



THE VIDEO GAME GENERATIONS NEWSLETTER

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Issue #31 – December 6, 2025

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Loading Screen

My plan to catch up on 2025 new releases has been derailed by the Analogue 3D, a modernized console that plays Nintendo 64 games. This week's issue is all about the Analogue 3D and various N64 games, including another *Collection Inspection* feature.



Say what you will about generative AI, but it works really well for the VGGN logo. From the dozens of variations I already have, I picked this one with gears, asked the AI bot to swap out the controller for the N64 controller I uploaded for reference, and it just worked.

Maybe I'm part of the problem, but it opens up possibilities I wouldn't have access to otherwise. Don't worry, I'm still keeping it minimal. The most egregious is probably the one weekly "cartoon me" I include here on the cover page.

Recent Events

The Mysterious Game Awards Statue

I find things like this pretty interesting. As I write this, it's still a mystery as to what game is being teased or promoted by way of a weird door-like statue found in the Mojave Desert after Geoff Keighley of The Game Awards [posted](#) “regal.inspiring.thickness” – a three-word phrase that apparently [points to](#) that geographical location – on social media.



Speculation that it's related to *God of War*, *The Elder Scrolls*, and *Diablo IV* have all been refuted by their respective developers, or by industry insiders like Jason Schreier.

I'm kind of surprised it hasn't already leaked or been revealed. If that happens before this issue is out, I'll mention it in *The Final Stage* on the last page. Otherwise, we should find out when The Game Awards happens on Thursday, December 11th, if not before.

It seems like a lot of effort (and expense) went into it, so I'll be surprised if it's something completely unknown and out of left field, or something for an obscure new indie game.

I've heard the suggestion that it might be related to *Saros* or *Fallout*, but both of those seem unlikely to me.

Source:

<https://www.ign.com/articles/geoff-keighleys-mysterious-the-game-awards-statue-reportedly-isnt-teasing-the-elder-scrolls-6-diablo-or-god-of-war-so-what-is-it-teasing>

Metroid Prime 4 Becomes a Troll Magnet

Two days before the game was even out, as soon as reviews and review scores began to post, idiots on social media latched onto it as their next clowning target. Typically, they do this with games scoring much lower than an 80 on [Metacritic](#) (especially as fodder for the idiotic console wars, depending on what “side” they're on), or games that don't have a big enough fan base in general that they feel safe and unopposed when posting nonsense; easy targets, so to speak.

While the game seems divisive among some critics, an aggregate of 80 (with some outlets of course giving it even higher marks) means **great** by any reasonable metric. To hear these fools tell it, though, an 80 is awful; a flop; an utter failure; total garbage.

In one pointless exchange, somebody replied to Logan Plant's post where he gave it an 8 (meaning “great”) for IGN, posting an image from Metacritic also showing 80, with the message “Is it?????” I replied that yes, 8 is great on their review scale. He doubled down by saying 8 was just “good” and that “a lot of outlets consider 8 as good”. I asked him to find even one legit outlet where that's true. He didn't (couldn't), but insisted I show him any besides IGN where 8 is great. I did, easily. Kinda Funny and GameSpot are two, although many sites use a 5-point scale instead.

In another, some idiot posted that people shouldn't feel bad for being upset that *MP4* is only good enough to earn an 8, because it's OK for gamers to have high standards (I'm paraphrasing). He wrapped up by saying this completely unhinged, entitled take: “Nintendo deserves the heat they're getting right now.”

The heat they're getting for making a great game? Okay, Chuckles. Oh, wait, his name wasn't Chuckles. I was confused for a minute. I thought he was Chuckles the Clown.

Two Weeks with the Analogue 3D

As I write this, I've had my Analogue 3D for around nine days. When this issue is out, I'll have been playing it for almost two weeks.

They describe it like this:

"A reimagining of the N64. In 4K resolution. 10x the resolution of the original N64.* The first and perhaps greatest multiplayer system of all time. Analogue3D is 100% compatible with every original N64 game ever made. Region Free. Bluetooth LE. Dualband Wifi. Four original-style controller ports. Entirely new, next generation Analogue hardware featuring 3DOS. Engineered entirely in FPGA. No Emulation."



I pre-ordered it more than a year ago, way back on October 21st, 2024. It was delayed multiple times, for various reasons, including the dumb Trump administration tariffs. If you're not sure if I'm saying the tariffs are dumb or Trump (administration) is dumb, just put a checkmark beside both; but I digress.

On the same day, I pre-ordered two 8BitDo 64 controllers to use with the new console.



Those arrived months ago, in the summer, well before the console. Presumably, they can be paired to other consoles or a PC, but I got them just for the Analogue 3D, so they stayed in their boxes until the console arrived.

It arrived Sunday night, which was right at the beginning of the week I took off work for the Thanksgiving holiday. I like to use my vacation time during a week when I already have paid holiday time off work, to get the most out of it.

Right away, I grabbed a few games from my collection to try out. I played a few minutes of each of them, and finally settled on playing *Shadowgate 64*. I'll write about that later in this issue, and include my mini-review too.

After that, I played through *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire*. Again, I'll write about that later, and include my mini-review.

