

THE ROAD TO NES WORKS

PART 2: FEBRUARY 2021

The second chapter of this photography project takes us through the end of 1983's console releases in Japan and into the following year. Here we see Sega's lineup branching out (and shaping up) considerably, while Nintendo continues steadily along with its own works, supplemented by releases from third parties. It's still mostly arcade conversions at this point, but they're growing quite a bit more convincing.

Thank you for your support of this historic curation effort! — **Jeremy Parish**



SG-1000

SEGA FLIPPER

Developer: Sega

Publisher: Sega

Genre: Pinball

Catalog no.: G-1018

Sega Flipper's box art makes a stunning first impression. It's vivid and bold, spicing up the staid video pinball genre with a visual representation that captures the energy and flash of a real pinball table through crisp comic book-style art enhanced by a few key applications of air-brushing (that is, to recreate the reflective silver of a steel pinball). A fantastic illustration.

As for the game itself? It's good, but not on par with the cover representation of the software contained in the box. Bear in mind that this was one of the earliest proper interpretations of pinball in console form; before this, they tended to be more like shooters or *Breakout* clones (see: Namco's *Gee Bee*).

Sega Flipper contains an entire pinball table, with two sets of the eponymous flippers and a pretty decent simulation of ball physics. It's fast-paced and kind of ruthless, and the graphical limitations of the system make for farprecision than you might hope to find in a pinball game. Yet I've played pinball sims from years later that didn't work as convincingly as *Sega Flipper*. It's a nice case of the company leaning into its arcade roots on console, for all that "arcade gaming" entails.



POP FLAMER™

ポップ フレーマー



Game Cartridge
For SC-3000

SG-1000

POP FLAMER

Developer: Jaleco

Publisher: Sega

Genre: Maze

Catalog no.: G-1019

Unlike *Sega Flipper*, this game comes nowhere near living up to its cover. From the vaguely naughty-sounding title to the delirious pop-art illustration, *Pop Flamer* is the kind of vintage game you really want to love. It has a mouse! With a flamethrower! Blasting frogs! How can this not be amazing?

The answer to that question is sadly simple: It falls flat by playing miserably. Aimless design, confusing mechanics, and a tendency for your character to get stuck on corners of the scenery in the midst of a heated monster pursuit: All of these factors combine to make for an unconvincing take on the maze-chase genre.

The box art isn't misleading, by the way. *Pop Flamer* really does feature a mouse with a flamethrower who has to pop balloons. But there's no real creative spark behind it; it's a random jumble of ideas as a desperate bid to find a compelling gimmick. A failed bid. Oh well.

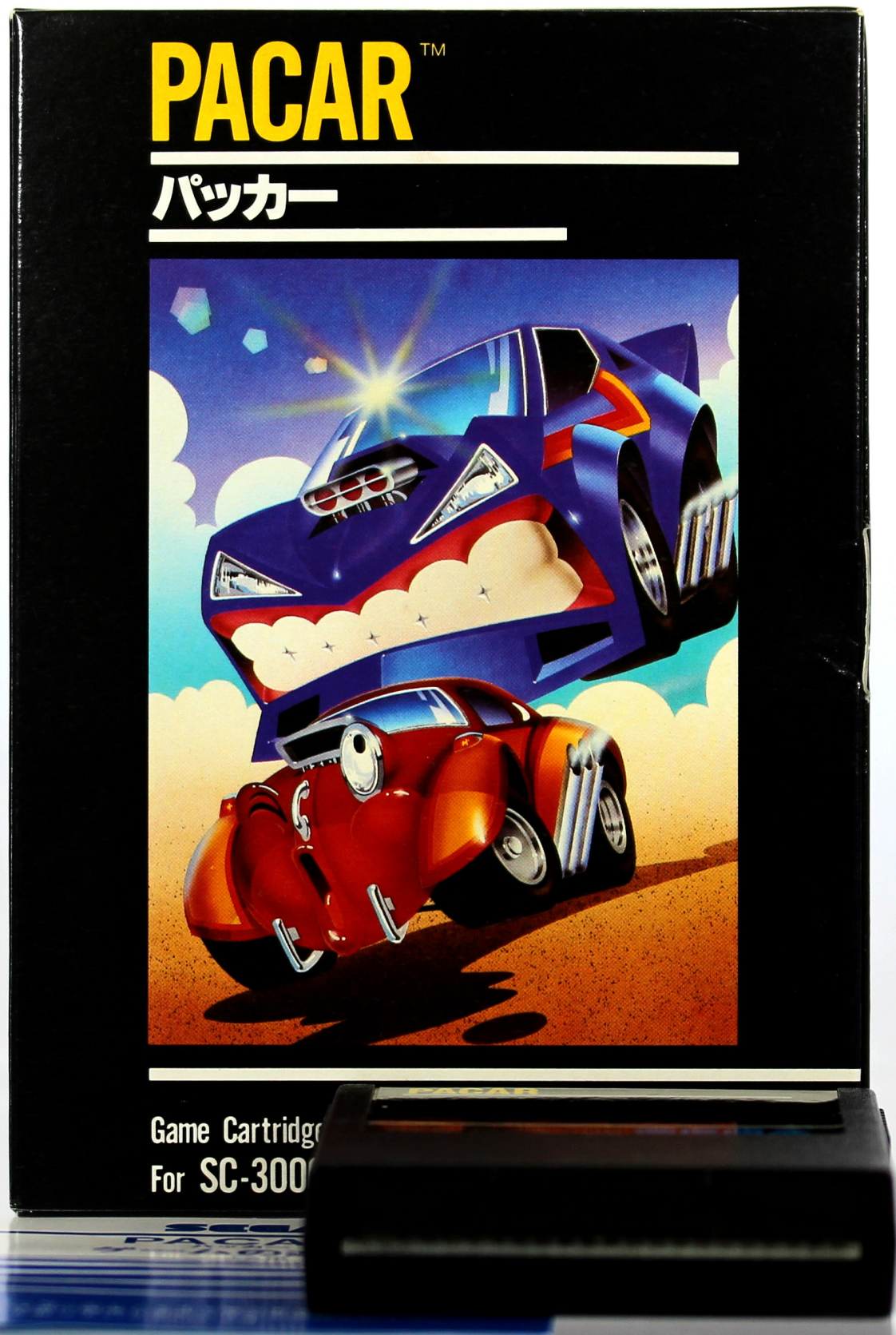
SG-1000
PACAR

Developer: Sega
Publisher: Sega
Genre: Maze
Catalog no.: G-1020

Head On was a minor arcade hit for Sega, and it even lived on as a built-in, legally mandated test game in some of their later coin-op boards. But there was never a port of *Head On* for a Sega system. Nintendo's Game Boy got one as late as 1990 with Tecmo's *Power Racer!* But Sega? Not a one.

