

GameOn

1989-2019

GAMEONMAG.COM - 2019



Nintendo **GAME BOY™**
SPECIAL EDITION

30TH ANNIVERSARY

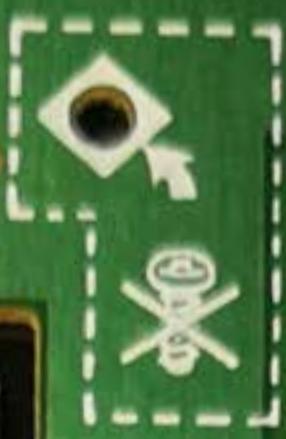
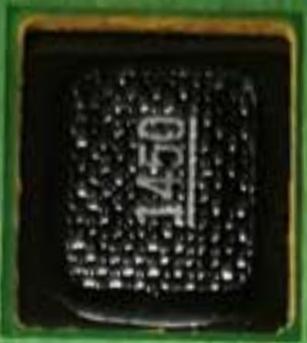


©1989 Nintendo
DMG LCD-06

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C3 10μ25V
3.6V
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DA1
DA2

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DA3
DA4

E2
Q1
C4 47P



C6
C7
C8

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(0.68μ × 5)
C9
C10



10V
100μ
C3
0.1μ/200P
C2



J3
J4
J5



Who would have thought back in 1989, that a device which required four batteries would still be so fondly remembered three decades later? But here we are, celebrating the fact that the Game Boy is 30 years young as of 21st April 2019!

Often copied, but never surpassed (in sales at least), Nintendo R&D1 really knocked it out of the park with a design so memorable that it's probably the most recognisable handheld console ever. The worldwide sales for the Game Boy and Game Boy Color combined were over 118 million units. That's more than the population of Ethiopia! If you count the Game Boy Advance sales, it dwarfs the population of Russia!

Of course, this magazine was put together by our team members who felt the most affinity with the little grey box with the green screen.

Included within these pages you'll find pieces covering the different Game Boys, the launch titles for each of the three main iterations, and the accessories that came out. We also have a couple of articles about the best selling games for the Game Boy, Color and Advance, and a couple more about some technically impressive Game Boy games, and how some of Capcom's biggest franchises turned out.

There's more, of course, but you'll find all of that across these pages.

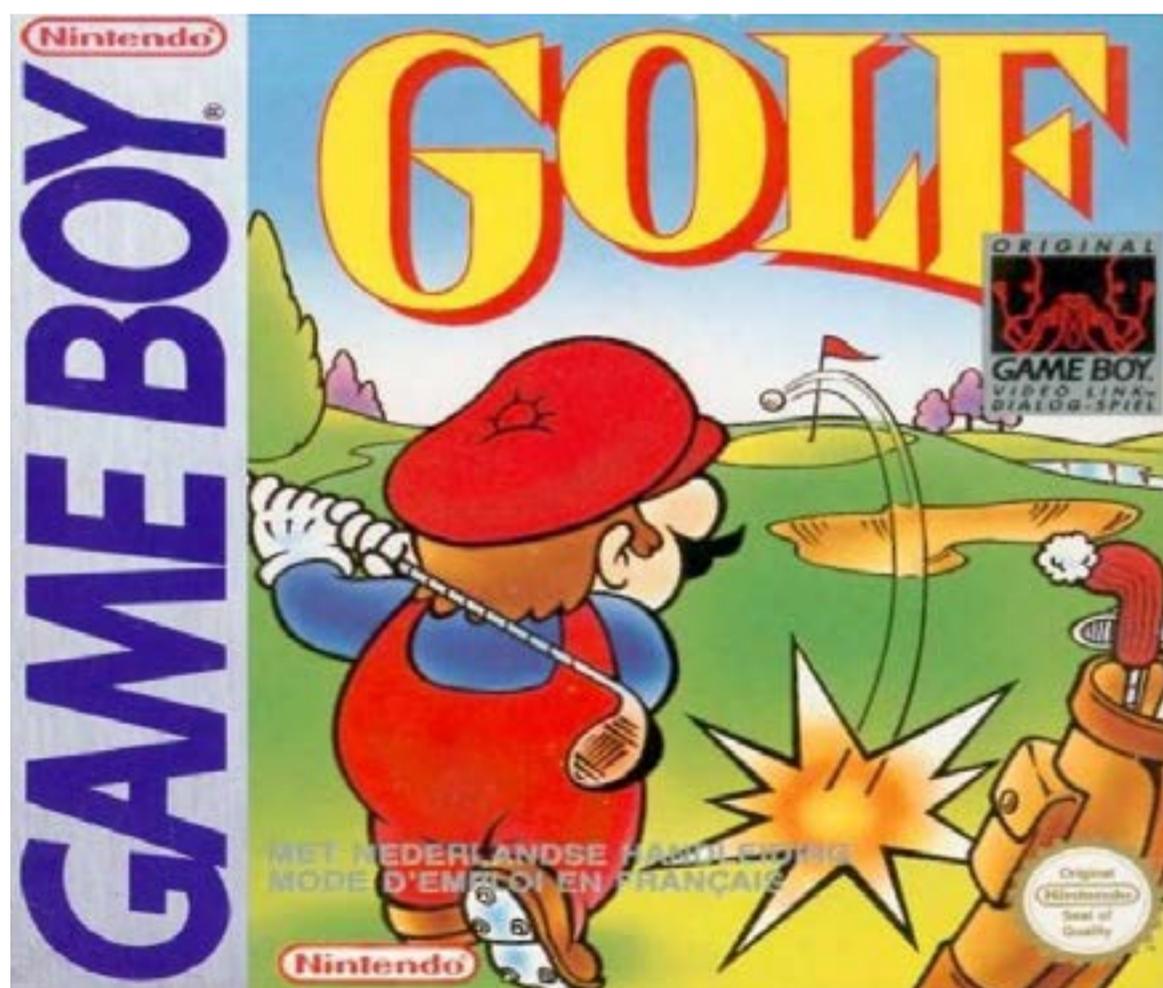
If you like what you've found here, make sure to check out The GameOn Magazine, available monthly from Amazon Kindle and Magzter for only £1.99/\$1.99.

- THE EDITOR

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GameOn's First Game Boy

Which one did we have?

By GameOn Staff



There's no denying that there's been plenty of different models of Game Boy. We asked our staff which one they had as their first foray into handheld Nintendo gaming.

Alex:

Game Boy Advance SP, my first console.

Andrew:

Game Boy with a "Color" case - the clear one, obviously, because that looked awesome.

Benedict:

The original Game Boy. Bought in 1991 when I was on a school trip to Berlin and had some spare cash.

Elisa:

Had the original Game Boy, kept me quite busy in doctors offices as a kid.

Ethan:

Game Boy Advance

Gary:

Game Boy, when I started collecting retro consoles, I found an original DMG 01 and with a little clean of the battery contacts, worked perfectly.

James:

Game Boy Color then a *expletive* who borrowed it off me lost it on a plane and he bought me an *expletive* PS2 game as an apology.



Jinny:

Game Boy Color, but I remember nothing about it...

Jordan:

I was given a clear Game Boy when I was five and it became my best friend, until I realised people were supposed to have literal fleshy ones.

Mark:

Game Boy Color. I stupidly had a Game Gear prior to that.

Nikki:

The OG Game Boy. It was big, the size of a brick and ate through batteries but I loved it.

Owen:

Game Boy Advance fulfilled my childhood and kept me entertained. Sonic Advance 2, Advance Wars, and Final Fantasy Tactics Advance were my faves.

Sean:

Game Boy with only Tetris that my dad bought me from a car boot. It was missing the back battery cover, so I had to sellotape the batteries in.

Simon:

Game Boy, I only had Tetris to play for far too long causing me to suffer flashbacks whenever I hear THAT tune now.

Steve:

Original Game Boy - but I've bought most consoles up to the Wii U.





Game Boy Launch Titles

The first games past the post

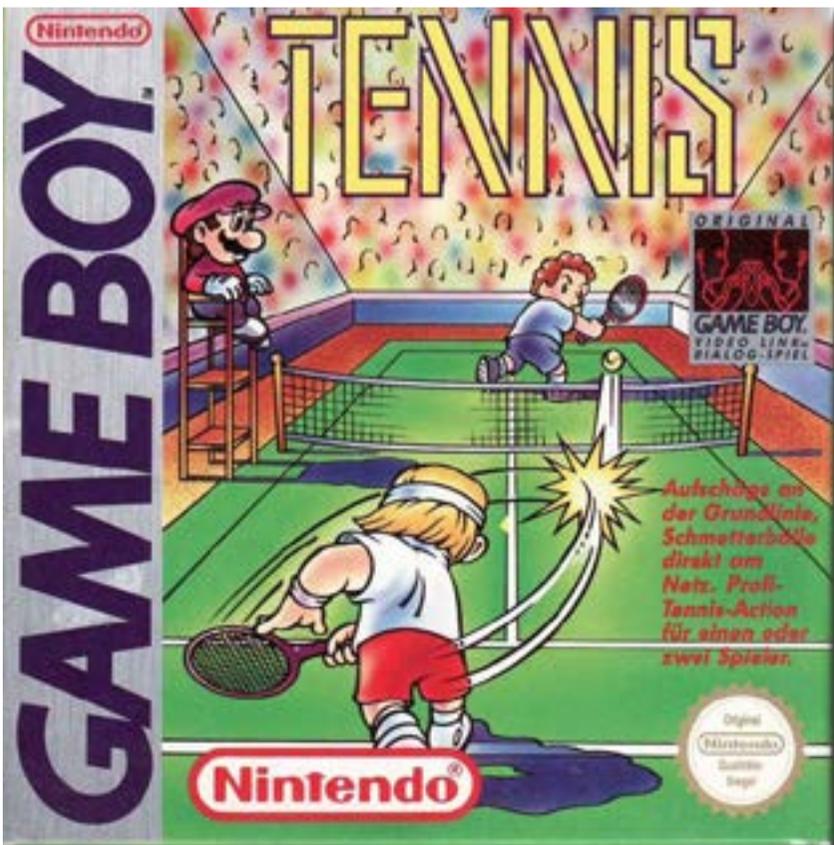
By Andrew Duncan



30 years is a long time, especially in gaming, so although we all may remember the original Game Boy and its successors, who can remember which games were released on the very first day?

Well, as it just so happens, we do! So feast your eyes on the launch titles for the Game Boy, the Color and the Advance.

Game Boy



The Japanese launch of the Game Boy was just four titles:

- Alleyway
- Baseball
- Super Mario Land
- Yakuman

Whereas the North American launch included two more:

- Tennis
- Tetris

Unfortunately, the European launch was missing Tennis, despite Wimbledon being in England - but that's beside the point.

Game Boy Color

The Color saw a meagre three titles released in its specially designed clear carts:

- Pocket Bomberman
- Tetris DX
- Wario Land II

But at least they were available in all territories alongside the handheld!



Game Boy Advance

The Advance had a staggering 15 titles when it hit the market, with North America getting:

- Army Men Advance
- ChuChu Rocket!
- Dodge Ball Advance
- F-Zero: Maximum Velocity
- Fire Pro Wrestling
- Fortress
- High Heat Baseball 2002
- Iridion 3D
- Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure
- Rayman
- Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2
- Super Mario Advance
- Tony Hawk Pro Skater 2
- Top Gear GT Championship
- Tweety and the Magic Jewel

Whereas Japan saw all of those titles, plus these two:

- Kuru Kuru Kururin
- Napoleon

So there you go, we hope you learnt something!





Game Boy Models

Which did you have?

By Gary Sheppard



In the 30 years since launch, there have been a number of Game Boy models. The system was expanded on, repackaged and re-released in various guises over the years, with some models becoming quite collectible. With different designs and colours there are literally hundreds of variations on the machine, but each of them falls into one of eight designations. Let's take a look at the great eight in celebration of three decades of Nintendo's great game-changer.

Game Boy (DMG-001)

The very first Game Boy was released on the 21st of April 1989 in Japan, with a European release following the next year. Internally, Nintendo had referred to the machine as "Dot Matrix Game" and so the initial model carried that internal name over with its serial number. You'll generally hear collectors referring to it by that model number to differentiate between it and later revisions.

Coming with a custom Sharp GPU based on the intel 8080 and zilog z80 (both popular microprocessors in computers of the 80s), the Game Boy supported much of the code that developers had already

written. This made it an attractive proposition for gaming companies at the time as they were able to modify their existing code rather than re-writing games from the ground up for the new system.