I took some time to finish playing through *Silent Hill f* (twice), then got right back to the Analogue 3D with *40 Winks*. There's an interesting story behind this game, which (you guessed it) I'll write about later in this issue.

I used to keep my original N64 hooked up, but I've had it tucked away in a drawer for two or three years now. I still have my original, along with the original box. I tend to keep all boxes.



With the Analogue 3D, I've been in an N64 game mood. That might change with *Metroid Prime 4: Beyond* coming out this week.

My Analogue 3D Impressions

Anyway, I'm enjoying the Analogue 3D so far, but I have a few complaints. Granted, it's far better being able to hook it up via HDMI without a third-party adapter and without going with its standard composite output.

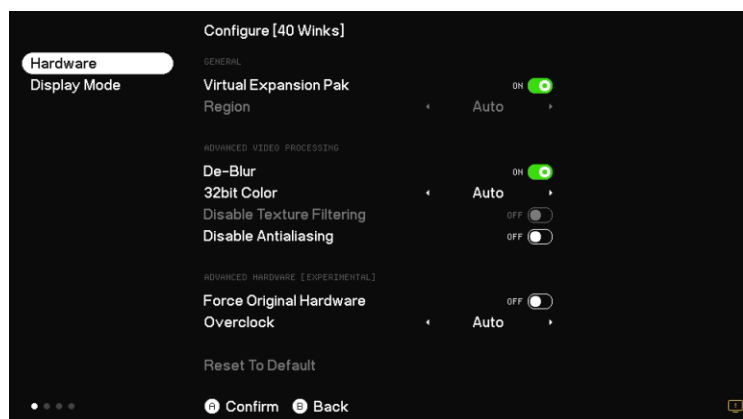
There are just a few things I *expected* it to do, being a modernized console, which it doesn't.

First, there is no save/load state ability. I'm the type of person who would abuse the heck out of it, but at this point in life, I'm not trying to impress anybody (not even myself) by getting good enough to finish some of these more challenging games. With that feature, I could speed through my entire N64 backlog in a few days or weeks. I've read conflicting reports that it's a planned future feature, but I'm not counting on it.

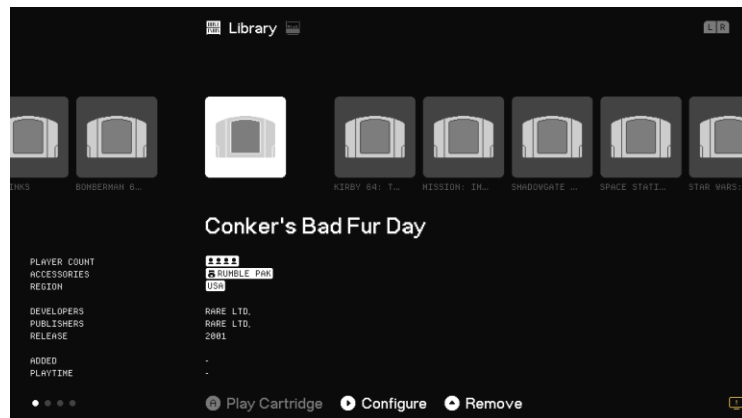
Second, it doesn't have support for taking screenshots. This one is a bigger deal to me. It doesn't record videos either, but that doesn't bother me as much. I just need to take screenshots for my mini-reviews.

As a work-around, I plugged it into my [ClearClick HD Capture Box](#), which lets me capture video and images both. I'd just prefer it to be a built-in function of the console.

This is another thing that (according to some sources) may be added in a future update. It ships with an SD card (although it's a stubby short one somehow) so it seems possible.



Third, the Added and Playtime stats for each game don't seem to do anything. I would expect to see the date I first put in each game cartridge (they're added to the menu then), and how much time I played each game.



Fourth, I experienced a few lock-ups early on, after booting up the console; at least, I *think* it was locked up. The power button did nothing and there was no display, but I've also had odd problems routing video through that ClearClick box from time to time, so I can't be sure. I'm just keeping an eye on it.

Fifth, I lost progress in multiple games multiple times, until I realized that even when you save in-game (to the virtualized controller pak, I think), if you turn the console off without first exiting back to the console menu, it won't permanently keep the updated data. It took a while to figure out why sometimes I'd start again later and be at an earlier point in the game than where I had saved the last time.

It would be a pain to lose power, but barring that, exiting first has kept all my save games.

Sixth, the controller is able to power on the console, but I haven't found a way to power it off using the controller. Again, this is rumored to be included in a future update.

On the plus side, games look fantastic and run well. Here's a Digital Foundry article about the console's visuals and performance:

<https://www.digitalfoundry.net/reviews/analogue-3d-overclocks-the-n64-in-stellar-fashion>

The Games I'll Play

I'm really hoping to fit in time for N64 games between new releases. My current plan is to finish *40 Winks* before *Metroid Prime 4* is out, but as I write this, I only have two more days, and it's a bigger game than that. After *MP4*, I might spend the rest of December (including the two weeks of vacation time coming up) on an N64 gaming spree.