That's OK, because Sega published this instead. *Pacar* is basically a sequel to *Head On*, with more complex stages and more challenging design. And the name—"Pac-Car," as in *Pac-Man*—speaks to the enthusiasm with which Sega embraced the maze action genre that followed in *Head On*'s wake. There are more dots to drive over and even energizer pellets to allow you to turn the tables on the enemy racers.

The cover art is less convincing than the game, though. It has a bit of an Aerosmith *Pump* vibe to it. While it may not be the SG-1000's finest illustration, the game inside is solid.



SEGA-GALAGA™

セガ・ギャラガ



Game Cartridge
For SC-3000

SG-1000 SEGA- GALAGA

Developer: Namco

Publisher: Sega

Genre: Shooting

Catalog no.: G-1022

So far as I've been able to determine, the world's first home console conversion of Namco's arcade masterpiece *Galaga* appeared on SG-1000 by way of a version that Sega took so much pride in they slapped their name on it.

It's a pretty respectable adaptation—perhaps unsurprisingly, as Namco handled the conversion themselves. Even so, the SG-1000's technical limitations do rear their head in a few notable ways. There are no “challenging stages,” the movement of ships looks quite choppy, and enemies really only have one pattern that simply gets faster and faster with each stage. Yet as this was the only home version available for a year or so, I'm sure players at the time were more than happy to make do.

The box art is a fairly plain “airbrushed space ships flying around” affair, but it shows off the insectile *Galaga* lead ships to clear effect, so it does the trick... even if the formation of ships in the background looks more like *Space Invaders*.

SG-1000
**SPACE
SLALOM**

Developer: Orca

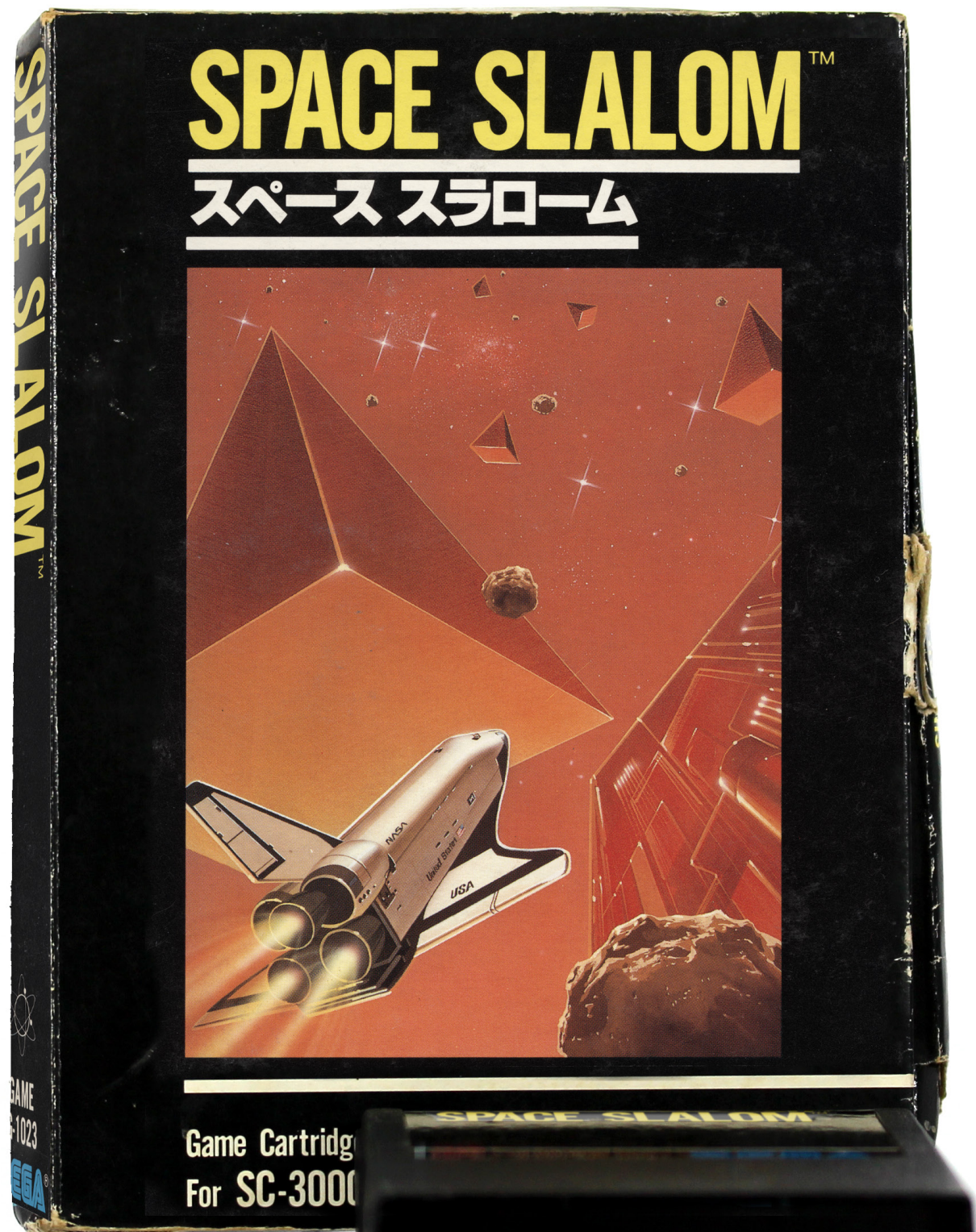
Publisher: Sega

Genre: Racing

Catalog no.: G-1023

Space Slalom for SG-1000 is not really much of a game. It's a racing game, sort of, but there are no competitors. You're simply racing against the clock, attempting to pass through sets of winking stars (the "slalom" part) with a space shuttle (the "space" part). It feels less like a polished commercial release and more like the kind of program you'd have typed in from a listing in the back of a computer magazine. I suppose in that sense this is a relic of a bygone era: An era when (seemingly) amateur game projects could make their way to retail pretty easily, as well as an era of shuttlemania. That thing used to be the peak of cool: A sci-fi image existing in the real world!

