

The Home Market Expands 1989-1992

1989

Tetris Troubles

Tengen acquires the home rights to Tetris and begins selling the extremely popular game. However, it is quickly discovered that Tengen had bought the rights from Mirrorsoft, which did not own the rights in the first place. Nintendo quietly acquires the legitimate home rights to Tetris and releases it under its own label. The Tengen version is removed from the marketplace.



Tetris

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Nintendo Introduces Monochrome Game Boy

Nintendo releases its handheld Game Boy (\$109). The system comes with Tetris, and despite a tiny monochrome screen, it begins to build a historic sales record. A Game Boy version of Super Mario (Super Marioland), a Breakout clone (Alleyway), and a baseball game are quickly released.



The Nintendo Game Boy

NEC Releases "16-Bit" Console in America

NEC brings the PC-Engine to America and calls it the TurboGrafx-16 (\$189). NEC also releases a \$400 portable CD player that attaches to the TurboGrafx-16 and plays games that are, for the first time, stored on compact discs.



The TurboGrafx-16

Sega Releases 16-Bit Genesis

Sega releases the 16-bit Genesis in the United States after limited success in Japan. The \$249.95 system is packed with a conversion of the arcade game *Altered Beast*. Early marketing efforts push the system as a true arcade experience that's substantially better than previous home game machines.



The Sega Genesis

Atari Releases Handheld Lynx

Epyx displays a handheld color console called the Handy Game at the Winter CES. Atari purchases the rights to the Handy Game and releases it as the Lynx (\$149). After publishing a handful of great Epyx games, Atari begins to develop a number of 7800 game conversions and Atari Games arcade ports for the system. More expensive than the Game Boy, the Lynx suffers from a lack of third-party support and is plagued by constant rumors that Atari will stop supporting the system.

1990

Good Year for Nintendo

Nintendo releases *Super Mario 3*, the all-time best-selling video-game cartridge. Despite competition from the Genesis and TurboGrafx-16, the NES enjoys its best year. Nintendo of Japan unveils its Super Famicom, a 16-bit system with better audio and 3D graphics than the Genesis and TurboGrafx-16. *Super Mario 4: SM World* is offered to Japanese gamers, who rush to stores to buy the game.



Super Mario 3

Video-Game Rental Dispute

Nintendo and Blockbuster go to court over video-game rentals, with Nintendo maintaining that the rentals are destroying its sales. When the courts decide the games can be rented, Nintendo strikes another blow by claiming that Blockbuster had illegally copied the copyrighted game-instruction manuals. This time the courts side with Nintendo.

Neo-Geo

SNK, a long-time Nintendo developer and maker of such games as Ikari Warriors (1-3) and Crystalis, releases the 24-bit Neo-Geo in arcade and home formats. The graphics and sounds crush the Genesis and TurboGrafx-16, but the \$399 retail price crushes the Neo-Geo's sales.

Sega Arcade Hits Continue To Come Home

Sega continues to turn out games to trade in on its established arcade successes. Afterburner II, E-SWAT, and other Sega arcade hits come home, and Sega secures the Genesis rights to Capcom's largely unknown but amazing platform game Strider, which wins Game of the Year.

NEC Releases Handheld TurboGrafx-16

NEC releases the TurboExpress (\$299.95), a handheld TurboGrafx-16 with a separately sold TV tuner. This is the first time a portable game machine can play a dedicated console's games.

Commodore CDTV

Commodore announces its CDTV (Commodore Dynamic Total Vision). Basically a Commodore computer without a keyboard, the CDTV is the first of several home interactive systems that stress education software as well as games. The software is sold on compact discs rather than cartridges.

1991

Nintendo Releases SNES

Nintendo releases the Super Famicom in America and calls the \$249.95 console the Super NES (SNES).

Journalists begin to wonder aloud whether Mario will be enough to convince NES-dedicated parents to make the investment in a new machine.



The Super Nintendo

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Sega Introduces Sonic

Sega unveils Sonic the Hedgehog, which it hopes is a force that will one day conquer the NES and SNES. Charmed by the character, critics are quick to support it but call the choice between Mario and Sonic a toss-up. Most pick Super Mario World as the better of the two.



Sega's Sonic the Hedgehog

SNES CD Player

Sony and Nintendo announce plans for Sony to develop a \$700 CD player to work with the SNES.

Game Genie

Galoob Toys releases the Game Genie, which infuriates Nintendo: The device lets players cheat on NES games and win more easily. Nintendo sees the Game Genie as a tool that reduces the long-term value of its games, and it attempts to prevent Game Genie sales.



The Game Genie

Street Fight II

Capcom releases Street Fighter II and brings new life to arcades filled with walk-and-punch clones and shooters. Teenagers flock to play Street Fighter II, and arcades purchase multiple machines and similar clones and begin to invest in more sophisticated racing simulations as well.

Atari Panther

Atari announces development of the Panther, a new 32-bit game system to compete against Sega and Nintendo.

1992

Genesis Software

Although they have contracts with Nintendo, Capcom and Konami talk actively with Sega about development for the Genesis. They ultimately release games but never devote their best teams to work on Sega software. Sega hurriedly prepares Sonic the Hedgehog 2 for a holiday release. The game sells like mad, and Sonic becomes a serious challenger to Mario's future success.

Sega CD

Sega releases the Sega CD (\$299.95) but denies developers easy access to development tools that would let them use the system's special graphics abilities (hardware sprite zooming and rotation). Sega of America focuses on developing a number of interactive movies.



The Sega CD

JVC Wondermega

JVC introduces the Wondermega in Japan. The Wondermega is a combination Genesis and Sega CD and retails for \$620.

Nintendo Divorces Sony and Marries Philips

Sony and Nintendo abandon their joint CD peripheral, which Sony had reputedly completed in prototype form. Rumors surface indicating that Sony lawyers had skillfully crafted an agreement that allowed Sony to reap publishing profits from SNES/Super Famicom CD-based games, profits Nintendo sought to retain. Nintendo announces plans to work with Philips to create a CD-ROM compatible with the Philips CD-i. Sony, disgusted, finishes work on a number of SNES games, scraps the old "PlayStation" developed for Nintendo, and sets its engineers to work on developing a 32-bit CD-only game machine to unseat Nintendo in Japan and the United States.

3DO Is Launched

3DO, a new company started by Electronic Arts founder Trip Hawkins, announces a new 32-bit gaming console. 3DO receives major backing from Panasonic, Time-Warner, and MCA. 3DO does not plan to manufacture any consoles itself. Hawkins' dream is that the 3DO console will become the standard that will be released by many different manufacturers.