

SPECIAL FEATURE

In 1981 Nintendo set out to accomplish something that had never and couldn't ever happen again – no matter how hard anyone tried. They grabbed the newfound video-game industry by the braces and catapulted it into the stratosphere!

Following the success of his Laser Clay shooting range and Wild Gunman attraction President Hiroshi Yamauchi decided it was time to make more of Nintendo's success in the arcades. His team of engineers did well to produce a group of little-known coin-ops, with names like "Hellfire", and "Sheriff" which did okay. However not even a Flight Simulator system developed especially for coin-ops such as "Sky Skipper" proved enough to satisfy Japan, let alone challenge the insatiable appetite for success inside Mr Yamauchi. Evidently he had greater things planned for Nintendo, though his high values prevented him from making a move until his daughter Yoko married a respectable, well educated young man named Minoru Arakawa. Mr Yamauchi eventually came to like Minoru so much he elected him to front Nintendo's brave venture into foreign territory.

Before the opportunity for this brave move became available, however, Nintendo Company Limited needed an ambassador to prepare the way. It's remarkable that the character who made everything possible couldn't speak a word and was, at the time, considered quite a nasty piece of work...

DONKEY KONG NINTENDO OF AMERICA

1981-82

Prior to the arrival of Mr Arakawa and his family, all Nintendo coin-ops sold throughout America were handled by two men – Al Stone and Ron Judy. The fact they weren't doing too well was no fault of theirs, so Mr Arakawa made Stone and Judy his first employees when he landed in New York. The first coin-op they marketed as the new company was Raderscope. It did okay but nothing like the success of Pac Man and Space Invaders, besides which the machines took so long in getting from Japan to America they became old news almost as soon as the power was switched on.

Of course Mr Yamauchi had to do something, so he gave an ambitious employee named Shigeru Miyamoto the chance to produce a successful arcade game.

Though still an apprentice at the company, Shigeru had hoped to become "a designer or promoter of toys or unique goods" after studying at Kanazawa Art and Craft University. This was his big chance! Though Pac-Man is Mr Miyamoto's favourite video game character of all time, this didn't deter him from ignoring Namco's greedy yellow funster in favour of something completely different.



By the time this new game was ready, the fledgling Nintendo of America had moved to Seattle where Mr Arakawa – or Mr A as he soon became known – and some new recruits waited for the fruits of Mr Yamauchi's exciting new project. When it arrived nobody could believe their eyes! Not only did the game contradict everything that was popular in the arcades at the time, it had the most ludicrous name – Donkey Kong! According to David Sheff's book 'Game Over', the only member of the team to take an immediate shine to the game, who also happened to be the company's most enthusiastic games player, was future Product Analysis Manager Howard Phillips. Perhaps the only other good thing to come out of this tense meeting was a name for the game's central character who has remained largely unchanged till the present day – Super Mario! It wasn't long before Howard Phillips' uncanny knack for recognizing great games became evident, as the machine placed on trial in a local bar called the Spot Tavern began making huge profits after just one week. It was a foregone conclusion: Mr A ordered 2000 machines and every last one of them sold – and still amusement arcade owners wanted more!

(LEFT) Donkey Kong Jr. (ABOVE) Donkey Kong 3.

SPECIAL FEATURE

FAMILY COMPUTER

1985

While the excitement over Donkey Kong supported Nintendo of America, Hiroshi Yamauchi had his engineering teams in Japan work on something potentially more wide-reaching still. With the experience of coin-operated technology, and an almost prophetic understanding of his market, Hiroshi Yamauchi saw an opportunity to bring arcade excitement to the home.

At the time Atari were doing very well out of their 2600 system in the States, which President Yamauchi evidently regarded with little respect because in 1983,

despite having the option to license Atari's machine for Japan, Nintendo Company Limited released a machine superior in every way.

Christened the 'Family Computer', which is abbreviated to 'Famicom', the new hardware enabled consumers to play arcade-quality games for under 14,000 yen when competitors' inferior machines were still selling for around 40,000 yen. How did Nintendo do it? Well, just as Nintendo of America are working alongside Silicon Graphics with Ultra 64 - President Yamauchi signed a contract with leading semi-conductor manufacturer, Ricoh, guaranteeing them millions of sales.