Ah, but this post is actually a lie. This is not a real photo of *Space Slalom*! This is probably the SG-1000's second rarest release, and in six months of combing auction and Japanese retro retailers, I've only seen a few copies up for sale, and they all fetch prices ranging from \$900 and scaling upward. That's a lot! Thankfully Sega ultra-collector Omar Cornut was kind enough to share high-rez packaging scans that I photoshopped onto a pic I had taken of a different game. Can you tell which game provided the donor photo?



SG-1000 ZIPPY RACE

Developer: Irem

Publisher: Sega

Genre: Racing

Catalog no.: G-1026

Irem racer *Zippy Race* showed up on SG-1000 pretty early on. I don't have just a lot to say about this one. It's a dual-mode game that switches from a top-down perspective a la *Monaco GP* to a forward scrolling perspective—pretty impressive for 1983, but the overall design is limited enough that it's a little hard to return to almost 40 years later.

Zippy Race is a cross-country motorcycle journey from LA to NYC against 99 other cars; at each waypoint along the way (Vegas, Houston, etc.) you get to top off your fuel based on your pole position. The game ends when you run out of gas, so you really have to memorize the entire route for maximum efficiency. The cover art is pretty good, at least! Very energetic, cramming all the elements of the game into the scene without feeling overcrowded.

ZIPPY RACE™

ジッピーレース



Game Cartridge
For SC-3000

SG-1000

ZIPPY RACE

MyCard Version
Developer: Irem
Publisher: Sega
Genre: Racing
Catalog no.: C-26

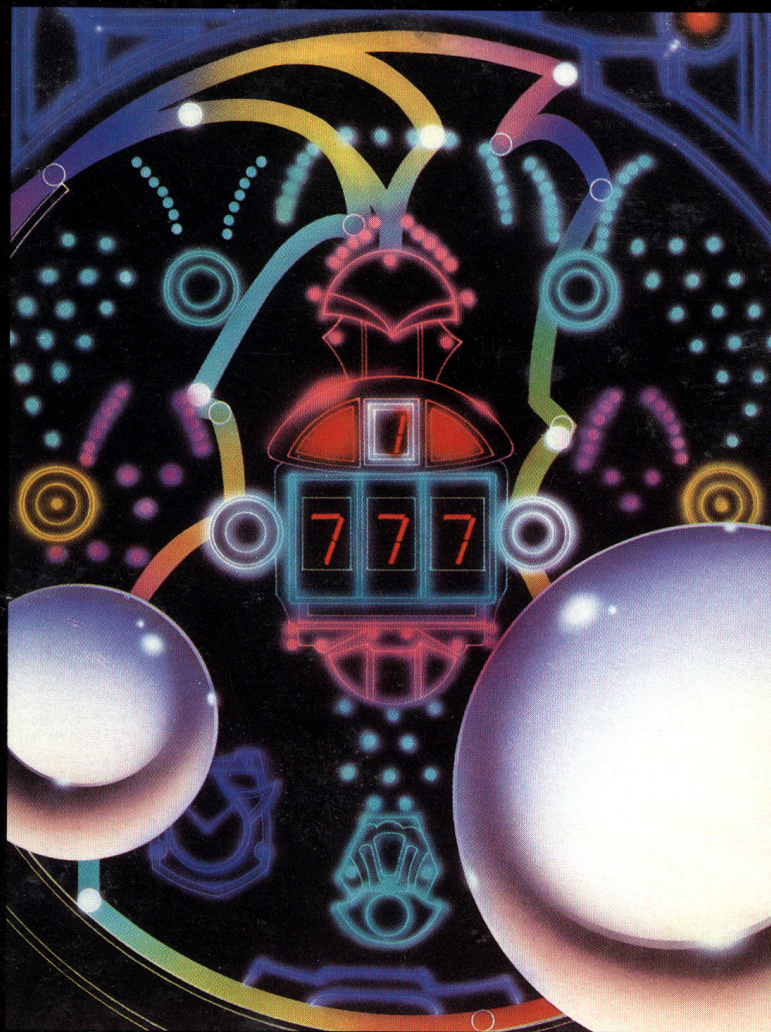
Like Monaco GP, Sega reissued *Zippy Race* in the smaller MyCard format after the SG-1000 Mark III launched. To my knowledge, this version differed from the cartridge release only in terms of how much shelf space it consumed; the programs contained on card and cart were identical.

It's a bit of a missed opportunity. Sega released a couple of steering peripherals for SG-1000, but they were built around a different control scheme than the one in *Zippy Race*. Updated controls would have made this a great fit for the motorcycle controller, but it was not to be.



PACHINKO™

パチンコ



Game Cartridge
For SC-3000

SG-1000

PACHINKO

Developer: Sega

Publisher: Sega

Genre: Gambling

Catalog no.: G-1027

Another forged photo: Pachinko for SG-1000 is without question the rarest and most expensive release for the system, regularly fetching prices in the \$2000-3000 range. This is not a function of the “retro bubble,” either. It’s always been a coveted collectible. By all accounts, *Pachinko* was immediately recalled due to a defect in production and replaced soon after by a sequel that was more like an expanded rerelease.

This is definitely not one of those pricey gems that everyone must play regardless of the cost; it’s a single virtual pachinko table, which means “play” consists of holding down a button and nudging your aim slightly until you run out of either pachinko balls or patience. Thanks again to Omar Cornut for the scan that served as the basis for this photo chicanery.

SG-1000

EXERION

Developer: Jaleco

Publisher: Sega

Genre: Shooter

Catalog no.: G-1028

There's something simultaneously wonderful yet agonizing about games on vintage systems straining to punch above their weight. The SG-1000 port of Jaleco's *Exerion* definitely falls under that heading. In arcades, this game featured a split-screen scrolling effect that created the impression of an alien landscape zooming past below your fighter as you dodged and juked to avoid incoming fire (while grappling with an unconventional feature: inertial weight and acceleration).

It looked pretty amazing at the time, even if it ultimately amounted to some whiz-bang effects behind a mostly standard take on the shoot-em-up. The SG-1000 unfortunately wasn't geared toward that kind of visual trickery; between its stop-start scrolling capabilities and its extremely limited color palette, the system turned *Exerion* into an eye-searing headache. A noble try, but literally painful to play.

The box art fares much better, giving us Luke Skywalker's T-16 Skyhopper versus Mecha-King Ghidorah in a copyright infringement battle for the ages.



