

Bit Age Times

The Newsletter for the Second Generation

Issue #12 - December 31st, 2000

Table of Contents

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 01. | Nintendo To Buy Sega? |
| 02. | New Year's Resolutions V2.001 by Fred Wagaman |
| 03. | The Playstation, Deja Vu |
| 04. | 20 More Eyeball Benders by Alan Hewston |
| 05. | Collecting Bit Age Games |
| 06. | Bit Age Comics |
| 07. | Conclusion |

Nintendo To Buy Sega?

Normally we laugh at such rumors, but this one was posted in the NY Times and has shown up in quite a few other places (like Daily Radar). The word is that Nintendo is in discussion with Sega about buying the company for \$2 billion dollars. Just the thought of this is monumental and would change the face of video games forever.

It is strange to think of the two biggest video game companies of the bit age and still the #2 (Nintendo) and #3 (Sega) video game companies in the world today as being one company. While some people think the idea of Sonic appearing in the next installment of Smash Bros or Shigeru Miyamota, Yugi Naka and Yu Suzuki, three of the best, if not the best video game designers in the world, working for the same company. Even if these ideas are tantalizing, the thought of the world losing the most innovative and creative video game company is downright scary. Let us imagine that this deal goes down and how it may affect the video game market.

1. Short Term Effects

The first question would be what would happen with the Nintendo 64 and Sega Dreamcast. Would Nintendo continue to support both or either? Would one go away or possibly would they abandon both as they send all the programmers to the Gamecube and Gameboy Advance? Since Nintendo has already moved all their key programmers away from the Nintendo 64 (this Christmas was the curtain call for the N64), I think that one is pretty much

dead, irregardless of what happens. But the Dreamcast is a whole different story. Would Nintendo dump a system that is selling very well and reaching some very nice numbers? After this holiday, the installed user base for the Dreamcast should be 4 million, which is great for a system that is a little over a year old. Plus, with the continued problems with the Playstation 2 and some very promising games coming out in the next few months, the Dreamcast is poised to add further to the number. It would be stupid for Nintendo to pull the plug on the system.

While the Dreamcast may continue to get support, for the foreseeable future, it is doubtful that it would continue to get great games. The best case scenario would that Nintendo would release all the games that are in development right now and then start to shift the programmers over to developing for the Gamecube. What that would mean is that Yuji Naka and Yu Suzuki would probably finish up their big projects, like Sonic 2 and Shenmue 2, but then they would take their talents to the Gamecube. This would give the Dreamcast enough AAA software for 2001, if spread out. It would keep the systems selling for the year and keep money rolling in. But in 2002, when the Gamecube rolls out, the Dreamcast would be cast aside, with only some second tier software coming out.

Another short term effect would be Nintendo tapping into the vast game library of Sega's to bring out a bunch of Gameboy and possibly some Nintendo 64 games. Games like the early Sonic the Hedgehog, Phantasy Star, Golden Axe, Shinobi, Space Harrier, Outrun, Ecco and others would be ported over with some improvements as either single games (for the Gameboy) or as compilations for the Nintendo 64 and possibly the Dreamcast.

2. Long Term Effects

The first and possibly the biggest effect it would have on the game industry is the void it would leave. Competition is a good thing and to lose the #3 video game company and possibly the best software company (it can be debated between Sega and Nintendo as to who is the best). While having all that talent at Nintendo would be good for the Gamecube, would Naka and Suzuki enjoy the same creative freedom at Nintendo that they do at Sega? Would such unique games as Shenmue, Seaman and Jet Grind Radio exist in such a family orientated company like Nintendo or would they homogenize the Sega games? Are Naka and Suzuki under contracts or could they flee and go elsewhere? Imagine what a boon this would be for Sony or Microsoft to employ these guys. Or they could possibly join a third party company or even start their own company. I do not know about how the game market works in Japan and if they have the same options open to them as do the Western programmers who can become free agents and go their own way.

While the Gamecube would be positioned for the big battle and their chances of success would be enhanced, they would also be helping out Sony and Microsoft. Everyone knows that the Gamecube will not ship in 2001, despite what Nintendo says. Without the Dreamcast or a Dreamcast with limited support on the market, this would give both Sony and Microsoft even more of the market and a better chance of building their user base by the time the Gamecube ships.

Before anyone gets upset, remember this is only a rumor. Even if there is truth to it, both companies have to agree to it. While Nintendo can afford the \$2 billion (they have \$6 billion in the bank), it is still a lot of money to spend. But let us look at the reasons they would and wouldn't purchase Sega.