This was all part of Nintendo's plan. It wasn't using any particularly new technology: instead existing

technology was being used in an innovative way. Creator Gunpei Yokoi was fond of the phrase “Lateral Thinking with Withered Technology” to describe this method. As well as the outdated for the time processor, the screen was a 160x140 resolution STN display. STN is a technology that was cheaper and more established than the higher quality TFT, although it did mean that the response rate was poor, causing ghosting on many games.

Whilst this use of lower powered components meant the Game Boy wasn't as powerful as other competing devices released after, it did mean that it could run for around 15 hours on a set of four AA batteries. More powerful devices which came later such as the Lynx and Turboexpress just couldn't keep up with the lifespan of the device, limiting their portability.

For six years, the original design reigned supreme, and then 1995 came and along with it the the “Play it Loud!” series. These models weren't officially called that, but the advertising campaign that accompanied their launch used this phrase, so the name stuck. There wasn't anything particularly different about this model inside the shell, but it came in various different colours. This would start Nintendo's trend of releasing their later consoles in assorted colours so that players could pick their favourite.

This minor redesign came in black, green, red, and transparent casing, with a white version being exclusive to Japan and Toys R Us in the UK. There was a European-only Blue version which is quite sought after now. The range followed after a number of limited edition variants such as a UK-only model coming in red with the Manchester United logo, and a Japanese-only Toyota branded model that was given as a free gift with car purchases.

Game Boy Pocket

The next major revision came with the Game Boy Pocket in 1996. Smaller and lighter, this version took only two AAA batteries, but still managed to squeeze about 10 hours of gameplay from them. It also had a smaller link port, meaning that new cables or an adapter were needed to trade the new fangled “pocket monsters” that were starting to arrive on the scene.

The screen was now pure black and white compared to the green tinted display of the original model, and thanks to LCD technology improving it has a much better refresh rate, meaning less ghosting. Early models had no LCD to indicate if the unit was powered on or not, but after complaints, one was added. Apparently the presence or lack of sound and picture wasn't enough for some people



Game Boy Light

One of the most sought after models of the original Game Boy is the Game Boy Light. Released in Japan in 1998, this iteration is slightly bigger than the Pocket and as the name suggests

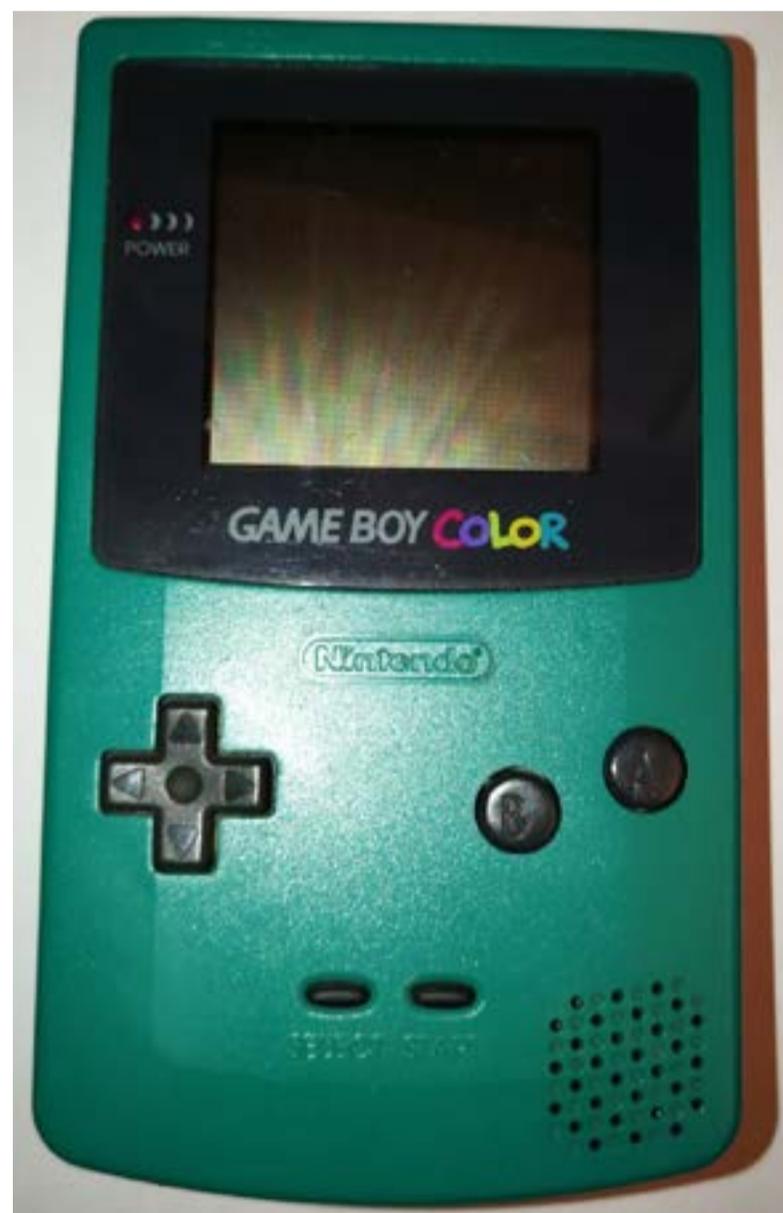


it comes with a backlight. You'll get 12 hours on two AA batteries with the backlight on and 20 hours without. This is considered one of the best ways to play Game Boy games in poor light situations. That fact, combined with the limited release the device saw, makes it a pretty valuable system to own, especially if you're one of the lucky thousand people that got the special yellow Pikachu edition from the Tokyo Pokémon Center.

Game Boy Color

The main reason that the Game Boy Light didn't get a worldwide release was because just a few months later, towards the end of 1998, the Game Boy Color was released. This was the first major upgrade to the playing experience as it added a colour LCD to the mix. The cartridge style was retained, meaning full backwards compatibility. There was also often forwards compatibility, as many Game Boy Color games could still work on the black and white Game Boy models.

You can tell which games are which from the colour of the cartridge, with games that only work on the Color coming in transparent casing (because the 90s). These games generally made use of the faster processor in the machine, which ran at around double the speed of the original, but was able to underclock itself to play older games. RAM was also increased, with 32kb of RAM and 16kb of VRAM installed, compared to just eight of each in the earlier models.



Game Boy Advance

It was 2001 however that saw the greatest leap in Game Boy technology, with the launch of the Game Boy Advance. With a 32-bit ARM processor and 256kb

of RAM, it represented a gigantic power increase. The system also came equipped with 96kb of VRAM and an additional 32kb bank of RAM embedded in the CPU for data needing quick access. Nestled within all of this was the good old sharp LR35902 that had been in use since 1989, but this time it was only there to keep backward compatibility with titles from the OG system. The screen remained in colour but now it was a much higher quality TFT, and it was wider, featuring a resolution of 240 x 144 pixels. All of this and it still managed 15 hours on two AA batteries.



This was the first Game Boy model that was released in landscape format, with this orientation seeming to suit the wider screen. It was the first Game Boy not to be based on Gunpei Yokoi's iconic design, instead Nintendo hired French designer Gwénaél Nicolas to help them create the handheld, along with his design studio Curiosity Inc.

12 years on from the initial Game Boy launch and this new model still supported games from the earlier systems. Advance games came on smaller PCBs which were physically (but not electrically compatible) with the original design (the main difference being a change from 5v to 3v power). In order to enable backwards

Game Boy Special Edition

compatibility the casing of cartridges was designed with a lip so that they couldn't be inserted into an old style Game Boy, but classic Game Boy games would still fit in the cartridge slot. A physical switch inside the slot would be depressed only with an old style cartridge to increase the voltage. It was exactly the kind of clever design that you'd expect from Nintendo.

Game Boy Advance SP

Two years later, we saw the release of the Game Boy Advance SP. This edition had a clamshell design in order to reduce the width, with buttons in the base and a



screen in the top. Internally it was similar to the first model, but added a front light for the screen and a Lithium Ion rechargeable battery. With the light off, you could squeeze 18 hours out of the device, as well as a respectable 10 with the light on. A later revision in 2005 saw the screen changed to backlit

instead of frontlight, making for a much easier to see display. This late model with the designation AGS-101 is widely considered one of the best screens in all of the Game Boy range and so it still fetches a noticeably higher price in the second hand market.

Game Boy Micro

Around the same time as the SP redesign, the Game Boy Micro was released. This would be the last model to bear the Game Boy name; at this point the DS had been released and was starting its journey to become the biggest-selling handheld of all time. Not much larger than an iPod nano, this tiny device has a rechargeable battery and a similar (albeit smaller at just 2 inches) screen to the AGS-101. The pixel size is the smallest of any Game Boy model, and combined with the high quality backlight, it makes for the sharpest image that one can obtain on any Game Boy model. It had removable faceplates, but few were ever made available outside of Japan, and the European model didn't even mention it as a feature on the box or instructions.

Unfortunately, due to the aforementioned release of the DS, as well as the lack of backwards compatibility with earlier games, it wasn't a sales success, and was discontinued after less than three years on the market. By the end of its lifespan, the Micro had sold under 2.5 million units. That sounds quite respectable, but compared to the 43.57 million sales of the SP or the over 118 million that the original models sold, it was considered a commercial failure.

Fortunately the Game Boy name continued for another two years after the demise of the Micro as the SP continued to sell until it was finally discontinued in 2010. Nine years on, the Game Boy name might no longer be in use, but it still resonates as one of the most iconic brands of all time, and probably will long after any of us who were there at the start are still around.





Highlights of the Game Boy Virtual Console Games

What can you still buy?

By Andrew Duncan



The Game Boy had a lot - a lot - of good games over the decade that it was on general sale. Perhaps you're reading these pages and wondering where you can find some of these classics today, to relive some of your past glories? Well, good news, it's not all second-hand shops and eBay; you can buy them directly onto your Nintendo device!

There's a big selection of Game Boy and Color titles on the Nintendo 3DS, with 77 games - at least in the West. There are probably more in Japan because there were simply more games released in Japan.

If you still have your Wii U, you can currently purchase 40 Game Boy and Game Boy Color titles on the Virtual Console. There are also 73 Game Boy Advance titles, a platform that is more difficult to bring to the 3DS, so if those were some of your favourites you'll need Nintendo's previous home console.

What exactly is contained within the eShop? I could list the games, but that would take far too long, so I'll just give the highlights.

There are three Pokémon titles - Crystal, Gold and Silver (as well as the Trading Card Game and Game Boy Special Edition

Puzzle Challenge). All three Donkey Kong Lands are represented. Seven Mega Man titles, numerous sports games and even Metroid II - Return of Samus.

If you want Mario, then you have two Lands, three sports, a doctor and a Deluxe. Want Wario instead? Then lucky you, all three games are on there too!

As for the Wii U's Game Boy Advance titles, there are all six of the Mega Man Battle Network games, a couple of Rayman's and both Advance Wars. If you're a fan of Medabots, then there are four titles to choose from. Play the original handheld farming with two Harvest Moons! There's even both Golden Sun games, to hit that epic RPG itch.

I know this was supposed to be the highlights, but it turns out that an absolute star load of brilliant handheld retro gaming is currently available on the eShop. Whether you've got a 3DS or a Wii U, there's something there to pick up and play - with save states as an added bonus!



Ambitiously Technical Game Boy Games

Pushing the hardware to the limit

By Simon Brown



For every platform, there are games that push the boundaries on what a system can do and the humble Game Boy was no exception. The whole line had a surprising number of games that managed to squeeze out visuals you wouldn't necessarily have expected, so here is a sample that impressed.

Race Drivin' - Atari Games (1993)

The Argonaut (of Starglider and Star Fox fame) developed port of Race Drivin' for the original Game Boy is remarkable in how it managed to throw filled polygons around the screen at all. The performance wasn't great, getting up to almost



double-digit framerates but that doesn't negate how impressive a technical feat this was.

Unfortunately, the game itself isn't very fun, partially because of the framerate (to be fair, most of the ports at the time ran poorly) but the checkpoint based courses just aren't very interesting.

X - Nintendo (1992)

Another Argonaut affair, this time using a simpler visual approach with non-filled polygons. X saw you piloting



a space tank completing missions as you defend Earth from an alien menace. Each mission took place in vast spaces as you took on enemy patrols, restored power to facilities and navigated underground tunnels.