Simple, eh.

Famicom sold better than even Hiroshi Yamauchi could have expected. Millions filtered into homes throughout Japan and this brought a demand for more games. Key people such as Shigeru Miyamoto and Gunpei Yokoi headed Research and Development (R&D) teams to produce these games, but always it was

Yamauchi San who had the final say as to which were superb enough for release.

Initial games such as Lode Runner from Hudson Soft, and a bizarre Space Invaders clone called Alien were superseded by games that benefited from specialist chips; among them Zelda, Metroid and Kid Icarus. Each new game expanded the Famicom's horizons with increased memory size and battery back-up allowing for more complex scenarios. From now on Nintendo would always be viewed as the number-one manufacturer of video games in Japan, a situation that has remained unchanged until the present day.

SUPER MARIO IN THE USA

1985

When the time came to launch the Famicom in America, nobody was interested. Atari had messed things up so badly that retailers weren't interested in committing themselves to anything associated with home video games ever again!

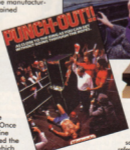
Of course the hearts and minds of the American public couldn't resist the Famicom forever, especially since the launch game was Super Mario Bros. Once players saw what the machine could do, and experienced the amazing gameplay - which has remained classic to this day - they didn't need further convincing. Shops couldn't meet demand for the new system.



FAMILY COMPUTER DISK DRIVE SYSTEM

1986

Around 4 million of these exclusive Japanese systems were sold before NCL considered it unprofitable. The idea was to produce bigger games for a much cheaper price than cartridge, allowing customers to replace old games for a fraction of the cost using Disk Writers placed in toy shops and department stores. Exclusive titles such as the infamous 'Super Mario Bros 2: For Super Players Only' ('Last Levels' in the West) were intended to entice more people over, but it just didn't happen. Great idea - poor support.



(ABOVE) Howard Phillips: the man whose enthusiasm NOA trusted to evaluate many of their games.

To discourage any association with Atari, Nintendo of America redesigned the Famicom on the outside and renamed it the 'Nintendo Entertainment System'. It was never to be regarded as a console, so it became known as a Control Deck with cartridges referred to as Game Paks. To avoid being seen as a simple toy manufacturer, Nintendo exhibited their machine as a piece of consumer electronics hardware. These early promotion shots, issued before the system was even released, show how the NES was intended to look and the kind of market it hoped to reach. Different, eh!





(LEFT) Nintendo Fun Club News was a subscription-only newsletter introduced by Howard Phillips. It was phased out with the launch of Nintendo Power in 1988.

(RIGHT) Early US Nintendo ads! TOP - Mike Tyson's Punch Out. MIDDLE - The Adventures of Link. BOTTOM - ROB (Robotic Operating Buddy). Gunpei Yokoi's device that came packaged with the NES at launch. ROB acted as the player's assistant in games, such as this one where spinning tops he placed on his tray shifted the obstacles on screen.

SPECIAL FEATURE



(ABOVE) Howard C Lincoln: Senior Vice President of NDA wearing a smug grin.

(RIGHT) Big smiles for Gail Tilden and Minoru "Mr A" Arakawa too. Gail is Editor in Chief to Nintendo Power. Mr Arakawa is President over Nintendo of America! No wonder they're so happy.



HANDS FREE

1988
An American invention, this time proving Nintendo care more than most companies about their customers. After receiving a letter from a devoted Nintendo player, who had been paralysed from the neck down by a tragic accident, American R&D devised this Hands Free controller to help others disabled in similar ways to enjoy video games.



SUPER MARIO VS MICKEY MOUSE

1989
With one quarter of America owning an NES in 1989, it is no surprise to learn that a survey conducted at this time revealed that more American children recognised Super Mario images than those of Mickey Mouse. Somehow us Brits weren't quite ready for all of this, not at this time anyway. Later however...



NETWORK GOLF TOURNAMENT

1987

Sorry we don't have any pictures of this, but it's worth a mention to highlight another of Hiroshi Yamouchi's dreams. The Family Computer Communications Network System connected millions of Japanese Famicom owners by MODEM and, if it had proved more successful, would have established the largest computer network in Japan - maybe even the world. Just to prove that it could work, NCL organised a Network Golf Tournament which did take place. Sadly the overall concept was just too far ahead of its time.

