

# The best cometh...

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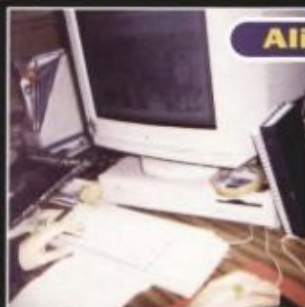
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The present-opening is over, all the little chocolate bells have vanished from the tree and the turkey is down to sandwiches (though surprisingly enough there are still two full tubs of cheesy footballs in the larder). Yes, the festive season is over and it's only a matter of time before the new series of *Grange Hill* starts. Time to dig deep into your inner psyche, then, and extract that new year's resolution that you'll promise to keep faithful to all year long. Yeah, right...

## PROFILES



### Alison Harper

"Apart from trying to curb my insatiable desire for ginger nuts, my new year's resolution is to stop using work time to surf the Net in search of useless information that I can sell articles about to *The .net Directory*. (Even though I make a huge wad of cash doing so each month.)"



### Ollie Alderton

"I vow to watch as many sub-standard '50s B-movies as possible. Especially ones that contain obvious stock footage whenever the American military are called in to deal with a monster/alien/atomically-enhanced animal that's operated by visible wires."



### Tony Mott

"My resolution is to give up beer, tabs and late nights. Apart from being unhealthy pursuits, generally speaking, partaking of such delights leaves me so strapped of cash each month that I can hardly afford my steady diet of burgers, pizzas and fried chicken. Er, hold on..."



### Wil Overton

"I will not abuse *Super Play's* petty cash tin by getting our Japanese correspondent to buy expensive RPGs and music CDs that the magazine has no use for after one issue and that I can smuggle into the depths of my bag, never again to be seen in the office. Then again..."

# THE BEAST COMETH...

Just as promised, Nintendo unveiled the successor to the Super Nintendo at the Shoshinkai Software Exhibition '95 on November 24. In a hail of publicity – the event enjoyed CNN coverage in the States – the Ultra 64 finally turned from the stuff of dreams to something to touch, and the reception it received was that of general mass excitement, with just a touch of disappointment thrown in by some for good measure.

The downer came in the form of only two pieces of playable software on display – a 50% version of *Super Mario 64* and a 20%-complete *Kirby Bowl 64* (see full previews elsewhere). Nintendo had, of course, promised to have ten games ready to test, but three days prior to the exhibition made the decision to display the remaining games in the line-up on videotape only. The reason? It's difficult to say for definite. One theory suggests that Nintendo were eager for their new *Mario* title to get all the attention; if it was jostling with lots of other titles there was a danger it might not make the impact they were hoping for. Also worth bearing in mind is that if all the games had been available to play, some would have been running in a distinctly unfinished state, lacking soundtracks and finer presentation details and suchlike, and Nintendo did not want to risk show reports appearing based on the strength of beta versions such as this. Lastly there's the psychological factor of showing their entire hand: after playing ten of the system's games now, wouldn't everyone demand to see *another* ten when the machine gets its next public airing? Probably.

Another oddity concerning the unveiled games was the conspicuous lack of home versions of *Killer Instinct* and *Cruis'n USA*. There had been rumours that Rare's coin-op update had been canned because it was proving too weighty to be crunched down to the Nintendo-imposed launch line-up cart limit of 64 megabits. Rare's Production Manager Simon Farmer, however, is quick to quash such talk: "*Killer Instinct* will certainly be making an appearance on the Ultra and we'll show it when we think the timing is right. The game wasn't released as a consumer title in Japan so to show it at Shoshinkai wasn't considered appropriate timing." *Cruis'n USA* is certainly still happening, and failed to appear because of its obvious all-American origins. By not showing games which could be judged squarely against benchmark



Although Ninty promised 100 Ultra 64s to win at Shoshinkai, not one attendee left with a machine...



