

The Ultimate N64 Yuletide Buying Guide

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THE
ULTIMATE
N64
MAGAZINE
YULETIDE
BUYING
GUIDE



Got some Christmas cash burning a hole in your pocket? Here's what you should be spending it on...

Christmas is upon us again, and some of you may still be looking for last-minute stocking-fillers, wondering what you can ask the folks to get you for the big day, or pondering what to spend Auntie Edna's gift voucher on. Fret no more, because we've compiled what we consider to be the ultimate Christmas list for your N64 and Game Boy: the minty Ninty's cream of the Chrimbo crop. Enjoy!

GAMES

The lifeblood of the N64. Here are the very best games available to buy this Christmas...

MUST-HAVE!

Donkey Kong 64

Rare/Nintendo, £59.99

If there's one game that you *simply must* get this Christmas, it's *Donkey Kong 64*. In the absence of anything equivalent from Nintendo themselves – such as last year's *Zelda* – Rare's much-anticipated monkey-fest offers a blockbusting adventure of titanic proportions. Five different characters, over 100 moves and special abilities, weapons, musical instruments, mini-games, gorgeously huge levels absolutely *stuffed* with things to do, even several different

multiplayer games... *DK64* has it all. Granted, the baffling £60 price is harshly steep, even if the game does come bundled with the expansion pak, which is required to run the game. However, we're sure that just one look at the beautiful coloured lighting and wealth of things to do will persuade you that *Donkey Kong 64* is a real shining gem.

We said: "A game that's often as vast, well-designed and impossible to resist as *Zelda* or *Mario 64*." (N64/36, 93%)



△ It's everything we wanted, really. God bless Rare.

▶ At £60 it's a bit expensive, but you certainly get your money's worth.



BEST BEAT-'EM-UP!

Super Smash Bros

Nintendo, £40

Despite an intolerable *nine month* wait for the PAL release of *Smash Bros* (it came out in Japan back in February), this has been well worth the wait. It's by far the best beat-'em-up on the N64, in fact, it's so revolutionary and breaks so many rules, that's it's not really a beat-



'em-up in the traditional sense at all. Incorporating multi-levelled arenas, impossibly high triple-jumps, power-ups, all sorts of lightning-quick, balletic combat, and a priceless multiplayer mode (four



players, too!), your games collection just isn't complete without it.

We said: "As unique and essential an experience as any Mario game." (N64/36, 90%)

BEST SCAREFEST!

Resident Evil 2

Virgin, £40

At long last, Capcom have come to the N64 and despite *Resident Evil 2* being over two years old, the N64 version of the game is a real



treat. Vastly superior to its original PlayStation counterpart, the game features some stunning hires visuals and some alarmingly effective surround sound. True, the game keeps the same hideously outdated rotate-and-run controls, and having to press A to climb stairs is simply ridiculous, but you won't find another game so determined in its efforts to shock and scare you. And cartridges can't do FMV, they said. Hal

We said: "If it doesn't have you leaping from your chair in shock at least once, you must be dead." (N64/36, 90%)



BEST MULTIPLAYER!

Turok: Rage Wars

Acclaim, £40

Eschewing the epic single-player quests of *Turok* and its sequel *Turok 2*, *Rage Wars* concentrates on deathmatching.



And the result? A damn fine gaming experience. The single-player game – featuring a series of matches against computer-controlled 'bots', and 17 different characters – works well, but it's the multiplayer that's the real meat here. The well-designed arenas, superb, over-the-top weaponry and tight controls mean a multiplayer experience that could almost rival *GoldenEye's* and *Quake II's*. Another triumph for Acclaim.

We said: "This bold experiment has yielded superb results. An absolute blast." (N64/35, 87%)



GAMES

BEST BLASTER!

Jet Force Gemini

Rare/Nintendo, £49.99

Rare's first game since 1998's *Banjo-Kazooie* doesn't disappoint. Ostensibly a fast, frantic shoot-'em-up, the game is actually a 3D action-adventure with the emphasis on utter carnage. And we mean carnage: green bug-juice flies left, right and centre, and the 15 ridiculously destructive weapons are a joy to behold.

Visually, it's superb, there's no hint of pop-up and it's silky smooth. It's tough, too and although it's been criticised for being simply too big, we think that a game that can keep you playing for months is exactly what we want. Brilliant stuff.

We said: "You simply must play this." (N64/34, 93%)



BEST RACER!