Sadly this Game Boy title never came to the West, leaving this quirky, impressive game in Japan. It was planned to make the trip, having the working title of “Lunar Chase” but unfortunately, it wasn’t to be.

Wacky Races - Infogrames (2000)

A pair of names that come up repeatedly when researching games that push systems to their limits are those of the French duo, Fernando Velez and Guillaume Dubail who would later become VD-dev. They worked on a plethora of games for Infogrames with a specific focus on the Game Boy and DS range of systems and could wring some miraculous things out of these machines.



Wacky Races is a kart racer that plays how you'd expect, but visually the game is a treat with sublimely smooth scrolling and impressively texture-mapped roads. This is something that you rarely, if ever, saw on the humble Game Boy Color, that it runs so slickly is incredible.

It's also a pretty fun game with a nice variety of tracks and a whole lot of charm. The racing itself has a lovely old-school Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge feel which somehow feels wholly appropriate.

Shantae - Capcom (2002)

The infamous hair-whipping half-genie made her debut in this WayForward developed classic on the Game Boy Color. It stood out due to the gorgeous art direction but the animation, in particular, shines thanks to the abundance of frames making it super smooth and full of character.



It helps that the game itself is a stunning platformer that is just as much fun to play today as any top-tier Mario or Sonic title. There isn't really another game as accomplished as this on the Game Boy and its visual flourishes still impress.

Smashing Drive - Namco (2004)

The Game Boy Advance was primarily known as a 2D powerhouse, bringing enhanced SNES quality visuals into the palm of your hands, so seeing it produce competent 3D graphics seemed like sorcery.



This port of the taxi-themed point to point racer is better than it has any right to be. Impressive texture-mapped models and environments that move at a pretty consistent and playable frame rate belie the machine it's running on. As a technical showpiece, it's very impressive, featuring large, detailed and destructible environments as you tear through the city to your destination.

Driv3r - Infogrames (2005)

While Smashing Drive is impressive, nothing quite compares to the miraculous feat that is Driv3r on the GBA. This is another Velez and Dubail affair which crams far more of its console cousin into the handheld than is reasonable to expect.

The game manages to cram in the entirety of both Miami and Nice into the cartridge, having to sacrifice Istanbul. The story is also a more abridged version of what was in its console brother but like most of the games in this article, that it's here at all is amazing.

Visually the game runs at an impressive clip considering the open world nature of the game with its mix of 3D environments and 2D sprites for vehicles and characters. Some shortcuts have been taken, with extremely simple AI for enemies and simplified mission objectives but by and large, this is like having the original console game in your hands.

So there you have it, a look at a small handful of the technical wonders that Nintendo's handhelds are home to. Developers managed to squeeze a whole lot out of machines that definitely weren't cutting edge at the time. Hopefully seeing these will encourage you to examine their libraries a bit closer and find some hidden gems.





By Mark Reece



For those of a certain generation, the words “Game Boy” are as synonymous with portable gaming as bread with butter... or Chaz with Dave. Selling in excess of a whopping 118 million units worldwide, the Game Boy and Game Boy Color are among the most successful consoles - handheld or otherwise - of all time. But what were the best selling games? Read on to find out. Spoiler alert: number four will not shock you. Nor will five... or any of the others.

Tetris

35,000,000 units sold



Nintendo’s decision to licence Alexey Pajitnov’s seminal puzzle game and pack it in with the Game Boy was a masterstroke. Not only did it provide new adopters with something to play straight out of the box, but Tetris is perhaps the most perfect game for portable play; great for the addicted among us to marathon for hours at a time, but also equally good fun for a few minutes on a commute or when those batteries are running on fumes. The fact that there are still Tetris games releasing to this day speaks volumes to this beloved game’s appeal, cementing the Game Boy’s first killer app as one of the most iconic games of all time.

Pokémon Red, Green and Blue

31,380,000 units sold

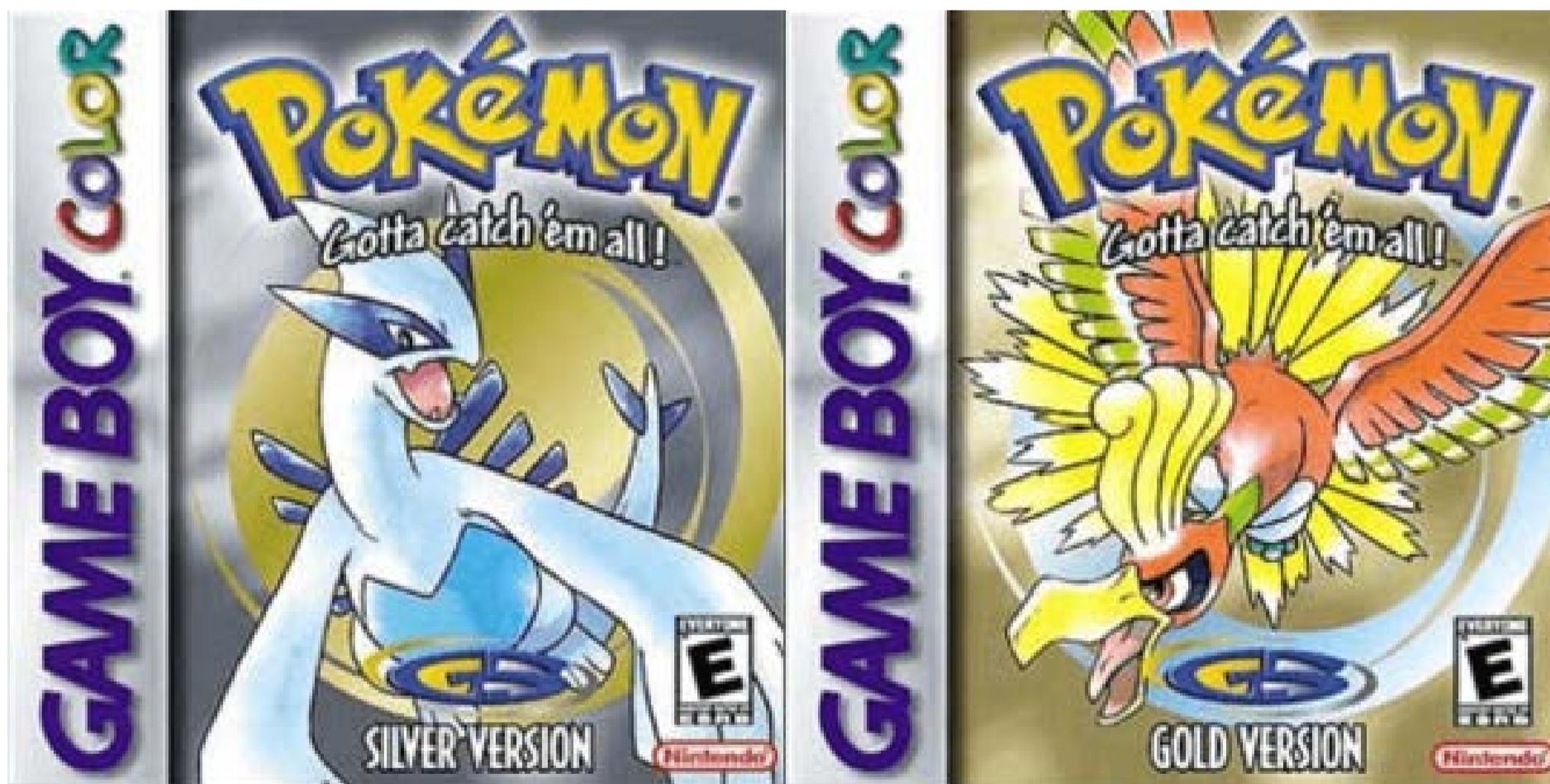


The debut entries in what would hastily become a worldwide phenomenon, Pokémon Red and Blue (or Red and Green, if you're a resident of Japan) introduced us to the Kanto region and the original menagerie of monsters to catch, train and battle. The use of the link cable gave aspiring Pokémon trainers the chance to both settle scores in direct competition and cooperate to complete their respective collections, swapping version-exclusive Pokémon and using the trading mechanic to even evolve certain creatures. Even 23 years on, for many fans there will never be a roster of Pokémon more iconic and beloved than the original 151.

Pokémon Gold and Silver

23,100,000 units sold

tip of the iceberg. A day/night cycle - which altered which Pokémon the player would discover in real time - was a massive shake-up. The ability to transfer your Pokémon over from Red and Blue meant that the team you'd previously spent hundreds of hours carefully cultivating wasn't lost forever - and in some cases there was even the added benefit of being able to evolve them into entirely new creatures. Additionally, the realisation that after beating Johto's Elite Four and becoming a Pokémon Champion you could travel back to Kanto and relive those fond memories from Red and Blue... well, that was the icing on the cake.



The sequels to the biggest Game Boy games this side of Tetris would have to pull something pretty special out of the bag to avoid disappointing their fanbase, and Pokémon Gold and Silver certainly didn't disappoint.

The 100 new Pokémon to discover were only the

Super Mario Land

18,140,000 units sold



It's shorter than Super Mario Bros. and - when compared to its NES cousin - it's evident that Nintendo had to make a number of compromises in terms of visuals in order to get it onto a portable device. Nevertheless, Super Mario Land was still a more than adequate approximation of the platformers that were prevalent on home consoles at the time, all while retaining a unique personality and aesthetic that hasn't been repeated to this day. Since the New Super Mario Bros. series debuted, Nintendo has never been as willing to get weird with its premiere mascot as it was when it released Super Mario Land. It's got aliens, for God's sake!

Pokémon Yellow

14,640,000 units sold

Pokémon Yellow held few surprises for anyone who'd spent as long playing through Red and Blue as I had, but this remake zeroed in on the Game Boy Special Edition

growing popularity of the franchise as a whole - specifically the anime - by incorporating elements introduced in the TV show. Pikachu was placed front and centre, following behind the player and reacting accordingly when interacted with, depending on its current condition. Jessie and James of Team Rocket cropped up many times throughout the game to get their arses handed to them, while the circumstances in which the player was introduced to and/or was able to capture certain Pokémon were altered to ape Ash's adventures on TV. The idea of releasing a third version of the game several years after each generation of Pokémon debuted was something of a tradition that continued for many years, but none since have held as much appeal as Pokémon Yellow.



The Best Selling Game Boy Advance Games of All Time

Which games sold the most?

By Mark Reece

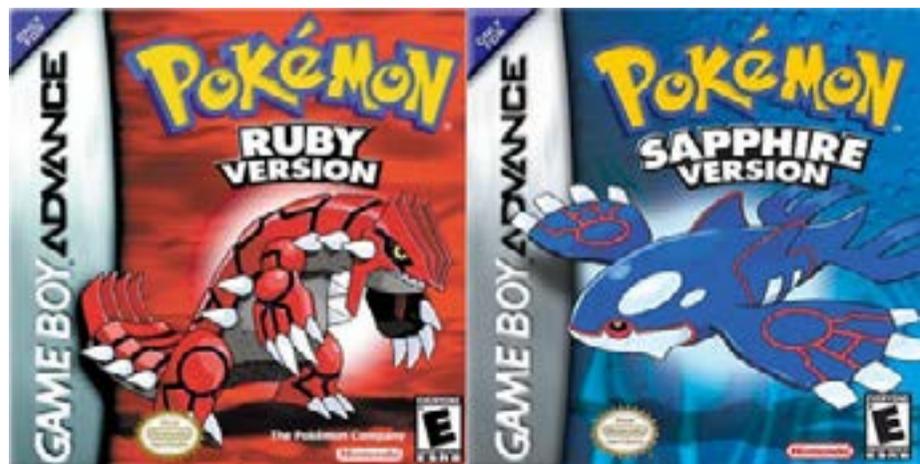


We already took a look at the best selling entries in the Game Boy and Game Boy Color's vast libraries here (link), now it's time to delve into the top performing games to appear on their successor, the Game Boy Advance. While by no means as staggeringly successful as its predecessor, the GBA line still managed to shift a combined 81.5 million hardware units, which is nothing to be scoffed at.

Anyway, below you'll find the list. Once again, it holds no surprises. Hope you like reading about Pokémon...