Why Nintendo Would Purchase Sega

1. They would get a very extensive library of games. While most of Sega's games are not known outside of the video game market (with exception of maybe Sonic), they are known to the hardcore gamers, something that Nintendo hasn't had for quite some time.
2. Nintendo would buy a great arcade division. Granted the arcade market isn't what it once was, but these guys continue to churn out great games.

3. Nintendo would bolster its programming talents and build an amazing stable of people.
4. Nintendo would eliminate one of its competitors and increase its market share.
5. Instead of starting from square one, Nintendo would have a working online game company and 150,000+ subscribers.

Why Nintendo Wouldn't Want to Purchase Sega

1. Outside of Sonic, none of Sega's properties are known and not many are marketable to the masses like Mario, Donkey Kong and Pokemon are.
2. Nintendo would be inheriting a bunch of debt.
3. Nintendo would be forced to cut a lot of jobs. While the best programmers would move over and work for Nintendo, a lot of the people would get the axe. Remember that Japanese companies aren't as enthusiastic about cutting jobs as American companies.
4. Not quite sure how Nintendo would plan on recouping the investment. Sega loses a lot of its value if the Dreamcast and their growing online server are dumped. But if you keep them going then you are competing with yourself and this is not good either. While the new programmers would allow Nintendo to make more great games, it is not like they are not doing that now.

One possibility is for Nintendo to sell off pieces of Sega to recoup part of the money. They could sell the arcade division, the Segaworks franchises and rights to earlier titles. A decent price could be fetched for franchises like Golden Axe, Shinobi, Panzer Dragoon and others.

New Year's Resolutions V2.001

By [Fred Wagaman](#)

Last year, I put together some video-game related New Year's Resolutions (Bit Age Times #4). It does no good to do something like that unless you're willing to look back and see how you did.

For the year 2000 I resolved to:

to spend less time collecting, shopping and pricing and more time playing

I did OK with this one. I definitely did less shopping and buying of games. Much of it had to do with the prices and the ending of some discount programs by some major chains. Some of it had to do with me and my family playing more non-video games. And some had to do with the lack of availability of classic games at the usual haunts.

to find the last 2 Atari 5200 carts I need (Meteorites/Bounty Bob Strikes Back)

Thanks to my friend Rick, I was able to get one of those two (Meteorites). I've seen Bounty Bob Strikes Back on ebay, but couldn't justify spending that kind of money (~\$125) for a game just to have it.

to find the last Odyssey 2 game I need and not sell my first born to get it. (Power Lords)

Thanks to Alan DePaulo and the Philly Classic Game show in April, I was able to trade for this rare game. Anyone in the Northeast or Mid-Atlantic region should plan to attend the second one.

to find out what I really have and don't have when it comes to boxes and instructions.

This one was a major failure. With all of the classic games stacked and stored so well, it was hard to justify taking them out. Add to that the mobility of my daughter (now 16 months old) and you have a good reason not to disrupt the games. To make matters worse, with the decrease (but not termination) of acquiring games, I've grown lax in keeping track of what I have.

to have at least one "Game Party Night".

There's still hope for this one. I had several false starts on this, but it always seemed that the major players were too busy to commit. Maybe New Year's Eve ?

to complete at least 6 different games.

I completed 5. I played many more, but actually finished:

Pokemon Yellow (GB)

Xena-Warrior Princess (Playstation)

Strider 2 (Playstation)

Gauntlet Legends (Dreamcast)

Game Paradise (Saturn)

This doesn't count beating several Fighting Games (Marvel vs. Capcom, etc.)

to build a vertically oriented mini MAME cabinet.

I've got the necessary parts. Does that count ?

to institute a family game (video/board/card) and movie night.

I did pretty well on this one. From January until about June, we had a game night every Friday. We would take turns deciding what game we'd play or movie we'd watch. Worked pretty well until vacation and the summer busyness broke our schedule. Hopefully, we will restart it again after the holidays.

to get a PS2 the day it comes out

Upon further review, I made a conscience decision to NOT get one of these things early. Nothing in the Japanese release impressed me and I changed my mind about getting one on day one. The closer the launch date came, the happier I was not to be roped in by the hype. There is still no "must-have" games on the PS2's roster for me.

to upgrade my MAME machine to a more powerful processor.

Took care of this one early. Did it in January. Subsequently had to reload my entire setup due to a hard disk crash...

to put together a video game presentation to give to my sister's 5th grade class.

My sister teaches 3rd grade now. With all of the bad press that video games got last year, the whole subject sort of got dropped at the family gatherings.

to enjoy life more, let little things bother me less and to be more positive.

