

VIRTUAL BOY HIT OR MISS?

One of the most significant developments in the world of Nintendo of late has been the transformation of the Virtual Boy from novelty laughing stock to a machine with credibility - if not necessarily a future paved with the level of success that both the SNES and Game Boy have achieved.

In the past, the Virtual Boy has appeared to be of less importance to Nintendo than the Ultra 64. Chairman Howard Lincoln, however, appreciates the machine is among Nintendo's biggest interests. 'We have high hopes for it. We think that at \$179.95 with the game included the product will do very, very well, particularly in the demographic area that we are targeting, which is boys aged seven to 14. Our projections are for 1.5 million hardware units in North America and 1.5 million in Japan. So it's a very important product. Also, it's exclusive to Nintendo - we're not competing with Sega or Sony for Virtual Boy, and that has its pluses.'

These projections are castable because of the past successes of its inventor, Gunpei Yokoi, who also developed the Game Boy and the Game and Watch series. 'With a proven track record like that, I don't think you're going to have a lot of internal debate,

says Lincoln. 'You know about the reliability of his products.' Er, presumably he's forgotten about the Power Glove and the R.O.B. - both Yokoi products, both big spends, promotional-wise, and both relative flops.

The system's monochrome display - the primary target for most of the criticism the machine has suffered - simply doesn't count as a problem in Lincoln's book. 'My recollection is that there were similar questions about the Game Boy on the part of a number of people when we launched it. Would, for example, anyone have predicted that seven years after its

launch we were still selling three million Game Boys a year in the US? I don't think so.'

The thinking, then, is that any such conceptions will wash away in time, just as the Game Boy gained credibility once its limitations were accepted.

But it was down to a sterling range of software that the Game Boy sold so well, and a similar set of softs will account for the Veebie's showing in sales. The games are getting better, as Lincoln confirms: 'We're very pleased with how the quality of the software is improving, and Mr Yokoi [Gunpei Yokoi, inventor of the Game Boy and the Game and Watch series] has done a really fine job in not only coming up with the product but in coming up with really excellent software which will be available at launch.'

Those games are *Mario's Dream Tennis*, *Mario Clash*, *Galactic Pinball* and *Wario Cruise* - four titles which have been tidied up considerably since their debut showing at last year's Shoshinkai show. There are a number of attractive third party titles on their way too, and we'll be keeping an eye on them over the months leading up to the Veebie's launch.



Mario's Dream Tennis (Nintendo)

One of the Nintendo's own-developed games, this looks like a real hoot. It's looking similar to the Game Boy game *Mario Tennis*, with Mario, Luigi, Yoshi, Donkey Kong and Toad taking part in the action. Expect all the usual neat touches from the boys from Kyoto.



Doesn't he look good in shorts?

Virtua Tetris (Bullet Proof)

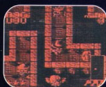
And still they manage to produce updates of *Tetris!* You can play the standard game on this version or opt for a mode that uses two planes of shapes - one behind the other - so you can effectively 'rotate' the area where the blocks are about to fall. It sounds confusing. It isn't.



That's going to be a bit of a roller.

Jack Bros (Atlus)

Most of the early releases are simple games, but not *Jack Bros*. After choosing one of three characters you set off to find the keys to escape from 60 levels of dungeon complexes, all peopled by enemies and spiked with traps. Could be a goody.



Ceo. A corky overhead view, too.

Vertical Force (Hudson Soft)

This was the first third-party game to go into development, and it shows. The time spent by Hudson has gone on making a great 3D environment, with two planes of action that you can fly between. Judged purely as a shoot-'em-up it's only ho-hum, but the 3D really makes it.



Does this remind you...



...of Super Star.



Satisfied? Cos it does it!