GAME BOY

THE BOX ART COLLECTION

ゲームボーイボックスアートコレクション

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Preface

Whether you're an old-school Game Boy fan or discovering the wonders of Nintendo's million-selling portable system for the very first time, we'd like to welcome you to *Game Boy: The Box Art Collection*, a celebration of some of the finest cover artwork for the monochrome marvel that kick-started the handheld games industry.

Despite the fact that we live in a world where the average smartphone makes the Game Boy look like an abacus, in purely technical terms, Nintendo's trailblazing handheld still manages to capture the attention of gamers all over the world – and it's easy to see why. It's home to some of the most famous names in the video game business, including Mario, Zelda, Donkey Kong, Metroid, Mega Man, Castlevania, Gradius and Final Fantasy, and many of its best titles hold up surprisingly well by modern standards; with technology this basic, developers of the period needed to make sure the gameplay was compelling and addictive. On top of this, a passionate and dedicated modding scene has grown up around the console in recent years, with fans enhancing and upgrading aspects of the system – such as its display and audio capabilities – to bring it up to modern gaming standards.

Those of you who have followed our previous work here at Bitmap Books will be aware that we published *Super Famicom: The Box Art Collection* a few years back; the tome you're holding in your hands right now should be considered a successor to that work, and it has the same basic aims and objectives: to honour some of the best Game Boy cover artwork as well as give the reader a little insight and background on each game.

The most notable difference this time around is that we're not limiting ourselves solely to Japanese releases; *Game Boy: The Box Art Collection* also includes North American and European cover artwork, giving you a truly global sense of what the Game Boy library was all about.

We've worked closely with some of the world's most renowned Game Boy collectors to pull together a varied selection of titles which span both Western and Eastern tastes. For this reason, you'll see that some games are displayed as produced for North American and European gamers, while others are shown with Japanese covers; we've tried to strike the right balance between the two, and we hope you enjoy seeing some familiar cover imagery rubbing shoulders with artwork you might know from the dim and distant past, but have never seen presented this way before.

The other notable addition is the inclusion of screenshots on each page, giving you the opportunity to see what the games in question actually look like. As if that wasn't enough, we've gone to the extra effort of professionally translating the titles of Japanese games into Romaji – something which, to our knowledge, has never been properly attempted before in any English-language book.

We sincerely hope you enjoy our tribute to one of the most iconic gaming systems of all time.

*Bitmap Books, 2020*

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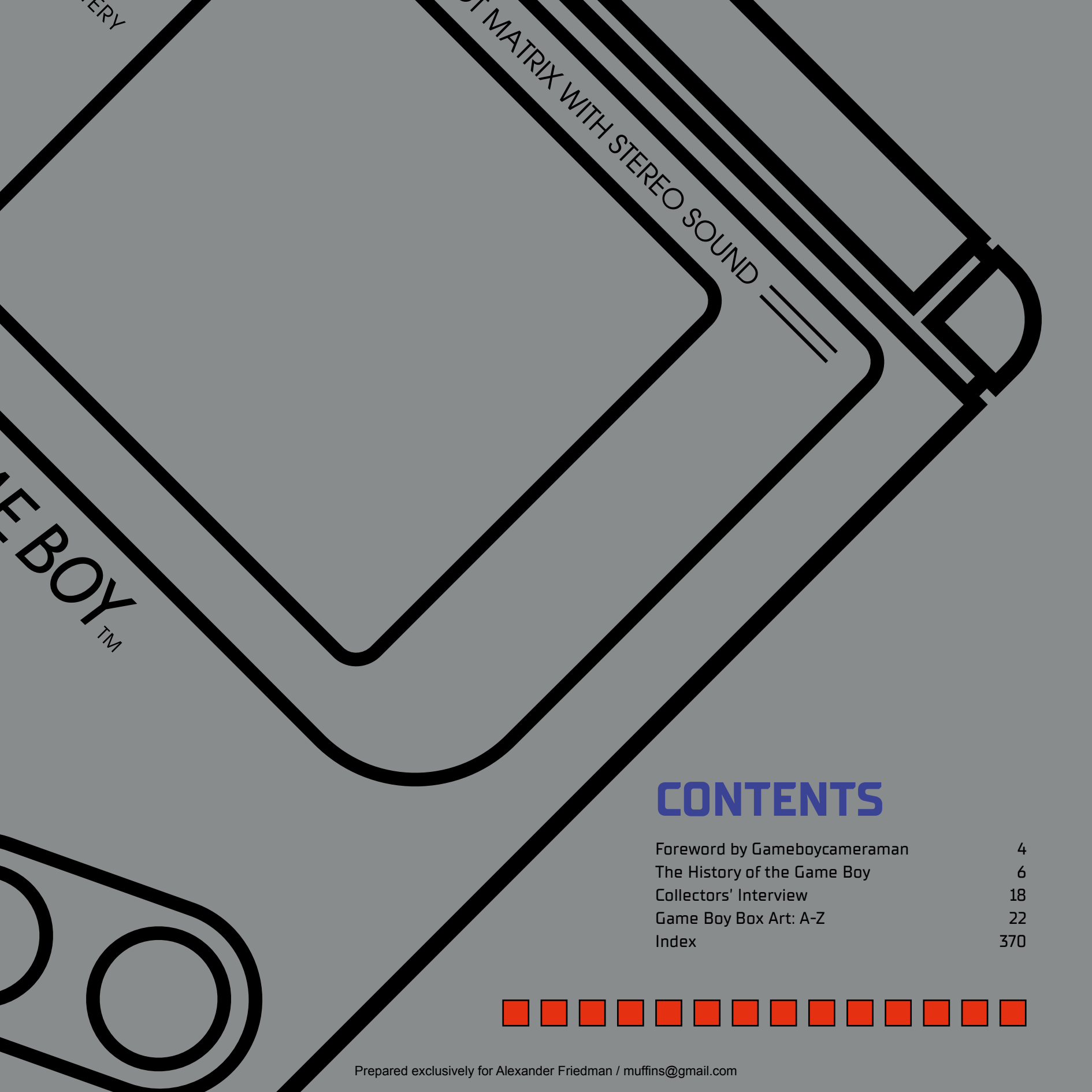Vincent Haucourt
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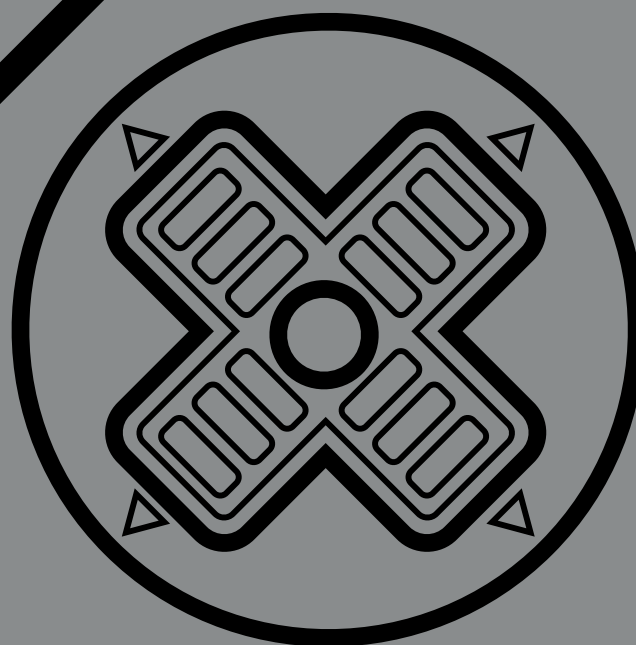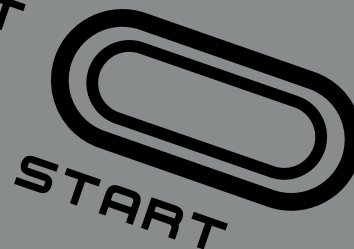
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Foreword by Gameboycameraman

As a kid growing up in the '90s, I was destined to play with a Game Boy. The first one I got my hands on belonged to my sister, but it felt just like my own. I remember her saving money for many months in order to buy it, but in the end I was the one playing with it the most. It was the original DMG–01 model and it provided as much fun for me as it did my sister and mother, who very quickly became addicted to *Tetris*. I remember my wild games of *Wario Land*, *Mystic Quest* and *Link's Awakening* – just three of the many, many amazing games from the Game Boy's massive catalogue.

