

# Missing in Action

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Whatever happened to the heroes? We hunt down 12 forgotten videogame stars.

By Mark Green (PI)



Brekkie pics by Rick Buetner (the most important pic of the day)



**N**intendo aren't in the habit of leaving legendary game heroes to rot. Mario, Donkey Kong, Yoshi and Fox McCloud have all been 'borrowed' from the SNES, given a 3D makeover, then plonked into their very own N64 games. You could mark it down as laziness, but we prefer to think of it as Nintendo recognising the brilliance of their most popular characters.

But not every videogame character is so lucky. For every game hero who's been hand-picked for N64 stardom, there are two or three left floundering in the past. Whether it's because they're deemed unpopular, badly-designed, old-fashioned or downright ugly, there's a host of game heroes who've yet to make their N64 debut.

So, we've turned private investigator and tracked down the 12 old game characters who are most conspicuous by their absence on the N64, and found out how likely they are to make a spectacular return. Here's what we discovered...

## Samus

**Description:** Tall, muscular. Wears orangey armoured suit with giant shoulderpads. Surprise lady hidden inside. Curls up into a ball, whips out laser and murders flying aliens.

**Last seen:** *Super Metroid* (SNES, 1993), side-scrolling platform shoot-'em-up. Guest appearance in *Super Smash Bros* (N64).

**So where is she?:** The good news is that Samus is on her way back; Miyamoto has dragged her from the box in Nintendo's attic and dusted her off, ready for inclusion in *Metroid 64*. The really good news is that the game engine from *Zelda* will be used to create the game. It's a logical move – the *Metroid* games are very *Zelda*-like, with progression depending on the objects and abilities in your possession – and it guarantees a mammoth and great-looking game. No release date has been confirmed yet, but EAD, Nintendo's main development team, are slaving over hot slabs of code as we speak.



△ It wasn't until the very end of NES *Metroid* that it was revealed that Samus was a lovely lady.

## Kirby

**Description:** Pink balloon with a face, two legs and fins. Blushes. Sucks air, swallows enemies and floats around in the sky a bit. Cute.

**Last seen:** *Kirby Super Deluxe* (SNES, 1996), a horizontally-scrolling platformer with Kirby gobbling up bad guys. Guest appearance in *Super Smash Bros* (N64, 1999).

**So where is he?:** Kirby was originally set to star in proposed N64 launch title *Kirby's Air Ride*, which would have seen the pink ball hovering around a 3D landscape on a surfboard. Sadly, the developers re-designed the chubby hero with a backwards baseball cap, at which point Shiggy ordered the game to be started again from scratch. It all went quiet until this year's E3 show, where a short video clip showed Kirby scampering around a *Yoshi's Story*-style 2D platforming world and acting like he'd never been away. Unless Mr Miyamoto demands another re-write, we can expect the finished *Kirby 64* by next year.



△ Kirby's Tee Shot on the SNES – crazy golf for the Kirby generation.

## Pac Man

**Description:** Rotund yellow ball with big mouth and pinocchio nose. Frighteningly pointy eyebrows. Claims to be haunted by ghosts. Takes pills. Continually lost in mazes.

**Last seen:** *Pac in Time* (SNES, 1995), a generic 2D platformer with Pac sent back in time 20 years.

**So where is he?:** After a long absence from the videogame world, Pac Man's making a heroic comeback. 3D platformer *Pac Man World* is due out shortly on the PlayStation, and Namco have commented, "we are looking into making versions of the game for other platforms, but we can't elaborate at this time". Another Pac fact: Hasbro have purchased the rights to the original *Pac Man* and *Ms Pac Man* games, so there's a good chance of seeing a version of the creaky 1982 titles on the N64 or Game Boy.

▽ Pac Man used to be the king of the world, now he's reduced to shamelessly aping Mario.



## Mega Man

**Description:** Small, wide-eyed child with super-gelled spiky hair. Absorbs enemy powers. Wears blue battle suit and pants on the outside. Left arm replaced with laser-o'-hurt.

**Last seen:** *Mega Man X3* (SNES, 1994), a side-scrolling platformer choc-a-block with running, jumping and shooting.

**So where is he?:** The spunky bionic kid certainly hasn't disappeared completely – the PlayStation has already played host to a robot-packed 3D update. *Mega Man* is the property of Capcom and they've recently committed to a whole series of Nintendo titles, which could include a *Mega Man* title. In fact, as the president of Capcom said himself, "*Mega Man* would make a great N64 game!". Prospects aren't bad, then, for a dramatic comeback.



△ Two faces of Mega Man: old skool 2D and spanking new 3D.





## EXIT STAGE LEFT

The game characters who we'd prefer never to see again.