Still plenty of room for improvement here.

So what does 2001 hold in store for me ?

I resolve to:

**get back on track when it comes to organizing and listing my games.
(Eight months is waaaay too far to be behind)**

**find out what I do and don't have box and instruction wise.
See last year.**

**find a better way to store my machines and games.
With a 16 month old that loves to play with the boxes, wires and controllers, I must find a better way to store my Saturn, Dreamcast, N64 and Playstation games in the living room as well as the machines to play them on. She's just about tall enough to climb over the barriers that have thwarted her this long and she can open the entertainment center with little or no effort.**

find a copy of Bounty Bob Strikes Back for the 5200

**seriously consider pruning the collection.
This one would be for space as well as cash. I must think long and hard about this one. Watch for me on ebay !**

**complete at least 6 different games.
I got close last year.**

**restart game/movie night
We really had a lot of fun doing this. The party games got the most workouts. To make this work, it has to be a priority on your family's schedule.**

**install the new equipment on the MAME cabinet
An arcade trackball is still in the box awaiting installation. Chances are the only way I'll do this is if the machine breaks sometime this year.**

**fix Mappy
My Mappy arcade machine has been out of commission for over a year. I was able to get a replacement board, but it didn't fix the problem. Now that there is some room in the gameroom, I should be able to work on it.**

have at least one "Game Party" night.

**get my personal finances in order.
This one might take a lot of effort and impact my gaming in a big-time manner. But it needs to be done.**

Well, here's to a happy, healthy 2001. Keep playing...

FRED

The Playstation, Deja Vu



As I went to Toys R Us over the holidays and looked over the shelves of the latest games, I experienced a feeling of Deja Vu. While looking over the Playstation games, I saw games for the Grinch, Barbie, Tonka and a ton of other licenses. I could not help but think to the days of the Nintendo. I thought back to games like Where's Waldo, Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure and Sesame Street. I remember how I knew the Nintendo was waning and its days as a serious video game machine were behind it. How the great games were moving to the Sega Genesis and soon, the Super Nintendo. Well, it is deja vu all over again! The Playstation, the most successful game console (that is not a handheld as the Gameboy has lasted longer and sold more systems) has become the Nintendo all over again! Come to think about it, the Nintendo was the most successful system before the Playstation.

What is more humorous is when I think back to an article in Next Generation when they were talking to one of the guys at Sony about the launch of the Playstation. He was talking about how some edutainment guys (edutainment is a term for games that are educational, think of the Sesame Street games) came and asked about developing for the Playstation. He told an employee to be polite to them, but get them out of the building. They did not want any edutainment software on the Playstation, it was a serious game machine.

How times have changed. Now the system has become a haven for these kiddie based programs as the shelves are littered with them. From Elmo to the return of the Smurfs (who is next, the Snorks?), there are a wide range of games aimed at the kiddie crowd, both the boys and the girls. Is this a bad thing? Not really, it is the natural progression of a game system and a signal for hardcore gamers to move to greener pastures. Once a system becomes cheap enough to reach the mainstream audience, like the Playstation with its estimated user base of 27 million is, then more and more companies will throw their hat in the ring and you get all kind of games out. But this also dilutes the image of the system and suddenly it doesn't look like such a cool system when your little brother wants to play Jungle Book on it. It is hard to feel cool about your system when your sister is asking for Barbie games for your machine. So you can sit back and watch the waning days of the Playstation. while there will be a ton of games made for it over the next 3-5 years, don't look for too many more Metal Gear Solids or Grand Turismos. Those have been moved to the Playstation 2 and soon the X-Box and Gamecube. So you may want to pull all your favorite games aside and play them on your new Playstation 2 or on the Dreamcast when they finally get around to releasing Bleemcast, and then handing over the Playstation to your younger siblings. Then you can complete the cycle tht happened back when gamers moved from the Nintendo to the Super NES. Deja vu!