FAMICOM TENNIS

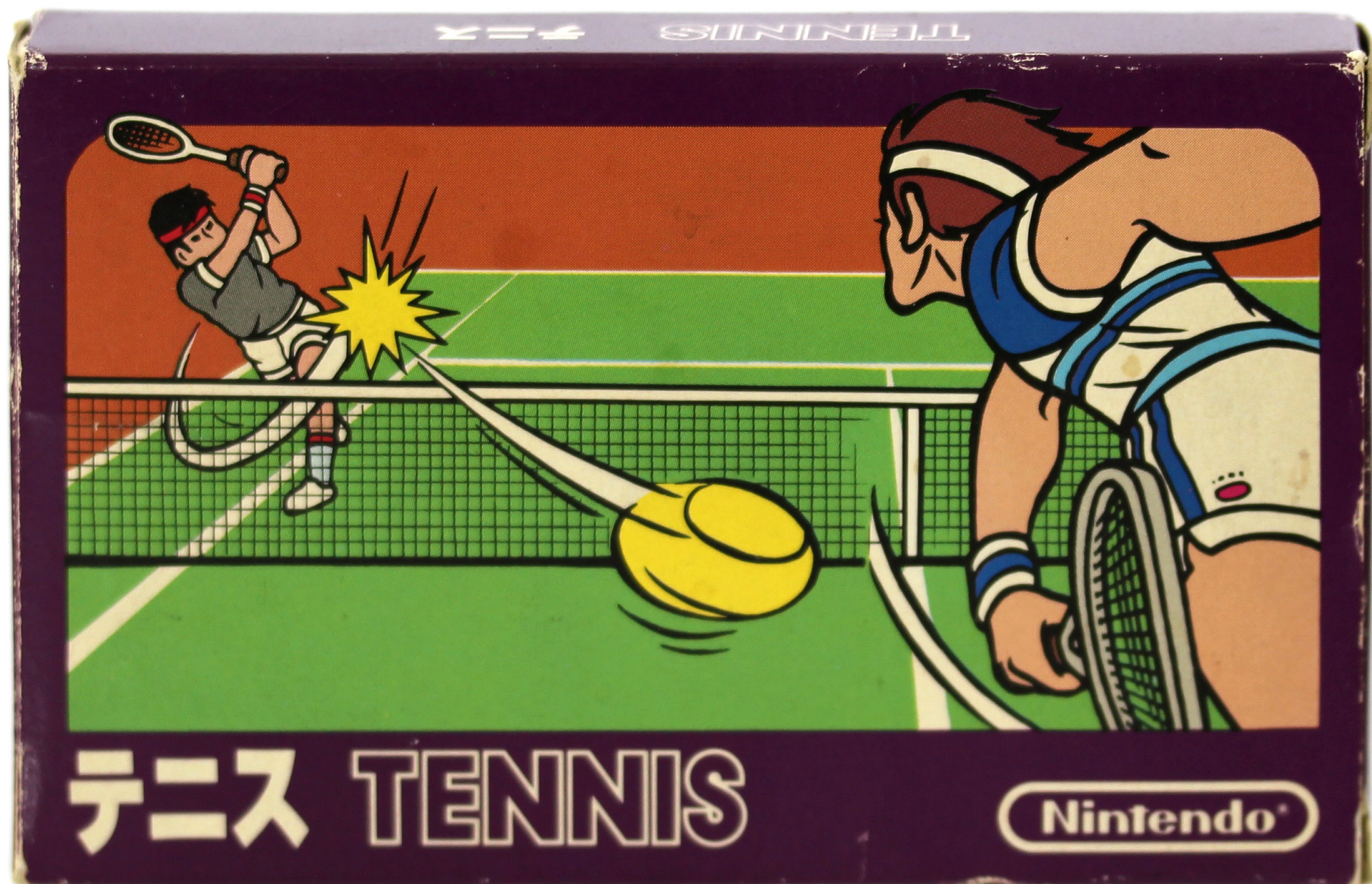
Developer: Nintendo
Publisher: Nintendo
Genre: Sports
Catalog no.: HVC-TE

So, on to 1984 with Nintendo's first release of the year: *Tennis* for Famicom. This would also be an NES launch game, but in fact it appears to have made its way to the U.S. well before the console launched as a Vs. System release in arcades. Chances are I even played it; I remember dropping quite a few quarters into those distinctive red-blue grid cabinets back in the early '80s, but I don't recall the exact games I played. It's been a while.

Tennis seems to take its cues from Sega's *Champion Tennis*, but it makes use of

the Famicom's visual capabilities to produce a better-looking and better-playing simulation of the sport, with a scaling effect and shadow for the ball, detailed player sprites, and a stronger sense of visual perspective. It's a pretty dated game these days, but I'd say it manages to meet the bare minimum threshold for playability by current standards.

The box art plays up the 3D view of the court with a dramatic behind-the-player perspective as the guy in the forecourt totally whiffs his return. Love-15, then?



FAMICOM PINBALL

Developer: HAL Labs
Publisher: Nintendo
Genre: Pinball
Catalog no.: HVC-PN

Next up from Nintendo came *Pinball*. Nintendo was not much for creative names for its real-world analogs, but what they lacked in inventive titles they made up for in quality. 1983's *Sega Flipper* for SG-1000 had brought a dramatic leap in quality and fidelity over previous console pinball sims, and this Famicom release constituted an equally significant step forward from *Sega Flipper*.

Pinball incorporated some obvious advances, like the multi-screen table design and the bonus game in which Mario controlled a *Breakout* paddle, but more essential to this cart's success was a subtle improvement: Actual ball physics. Where *Sega Flipper* made

use of pre-baked ball paths, *Pinball* (which was co-produced by HAL, whose star programmer Satoru Iwata was a bit of a genius with the Famicom's 6502 processor) featured more dynamic and reactive ball movement. This made for a more immersive, more varied take on pinball—a real masterpiece for the era.

You might not guess that from the disappointingly prosaic box art, which eschews the Famicom house illustration style for a literal interpretation of the in-game table. It even includes game pixel art, something Nintendo leaned on for U.S. NES boxes but largely avoided over in Japan.