Pokémon Ruby and Sapphire

16,220,000 units sold



Marking the series' transition from the Game Boy Color to the Game Boy Advance, Pokémon Ruby and Sapphire were perhaps not the massive leap forward many had expected and probably represents the most divisive the core Pokémon RPG's have ever been among fans and critics. The day/night cycle introduced in Gold and Silver was abandoned and the visuals were only marginally more impressive than those seen on the Game Boy Color. Neither the over-abundance of water type Pokémon, water traversal nor the bloating of the HM moves were that well received, either. Ruby and Sapphire, however, did introduce double battles, alongside innate abilities and natures, adding further complexity and strategic layers that the competitive Pokémon scene latched onto.

Pokémon FireRed and LeafGreen

12,000,000 units sold

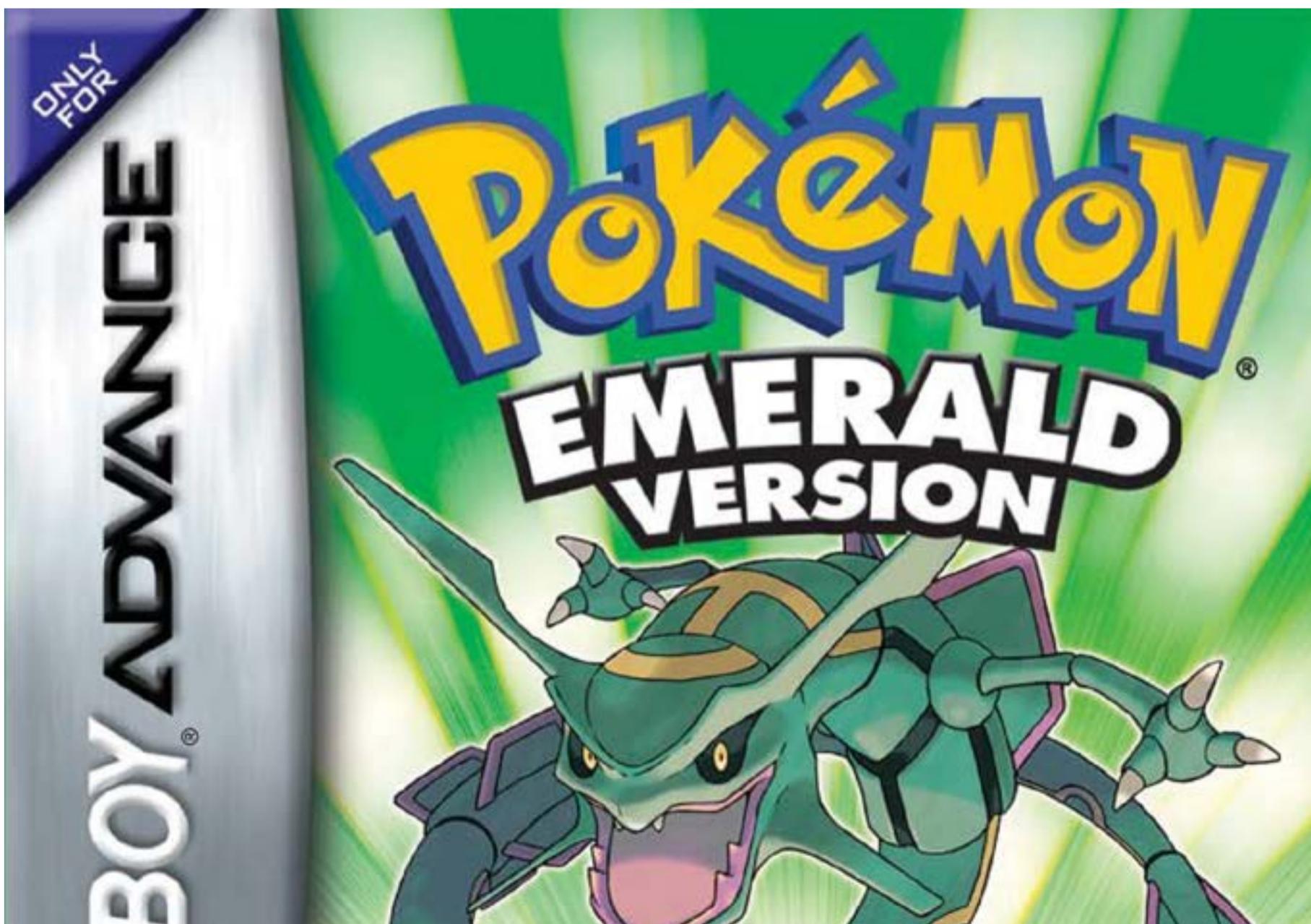


There's nothing inherently remarkable about Pokémon FireRed and LeafGreen. They're remakes of Red, Blue and Green, sporting enhanced visuals and all the quality of life improvements that the series had introduced prior to their release. But the biggest and most revolutionary addition came by way of the Game Boy Advance Wireless Adaptor. This nifty piece of kit came bundled with every copy of the games and allowed players to interact with other local Pokémon trainers completely wirelessly, no longer tethered by cables. And by entering into a Union Room, up to 39 players could wirelessly battle, trade and chat with each other; Nintendo even went as far as setting up special "JoySpots" at Japanese retailers for this purpose.

Pokémon Emerald

7,060,000 units sold

With the third generation of Pokémon RPG's came another belated third entry that remixed certain elements of the story and Pokémon encounters. Pokémon Emerald was the Pokémon Yellow or Pokémon Crystal of its generation, largely unchanged but still sprinkling in some minor new features and enhancements. Chief among these was the Battle Frontier, an expanded version of the Battle Tower found in previous games. After beating Hoenn's Elite Four and becoming champion, the player was able to enter the Battle Frontier and compete in various series of tough battles against NPC's to earn in-game prizes. Pokémon Emerald was also the first portable entry to feature sprite animations when battling, which was kind of a big deal at the time for a series that was - and in some circles, still is - seen as being behind the curve when it came to graphical prowess.



Mario Kart: Super Circuit

5,910,000 units sold



My personal favourite Game Boy Advance title, Mario Kart: Super Circuit offered up everything I could have hoped for in a debut portable entry to one of the top local multiplayer series of all time. All the trademark Mario Kart mayhem was present and correct, encased in a vividly colourful aesthetic that was a joy to behold, especially on the GBA SP. There were 20 new tracks to master and an additional 20 could be unlocked, all of them lifted straight from Super Mario Kart on the SNES. Plus, not only were the four-player shenanigans left intact, but a simplified version of the mode could be played with only one player needing a copy of the game.

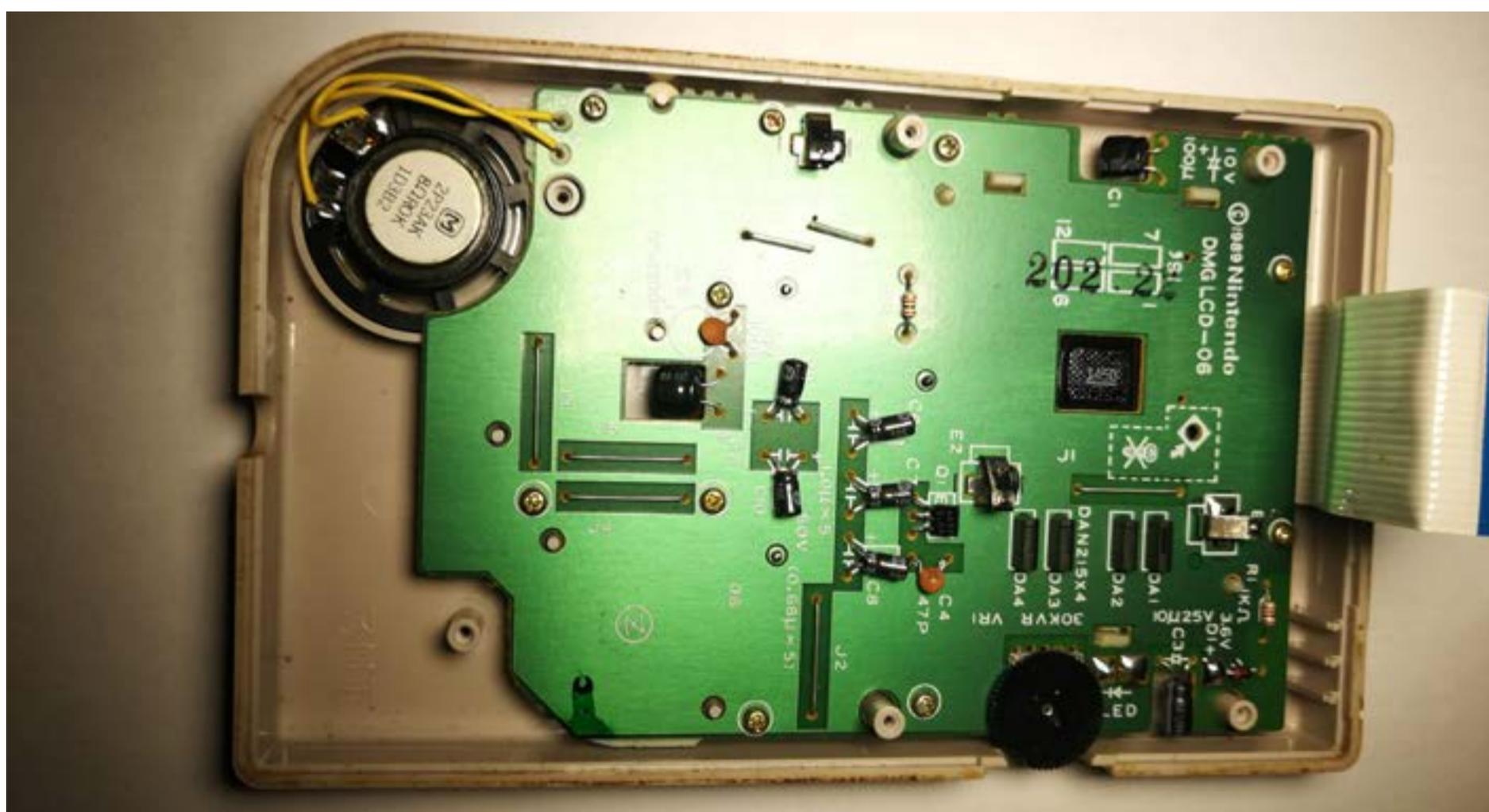
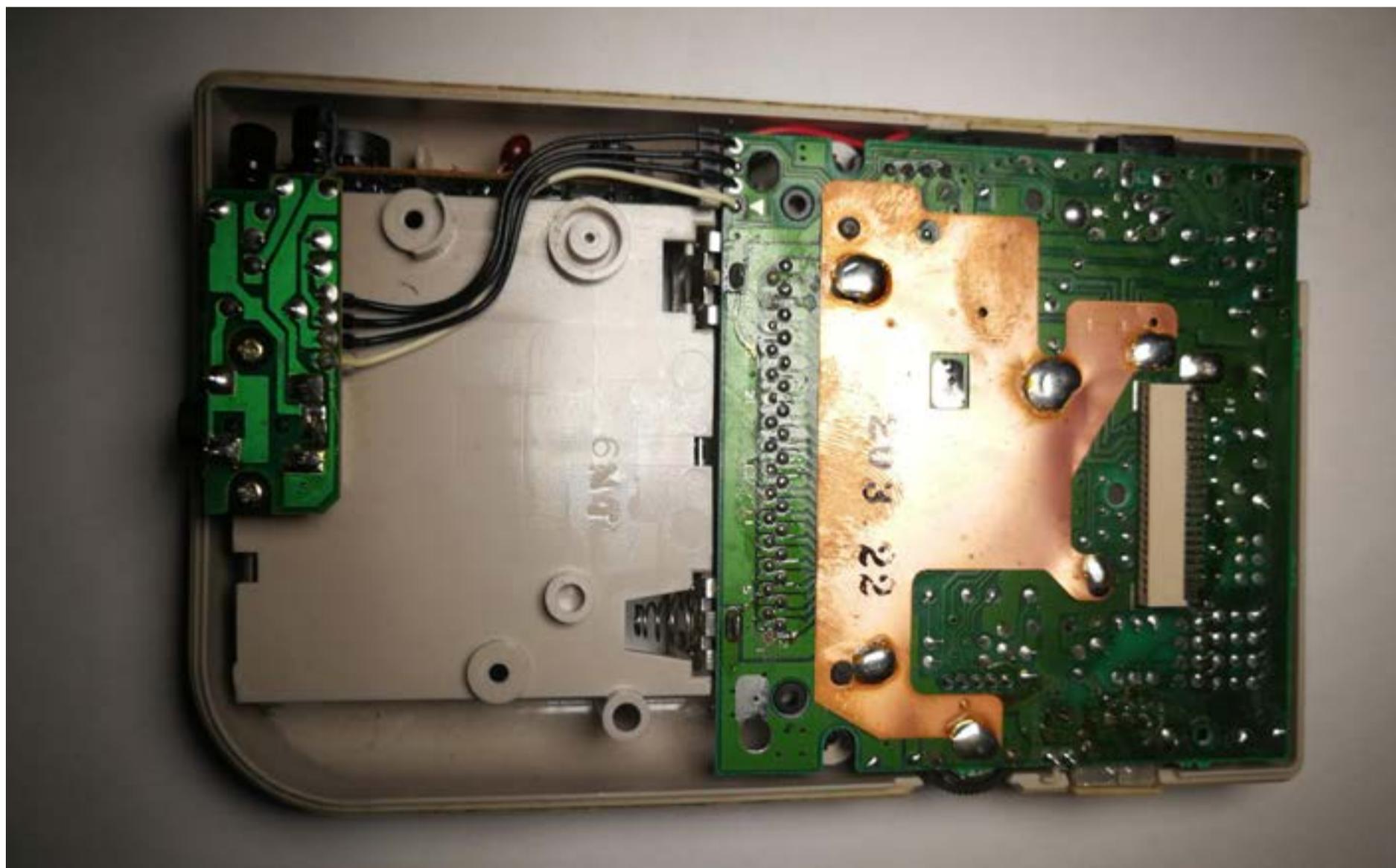
Super Mario World: Super Mario Advance 2