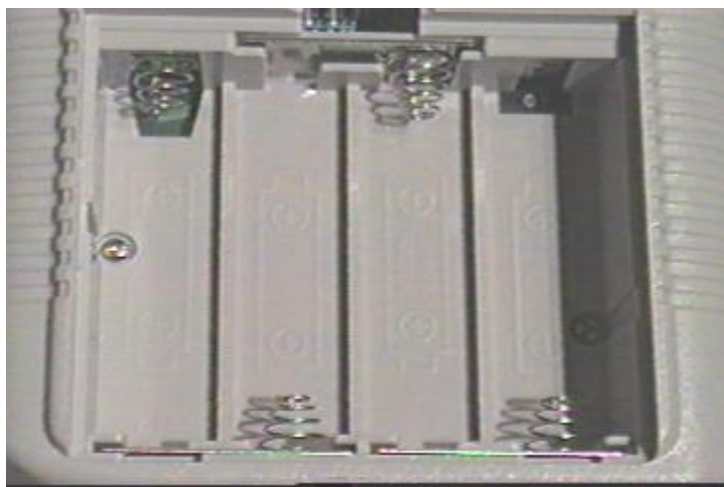
20 More Eyeball Benders

by [Alan Hewston](#)

This is my first time writing for BAT, but hopefully not the last. For those of you who read the Retrogaming Times, you'll know what these are about. The objects shown in the link are all videogame related views of home video game systems, components or paraphernalia from the Bit Age Era. That is, from TGFX, SMS, SEGA Genesis, Game Gear, NES, SNES, Game Boy, and others. Hopefully you'll enjoy all 20 of them, and get at least 10 of them correct. At the end of the section, the answers are shown. So grab a piece of paper . . . See below for the eyeball benders . . . and write down what you think each of these are. At the end Tom provides the answers, and a prize to the first person to correctly identify all of them ;-). For official complaints about your eyes being bent, or that we made an error with any of these objects, or that Tom really isn't giving out a prize, Alan can be reached at hewston95@stratos.net



Eyeball #1



Eyeball #2



Eyeball #3



Eyeball #4



Eyeball #5



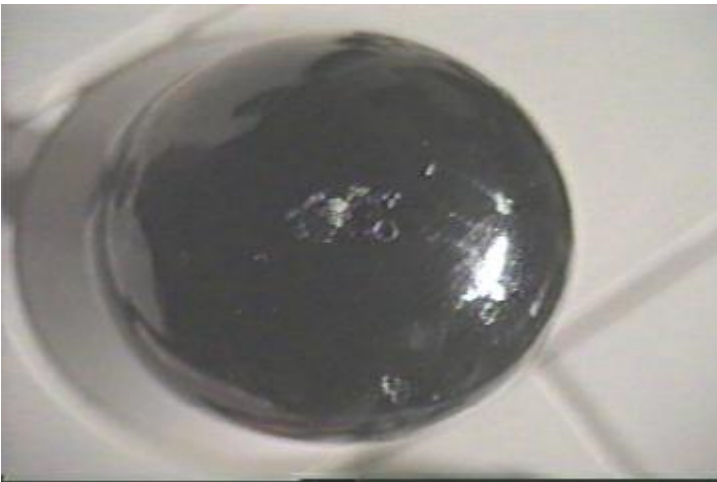
Eyeball #6



Eyeball #7



Eyeball #8



Eyeball #9



Eyeball #10

Answers:

- 01) SMS Goggles**
- 02) Gameboy battery compartment**
- 03) SMS Light Gun, rear of**

- 04) Sega Genesis Cart
- 05) Action Max Video Tape
- 06) Game By 4-player adapter
- 07) NES Game Genie
- 08) NES Game unit Cleaning cartridge - The Eliminator
- 09) NES Advantage Joystick Ball
- 10) SNES Super 5-Play

Collecting Bit Age Games!

There are a lot of people who collect classic games, just look at ebay auctions to get an idea. But what about the Bit Age games? Are they collectible? Will they be collectible? The answer is "YES"! But collecting classic games and Bit Age games are quite different.

The first thing to keep in mind with Bit Age games is that the quality of the game is usually more important than the rarity of the game. In the classic game market, the rarer the game, the more valuable it is. It doesn't matter if the game stinks worse than an outhouse in July, just so long as it is rare. But in the Bit Age, the quality of the gameplay and the lineage of the game are more important. Some of the games that are the most sought after and quite valuable are the ones that are still coming out as newer games. Phantasy Star for the Sega Master system commands \$50.00 and a boxed Final Fantasy can get almost as much. These are two series that are still having an impact on modern games with Final Fantasy IX just released and Phantasy Star Online coming out shortly.

While lineage will play a role in game value, the quality of the game and how fun it is definitely helps. A great playing sports game like Baseball Stars garners \$10.00-\$15.00, while most other baseball games for the NES are only worth a few dollars. Same with how Devil's Crush for the Turbo Grafx will get anywhere from \$35.00-\$50.00, where a lesser pinball game will get a few bucks.

