EDGE

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PlayStation enters the solid state: Edge plugs in

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Industry awards

Issue seventeen **17**

A full year since Sony's first announcement, the
PlayStation has finally arrived. Edge reports from the
Japanese launch, takes a screwdriver to the hardware
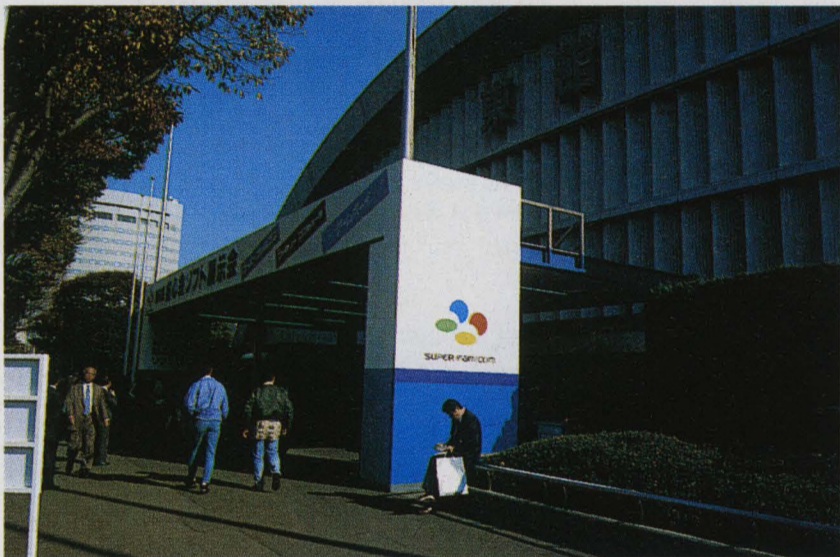and roadtests *Ridge Racer* – see review, page 68

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Nintendo pins hopes on Virtual Boy

Nintendo's 32bit VR system has failed to excite the industry

The Harumi Centre in Chiba was the venue for the Shoshinkai show. The promise of Nintendo's new hardware proved a big pull

The November unveiling of the Virtual Boy in Japan signifies an important change of direction for Nintendo. Either it has gone completely mad or it deems the future of videogaming to be crude, red and likely to induce headaches.

That was the opinion of most delegates who attended the Shoshinkai festival at the Harumi Centre in Chiba, Tokyo. Shoshinkai is an annual event for Nintendo's distributors and was the chosen venue for the Kyoto company's revelation of its '32bit VR system'. The show ran for two days but **Edge** attended just the first – there was little

else apart from new Super Famicom games to hold interest.

Nintendo's system was shown in two forms. Playable versions of the unit itself were installed on a trio of circular stands, and a giant enclosure was where a dramatic (ie 'is this really it?') presentation of the system's graphics and sound took place, with cardboard goggles distributed to anyone brave enough to enter.

Nintendo's hardware resembles a Viewmaster rather than a VR system, with the player looking into the eyepiece to see the stereoscopic image. Just as the Game Boy screen was yellow, Virtual Boy's is red. And it's no more impressive, either. The hardware uses a 32bit RISC CPU to generate the twin images, with 'two high resolution. mirror-scanning LED displays'.

This technology comes from a Massachusetts company called Reflection Technology Inc, which specialises in virtual display hardware →

The Virtual Boy hardware has a red and blue body. A joypad with elongated handles is attached via a lead
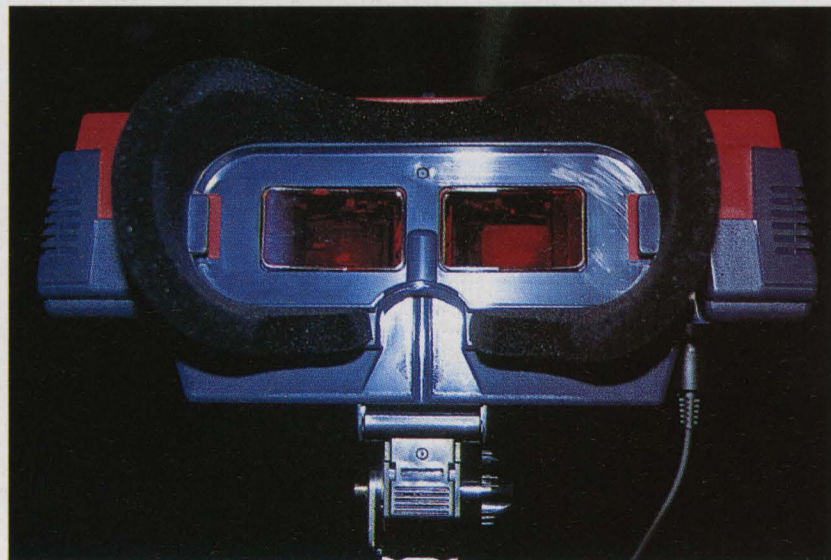
Looking through the Virtual Boy is like sellotaping two red Game Boys to your face (ie the prototype wasn't particularly impressive)

