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The NEC TurboGrafx-16



by Lee H. Pappas with Andy Eddy

If you've been a regular reader of this magazine then you'll know this new product by its Japanese name: PC Engine. Due to be released in the United States sometime in August, with a retail price of \$199.99, the TurboGrafx-16 includes the same features that has made the PC Engine a winner in Japan.

At the time this article was written (mid-April) the TurboGrafx-16 had captured 50% of current video-game console sales in Japan, outselling all other systems. The total number of PC Engines sold through April was 1.5 million units, according to the NEC Corporation in Tokyo.

The TurboGrafx is part of a new wave in game machines, referred to as the 16-bit class. Also in this 16-bit world is the new Sega Genesis (see page 26), the awaited Super Famicom from Nintendo, a rumored game system from Atari (likely based on their ST computer) and a new entry, the Konix Multi System, from England.

With a processor (the brain of the game machine) running four times faster than the one in Nintendo's NES, the TurboGrafx-16 can move graphic images on the screen up to eight times faster, with nearly ten times as many colors as the NES; the perceived resolution (clarity of pictures) is much greater. The TurboGrafx uses an 8-bit chip, but with 16-bit graphics. NEC sites the greater number of colors as one of the TurboGrafx's greatest assets.

The NEC also boasts stereo output with far superior sound-effect and music-generating capabilities. The difference between sound and music on the TurboGrafx, compared to the current game systems is like listening to an old 78 record, then hearing a compact disc.

And speaking of compact discs, as we reported in our May issue, NEC is planning to release their CD-ROM player soon after the rollout of the TurboGrafx-16. Though the list price of \$399 may seem high, keep in mind that this system will also play 3-inch or 5-inch CDs through your television or stereo system. And as we also mentioned it comes with the CD-ROM system card that gives this player features found only on the most expensive compact disc players.

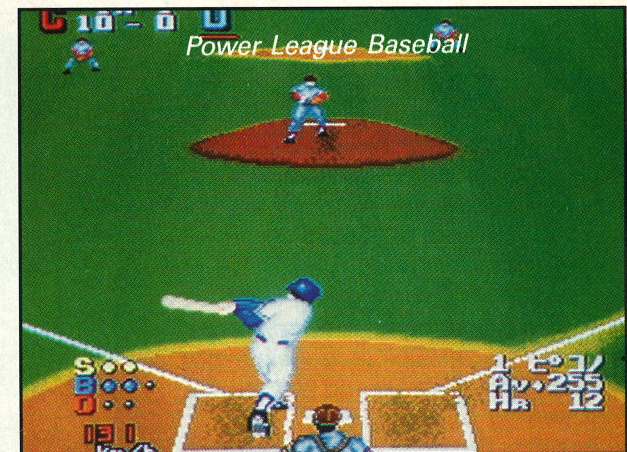
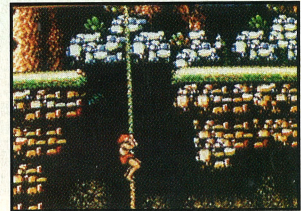
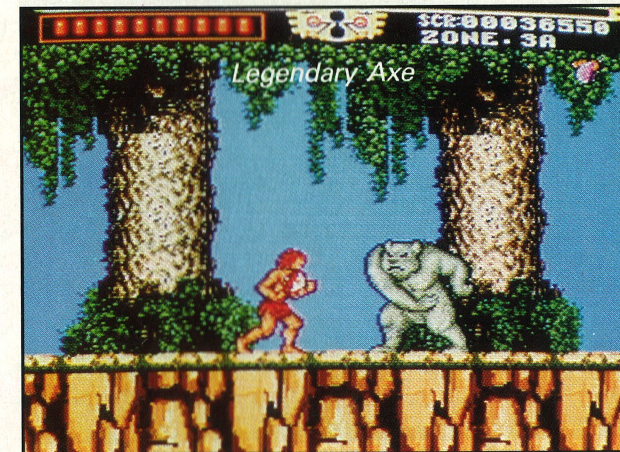
This CD player also plays a new format of compact disc using its built-in CD-G decoder. These new CDs still play music, but they can also display still pictures and graphics on your screen. This is a feature that few current CD players are equipped with.