World Driver Championship



Midway, £40

Yes, we know that the N64 has been short-changed on the serious driving front, but this superb slice of road-based racing changes all that.

Superficially similar to *Gran Turismo*, *World Driver Championship* features ten beautifully-designed courses, over 30 different cars, reams of truly stunning hi-res visuals and some wonderful full-race replay action. The handling may take some getting used to, but once you've got the hang of it, the game shines. In fact, *World Driver Championship* has everything you could want from a truly great racing game. Ace.

We said: "A tyre-squealing, rubber-burning, powersliding thing of wonderment." (N64/32, 91%)



BEST ADVENTURE!

Shadowman

Acclaim, £40

So what do you get when you throw some *Zelda*-style adventuring against a bloody and disturbing story of demons, serial killers and exploding zombies?



Shadowman, that's what. And it's tremendous. Set in both the real world and Deadside – a hellish afterlife – the game is a huge, 70-hour quest to retrieve 120 Dark Souls. But that's not all – you also have to find three pieces of a sacred dagger, a host of voodoo weapons and hunt down five

twisted serial killers. One of the best bits of the game sees you tracking Jack the Ripper through a deserted London Underground; as good a recommendation of the game as any, and gruesomely indicative of *Shadowman* as a whole.

We said: "A dark and glittering jewel in the N64's gaudy crown." (N64/32, 93%)



HARDWARE

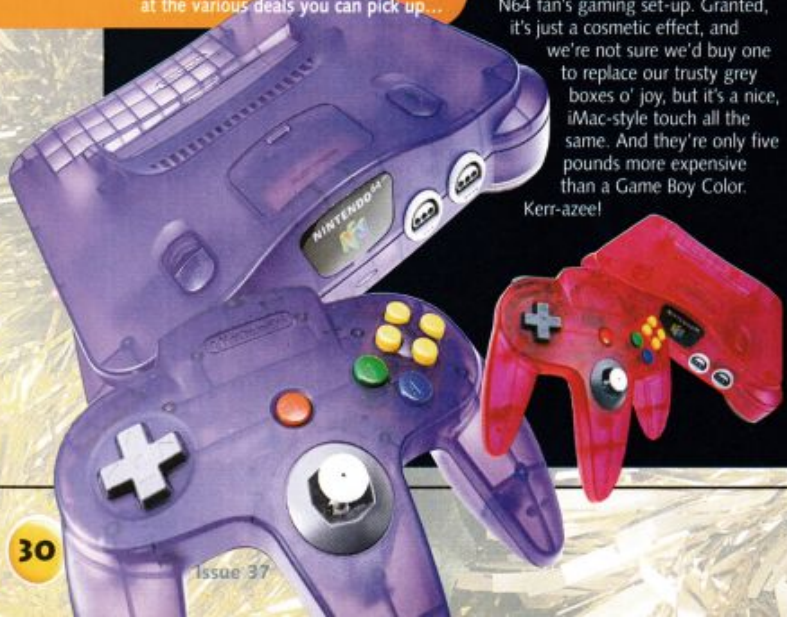
Not bought an N64 yet? Have a 'decko' at the various deals you can pick up...

Coloured consoles

£74.99

Now these are sweet. A selection of transparent coloured consoles, complete with matching controllers, ready to spice up the discerning N64 fan's gaming set-up. Granted, it's just a cosmetic effect, and we're not sure we'd buy one to replace our trusty grey boxes o' joy, but it's a nice, iMac-style touch all the same. And they're only five pounds more expensive than a Game Boy Color.

Kerr-azee!



DK64 Pak

£110

Well, well, well. The *Donkey Kong* bundle – whilst in theory a great idea – isn't actually that much of a bargain. Consisting of a N64, controller, *Donkey Kong 64* and the expansion pak, the bundle costs fifty pounds more than the game itself (which comes with the expansion pak anyway), so you're only saving fifteen quid. It's still a saving, which is always a good thing, but this is really only going to appeal to first-time N64 owners who want Rare's latest blockbuster.



Mario 64/ GoldenEye bundle

£84.99

These two bundles – a copy of the game in question, plus the N64 and a controller – have actually been on sale for quite some time now, but, with THE Games having suddenly seen the light and lowered their hardware prices, they're now equivalently cheaper. And if you're a first-time N64 buyer, you can't really go wrong. After all, *Mario 64* and *GoldenEye* are two of the finest games ever created.

