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TEST DRIVE THE VIRTUAL BOY!
Five Games Reviewed Inside

VIRTUAL BOY



IT'S A (VIRTUAL) BOY!

Compared to all the pre-release hoopla surrounding Sony's PlayStation and Nintendo's Ultra-64, hype for Nintendo's Virtual Boy has been, well, virtually nonexistent. In past months, only industry professionals and members of the press have been able to form any firm opinions about the long-awaited 3-D game system. But now that the Virtual Boy is popping up in stores around the country, its popularity among consumers will finally be put to the test. A year from now, the system could either be as big as Game Boy, or relegated to the realm of laughable memories alongside Sega's Activator. (Remember that?)

by the Staff of VideoGames

Like Game Boy before it, Virtual Boy is a self-contained cartridge gaming system—no television monitor is required. Instead, players look directly into a stereoscopic viewer mounted on a stand, and control the onscreen action with a separate handheld controller. Two LED video screens and precision optical mirrors combine slightly different images to create the illusion of a 3-D field of gameplay. The concept is similar to that employed for decades by View Master viewers, but of course in this case the images are always moving and are fully manipulatable.

So what's the catch? Unfortunately, there are many. Despite its 3-D capabilities and headset-like appearance, Virtual Boy is not a virtual reality system. The viewer isn't intended to be worn as a headset, and onscreen images don't track in response to movements of a player's noggin. To play a game, it's necessary to set up the system on a table, and look into it while leaning over slightly. After playing through a couple levels of any game, this position becomes quite uncomfortable, unlike past games displayed on television monitors. It's nearly impossible to sit back and relax while playing on the Virtual Boy.

The system's dual-handled controller is among the most comfortable and clever yet to be designed for any system. But because it's impossible to refer to the controller during gameplay, it's all too easy to forget which button is which. We don't have any problem with learning a little hand-eye coordination, but this is ridiculous.

Virtual Boy imagery is portrayed in only two colors: black and various shades of red. While this looks quite impressive on games with vector graphics, most of the sprite-based games we've seen look like little more than 3-D Game Boy titles. (Of course, this might not be a problem, for the most

VIRTUAL BOY

part, people weren't particularly bothered by Game Boy's lack of multi-hued coloring.)

Finally, for all of Nintendo's talk of the Virtual Boy being a 32-bit system with high-speed risc-processing, games have thus far exhibited little to show off the console's supposed enormous power. We had hoped to see games which were at least on par with those for the SNES, but in its gameplay and limited variation among levels, Virtual Boy has far more striking similarities to Game Boy. Its graphics, despite being in 3-D, fail to consistently amaze, and its sound effects, despite being in stereo, are on the level of 8-bit games. C'mon, Nintendo, where's all that memory going?

Still, the uniqueness of the Virtual Boy cannot be denied, and that uniqueness may well be enough to make these units fly off the shelves. With only a few more modifications to its hardware and software, Virtual Boy could easily set high standards for a new type of videogaming experience. Win or lose for Nintendo, we're all anxious to see what the next year brings for this ambitious, if flawed, system.

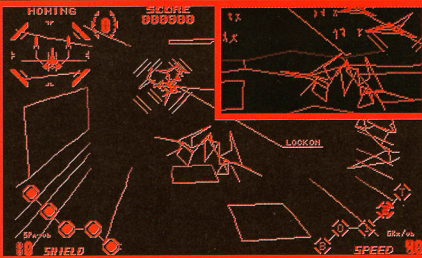


THE VIRTUAL BOY GAMES

As every gamer knows, the real test is the games. The staff got their hands on five titles for a test drive. The comments below reflect the general feeling of the staff as a whole. While Game Boy was laughed off initially, once titles like Tetris, Faceball, Super Mario Land, Link's Awakening hit the shelves, the platform became great portable fun. New titles like Donkey Kong Land, Space Invaders, Donkey Kong and the arcade classics series are set to sell a whole new generation on Game Boy. Virtual Boy needs just a few good games to become the next big thing. Are any of the games below sure-fire system sellers? Read on and see for yourself.

RATING SCALE 1-10 with 10 being a perfect score and 1 being, well, crap.

RED ALARM



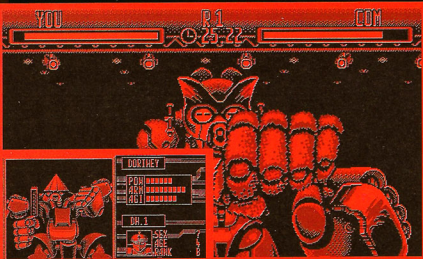
DESCRIPTION: You pilot a ship through high-tech caverns and blow approaching targets to smithereens.

HIGH POINTS: The crisp vector graphics are reminiscent of such great arcade classics as Tempest and Star Wars. Plays like a vector-based version of Starfox.

LOW POINTS: Multiple weapons are difficult to handle with accuracy, overlapping lines lead to objects blending together and getting "lost."

3-D EFFECT: Negligible. The strongest 3-D effect is created simply because the lines converge to a vanishing point, a technique which also works in 2-D games.

TELEROBXER



DESCRIPTION: FIRST-PERSON BOXING.

HIGH POINTS: SORRY, NONE HERE.

LOW POINTS: MINIMAL SKILL OR STRATEGY REQUIRED. JUST PUNCH, PUNCH, PUNCH.

