

## Nintendo's other disk drive...

Article scanné dans le magazine Electronic Gaming Monthly n°089 (Décembre 1996)

Sujet de l'article : Nintendo 64DD Starter Pak

Scans réalisés par les membres du site Nintendo64EVER, usage exclusivement destiné aux autres membres du site. Toute reproduction, partielle ou complète, ainsi que la diffusion de ce fichier est interdite. Les magazines originaux sont la propriété intellectuelle exclusive de leurs éditeurs respectifs, les scans regroupés dans ce fichier ont un but uniquement documentatif et informatif, aucune exploitation commerciale ne peut en être faite.

THE BEST VIDEO GAME NEWS

# PRESS START

# LAUNCH PUTS N64 ON MAP

**Amid A  
Chaotic  
Early  
Release  
of N64s,  
Rumors  
About  
32-Bit  
System  
Price  
Drops  
and N64  
Supply  
Figures**

Usually, the mark of a successful video game system launch lies with the number of units sold. That's certainly the case with the Nintendo 64, which unloaded all 350,000 systems initially available in just three days after the Sept. 29 launch.

But in the case of the N64, the success of its North American launch seems better measured by the number of wild rumors and crazy stories that have cropped up in the days before and after the debut of the 64-Bit system.

The best news for gamers came roughly four days before launch, as retailer after retailer began breaking the official release date and selling N64s the moment they got in stores. (Not surprisingly, the *EGM* staff ditched work the moment this

news broke.) It proved a case of, "Everyone else is selling it, so why can't I?" While Nintendo earlier this year had vowed to ensure retailers would comply with the Sept. 29 date, it surely must have known that some stores would sell early.

In Canada, Nintendo notched up "the biggest one-day sale" in its history, said NOC General Manager Peter MacDougall. He predicted NOC would sell at least 150,000 systems this year.

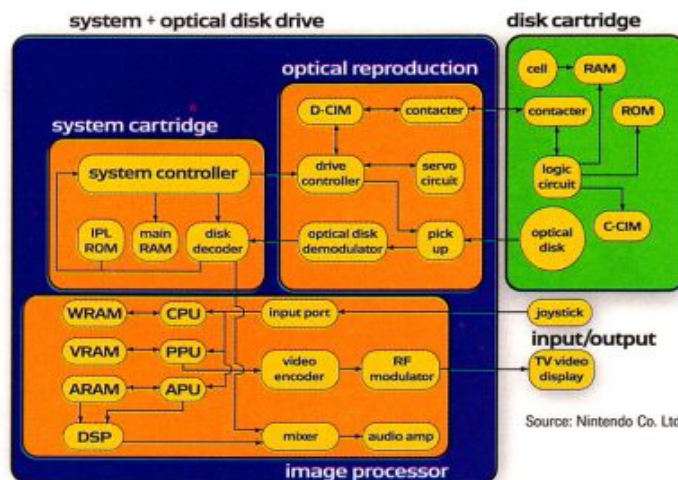
The U.S. launch also revealed the security method used to prevent U.S. systems from playing Japanese games: little notches in the back of N64 cartridges vary from U.S. to Japan—a method similar to the different cart shapes for the Super NES and Super Famicom Systems. At this point, no security chips exist in the cartridges, which

## THE BIG STORY

# NINTENDO'S OTHER

### Road Map to Bulky Drive?

The schematic at right is a block diagram of how the optical disk drive would interact with the system (in this instance, the Super NES). First, the optical disk sends serial data, or "raw bits," into the system. The bits are stored in semiconductors until decoded by the system, then transferred to various processors: CPU for main functions, PPU for picture data and APU for audio data. It would process this data based on the joystick input and send the resulting picture and audio to the TV.



Barring some unforeseen disaster, Nintendo will have given the world the first glimpse of the 64DD, known as the bulky drive, at the Shoshinkai trade show in Japan. As an alternative to the CD-ROMs of 32-Bit systems, the 64DD add-on will plug into the underside of the Nintendo 64. It will use 3.75-inch-wide 64 MB magnetic disks, which unlike CDs, can be written over and offer far faster data transfer times. As a result, the bulky drive will pave the way for user-customized N64 games that aren't hampered by long data load times, Nintendo has said.





So how did the two launch titles fare? Well, the pictures say it all. Sales of Super Mario 64 literally mirrored system sales at an unsurprising one-to-one ratio. PilotWings 64 sales got off the ground but didn't exactly soar: one game sold per four N64s.

contradicts statements made by Nintendo of America officials at the Electronic Entertainment Expo last May. (In fact, a Nintendo rep in August said the company was still considering a chip-based lockout as a

## Days it Took to Sell 100,000

224 **Sega Saturn**

91 **PlayStation**

1 **Nintendo 64**

Ahh, the figure Nintendo wants the world to know about: It took the company one day to sell 100,000 U.S. N64 systems, compared to months for its competitors.

