

## Talk: ahead of the game?

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Shigeru Miyamoto sporting his N64 badge.

# Ahead of the game?

**W**hile Nintendo employ hundreds of highly talented people across the world, there are two men at the top who, more than anyone, are responsible for Nintendo's continued good health. Hiroshi Yamauchi is the businessman behind Nintendo's transformation from a small Kyoto playing cards manufacturer to the world's leading computer games giants. Shigeru Miyamoto is the games genius whose work on arcade and home machines, from *Donkey Kong*

in 1981 to *Super Mario 64* in 1996, has constantly redefined the state of the art.

While Hiroshi and Shigeru have completely different personas, much is demanded of them at Nintendo's annual show. Yamauchi must deliver a speech outlining the current state of the company he leads and its future direction, and Miyamoto must show that he and his co-workers can keep the hits coming. **N64** Magazine was at Space World to hear the two men speak. This is what they had to say.

## Hiroshi Yamauchi

**S**peaking on the first day of the show, to a hushed throng of shareholders, journalists and gamers, Yamauchi gave an idea of quite how far Nintendo were preparing to change in the next couple of years. The speech itself lasted about an hour-and-a-half, but its main thrust can be distilled down to a number of major points.

### Yamauchi on: the state of the N64

The N64 has done well in America but after initially strong sales, stalled in Japan. The lack of software has been a

problem but simply providing more is not the answer.

### Yamauchi on: the games market

People are becoming tired with the same old titles. Very few games offer anything new and, importantly, very few games producers are making any money from them. We believe that if there were only a tenth of the current releases (on all formats) then the situation would improve considerably.

### Yamauchi on: the way forward

The biggest game phenomenon in Japan is *Pocket Monsters*, which has

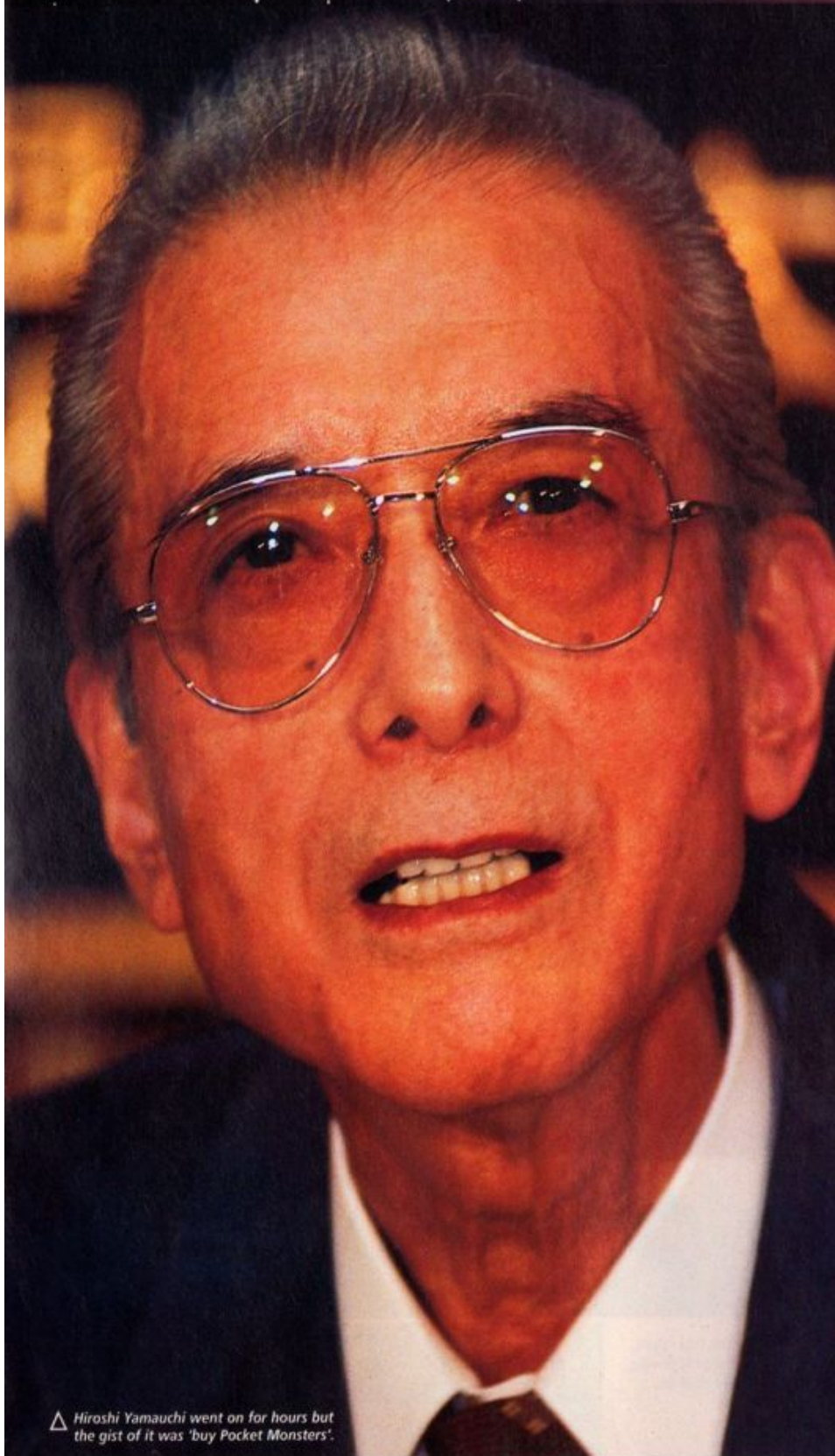
outsold everything that we have ever produced. We have analysed this game and found that it contains four key ideas which we think will form the basis of the software industry's future. These are:

### Nurturing

The first nurturing game was the *Tamagotchi*. Nurturing games require the gamer to nurse a virtual entity and care for its growth and development. The 64DD game *Cabbage* is an attempt to take this idea one step forward. It's a type of game that







△ Hiroshi Yamauchi went on for hours but the gist of it was 'buy Pocket Monsters'.



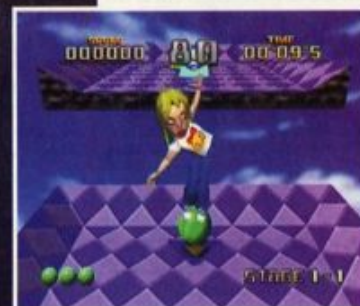
△ What part will Pocket Monsters Stadium play in Nintendo's future?



△ Can making pictures really be the future for Nintendo's fans across the World?



△ Will we be able to make our own personal versions of games with our own graphics?



△ And maybe see characters we've designed in the leading roles?





Nintendo feels is impossible on other games machines other than the N64 and 64DD.

### Trading and Collecting

This is a concept realised by *Pocket Monsters* and the Game Boy connection cable, where gamers can swap different Monsters amongst one another. The fun to be had here is similar to the age-old tradition of collecting and swapping trading cards. It is also another thing that present game systems cannot do. The beauty of the link up cable is that you can see the person you're trading or competing with rather than the anonymity of the Net.

### Addition

The idea of addition is that once a game has been bought, extra bits and pieces for it can be released to lengthen its life. Examples here will be the extra *F-Zero* tracks that will become available for the DD once the cart game has been out for a while.

The beauty of addition is twofold. Firstly sales of software can be prolonged past three weeks (when the vast majority are sold) which is good for the manufacturer. Secondly, the gamer can get more pleasure out of a single title, rather than conquering it and becoming tired of it in a few weeks.

### Yamauchi on: the 64DD launch

To make the system successful, we have to persuade the public that it has unique features to offer. This is why the launch has been delayed until June – until the launch software line-up is exactly right. People have complained about the lack of RPGs, but even RPGs have a limited life. We are trying to create games and software that will last a lot longer.

### Yamauchi on: Pocket Monsters

Nintendo want everyone in the world to experience *Pocket Monsters*, but different countries have different traits, and alternative versions of the game are currently being worked on. The USA will be the first country outside Japan to get the chance to play.

### Yamauchi on: the future

The games market is on the edge of a big decline in Japan. It is healthier elsewhere, but will soon face the same problem. If videogames cannot break away from the conventional ideas, it will be the end of the business. We are trying to create a new entertainment industry based on new types of game, the equipment to share these games and other secondary products related to the

games. We see a future where everything is connected and where they can expand the horizon of the entertainment industry.

### N64 Comment

As show speeches go this is a biggy. What Yamauchi seems to be saying is that we should stop looking for bulging release lists and the scattergun approach to games publishing, where maybe one game in ten is a hit. Nintendo want their new games – especially those on the DD – to be ones where gamers can become far more involved, can swap data with their friends and buy extra bits and pieces to keep their enthusiasm fired.