SG-1000

PACHINKO II

Developer: Sega

Publisher: Sega

Genre: Gambling

Catalog no.: G-2019

Remember how Pachinko is the single rarest SG-1000 game? Its "sequel", *Pachinko II*, is far more common. It's hard to get a firm read on exact SG-1000 release dates, but some online accounts have *Pachinko II* launching mere weeks after the first game. Certainly its catalog number positions it as having launched shortly after the first. The prevailing Internet theory behind *Pachinko*'s rarity is that the game had a crippling bug and had to be recalled. That may be! I can't help but wonder if they shipped an incomplete version. *Pachinko II* includes the virtual table featured in the first game as well as two additional tables, both of which are far more elaborate than the original's setup. That seems like a lot of new content to create in a short period of time, but who knows? I'm just spitballing here. The new machines here have more interactive elements, which make it really easy to rack up huge scores. I've played each for about 20 minutes, by which I mean I held down a button and watched the balls fly and drop into targets through no skill of my own. So... pachinko, then.

FAMICOM
GUN

Developer: Nintendo

Publisher: Nintendo

Genre: Accessory

Catalog no.: HVC-005





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FAMICOM
**WILD
GUNMAN**

Developer: Nintendo
Publisher: Nintendo
Genre: Light Gun
Catalog no.: HVC-WG

Wild Gunman is probably best known for being a crucial (if anachronistic) piece of foreshadowing in the *Back to the Future* movies, but it was also Nintendo's very first console light gun release. It has quite an arcade legacy behind it... in Japan.

That's one of the reasons the Japanese version of the light gun took the form of

a six-shooter (called "Gun") rather than the sci-fi Zapper released in the U.S. The contrast between the realistic Gun accessory (see previous page) and the goofy cartoon Wild West outlaw on the *Wild Gunman* game box is one of the most delightful visual disconnects in the Famicom library.



FAMICOM DUCK HUNT

Developer: Nintendo
Publisher: Nintendo
Genre: Light Gun
Catalog no.: HVC-DH

Like *Wild Gunman*, *Duck Hunt* adapted a real-world shooting game into video form. But where *Wild Gunman* had been a huge arcade installation, *Duck Hunt* was originally a compact game designed for homes: A light-emitting gun with a projector that could detect the light gun's beam. Obviously, as a television-based creation, the Famicom version worked on totally different principles.

It also managed to pack a ton of personality into its limited premise by way of a hound who alternately celebrated the player's successes and sneered at their failures. *Duck Hunt* also included a skeet shooting mode that called back to an even older Nintendo light gun installation: The Laser Clay Shooting System. There's a lot of history in this cartridge! But for kids in the '80s, it was just a fun test of skill, punctuated by a snickering dog.



JOYSTICK SJ-200



SG-1000

SJ-200

Developer: Sega

Publisher: Sega

Genre: Accessory

Catalog no.: SJ-200

Compared to its contemporary rival, the Nintendo Famicom, Sega's SG-1000 resembled the older generation of consoles in a lot of ways. Its controller was a big part of that: A single-grip joystick designed to be held in one hand and manipulated with the other. With buttons flanking the grip, it had an ambidextrous nature. That's good! But the joystick itself was a bit loose and unresponsive, and the buttons were spongy and lacked convincing action. That's less good. Worse yet, the joystick was hardwired into the console. That means if the controller failed, the whole console was effectively busted.

Things would get better once the revised Mark II hardware shipped. In the meantime, there was... the SJ-200.

セガ・コンピュータ ビデオゲーム用

ナルトラルコントロール

SH-400



SG-1000

SH-400

Developer: Sega

Publisher: Sega

Genre: Accessory

Catalog no.: SH-400

Sega has always been synonymous with arcades, and the company leaned into that legacy when they moved into the home market. The SG-1000's library heavily emphasized arcade conversions, and Sega did their best to bring the arcade experience home, with peripherals like the SH-400. ("SH" meaning "Steering Handle.") Designed to work with Monaco GP and other first-party racers, the SH-400 couldn't reasonably replicate the arcade setup, where players controlled their car's acceleration with a gas pedal. Instead, that's where the "handle" comes into play.

The gearshift lever on the left is linked to "up" and "down" on the joystick (with the wheel itself linked to "left" and "right" inputs). In *Monaco GP*, at least, this produces the sensation of up- and downshifting to control the speed of your car—a pretty cool effect. The SH-400 doesn't translate nearly as well to games that map gas and brakes to buttons. The handle controller does have buttons, but holding a dash button to maintain speed while steering with the other hand just feels off. But for games it suits, it's a great controller.

FAMICOM GOLF

Developer: HAL Labs

Publisher: Nintendo

Genre: Sports

Catalog no.: HVC-GO

Another groundbreaking title from Nintendo. *Golf* may not look like much these days, but this was an impressive take on the sport in 1984. The Famicom was powerful enough to recreate the nuances of golf convincingly, yet not so powerful it could render the obligatory ugly pants. The secret of this golf simulation's appeal was in its swing meters. Nintendo crafted a simple yet flexible interface here, giving players remarkable control

over the behavior of their ball and their club selection, while still demanding an element of skill and timing. This would go on to be the basis of just about every golf sim that doesn't use a *Golden Tee* trackball.

I'm fond of this cover. It doesn't try to make the duffer here look heroic—he's clearly a doughy middle-ager, which is most likely the exact audience Nintendo was aiming for.



FAMICOM
**HOGAN'S
ALLEY**

Developer: Nintendo
Publisher: Nintendo
Genre: Light Gun
Catalog no.: HVC-HA

The third and, surprisingly, final light gun game Nintendo ever made for Famicom was the only one of the trio not based on a vintage toy or arcade installation. *Hogan's Alley* is a police shooting range simulation, loosely inspired by a real training location in the U.S. As in the real-world location, this game has you gunning down pop-up paper targets while trying not to accidentally shoot

non-criminals. There's also a mode where you shoot tin cans.

The Famicom box art is highly literal, featuring a drawing of the actual standard game mode. But since the in-game visuals focused on big, charmingly illustrated effigies of criminals and innocents, the box ends up demonstrating no lack of personality for all its lack of imagination.



FAMICOM
**DONKEY
KONG 3**

Developer: Nintendo
Publisher: Nintendo
Genre: Shooter
Catalog no.: HVC-DT

Donkey Kong 3 is such a weird game! Note that weird does not mean bad, though. It's pretty fun, as long as you can get past the fact that (1) it's a shooter, not a platformer, and (2) Mario is not in it. In a sense, Donkey Kong 3 harkens back to Nintendo's pre-DK lineup of Space Invaders arcade clones. The point is to shoot down bugs with a DDT pump, and to scare away Kong by blasting

his backside with bug poison. Again: Weird. But pretty fun despite that.

