and no doubt very Japanese, the lot of them. **N64**

Seta

Known to SNES gamers for *F1 Exhaust Heat*, *F1 Exhaust Heat 2* and not much else, Seta's prominence in the N64 release list is rather surprising.

The less than saintly *The Glory Of St Andrew's* you already know about (if not, check out our review in issue 1), but that still leaves another six games to keep an eye out for. Inevitably there's a car game, in the form of *Rev Limit*, which thankfully looks more

promising than their racing titles of yesteryear (although an early version did seem to suffer from frame-rate problems). *Wild Choppers* sports some impressive visuals, too, taking an action-orientated approach to helicopter combat, but using some beautifully crisp ground detail to depict the low-level carnage. Rather unusually for an N64 game, it also uses a fogging effect to draw distant 3D detail. At the other end of the gaming spectrum there's the

Japanese chess game *Saikyo Habu Shogi*, and *Ikazuchi no Goto Ku*, a straight implementation of Chinese chess.

Finally, still under wraps are *Marti Shogi 64* and *Super Real Island*, the latter being, in all likelihood, some kind of platform game (or are we just thinking of Hudson's *Super Adventure Island?*).



NEXT MONTH

N64 crosses the Pacific to find out how American developers like id, Iguana and Midway are combatting the Japanese challenge.