I used to take it with me everywhere I went: to school, on holiday, to my friend's house – everywhere! I loved trading games with my cousins, and it was always the same way: we looked at the sticker on the front of the cartridge to see what feelings it evoked. These illustrations were the only indicators we had to gauge what the games were about; they were our passports to future adventures, and (almost) never disappointed. Each image was the first glimpse of a new and fantastic world, a little capsule of fun promising hours and hours of '90s craziness and colourful characters. Today, when I get my hands on a game I've never seen before, I like to go through that experience again, imagining what the game would be like just from looking at the front sticker.

The Game Boy will always be special to me, not just because I still use it, but because it's a console that allowed me to experience amazing stories at any point of the day. It was always there for me, and the time it shone the most was at night. I'll never forget the nights I went camping, struggling in the dark to catch a ray of light just to see the screen and make it through that annoying pit in *Gargoyle's Quest*, or when I was sat in a car with my parents and sister driving all night through France. I had to coordinate my jumps in *Super Mario Land* with the lights on the highway – needless to say, I lost many lives on the way! But all of this extra effort was worth it; the thrill was not just in the game itself, but the all-encompassing experience.

Moreover, the Game Boy was not just made for playing games, it was also a platform for quirky and largely unexpected experiences. From the WorkBoy to the Game Boy Sonar, the platform is home to many niche gadgets.

But if I have to remember only one, it would be the Game Boy Camera. Released in 1998, it was too expensive for the 11–year-old boy I was back then, but fortunately, in 2013, it was much cheaper to buy one. One day, while I was scavenging in a Parisian flea-market, I found a guy in his 40s selling one for a single Euro. I didn't try to barter – I just grabbed it and started taking pictures. I'd just received my masters in photography and wanted to start a new project – this was it.

It took me about two years to really formulate the seed of my project and make something of it. With the support of my fiancée Sroop and my friend François, I started to tell my stories, from London, Paris, New York and Tokyo, to Hyrule, New Donk City and the planets of No Man's Sky. This ongoing project is called @gameboycameraman in tribute to this amazing accessory. The Game Boy Camera always gets this "wow!" response the first time we use it; even looking back in 2020, people are impressed and surprised that something like this ever existed. Their reaction doesn't surprise me, because the Game Boy Camera comes from Nintendo's DNA. Within its limitations

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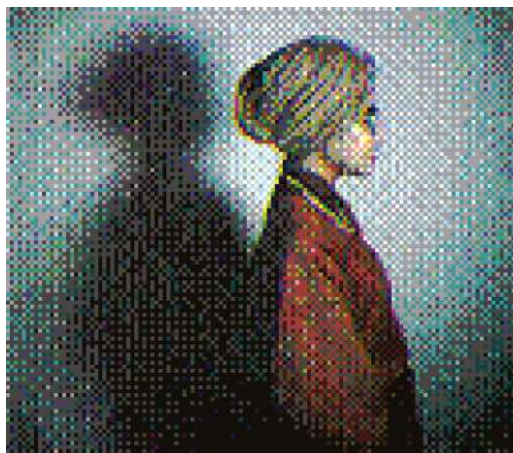
lives the essence of creativity and surprise – and that's what pushed me to use it. The Game Boy Camera is a very low-resolution device containing just 14,336 pixels, whereas your smartphone today probably has over ten million. But this is what makes it so unique. It filters the world, showing us a pre-digital era version, before digital took over our lives and became mainstream. You can see a mix of '80s science fiction, raw and seemingly emotionless CCTV-like imagery, and, naturally, a hint of video game nostalgia. When I take pictures of people in the street, they remind me of *Prince of Persia* or *Another World*, and that's one of the things I love about it. I like to blur the lines of what's real and surreal to the point where they're no longer distinguishable, trying to make you believe that you are Link, Aloy, Nathan Drake or Samus. I try to show that we all are the heroes of our own games.

*Jean-Jacques Calbayrac
(aka Gameboycameraman)
April 2020*

Below: A selection of images by Gameboycameraman, all taken using the Game Boy Camera peripheral.
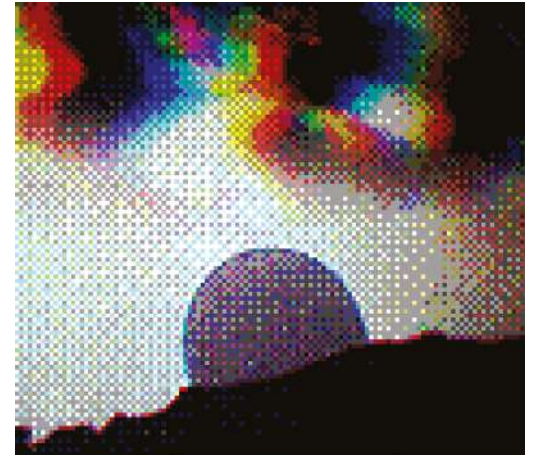
The History of the Game Boy

There's a famous story – which could perhaps be anecdotal – that when a leading Sony executive first laid eyes on the Nintendo Game Boy he couldn't contain his fury, claiming that the diminutive games console should, by rights, have come from Sony's R&D labs, given the company's stranglehold on the portable audio industry via its iconic Walkman range. Whether or not the tale is true or merely a fabrication to prove a point is almost moot; it perfectly illustrates just how significant a product the Game Boy was – and still is – in the history of portable consumer electronics.

The origins of the Game Boy go right back to the late '70s, when Nintendo was taking its first tentative steps into the world of video games with a series of home systems and a selection of original arcade titles, most of which were moderate successes rather than runaway commercial hits. While the Kyoto company was desperately searching for that elusive coin-op smash that would deliver a *Space Invaders*-sized revenue stream, an engineer by the name of Gunpei Yokoi found himself travelling on a Shinkansen bullet train packed with bored salarymen. One such businessman was absent-mindedly stabbing at the keys of a pocket LCD calculator, which gave Yokoi a brainwave – what if this cheap and readily-available technology could be adapted for overt entertainment purposes?

Yokoi's illustrious history with Nintendo was peppered with similarly notable moments of inspiration. Hired in 1965 as a lowly maintenance engineer tasked with ensuring the smooth performance of the company's Hanafuda playing card assembly line, he would create little toys to amuse himself during periods of downtime. One such device was an extending mechanical grabber, which was spotted on the factory floor by none other than Nintendo president Hiroshi Yamauchi. Yamauchi immediately saw the commercial potential of such a device and instructed Yokoi to create a version suitable for mass-production. Released in 1966, the Ultra Hand sold over a million units in Japan and turned Yokoi into one of the company's brightest prospects. His imagination was permitted to run riot, and he came up with a host of new toys and gadgets – including the Ten Billion Barrel puzzle, the Ultra Machine baseball toy and even a 'Love Tester', which was designed to show how compatible two people were to one another.