While I enjoy the "Nintendo house style" used for this box illustration, it really underscores how generic and unappealing protagonist Stanley the Bugman was—the character whose game killed the DK series for a full decade. That's some powerful bug spray.



ドンキーコングTM 3

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FAMICOM
NUTS & MILK

Developer: Hudson
Publisher: Hudson
Genre: Platformer
Catalog no.: HFC-NM

The very first Famicom third-party game—that is, a cartridge published by someone besides Nintendo themselves—was this: Hudson's *Nuts & Milk*. I suspect most Americans just know this as one of those random old ROMs with a zany title, but there's a lot of importance to this game. For starters, the fact that it was published by its own developer set Nintendo's Famicom apart from Sega's SG-1000, whose games were all published by Sega. Cutting other companies in on a bigger cut of the profits made Famicom a very inviting platform for game creators. It's

also noteworthy because *Nuts & Milk* initially debuted as a very different-looking computer game. Hudson rebuilt it in the style of Nintendo's own hits (think *Donkey Kong*), landing on a great strategy: Appealing to Famicom fans by calibrating content to their expectations. Hudson, of course, had already proven a valuable partner for Nintendo, programming the software for the Family BASIC add-on—a device *Nuts & Milk* was designed to promote, with its custom stage editor whose creations could only be saved to cassette through the Family BASIC system.



FAMICOM LODE RUNNER

Developer: Hudson
Publisher: Hudson
Genre: HFC-LR
Catalog no.: HVC-BA

Released either the same day as Nuts & Milk OR three days later (depending on which official source you believe), the Famicom version of Lode Runner gives you a pretty succinct statement of Nintendo vs. Sega when contrasted against the SG-1000 release. Where Sega's game was a stark, fairly faithful recreation of the Apple II original, Hudson's Famicom release is essentially a reinvention with slower action and more colorful, cartoonish graphics. Same basic game design (and even common stages), presented in very different

ways. As an early Hudson release, Lode Runner hits all the same marketing beats as Nuts & Milk: Colorful visuals and a presentation reminiscent of Nintendo's games, for a heavy overhaul of a PC game, with an edit mode containing hooks for the Famicom Data Recorder peripheral. The cover art is a lot of fun, but it also gives you a good sense of how this version approaches the Lode Runner property. Compare this loose, energetic illustration with Sega's more realistic painterly look, and that's the two versions in a nutshell.



FAMICOM GALAXIAN

Developer: Namco
Publisher: Namcot
Genre: Shooter
Catalog no.: NGX-4500

Hot on the heels of Hudson's releases, another Famicom third-party publisher made its debut in August 1984: Arcade powerhouse Namco, with a very faithful conversion of their 1979 hit *Galaxian*.

Galaxian's sequel *Galaga* had already appeared on Sega's SG-1000 the previous year. That might make this seem a laughable release for Famicom. But by the end of 1984, Namco will have published FOUR arcade

conversions on Famicom, compared to the one they released (by proxy!) through Sega. Here the Famicom's openness to third parties reveal its strength. There was simply more money to be made with Nintendo, who didn't restrict releases or require them to be sold under their label. Namco's home division, Namcot, did very well for itself on Famicom... right up until Nintendo started to impose their own limitations and demand a cut.



FAMICOM
**DEVIL
WORLD**

Developer: Nintendo
Publisher: Nintendo
Genre: Maze
Catalog no.: HVC-DD

Too spicy for America! Nintendo's Devil World was a rare Famicom release that made its way to Europe but not the U.S., for which we can thank the company's caution in navigating the religious mores of a nation ready for ANY excuse to get bent out of shape about Japanese imports. The box art makes it hard to say Nintendo was wrong. Not only does it depict Satan looming over the horizon, there's

also a green guy brandishing a radiant crucifix in the foreground. The game itself has no religious substance, but PTA types could be a bit hysterical in the '80s. In terms of the game itself, it's the closest Nintendo ever came to making a Pac-Man clone. With crucifixes in place of energizer pellets. Satan's role here is to direct a couple of minions who move a frame around the stage to box in the player.

デビルワールド™

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FAMICOM

4NIN UCHI MAHJONG

Developer: Hudson
Publisher: Nintendo
Genre: Gambling
Catalog no.: HVC-FJ

Even as third parties began to dip a tentative toe into the Famicom market, Nintendo continued publishing first-party titles. Well, technically, *4Nin Uchi Mahjong* is sort of third-party: Developed by Hudson, published by Nintendo. The title of this one ("4-Person Strike Mahjong") is a bit deceptive. Unlike Sega's *Home Mahjong*, this is not multiplayer; it's strictly single-player. The main difference between this and plain *Mah-Jong* for Famicom is the addition of up to three CPU opponents instead

of just one. So it's proper riichi mahjong, but with the twist that it's riichi mahjong played against robots.

With this release, Nintendo adopted a new packaging style. Gone were the tiny, colorful boxes that fit a matching cartridge snugly; only the carts would come in vibrant hues from here on out. Beginning here, first-party Famicom games up through the launch of the Disk System would come in larger boxes clad in a silver (or occasionally gold). Several older games would even be reissued in these boxes,