Of the N64 games I already have, I'm most interested in playing *Body Harvest* and *Space Station Silicon Valley*. Well, I'd also like to play *Conker's Bad Fur Day* and *Jet Force Gemini*, but both of those are in *Rare Replay*, which might be a better option anyway.

There's also *Banjo Kazooie* and *Banjo Tooie*, and I somehow made it this far in life without playing them, but those are also in the *Rare Replay* collection.

I never finished *Bomberman 64* or the original *Paper Mario*, but I'd like to. I always wanted to play the *Turok* games, and I have the three main ones, but they're all remastered on current-gen consoles, so I'm not sure I need to bother with the N64 originals.

Next, I'm going to write about every N64 game I've ever played. It's not a long list, which is why I'm able to do that. Before I do, though, I want to look at a few games I don't already have in the N64 section of my collection.

In a move I might regret later, I went on eBay and bought several more N64 cartridges. As expensive as complete-in-box N64 games have become, I'm glad I already have several in my collection.

I only bought the cartridges, and only the ones I could find in the \$15 to \$30 price range (with the exception of *Rocket: Robot on Wheels*, which was over \$100 after tax and shipping), and only the ones I think I *might* actually play. These are in addition to all the N64 games I already own.

It's a minefield on eBay trying to find N64 games that are both authentic and in good condition. Too many of them have labels (or even the cartridge itself) that have been marked all over, or the labels are scratched up, scratched off, or otherwise damaged.

Worse, bootlegs abound. I'm not interested in paying some idiot for a pirated copy of the game. Some of them are convincing enough that it's hard to tell, but usually the sellers with almost no feedback (or from China) listing them as *new* are a giveaway. Many are missing the embossed number on the back label for those that should have one (another giveaway), but those sellers typically don't include a photo of the back anyway.

So far, I have ordered *Glover*, *Tonic Trouble*, *Mischief Makers*, *Rocket: Robot on Wheels*, *Rayman 2: The Great Escape*, *Star Fox 64*, *007: The World is Not Enough*, *Bomberman Hero*, *Ms. Pac-Man: Maze Madness*, *Quake*, *Quake II*, and *Hybrid Heaven*. I think they're all authentic. The sellers seem well established, the photos look legit, and most of the listings *claim* they're authentic cartridges.



I made a list of several other games I'd like to get, once I can find a fair price on a cartridge that doesn't look to be in terrible condition.

These include *Winback: Covert Operations* (although I have it on PS2 already, which is an improved version, so maybe not), *Earthworm Jim 3D* (which I used to own), *Chameleon Twist*, *Iggy's Reckin Balls*, *Gauntlet Legends*, *Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers*, *Yoshi's Story*, *Goemon's Great Adventure*, and *Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon*. Should I buy them before prices go up even more? Maybe not.

I had also moved (from Oklahoma to Kansas) in late 1995 and I was working as a software testing and tech support technician for only a few months. Between starting my new career and spending all my free time making and supporting three different versions of *Lunatix*, there were a couple years where I don't think I was gaming much, if any. It must have been more than two years after the N64 launched before I finally decided it was time to get one.



For the purpose of this list, I'm not including games I only played briefly. That would simply be a list of everything in my collection. Rather, these are games I finished or played enough hours of that I probably *should* have finished.



I don't remember if this was the first N64 game I ever played, or if it was *Shadow Man*. I'm going to guess it was this, since it might be the game I purchased the console to play.

For whatever reason, it wasn't *Super Mario 64* that got me in, despite playing them all on NES and SNES prior to that. In fact, it wasn't until many years later that I played *Mario 64*, and that was the version on DS of all things.

But *Ocarina of Time*... what a game! Most of my time with the series was with *Zelda 2: The Adventure of Link* on NES, which yes, I beat, somehow. I never played much of the original *Legend of Zelda*, though (even to this day), and if I had played *A Link to the Past* on SNES at all, it was only a little (although I did play through it, years later, on GameBoy Advance).

Ocarina of Time was a revelation. Even though it's not on my personal all-time top 10 now, it remains one of the greatest games ever made.



The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask

My hype for *Majora's Mask* was through the roof, but I came away disappointed by it. It was probably the 3-day time limit that gave me problems. At some point, I gave up. Many years later, I played through the remastered version on 3DS (and using 3D) and really did enjoy it then. In fact, it seems like I had come close to finishing it on N64 to begin with but just didn't know it.



Shadow Man (aka Shadowman 64)

This game was on my all-time top 10 for a number of years, after I played it. This is why I'm unsure whether *Ocarina of Time* was really the first game on the console I ever played, or if it was this. I remember being immersed in the world, and the whole 3D traversal and exploration felt very new to me at the time.

It featured an expansive, complicated, interconnected world. It was dark and mature. The music (at least some of it) was atmospheric and memorable. I remember getting lost and confused, but the game came with a world [map](#) showing how doors and paths connect, which helped me eventually figure it all out.

I played through it again in 2022, at some point after Nightdive Studios did a remaster of it for PlayStation 4. My mini-review can be found in [VGGN issue #4](#) on page 13.



