

Obituaries - Nintendo 64

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Obituaries

Its glorious show kept the world entertained - but success came at a terrible price.

Nintendo 64

The Nintendo 64, which has died, aged just under nine years, from being crushed by a binman's lorry, kept audiences of the last generation thoroughly entertained with its handsome looks and cheekily playful nature. But success for the Japanese star came at a terrible price.

Born 'Project Reality' in late 1994 in Kyoto, Japan to parents Shigeru Miyamoto and Hiroshi Yamauchi, it experienced a torturous upbringing, locked in a cold, sterile room and forbidden from seeing or speaking to the general public.

According to Andrew Morton's seminal biography, *Putting the Cart before the Horse Sense*, Miyamoto spent every waking hour with his new baby - in sharp contrast to Yamauchi's emotionless parenting. "Hiroshi wasn't interested in playing games," he wrote. "He was counting the days until his new offspring was ready to go out into the world and make money for the family."

Despite Shigeru's claustrophobic obsession with keeping Project Reality away from the outside world "until he's ready", Hiroshi's cold impatience - and merciless scarlet-faced beatings - won through. Through brief public outings, the two-year-old, nicknamed 'Ultra 64' by friends, developed a cult following. In 1996, it reinvented itself as 'Nintendo 64', and began a worldwide tour, commencing in Tokyo's Akihabra district and supported by high-flying stunt team Pilotwings and Chuckle Brothers-style duo The Mario Brothers.

Press and public alike were bewitched, but the euphoria was short-lived. Quickly developing a reputation as "troublesome to work with" and "too big a risk," the Nintendo 64 saw financial and creative support soon dry up. "The

momentum was lost," recalled Morton. "All that little guy wanted was to be loved, but the big investors looked at Nintendo 64 with eyes as cold as Yamauchi's icy heart". Wracked with loneliness and paranoia, the Nintendo 64 complained in

private that the ever-worsening situation was "all a load of PS."

Finding it difficult to travel - many visits to Europe were delayed or cancelled for no good reason, and its displays here looked pale and lethargic -

the Nintendo 64 relied on enthusiasm in America, and support from seasoned acts such as Fox McCloud And The Useless Co-pilots and medieval troupe The Legend of Zelda. But the public was growing increasingly impatient with increasingly irregular and lacklustre performances, and the promise of new 'adult' material from The Mario Bros seemed a desperate step.

In 1999, the Nintendo 64 experienced a resurgence on the back of brief worldwide insanity over 151 unintelligible coloured blobs, and the award-winning slogan "Do not underestimate the power of Pokémon," courtesy of marketing guru Dick Francis. But when, in 2000, Shigeru Miyamoto and Hiroshi Yamauchi announced that they had conceived a new child, named Gamecube, the Nintendo 64's fate seemed sealed.

The sound of nails being banged into coffins rang out when European stand-up David Gosen took his notorious 'Nintendo Show' on the road in late 2001, bringing the house down with quips like "Mario Party 3 should give retailers cause for cheer this Christmas!" and "The future is bright for Nintendo 64!"

The Nintendo 64 is survived by the analogue stick, the Rumble Pak, and the 3D platformer.

Rigsby McDougall

Nintendo 64, videogames console, born 1993; died May 3 2002.



The N64, moments before its cruel demise under the wheels of a bin lorry.

Appreciations: Roy Porter

98 NGC ISSUE 67

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