

RING OUT!

SEGA'S COIN-OP *VIRTUAL FIGHTER 2* WAS ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING ASPECTS OF THE ENTIRE SHOW. I LOVED IT. THE POLYGONS ARE SMOOTH AND THE TEXTURE-COLORED CHARACTERS ARE MUCH CLOSER TO REALITY THAN THE FIGHTERS FROM THE FIRST GAME. ONE OF THE NEW CHARACTERS IS BASED ON JACKIE CHAN'S CHARACTER IN *DRUNKEN MASTER* AND *DRUNKEN MASTER 2* HAPPENS TO BE ONE OF MY FAVORITE JACKIE CHAN MOVIES, THAT MEANS HE HAS TO GET DRUGGED TO REEL UP A GOOD FIGHT.



BUBBY AND BOBBY BUST A MOVE

I'M ALMOST ASHAMED TO ADMIT IT, BUT ONE OF THE MOST ADDICTIVE GAMES AT THE SHOW WAS AN ACTION/PUZZLE CART FROM TAITO FOR THE SUPER NES CALLED *BUST-A-MOVE*. BASED ON A BRAND-NEW ARCADE GAME, IT'S LIKE A CROSS BETWEEN *BUBBLE BOBBLE* AND AN UPSIDE-DOWN *TETRISS*; YOU AIM, YOU SHOOT A BUBBLE, YOU MATCH COLORS, YOU CLEAR THE SCREEN, YOU TOTALLY LOSE TRACK OF TIME, YOU RUN LATE FOR YOUR NEXT CES APPOINTMENT.



RUNNIN' WITH RUNANDGUN!

THE CREATORS OF THE 3DO EPIC *DOEMIN' FIREMEN* PRESENTED THE MOST INTERESTING GAME AT CES. EVERYBODY WAS SUPERFLY, REAL BOSS-HOSS.



WHEN I FIRST SAW VIRTUAL BOY IN JAPAN THE GAMES WERE ONLY 20% COMPLETE. NOW NINTENDO TELLS US THAT THE GAMES SHOULD BE THE MOST INTERESTING THERE IS DEFINITE IMPROVEMENT IN GAMES LIKE *TELEBO BOXER*, WHICH INCLUDED AN EXTRA ROBOT AND WAS STILL THE MOST FUN VB GAME TO PLAY. THE VIRTUAL BOY IS NOT TRULY VIRTUAL REALITY, MORE LIKE PTERERO 3-D, AND IT REALLY SHOULDN'T BE CALLED A "BOY" SINCE IT'S NOT EASILY PORTABLE. BUT THE JURY IS STILL OUT; NINTENDO CLAIMS TO HAVE 49 THIRD-PARTY LICENSES ON BOARD WITH GAMES LIKE *COMBERMAN* AND A LINK-UP SO THAT MULTI-PLAYER VIRTUAL BOY GAMES CAN BE EXPERIENCED. WE'LL SEE...



I WAS VERY TIRED WHEN I TESTED IT OUT, SO ITS 3-D EFFECT GAVE ME A HEADACHE. OTHERWISE, I GOT A KICK OUT OF IT. THE 3-D EFFECTS WERE IMPRESSIVE, BUT I OBSERVED TWO THINGS: FIRST, GAMERS MIGHT NOT PAY FOR THIS WHEN THEY CAN GET THE SAME GAME AT SATURN OR PLAYSTATION FOR A SLIGHTLY HIGHER PRICE DOWN THE ROAD. SECOND, YOU LOOK LIKE A DORK WHEN YOUVE GOT YOUR HEAD STUCK IN SOMETHING THAT LOOKS A LOT LIKE A VIRTUAL FEETHOLE.

WITH THE GAME BOY, NINTENDO TURNED A NON-COLOR SYSTEM INTO A HIT BECAUSE IT WAS CUTE AND COMPACT AND LASTED FOR ALMOST A DOZEN HOURS ON A SINGLE SET OF BATTERIES. THE VIRTUAL BOY, ON THE OTHER HAND IS AWKWARD AND CUMBERSOME, AND ITS TWIN RED SCREENS AND LESS-EFFICIENT ARCHITECTURE ARE BOUND TO DRAW THE JUICE A LOT QUICKER. ITS ALSO 1995, AND NINTENDO IS NOT AS INTIMIDATED TO RETAILERS AND GAME DEVELOPERS AS IT USED TO BE. SURE, ITS 3-D, BUT IT AINT VR, AND ITS NOT EVEN COLOR...I THINK ITS A DUD.