When Nintendo transitioned its business into the world of video games, Yokoi saw the medium as the next logical step in his career as a toymaker and was one of the company's first game designers, alongside Genyo Takeda, who is credited with creating Nintendo's first original arcade game, 1975's *EVR Race*. However, Nintendo would not taste true success in the burgeoning games industry until Yokoi produced his Game & Watch line, inspired by that aforementioned idle businessman on the train to work. Yokoi's genius lay in the appropriation of mature technology – in this case, LCD screens powered by tiny watch batteries – and applying them in a totally unique manner. This philosophy would later be referred to as "lateral thinking with withered technology" – the act of taking cheap and common tech and using it in hitherto unforeseen ways. Thanks to the fact that Japanese companies Sharp and Casio were pouring resources into the pocket calculator market at the dawn of the '80s, the materials and technology Yokoi needed to make his Game & Watch concept a reality were cheap to buy and easy to mass-produce.

The Game & Watch range consisted of a series of pocket-friendly LCD-based games complete with a digital clock and alarm function – key selling points when you consider that low-cost LCD wristwatches were only just hitting the market, and were still highly desirable items for young children. The games were incredibly simplistic, but had just enough appeal to hook the player, and the range quickly became a worldwide commercial success for Nintendo, eventually selling over 43 million units globally. Despite the crude technology involved, the Game & Watch line laid down many of gaming's most common foundations; the D-Pad controller, for example, was developed by Yokoi for the Game & Watch adaptation of Nintendo's 1981 arcade title *Donkey Kong* – which would prove to be the company's breakout hit – and has been used on pretty much every games system since. Meanwhile, the Game & Watch Dual-Screen range would inspire the Nintendo DS and Nintendo 3DS handhelds decades later.

In 1983, Nintendo launched the Famicom home console in its native Japan, which would be better known as the Nintendo Entertainment System elsewhere in the world. The Famicom was to become even more influential than the Game & Watch line, siring a lineage of domestic consoles including the SNES, N64, GameCube, Wii and – most recently of all – Switch. With Nintendo's domination of the global video game market well underway as the decade drew to its conclusion, the decision was made to create a successor to the Game & Watch line that would benefit from the valuable lessons learned from the NES.

It would have been tempting to simply take the most potent technology available and apply it to the handheld sector, but Yokoi – keenly aware of the success Nintendo had enjoyed with the humble Game & Watch line – was savvy enough to realise that this approach simply wouldn't work with a portable device that was reliant on battery power. Instead, he fell back on his "lateral thinking with withered technology" philosophy, opting to use a 160 × 144 unlit monochrome dot-matrix LCD screen which would make only modest demands on the four AA batteries required to power the system.

With its boxy beige casing and iconic A and B buttons, the Game Boy DMG-01 is one of the most recognisable consoles of all time.

"The technology was there to do colour," he explained, in a 1997 interview. *"But I wanted us to do black and white anyway. If you draw two circles on a blackboard and say 'that's a snowman', everyone who sees it will sense the white colour of the snow, and everyone will intuitively recognise it's a snowman. That's because we live in a world of information, and when you see that drawing of the snowman, the mind knows this colour has to be white. I became confident of this after I tried playing some Famicom games on a black and white TV. Once you start playing the game, the colours aren't important. You get drawn, mentally, into the world of the game."*

Working alongside his six-man team at Nintendo R&D1, Yokoi and hardware lead Satoru Okada – who would also serve as a director on notable titles such as *Super Mario Land* and *Solar Striker* – decided to use a custom-made 8-bit Sharp LR35902 CPU (a hybrid of the Intel 8080 and the Zilog Z80) clocked at 4.19MHz to power the system. This supplied enough horsepower to produce games that were surprisingly close to those seen on the NES, at least in terms of pure gameplay, and the adoption of the two-button setup – twinned with Start and Select buttons – ensured that the controls were instantly familiar to existing Nintendo fans. Hirokazu 'Hip' Tanaka developed the console's sound hardware and its link cable capability, which allowed players to connect consoles via a cable for two-player games. This small team innately understood what would make a solid portable gaming platform, and that was a key reason for the console's success in Yokoi's eyes. *"Hardware design isn't about making the most powerful thing you can,"* he said in 1997. *"Today, most hardware design is left to other companies, but when you make hardware without taking into account the needs of the eventual software developers, you end up with bloated hardware full of pointless excess. From the outset, one must consider design from both a hardware and software perspective."* Ironically, the initial reception within Nintendo to this new system was lukewarm; the console's 'Dot Matrix Game' or 'DMG' codename was apparently twisted into the derogatory nickname 'DameGame' ('dame' being a Japanese term for 'lame'). Given this intense scepticism, Yokoi's high standing within the company became a key factor in getting the project into production. *"It was difficult to get Nintendo to understand,"* he admitted years later. *"Partly, I used my status in the company to push them into it."*

It's easy to see why, on initial inspection, the Game Boy looked like such a lame duck, even in 1989. Atari was preparing to launch its own handheld in the form of the Lynx, which had been in development since 1986 and boasted a full-colour, backlit LCD screen; at first glance, Atari's console was the clear winner, but Yokoi's approach proved its worth.

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The ability to insert different games made the Game Boy unique when set against other LCD-based systems of the period.

While the Game Boy could last for 15 hours on four AA batteries, the Lynx ate through six in the space of around four to five hours; it was also a larger and bulkier machine. With portability being the key selling point of a handheld console, Yokoi's choice of less-demanding technology proved to be the correct one. *"After we released the Game Boy, one of my staff came to me with a grim expression on his face,"* Yokoi remembered in his 1997 interview. The staffer informed him that a new handheld had hit the market that was similar to the Game Boy. *"The first thing I asked was: 'Is it a colour screen, or monochrome?' He told me it was colour, and I reassured him, 'Then we're fine.'"*

While Nintendo's 8−bit Famicom was given a different outer shell for the Western market when it was launched as the NES, the Game Boy looked the same all over the world – and also lacked any kind of region-locking, so game cartridges worked on any Game Boy

console, irrespective of where in the world they were purchased. Unlike the Famicom, this was a console with a global outlook that arguably mixed the best of Eastern and Western philosophy. *"The core hardware and operating system were designed in Japan, [and] the industrial design was tuned in the U.S. by the Redmond ID team at Nintendo of America,"* explains Tim Girvin, whose design agency had worked closely with Nintendo on the NES and was responsible for shaping the look of the Game Boy's packaging.

Nintendo's success with the NES stood it in good stead when it came to the launch of its handheld console, but it would be unfair to overlook the contribution made by what many consider to be the Game Boy's most notable title: Alexey Pajitnov's seminal puzzler, *Tetris*. Arguably the most perfect pack-in title of all time, *Tetris* – which had already become a sleeper hit on home computers in the '80s – was the ideal accompaniment to a portable

system. The story of how Nintendo came to acquire the console rights to the game has become the stuff of legend; developed by Soviet Academy of Sciences researchers Pajitnov, Dmitry Pavlovsky and Vadim Gerasimov in 1984, *Tetris* found its way out of communist Russia via businessman Robert Stein, and eventually into the hands of British publisher Mirrorsoft, which incorrectly believed that it had the right to sub-license both the home computer and console variants of the game. When Japan-based publisher and developer Henk Rogers – then most famous for his RPG *The Black Onyx* – spied the game at the Las Vegas Consumer Electronics Show on the stand of Mirrorsoft's North American subsidiary Spectrum HoloByte, he decided to inquire about the console rights. The Japan-based Rogers duly developed a Famicom port of the game under his Bullet Proof Software label, and, when he became aware that Nintendo was creating a handheld console,