Scooby-Doo - Classic Creep Capers

I don't remember much about this game, except that I played it when Anna (who helped with creating all the graphics for *Lunatic* and *Lunatic Online*) and I were housemates for a couple years. She had a daughter, Courtney, who was 7 at the time, and we played *Scooby-Doo* together. It was much the same as when I later got married and had kids of my own, where it was mostly me playing and her enjoying it as if it was an interactive cartoon.



Donkey Kong 64

After *Scooby-Doo*, we played *Donkey Kong 64*. I enjoyed it a lot but never finished it. I don't remember why. I think we made it pretty far in the game, but not far enough to hit the wall that prevents you from completing it because you have to beat *Jetpac* with a high score and beat the original arcade *Donkey Kong*.

At least, I *think* that's what I've heard. I could be wrong. All I know is, I don't think we had reached a point where it was a pain to play. We had made it to level 6, maybe level 7.

The real reason I never finished it is probably because I moved in with my girlfriend at the time (we were even briefly engaged, but it all fell apart) and I just got too distracted.

Or maybe it did get too hard, and I gave up. I just don't remember. It was a long time ago.



Goldeneye 007

When I hear most people talk about the N64 *Goldeneye* first-person shooter, it's usually for fond memories of the 4-player split-screen.

That might as well have not existed for me. I was only interested in the single player story campaign. Before *Goldeneye*, the *James Bond* movie franchise wasn't on my radar at all. Not only was it fun to watch the movie after playing the game and see the real versions of various characters and scenes, but it made me a fan of 007 such that I never missed a new movie upon release (until maybe the last one or two Daniel Craig movies).

I remember bits and pieces about the game, and how it lines up with the movie. The last level on the antenna dish was a great set piece moment back then. I loved this game.



Perfect Dark

Even better than *Goldeneye* was Rare's follow-up to it, *Perfect Dark*. I made it to the last boss but never could beat him. In theory, I could boot it up on the Analogue 3D, my save would still be there, and I could try again now that tips and tricks for it abound online.

However, I should just play it on Xbox and start over, so I get the full story. A couple times, I've started it again, but I never stuck with it long enough to really claim I made a series attempt.



Quest 64

This game gets a lot of grief, but I remember really enjoying it. I couldn't tell you anything about it now, so maybe it wasn't all that memorable, but I know I finished it and I know I had fun with it. As RPGs go, it was probably a simplified, even watered-down one, but that didn't bother me at the time.



Tetrisphere

Here's an odd one – 3D *Tetris* on an orb. I don't remember how far I made it in the game, but I don't think I made it particularly far in the campaign mode (I forget the specifics). I did play a lot of it, though, hence it's on my list.



Bomberman 64

This is another one I played quite a bit but never finished. I wasn't familiar with the series before this, and was kind of spoiled on the 3D world and adventure elements not present in the more top-down puzzle-like multiplayer games that typically make up the series. Every *Bomberman* since then, including what little I played of *Bomberman 64: The Second Attack*, has kind of been a let-down to me.



Castlevania: Legacy of Darkness

Technically, I may have played *Castlevania 64* and *Legacy of Darkness* both. The latter was an expanded version of the former, I think. It may not be well regarded now (if it ever was), but I remember being impressed by the atmosphere and vibe of it.

I'm fairly sure I finished it. I wasn't keeping a detailed log of all my games back then, but when I did start keeping track and made mention of all the games I'd played previously, there's no indication (as there is on some others) that I didn't finish *Legacy of Darkness*.



Paper Mario

This was a big deal at the time – a new *Super Mario Bros.* RPG with a unique paper art style, a fun story, and great turn-based combat that allowed some timing-based button presses to do extra damage or avoid/reduce damage.

It's a simple but clever mechanic that's been used in many a turn-based RPG since then, including the Ubisoft *South Park* RPGs and this year's likely Game of the Year winner, *Clair Obscur: Expedition 33* (check out next week's issue to see if that prediction is right).

As I've been itching to play N64 games, and since this is another I never actually beat, I really should give it another go. Starting it over is probably the way to go, if I play it again.

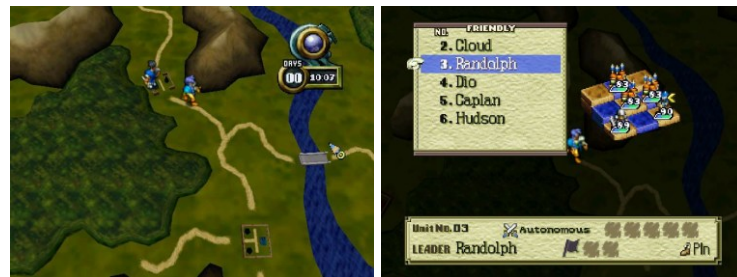


Ogre Battle 64: Person of Lordly Caliber

I got this game as a birthday gift from my girlfriend (who later became my wife, the mother of my three kids, and eventually my ex-wife) in late 2000, which was only a month or so after it first released, and mere weeks after we first met and started dating. When she asked me what I'd want, this was it.

For many years, this was the example she pointed to every time I decided I needed (or wanted) a new game, because I never got around to playing it. After our twins were born (kids number two and three), and right after I got the PS3 and Xbox 360 as a compromise for naming our son Heath instead of Vance, I finally decided to take that bit of ammunition off the table by playing *Ogre Battle 64*.

