

Nintendo 64 blasts off!

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Hands on with the N64, comparisons with 32-bit systems, and a look at games to come.

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The Nintendo 64 Blasts Off!

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By The Feature Creature

SPECIAL FEATURE



This Outrider ship appears in Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire, an exclusive game for the Nintendo 64.



We've all heard about it, wondered about it, and maybe even dreamed about it. After years of promises and delays, at last the Nintendo 64 is almost here, and it sports the \$250 price tag Nintendo always promised. September 30 is the day!

Hands On with the N64

Will the heralded new system be a resounding success, or will it be the most famous bust in video game history? We asked our editors to evaluate the actual performance of the N64. They've all had a crack at Super Mario 64, Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire, WaveRace, Blast Corps, and other N64 games.



Tommy Glide:

I've seen plenty of Doom games, but none of them gave me the true 3D feel that Turok: Dinosaur Hunter did, especially in an external environment (as opposed to the confining corridor sequences). The rendered scenery and plants had so much depth you thought they were going to pop out of the screen.



Scary Larry:

What Nintendo has done with their new system and superb, fluid games like Super Mario 64 is what Sony is just now getting around to doing (Crash Bandicoot for the PlayStation looks and plays a lot like Super Mario).

Price Wars

The question isn't what a system costs when it debuts, the question is how much it costs once it's been out for a while. Here's the pricing history for the next-gen systems. An asterisk denotes a system that had a pack-in game. The pack-in games listed below sometimes varied depending on when the system was purchased.

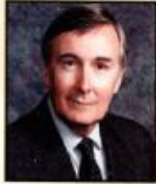
	3DO	Jaguar	PlayStation	Saturn	N64
Debut price:	10/94: \$799* (with Crash 'n' Burn)	11/94: \$249* (with Trevor McFur)	9/9/95: \$299 (no game)	5/11/95: \$399* (with Virtua Fighter)	9/30/96: \$249 (no game)
Later price:	12/94: \$399* (with FIFA)	11/95: \$149* (with three games)	10/95 \$349* (with Ridge Racer)	4/1/96: \$249 (no game)	N/A
Current price:	1/96: \$179-\$199* (with Gex)	1/96: \$49-\$99 (no game)	5/16/96: \$199 (no game)	5/17/96: \$199 (no game)	9/30/96: \$249 (no game)





Buy Our System

Advice for system shoppers from the heads of the three leading video game companies.



Howard Lincoln, chairman, Nintendo of America: "The N64 is intended for only one group of people—those who demand the very best video games the world has ever seen. Period. What you will see on the screen with Super Mario 64 or Pilotwings 64 would have required a \$100,000 workstation just a couple of years ago."



Tom Kalinske, president and CEO of Sega of America: "The consumer is looking at how the system will perform today and in the future. I believe today's gamer is a very sophisticated buyer who sees a real advantage in the Sega Saturn. The Saturn offers new networked-gaming capabilities and continuously delivers better and better exclusive game experiences."



Jim Whims, executive vice president, Sony Computer Entertainment: "The decision is simple: The PlayStation offers unique, robust hardware and an unsurpassable catalog of great games. From the start Sony's been laser-focused on making the PlayStation the ultimate game machine, and now we've got the most compelling software in the industry. Second-generation games like Crash Bandicoot take gaming to whole new levels."



Gideon: I was blown away by the virtual realism of the 3D environments in Mario 64 and Pilotwings 64. The ability to change camera angles, and the silky-smooth transition between the various views, propelled gameplay to a new level. Instead of just flexing the N64's graphics-

generating muscle, each different camera angle had specific functions that enhanced game-play, such as when Mario peeks around corners to see if there are obstacles or villains ahead. The rich hues and smooth scaling of scenery added to the ultra realism of the virtual environments, especially in Pilotwings.



Captain Cameron: Flying games should soar with the N64 controller. While whipping your Snowspeeder around the ice in Shadows of the Empire, the controls feel comfortable, the analog joystick is responsive, and it's easy to work the airbrakes with your index finger under the pad. You never got Snowspeeders like this in Super Empire Strikes Back for the SNES.



Major Mike: The controller works better than one would think; the "third leg" thumbstick doesn't get in the way at all. The joy-pad also fits comfortably in your hands. The analog thumbstick works well, especially with Pilotwings 64. Fighting games, like MK Trilogy, controlled perfectly.



The Whizz: Four N64 controllers will be as good as one! Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey in four-player mode glided along as smooth as ice. It was a blast! Since there are four dedicated controller ports, firing up a multiperson game is literally a painless snap. Impressive. (See "Sports Pages" for a preview of Gretzky 64.)



Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey

A Check of the Specs

	PlayStation	Saturn	N64
Dimensions: (in inches)	10.75 x 7.5 x 2.5	10.5 x 8.75 x 2.75	10.23 x 7.48 x 2.87
Total volume: (in cubic inches)	202	253	220
Weight:	2.75 lbs.	3.87 lbs.	2.4 lbs.
CPU speed:	33 MHz	27 MHz	93.75 MHz
Memory: (in megabits)	32 + 8 MB memory card	36 + 8 MB memory card	36 + 64 MB "bulky drive"
Current price of most games:	CDs: \$49-\$59 (prices likely to drop)	CDs: \$49-\$59 (prices likely to drop)	Carts: \$69-\$79 (prices likely to increase)
Current system price (w/ no game):	\$199	\$199	\$249