4人打ち麻雀

Nintendo FAMILICOM FAMILY

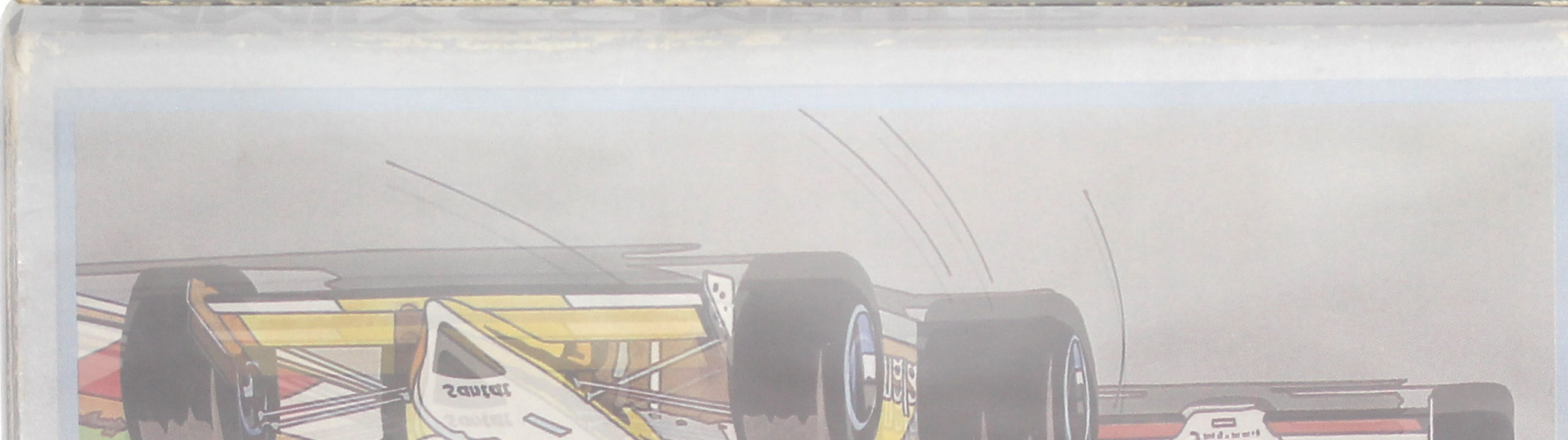
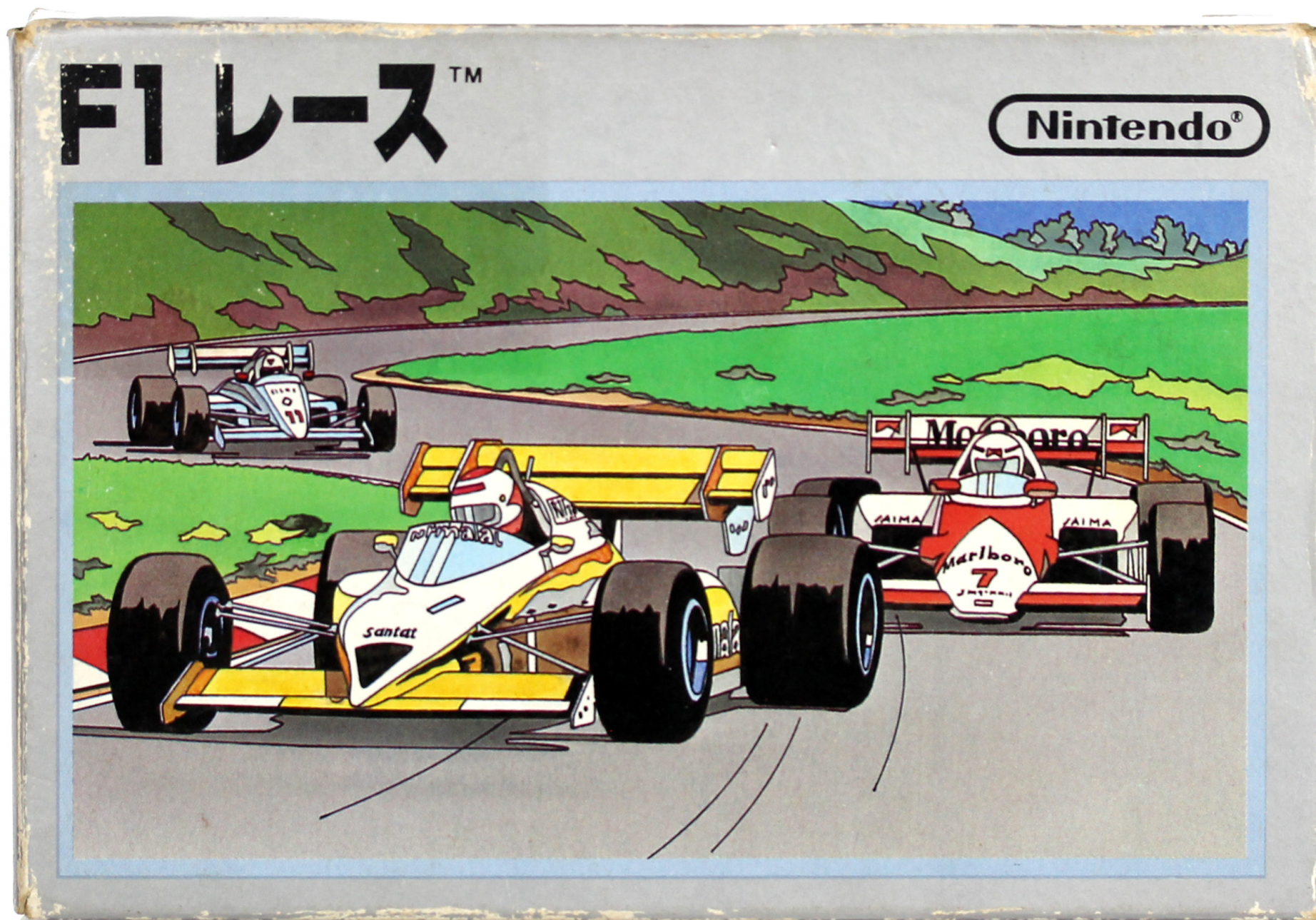


Famicom F1 RACE

Developer: HAL Labs
Publisher: Nintendo
Genre: Racing
Catalog no.: HVC-FR

Nintendo's *F1 Race*, co-developed by HAL Labs, brought console gaming closer to the golden ideal of Namco's arcade hit *Pole Position* than it had ever known before. Thanks to the technical prowess of HAL's programmers (read: most likely Satoru Iwata), *F1 Race* looks great. The game featured a behind-the-car camera perspective, fast forward-scrolling scenery, and even time-of-day shifts. It's a really impressive game for 1984.

While this one was never localized for the U.S., it very nearly saw release here under the name "Nintendo 500." Why did it ending up going unpublished in America? If I had to guess, I'd say it's because Americans collectively have almost zero interest in Formula One racing. Or maybe because the joke in the name would work better as "Nindy 500." Ah, everyone's a critic.