I WAS UNEXPECTEDLY AND PLEASANTLY SURPRISED BY VIRTUAL BOY'S STEREO SCOPIC EFFECT, AND I LIKED THE FACT THAT THOSE LIGHT-EMITTING DIODES WERE RED FREAKY. THE PADDING ON THE HEAD MOUNT WHERE YOU REST YOUR FACE IS REALLY VERY COMFORTABLE. I JUST HOPE THE STUFF IS DETACHABLE AND MACHINE WASHABLE BECAUSE IT PROBABLY GETS REALLY DIRTY AFTER PEOPLE HAVE PRESSED THEIR FACES INTO IT SO MANY TIMES. IT INITIALLY DISTURBED ME THAT I COULDN'T SEE MY HANDS OR THE CONTROLLER WHILE PLAYING FREAKY AGAIN, BUT I SUPPOSE ONE GETS USED TO IT. ITS PROBABLY AMAZINGLY FUN TO WALK AROUND WITH IT STRAPPED TO YOUR HEAD. AS FOR THE GAMES THEMSELVES, I THOUGHT *TELEBO BOXER* WAS A BIT BORING. I DO HOPE THERE ARE OTHER FIRST-PERSON FIGHTING GAMES ANYWAY...UNLESS YOUVE GOT A WEAPON IN YOUR HAND LIKE THE BIG OLD JAPANESE KNIFE IN THE VIDEO GAME *SUPER SPY*.

NINTENDO'S 32-BIT VIRTUAL BOY

DUE FOR RELEASE THIS SUMMER, NINTENDO'S VIRTUAL BOY CAUSED A SPLASH AT THE WINTER CES.

I WAS MORE THAN SKEPTICAL OF THE 32-BIT VIRTUAL BOY, BUT I KNEW I HAD TO SEE IT FOR MYSELF. A BEAUTIFUL SHOW/MODEL HANDED ME A SET OF CARDBOARD "GOGGLES" WHICH WERE NECESSARY TO SEE 3-D IMAGES OF INCOMPLETE VB GAMES ON BIG SCREENS. MY FIRST REACTION WAS: "200 BUCKS FOR THIS? I'LL PASS," BUT AFTER SEEING THE COOL NEW VERTICAL SHOOTER AND SOME NIFTY 3-D TRICKS LIKE MARIO WALKING INTO THE BACKGROUND TO GET AROUND A BRICK WALL, IT LOOKED BETTER THAN I ANTICIPATED. *TELEBO BOXER* AND *SPACE PINBALL* WERE "OKAY" AT BEST. CALL ME CRAZY, BUT I THINK IT'S SAFE TO ASSUME THAT PEOPLE WANT FULL-COLOR GAMES, THE NINTENDO NAME ALONE WILL PROBABLY SELL A HALF-MILLION VIRTUAL BOYS, EVEN IF THEY "DO SUCK." MAYBE IT'LL BE LIKE THAT MOVIE, *THE JERK*, AND EVERYONE WILL GO CROSS-EYED FROM IT AND SUE THE COMPANY!

AT THE JAPANESE PREVIEW OF THE VIRTUAL BOY, PEOPLE COMPLAINED THAT IT WASN'T TOTALLY PORTABLE. IT WASN'T COLOR AND IT WASN'T COMPLETE. MY ONLY BEEF IS THAT IT MIGHT BE TOO EXPENSIVE. OTHER THAN THAT, I THOUGHT IT WAS DONE. WE PREVIEWED FOUR GAMES, AND HAD A CHANCE TO PLAY TWO MORE. THE BEST PREVIEW GAME WAS A 3-D SHOOTER THAT ALLOWS YOUR SHIP TO GO DEEP INTO THE PLAYFIELD. THE TWO GAMES ON DISPLAY WERE *SPACE PINBALL* (A 3-D PINBALL GAME) AND *TELEBO BOXER*, A FIRST-PERSON ROBOT BOXING GAME SIMILAR TO *PUNCH-OUT!* BOTH WERE FUN, BUT I'M STILL SKETCHY ON VIDEO PINBALL. THE PROBLEM I SEE WITH VB IS THAT IT MIGHT END UP AS A REALLY EXPENSIVE TOY THAT DOESN'T QUITE CATCH ON. THE PRICE WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THIS, BECAUSE IT IS DEFINITELY GOING TO BE HITTING THE YUPPIES, LEAVING THE REST OF US OUT IN THE COLD. BUT WHO KNOWS, MAYBE WE CAN ALL JUST STEAL IT.