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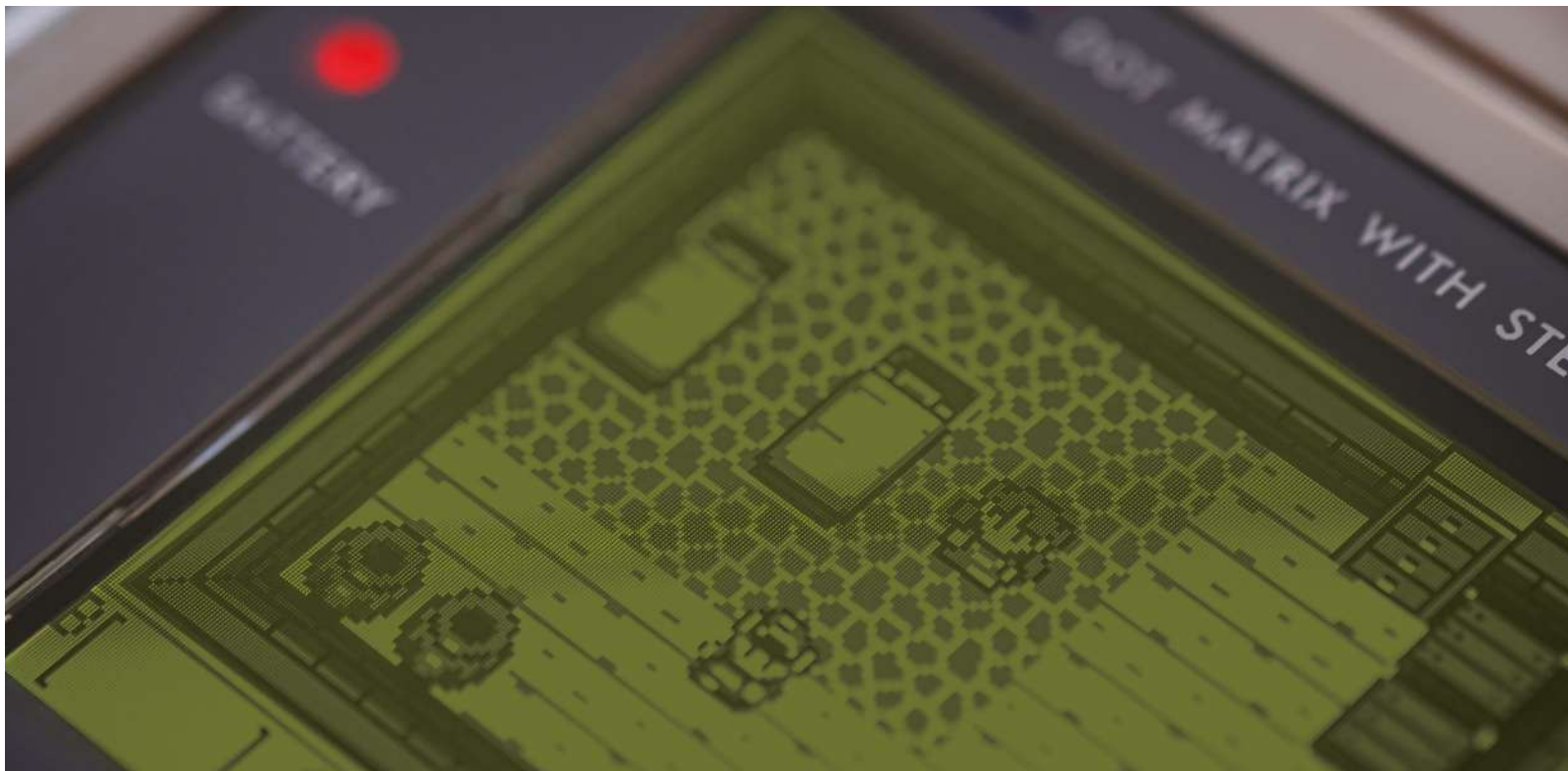
The shade of the Game Boy's 2.6 inch, 160 × 144–pixel LCD has been described as being like 'pea soup', but it's all part of the handheld's charm.

approached Nintendo of America president Minoru Arakawa with the suggestion that a special version should be developed for the system and packed-in with every console sold.

Arakawa asked Rogers to pursue the rights by travelling to Russia, where he found that the state-owned Elektronorgtechnica – responsible for import and export of all computer hardware and software for the Soviet Union – had no knowledge that Robert Stein had licensed the game to other parties. Rogers, by offering Elektronorgtechnica money in advance, was able to outmanoeuvre both Mirrorsoft and the companies it had sub-licensed to, and secure the console rights. Arakawa was then convinced to include *Tetris* – and not his original choice, *Super Mario Land* – with each Game Boy system sold in the West. Interestingly, no game was included with the Japanese model, as is traditional in that region – *Tetris* wasn't

even ready for launch in Japan, where the console shipped on 21 April, 1989 with *Baseball*, *Alleyway*, *Super Mario Land* and *Yakuman*.

Addictive, accessible and blessed with an almost limitless degree of playability, *Tetris* became the must-have title that everyone had to play – and as a consequence, the Game Boy swiftly became the must-have gaming platform that everyone had to own. When it hit store shelves across the globe between 1989 and 1990, its audience included mums, grandparents and plenty of other people who wouldn't ordinarily consider playing a video game. *"It became apparent that a lot of people were buying [the] Game Boy without having any previous gaming interest,"* says Paul Machacek of UK studio Rare, who worked extensively on the console during the '90s. *"In fact, lots of early customers probably never bought another game outside of* Tetris*. Lots of people bought the 'funny little grey machine that*

fits in your pocket and plays that block game'. I'm quite sure it was lost on many that they could take Tetris *out and put another game in. Game Boy wasn't tethered to a living room TV, so it entered schools and offices and other people got hooked. Game Boy was revolutionary, but what would it have been if* Tetris *had not existed and hadn't been bundled with it?"* We'll never know the answer to that question, but Nintendo president Hiroshi Yamauchi boldly predicted sales of 25 million consoles in two years – and when the Game Boy sold 300,000 units in its first two weeks on sale in Japan, his claim seemed to carry more weight. A few months later the console was launched in North America and sold 40,000 units in a single day.

Tim Girvin played a huge role in achieving such incredible sales figures in the West by creating the key design language for the system's packaging and promotional
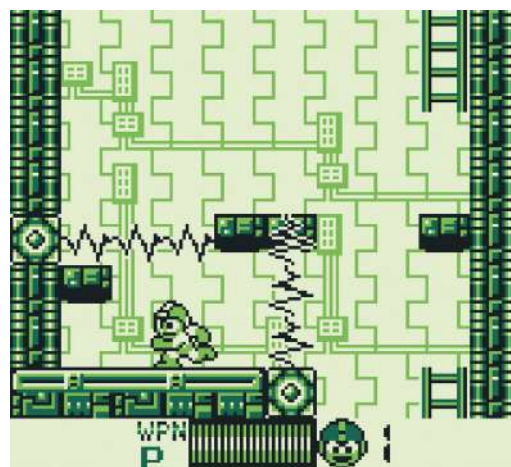
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Below: The Game Boy was blessed with a varied library of titles, covering genres such as sports, puzzles, shmups, action platformers and intense RPGs.