### Cool Spot

Conjured up by the good folk at Virgin, Cool Spot was exactly what you'd expect – a red spot, wearing shades and strutting around like the Fonzie. He swung a yo-yo around long after they'd stopped being cool.



### Soccer Kid

A terrible character and a terrible game. This idiotic child wore a baseball cap and a horrendous quiff, and was restricted to killing enemies with his football. Rubbish.



### Zool

Billed as a 'Sonic for the Amiga', Zool appeared in one game (or was it two?) before swiftly disappearing. Despite claims he wasn't actually an ant, he was precisely that. A ninja ant. Awful.



### Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

It was a strange period in history that featured a band of bandana-wearing amphibians as national heroes. With Pokémon set to take over the world, they're unlikely to return.



### Bubsy

Cocky bobcat who thought the world of himself, and wore a T-shirt but no pants. His PlayStation outing failed miserably, so hopefully we're rid of him for good.



## Bomberman

**Description:** Small violent robotic chap with TV-shaped face. Big eyebrows. Metallic bobble hat. Doesn't get on too well with his mates. Holds and throws bombs despite lack of fingers.

**Last seen:** *Super Bomberman 3* (SNES, 1995).

**Bomberman Hero** (N64, 1998), an uninspiring 3D adventure inexplicably lacking a multiplayer mode.

**So where is he?:** Bomberman has yet to make a proper appearance on the N64, with the frantic multiplayering of the SNES originals intact. The good news, then: Hudson are beavering away on *Bomberman 64 2* for release at the end of this year, with a full complement of multiplayer modes. The bad news: as well as the usual uninspiring one-player platforming nonsense we saw in *Bomberman Hero*, the deathmatches look set to retain the shockingly poor isometric graphics that made the original so little fun. Sigh.



△ Those big-headed metallic blokes leaving a trail of destruction in Bomberman 3.

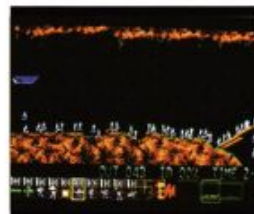
## Lemmings

**Description:** Small suicidal gonk. Wears a blue dress and ill-advised grassy haircut. Incapable of making own decisions. Walks into burning fires and underneath crushers. Dies.

**Last seen:** *Lemmings 2* (SNES, 1993), an infuriating puzzle game with the aim of saving the unlucky midgets from death.

**So where are they?:** It looks like the hapless dwarves have fallen off their last cliff. DMA sold the rights to the green-haired fools to Psygnosis, who released two PlayStation titles – a compilation of the two earliest *Lemmings* games, and a dire 3D update. Neither sold particularly well, making further *Lemmings* adventures extremely unlikely. Still, with Psygnosis showing an increasing interest in the N64 (we've seen *Wipeout*, and *Destruction Derby* and *O.D.T.* are on their way), we might yet be watching the Lemmings being bloodied up all over again.

▽ The Lemmings are dead and buried. Hip, hip...



## Turrican

**Description:** Angry-looking German. Michael Bolton haircut. Peter Andre pecs. Hefty battle suit and big guns. Contorts into a ball and rolls down hills for a laugh.

**Last seen:** *Super Turrican 2* (SNES, 1995), side-scrolling platform shoot-'em-up with a mind-melting amount of on-screen action.

**So where is he?:** If you're blubbing over the disappearance of one of the biggest shoot-'em-up stars of the early '90s, dry your tears – *Turrican* is all set to make a gun-toting comeback on Nintendo's Next Generation Console. *Thornado* was originally planned for the N64 (we previewed it way back in N64/9), but according to developers Factor 5 – the people behind the splendid *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron* – the graphics were 'too good' for the N64, forcing them to dive into the Dolphin. Think *Jet Force Gemini* at three times the pace and you'll have some idea of what to expect.



△ Turrican is on his way back. The Amiga, though, isn't.

## Earthworm Jim

**Description:** Worm with attitude. Disturbingly muscular. One eye bigger than the other. The only spineless annelid to carry an earwig-sized gun.

**Last seen:** *Earthworm Jim 2* (SNES, 1996), a side-scrolling platformer with guinea pig-riding moments.

**So where is he?:** It's easy to forget that Earthworm Jim was a videogame character long before he had his own animated cartoon, but these days he's more likely to be found slithering around inside your TV than on your console. Despite this, the oft-delayed *Earthworm Jim 3D*, which features Jim scampering around four 'zany' worlds, has recently re-appeared in a near-complete state, so don't write the wily worm off just yet.

We've been waiting ages for this worm to (re)turn – look out for a review of *Earthworm Jim 3D* next issue.



## Kid Icarus

**Description:** Small angelic boy. Carries a bow and arrow. Hangs around with the Gods. Doesn't fly too close to the sun or fall out of the sky.