5,690,000 units sold

While Wario got more than his fair share of opportunities to shine on the GBA, Nintendo, for some reason, seemed reluctant to bring a new Mario platformer to the system. They instead opted to re-release several enhanced remakes of Game Boy Special Edition

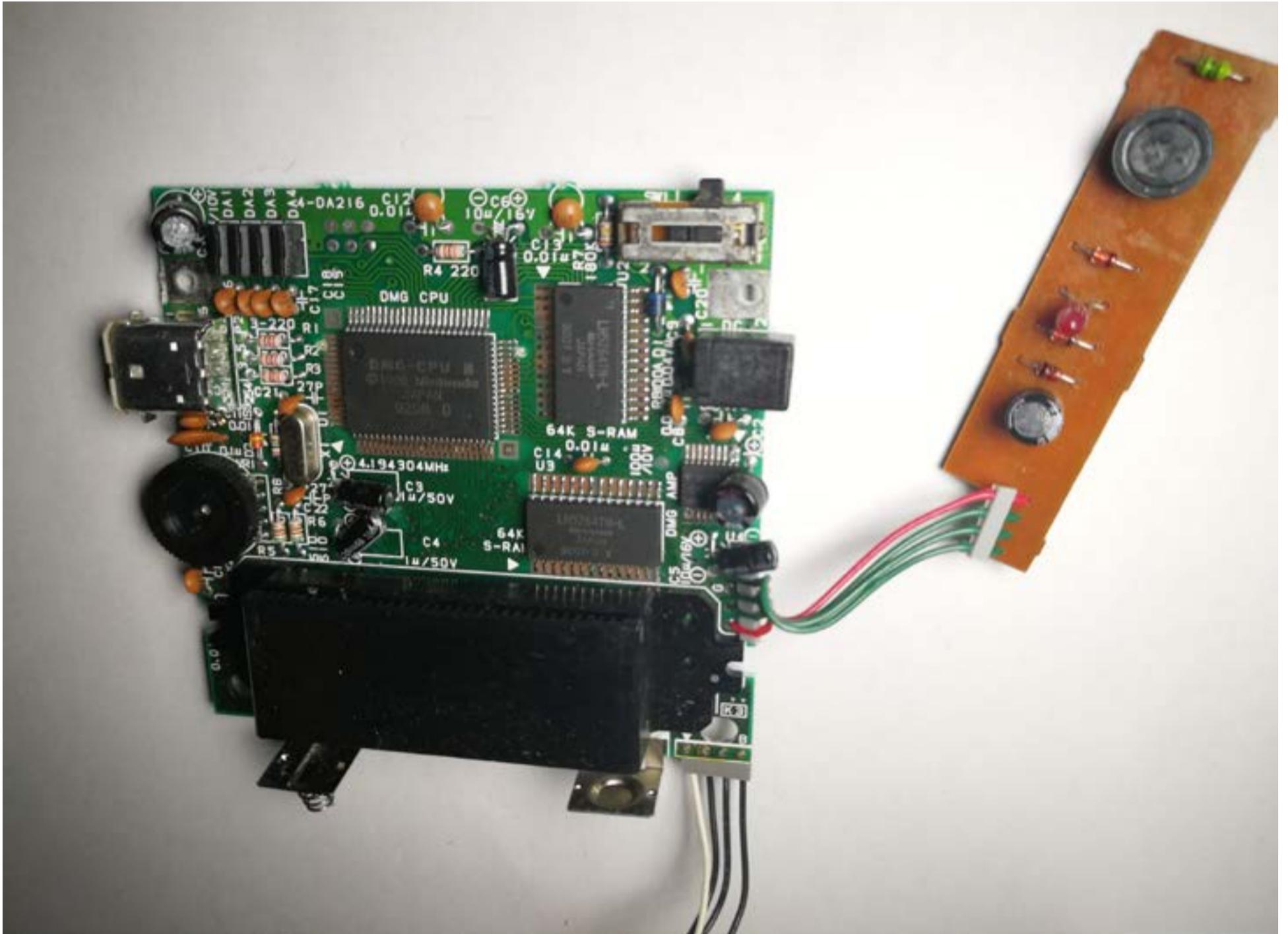
previous NES and SNES entries and labelled them Super Mario Advance. Some might claim that to be laziness, but on the flipside, it did mean that we got to play the utterly sublime Super Mario World on the go and the added allure of gaming in bed or on the toilet is something we can all get behind, as anyone with a Switch will attest to.





Centrefold

Anatomy of a Game Boy

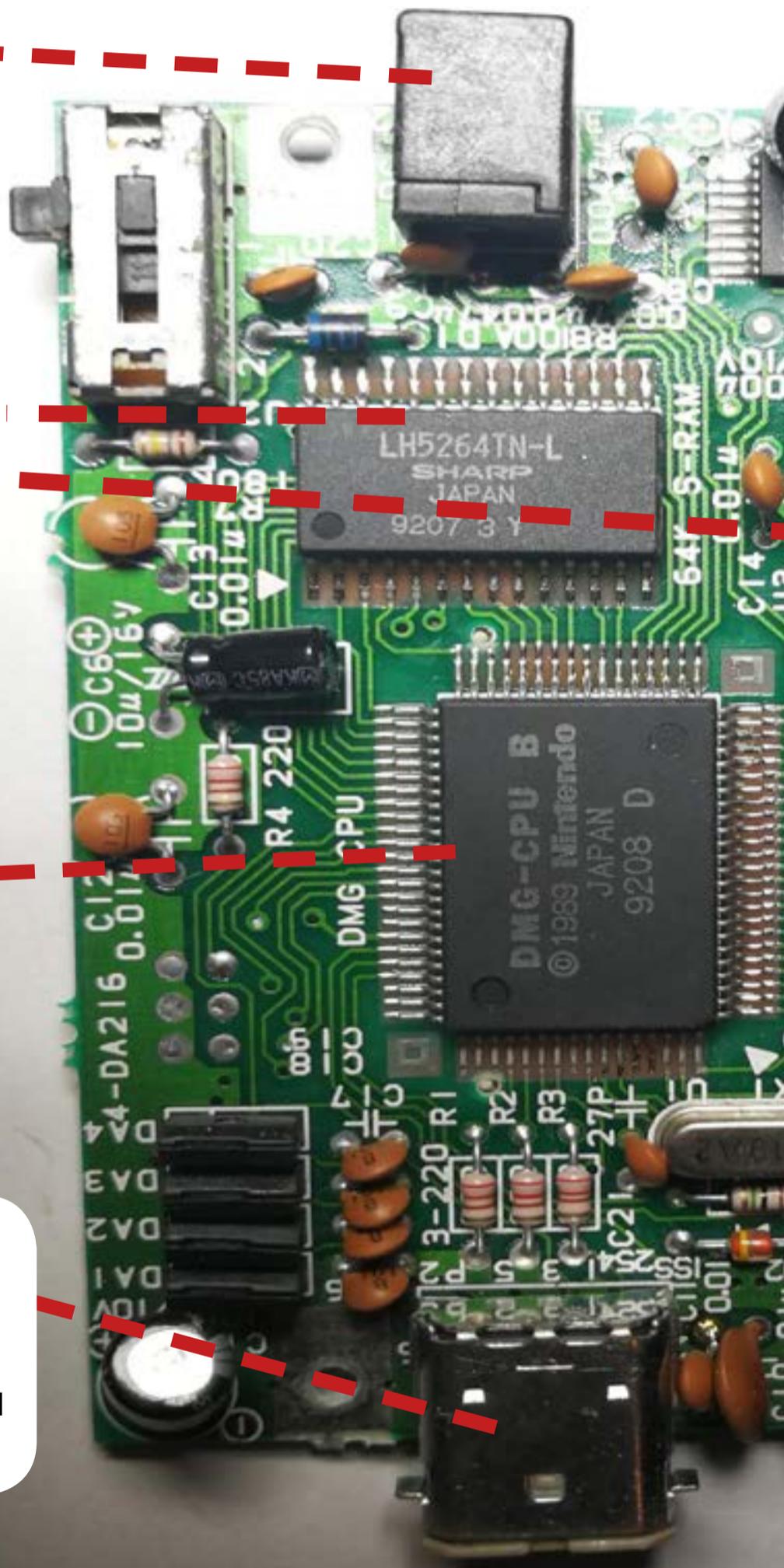


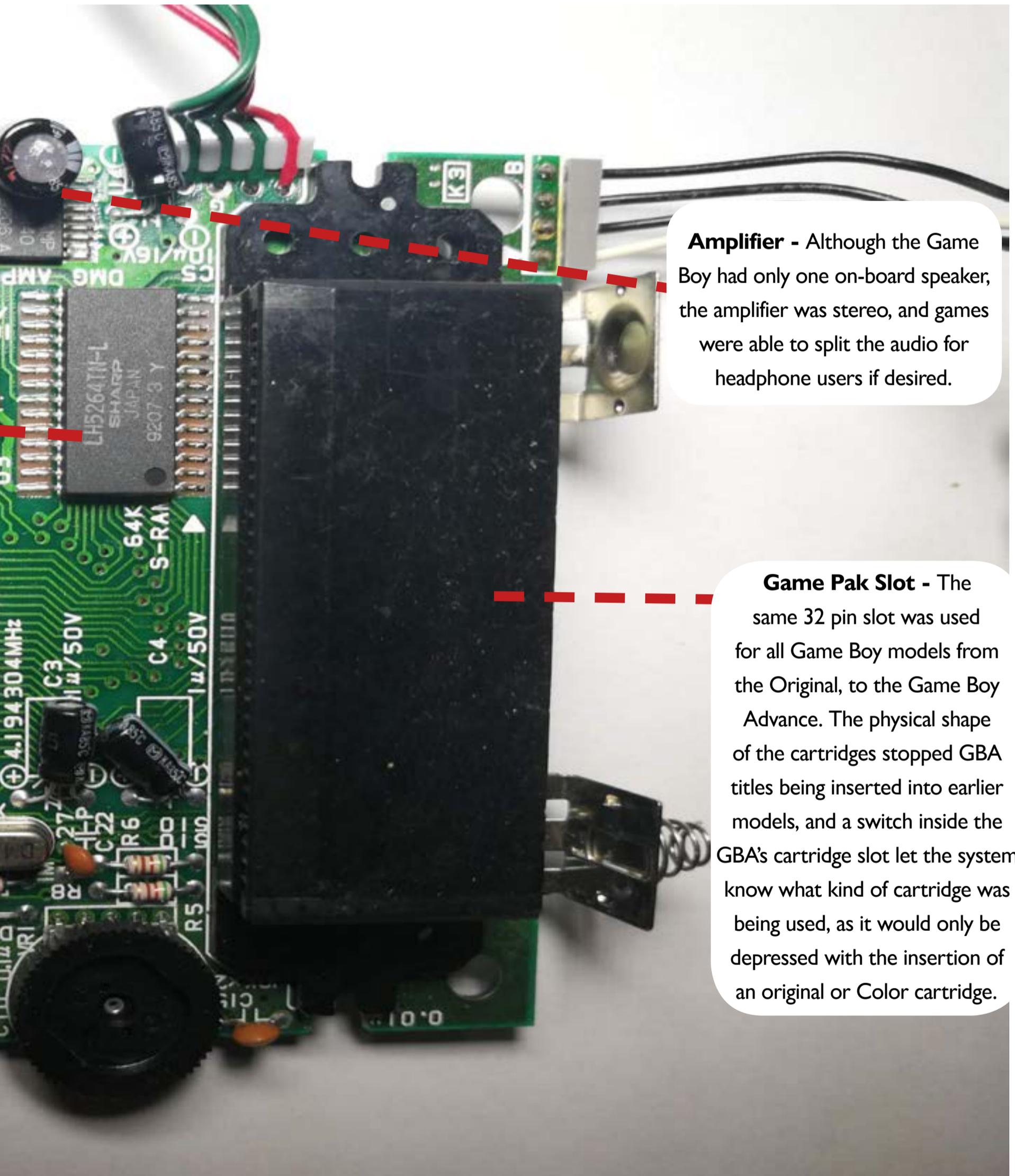
PSU socket - While the Game Boy was known for its phenomenal battery life, it was also possible to power it using a 6v DC power supply.

