Shigeru Miyamoto

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Sujet de l'article : Interview (*)

Une interview de Shigeru Miyamoto.

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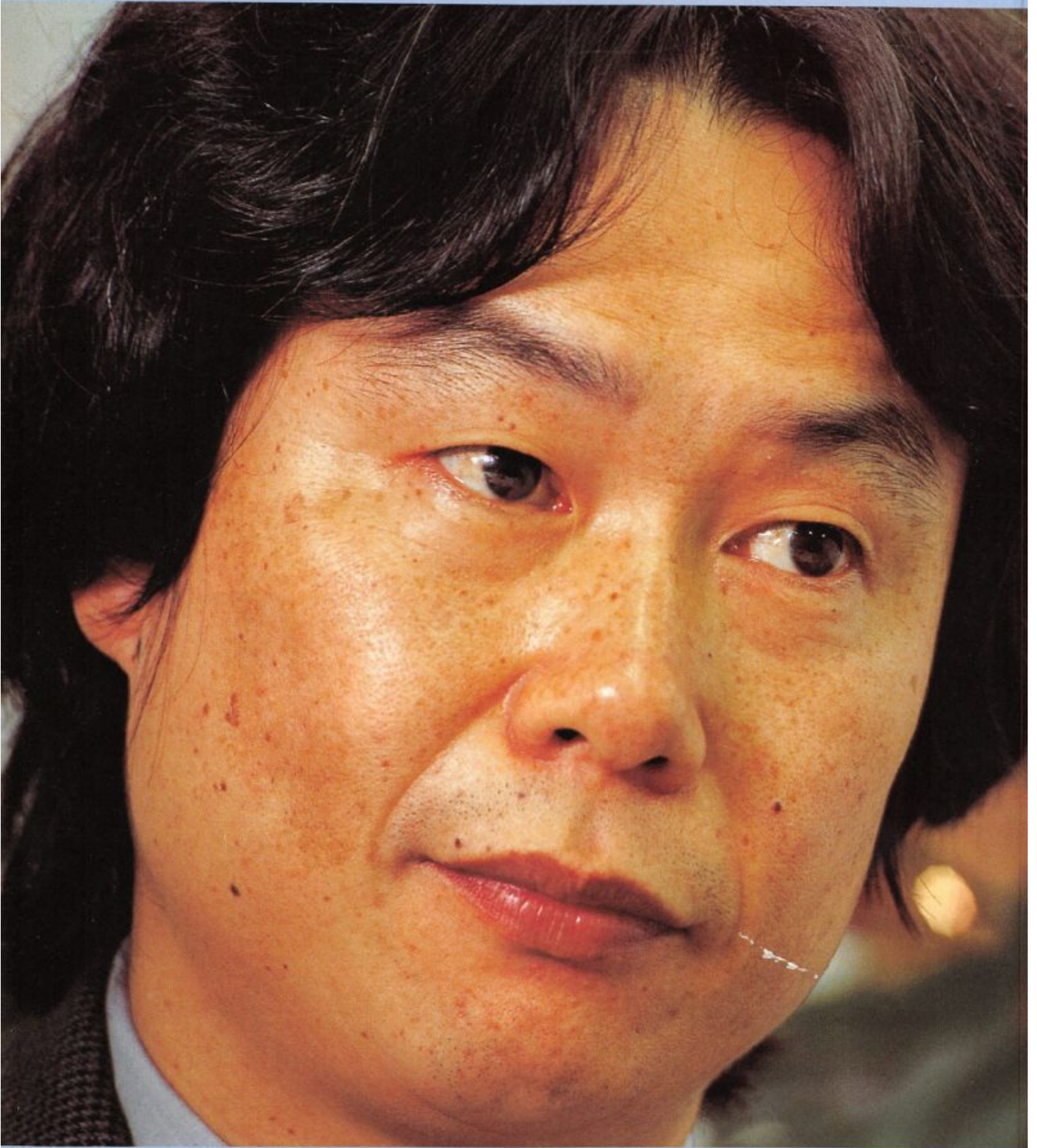
AN AUDIENCE WITH...

Shigeru Miyamoto

AT THIS YEAR'S NINTENDO SPACE WORLD

EVENT, **EDGE** CAUGHT UP THE BIGGEST NAME

IN VIDEOGAMES FOR WHAT HAS BECOME

ALMOST AN ANNUAL TRADITION.

AS NINTENDO PREPARES TO ENTER ONE OF

THE MOST IMPORTANT YEARS IN THE

COMPANY'S EXISTENCE, **EDGE** WAS EAGER TO

LEARN HOW MARIO'S FATHER SEES THINGS...

S higeru Miyamoto seems in fine fettle. But then he has good reason to be – in the main hall, some distance away from the room in which **Edge** is interviewing him, his latest labour of love, *Legend of Zelda 64*, has Space World attendees captured under its dizzying spell.

To single out *Zelda 64* is to miss the point, though; Miyamoto-san has a hand in a great many projects – not least of which are the *Mario Artist* series of titles being developed for the 64DD device. Here is an individual to whom creativity is king, whether that is creativity from him in game design terms or creativity from the perspective of a Nintendo 64 owner contemplating the next stage of the machine's life in Japan via the 64DD.