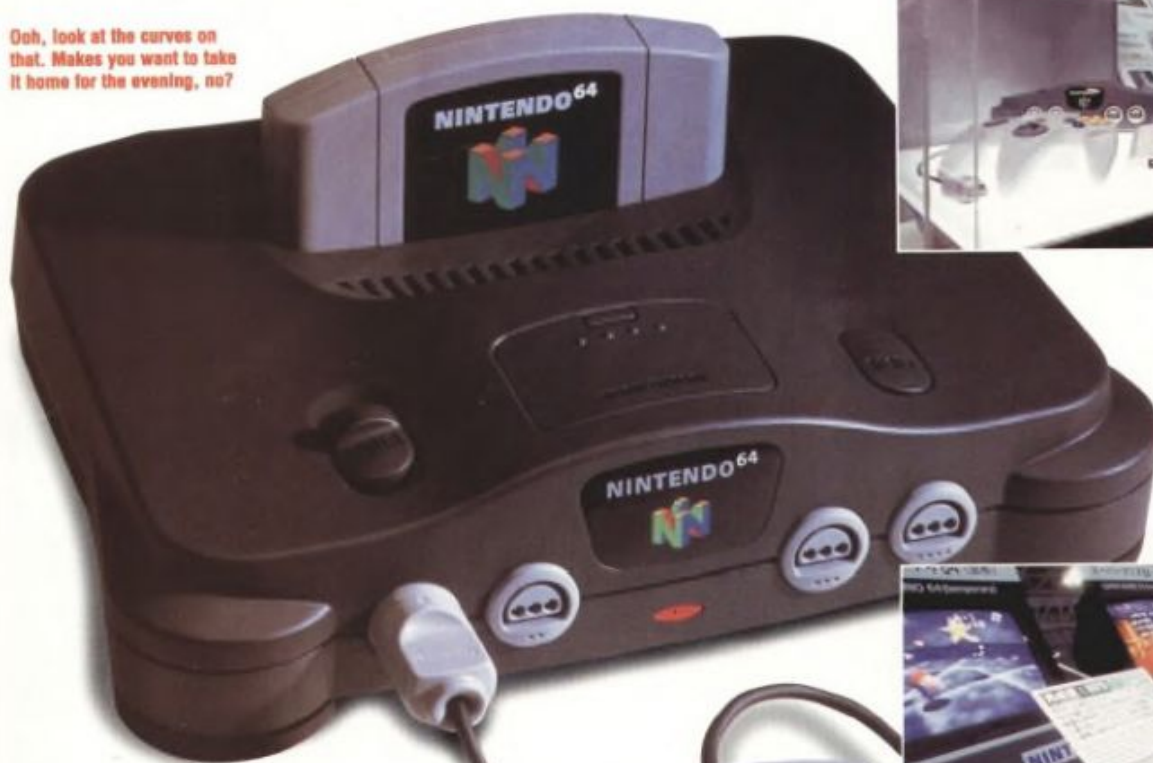
# EXPRESS

SUPER NINTENDO NEWS NETWORK SUPER NINTENDO NEWS NETWORK

SUPER EXPRESS

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Ooh, look at the curves on that. Makes you want to take it home for the evening, no?



titles of other platforms, Nintendo also cleverly shielded their machine from potentially unfavourable comparisons with the likes of Saturn *Sega Rally* and PlayStation *Ridge Racer*.

So what was the buzz like around the machine? One developer had this to say: "We've been working with 3D for around five years now and the Ultra 64 represents a completely new era". Others, however, were not quite so optimistic: "It's not really doing much that we haven't seen on the PlayStation - take away its mipmap interpolation and there's not much left to get excited about..."

This feeling was reflected elsewhere, with numerous industry-watchers claiming that the finished unit could not, in fact, throw around a noticeably larger amount of polygons than that of its main market rival, the PlayStation.

But processing funk should never be an issue when comparing a Nintendo machine to any other, because the big N's effort has access to that most valuable of videogaming commodities: gameplay - a vast amount of which is currently bottled up, just waiting to be siphoned into millions of their carts as they begin their next assault on global domination.

The bottom line? Nintendo is the most talented videogame company in the world; it appears to have created the greatest ever videogames machine to go in it.



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## SEVEN FLAVOURS OF PAD

The Ultra 64's joypad is a whopping piece of kit in itself: at least twice the size of a standard SNES 'pad and packed with more features than a NASA control deck (almost).

Apart from its most obvious technical innovation (more of which in a mo), the finished joypad surprised all who saw it by being available in no less than seven colour schemes: grey (the standard version you'll get with the machine), black, dark blue, light blue, red, green and yellow. Yep, multi-player gaming is high on Nintendo's agenda, with the obvious advantage of such a variety of colours coming from sitting down for a frenzied multi-player sesh with three friends and knowing at a glance which controller's yours.