GAME BOY

The best games you can buy for your handheld chum.

Grand Theft Auto

Take 2, £20

Finally – the Game Boy gets a version of the game that caused such a stir on the PC and PlayStation. And – brilliantly – it's virtually the same. Steal cars, run down pedestrians and escape the police. Tremendous.



Mario Golf

Nintendo, £25

The perfect accompaniment to the N64 version, in some ways this is even better than its big brother thanks to the ace RPG mode. The control system, as ever, is spot-on. It may be golf, but it's superb fun.



Stranded Kids

Konami, £25

A first-rate survival RPG which sees you stranded on a desert island. There's a Zelda-style day/night feature; you have to catch animals and then eat them; you even have to sleep. And it's got monkeys in it. *Stranded Kids* is absolute class.



Pokémon Red/Blue

Nintendo, £25

But of course. If you haven't got this already, there's no excuse not to rush straight out and spend some cash. We just can't fully explain the joys to be had in raising your own little Pikachu or Squirtle. A classic.



BEST IMPORT!

Ltd. Edition Pokémon Game Boy and Pokémon Yellow

On import www.ebworld.com, \$99

Currently, you can only get this in America, but it's great. The yellow and blue Pokémon Game Boy is class and *Pokémon Yellow* – due for release in the UK in June – is a tweaked version of *Pokémon Red* and *Blue*, letting you start with Pikachu and following the plot of the cartoon series more closely. There's also one new Pokémon called Togepi. We recommend you ring an importer for details (try the ever-lovely CA Games on 0141 334 3901) or you can order this straight from www.ebworld.com. The package costs £99, and takes a week or two to arrive.

BARGAIN HUNTER

Our intrepid reporter sniffs out the better bargains to be found at the best N64 game-stocking shops. Booyakka! Ahem.



Mr Bickham, on the sniff for some true-blue bargains, spies a minty-fresh copy of *Rayman 2*.

It's not the biggest stand we've ever seen, but dig deep and you'll find some bargains.

MVC

Ostensibly a music and video store, MVC offers free club membership. Members get money lopped off, well, pretty much everything and as far as games are concerned, this can be between a couple of quid and a fiver. Very nice indeed.



Fancy a brand-new game? MVC sells 'em cheaper than elsewhere. Provided you're a member.

Bargains

- **Rayman 2**
If you're a music club member you get almost five quid snipped off the price of *Rayman 2*. Great.
- **Top Gear Overdrive**
Not bad at all. A brand spanking new *Top Gear Overdrive* for £18.99. 'Mint.'
- **F1 WGP**
Video System's top F1 simulator comes in at an eminently affordable £18.99 – a full eleven quid cheaper than the 'Player's Choice' asking price.

Verdict: Although true-blue bargains aren't too numerous, MVC is excellent if you're looking for the latest releases; if you're a member, the discount means you'll probably get them cheaper than anywhere else. *Rayman 2*, which had only been in the shops for a few weeks at the time of writing, was four pounds cheaper in MVC than anywhere else we looked.

Bargain Rating:



BARGAIN HUNTER

DIXONS

The electrical goods chain has a wide variety of N64 games, which take up a large amount of wall space. There's also some impressive window displays and loads of Pokémon stuff.



△ Les hides behind a dirt-cheap version of the evergreen F-Zero X. £59.99 for an N64! That's cheaper than a Game Boy! Not bad.



Bargains

● **Mystical Ninja starring Goemon**

We found this tremendous RPG adventure for a mere £19.99, with, get this, another 25% off! Meaning you can now buy this classic – wait for it – for just £14.99. A bargain in anyone's book.

● **F-Zero X**

A must-have racer that, like *Mystical Ninja*, costs just £19.99 plus a 25%

discount. £14.99 again. Aces.

● **Wipeout 64**

A little more expensive this, at £29.99, but there's another 25% discount so Psygnosis' top future racer could still be yours for just £22.49.

Hardware

Dixons slashed the price of a stand-alone N64 from £69.99 to £59.99. Not bad at all. Also, any games you buy at the same time as an N64 come with an extra ten pounds off. Blimey!

Verdict: We weren't expecting a chain store like Dixons to offer much in the way of bargains and while it's true that recent releases, such as *Jet Force* and *Rayman*, are on sale at full whack, older games (as seen above) have been drastically reduced in price. We also found *Top Gear Overdrive* for just £9.99, *WWF Warzone* for £14.99 and *Shadows of the Empire* for £18. A real surprise. Well done, Dixons.