Those numbers (which contradict earlier reports from other magazines) may sound impressive, but other factors get lost in the summary. The Saturn's "launch" began with limited national distribution; both systems hit the market at a higher price tag. Still, this figure underscores the overwhelming initial demand for the N64—but it remains to be seen how long Nintendo can sustain that demand.

Sources: Nintendo, NPD Research

possibility even at that late date; in retrospect, that account seems highly suspect.)

In addition, the success of the N64 launch has fueled speculation as to the number of systems that'll actually be available this Christmas. Nintendo has remained coy about the figures, but has said between 500,000 to 600,000 systems will be available between now and Christmas. Some industry officials have cast doubt on those figures, claiming that the "shortage crisis" Nintendo has concocted is nothing more than a brilliant sales ploy. Fueling such thoughts was a statement from Nintendo of America Chairman Howard Lincoln, who

predicted "U.S. retailers can sell more than 1.5 million units by Christmas, if there is any way to receive that much inventory from Japan."

Speaking of numbers, more rumors abound as to Sony and Sega's reaction to the N64 debut. EGM's online colleagues received reports from various distributors who claimed to buy 32-Bit systems at wholesale prices that would indicate price drops from \$199 to \$179 or \$149. Despite these rumors, both Sony and Sega have made no announcements. Quite the opposite: Sony spent most of the N64's launch week fending off rumors of an impending system price drop. ■

# DISK DRIVE...

## Remember that 32-Bit CD-ROM Super NES Add-On? EGM Analyzes How That Vaporware Might Have Shaped the N64's 64DD Design...

While many gamers may perceive the bulky drive peripheral as Nintendo's first stab at an optical-disk-based game system, they are mistaken. In fact, Nintendo's research into such a project began in the 16-Bit era, when it considered a CD-ROM add-on to the Super NES.

That project (which involved Sony) was ultimately shelved by Nintendo; still, the design

research gave the company more than enough ideas to lay the foundation for the N64 bulky drive's design.

To that end, EGM editors have acquired documents recently made public that describe in detail Nintendo's Super NES CD-ROM plans. Not only do these documents show Nintendo's ultimate "vision" of an optical disk system, but they



More info on the first bulky drive game, *Zelda 64*, was expected when the bulky drive debuted in Shoshinkai in November.

also reveal design advances that might very well be incorporated into the bulky drive and disks.

(Continued on Page 22)

## PRESS START



**Sega** has officially thrown its hat into the price battle arena by juggling its Saturn software retail prices. Notably, the cost of the most expensive games will drop from \$69.99 to \$59.99; some games will sell for as low as \$19.99. The company has also dropped prices of more than 20 games including Panzer Dragoon II, Legend of Oasis and Clockwork Knight II (above). The price cuts give **Sega** better leverage as it heads into the holidays against **Sony** and **Nintendo**. One ace up **Sega's** sleeve is its Net Link add-on for the Saturn; look in this section for a detailed look at the Net Link's online features.

This story comes from **EGM's** online pals: For those who couldn't get enough of the *Mortal Kombat* movie soundtrack, **TVT Records** plans to follow it up with a *More Mortal Kombat* CD, filled with additional high-energy tracks. Cuts on this album, from bands such as God Lives Underwater and Sepultura, were recorded exclusively for this project, reps said.

EGM 21



## NINTENDO'S OTHER DISK DRIVE...

(Continued from Page 21)