It's difficult to get excited about this if, like us, you've never been able to play – or even properly imagine – a game like *Pocket Monsters*. It's easier to see what Yamauchi's driving at, though, if you take some more familiar examples.

Say you bought your *F-Zero* cart on the second day of its release and played and played it until you'd beaten all its courses. That might take you a week. You concentrate on the multiplayer mode, but after a couple of weeks you tire of that as well. Imagine now that Miyamoto releases a DD disk with another 12 tracks along with a track editor to make your own. How many more weeks would that keep you going? What if you could import polygon shapes and textures from *Picture Maker* and *Polygon Maker* – or even your own face from *Talent Maker* – to decorate your new tracks. Not convinced? How about extra levels for *Zelda*, or maybe a dungeon editor allowing you to build your own levels and share them with your friends. Is that cool? We think so.

And who knows, maybe Europe and America will be taken by storm by *Pocket Monsters* and its happy band of associated titles.

Nintendo are looking to the future – the real future, not just where the next decent driving game is coming from. We shall see what happens.



△ 'Lylat Wars? I'm glad I'm not responsible for that. N64's a great read, though, I get it every month.' (Rough translation)



N64 Badge proudly on his lapel, Shigeru autographs a Space World ticket JUST FOR YOU! Well, if you win the competition below, that is.

## Shigeru Miyamoto

**D**oing some of the speaking for him, *Zelda*, *Yoshi*, *F-Zero X* and *1080° Snowboarding* were some of Shigeru's current projects down on the show floor wowing the audience. However, like Yamauchi he concentrated his talk mainly on the 64DD and the future for games development.

### Miyamoto on: the 64DD

I think it is clear now why we did not opt for the non-writable CD format for the DD. None of our plans would be possible on a non-recording format.

### Miyamoto on: nurturing games

It's not just Tamagotchi-style games that can be considered as nurturing games. There are elements of RPGs that also have this element - where you care for and grow your character over a period of time. Also, the *Maker Trilogy* has a different kind of nurturing, where you're making data grow.

### Miyamoto on: the exchange and collection

You know that Nintendo are going to be selling a 3D *Sim City* game for the 64DD and Maxis are going to sell a *Sim Copter* game. By using both pieces of software you'll be able to fly in the *Sim Copter* helicopter around cities created by you in *Sim City*. In the *Maker* series of games, work in one package can be transferred and used in another.

### Miyamoto on: addition

The only concrete information I can give you about this is that *F-Zero X* has been programmed with the possibility of making an *F-Zero* disk to follow it. The disk will contain new courses and allow you to create your own and swap them with your friends.

### Miyamoto on: the Game Boy adaptor

This new adaptor will allow games to be played both on Game Boy and on the N64. I know that you aren't familiar with *Pocket Monsters* so I will use another example. If you are playing a war simulation on the N64, you will be able to download your game onto a Game Boy cart and continue to play a limited part of the game while you're away from the N64 and your TV. You could solve a puzzle while you're on the train, for instance, then go back home and load your game back onto the N64.

### Miyamoto on: Cabbage

*Cabbage* is going to be the lead character in a Tamagotchi-style game

for the 64DD. Because the DD has a clock inside it, *Cabbage* will be able to be active when you're not actually playing the game. However, you'll be able to download data from the DD onto Game Boy carts and look after the character while you're outside using the Game Boy. You'll also be able to buy *Cabbage* toys - slides and swings for instance - to play with. This data you'll be able to download from real stores and swap and exchange with your friends.

### Miyamoto on: new game players

The generation that grew up with computer games are becoming less and less interested in them. The thousands of children who have come to Space World have become interested but in a whole different type of game - not the type of game which we were very excited about a few years ago.

### Miyamoto on: the games he wants to make

When I think about what a game means to the game player, I want my games to be loved by, let's say your

father or mother and your friends in the neighbourhood and everybody.

### WIN! SHIGS'S AUTOGRAPH

Lovely chap, Mr Miyamoto - all smiles and patience answering (probably) the same questions over and over again from press all around the world. He seemed very chuffed with the N64 pin badge we gave him and put it straight on the lapel of his suit. (If you look at any picture taken of him on the first day, you'll probably be able to spot it). Anyway, we didn't have much time alone with the great man, just long enough to give him the badge and for him to autograph a Space World ticket. If you'd like to win this sacred document - we're not keeping it for ourselves, we like you THAT much - jot down the answer to this simple (ish) question and send it to: **Touched by the Hand of God, N64 Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW.**

**Question:** What is the name of Shigeru Miyamoto's first game for Nintendo?

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