On the pad's front you get two standard control buttons (marked, in traditional Nintendo fashion, A and B), along with four yellow ones arranged in a diamond configuration. Each of these is marked with a direction, with Nintendo indicating their primary uses as switching between various viewpoints during play — although they're definable to perform any game function, naturally. The 'trigger' on the underside of the 'pad' — which will only realistically be of use in games controlled via the analogue stick — is now marked as 'Z', and is square in appearance. Finally, there's a pair of SNES-style shoulder L and R buttons set along the 'pad's top — this little beggar has everything but the kitchen sink.

The central stick is a sprung, self-centring device which is much sturdier than it looks. If you've tinkered with Philips' original CD-i joypad you'll be familiar with its style — Ninty's version offers a similar amount of throw but is much more robust.

And let's not forget the 'pad's memory card facility: the slot on its underside takes itty-bitty little mini-cartridges which will be most commonly used for saving game positions and game option settings. Nintendo have also claimed that they can be programmed with an individual's gameplay style, allowing the 'pad to 'learn' the playing nuances of a human opponent and replicate it later in that person's absence. (Though we're a bit sceptical over this last claim, frankly.)

What all these features add up to, of course, is an expensive little device and also a unique one

— you certainly won't see third parties creating their own versions of it and selling them for less than the real thing, as is increasingly the case with formats such as the PlayStation. How much can you expect to pay for your second, third and fourth pads?

Nintendo have yet to confirm, but we're betting on something like £35-40.

Although the console itself does not appear to have any facility built-in for linking up machines for multi-player matches, it may be possible to network two or more Ultra 64s through its joypad sockets.

Nintendo have, incidentally, made it clear that the joypad sockets could be put to use with many different types of controller types, but haven't said what they might be. Now, a virtual reality headset, that would be interesting...

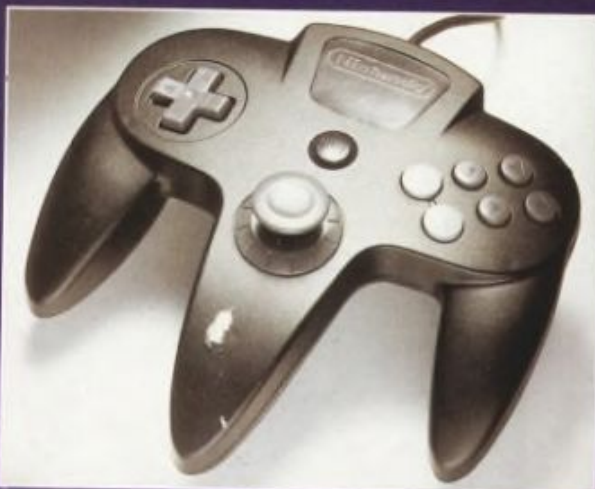
So what's going to be your favourite colour? We're quite taken with the light blue variation, but we won't be happy 'til we have a full set, of course.



This is where to stick your save-game cards — in the back. Lovely.



Look at the size of this baby! A veritable porker of a pad.



The US version of the Ultra 64's 'pad currently looks like this. Note the subtle difference on the joystick...



So what happens when someone produces an Ultra 64 multi-pad? Simultaneous eight player gaming? (Maybe.)



See that? That's the joypad's Z button — used as a trigger-type device in conjunction with the joystick.



## Nintendo 64 GAMES

- Super Mario 64 – Nintendo
- Super Mario Kart – Nintendo
- Kirby Bowl 64 – Nintendo
- Wave Race 64 – Nintendo
- The Legend of Zelda – Nintendo (Bulky Drive game)
- Killer Instinct 2 – Nintendo/Rare
- Blastdozer – Nintendo/Rare
- Goldeneye 007 – Nintendo/Rare
- Ken Griffey Jr. Baseball – Nintendo/Rare
- Cruis'n USA – Nintendo/Williams Entertainment
- Body Harvest – Nintendo/DMA Design
- Pilotwings 64 – Nintendo/Paradigm Simulations
- Creator – Nintendo/Software Creations
- Buggie-Boogie – Nintendo/Angel Studios
- Starfox 64 – Nintendo/Argonaut Software
- Turok: Dinosaur Hunter – Acclaim
- Ultra Doom – Williams Entertainment
- QTE Interactive Media's game
- Top Gun: A New Adventure – Spectrum Holobyte
- Mortal Kombat 3 by Williams Entertainment
- Red Baron – Sierra Online
- Robotech Academy – Gametek
- Monster Dunk – Mindscape
- Shadows of the Empire – LucasArts Entertainment
- FIFA Soccer '97 – EA Sports
- Wayne Gretzky 3D Hockey – Time Warner Interactive
- Final Fantasy VII – Squaresoft (Bulky Drive game)
- Frank Thomas Big Hurt Baseball – Acclaim
- Ace Driver – Namco
- Mission: Impossible – Ocean
- SoulStorm – Virtual Hollywood
- Alien Trilogy – Acclaim
- Quake – Id Software
- Stacker – Virgin Interactive
- Prey – Apogee/3D Realms
- Dragon Quest VII – Enix (Bulky Drive game)

