

Ultra 64: Renamed, rescheduled, revealed

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'Tis the season to be jolly. But it's very hard to retain an air of jolliness if you find a pile of cacky presents under the tree on Christmas morning. So, *Super Play* boys and girls, what are you hoping not to see making Santa's sack bulge on the eve of the 25th?

PROFILES



Alison Harper

"Look," said Alison, "if I'm going to have wobbly 3D vision that's all in red this Christmas, then it'll be through too many Marks & Spencer's puff pastry mince pies and industrial-sized quantities of Twiglets, not some half baked virtual Game Boy!" - "Blimey," we said as she went off to find the *Galactic Pinball* cartridge.



Ollie Alderton

Ollie loves all living things it's true but, alas, when it comes to the botanical arts the feeling isn't reciprocal. That's why he definitely doesn't want a certain Chris Cringle popping a pot from Homebase into his tinsel-rimmed footy sock this yuletide. "The only plants I like are in re-runs of *Day Of The Triffids*".



Tony Mott

It was with a saddened expression worthy of Lady Di on *Panorama* that our Tone confessed to his hermit-like Gamefreak's lifestyle. "You definitely won't be after a *Bombberman* multitap this Xmas then," we all cheered, and promptly went down the pie shop, leaving him to bemoan his lack of chums.



Wil Overton

"I dunna want no more paints!" moaned Wil, sounding more like Taggart than anything. "I've gone digital you see." But frankly, the thought of Santa bringing him a Power Mac 9500 with 256Mb RAM and a 21" monitor on the 25th rather than a couple of tubes of cobalt blue and a no.2 sable are a little on the slim side.

ULTRA 64:

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Just prior to the Shoshinkai Software Exhibition 95 in Japan where their lean mean 64-bit machine is due to make its debut, the latest word on the street is that Nintendo have suffered more difficulties with the project, forcing its release to be delayed until March 31 1995.

If this proves to be true, of course, the European launch also looks likely to slip back. Nintendo had originally planned to get units into the UK for spring '96, but a delay in Japan would most likely mean it not reaching this shores officially until September. (Boo.)

At the time of writing Nintendo have yet to confirm the news, but there are numerous points which lend credence to the supposed new date of March 21:

- The date is a national holiday in Japan, which would eliminate problems with school children skipping class and office workers leaving their offices in order to track down and buy their own machine the moment it hits the streets.
- It has been suggested that Nintendo's hardware production facilities have not yet been able to produce enough machines to



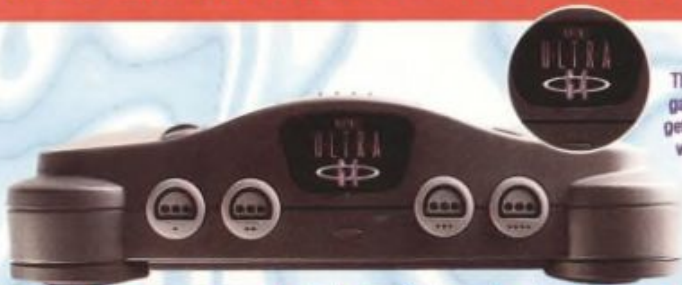
Yes, every time we report on something happening at Nintendo in Japan, we wheel out this shot of their Japanese HQ. And now for the "if you look very carefully" gag.

EXPRESS

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This is what US gamers will be getting. Can't say when, though.

RENAMED, RESCHEDULED, REVEALED

meet expected demand; the extra three months giving them valuable production time to allow retailers to stock 'em high come March, when the rush hits.

- The Japanese 1995 tax year ends on March 31. Nintendo have always promised to deliver the machine in 1995, and although they'll be catching the end of fiscal '95 rather than calendar '95, they'll be keeping their promise.

- Tenuously – but significantly, bearing in mind their strong, quirky traditions – the 21st of the month is the date on which Nintendo have launched a number of their biggest products: the ill-fated Famicom (floppy) disk system came out on February 21, 1986; the Game Boy was released on April 21, 1989; the Super Famicom (SNES) arrived on November 21, 1990; and the unimpressive Virtual Boy popped from their loins on July 21 earlier this year.

Developing for the console is reportedly proving tricky for those whose games aren't due to arrive for the machine's launch. It's believed that some are still working with only half-complete development kits, making the prospect of a fat wedge of extra software to immediately follow the machine's launch in 1995 look rather doubtful.



The Japanese unit, complete with funky '3D' logo. Mmm.