NEXT MONTH IN PART THREE

Game Boy entices game adults with Tetris. An all-new Super Family Computer saves the video-game world and an incredible announcement is made...

It's about this time each year that a horrific ritual takes place. A ritual steeped in tradition that harks back centuries. But a ritual terribly out of step with the needs of a civilized society. I'm referring to the annual NMS Reader Cuff. Sadly, as you are reading this, hordes of Seals, spiked baseball clubs in their sweaty flippers, are boarding small fishing vessels and heading for the reader boarding grounds the taste of blood on their be-whiskered lips. Of course I should use these pages to condemn such barbaric activities, but what the heck! It would not miss a few readers, and they deplete our fish stocks too. Besides all that they taste so good (with lima beans and a nice little oland). If you're lucky and my few Seals pass you by, why not write in telling me of your, no doubt, horrific experiences to: I WAS SUCKERED BY THE SEAL SQUADS AND SURVIVED, MAILBAG, NMS Priority Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU



Mailbag[®]



OCEAN LETTER OF THE MONTH!

DEAR SEALLY WEALLY

I am mad! Mad, you hear! Very mad indeed! But not in the wibble-gank-pipple-dee-dot way. I am angry! Why? Because of a stupid thing Nintendo have done. And I mean reeally stupid! I am talking king-thick-of-braindead-land-edy stupid! I'm talking don't-bring-out-the-Ultra 64-in-Europe-til-1996-while-it-comes-out-in-Japan-and-the-states-in-september-ly stupid! I mean what the heck do Nintendo think they're playing at? Why not have a worldwide release date? Maybe because Nintendo reckon the Ultra 64 won't sell very well over here. Well that's the monkey's reproductive organs, I'm afraid. Anyone whose played or even seen Killer Instinct or Crus n' USA in the arcades will definitely want an Ultra 64 - especially since the games are going to (allegedly) be better than their arcade counterparts. Another problem that is bound to raise its head with the release of the Ultra 64 is cost. Being a bit of a video gaming maniac I would gladly pay up to £250 for the machine, although any more would be pushing it, even for the richest of rich people.

There we are. I've said my piece and I'm still very annoyed at Nintendo as are many others, I'd imagine. Although by the time this is printed Nintendo may have changed their minds.
Rob Jenkins, Barry

SEAL: There are in excess of a million Super NES owners in the UK and, game-wise, there's never been a better time to own the machine. There is a solid library of high-quality titles currently available and loads more in the pipeline (Starwing 2, Diddy's Adventures, Comanche etc...). With that in mind it's pretty easy to see why Nintendo are keen not to spoil this lucrative market by releasing the Ultra 64 too early. At least by the time it arrives on our shores the machine will have a reasonable range of titles ready. There are more potential flies in the ointment too. How are Nintendo going to convince anyone to buy the Virtual Boy, also due for release next spring, when they can have an Ultra 64 for only a few quid more? Tricky! I can't comment on the price. All I have to go on is Nintendo's commitment to sell it for around \$250. All that said and, as you so rightly point out, Nintendo are wont to change their strategies (anyone remember Super NES's early arrival?) and they may decide to go for a worldwide release after all. Phew! I think that deserves letter of the month.

THIS KIRBY KRAZINESS KANNOT KONTINUE

DEAR SEAL

I am the great Kirby King. News has come to me of a man that works for you called Paul Davies. I have heard that he praises my son Prince Kirby. back in issue 21 a certain David Barr wrote in about how much he disliked Kirby, but Paul replied "Listen right, if you've got anything against Kirby you can just shurrup cos he's brilliant. Heee issas right.

And I'll have anyone who says he's not."

I have since dealt with David Barr, he is now chained up in my dungeons being forced to watch endless episodes of Power Rangers. This will happen to anyone who dislikes any part of my family. You have been warned. All that I ask is that Paul Davies marries my daughter, Princess Kirbyweena, and comes to live with my family in Kirbyland where he will be treated with respect. Do not in your reply make any cocky remark.