These are the final Ultra 64 specs direct from Nintendo's labs:

### CPU

MIPS 64-bit RISC-based (customised R4000 series)  
Clock speed: 93.75Mhz

### MEMORY

Rambus DRAM 36Mbit  
Maximum transfer speed: 4,500 Mbit/second

### CO-PROCESSOR

RPC incorporating SP (sound and graphics processor) and DP (pixel drawing processor)  
Clock speed: 62.5Mhz

### DISPLAY

Minimum: 256 x 224 pixels; maximum: 640 x 480 pixels  
Flicker-free interlace mode

### COLOUR

32-bit RGBA pixel colour frame buffer support  
21-bit colour video output

### GRAPHICS PROCESSING FUNCTIONS

Z buffering  
Anti-aliasing  
Realistic texture-mapping featuring:  
Tri-linear filtered mipmap interpolation  
Perspective correction  
Environment mapping

### DIMENSIONS

Width 260mm (10.23") x Depth 190mm (7.48") x Height 73mm (2.87")

### WEIGHT

1.1kg (2.42lb)

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## SUPER PLAY SHOSHINKAI AWARDS



**Best graphics**  
**SUPER MARIO 64**



**Best gameplay**  
**SUPER MARIO 64\***

\*Hey, there were only two to choose from



**Best use of the N64's power**  
**SUPER MARIO 64**



**Best-looking Brit game**  
**BLASTDOZER**



**Dullest-looking game**  
**BUGGIE BOOGIE**



**Oddest-looking game**  
**CREATOR**

Turn over for top Ultra 64 facts and the big N's speech...







## SHOSHINKAI, JAPAN — NINTENDO 64 UN

Nintendo 64  
FACTS

- At the time of writing, there is still no firm date in place for the Ultra 64's UK and European launch. THE's Managing Director Alan Taylor is confident that it'll reach us as soon as April next year (at around £200), but a delivery in September seems more likely.
- Cart sizes can effectively range from 64 megabits (eight megabytes) up to 256 megabits (32 megabytes) in size, although 64 and 96 megabits (12 megabytes) will be the most common cart sizes when the system launches.
- Now that the hardware has been shown, Nintendo have met with a number of Japanese third-party developers to talk about signing for the system. Konami and Capcom have still to be officially confirmed, but they make up a number of big-name PlayStation and Saturn licensees believed to be wandering back over to Nintendo territory.
- The Bulky Drive will make its debut one year on from that of the Ultra 64 at Shoshinkai '96 next November. The new *Zelda*, *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Quest* instalments will accompany it. Yahoo!

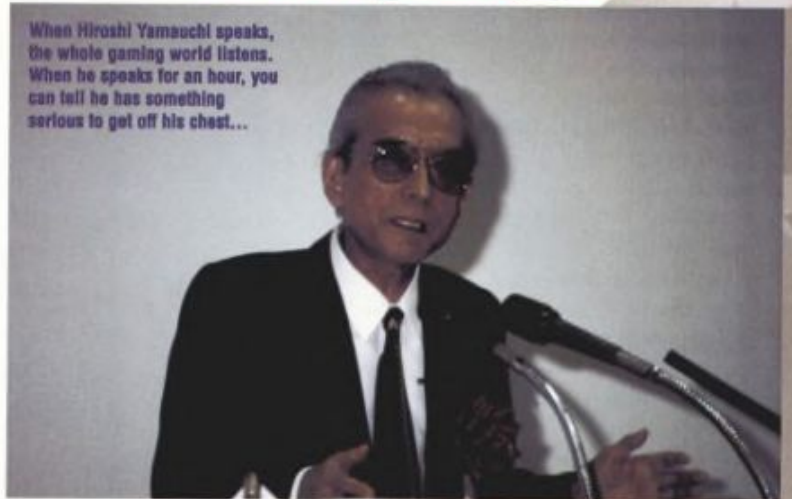


This time next year, these *Dragon Quest VI* girls could be promoting the Nintendo 64 version of *Dragon Quest VII*.

