

1994

Sega 32X

- Nintendo releases Super Metroid and begins a push to regain control of the 16-bit market. New Super FX chip games such as Star Fox aid Nintendo's efforts against Sega and the forthcoming 32-bit machines.
- Sega releases 32X (\$179.95), a peripheral that enables the Genesis to run 32-bit cartridge games, in an attempt to stave off early adopter sales of the Jaguar and 3DO machines. Ports of Virtua Racing and Star Wars are favorable, as is a good version of id Software's Doom, but Sega licensees remain mysteriously noncommittal to the format, and all Sega games announced for release bear the frightening fingerprints of Sega of America marketing and development efforts: No one seems to know what the company is planning to do with the machine. Sega seems unprepared to release the machine in Japan.
- Nintendo releases Super Game Boy (\$59.95), an adapter that lets the Super NES run Game Boy cartridges and Super Game Boy-enhanced games with color frame artwork and improved extra features.
- Nintendo releases Donkey Kong Country to a stunned crowd at a trade show (which had been expecting news on the new Nintendo 64-bit game machine) and thus demonstrates that even the Super NES' slow CPU can compete with the 3DO and Jaguar. Donkey Kong Country is a best-seller, and Nintendo sales nearly catch up to the Genesis.
- The Sega Saturn and Sony PlayStation are launched in Japan, the Saturn with a small number of 50-50 games (including Virtua Fighter), and the PlayStation with a growing number of successful arcade hits (Ridge Racer), good original titles (Toshinden) and mediocre home releases (Space Griffon). Sega launches its fourth Sonic 16-bit cartridge, Sonic & Knuckles, and despite massive cross-promotional efforts, the game's sales are comparatively poor. Titles similar to Sonic have saturated the market, and massive giveaways are planned for millions of Sonic & Knuckles cartridges. Despite Donkey Kong Country's success, video game sales are low overall.

Star Wars

Virtual Boy

Sega Saturn

■ After announcing that the Saturn will be released in the United States on Sept. 2, "Sega Saturn Saturns," Sega releases the 32-bit system in May for \$399.99. Early adapters are overpriced as Daytona USA, Panzer Dragoon and Virtua Fighter come home early. Yet overall sales are low, and few titles are released for the machine as developers are taken off-guard by the early debut.

■ Sega and 3DO are ready to announce a joint hardware venture on 3DO M2 64-bit technology. Although the deal is broken off at the last minute, talk continues throughout the year. 3DO development slows in anticipation of a 64-bit announcement, and Panasonic ultimately acquires the M2 technology for use in home games and other devices. Panasonic reportedly pays \$100 million for it.

■ Nintendo releases the Virtual Boy (\$179.95), a 32-bit portable game console to tide people over until Project Reality, now called Ultra 64, is ready for release. Critics swarm to smash the system, while Nintendo points out that the Game Boy's sales have been strong despite its limitations and the Virtual Boy should see similar success. Media criticism is muted until the Virtual Boy's sales fall dramatically below Nintendo's own projections.

■ Sony releases the PlayStation in the United States for \$299, \$100 less than expected. Sales are strong, and a collection of good release titles receives praise from consumers. Meanwhile, the Atari Jaguar continues to decline, despite the release of a CD peripheral that raised Jaguar supporters' hopes but was most likely dead on arrival.

■ Nintendo delays the launch of the Ultra 64, telling fans of Nintendo products to keep on supporting the Super NES for another few months. Nintendo eventually demonstrates the Nintendo 64, the new name for the Ultra 64, at Shoshiniki—its own Japanese trade show. Super Mario 64 is playable and impresses gamers, but rumors persist that few other games are in development.

1995

■ Sega drops internal plans for The Neptune, a system that would have combined the Genesis with the 32X peripheral.

■ Another bad year for video game sales comes to a close. Several Japanese companies close their U.S. offices and a few U.S. companies go bankrupt. Sega and Sony's early skirmishes reveal Sony to be the winner, and Sega ends the year by releasing three excellent arcade translations (Virtua Fighter 2, Virtua Cop and Sega Rally) in rapid succession as a countermeasure. Meanwhile, Sega abandons support for the Sega CD and 32X.

Sony PlayStation



Virtua Fighter