RAM - The Game Boy's RAM is split into two banks, the 8Kb on the left is used for video tasks and the 8Kb on the right for working memory.

CPU - The custom chip in the Game Boy was created by Sharp. It's a hybrid clone of Intel's 8080 and Zilog's Z80 running at 4.2 Mhz. It has an integrated Audio Processing Unit which includes a four-channel Programmable Sound Generator.

Link Port - The Game Boy's multiplayer features were a big selling point, with the Pokémon series making link cables essential in the task of catching em all.





Amplifier - Although the Game Boy had only one on-board speaker, the amplifier was stereo, and games were able to split the audio for headphone users if desired.

Game Pak Slot - The same 32 pin slot was used for all Game Boy models from the Original, to the Game Boy Advance. The physical shape of the cartridges stopped GBA titles being inserted into earlier models, and a switch inside the GBA's cartridge slot let the system know what kind of cartridge was being used, as it would only be depressed with the insertion of an original or Color cartridge.

Konami Franchises In Your Pocket

How did two Konami franchises fare?

By Simon Brown



The Game Boy has a fascinatingly varied library of titles that, unsurprisingly contains a lot of games connected to popular franchises. In this article, I take a look at a couple of Konami's popular series that ultimately ended up with more representation than you'd perhaps expect.

Castlevania

The Castlevania series leaves a long legacy, from its linear action game roots through to the popularity of the so-called metroidvania genre. Dracula made his appearance three times on the handheld, so let's take a quick look at each of them.



Game Boy Special Edition

Castlevania: The Adventure, originally released in 1989, is set 100 years prior to the original NES Castlevania and sees you controlling Christopher Belmont, one of Simon's ancestors, as he attempts to thwart Dracula. The Adventure is heavily simplified compared to its console relatives, having no sub-weapons and only four long and difficult levels. Despite the simplifications, it does feel like Castlevania but something has definitely been lost in translation. It does, however, feature some rather nice versions of classic series tunes like Vampire Killer.



Castlevania II: Belmont's Revenge, which takes place 15 years after The Adventure, was released in 1991 and sees the return of Christopher Belmont as he tries to save his son, whom Dracula has turned into a demon to allow him to take on human form. It improves on the prior game visually but keeps to pretty much the same formula. Belmont's Revenge does bring back the series' iconic sub-weapons and allows you to select the order in which you take on stages, a la Mega Man.



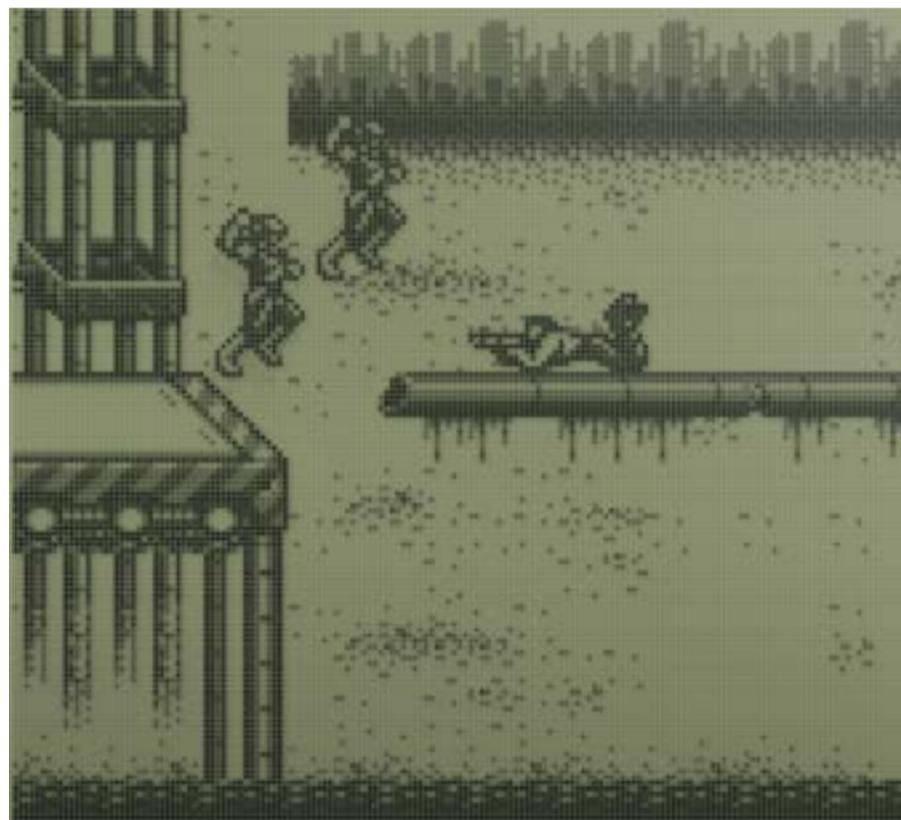
Neither game has levels as interesting as the NES titles they are inspired by, lacking staircases and other similar elements. Taken on their own terms though they are fun little games but aren't really representative of the console iterations in the series. Castlevania Legends gave players control of Sonia Belmont who wields magic to confront Dracula this time around. Set in 1450, it placed the game at the start of the timeline, although that was later retconned. Originally released in 1997, it again stayed pretty true to the established Game Boy Castlevania formula but did move to a more traditional level setup akin to the main games, this time with a map between stages.

Game Boy Special Edition

Castlevania Legends is, unsurprisingly perhaps, the most polished of the three Game Boy entries, with a little more flourish in the visuals. It's still not really like its console brethren but, again, it can be a fun game in its own right.

Contra

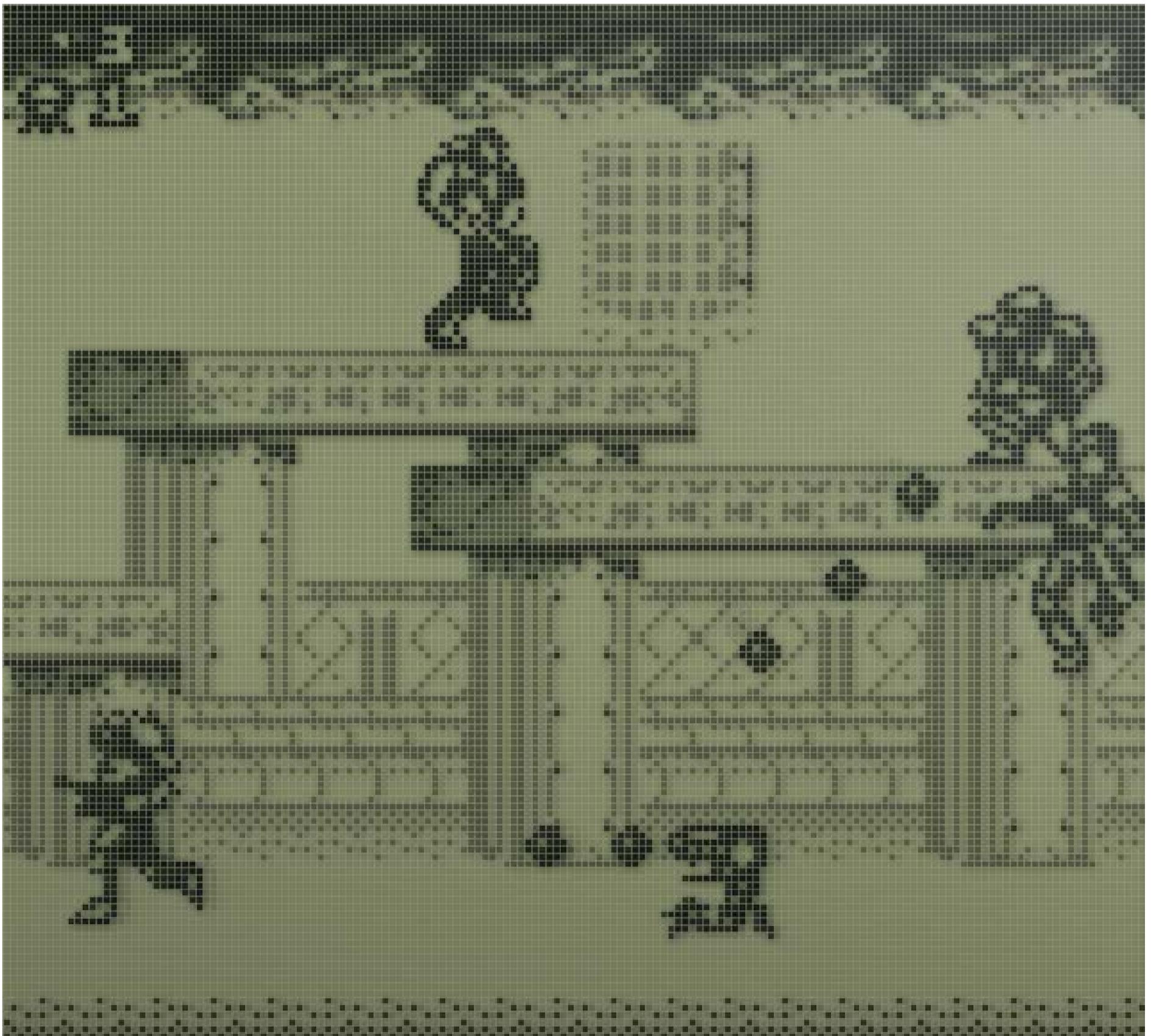
Like Castlevania, the Contra series was one of Konami's staple franchises, making an appearance on almost every system. The Game Boy was no exception, featuring two entries in the run and gun franchise.



Operation C (Just called Contra in Japan) was, like the Game Boy Castlevania games, a wholly original entry in the series. Released in 1991, it was however a lot more faithful to its console and arcade inspiration, featuring gameplay that was very familiar to fans of both the original Contra and its sequel Super C. The game features power-ups you'd expect like the infamous Spread Gun and introduces the Homing Gun for the first time as you shoot your way through five stages of side and top view action.

Contra III: The Alien Wars (known in Japan as Contra Spirits) was released in 1994 and is a port of the Super Nintendo game of the same name. Developed by Factor 5 (known for the awesome Rogue Squadron series on later Nintendo systems) it's an astoundingly good port. Some elements have had to be stripped away like some bosses, and many levels have been truncated or rejigged to work in the new form factor but it's an incredible feat that works surprisingly well.

Both Contra titles fared better on Nintendo's fondly remembered brick than the Castlevania series when compared to their console siblings, both Contra games giving you a proper dose of frenetic run and gun action in your pocket. The Castlevania titles may not have been as faithful, however, but they still allowed you to pull out your whip no matter where you were!



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Game Boy Competitors

Not so much stiff competition

By Gary Sheppard



With the demise of standalone handheld gaming coming alongside the rise of the smartphone, it would be easy to forget what an impact the Game Boy had on its release 30 years ago. At the time, very few other portable systems with interchangeable cartridges existed and none of them had seen major success. After the Game Boy was released though, there were tonnes of pretenders to the throne. Here's a few of the consoles that took on Nintendo's champion:

Bit Corp Gamate



Retailing slightly cheaper than the Game Boy, the Taiwanese Gamate was a similarly specced system. Whilst they had been in the videogame business since the early eighties, Bit Corp were still largely unknown in 1990 when they launched the console. To make it more appealing, it was launched under Game Boy Special Edition

different brand names in different markets. In the UK, joystick manufacturer Cheetah branded it, and in Italy it was the GiG Gamate. Sales figures are not known, but the fact that Bit Corp went bankrupt two years after the launch is taken as a sign they weren't high.