Baseball (1989)

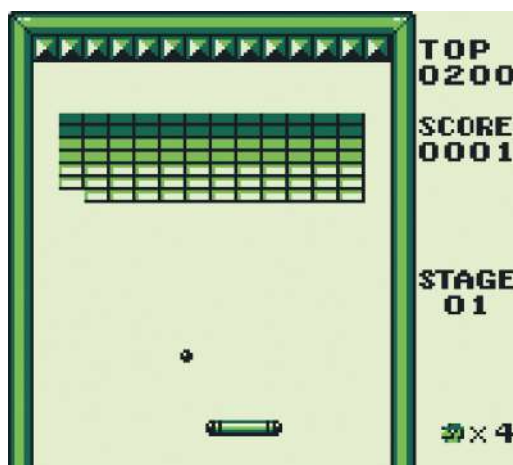**Nemesis** (1990)

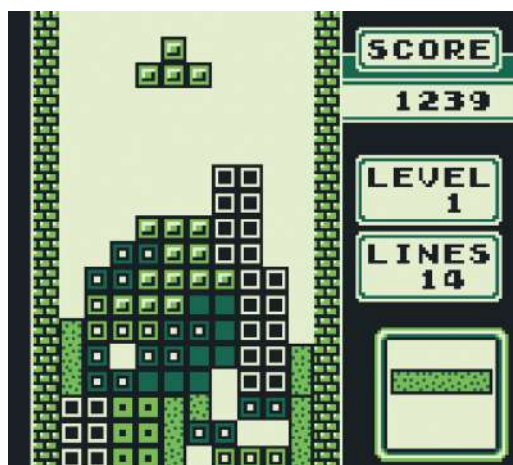**Mega Man: Dr. Wily's Revenge** (1991)

Mario & Yoshi (1991)

Donkey Kong (1994)

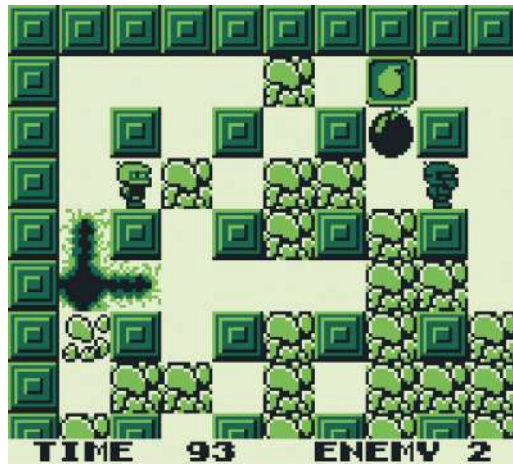**Kirby's Dream Land** (1992)

Alleyway (1989)

Tetris (1989)

Pokémon Red (1996)

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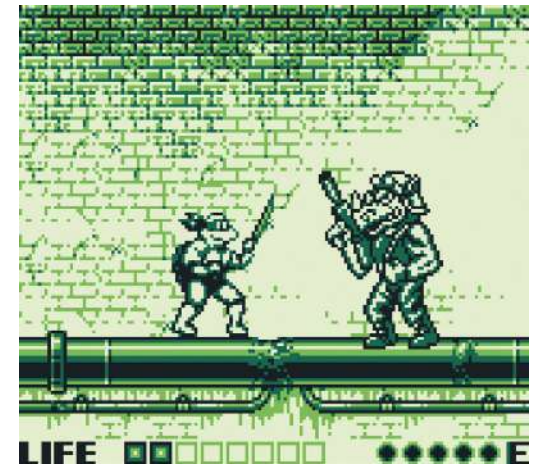**Batman** [1990]

Super Mario Land [1989]

The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening [1993]

Bomberman GB [1994]
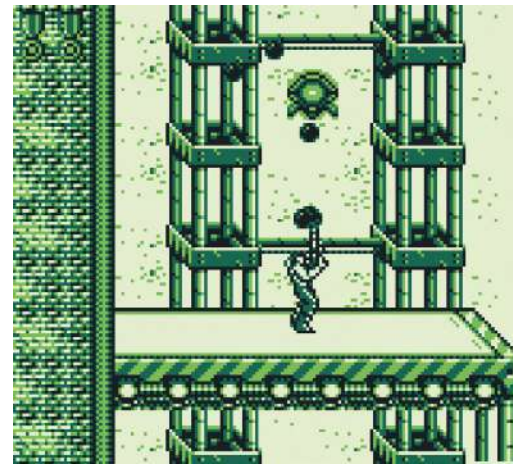
Operation C [1991]

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Fall of the Foot Clan [1990]

Golf [1989]

Battletoads [1991]

Super Mario Land 2: 6 Golden Coins [1992]

While Western Game Boy packaging tended to stick to a uniform aesthetic, Japanese publishers experimented more readily with box artwork and design.

material – but coming to terms with that child-like name was his first challenge. *"Its name, for an American market, required taking everything seriously,"* says Girvin. *"Reaching to the gamer archetypal persona and user, but being mindful of the 'Boy'. The word defines demography, age, and audience characteristics in a manner that could be dissociative for tweens, young men and adults."* Girvin's approach to this conundrum was to make the system seem as advanced and mature as possible. *"We designed the core logo, a player icon system, the materiality of the packaging (brushed stainless steel), the brand palette and design systems, collateral, displays and merchandising, as well as the central shelf visual: the illustration of the player hands, robotized or gloved, and an emanating light that was split-scanning the horizon in a multi-dimensional way. Perhaps most challenging was that, while the NES design system was mostly about organizing an*

aesthetic for an extant platform of hardware, Game Boy was new. We knew we had to deliver a solution that would package the brand as a compelling storyline – that the story would be recognised as unique in handheld entertainment and gaming systems – and it had to work well. We realized that we needed to design broadly, for a wider demographic." This uniform approach gave the Game Boy brand additional weight and gravitas in the West and stood in stark contrast to the way things were handled in Japan, where box artwork and packaging layout were left entirely up to the publisher.

As the Sony-related anecdote recounted earlier attests, the astounding commercial success of the console wasn't just a key event in the world of gaming – it was a seismic launch in the world of consumer tech, full-stop. *"In today's smartphone-obsessed world, it's very easy to underestimate the impact that the*

Game Boy had in 1989," says Machacek. *"In a nutshell, the late '70s saw Sony's Walkman give us portable music, in 1989 Nintendo gave us portable gaming, and in 2007 Apple gave us portable 'everything else'. Before Game Boy, handheld gaming systems were crude, with basic LED lights or finite character frames pre-baked into LCD screens to represent all elements of gameplay; a console was the whole game, nothing could be changed, and the form factor for each often reflected that. Most of what you experienced was left to your imagination. Nintendo brought us a portable device which ran for many hours, could swap game carts that were small enough to drop a few in your pocket, and even hook up for multiplayer. This was totally game-changing – pun intended."*

Despite the subsequent arrival of the SEGA Game Gear and NEC PC Engine GT in 1990 – two more colour-screen handhelds which suffered from poor battery life – the Game

The Game Boy's rugged cartridges are wonderfully tactile objects, each showcasing unique sticker artwork, making them a joy to hold and look at.

Boy went from strength to strength, buoyed by its status as a must-have system and the avalanche of instantly-recognisable games from many of the same developers who had so passionately supported the NES. Konami, Capcom, Taito, Irem, Square, Acclaim, Rare and Sunsoft all flocked to the machine, many of them bringing familiar franchises such as Castlevania, Mega Man, Gradius, Contra, Wizards & Warriors, Final Fantasy and many, many more. These sat neatly alongside Nintendo's own enviable assortment of titles – Metroid, Kid Icarus, Zelda and Donkey Kong – to create a library of software that was unparalleled outside of the home console arena. Nintendo's handheld may have lacked the graphical grunt of its battery-hungry rivals, but it unquestionably offered the best games, and in the highest quantity – and much of that was down to the fact that it was an interesting system to develop for, at least by the standards of the time.

