LATE-BREAKING NEWS!
Electronic Arts to Develop NES and Genesis Games

MAPS AND TIPS:
Sunsoft's
Batman, Part II
Sega's
Alex Kidd in the Enchanted Castle

ABRACADABRA!
OUT OF THE SHRINKING MACHINE!
NEC SHOWS OFF THE TURBOGRAFX-16 PORTABLE!
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PORTABLE INTENSITY!
Comprehensive Game Boy Buyer's Guide
Gaming on the Go: A New Column
THE TurboGrafx-16 GOES INTO THE SHRINKING MACHINE

by Andy Eddy

VG&CE • JUly 1990

VG&CE first reported on the possibility of a TurboGrafx-16 portable in the News Bits section of our February 1990 issue, then showed an artist’s representation of the unit in our April 1990 News Bits. Unfortunately, little news has since come out of Japan, where the machine was being developed, about this much anticipated game player.

As this issue was going to press, VG&CE acquired more data and pictures on the “Game Tank,” the working title for the TG-16 portable. It was scheduled to be an exhibit at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago (June 2-5, 1990), which leads us to think—and the reliable sources of our grapevine back this up—that the portable will be ready for introduction in America this Christmas. VG&CE will update you as to when the TG-16 portable, as yet unnamed, is firmly announced for purchase in this country.

Specifications & Full Details

As we’ve already noted in our previous coverage, the TurboGrafx-16 portable (we’ll refer to it as the TGP) will play all existing TurboChip games, which is its obvious advantage. Unlike the Lynx and Game Boy, NEC won’t have to develop and produce another software line to support the portable.

That’s the strength of the TGP. It’s identical to the TG-16 from a hardware standpoint. Lots of readers call us and ask us about specifications, mainly resolution, and want to know which system is strongest. These days it’s not so much resolution that’s important anymore, but instead the number of colors that can be displayed simultaneously. In the TG-16’s case—and therefore the TGP—the spec report that up to sixteen 16-color palettes can be put on-screen simultaneously, which means 256 different colors out of a possible 512.

Colors and resolution aren’t the only things that the TGP will borrow from its big brother. It will also use the same processor, handle 1.5 MIPS (million instructions per second) and allow up to 64 spinos per second with up to 16 colors per sprite.

Similar to the Game Boy and Lynx, which were constructed with built-in networking capabilities for multiplayer games, the TGP will also feature a communication-link cable that will allow two-player games. For this reason, NEC will start developing games that take advantage of this capability, rather than offering TGP-specific software. Rumor has it that the first game, the communication link will be tested on a head-to-head air hockey contest, with each person seeing his perspective of the action on each TGP.

The TGP, much like the Game Boy in size and shape, is equipped with all the necessities—bells and whistles too. On the lower half of the face, just under the screen, are two dials, the controls. Not only does it have the standard directional rosette and buttons for SELECT, RUN “P”, and “T” functions (as on the TurboGrafx controller), it’s also been furnished with “turbo” switches to individually alter the rate of scrolling by each “T” and “P” button. Additionally, the TGP will have a stereo-head-phone jack for personal game play.

Thanks to the diminutive size of the TurboChip, the “cartridges” that hold the game information, the TGP doesn’t need a large cartridge slot. As a result, the top rear of the unit, there is a small opening where the TurboChip fits snugly. In contrast, talk of an NES or SMS portable eventually leads to discussions of size and how much bigger a portable game machine would need to be built in order to handle those bulky cartridges—not a concern with the TGP.

What would a portable be without battery power? The TGP requires six “AA” batteries to run, which NFC figures will last a minimum of 3-5 hours during normal usage. The plan is also to offer a rechargeable battery pack, an AC adapter and a car cigarette-lighter cable, but it hasn’t been decided at press time which of these items would be optional and which would be part of the TGP package.

As we spent time with a prototype of the TGP at the RXD laboratories in Japan, we were amazed at how crisp the picture was. It was so clear, we could easily read the numbers and characters on the power-up screen as we played Blazing Lasers. Similarly, the charts and maps of Military Madness were crystal clear. The credit for the high-quality visuals goes to the type of screen used; an MIM Active Matrix LCD (liquid crystal) display. “Active Matrix” means that each dot on the screen has a separate transistor controlling it, so the screen information can be updated quickly without seeming or blurring. Unfortunately, using active-matrix screens is costly and can slow down production. Since NEC’s TGP display manufacturer, rejects any screen with even one nonworking dot.

TABLE OF SPECIFICATIONS

| Base Unit: | 185mm x 110mm x 46mm (approx. 7 1/2” x 4 1/2” x 1 3/4”) |
| Screen: | 39.7mm x 51.1mm (approx. 1 1/2” x 2”) |
| Tuner: | 11.1mm x 53.9mm x 40mm (approx. 4 1/2” x 2 1/2” x 1 3/4”) |
| Weight: | 410 grams (approx. 14 1/2 ounces) |
| Dimensions: | 322 x 218 dots (73,234 dots total) |
| Dimensions: | 130 grams (approx. 3 1/4 ounces) |

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The left-side view of the TurboGrafx-16 portable keeps most of the controls close at hand (from left to right): a jack for off-board DC power, the stereo-headphone jack, a volume knob, a two-position brightness switch and a variable contrast knob.

Speaking of the display, the resolution of the TGP is 312 x 238 for a total of 74,256 dots. This makes for not only a good picture for videogame playing, but also for TV watching. And the TGP won't be limited by available lighting, as is the case with Nintendo's Game Boy. The TGP will be equipped with a florescent back-light with a life span of approximately 4,000 hours of use.

**It's Not Just for Games**

Did we say TV watching? Well, as we noted in the February issue, NEC is also planning to produce an optional tuner (with a rumored target price of $79) that can couple to the TGP, turning it into a fully functional UHF/VHF television. This tuner, though equipped with a telescoping rod antenna, will also have a separate antenna input.

The coup de grace is that the tuner will also feature audio- and video-input jacks. This will allow the TGP to operate as a monitor for a camcorder, VCR or other video device. As with the TG-16—which NEC is positioning as a home-entertainment device thanks to its CD unit—the TGP is more than just a video-game system. What will NEC think of next?

### Stocking Stuffer

Unfortunately, that's all the information we have—though it makes for a nice dream machine. It might be pushing it to expect that NEC could bring the TGP out by Christmas 1990, but knowing the determination that the company has displayed so far and its Japanese roots, it's even money that you could be holding a TGP in your hands by New Year's Day 1991.

My palms are getting sweaty just thinking about it.

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The compact size of the TurboChips makes it easy for NEC to work a portable around them. A slot at the top rear of the TGP holds the cartridge (in this case, the Japanese version of Bonk's Adventure); the door at the bottom opens to house six "AA" batteries.

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You Could Win a TurboGrafx-16 System!

VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTE R ENTERTAINMENT and NEC Technologies have joined together to offer our lucky readers the chance to win a TurboGrafx-16. The winner, picked at random, will receive a brand-new TG-16 game system, a TurboStick controller and assorted TurboChip games.

To enter, just send your name, address and phone number on a postcard to

**VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT**
9171 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300
Beverly Hills, CA 90210
Attn: TG-16 Contest

All entries must be received by August 31, 1990, and the winner will be announced in the December issue of VG&CE. Best of luck to you!