Atari Lynx



Arriving just three months after the North American release of the Game Boy, the Lynx was hugely more powerful than Nintendo's device. With a colour screen, two processors, and eight times the RAM, on paper, it was the much better system. Sadly a lack of support from developers led to a dearth of games. To make things worse, the extra power inside the system ate through batteries like Kevin James at a buffet and four AA batteries would get only four hours of gaming,

around a fifth of what the Game Boy could manage. Sales figures are disputed, but estimates tend to range between two million and half a million units. After two models and five years, Atari pulled the plug on the Lynx to focus on the even less successful Jaguar.

Bandai Design Master/ Denshi Mangajuku



This is an odd one. Released in 1995 in Japan by Bandai, it's believed to be the first console to have a touchscreen display. It sported a black and white LCD screen and a stylus that allowed players to draw sprites that could be incorporated in the game. Only a handful of games were released, but some of these were big franchises such as Mega Man, Street Fighter II and Dragonball Z. With no buttons and early touchscreen technology, games were limited, with most being drawing simulators or turn-based battle games. Concrete information on the system is hard to come by now. Very few consoles are known to exist in the wild and it's believed that poor

sales resulted in a quick demise. By 1996, Bandai were already working on another console...

Bandai Wonderswan



After Game Boy designer Gunpei Yokoi left Nintendo in 1996, he created his own engineering firm 'Koto Laboratory'. Bandai approached the great designer to enlist his help in designing the console that would become the Wonderswan. Tragically, Yokoi passed away in 1997, sadly missing the launch of his final handheld in 1999. Even more upsetting was the relative failure of his swansong, with sales of the monochrome handheld estimated between one and two million, a fraction of the Game Boy Advance. The long lead time between design and market meant that Bandai



just couldn't compete with Nintendo, cancelling a planned worldwide release in 2000 in favour of a colour redesign of the console. By that point, however, it was too late and after another disappointing set of sales figures believed to be in the region of around one million units, Bandai discontinued the device in 2003 and left the hardware business altogether.

Tapwave Zodiac



Tapwave was a company formed of ex-Palm executives Peng Lim and Byron Connell and the Zodiac was the debut piece of hardware for the fledgling company. Keen to avoid the mistakes that led their previous company to lose 90% of their share value. They succeeded in this, although the failure of the Tapwave Zodiac illustrates the new selection of mistakes which led to the company's demise after four years and just one device.

The device itself was very well received, winning numerous awards for technical innovation. It was essentially a high-end PDA with the ability to play games. The high asking price of £269.99 didn't help it and neither did the decision to sell in the UK only through the Dixons chain of shops via an exclusive deal. Despite a lot of critical praise, the lack of

advertising and the announcement of the Nintendo DS and Sony PSP proved too much for the fledgling company and they shut up shop in July 2005.

Neo Geo Pocket/ Neo Geo Pocket Color



With an aggressively cheap launch price, SNK's legendary build quality, and the weight of both Sega and SNK behind it, the Neo Geo pocket range was expected to do much better than it did. The first model of the device was released just a few days after the Game Boy Color hit store shelves and the hype for that device saw to it that Neo Geo's handheld garnered little attention in 1998. This led to the company deciding not to launch outside of Japan. They returned the next year with a backwards and forwards compatible colour version which DID see a worldwide release. The devices were very similar with near identical specs and casing, as well as a highly-praised microswitched joystick.

Sadly, even with a \$4m advertising campaign, the King of Fighters series, and an exclusive Sonic the Hedgehog game, the Neo Geo Pocket Color just didn't manage to compete with the big N. With a peak of 2% market share, it just wasn't profitable enough and SNK



discontinued it in the EU just 8 months after launch; and North America after only 12 months. Although the Asian markets propped the device up for another year, SNK decided enough was enough and discontinued the device in 2001 before leaving the hardware market.

Sega Game Gear/ Sega Nomad



The Game Gear was the best-selling Game Boy competitor, shifting around 11 million units worldwide. It was essentially a portable Master System, although it took different shaped cartridges. Most Master System games can be played on the device with the use of an adapter. The high-end hardware and colour screen was attractive to many gamers compared to Nintendo's monochrome offering but like the Atari Lynx, its battery life was poor. As a result this harmed sales.



Sega attempted to follow on from the success of the Game Gear by releasing the Nomad in 1995. This was literally a portable Mega Drive, even taking the same cartridges. With only 1 million units sold in Japan and North America though, the device never saw a European release. Sales had been hindered by the fact that Sega had launched the 32X and Saturn home consoles before the Nomad, reducing consumer confidence in the Japanese giant. The exceptionally poor battery life of just 2-3 hours for six AA batteries didn't help much and Sega's decision to focus their marketing push on the struggling Saturn helped to kill off the Game Gear's successor.

Nokia N-Gage

The N-Gage was part mobile phone and part game console. At the time, mobile phones were starting to become more technologically advanced and games were starting to become less rudimentary. Nokia, the world's most successful mobile phone manufacturer at the time, attempted to capitalise with this hybrid device.



The device was not received well, with its unusual shape and speaker positioning on the side meaning it was awkward to use as a phone. As a game console it was equally awkward, with the battery needing to be removed to change cartridge and control buttons mixed in with the numeric keypad. A second model with a new design was released in 2004, called the N-Gage QD, but by this point

the damage had been done and after 3 million sales worldwide, half of what Nokia had expected, the company decided to concentrate on phones instead.

Wataru Supervision

Selling at a considerably cheaper price than the Game Boy, this oddly-named console saw reasonable sales initially. Branded by joystick manufacturer Cheetah in the UK rather than the unknown Wataru, it retailed at just £39.99 with a game at launch, compared to the £69.99 of Nintendo's console. It wasn't long before savvy consumers realised why the device was so cheap, however, as the cut-down hardware proved to be underpowered compared to what Nintendo offered. Technical specs were actually quite similar, but the lack of video memory and super-cheap LCD screen hindered



what the machine could achieve, with slowdown and ghosting being frequently cited as bugbears of those using the system. The lack of major third-party developers saw to it that the Chinese-made handheld didn't make much of a dent in the Game Boy's sales, with most gamers deciding it would be better to spend the extra 30 notes instead.





Game Boy Accessories

What could you plug into your Game Boy?

By Andrew Duncan



Everyone remembers the Game Boy, whether they owned one or not, but most people probably don't remember the huge amount of accessories that Nintendo released for the handheld. Operative word, there - Nintendo. There were a bunch of third-party accessories, but I don't have the space to write about those.

Game Boy Battery Pack

Released in 1989 with the Game Boy, the Battery Pack was a way to avoid having to go through batteries so often. It allowed 8-10 hours of use once charged, or infinite use if you left it plugged into the wall. It also had a belt clip, to make it easier to carry around, since it was almost as big as the handheld itself.

Game Link Cable



Also released in 1989 alongside the handheld, the Link Cable was used for multiplayer games, and later, for transferring Pokémon between the different titles. Examples of multiplayer games were; Double Dragon, Mortal Kombat, Micro Machines and Golf.

Super Game Boy



^--- European/
Japanese

<---North American

Released in 1994, the Super Game Boy was used to play Game Boy cartridges in a Super Nintendo Entertainment System. Some games did receive additional features when playing in a Super Game Boy, such as Animaniacs and Toy Story having expanded sound, and most others having their own unique borders.

Game Boy Camera

Released in 1998, the Camera held the Guinness World Record for being the world's smallest digital camera. It had a 128x128 pixel CMOS sensor. It came with some mini-games installed on it, but it was mainly used in conjunction with the Game Boy Printer.

Game Boy Printer

Also released in 1998, the Printer was a thermal printer (like the kind that produce till receipts) that was mainly used with the Game Boy Camera. However, some games also had Printer functionality, such as Donkey Kong Country, Pokémon Gold & Silver, and Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2.

N64 Transfer Pak

First coming out in 1999, the Transfer Pak was bundled with Pokémon Stadium, and allowed you to transfer data from Game Boy cartridges into certain Nintendo 64 titles. Only six of these were released in the West, with 12 more being Japan-exclusive. It was mainly used in the Pokémon Stadium titles to transfer your Pokémon teams.

Nintendo GameCube Game Boy Advance Cable



Released in 2001, this allowed the two latest Nintendo devices to interact more closely than just slotting a game cart into the controller. It allowed you to control certain GameCube games



using the Game Boy Advance, as well as allowing communication between over 20 titles.

Nintendo e-Reader



A proto-amiibo released in 2001, it allowed you to scan cards that came with certain titles. This would unlock features in the games that you otherwise couldn't use without owning an e-Reader.

Game Boy Player



From 2003, this was performed the same function as the Super Game Boy, but allowed (almost) any Game Boy Special Edition

Boy cart to be inserted and played via the GameCube. It also enabled certain Game Boy Advance games to use the GameCube controller's rumble feature.

Game Boy Advance Wireless Adapter

Released in 2004, this was basically a wireless version of the Link Cable. Unfortunately, it supported fewer titles. On the plus side, it allowed up to 39 players to connect together and communicate in the Union Room of Pokémon FireRed, LeafGreen, and Emerald.

Japan-Only

There were also a couple of accessories that never reached Europe or North America. The Game Boy Pocket Sonar was released in 1998 to help with fishing - not a videogame, but actual real-life fishing. Finally, the Mobile Game Boy Adapter allowed you to connect to your mobile for remote play, for titles such as Pokémon Crystal.

We hope this has been enlightening, and that you can truly appreciate how technology has changed over the decades.





Nintendo GAME BOY™

You Know You're Addicted To The Game Boy When...

Are you an addict?

By Anna Duncan



It's that time again for another edition of You Know When You're Addicted To! Today we will be talking about the Game Boy and how you could be addicted to them.

It has been 30 years since the original Game Boy was made, we must have all had one in our lives whether it was the original, Pocket, Color or even the Micro. One of the very first games made for the Game Boy was Super Mario Land back in 1990 for Europe, but it came out the year before in Japan. Now, did you know that 1049 games released in total for the Game Boy? Neither did I.

I believe my very first Game Boy game was Tetris, now everyone loves Tetris. It was fun and addictive, even the tunes it played while you tried to complete each level were addictive, too. There were over 100 levels in free mode, and I remember playing up to around 99 driving my parents mad with the music.



Personally, I ended up owning the Advance SP and the Micro. But my all time favourite was the original despite it being heavy and needing four AA batteries, at the time it was fun to use.

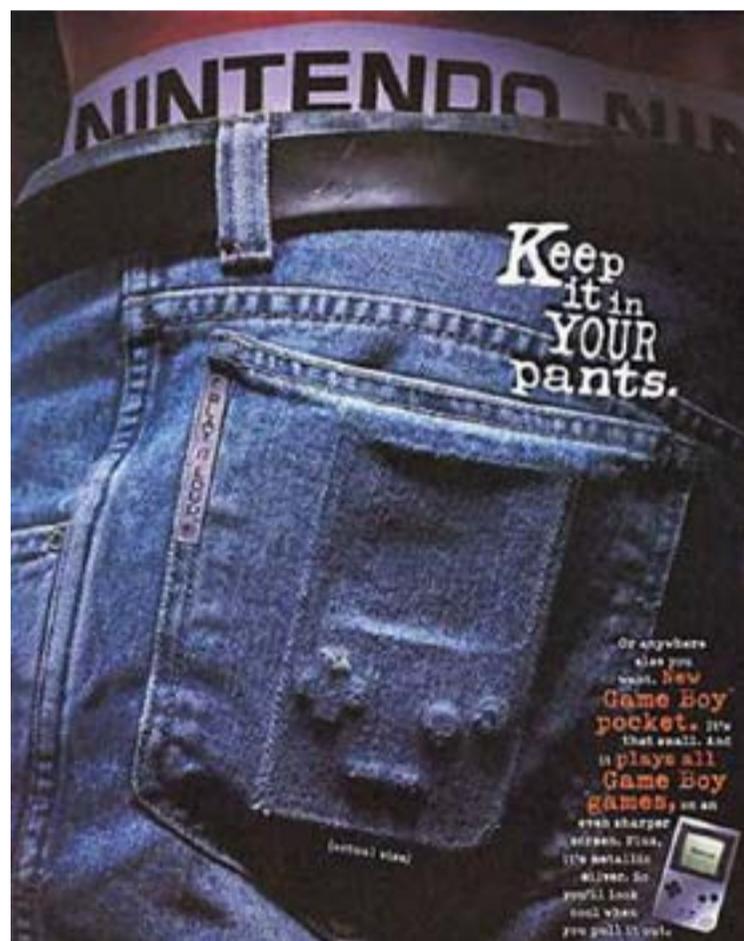
Anyways, here's a list I compiled of "You Know You're Addicted To the Game Boy When...":

- You hum all of the Tetris music all the time
- You keep fistfuls of AA batteries on you for "just in case"
- You can't tell which cartridge it is because the sticker has worn off
- You know everything that comes up on the loading screen when you turn it on
- Your vision is in four colour grayscale and blurs on movement
- Analogue sticks scare and confuse you
- You rearrange your furniture at right angles
- You make slightly racist attempts at Mario's voice
- Backlit screens hurt your eyes
- You make the 'loading' noise randomly
- You can play a game in bursts of light from street lamps whilst in the back of a car

Retro Adverts

Do you remember spotting these?