The \$399 price includes the TurboGrafx-CD player, system card, docking station with additional computer memory and a carrying case that can hold CD cartridges, power supply, controller and, of course, the TurboGrafx and CD player.

The TurboGrafx-16 game system

multiplayer games), and the TurboBooster, which converts the game system's output into separate audio and video signals. A deluxe table-top controller called the TurboStick, similar to the NES Advantage, will be introduced as well.

Also to be packaged with the TurboGrafx-16 is *Keith Courage in Alpha Zones*. In this appealing game, you control a young character on the screen as he plays in the countryside. At certain stages he is zipped away by a rainbow beam, transformed into a powerful robot and placed in an evil



comes packed with the TurboPad. This controller is your standard hand-held game pad made popular as standard equipment with the NES and SMS game consoles. But this version comes with a pair of three-position switches. These switches let you adjust the speed of fire buttons, giving two rates of auto-firing in addition to manual blasting.

Optional accessories for the game system include the TurboTap, an adapter that allows up to five controllers to be plugged into the game system (for

underground world to battle his way back into the normal world. *Keith Courage* should appeal to most game players.

When asked to compare the TurboGrafx-16 with another game system, we can't. It's as far above the NES in graphics and sound as the NES was above the Atari 2600. While Nintendo's stronghold is quality games with lasting value, the TurboGrafx continues in the same mold. Indeed the names of many of the game companies also appear on PC Engine products in Japan.



**TURBO
16
GRAFX**

adventure. At press time the Americanized title of this game was not yet decided on. This is one of the most humorous games we've ever played, and we hope the U.S. version comes close.

Legendary Axe is one of the better games on the TurboGrafx-16. The graphics are true arcade-quality, and the game play is outstanding. You take on the role of a skilled ax warrior, who must make his way through multiple levels to face the evil Flare. This is one game every TurboGrafx owner should have. It's also an excellent showcase of the game system's capabilities.

At the time this was written, four golf games were available in Japan: *Power Golf*, *Winning Shot*, *Golf Boys* and *Naxat Open*. NEC was just finishing the selection of what game would be released here, and was leaning toward *Power Golf*. All of these games make good use of the game system's graphic abilities, though they differ on play implementation.

Also available in Japan are two baseball games: *Power League* and *World Stadium*. NEC, opting for high realism, chose *Power League* (which

NEC is working on getting new companies into the development fold for the TurboGrafx. We've received confirmation that Cinemaware and ICOM Simulations are creating software for the machine. Cinemaware has also just signed with a Japanese publisher to release a CD-based version of one of their most popular titles. ICOM is a lesser-known company, but their software is also popular. For example, they're the group responsible for *Shadowgate*, *Deja Vu* and *Uninitiated*, released by Mindscape.

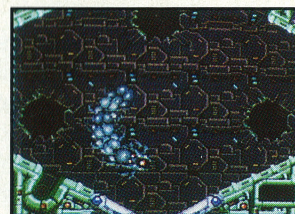
At press time NEC was planning to establish the TurboGrafx-16 with at least ten titles. Here is a description of what is confirmed to be released.

Alien Crush is a spectacular two-level pinball game with detailed alien-type backgrounds. Several bonus screens add to the sophistication, and the music in the background is equally impressive. I've never been into video pinball very much until now.