It was hard to follow at first. I wasn't much of a strategy RPG fan, and I wasn't familiar with the systems. Once it clicked for me, I really got into it, and I enjoyed the heck out of it.



Shadowgate 64

I just finished this on the Analogue 3D, a few days ago. My mini-review is later in this issue.

Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire

I also just finished playing this a few days ago, and it's my second mini-review for this week.

40 Winks

This came out on PS1, but the N64 version was cancelled until Piko Interactive did a Kickstarter (which I backed) in 2018. I wanted to finish it in time for this issue, and I'm pretty far in the game now, but I've ran out of time.

Collection Inspection - N64 Edition



Ogre Battle 64 – Person of Lordly Caliber

Platform: Nintendo 64 / **Edition:** Standard

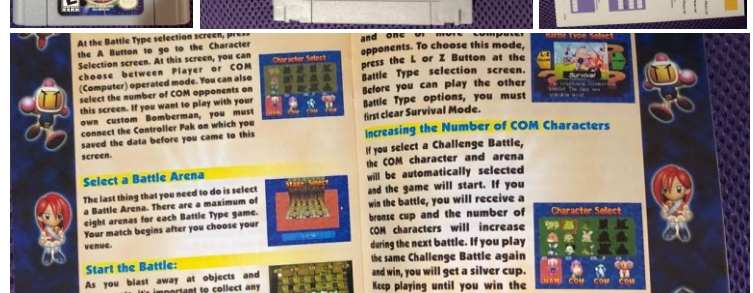
Comments: It's the game my (ex-)wife bought me as a birthday gift in 2000, right after we started dating. I played it once, and kept it all in excellent condition.



Bomberman 64 – The Second Attack

Platform: Nintendo 64 / **Edition:** Standard

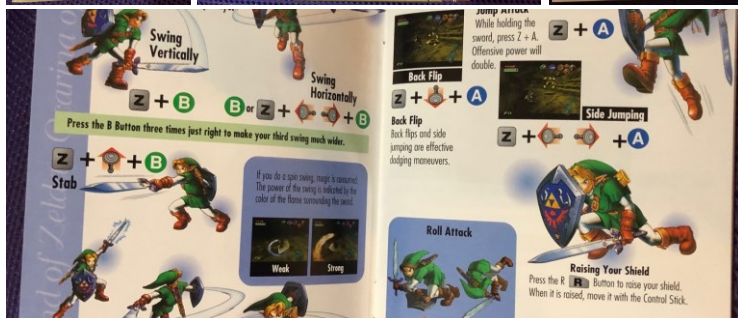
Comments: I bought this because I liked the first Bomberman 64 so much, but I never got around to playing much of it. It's practically brand new.



The Legend of Zelda – Ocarina of Time

Platform: Nintendo 64 / **Edition:** Collector's Edition

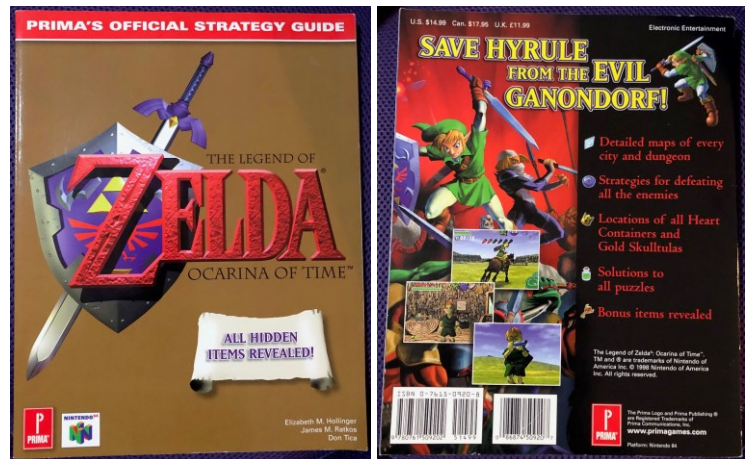
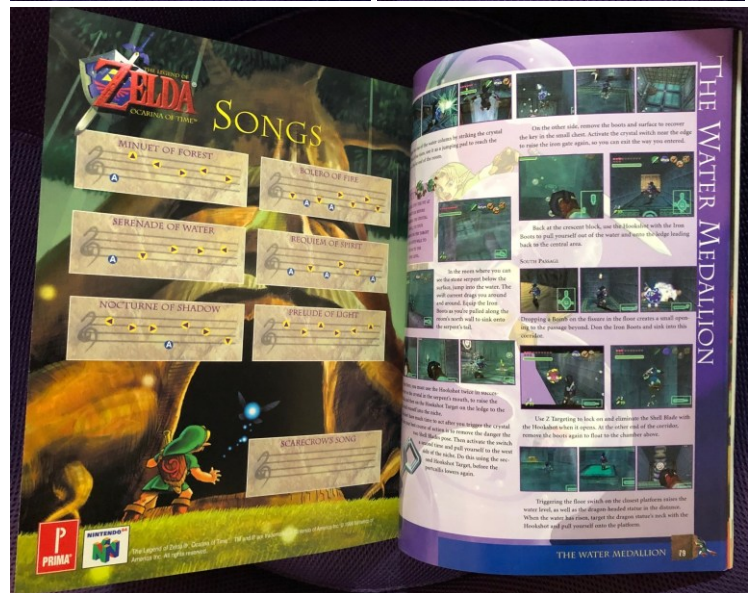
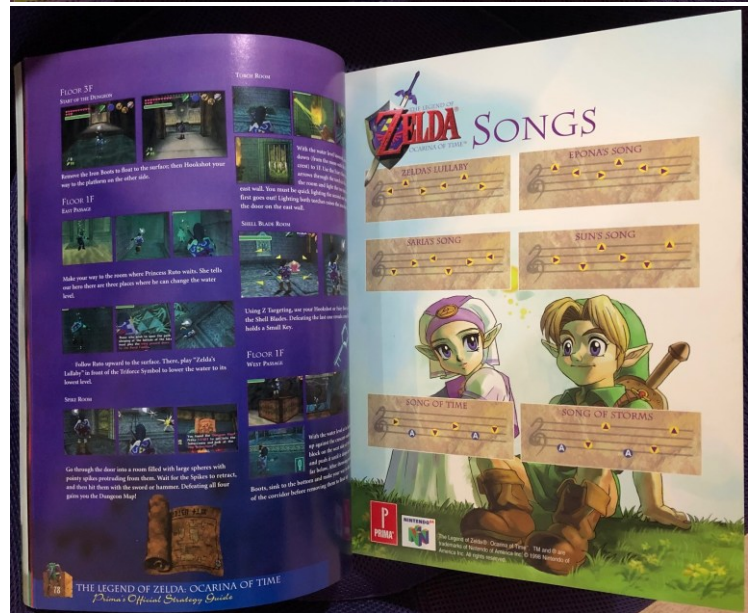
Comments: This has to be one of the first N64 games I owned, along with *Shadow Man*. It's still complete.