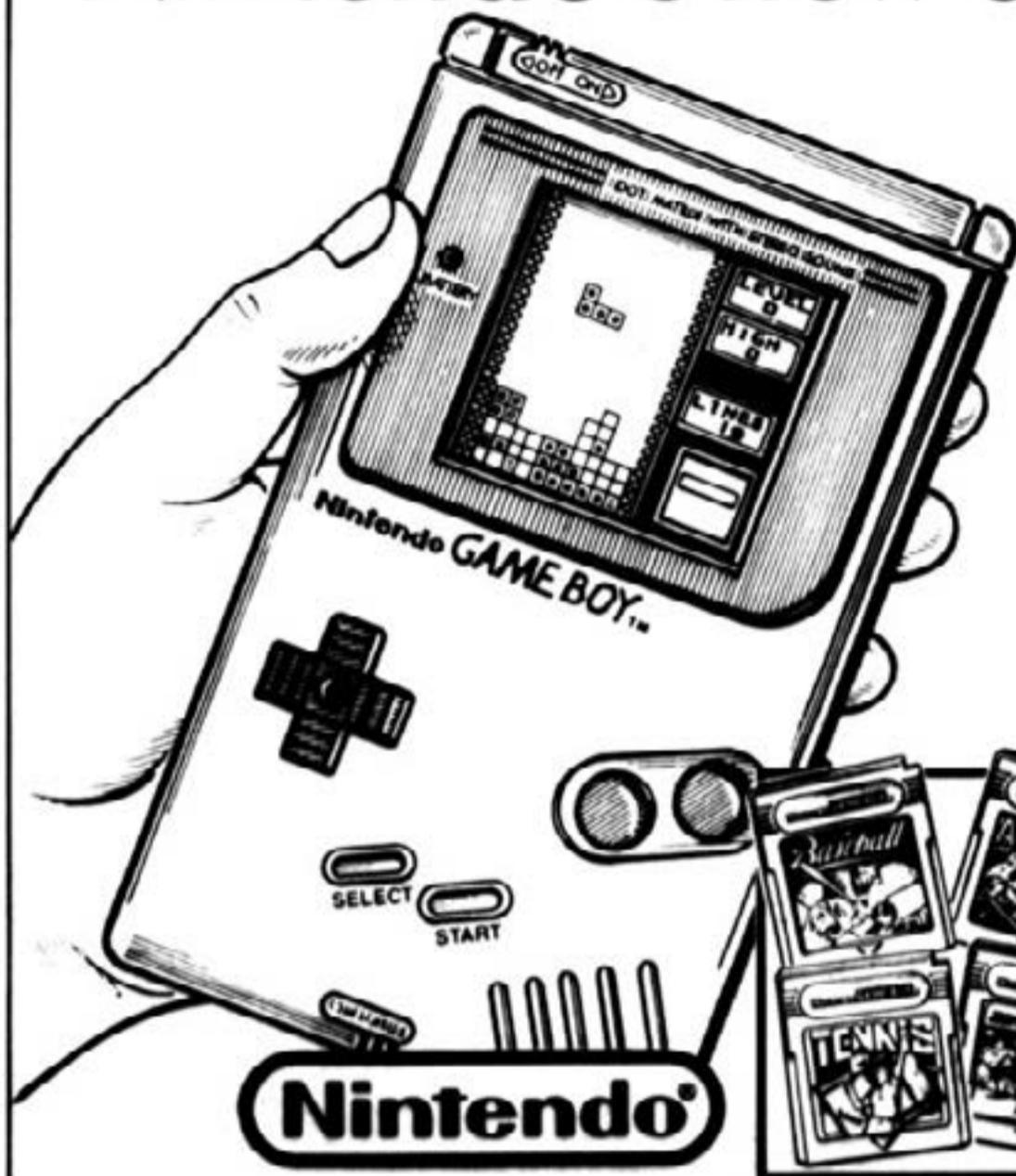
By Steve Greenfield



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ULTRA GAMES

GAME BOY

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COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

57 52 57



By Andrew Duncan



As an alternate universe to the main Mega Man series, the world of Mega Man Battle Network followed the adventures of Lan and his best friend/AI buddy MegaMan.EXE. It was an RPG series released on the Game Boy Advance (I'm ignoring the one on the GameCube) between 2001 and 2006, and you can still buy them if you have a Wii U.

In the world of 20XX (some time between 2000 and 2099), the world is entirely digital -- from toasters to cars, everything is capable of being controlled by a personal handheld computer known as a PET (Personal Information Terminal). Each PET has a NetNavi, which helps you to explore the internet, and is customisable by the user. Lan's NetNavi is special for a reason that you don't discover until near the end of the first game. Combat saw you chose your battle cards and use them as you wish, whilst dodging attacks by moving on the battle grid as you wait for your next turn.

I played every single one of the seven titles as they came out, and was pretty bummed when the series ended. It was aimed at younger gamers, but damnit I don't care that I was 17-22, they were fun games! So let me rank them, in case you wanted to take a look.



#6 - Mega Man Battle Network 4 Red Sun / Blue Moon Released 2004

The changes it made to the formula were a little too far for me. The inclusion of an Emotion Meter on the screen to monitor MegaMan's mental state was pretty stupid to me, as it really only had one function: it let you find out when you could use a Dark Chip during battles. Since the Dark Chips had a permanent negative effect on MegaMan, I found little reason to actually use them, and so the feature was practically pointless -- I wanted more health, not to use a chip and lose health!

With Nebula releasing Dark Chips across the internet, Lan and MegaMan take part in a tournament to find the best NetNavi to send into space. It's mission: connect to the asteroid's cyberworld and divert it. The NetNavi controlling the asteroid was trying to wipe out the large amounts of dark energy it detected (courtesy of the Dark Chips), but the duo convinced it to change course, thwarting Nebula.

Also, as you may be able to tell from the summary, it was pretty light on plot. I liked the plots, and getting to know the characters around Lan's hometown of ACDC Town. So by making it basically a series of boss fights, it kinda ruined it for me. They made a game specifically about the battles and none of the RPG elements, in the spin-off Mega Man Battle Chip Challenge literally released just months earlier... As far as the RPG Battle Network games go, this is the loser.



#5 - Mega Man Battle Network 5 Team Protoman/Team Colonel/Double Team Released 2005

This came in two editions (Team Protoman and Team Colonel), like Battle Network 4 before it, and like every Pokémon title. However, it was also released as a combined edition on DS, under the title Double Team. Although the next game was exclusive to the Game Boy Advance, the sequel series Mega Man Star Force would all be on the DS.

Lan and MegaMan team up with the Official NetBattlers (Net Police) to rescue his father, after the terrorist group Nebula kidnaps him and takes over the internet. Led by either Chaud or Baryl (their NetNavi's named the two versions; Protoman and Colonel), the team grew through the game, liberating the internet and eventually defeating Nebula.

As with Network Transmission, Network 5 changed the formula -- though not as radically. Forcing you to
Game Boy Special Edition

team up with other NetNavis, rather than do things on your own, was a gameplay mechanic that I wasn't too fond of. I had enjoyed wandering around ACDC Town, logging into things to solve everyone's little problems (viruses in the refrigerator, fire engulfing the school...), but having to control multiple NetNavi's as they cleared each area was a chore. It wasn't there for the entire game, but when it was it was just less fun.



#4 - Mega Man Battle Network 6 Cybeast Gregar / Cybeast Falzar Released 2006

The final game in the series, I've had to place this here due to the plot, but for a different reason to Battle Network 4. The game itself was fine, and it gathered everything that was great about the other titles, but both setting and storyline made it suffer. Admittedly, the areas that you could reach via bus from ACDC Town must have been used up by the fifth game, so it's likely the developers wanted it to be believable. There were only so many times SciLab could be renovated, and areas of the Undernet to find...

Moving to Cyber City because his father gets a new job, WWW returns seeking to revive the legendary Cybeasts: Gregar and Falzar (naming the two versions). They are defeated by Lan and MegaMan, and the Cybeasts destroyed. The final scene shows Lan and his friends from ACDC Town as happy adults, ending the series.

Honestly, I'm not angry that this ended the series. All good things must end, and there is always Mega Man Star Force that I could get into (I'm still grieving over Battle Network...). What I didn't like was removing almost the entire cast of supporting characters, that we had spent five games getting to know! Look at that final sentence of the plot summary -- the game shows us what happened to them after this game. What had been going on during this game? Who knows?



#3 - Mega Man Battle Network Released 2001

It was the original, but unfortunately wasn't the best. It brought out all of the cool ideas -- controlling both Lan and MegaMan, a fully digital world, battle chips, setting up the whole cast of characters... But most sequels surpass their originals, and this series certainly did.

As the terrorist organization called WWW (World Three) began gathering four element programs required to engineer a super virus to destroy the world, Lan and MegaMan get sucked up into the plot, and ultimately defeat them.

If you want to get into the series, you definitely have to play the original. It introduced the characters in a way that no sequel ever can reintroduce. Although every sequel went through the battle mechanics once more, it's the characters and setting that shines through.



#2 - Mega Man Battle Network 2 Released 2002

Building upon the original, it refined the best features and improved the Net tenfold. The routes were easier to follow, there were hub areas and you could now use items outside of battles. It also introduced Style Changes, which altered combat considerably from just armour, to element based.

With WWW defeated, a new terrorist group called Gospel emerges. Causing seemingly random acts of destruction, they are actually trying to recreate an optional final boss from Battle Network: Bass.EXE. Lan and MegaMan go about putting a stop to Gospel, but something goes wrong, and Gospel's copy of Bass.EXE is imperfect, turning into a wolf-like bug beast. Once it is destroyed, so is Gospel.

Although it did refine the first game, Battle Network 2 would be redefined over the next two entries, and "better" turned to "best". This was the first entry I played, admittedly.



#1 - Mega Man Battle Network 3 White / Blue Released 2003

Although this was the first game to be released in two versions, this has to be my favourite. It was more of the same, but not too different. No teams, no platforming, no stupid “legendary” beasts... what about the internet in 20XX is old enough to be a legend?! No, this was a great little plot with a couple of twists, and it introduced the NaviCust. It allowed you to change the layout of various plugins, and change MegaMan’s strength, defence and even allow him to walk on ice instead of slip.

Not long after defeating Gospel, Lan and MegaMan participate in the N1 Grand Prix tournament. However, they discover it’s a plot by WWW, working behind the scenes, trying to take over the world using the internet monster Alpha. The two defeat it, and World Three is crushed forever (until the last game).

The differences between the two games were mostly just different bosses and different battle cards. However, there were some graphical differences in places, which helped to differentiate the two games. Admittedly I only finished Blue, and not White, but I’ve never been one to play the same game multiple times in quick succession...

To Sum Up

If you’re a fan of Mega Man and RPGs, then you should definitely play all of the games. It’s a fun series, and the handheld games are fully available on the Wii U Virtual Console. These games only left my Game Boy Advance so that I could have a quick go on Pokémon or Final Fantasy Tactics Advance, before playing more Mega Man Battle Network. Yes, even 4 Blue Moon.



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DMG-

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MODEL NO. DMG-01

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RATING : DC 6V 0.7W

BATTERY : SUM-3(AA,R6)X4

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