"I found it a lot of fun," says Jas Austin, who, during his tenure at UK-based Bits Studios, worked on titles such as *R-Type*, *Alien 3* and *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. *"Previously, I'd been making ZX Spectrum games, so had a head start as the two machines used a similar CPU. I was kind of thrown in at the deep end with* R-Type *as my first game, so it was hard work. But I quite liked the short dev time back then, as it always meant you were working on something new and exciting. Plus, Bits Studios was one of the first European developers to work on the Game Boy, so it felt like we were on the cutting edge. Early on, all the dev hardware we used was built in-house by the talented team using reverse engineering. For example, the hardware I used for* R-Type *could only handle one memory page, so while making it I was never able to actually play the game from start to finish. We just had to hope it would work correctly on a release cartridge."*

Rare was another UK studio that provided an astonishingly robust degree of support for Nintendo's portable console, just as it did for the company's NES hardware. *"I first saw it in July 1989, when I started at Rare,"* explains former staffer Chris Sutherland, now serving as Project Director & Software Engineer at Playtonic Games. *"It had been released in Japan in April and was about to be released in the U.S., so I was quite amazed and excited to be working on this brand-new machine. Because of the size of the display and due to the blurring effect of the LCD, we'd try to minimise the number of things that moved on-screen at one time – otherwise, players would struggle to see what was happening – which, coincidentally, also benefited the game's performance. Eventually, Nintendo did develop a way for game developers to feed the output into a TV display, but as the titles I worked on were in the early years, it meant staring at that little monochrome display*

Nintendo carried over its key franchises to the Game Boy, with mascot Mario making the leap in the brilliant launch title, *Super Mario Land*.

every day. In some ways that was of benefit because if you view the games on a CRT or modern LCD you may be less cognizant of issues with fast-moving objects on the Game Boy's display."

The Game Boy was also notable for the astonishing volume of accessories and peripherals it inspired, many of which were intended to mitigate the console's shortcomings. Multiple screen magnifiers appeared – which not only made the screen easier to see, but also provided crude illumination so the system could be played in the dark – while the Nuby-made bolt-on speaker ensured that the Game Boy's sound became so loud it could annoy everyone in your household. Companies like Joyplus and Konami took these two concepts to the next level, creating the Handy Boy and Hyperboy respectively; these featured screen magnifiers, lights and significantly boosted sound volume, with the obvious

downside being vastly reduced portability. Speaking of which, in 1994 Nintendo released a device which totally removed the Game Boy's key selling point of pocket-sized mobility; the Super Game Boy slotted into the cartridge slot of the Super Nintendo home console and allowed you to play your Game Boy cartridges on a big-screen television, with the added bonus of special illustrated frames around the image and a small smattering of colour in the game itself. This was followed by the Japan-only Super Game Boy 2 in 1998, which included a link cable port for two-player titles.

The fact that the software on the Game Boy felt comparable to games available on home consoles was yet another key reason for its stunning success; unlike the Game & Watch line which sired it, this really did feel like a proper gaming system. *"Before I developed for it, I imported my first Game Boy from Japan,"* recalls Austin, while naming his

favourite games on the platform: *"Nintendo's own* The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening *and the* Super Mario Land *titles… with my love of side-scrolling shooters, special mention should also go to* Parodius *and* Nemesis.*"* Sutherland agrees that Mario's outings on the console were especially noteworthy. "Super Mario Land *stood out for me, and I had a soft spot for Konami's* Motocross Maniacs, *despite never really being able to get that far."* Thanks to low development costs and a large potential audience, the Game Boy certainly wasn't short of software – over 1,000 games were published for the system during its lifespan.

With its dominance of the market all but assured, it would have been easy for Nintendo to sit back and allow the Game Boy hardware to stagnate. However, it took advantage of advances in technology by repackaging the core system in a sleeker, less power-hungry frame; 1996's Game Boy

The absence of any kind of built-in screen illumination resulted in a host of peripherals to solve the problem, including the famous Light Boy.

Pocket boasted an improved monochrome screen, which was less prone to blur, and ten hours of power was supplied by a pair of AAA batteries. The Pocket was compatible with all Game Boy titles, and arrived in the same year as one of the console's most important games – second only, perhaps, to the legendary *Tetris*.

Created by external studio Game Freak in close collaboration with Nintendo, *Pocket Monsters* was inspired by game designer Satoshi Tajiri's childhood hobby of bug collecting, and had actually been floating around since before the Game Boy was released. When he first laid eyes on the console – and the revolutionary link cable functionality – Tajiri felt it would be the perfect platform for his concept. According to Tajiri, Nintendo didn't seem to fully comprehend the appeal of the game at the start, and he expected development to be halted at any point, despite the fact that

Nintendo drafted in Shigeru Miyamoto – its star developer – to act as one of the title's producers. He needn't have worried; *Pocket Monsters* – renamed *Pokémon* for its global release – was an instant smash hit when it launched in Japan in 1996 and triggered a fresh wave of interest in the ageing Game Boy hardware. In total, all versions of the first *Pokémon* game (*Red*, *Green*, *Blue* and *Yellow*) sold over 30 million units worldwide, making it the best-selling RPG on the console. There's no denying that the timely arrival of *Pokémon* gave the ageing console its second wind.

Gunpei Yokoi – the man who did so much to make the Game Boy a success – was no longer part of the Nintendo family by this stage. After the dismal failure of the Virtual Boy, a 1995 system which boasted stereoscopic 3D visuals, he left the company under something of a cloud to form Koto, a design consultancy company which worked

with toymaker Bandai on the WonderSwan, a portable rival to the Game Boy. Even smaller than Nintendo's system and powered by a single AA battery, the WonderSwan was a moderate success in its homeland but never saw a global release. Yokoi tragically died in 1997 when he was involved in a road traffic accident; the car he was a passenger in was rear-ended by another vehicle, and after getting out to inspect the damage, Yokoi was hit twice by other passing cars. He was only 56 years of age and didn't get the chance to see the WonderSwan hit store shelves.

Despite its advanced years, the Game Boy was still innovating after almost a decade on sale. Early in 1998, Nintendo released the Game Boy Camera accessory, which boasted a 128 × 128–pixel CMOS sensor capable of capturing black and white images that could be edited or printed out using a special thermal printer device that connected to the console's link cable port; a selection

Released in 1994, the Super Game Boy allows Game Boy games to be played with additional features on a Super Nintendo console.

The Game Boy Camera was recognised by The Guinness Book of Records as the world's smallest digital camera at the time of release.

of mini-games was also included. The brainchild of Masato Kuwahara, the project was not well-regarded within the walls of Nintendo until Hirokazu Tanaka – who was on the original Game Boy hardware team and by this point had become president of Creatures, Inc. – agreed to come on board to develop the software side of the device. The following year, the Game Boy Camera was recognised by the Guinness Book of Records as the world's smallest digital camera. The device was both a commercial and critical hit, and cannily predicted the global obsession with portable photography and image manipulation that would truly explode during the smartphone revolution around a decade later.

With the Game Boy on everyone's lips once more, Nintendo released another hardware revision in 1998, which added in one of the most requested features: a backlit screen. Using electroluminescent

technology that had previously been popularised by watchmaker Casio, the Game Boy Light was roughly the same size as the Game Boy Pocket but was powered by two AA batteries. Despite releasing a handful of unique special edition Game Boy Light consoles in Japan, Nintendo decided against launching it globally, presumably to avoid taking sales away from the Game Boy Color, the monochrome Game Boy's true successor. Also released in 1998, the Game Boy Color boasted improved internal tech but full backwards compatibility with black and white Game Boy games, a factor that allowed current owners to upgrade without fear of devaluing their existing software collection.

The arrival of colour-screen hardware effectively spelled the end for the original monochrome model of the Game Boy, although hybrid cartridges were released which ran on both systems until way into

the next millennium. Between the two of them, the Game Boy and Game Boy Color would eventually sell 118.69 million units worldwide – a staggering figure when you consider that the video games market of the '90s was smaller than the one we know today. The Game Boy name endured, with the release of the Game Boy Advance in 2001, and its two further hardware revisions: the Game Boy Advance SP in 2003 and the Game Boy Micro in 2005. The latter is, at the time of writing, the final device to bear the famous name.