The Legend of Zelda – Prima Strategy Guide

Platform: Nintendo 64 Game Guide / **Edition:** Prima

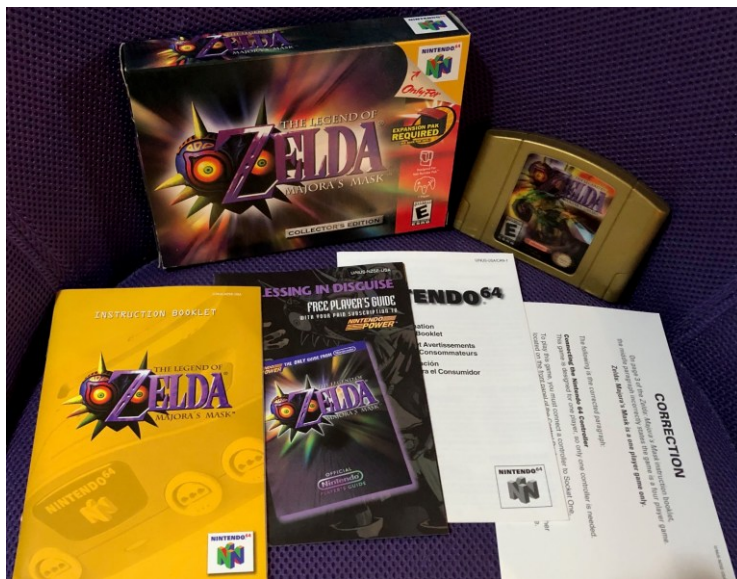
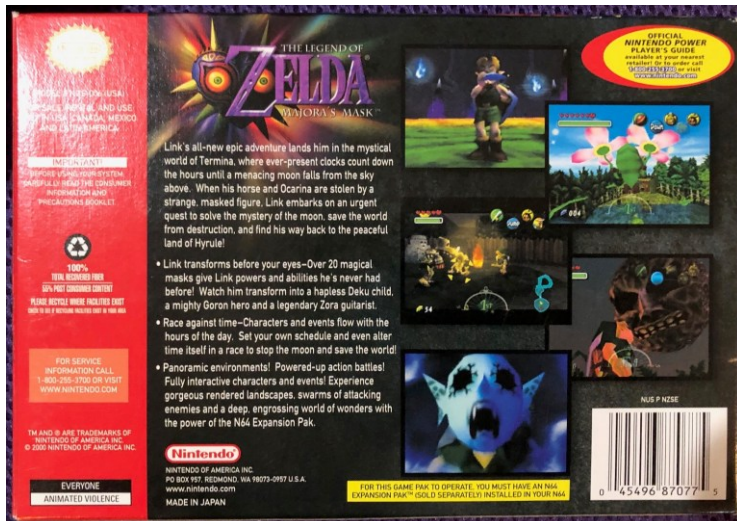
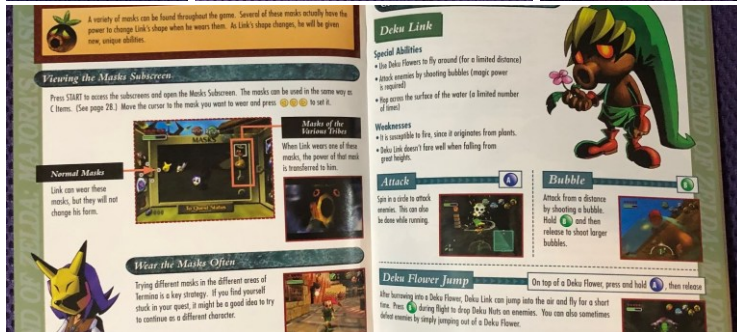
Comments: I played the game before I owned the strategy guide, but it's a cool piece of history anyway. In today's information age, where every answer is just a click away, physical strategy guides don't seem to be a thing. There might be one-off niche items for collectors, but most gamers will just get the free info.