- The core audience for the machine will be the same as that of the SNES — 8-15 year olds. So, although there will be a wide range of software types for the machine in the long term, it looks like wholesome family entertainment will make up Nintendo's own games. (Just wait for *Ultra Doom*, though, heh heh...)
- Williams will release a coin-op in 1996 using a modified version of the Ultra 64 technology. Nintendo also look set to take the system into the arcades, possibly with a *Killer Instinct* 'special edition'.
- Nintendo have claimed that members of the so-called Dream Team have agreed not to release their N64 titles on any other format within 12 months of their release. These outside of this circle appear to have no such restraints — EA spring to mind, with their planned version of *FIFA* for the machine. It's not yet clear where exactly the benefits of Dream Team membership lie...

## The Presidential Campaign

When Hiroshi Yamauchi speaks, the whole gaming world listens. When he speaks for an hour, you can tell he has something serious to get off his chest...



At 3pm on November 24, 1995, Nintendo President Hiroshi Yamauchi took to the main podium at the Shoshinkai Software Exhibition '95 and looked out across over an acre of floorspace packed with eager showgoers. His proceeding speech lasted an hour and was perhaps the most important public address Nintendo have ever made. Here are the edited highlights, along with *Super Play's* analysis of his spiel:

**He sez:** "Despite the lack of unique titles, we still thought it (Virtual Boy) could be sold. I want to return to the starting point and find titles that emphasize the difference that Virtual Boy games can provide. I want to start afresh in 1996."

**We sez:** It's obviously interesting to hear Nintendo say they want to wipe the slate clean and start afresh. Such an admission is atypical of the company, whose pride has undoubtedly taken a bashing after the relative failure of the Virtual Boy.

**He sez:** "But I'm here to talk about the market and the Nintendo 64, not the Virtual Boy."

**We sez:** Phew.

**He sez:** "I might be bragging, but when this game is complete, it may be the best video game in history. The launch of *Super Mario 64* with the Nintendo 64 will occur next April 21st."

**We sez:** Yes, that's bragging in our book, and it's something else that's a bit out of character for

Nintendo. Yamauchi is being bolshy — perhaps this is something that's aimed at Sega and Sony, both of whose attitudes are traditionally more aggressive. Maybe we're about to see a new Nintendo emerging...

**He sez:** "Clearly, when users who have been playing with Super Famicom *Mario Kart* can tell exactly how different the (Nintendo) 64 title is, then the players would know for themselves what the features and characteristics of the Nintendo 64 are. And they will know just how different the Nintendo 64 is from other video game systems."

**We sez:** Yamauchi's picked up on *Mario Kart* because it's the biggest-selling SNES game ever (although *Super Mario World* is in more SNES owners' homes, it doesn't count because a great many copies were supplied packed-in with machines), and he knows how eager everyone is to see just how far the N64 can push the theme. *Mario Kart 64* is a trump-card game, and Nintendo know it'll be one title in particular that will expose the gulf in power which exists between the N64 and 32-bit consoles (er, despite it looking a bit weak right now, at its 20%-complete stage).

**He sez:** "Users will just reject repetitious titles. They are sophisticated. They aren't fooled by copycat titles."

**We sez:** Ooh, a direct reference to the slew of driving games and polygon beat-'em-ups which have been quick to follow the likes of *Ridge Racer* and *Virtua Fighter*. It's a bloody good point, too — after you've played the bona fide article (say, *Tekken*), unimaginative copies are simply the pits. Most importantly, Nintendo will actively prevent their third-party licensees from producing games which set out to copy those that already exist on other platforms.

**He sez:** "The market should be led by software. But when you're talking about the next generation machine, you're talking about



He may look dwarfed by the stage here, but this is the most powerful bloke in videogaming.



hardware. Users want software – creative, innovative software that offers a fun experience they have never witnessed before. This is a market that is led by software, so it doesn't make sense to talk about the so-called next generation machine."

**We sez:** Nintendo are hacked off by the next generation console war being fought over which machine can generate the most polygons per second rather than which has the best software. Does this mean they have doubts over the power of the N64's power now that it's finally passed through its vapourware period and has to fight it out against the PlayStation and Saturn in the oh-so-harsh light of day? Or perhaps Ninty really don't give a toss about how fast CPUs can process data, concentrating instead on the craft of game making? It's up to you.