Bargain Rating:



△ Plenty o' games there. And some cracking bargains to boot – have a look in the January sales.

VIRGIN MEGASTORES

And megastores they are – the games section is pleasingly large (and the staff were very friendly too). Oh, and there are millions of CDs as well – we lost Wil as he marched off to find a rare Todd Rundgren album. (*Todd who?* – Ed)

Bargains

● **Turok 2**

A brand-new, gleaming, shrink-wrapped copy of the game, untouched by human hands, for only £19.99.

● **XG2**

Acclaim's challenger to the *Wipeout* throne is a wallet-friendly £19.99 too.

● **Mortal Kombat 4**

A surprise, this; we haven't seen it in the shops for ages, and here it is, at a very reasonable £24.99.



△ *Mortal Kombat 4* – an entertaining slice of fisticuff action. And it could be yours for only £25!

Verdict: Virgin get top marks for their large and very prominent N64 display – actually almost twice the size of the Dreamcast stand next to it – but the bargains we found were few and far between. Other cheapo games included: *Glover*, £29.99; *Hexen*, £19.99; *Tetrisphere*, £19.99.

Bargain Rating:



△ XG2. A good game – this brand-new boxed copy was only £19.99.

△ A vast number of games, including a good selection of oldies. Nice.

△ This Megastore's in Bristol, but there's bound to be one near you.



PINK PLANET GAMES EXCHANGE

An independent chain, the Games Exchange currently have eleven stores throughout the South West, making them Britain's largest independent retailer.



△ Friendly staff and plenty o' bargains. Classy indeed.

△ Turok 2! £13.99! Unbe-frickin'-lievable! You'd be mad not to snap that one up.

△ And Pilotwings! Still great after all these years. We love it.



▽ The real treats are found on the bottom. Loads of great games at stupidly low prices.



The lovely Vikki managed to stop flogging copies of *Jet Force Gemini* long enough for us to have a quick chat.

N64: So, what's selling well, then?
Vikki: Well, *Jet Force Gemini* is going great guns. In fact, I think it'll be the top N64 seller over Christmas – *Donkey Kong 64* may just be too expensive at £60.

N64: Do you think the games are too expensive generally?
Vikki: Definitely. And that's why a lot of the older games are still selling well (motioning to an £11.99 copy of *Pilotwings*). But, I have to say, we've had a lot of interest in the new coloured consoles that are coming out, so hopefully we'll be seeing a great Christmas for the N64.

N64: Smashing. Thank you very much.
Vikki: No problem. Bye!

Bargains

● Turok 2

A mind-boggling £13.99. *Turok 2* was second hand, but it was in great condition, and you can't argue with that price.

● Pilotwings 64

An even more unbelievable £11.99. £11.99! Second hand again but *Pilotwings* is a brilliant, brilliant game.

● Super Mario 64

One of the finest games ever created – and a snip at £16.99. Once again this was second hand, but it was in flawless condition. Beautiful.

Verdict: The Games Exchange is a real treasure trove; even brand-new games are, on average, a pound or two cheaper than they should be. As well as the host of dirt-cheap second-hand games available – including some real hard-to-find golden oldies – you can also part-exchange old games. We threw in *Rayman 2*, *Castlevania* and *Mission: Impossible*, and got a £48.99 copy of *Jet Force Gemini* for a tenner. Real sweet indeed. Other treats we found were: *GoldenEye*, £20; *Doom 64*, £9.99; *Bio Freaks*, £13.99 and *Zelda*, £23.99.

Bargain Rating:



and elsewhere...

We couldn't take pictures inside these shops but here are some details.

GAME

A great selection of games, with some real gems squelched away amongst the newer releases. *Blast Corps*, *Silicon Valley*, *Body Harvest* and *Forsaken* were all £19.99 each, and *World Cup '98* was – get this – just £9.99.



Electronics Boutique

Seemingly allergic to cameras, EB nonetheless have a huge N64 stand, loads of games, and a worthy pre-owned selection, including a second-hand *Banjo* for a mere £20.



HMV

A fairly small N64 stand, although it was in a prominent position. Unfortunately, bargains were almost non-existent, aside from a single copy of the excellent *Mischief Makers* for just £29.99.