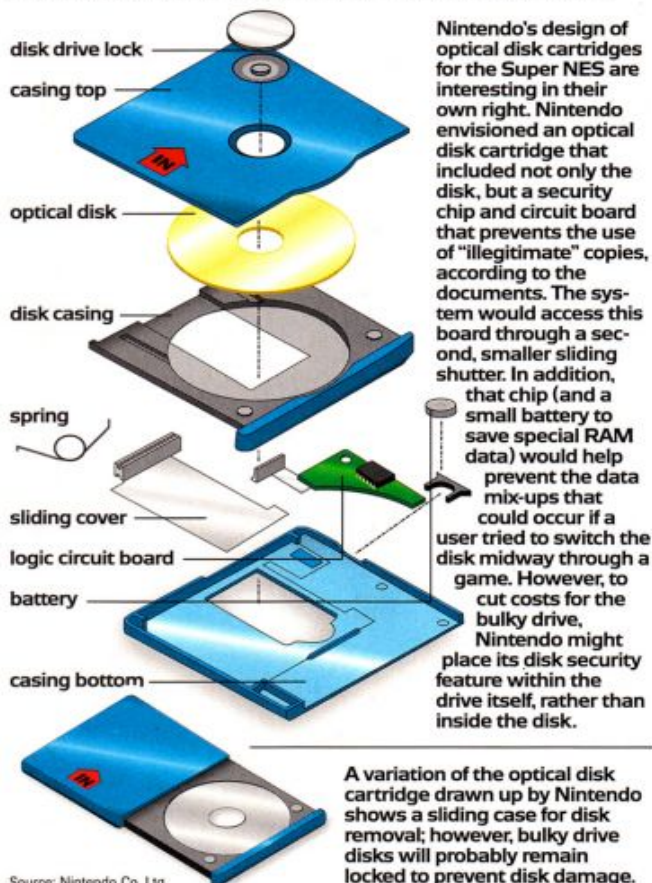
It's been long rumored that **Crystal Dynamics** sought a switch from publisher to developer, but only recently has the company made details of that switch publicly available. The company will adapt a "studio model" meaning that it will develop and market its own games, but leave the distribution to other companies, said CEO Ted Ardell. The news directly affects two of the company's eagerly awaited titles: *Pandemonium!* and *Legacy of Kain*. For *Pandemonium!*, a classic platform game with 3-D graphics, **Crystal Dynamics** has picked software giant **Electronic Arts** to distribute the game throughout North America. For the dark adventure game *Legacy of Kain*, the company signed a deal with **Activision** for distribution of not only that game, but also a possible sequel. Both games are expected to ship by Christmas.

**Acclaim** News, Part One: The massive restructuring at the company has hit the highest level, with Jim DeRose taking the helm as the company's president and chief operating officer of the company's North American division. DeRose will help solidify the company's top management positions, which underwent major changes when company president Robert Holmes stepped down as president and CEO. Holmes will continue to work with **Acclaim** as a consultant, according to a company statement.

■ **Feature No. 1—The Data Shuffle:** It's no secret Nintendo ditched the CD-ROM format because its data transfer rates were too slow. That didn't stop them from trying: For the CD-ROM drive, Nintendo engineers designed a way to speed up data transfer rates through the combination of multiple processors and a data bus selector, which controlled data flow. The selector worked like a floodgate, allowing compressed data from the optical disk to transfer to a dedicated RAM area. Instead of letting the main CPU decode the compressed data, the "flood-gate" would close, forcing a specialized faster processor to decompress the disk data instead. Once the data was ready to "ship out," the "flood-gate" would open, this time to send the data to the main CPU. A data transfer system like this in the bulky drive would make sense; the RAM expansion pack that'll come with the bulky drive may be used to store compressed serial-bit data streamed directly from the optical disk. This method would put less strain on the N64's main CPU.

■ **Feature No. 2—The Disk Cartridge:** A major concern for the Super NES CD-ROM cartridge, and surely the bulky drive disks, is described in documents as the need to "prevent scratches" from the sliding shutter, as well as ensure that "the shutter is not accidentally

## Nintendo's Original Disk Design



opened allowing a user to touch or contaminate the [disk]."

To do this, Nintendo engineers found an ingenious disk design. Unlike 3.5-inch floppy disks, which have metal shutters that are easily opened by hands, the optical disks' shutters are kept between two layers of plastic (see above diagram). The plastic prevents the sliding shut-

ter from scratching the optical disk. Since the shutter is housed within the plastic case, it prevents accidental openings that could allow dirt to get inside.

Of course, how much or how little Nintendo applies its Super NES CD-ROM ideas to its bulky drive peripheral still remains to be seen. Look for more bulky drive details in a future *EGM*. ■

## PREVIEW

## NAKI CUTS ITS CORDS

## Wireless Arcade Sticks Hit PlayStation, Saturn

A wireless arcade-style joystick for 32-Bit gamers has finally hit the scene, courtesy of peripheral maker Naki International.

Both the PS Wireless Joystick and the SS Wireless Joystick have an eight-button layout, as well as Slow-motion and Turbo Fire controls.

These joysticks send infrared signals to the system via a plug-in module (which doesn't



These wireless joysticks have an operating range between 15-35 feet. Plus, the joystick can be held by the user at up to a 45-degree angle.

interfere with the memory card slot in the PlayStation version).

Four AA batteries can power the joystick for up to 40 hours. Instead of an on/off switch, the joysticks automatically turn off after 140 seconds of inactivity to prevent battery drain.

Each joystick will retail for \$59.99 and should currently be available in stores. ■