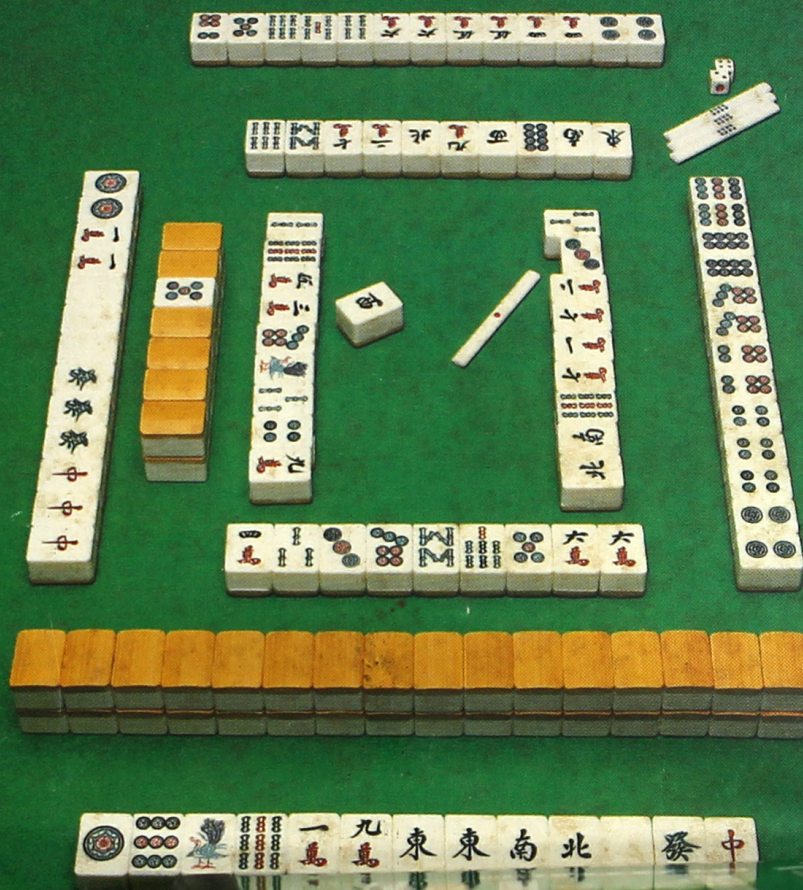


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SG-1000

HOME MAHJONG

Developer: Sega

Publisher: Sega

Genre: Gambling

Catalog no.: G-1030

Here's an interesting set: *Home Mahjong* for SG-1000. Admittedly, Mahjong may not be everyone's cup of tea, but scope that pack-in bonus accessory! Green plastic wings! See, the original Mahjong for the system was exclusively a solo-play kind of affair. However, *Home Mahjong* hewed a little more closely to the spirit of the real game by allowing two people to play. Not quite the proper four-seater, but at least it hints at the spirit of competition. So why the plastic? Well, obviously, you didn't want the other player seeing your tiles. The plastic is a blinder that attaches to the screen with an adhesive strip and flares outward, obscuring your row of tiles (which appear in a bottom corner of the screen) from your opponent. This was of course meant for use on the 12-inch sets common in homes in 1984, not huge modern HD TVs.

SG-1000

LODE RUNNER

Developer: Brøderbund

Publisher: Sega

Genre: Maze

Catalog no.: G-1031

Since Sega doesn't make the official release dates of its SG-1000 games public, it's impossible to say which came first: The Sega conversion of Doug Smith's Lode Runner, or the bestselling Hudson/Nintendo release. What you can say for certain, however, is that this port has much more in common aesthetically with the Apple II original than Hudson's. It features simple blue bricks and a tiny white stick figure running around at breakneck speeds, pumping the level full of makeshift pitfalls. I've always been a fan of this cheesy cover, and I've just realized why: The hero's pose reminds me of a Buck Rogers lunchbox I had as a kid. That stuff drills into your head like the Lode Runner digging a pitfall.



FAMICOM

PAC-MAN

Developer: Namco

Publisher: Namcot

Genre: Maze

Catalog no.: NPM-4500

The prospect of an “arcade-perfect” home conversion of a coin-op hit was a big selling point for a game system throughout the '80s. Sure, Namco's Pac-Man might have been a bit past its sell-by date four years after its original debut, but there was no denying its Famicom rendition looked and played way better than everything that had come before. Atari 2600 version? Forget about it. On Famicom, the only thing keeping Pac-Man from looking like the real thing was the horizontal screen orientation of home TVs. Vertical com-

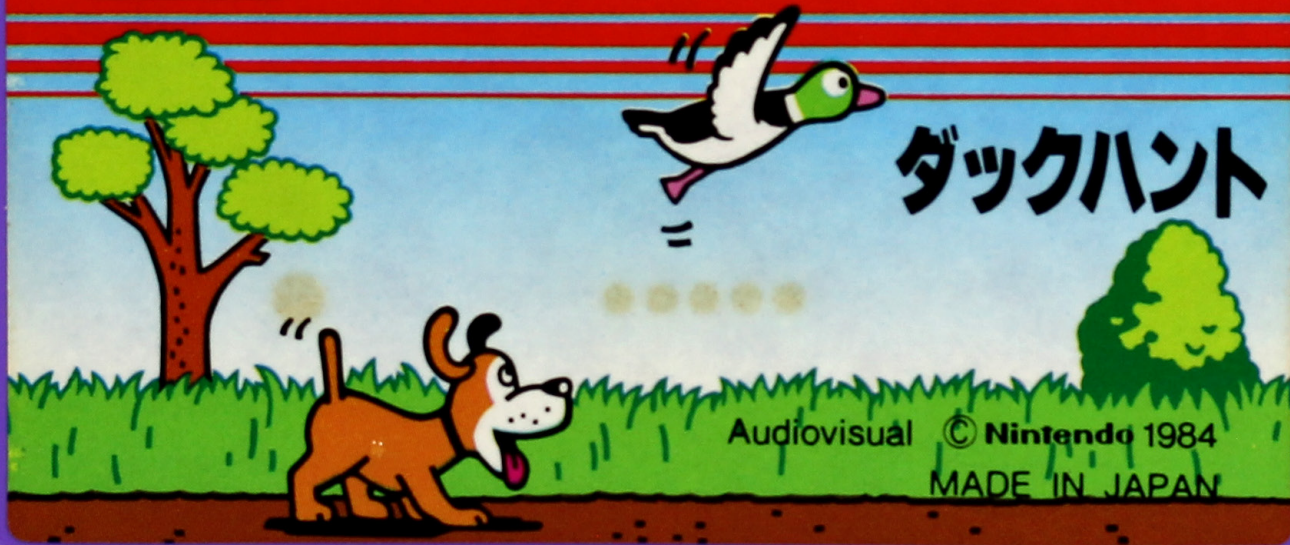
pression and imperfect colors aside, this was legit.

The artwork for this one is equally great. Instead of dramatizing the maze action like usual—emphasizing the heroic nature of the chase and the act of eating—the Famicom box gives players a little slice of life. Pac-Man skates along through town, happily listening to his Walkman as ghosts drift in the background. The silver corner cladding, previously seen on *Galaxian*, gives Namco's boxes a distinct look, and the number 02 drives home



HVC-DH

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