The Legend of Zelda – Majora's Mask

Platform: Nintendo 64 / **Edition:** Collector's Edition

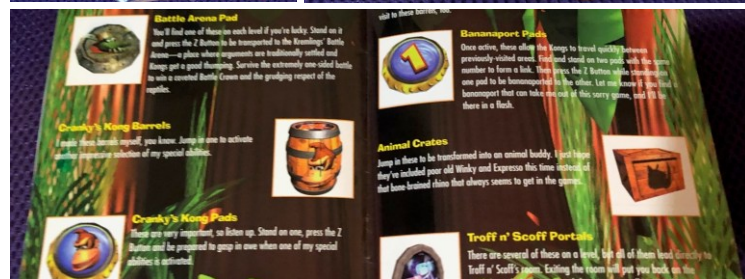
Comments: Not only is it a gold cartridge, but the label on it is one of those hologram thingies.



Donkey Kong 64

Platform: Nintendo 64 / **Edition:** Collector's Edition

Comments: I don't know where the extra pamphlets went, unless I didn't purchase it new to begin with.



Paper Mario

Platform: Nintendo 64 / **Edition:** Standard

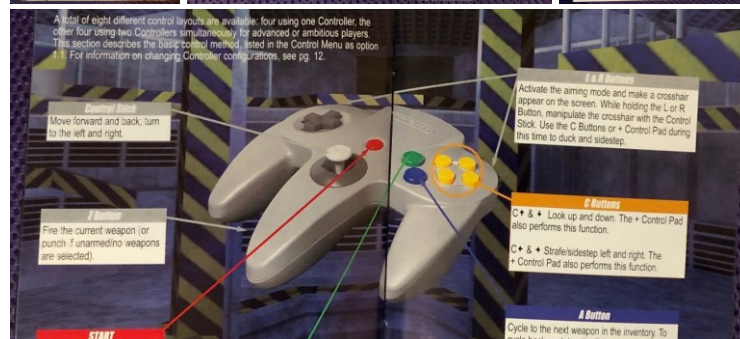
Comments: I never finished this game, but I really should start it over again and finally do that.



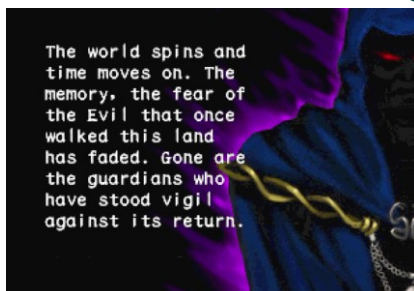
Perfect Dark

Platform: Nintendo 64 / **Edition:** Standard

Comments: I never finished this game either, since the final boss was too difficult for me at the time.



Mini-Review: Shadowgate 64



Full Title:

Shadowgate 64 – Trials of the Four Towers

From several games in the unplayed portion of my N64 collection, I ended up getting drawn into this N64 sequel to the cult classic NES point-and-click adventure.

Now it's in full 3D, with a large castle and the surrounding area to explore. It's hampered by the N64 controls, where the thumb stick is for the camera but movement is on the four directional "C" buttons. I got used to it quickly though. The 8BitDo N64 controller is nice.

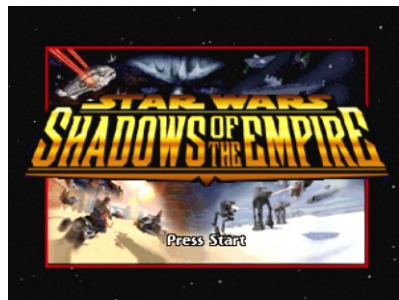
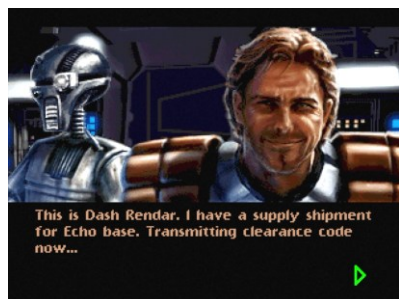
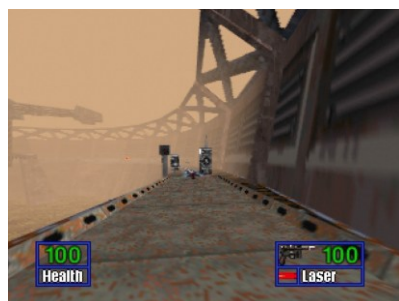
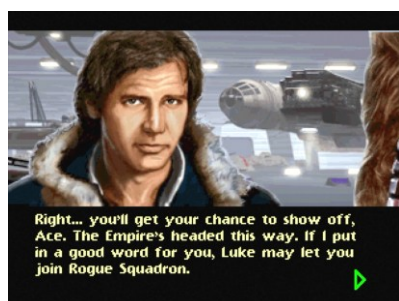
The large world makes things a bit difficult if you miss an item, as I did with the Rusty Key.