Since then, Nintendo has remained firmly in control of the handheld market, following up the Game Boy Advance with the Nintendo DS – which, with over 154 million consoles sold, is comfortably the company's most successful platform ever, and second only to the Sony PlayStation 2 in terms of best-selling video game hardware. While 2011's Nintendo 3DS was slightly less

Sporting a 128 × 128-pixel CMOS sensor, the Game Boy Camera is capable of snapping grayscale images using the four-colour palette of the Game Boy.

successful, the Switch – Nintendo's current system – is, at the time of writing, selling at such an impressive rate that it's hard to see how or indeed why the Japanese veteran would choose to resurrect the Game Boy brand.

"I do think the name was really more relevant to that era," admits Sutherland. *"The name was inspired, I guess, by the Walkman portable cassette player that Sony produced in the '80s and '90s, so at the time it made sense. We might see it in more retro products, but in the main, I think it's now going to be supplanted by the Nintendo Switch brand."* Machacek agrees: *"Nintendo is a very forward-looking company and one that's very creative. Their successful software franchises recur to show off new hardware or gaming elements, but they tend to move on with their main hardware. We're in a world now where everyone has a powerful computer in their pocket, and*

the barrier to entry for selling software into that ecosystem is seriously low, so I think producing a standalone gaming-only portable device with the Game Boy name may now be a hard sell."

Indeed, Austin suspects that any future Game Boy system will be marketed purely for nostalgia's sake, as has been the case with the recent NES and SNES Classic Edition micro-consoles. *"Perhaps something like the SNES Mini would be cool,"* he says. *"I'd quite like a handheld that had a selection of the classic Game Boy and Game Boy Color games – but with some quality-of-life improvements like modern backlight, save game snapshots and improved battery life."* The Game Boy name may be destined to remain in the past, then, but the fact that people who have never played a video game in their lives are familiar with the branding shows just how dramatic an impact the machine has had on the world of gaming –

and it's impossible to understate how transformative the Game Boy has been for Nintendo as a company. It's the console that firmly established it as the market leader in the handheld video gaming arena, a position it still enjoys to this very day. Indeed, Yokoi's "lateral thinking with withered technology" approach guides Nintendo now more than ever; that is, perhaps, his most significant legacy.

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Collectors' Interview

While gaming in the modern age is becoming increasingly driven by digital distribution, for decades the world of interactive entertainment was a tangible, physical affair; chunky plastic carts being slotted into bulky consoles, cardboard packaging filling up your shelves, and detail-rich manuals neatly soaking up that precious downtime between mammoth play sessions. Consoles from the '80s and '90s were all about physical media, but it could be argued that no other system scratches the 'collector' itch in quite the same fashion as the humble Nintendo Game Boy.

Handheld consoles are, by their very definition, more tactile than home systems. You're constantly interacting with a portable system; it's in your sweaty palms during gameplay, and that satisfying 'click-clunk' you get when you insert a cartridge is loaded with nostalgic promise, even many decades later – and as we're all painfully aware, rose-tinted nostalgia is a huge reason collectors do what they do in the first place. It's little wonder, then, that the Game Boy has become something of an obsession with video game hoarders around the globe; not only does it offer some of the best portable gaming experiences money can buy – has *Tetris* ever been bettered, truly? – it also delivers over a thousand different games to track down and acquire, each blessed with eye-catching packaging that looks fantastic when arrayed on your pristine white Ikea shelving.

"My first encounter with the Game Boy was Christmas 1990," says Irish collector Michael Lynch. *"I was only six years old. My brother, who was about 13 or 14 at the time, got the Game Boy with* Tetris *and* Super Mario Land. *I remember watching him play it for the first time. He didn't let me touch it for a few weeks, so I busied myself with all my* Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles *and* Ghostbusters *toys. But when I finally got my hands on that Game Boy, I was instantly in love."*

Across the English channel, French obsessive Vincent Haucourt was forging his own relationship with Nintendo's brick-like gaming system. Tellingly, he also uses the 'L' word. *"As far as I can remember, my first impressions were that I fell totally in love with this console as a kid. It was a revolution to me: my first handheld console. I was able to play anywhere I wanted, to easily switch games, and even sometimes play with friends thanks to the link cable."*

Michael and Vincent are two of Europe's leading Game Boy collectors and, between them, they have amassed a stunning selection of software for this seminal monochrome system. Like people who collect stamps, vinyl records or even classic cars, the desire is largely the same – to obtain as much of a kind of item as possible because of a driving affection for said items. Anyone can own a Game Boy, but taking the step up to becoming a dedicated collector is a key moment, not to be taken lightly.

"I actually very clearly remember a turning point when I was younger," recalls Lynch, when asked exactly when he decided he was going to turn from casual fan to hardcore hobbyist. *"I got this amazing new bike for either a birthday or Christmas and was out on it in Hampstead Heath. A lad was playing his Game Boy and he shouted over to me. He wanted a go on my bike. I said no, it was new, and my parents would shout. So he said I could hang onto his Game Boy and games while he was on the bike to ensure he wouldn't steal it. So he digs into his bumbag and pulls out a huge stack of games – this stack at the time looked like 50-odd games. In reality, it was probably about 15 or 20, but to me, that was a huge collection, as I only had about three or four games, which were handed down to me by my brother. I remained quiet, as I was so impressed with the stack of games; he then went on to offer me RoboCop to keep if he could ride my bike! Instantly I said no problem, take it.*

Before seeing his stack of games I would often just borrow games from friends or trade them. I never thought to myself about building a collection, until that day."

Haucourt's fateful day came a little later in life, triggered by the transition into adulthood and the regular wage required to facilitate his collecting bug. *"It started when I was 17; I found a few games I used to own in my grandma's home and decided that I would buy some others which reminded me of my childhood, as well as picking up the ones that I had never played and couldn't afford in the past. Because I was growing up and working, I was able to buy more and more games and consoles, starting what would become my collection. I'm very dedicated in my passions, so I slowly widened my field of research to anything related to the Game Boy – including limited edition consoles, sealed games, Game Boy retail kiosks and other goodies."*

Game Boy software comes from a time when the imagery on the packaging was of the utmost importance; without the Internet to rely on for opinion, or even screenshots, players often made purchasing decisions based solely on what the box offered – and that's why many of these games are so sought-after today. The illustration on the cover can trigger happy memories of a bygone era for many collectors, as well as be appreciated as a work of art.

For Lynch, Western packaging is the focus, and he's of the opinion that the Game Boy offers the best artwork of any retro system. *"I think it's something about how small and snug they are,"* he says. *"Also, all the Western boxes have the same grey Game Boy logo down the side, so they look perfectly uniform together, whereas other boxes would have just a simple logo with varying colours and designs around it – but the Game Boy box had the exact same template across all games."* Such was Lynch's obsession with Game Boy packaging that he recalls making
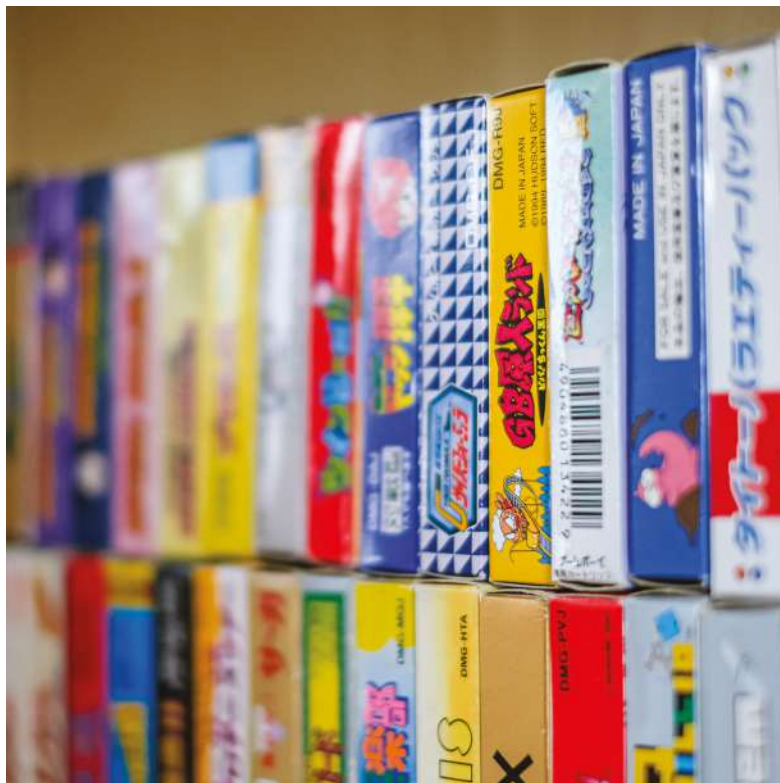
Vincent Haucourt's enviable collection shows off the varied and colourful spines of the Japanese Game Boy library.