In the following interview, Miyamoto-san discusses just about every aspect pertaining to what has become – outside of his homeland, at least – one of the most successful games machines ever created....

Edge: Can you give an outline of the games that you feel are important on display today?

Shigeru Miyamoto: For a start there are titles that failed to meet the original schedule but are now about ready to go, so they're the most important titles here. Have you played them yet? Because you can feel that they have a very Nintendo-like touch – I hope you like them.

Edge: Which are the most important games at the show for you?

SM: *Zelda*, *Yoshi's Island* – I mean *Yoshi's Story* – and *F-Zero X* and *1080° Snowboarding*... because I'm working on these titles! [Laughs]

Edge: Which one has had the most time spent on it?

SM: *Zelda*, definitely.

Edge: How do you divide your time up between the various projects?

SM: It's hard. Shifting my train of thought from one project to another isn't easy. I have to plan my time, but even then I often end up thinking of other games than the one I'm scheduled to be working on at that point. Sometimes I have to juggle two things at once.

Edge: So what was the most difficult thing to achieve when making *Zelda*?

SM: I suppose the biggest problem was the proportion of my time occupied by looking after software. We wanted to launch for Christmas but it will be

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three months late. Keeping quality high has consumed lots of time – we had to set up an environment that enabled creators and artists to work efficiently together to achieve the required quality.

Edge: *Mario* offers the same kind of sense of exploration as *Zelda*. Was it difficult to make it feel different?

SM: No, not really. There were many things we could not do with *Mario 64*. For a start, rather than concentrating on seeking out game objectives we tried to make *Zelda* an experience where the player can enjoy the artist's environment and experience new sensations. People will feel something by being in *Zelda*'s world.

Edge: Talking of *Mario*, how is *Super Mario 64 2* going?

SM: The game has already been running for one year on the 64DD system. We have still not decided how much new data we will add to the game, but I think we will release it within one year of the 64DD launch. We've ported it from cartridge to 64DD, and it's likely we will release it on 64DD only. The main merit of using a dual system cartridge-64DD is while the cartridge takes care of realtime data, the 64DD can take care of switching the maps and scenario. But the new Mario game currently fits onto the 64DD disk neatly, so a cartridge is not required.

'Super Mario 64 2 has already been running for a year on the 64DD. I think we will release it within a year of the 64DD launch, and on 64DD only'

Edge: Is there anything more you can tell us about it?

SM: Well, we are currently working on a system where Mario and Luigi can co-exist, and they are both controllable by the player. But we will finalise more game elements when we finish *Zelda*.

Edge: Staying with *Mario*, *Super Mario RPG 2* looks different to the first game...

SM: The first *Super Mario RPG* was 2D, so we wanted to make one 3D and use rendering technology. As you know, *Super Mario 64* is already 3D – we are looking at ways in which we can separate the two visually. In *Yoshi's Story* there is a picture book you can flip through, so in *Super Mario RPG 2* we may want to do something similar.

Edge: Tell us about *Yoshi's Story*. The original game was quite a big title for you, so is this an important release?

SM: Yes, but my colleague Mr Tezuka is taking care of *Yoshi's Story* for most of his time – he's our group director and has been working with me a long time. *Yoshi's Story* is being produced by him, and I'm mostly focused on *Legend of Zelda*. As you can see, *Legend of Zelda*'s main theme is to play inside the virtual world while *Yoshi's* focus is to give a storybook feel.

Edge: What distinguishes *Yoshi's Story* from the 16bit version in your opinion?

SM: The ideas in *Yoshi's Story* couldn't be realised in the previous Yoshi game and the quality is much higher overall, I think. They are virtually identical in terms of gameplay, though, and it's basically a 2D game, but in some ways it is a 2.5D game in that very large objects can rotate, and you move with the analogue stick. With the RumblePak plugged in you can even feel objects tremble before they move – there are lots of new ideas.

Edge: *Yoshi's Story* will no doubt appeal to players who appreciate colourful, cartoon-style graphics. How do you feel about the more mature content of popular games like *Resident Evil* and *Tomb Raider*?

SM: Personally, I like the games you mentioned and I think that *Zelda* is already a step in that direction. As long

as we can maintain the same high standards in our games then I would like to try anything.

Edge: What can you tell us about the progress of the game *Jungle Emperor Leo*?

SM: I think we're in the middle of the development phase. So far we've made three initial stages. The team has grown to 20 or more, so we must accelerate progress or it will be expensive to complete.

Edge: In Japan, Nintendo used to be a strong format for RPGs and the N64 seems to be poorly supported so far. Do you think the 64DD will become a prominent platform for RPGS?

SM: Yes, the 64DD is well suited to RPGs. I think that when they see that the 64DD sells, companies will start making RPGs for the 64DD. Nintendo has already announced *Mother 3*, *Super Mario RPG 2* and *Zelda*, and we're planning to release them within six months of the hardware launch.

Edge: But do you not think the noticeable lack of RPGs is one reason why Nintendo – and more importantly the N64 – is not the market leader in Japan?

