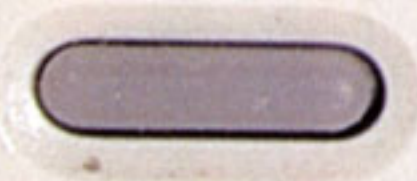




SELECT



START



INFORMATION

Year released: 1989

Original price: £69.99

Buy it now for: £5

Associated magazines:

GB Action, C&VG Go! supplement, Mean Machines, Nintendo Magazine System

Why the Game Boy

was great... It offered true portability in an era when manufacturers were seemingly falling over themselves to produce battery-hungry behemoths that required you to carry a power supply with you at all times. With excellent support from practically every software publisher on the face of the planet, the Game Boy effortlessly overcame its monochrome shortcomings to become one of the most successful pieces of videogame hardware the world has ever seen

this interface for granted now but it was Yokoi and his team at R&D1 that developed the concept; sensing that joysticks would impinge on a handheld's mobility, Yokoi concocted the D-pad – a flat controller that wouldn't protrude from the casing of any handheld it was applied to. The concept also found its way onto the NES, where it was equally successful. The NES in turn influenced other aspects of the Game Boy interface – the familiar A and B buttons were present, along with the 'Select' and 'Start'. This shared control method was beneficial in two ways; it allowed NES owners (and there were plenty of them) to effortlessly pick up the play this shiny new portable, and it also made it easy to port popular NES franchises to the machine.

As the Japanese release date approached, Nintendo confessed that it had high hopes for the device; president Hiroshi Yamauchi confidently predicted that it would sell over 25 million in the first three years – quite a bold claim, for the time. There might have been quite a few people that scoffed at such optimism, but when the machine effortlessly sold 300,000 units in its first day on sale in Japan in 1989, such scepticism seemed foolishly misplaced. It was painfully obvious that Nintendo – and Yokoi – had struck gold once again.

Software played a massive role in this victory and no game is more significant in shaping the Game Boy's history than the ultra-addictive puzzle title *Tetris*, created by Russian programmer Alexei Pajitnov. Although this legendary title was already widely available on PC at the time, its appearance on the Game Boy is arguably the reason why it is remembered so fondly today. CEO of Nintendo of America, Minoru Arakawa witnessed a demonstration of the puzzler at a trade show in 1988 and moved quickly to ensure that *Tetris* would become the Game Boy's first 'killer app'. It was included as a pack-in title in every region except Japan and would become instrumental in cementing the console's reputation as a 'must-have' gadget in the US, where the initial shipment of one million consoles sold out within a matter of weeks.

As was the case with the Game & Watch, the Game Boy used LCD technology, but instead of static images it boasted a 'dot-matrix' screen and could therefore display 160 by 144 individual pixels. It was monochrome, lacked lighting and could only display four different shades of grey, but it is unquestionably one of the reasons why the console was such an enormous success. It meant that the machine was incredibly energy efficient by the standards of the time, and although it's rumoured that several of Nintendo's

Battery life helped the Game Boy to win the



the screen as just didn't phase me at shades was heaven had been using on the tricks were developed shortcomings of the dis sprites needed to stand c the backgrounds would blur a to the lag on the display," says Mar give important sprites, like the play help delineate them from the rest, On the audio side of things the C challenge for coders. "The sound Cuthbert. "It had a 'user wave table entries, each of which was 4-bit, so

» C&VG produced a supplement called *Go!* that was devoted to handheld machines, with the Game Boy being the main focus.

GAMEBOY GAME GEAR LYNX PC ENGINE GT

ISSUE 3 JANUARY 1992

HAND-HELD GO!

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NEWS

THE FUTURE OF CONSOLES IS IN YOUR HANDS

Here's a new Nintendo console in your hand. It fits comfortably in the palm of your hand, has its own tiny TV screen, and the games come on cartridges the size of a matchbox. Sounds too good to be true? Julian Rignall has the story.

HISTORY LESSON

Hand-held game machines have been around for over a decade. One of the earliest was Micro, a simple machine based around a display of size LCD tubes and a very basic sound chip.

The next generation came with coin-operated games which used multicolored LED graphics displays, but the graphics were crude and games often simple and very tedious, mostly Pac-Man and Space Invader-type games.

In the early eighties, LCD hand-holds came onto the market. These monochrome games gave better graphic detail, were far smaller in size — but were still ultimately very simple and limited. And this has been the way up until now...

But that's all about to change with the release of Nintendo's Game Boy, the fourth generation of hand-held machines. And what a generation gap Nintendo have made — the Game Boy makes previous hand-held games look banal and out of date.

THE CONSOLE

Basically, the Game Boy is a Nintendo-style console in a tiny case — the whole console measures 110mm. On the front is a jerky controller, start, select and two fire buttons, and a little speaker. Above these is a battery power indicator and a light and white fork in the LCD screen, similar to those found in toy portable video like the Sky Watcher.

On the sides are a volume control, headphone socket, external connector (so you can link up with another Game Boy), contrast control and cartridge port. Underneath is the battery compartment, which takes four AA-sized batteries.

The console is of ergonomic design, and fits in your hand perfectly — playing games on it is a joy!

THE GAMES

Games come on monochrome 8-bit cartridges, and the two I've got are Super Mario and Baseball. Mario is a revamped version of Mario Bros, and has many new features, including a short 'let up' section with Mario in a life sub-course. There are many levels, which include Egyptian, Egyptian, Jungle and Sub-Aqua, and there are more hidden features than any previous Mario game. It's also undeniably addictive — I've already whiled away many, many hours on the Brighton to London computer special playing it.

Baseball is also excellent — addictive and very, very challenging. In fact, I'd go so far to say it's one of the best baseball games I've seen on a console!

Other games available are Tetris, Alleyway (an Asteroid game), a fairly looking platform game that I don't know the name of, Tennis and Mah Jongg. And apparently there are even more games in the pipeline.

THE GRAPHICS

The high contrast screen gives amazingly sharp graphics, and although the graphics are small there's absolutely no eye-strain involved using it. The Mario and Baseball graphics are superb, with a monochrome palette.

The high contrast screen gives amazingly sharp graphics, and although the graphics are small there's absolutely no eye-strain involved using it. The Mario and Baseball graphics are superb, with a monochrome palette.

Mario and a myriad of min enemies and brilliant backdrops, all in incredibly top detail. Smoothly in motion, but there's a little bit of an artefact due to the LCD screen — but it's nothing that impairs the game. Baseball uses large sprites for batting, and switches to a pile of the field. Again, it's very clear and you can see exactly what's going on.

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