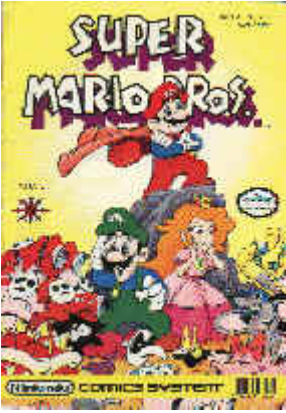
Another thing to keep in mind is that genres are much more important in the Bit Age than during the classic era. Role playing games tend to get more money on the average than other genres and sports games tend to get the least. One reason is that RPGs tend to age better and are more fun to play now than sports games, which tend to have archaic gameplay and feature players who are most likely retired. One would think that the original John Madden game would have some value with the impact the series has had on modern sports games, but it is pretty much worthless. Go figure.

There is one major difference from the classic games and the Bit Age ones and that is values. One thing about classic games is that there are some seriously expensive games. Some of the games (not counting prototypes) are worth in the \$1,000 range and there is quite a few in hundreds. But with the Bit Age games, there are only a handful that break the \$100.00 range. Probably the most expensive, non prototypes are the Panesian Adult Nintendo games. There are three of them and they have been known to get around \$400.00 each. But one major difference is that the average price of a common video game from the Bit Age is higher than the classic era. In the classic era, many commons like Combat, ET, Las Vegas Blackjack and Poker and Donkey Kong (the Coleco one) are worth a dollar or less. But in the Bit Age, most games are at least worth a dollar and most are worth a few dollars or more. The only real exceptions are Super Mario for the NES and some of the sports games, specifically some of the Sega Genesis ones. Otherwise, you are looking of an average common price of about \$3.00, unlike the classic games which are nearer to \$1.00 average for the common games.

While collecting games can be a fun and enjoyable hobby, you need to keep a few things in mind. First off, don't expect to get rich from video games. Unless you luck on some prototypes or a stash of really rare games, you can at best, make your hobby pay for itself. You should look at it as just a hobby and if your collection goes up in value, then think of it as a bonus.

Bit Age Comics

During the classic era, there was a comic book series called Atari Force. It started off as small comics that were inserted with Atari games and became a full fledged comic book series. While it was the only classic game that was given its own comic book, the Bit Age featured a handful of comics based on video games. Here is a look at some of the ones that came out.



Super Mario Bros-The famous Mario and Luigi starred in a handful of different comics based on their adventures. There was Super Mario Bros, The Adventures of the Super Mario Bros and Nintendo Comic System. All of these were released by Valiant Comics, prior to their explosion into the mainstream with such books as Turok, Magnus and Shadowman (two of which went on to become video games).



Sonic the Hedgehog-Archie Comics has been doing this series since 1993 and it still comes out today, making it the longest running video game based comic book of all-time! There has been sequels, including Sonic vs Knuckles, Sonic and Knuckles and Sonic Super Special.

Gameboy-That's right, the best selling handheld of all time, also was a comic book. It ran for five issues and was also published by Valiant. Gameboy also starred in the Nintendo Comic System series.

Nights-The star of the the very popular Sega Saturn series, was also featured in a comic series. It was called, Nights into Dreams and went for six issues. Like Sonic, it was published by Archie Comics.

Street Fighter-The highly successful arcade and later console game spawned numerous comic books. They were published by numerous companies including DC Comics and Malibu. Later, ones from Japan were brought over by Viz Comics.

Mortal Kombat-The other highly successful fighting game also spawned a comic series. Oddly enough, it was also done by Malibu Comics. The base series ran for six issues and there were numerous spin-offs with most of the regular characters getting their own series.

Double Dragon-The game that spawned a horde of copies and turned the side scrolling beat-em ups into a popular genre, was also a six issue series of comic books from Marvel Comics.

As you can see, there were quite a few comic series based on video games from the Bit Age. If you know of any that I missed, please email me. But let it be known that the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles was a comic book before it became a video game or a cartoon or an action figure.

For a great site with lots of information on the Super Mario Comic Books, check out the following URL:
<http://www.smbhq.com/users/cartoons/comics.html>.

Conclusion

While I hoped to have a larger newsletter for our return, I ran into online problems. My DSL server, Flashcom has gone bankrupt and I have been switched to Earthlink. Of course the day of the switch happened to be today, so I was offline for most of last night and almost all of today. When I thought it was all smooth, the computer acts up, so here is a shorter issue, but at least there is a new issue! I do hope you enjoyed it and I will try to do another one in a few months. Thanks to everyone who sent letters of thanks and encouragement to continue Bit Age Times, they were all appreciated. I will try to do a new issue at least quarterly and possibly sooner than that.

[Tom Zjaba](#)