The security screen Nintendo have erected in order to shield their 64-bit secret weapon from prying eyes has been more effective than anything in the history of gaming. This means, of course, that Nintendo have complete control over when and where the hungry gaming public finally learns what the machine is really capable of. The company have even laid down groundrules to press attendees at Shoshinkai, one of which prevents people from pointing a camera at a screen running from a Nintendo64 – presumably to prevent loads of dodgy game shots appearing in American videogames mags (!).

However the system performs in actuality – whether it's world-shakingly amazing (witness the SNES) or, erk, a bit on the disappointing side (see the Virtual Boy) – you'll be reading about it here next month in an extended news special direct from Japan, complete with tons of game shots and in-depth exposés on every game. Mark the calendar now, cos it's going to be a hot one.

PAD JOY

The Nintendo64's controller has at last been revealed. Looking quite similar to the artist's impression from issue 36, it has softer lines and a colour scheme that has Nintendo written all over it.

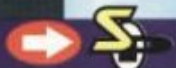
Along with the revolutionary analogue thumb-stick at its centre, the 'pad' apparently has one other groundbreaking feature – an expansion port type aperture at its rear. Its exact use has yet to be confirmed, and speculation has ranged from it being for accepting PlayStation-style memory cards (probable) to peripherals such as a lightgun (unlikely) to household appliances such as toasters, multi-processing food mixers and tumble driers (only kidding).



The N64's joypad will, Nintendo hope, unlock an entirely new era of gaming. But it can still be used just like a standard SNES 'pad, of course.

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Turn over for more piping hot Nintendo64 news!



A WIDE NET



Above: Netscape, the popular Internet software. The N64's interface will look different, naturally.

The N64's modem will take a similar form to that of Nintendo's Super Famicom equivalent, the Satellaview.



Nintendo have further confirmed their interests in communications – something which was flaunted earlier this year with the launch of their Satellaview modem device – by announcing a deal with Square Soft and Just System Corp which kick off the development of a modem peripheral.

Through the connection to a standard phone network, services on offer will naturally

include gaming – a typical scenario perhaps involving players downloading extra levels or character details to make tasty changes in their games – and also shopping, karaoke and banking services.

Following their decision to develop *Final Fantasy VII* on the Nintendo64 – which is now believed to be a Bulky drive-only title, not cartridge – the involvement of Square Soft in the modem project is further evidence of their commitment towards Nintendo's developments.

As yet the modem is scheduled only to appear in Japan, but Nintendo have similar plans on a global scale, so an eventual European release of such a system shouldn't be ruled out. Just don't hold your breath...

GAMES! WE MUST HAVE GAMES!

At Shoshinkai, Nintendo will be showing 13 games – at various stages of completion – with these ten set to appear among them:

Ultra Mario
Killer Instinct 2
Goldeneye
Cruis'n USA
Turok: The Dinosaur Hunter
Phar
Software Creations' game
Angel Studios' game (produced by Shigeru Miyamoto)
DMA Design's game
Paradigm's flight simulation (produced by Shigeru Miyamoto)

Three of them are known to be 100% complete, with the ten remaining titles appearing as playable beta

versions. The hot money, incidentally, is on *Ultra Mario*, *Killer Instinct* and *Cruis'n USA* to appear alongside the system as launch titles in March.

Three new games have just been announced for the machine – *FIFA 97*, *Quake* and *Prey*. *FIFA* will become the benchmark version of Electronic Arts' lucrative sports sim, while *Quake* is id's pseudo-sequel to *Doom*, with incredibly 3D environments and deeper gameplay than its predecessor. *Prey*, from Apogee Software (the scarily talented bods

behind the stunning PC game *Duke Nukem 3D*), however, sounds most interesting of all.

Based around a storyline which echoes themes from the *Predator* movies, you play as a character who is being hunted down by aliens as sport. Its 3D engine allows full three degrees of movement and view, which, along with so-called 'real world' lighting, makes for a near photo-quality playing environment (or so they claim).

Its other key features include dynamic light sourcing (ie there are moveable objects in the game which cast light as well as stationary ones); shadows cast by every character; and full 3D characters which look solid from any angle, even above and below (as opposed to *Doom*'s 'cutouts', which look the same from all angles).

The environment itself is alien, featuring odd architectural structures completely unlike the now-familiar design of *Doom* et al. And you won't simply run around it – there are various innovative gameplay twists, with even the opportunity to swing across ropes. It's coming on PC first in late '96, with the updated Nintendo64 version due in '97.



Mario's N64 guise? Very possibly, yes.

id's *Quake* is set to become one of the N64's hottest titles.

Here's Super Play's invitation to Shoshinkai. We can't wait.

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