SM: Yes, this may be correct. There are lots of RPG fans in Japan, but I am concerned that the RPG market is shrinking rather than expanding at present. Children are currently into the *Pocket Monster* type of game instead. It is a kind of roleplaying game, but I suspect that it is not those aspects that provoke childrens' interest in the game.

Edge: Which of the thirdparty games have impressed you?

SM: *Snobow Kids* sounds good, and the Hudson and Konami games are promising. These companies are gaining experience in N64 developments, and next year they will be able to come up with good adventures and RPGs.

Edge: Is Nintendo successful because it's exceeded expectations? Where do you find clues in developing ideas?

SM: We like to do something others haven't. If I propose an idea to Mr. Yamauchi that he's never heard of before, he will probably say, 'Do it.' It's interesting, and that is his philosophy. I'm trying to see things from as many angles as possible. If we just concentrate on the process of creating something, we may blind ourselves to important ideas, and our games will turn out like everybody else's. I always try to see it from another view, to ask, 'How will people actually play these? What will parents think of their kids playing?' These questions are foremost in my mind.

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Edge: There's a lot of focus on the 64DD at the show, despite the fact that the launch has been delayed and the software is unconventional compared to most games. What do you find exciting about the system?

SM: On the 64DD booth you will find the *Mario Artist* series and you can actually see how it works, including the video-capturing system which is really interesting. Of course it is now more than a year since we launched the N64 in Japan, and perhaps the most important aspect is that we have become accustomed to exploiting its abilities. I think you can now see the potential of the N64 at last.

Edge: What else should the average Nintendo fan be interested in?

SM: We're also showing several attachments, including the Game Boy Pocket Camera device – it's a splendid toy. And the 64GB adaptor, which connects the Game Boy and N64. With Game Boy compatibility and capture-board

◄ possibilities we can develop new horizons for entertainment. And also across the *Mario Artist* series, the data is transferable – you can make a picture in *Picture Maker* and then transfer that to *Talent Maker*.

Edge: Originally it was *Zelda 64* that was being touted as the title that would be the 64DD's killer app. Why was the decision made to release this as a cartridge game?

SM: I think the 64DD should be a device allowing lots of creativity. For *Zelda*, we wanted to prioritise the cartridge version. Now, we are going to sell the 64DD next year, so we are thinking of porting *Zelda 64* to it. We have not decided yet whether the 64DD version will be used with the cartridge, or whether we will make it into an independent game. You may be able to change game scenarios, but we are still working out such details.

Edge: So the release date of the 64DD version is still not decided yet?

SM: I think it depends on the number of staff that we get working on the 64DD version.

Edge: So far then, it seems that 64DD software is being characterised by its creative traits. What plans for new gameplay experiences do you have?

SM: I can't really go into detail about it at this stage I'm afraid, but one example is that we will be releasing *F-Zero X* on cartridge and then later on 64DD. The 64DD version enables players to make their own cars and courses, or edit the existing ones. This editing program already exists (visible proof could be found on-screen in the Space World version) on the cartridge we are showing here, but you cannot use it without the 64DD.... I think 'Addition' will be an important keyword for the 64DD. Seasoned players who are beginning to tire of the game will be able to add some new data or courses, and then even swap those edited courses.

'Update' will be another keyword. You will be able to update the Championship data, for example, and in doing so will be able to play against new competitors. You will be able to record the best player's performance and use it as a ghost. If such a system is successful then the next step will be to connect players to a network.

Edge: It seems that this kind of project is for the future, whereas cartridges form your current strategy...

SM: Well, this system is already in the *F-Zero X* cartridge and we are going to sell the 64DD version next year. Maybe *Pocket Monster* is not well known abroad, but it is big in Japan at the moment. We are showing systems here that link *Pocket Monster* with 64DD so that players can see the monsters in 3D and add new data.

Edge: Was it a strategy of Nintendo's to create a link between the Game Boy and N64?

SM: If you are asking me if it's a business strategy, I have to answer yes. But I honestly believe it is very interesting to explore the possibilities of compatibility between these pieces of hardware. As a concept it's pretty unusual in the toy world. To reflect this we're providing a new *Pocket Monster* character to all our visitors at Space World. Such characters will be distributed only during particular events – like Space World – so children are already experiencing additions to their games and exchanging data. The 64DD can actually expand on this.

Edge: In the past consumers have proved reluctant in purchasing hardware add-ons for their game systems. The original Famicom Disk System was not an huge success and Sega systems such as the Mega-CD and 32X were spectacular flops. Why will things be any different for the 64DD?

SM: Frankly, I wanted to release an N64 with a built-in 64DD at the beginning ... But the cost was prohibitive and we didn't have time to do it. I regret that, but we still want to release the 64DD. We'd like the disks to be as inexpensive as possible, but they will not be as cheap as CD-ROMs to manufacture. However, disks are much faster than CDs and have more storage capacity than cartridges. We are not sure about the cost of the 64DD itself, but it should be much cheaper than a console. However, as CD-ROM proliferates, a cost reduction war is developing in the market, and we do not want to get involved. We want to create software with real value.

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