

# Nintendo 64 jumps on \$149 bandwagon!

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## Nintendo 64 Jumps on \$149 Bandwagon

As expected, in March **Nintendo of America** slashed \$50 off the price of the Nintendo 64 throughout North America, thus lowering the system's suggested price to \$149.95. The N64 now matches the price of the **Sony PlayStation**, which also dropped to \$149 just two weeks earlier. Unlike **Sony**, which also cut \$10 off new PlayStation games the same day it cut the system price, Nintendo didn't cut the price of its N64 games (most N64 games debut at \$60-\$80, depending on the retailer).

Nintendo and Sony are locked in a hard-fought war for consumer dollars, and each has stats to support a claim at the top spot. While the nine-month-old N64 has been selling faster than any U.S. system in history (almost twice as fast as the PlayStation), the 21-month-old PlayStation still has a much larger installed base around the world (over 13 million owners globally versus about 5 million for the N64).

As attractive as the new \$149 figure is, it's probably only a steppingstone to an even lower price. Many experts predict that both companies will reduce their prices to the \$99-\$119 range in time for Christmas.

**Sega**, meanwhile, is standing on the sidelines watching the two leaders slug it out. So far the **Saturn** price remains at \$199, but Sega points out that pack-in games are included with the system. Game prices appear to be the focal point of Sega's strategy: At the same time Nintendo and Sony were slashing their system prices, Sega announced that it was extending its Christmas '96 offer of three free games with a new Saturn and also cut prices by half on some of its Japanese games. Further price cuts on Saturn games in both Japan and the U.S. are expected this year.

### Goin' Hollywood

This is shaping up to be a year when software companies decide they oughta be in pictures. Longtime gamemaker **Namco** has decided to get into the movie business by joining with **Sony** and the computer-graphics company **Polygon Pictures** to form a new moviemaking venture called **Dream Pictures Studio**. According to Namco, Dream Pictures will create "digital content for computer graphics-based films and entertainment software." However, there may be more specific announcements coming soon, as industry insiders speculate that Dream Pictures Studio's first product will be a full-length computer-generated film version of **Tekken**, Namco's popular series of fighting games.

Also jumping on the moviemaking bandwagon is **Sega Enterprises Ltd.**, which has joined with **Bandai** to produce four animated videos in Japan. These videos will be the first joint products resulting from the proposed **Sega-Bandai** merger announced last month. The videos will be based on the popular Japanese RPG **Sakura Wars**, and a new video will appear every other month. There's no word yet on whether the game or the

### Inside Scoop

- Great news for sports gamers: **EA Sports** is bringing some of its top-rated games to the **Nintendo 64**. Under a recent agreement with Nintendo that extends for the next few years, EA Sports will have 64-bit versions of some of its best-selling titles ready for the first half of 1998. No specific titles have been announced yet, but the likely suspects include **Madden NFL**, **NBA Live**, **NHL**, and **Triple Play**. The company's first N64 sports title, **FIFA Soccer 64**, was released in late March.

- Buoying up a company in need of a hit, **Electronic Arts** has invested in **Accolade**, the long-time developer and publisher of the **Bubsy** games. According to the agreement, EA will distribute all new Accolade games, including the upcoming **NFL Legends Football '98** for the PC and **HardBall 6** for the PlayStation and PC.



*Warcraft Adventures brings an exciting new look to the Warcraft series.*

- The next **Warcraft** game is going to get a whole new look. **Blizzard Entertainment** has announced that **Warcraft Adventures: Lord of the Clans**, the third chapter in the epic Warcraft saga, is going to be a fantasy adventure game, not a real-time strategy game like its predecessors. The **Windows 95** and **Mac** games should be out in time for Christmas.

- **Sega** has brought its superstar mascot to the PC in a new compilation disc. Called the **Sonic & Knuckles Collection** and priced at under \$30, the **Windows 95 CD** includes three games with enhanced sounds and graphics: **Sonic the Hedgehog 3**, **Sonic & Knuckles**, and **Sonic 3 and Knuckles**.

- To revive its sagging fortunes, **Sega of America (SOA)** has appointed two new executives to key positions within the company. Interestingly, both are former vice presidents at **Sony** and helped successfully launch the **PlayStation**. **Bernie Stolar** is SOA's new chief operating officer in charge of expanding the North American business operations. And now heading Sega's software developments (including all console and Net Link games) is **Shuji Utsumi**. They will join the team led by the company's chief executive officer and chairman, **Shoichiro Irimajiri**, who assumed the top spot at Sega last summer (see "ProNews," October '96).