**Last seen:** *Kid Icarus* (NES, 1988). Vertically-scrolling platformer with the Kid on a mission to defeat Medusa and save "Angel Land".



△ Look! An angel! It's just like Highway To Heaven. Without the bearded idiot.

**So where is he?:** Where he belongs – in videogame heaven. Being a weedy angel brat, Kid Icarus failed to capture the public imagination (despite being one of the characters chosen to star in America's Nintendo-based cartoon series, Captain N), and his game wasn't much cop either, nicking loads of ideas and graphics from the superior *Metroid*. However, all manner of ancient characters are being dragged up to star in Nintendo's new games (see the surprise appearance by *Earthbound*'s Ness in *Smash Bros*), so fans of Kid Icarus shouldn't uncross their fingers just yet.

## Jetman

**Description:** Moon-based space chap. Wears white NASA spacesuit circa 1983. Blasts aliens to bits. Drives around in a giant Big Trak.

**Last seen:** *Solar Jetman* (NES, 1988), a simplistic space-based shoot-'em-up.

**So where is he?:** Wondering who this little man is? The original *Lunar Jetman*, a single-screen shoot-'em-up, was published on the Spectrum back in 1983 by Ultimate – a company which later went on to call itself Rare. The spaceman's appearance in the NES title *Solar Jetman* makes him one of the few Rare characters to survive beyond the Spectrum days – so we reckon there's a higher-than-average chance of him blasting his way back onto Nintendo. With *Jet Force Gemini* demonstrating that frantic bug-blasting is back in vogue in Twycross territory, Jetman would fit comfortably into Rare's release schedule. Watch this space.

△ *Solar Jetman* on the NES – one of the most frustrating games we've ever played. We smashed our NES to bits, in fact.



## Kamek (Magikoopa)

**Description:** Bloke in a cloak, and Yoshi's most incompetent enemy. Scoots around on a broomstick. Weaves colourful magical rainbows. Messes up.

**Last seen:** *Yoshi's Island* (SNES, 1996), attempting to thwart the loveable dinosaur and failing miserably.

**So where is he?:** Despite Miyamoto's tendency to borrow characters from his older games, we haven't heard a squeak from Magikoopa since his appearance as Baby Bowser's sidekick in *Yoshi's Island*. In fact, he was set to re-appear in *Mario Kart 64*, before Donkey Kong replaced him as the game's third evil driver (take a look at the picture in N64/32's Club 64). Baby Mario's appearance in *Mario Golf* suggests that the events and characters from *Yoshi's Island* are on their way back, so there's nothing to say that Kamek's worried fizog won't be popping up again in the near-future. In fact, we've already glimpsed him in a screenshot of the upcoming *Super Mario Adventure*.



△ He cries, he shouts, and presumably he changes Baby Bowser's nappies. Pity poor Kamek.

## Bonk

**Description:** Prehistoric child. Big head. Head-butts anyone who gets in the way. Eats kebabs and grows to the size of a small skyscraper. Cries when he hurts himself.

**Last seen:** *Super Bonk's Adventure* (SNES, 1994), side-scrolling platformer with a host of stone-age nasties succumbing to Bonk's head smack.

**So where is he?:** Lost in the mists of time. Bonk enjoyed a popular period on the SNES, but was quietly hidden behind the sofa when developers Hudson came up with the far more profitable *Bomberman* series. The young caveman's only recent appearances have been a result of Hudson programmers slipping him into *Bomberman* titles as a secret character (his shiny bald bonce popped up in the excellent Saturn *Bomberman*), so keep an eye out when *Bomberman 64 2* appears later this year.



△ BC Kid – the boy who makes dinosaurs cry. Horrible little brat.

## BACK ONCE AGAIN

The most popular Nintendo-based characters, and when they're set to return.

### Yoshi

Although *Yoshi's Story* wasn't that well-received in its Japanese homeland, the cuddly dinosaur is still far too popular to be chucked into the bin. Expect more 2D platforming in two or three year's time.



### Goemon

The *Mystical Ninja* legacy is set to continue, despite the recent 2D disappointment of *Goemon 2*. Hopefully we'll see a return to the tried-and-tested platform/RPG combo.



### Fox McCloud

*Lylat Wars* was a real labour of love for Shigsy, but Nintendo consoles seem to be restricted to one Starfox game each. *Lylat Wars II* on Project Dolphin, perhaps?



### Wario

Mario's arch-enemy seems happy to confine his adventuring to the Game Boy, but he's bound to make the crossover to N64 (or Project Dolphin) sooner or later.



### Banjo-Kazooie

A definite comeback is in the works. Banjo-Tooie is the sequel's title, but with *Perfect Dark* and *Donkey Kong 64* taking up most of Rare's time, it could be a while before we see it.



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