**He sez:** "Why did we launch the Nintendo 64? To defend and protect the video game market? For Nintendo to become the sole, absolute, hegemony in the market? No. We are launching the Nintendo 64 to rescue and to save the market that is being threatened. Our objective is not to dominate the market. Rather we want to change the market so that users won't leave us. We want to assure our future."

**We sez:** This is interesting. Yamauchi has looked at what's happening to the videogame industry and decided that if certain parts continue the way they're going, they're going to stumble, falter and maybe even collapse completely. Bad games are bad news, and the sad fact is that there were probably just as many crappy platformers released in this last year as there were the year previous. Manufacturers working in other industries appear able to learn more from mistakes that are made, so why the difference? Nintendo are perhaps no better than the rest in some respects (how many tens of millions of dollars did they ploughed into marketing the Virtual Boy, exactly?), but they're openly recognising a deficiency and taking upon themselves to do something about it. Hoorah for them.

**He sez:** "The uniqueness of the Nintendo 64 controller enables new seeds or ideas to grow with developers. For example, the 3D Stick can be used in sports games such as soccer and baseball for more realistic control. A qualitative difference can be felt by the users. Without those changes, there may not be a future for video games."

**We sez:** Hmm. That last sentence can be read two ways: a) "Blimey, listen, we're serious about this Videogames In Decline problem"; and (more importantly) b) "To take part in the future of videogaming you'll have to buy our system, because you cannot experience the future of gameplay with our competition's formats". It doesn't really matter whether it's a genuine and heartfelt plea or a blatant marketing statement; the controller's contribution to the Nintendo 64 dream should be in no way

underestimated. Nintendo's rivals have failed to note its significance, and that may be to their cost.

**He sez:** "Many of you feel that CD-ROM is the call of

Atari, of course) has invited CD-ROM back to their place for a night cap. Claiming that DSPs (digital signal processors – like the Super FX chip) form an important part of their pro-cart stance sounds more



Press day at Shoshinkai, when the atmosphere was quiet in comparison to when the screaming hordes arrived on following days. To their dismay, few attendees managed to get more than a few minutes with *Mario*.



the day. But look at the latest buzz word in the computer world – plug-and-play – which is nothing but Famicom culture. In addition, customers thought that having no

loading time is a great advantage, but more importantly, by using ROM-based games, other chips can later be incorporated into the cartridge, which allows Nintendo to offer new game

than a little bit odd, though. After the years of planning and design work that went into the development of the Nintendo 64, wouldn't you feel just the slightest bit disenchanted with the prospect of buying an N64 game which could only run with power-boosting (and potentially expensive) supplementary chip(s)? After all, isn't the N64 supposed to be right on the cutting edge? And what happens to the DSP situation when the Bulky Drive format comes along? Games delivered on that format – which, let's face it, should be the most impressive games on the N64 – simply cannot benefit from DSPs... Nope, we're not convinced there'll be any carts which utilise what Ninty are calling mask ROMs.



Nintendo Vice President Howard Lincoln manages a smirk at Shoshinkai. And who can blame him?

opportunities to game developers. The N64 will carry on this tradition of using mask ROMs and computer chips to provide the most advanced games."

**We sez:** Now that Nintendo's killer system – power, controller, games and all – has finally come to light, Yamauchi obviously wants to assure the world that his company hasn't blundered in clinging so tightly to cartridges while everyone else (including even

**He sez:** "In addition to mask ROMs, Nintendo intends to provide a large capacity, high-speed peripheral that not only reads data, but it writes in, as well. At next year's exposition, this new media should be introduced in video games, and hopefully, visitors can play with and see what this new media can provide."

**We sez:** Okay, so Nintendo are saying you'll have to make do with carts for a year, then you'll be able to get your paws on some juicier storage capacity – the so-called Bulky Drive. Now we start entering some really interesting territory... Perhaps there's an underlying reason why Nintendo are reluctant to place, say, 400 Megabits of game capacity on their designers' laps and say, "Ere, fill this one up, will yers?" Indeed, wasn't Nintendo's last big game *Yoshi's Island* – yes, the game that reputedly took Shigeru Miyamoto and his team four years to create? That's four years for a 16 megabit cartridge. Does this mean we'll have to wait until the year 2000 and beyond before the N64's potential is realised? And don't laugh – developing for Ninty's new machine is a whole different ball game...

Turn the page for Shigeru Miyamoto on Super Mario 64!