3-D EFFECT: INEFFECTIVE. SUPER PUNCHOUT FOR THE SNES WAS MUCH BETTER.

GALACTIC PINBALL



DESCRIPTION: PINBALL WITH A SPACE-AGE HOCKEY PUCK INSTEAD OF A BALL.

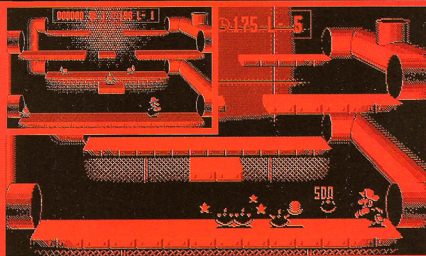
▷ 3

HIGH POINTS: FLAWLESS PINBALL ACTION, MULTIPLE MACHINE STYLES. GREAT MULTIPLE LEVELS IN 3-D.

LOW POINTS: REAL PINBALL IS A LOT MORE ENTERTAINING.

3-D EFFECT: EXCELLENT. THE TOP OF THE MACHINE SEEMS TO REcede INTO SPACE, AND THE "BALL" GETS BIGGER AND SMALLER DEPENDING UPON ITS LOCATION.

MARIO CLASH



DESCRIPTION: LIKE THE ORIGINAL MARIO BROS. WITH A THIRD DIMENSION ADDED, CHARACTERS MOVE NOT ONLY UP, DOWN, LEFT AND RIGHT, BUT AWAY AND TOWARDS, AS WELL. BASICALLY THIS IS A QUAD-SCROLLER.

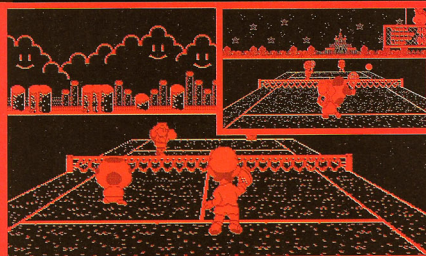
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HIGH POINTS: PLAYS AT LEAST AS WELL AS THE ORIGINAL, AND WITH THE NOVELTY OF AN EXTRA PLANE OF MOVEMENT.

LOW POINTS: BEEN THERE, DONE THAT.

3-D EFFECT: THE BACKGROUNDS ARE EFFECTIVE, BUT THE MOVING CHARACTERS LOOK LIKE PAPER-THIN CARTOONS AND HAVE NO DIMENSION OF THEIR OWN.

MARIO'S DREAM TENNIS



DESCRIPTION: TENNIS WITH YOSHI, MARIO AND COMPANY.

▷ 9

HIGH POINTS: THE THIRD PLANE OF MOVEMENT LENDS ITSELF WELL TO THE GAME OF TENNIS. THIS IS THE BEST OF THE VIRTUAL BOY GAMES WE'VE SEEN SO FAR.

LOW POINTS: IF ONLY IT WERE IN FULL COLOR. AS IT IS, IT LOOKS LIKE ALL OUR LITTLE NINTENDO FRIENDS ARE PLAYING TENNIS IN THE FIERY BOWLS OF HELL.

3-D EFFECT: VERY GOOD. THE CHARACTERS ARE FLAT, BUT THE BACKGROUND SCROLLS WELL AND IT'S ALWAYS EASY TO TELL EXACTLY WHERE THE BALL IS.

Yo, boy— **GET VIRTUAL**

Nintendo and VideoGames Magazine present the **VIRTUAL BOY SWEEPSTAKES**

Two-Dimensions is for suckers. Enter a 3-D world with a Virtual Boy compliments of Nintendo and VIDEOGAMES Magazine. The Grand Prize winner not only gets the Virtual Boy system itself, but FIVE stomach-churning 3-D cartridges, including Red Alarm, Mario Clash, Telero Boxer, Galactic Pinball and Mario's Dream Tennis. Once you look into the Virtual Boy and experience its one-of-a-kind play action, there'll be no turning back. (Remember to dispose of your old two-dimensional consoles in a responsible manner, okay?) All you need to do is pick up a pen and send us a virtual postcard. And hey—don't forget the virtual stamp.



GRAND PRIZE

A Virtual Boy System plus 5 Games!

15 FIRST PRIZES

A Virtual Boy System!

50 RUNNERS UP

Each get a SPECIAL Virtual Boy prize!

TO ENTER:

*Send a postcard (no envelopes, please) with your name, address and age to:
Virtual Boy Contest c/o VIDEOGAMES
PO Box 17379
Beverly Hills, CA 90209-3379*

Entries must be received by October 15, 1995. Mutilated, incomplete or illegible entries will be disqualified. Sponsor is not responsible for late, lost, postage due or misdirected entries.

ELIGIBILITY: Contest is open to residents of the United States and Canada. Employees of Nintendo of America Inc., its affiliates, subsidiaries, participating retailers, advertising/promotion/publicity agencies, L.E.P., Inc., printing suppliers and the immediate families of each are not eligible. Contest void where prohibited, restricted or taxed by law. Contest subject to all Federal, State and Local laws and regulations. Taxes on prizes, if any, are the sole responsibility of the prize winners. Winners will be announced in the 1/96 issue of VIDEOGAMES.