Data stream

Marketing budget for *Magic Carpet*: **£200,000**
Marketing budget for *Donkey Kong Country*: **£2 million**
Percentage of targeted UK adults and children who are expected to have seen the Donkey Kong Country advertisements three times: **70%**
Marketing budget for Microsoft on updating their image: **£60 million**
Percentage of CD-ROM sales accounted for by Microsoft: **11.41**
Number of formats *Rise Of The Robots* is to be released on: **22**
Number of units 3DO claims to have sold: **250,000**
Present value of the videogames market: **£13.5 billion**
Projected value of the videogames market by year-end 1995: **£20 billion**
Growth in the videogames market over the last 15 months: **67.5%**
Increase in videogame sales caused by half-term holidays: **20%**
Estimates of annual cost to industry caused by piracy: **£400 million**
CD-ROM access time required to comply with MPC1: **1000ms**
CD-ROM access time required to comply with MPC2: **400ms**
Typical hard drive access time: **11ms**
Price recently offered for 156,931 aging games carts: **£200,000**
Dimensions of a 35mm film screen: **20x35ft**
Dimensions of an IMAX screen: **80ftx100ft**
Number of IMAX theatres in the world: **115**
Number of PlayStations available at launch: **100,000**
Number of defective Saturns that have caught fire: **10**
Cost of a single game of *Virtua Fighter 2*: **¥200 (£1.30)**

and was formed by a team of MIT scientists. Nintendo Of America's press release distributed at the show reveals that 'Nintendo has obtained exclusive worldwide licensing rights within the videogame market to Reflection's virtual display technology', and that Virtual Boy is its 'initial application'.

It's difficult to convey just how crude Virtual Boy's graphics are. While the technology is presumably advanced for the cost, its potential for videogames is all but invisible in the first crop of titles. Nintendo unveiled three prototype games at Shoshinkai, all in playable form. First up was *Mario Bros VB* (no, really) – imagine a static screen and Mario hopping from platform to platform. *Space Pinball* is a standard pinball game with the 3D effect allowing the ball to travel beneath the table. *Telero Boxing* is just plain weird. Needless to say, all three were extremely early versions.

Ironically, Nintendo is expecting great things of the Virtual Boy. The company has stated that it plans to sell three million hardware units and 14 million game cartridges in
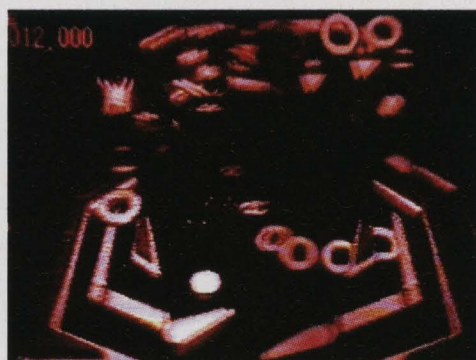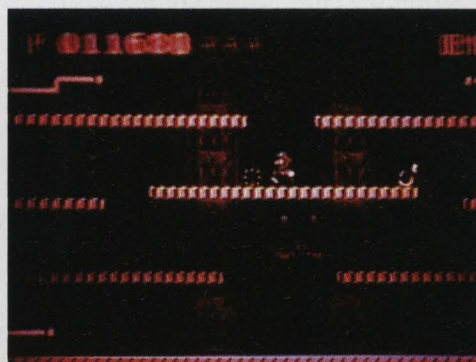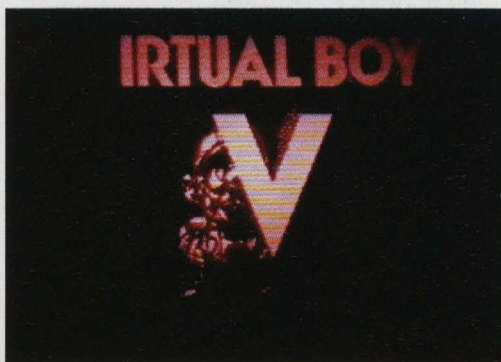

Nintendo chairman Hiroshi Yamauchi (above) put on a brave face

NCL officials demonstrated the VB to show delegates. Few were impressed with the crude monochrome display

Japan alone in the period from its launch in April 1995 to March 1996. The system will retail at ¥19,800 (£128), and three games will be available at launch, costing between ¥5000 and ¥6000 each.

Virtual Boy is on its way to the States, but whether it will make the journey to the UK hasn't been confirmed. Next month **Edge** quizzes its designer, Gumpei Yokoi (who was also responsible for creating the Game Boy), and asks: just what is Nintendo playing at?

What is it?
Perfected in 1948, this invention not only had a profound impact on computer technology but revolutionised the electronics industry as a whole. Without it, home computers would have remained an impossible dream

Specs
CPU: 32bit NEC V810 @ 10MHz
Dimensions: 217x254x110mm
Power: 6 AA batteries
Weight: 760g (body only)
Accessories: AC 100V adaptor Battery charger

BUZZ words

frame-rate
frame-rate mate that's what you want get that polygon engine churning out those **frames** pal the more the merrier just get millions of the suckers down your scart lead and you're laughin' forget your dull pc flite sims that chug along at 10 **frames** a second i'm gonna get me a PlaySaturn that baby chucks out a cool 60 **frames** a second that's *six ooooh*-baby frames a second so your Ridge Racing-Virtua-Kick-Assing games are just the business read it and weep pc boys

Virtual Boy as captured by the Edge-cam. Clockwise from top: title screen complete with zooming letters; *Mario Bros VB* – possibly the 'flagship' title; the underwhelming *Space Pinball*; and *Telero Boxing* – hardly a threat to PlayStation *Boxer's Road*

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