There's no quest log, no map, no built-in hints, but I was able to get through most of it without looking up a guide (just that key, and then a puzzle with a slipper, and maybe one more). I actually had fun playing through this.



Nintendo 64 game played on the Analogue 3D.
Originally posted to social media on 11/25/2025.

Mini-Review: Shadows of the Empire



Full Title:

Star Wars – Shadows of the Empire

I should have played this back when it was new in 1996, back when I had just read the *Shadows of the Empire* novel. Now, the years of self-created hype for it are dashed (no pun intended) by an experience that is just OK.

You play as Dash Rendar (a mercenary) across 10 levels that vary from space battles, to speeder bikes and other craft, to first-person shooting and jetpacking (or third-person or fixed; you have options).

I started over on Easy after getting to the boss of Level 2 on Normal, losing all lives, and deciding I was not in the mood to "get good" by having to replay an entire level. I'd have enjoyed it far less if I hadn't.

The story is disjointed on its own, relying on knowledge of the movies and the book.

Worth playing in 2025? Probably not, but I'm glad I finally did.

Nintendo 64 game played on the Analogue 3D.

Originally posted to social media on 11/26/2025.

The Final Stage

The 8BitDo 64 Controller

I'm a little disappointed that this version of the 8BitDo 64 controller wasn't listed for pre-order when I first ordered mine. I can't tell if it's sold out now, or if it just hasn't yet been released. I don't really need a third one, but it sure makes the originals look boring.



Netflix is Buying Warner Brothers

This missed *Recent Events* because I had already filled that up talking about the statue in the Mojave Desert and my rant about the people who think an 8 out of 10 review score is bad.

If this deal goes through, Netflix will own Warner Bros. Discovery for the tune of some \$82.7 billion dollars.

Netflix has dabbled in games and owns a few studios, including the makers of the *Oxenfree* series, *Night School*. They'll own the makers of the *Batman Arkham* games, *Mortal Kombat*, *Hogwarts Legacy*, and quite a few more, plus all their film and TV franchises.

If it does go through, bet on Netflix subscription prices going way, way up. They'll rationalize it by saying you don't need Netflix and HBO Max separately, and that new Hollywood releases will arrive sooner to stream.

Source:

<https://www.gamespot.com/gallery/netflix-could-own-all-these-warner-bros-game-studios-soon/2900-7310/>

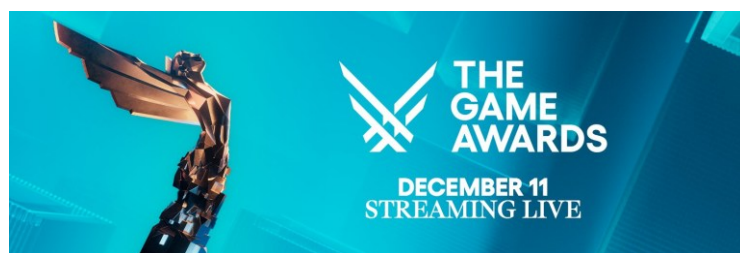
The Top 100 Nintendo 64 Games

When I stopped resisting the urge to buy a few more N64 games from eBay, I found this site detailing one guy's opinion on the best N64 games. It was a big help in figuring out which ones I might actually want to buy and play.

<https://infinityretro.com/top-100-best-nintendo-64-games/>

Next Week

The [Game Awards](#) are scheduled for Thursday, December 11th. I'm expecting plenty to write about as a result, from my thoughts on all the winners (and runners-up) to the numerous game announcements we're sure to get (including whatever the heck that statue turns out to be). Next week, I'm not planning any other topic or feature. It'll just be an issue all about that. See you then!



End Credits

The VGGN controller logo with multiple "X" buttons and some occasional other artwork was made using <https://openart.ai>. This week I swapped it out for an N64 controller to fit the theme.

The title font *Closet Dwellers* and the section header font *Shake Your Plums* are licensed from <https://chequered.link/>.

Photos of the Analogue 3D, the two 8BitDo controllers for it, the Nintendo 64 with its controller, and the N64 original box were of my own items and taken by me. The colorful 8BitDo controller was found in the Amazon.com listing, and the two cartridge pics (*Tonic Trouble* and *Hybrid Heaven*) are from the eBay listings of those actual games I purchased, so technically they're mine now. Screenshots from various N64 games in the feature *Every Nintendo 64 Game I've Ever Played* came from various places on the internet and are credited by way of clickable links on them.

Images of the physical games in the *Collection Inspection* feature are photos I took of games in my own collection and weren't sourced from the internet.

Screenshots used in my video game mini-reviews and some screenshots used in other articles or features that weren't already attributed to a different source were captured by me in-game and are used here in what I believe is "fair use".

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