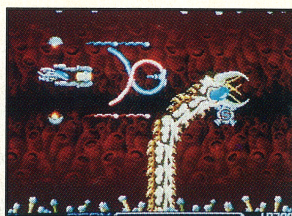
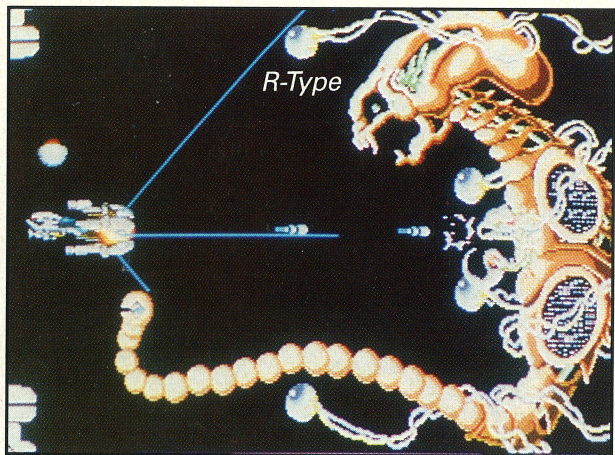
Kato & Ken are two popular Japanese characters who romp their way through this detailed graphic arcade/



Alien Crush



Vigilante



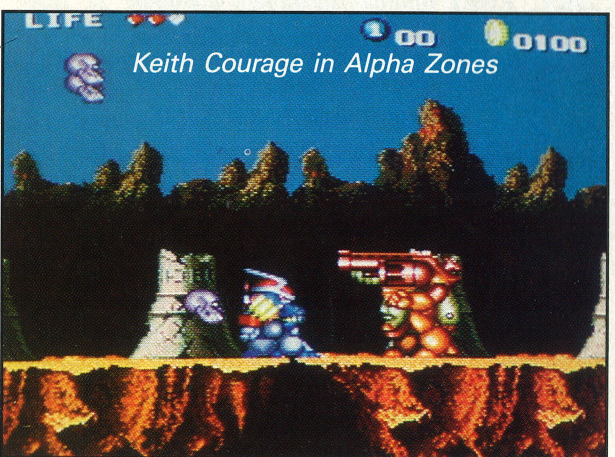
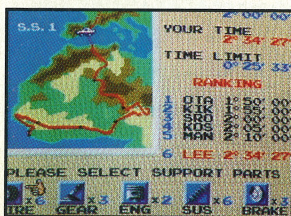
not just better graphics or improved sound and music, but the actual game play is enhanced tenfold. There is crisper detail and minimal flickering. In Japan this game was released on two cartridges because all eight levels couldn't fit on one game card. At press time NEC told us the new, increased memory cartridges would now hold the entire game and may be released in that form to U.S. consumers. If you are into space shoot 'em ups, this one's for you.

Victory Run is a high-speed driving game, similar to Sega's *Out Run*, that simulates the "Paris to Dakar Road Race." You race through Europe and Africa in your bright red sports car, negotiating turns and small hills, while avoiding other vehicles. Each country features different road characteristics and scenery, as well as night-driving situations.

Vigilante follows in the footsteps of the popular Kung-Fu games. The goal is to take it upon yourself to rescue a hostage from a group of evil thugs. Along the way you can pick up useful weapons to aid your mission. The graphics are detailed, though the game tends to be repetitive.

What really impresses us, however, of the 35 cartridges for the TurboGrafx-16 we now own, is the consistently high quality of the games. NEC is only looking to bring over to the U.S. the best of the best.

Frankly, we can't wait! 🗿



will carry the name *World-Class Baseball*) to release in the U.S., and we agree with them. This game allows two players to compete against one another, or one against the computer. You get the best seats in the stadium, behind the catcher, or an overhead view. Digitized voices add to the realism, along with realistic scoreboard images and player movement. On this game and golf, when a ball is hit high it "comes

toward the player" and looks as though it is ready to break through the screen. I've caught myself ducking a few times!

One of the best arcade-to-home translations we have ever seen comes in the form of *R-Type*. If you want to see how good this game system is over the current game machines, compare *R-Type* on the Sega Master System with the TurboGrafx version. It's