his own at an early age. *"I remember vividly making my own game carts and designing the cart labels out of paper. I even made my own paper Game Boy and stuck a slot at the back for all my paper games to go in! I made games that weren't available and I specifically remember making a* Gladiators *game, with Wolf and Jet on the label art. I also made a* Nightmare on Elm Street *cart. There were about 30 paper games in total but those two in particular stick out in my memory."*

It's always hard to choose a favourite, but does Lynch have any personal picks among his gargantuan collection? *"Personally, I love the artwork for* Wizards & Warriors X: The Fortress of Fear. *It's probably in my top three games for the Game Boy, due to it being one of the games my brother handed down to me, so I have fond memories of that game. Some notable favourites are* Starhawk *and the three Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*

games, with Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 3: Radical Rescue *standing out. I also really love the art on* Kid Dracula, Rolan's Curse *and* Castlevania II: Belmont's Revenge."

Haucourt, on the other hand, collects mainly Japanese Game Boy games. Unlike the Western covers, which were fairly uniform in that they had the Game Boy branding down the left-hand side, Japanese developers and publishers were given more freedom when it came to box layout, and as a result, there are some truly stunning examples if you're keen to collect imported games. *"I like the fact that their creativity has no limits,"* Haucourt says. *"Firstly, because there's not just one type of box; you can find small, medium, big, tin cans, bundles, limited packages and so on. And for collectors, it's a blessing to be able to hunt such atypical boxes. Secondly, it's because Japanese covers are such amazing pieces of art. The colours, pictures, characters, text; they're just beautiful to look at and to display."*

Not all Game Boy games are created equal, of course, and for a variety of reasons – limited print run and overall desirability being just two – certain titles can be harder to track down than others, even for outstandingly committed collectors. Haucourt cites the French versions of *Battleship* and *The Battle of Olympus* as being two titles that are hard to pin down, while Lynch admits that patience is almost always required in order to locate the most desirable games. *"I've been quite lucky with this,"* he admits. *"Due to me being patient and not actively searching for games regularly, I'm able to buy in bulk when collectors are selling up their collections. I did have trouble tracking down a good condition* Pokémon Blue *for a good price. If they are mint, they are usually overpriced. I do currently have* Donkey Kong Land *on the search list, as I have the second and third games in that series already, but it's one of those games I've seen plenty of times and just overlooked it as I thought I*

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The jewel in Michael's collection – a sealed and graded Western release of *Top Ranking Tennis*.

already owned it! Now I want it, there's not many in the condition I want for the price I'm willing to pay. Don't get me wrong; I'll pay a good price for a mint game but not double or triple the price it's worth. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 3: Radical Rescue was tricky to track down in good condition, but that's one I ticked off when a collector friend sold off his collection."* When asked which game has been the hardest to find, Lynch offers up a surprising answer. *"This isn't something totally rare and worth triple figures, but I found it really hard to track down a PAL copy of Tamagotchi. Coincidentally, I managed to get one in mint condition pretty recently."*

Like so many obsessions in life, collecting Game Boy games is the pursuit of a lifetime. *"I can't count the number of hours, days, weeks and months spent in the shallows of the Internet, looking for rare gems in foreign marketplaces all over the world, and*

trying to improve my knowledge about my favourite console," says Haucourt. *"All this time has been spread over almost 15 years! Patience is indeed a virtue for all collectors!"* Lynch admits that he's spent the best part of a quarter of a century seeking out titles for Nintendo's world-beating handheld. *"When my brother gave me that Game Boy and the few games, they were all loose. When I started buying my own games, I kept every single box, and still have them to this day in mint condition. I'm not surprised I've kept them so well – it's more the fact they survived countless house moves intact! I'm rather patient with my Game Boy collection now. Previously, I would buy anything I didn't have, which resulted in me getting bad condition games and games in regional variants I didn't want. So now, I make sure I'm buying the best condition, as well as the region I want specifically, when available."* This begs the question of when either of these committed individuals will consider

their collection to be truly complete? *"It's a never-ending quest,"* claims Haucourt. *"That's why I love collecting. I could reach some goals, such as a full set of French or Japanese games, but once done, I will need another challenge – and fortunately, the Game Boy gives you so much work that one life will not be enough to finish it!"* Lynch thinks that when he does eventually reach an end goal, he might consider selling up and looking for a fresh challenge. *"I probably will reach that point,"* he concedes. *"Whether that's a full PAL set or if I just sell the collection off. If I do sell it, I'll be keeping all my childhood games. I made the mistake when I sold my full PAL complete-in-box set of SEGA Game Gear games that I also sold my childhood games with it. None of them were pricey, but they held nostalgic value for me. I won't get them back now, so I refuse to sell my childhood Game Boy games."*

Given that video games are moving into the digital age, is the art of a good cover going to be lost in time, along with physical media and manuals? *"I hope not,"* says Lynch. *"But the way things are going with modern gaming – digital vs. physical and companies wanting to maximise profit as much as possible – it feels like we're just getting more and more generic covers than previous generations. Don't get me wrong; there are still some fascinating covers out there, but they seem fewer and farther between these days, compared to the '80s and '90s, when so much more effort was made with the packaging to draw players in."*

Haucourt agrees. *"As creating a game has become more and more expensive, the trend is to reduce costs as much as possible. For players, it's a boon; games are cheaper and it increases their purchasing power, but for collectors, it's the end of something. Everything is becoming digital and online. We have already forgotten the pleasure of blowing in a cartridge or cleaning a CD which didn't launch at the first try – and covers are part of all of this, too. During our childhood, we might buy a game only because of its attractive cover. It's definitely not the case now – we have screenshots and videos to watch online – and unfortunately, I guess it's not going to change back."*

Moving away from the collecting angle for a moment, what is it that makes the Game Boy so appealing today – when 30 years of technological progression have made the crude monochrome system look like a relic? *"I remember reading an interview with the Game Boy creator Gunpei Yokoi where he stated the Game Boy was made up of bog-standard parts,"* remembers Lynch. *"The screen only had four shades, whereas competitors at the time had a vast plethora of colours to work with. It was a simple concept which hugely benefited from having such quality titles to launch with. Nobody can argue the impact* Tetris *had on society at the time; everyone was talking about it and playing it. It wasn't just gamers. It appealed to the wider masses.* Super Mario Land *also*

launched with it and to this day many claim it's the best game on the system, along with its sequel. I think having such a large catalogue of quality titles will forever keep the original Game Boy in the mix when people talk about truly classic retro systems."*

Haucourt says that the legacy of the Game Boy lives on for other reasons too, such as modders and homebrew coders who find the hardware basic enough to work with, but advanced enough to create something worthwhile. *"Lots of people and companies try to perpetuate the legacy of the Game Boy by releasing books, homebrew games, customised consoles, live conferences or simply documenting online everything related to the Game Boy. There is real interest still growing around the most popular handhelds. Moreover, lots of people over the age of 30 have a memory of the Game Boy and will have played one at least once. The recent 30th birthday was covered by a lot of mainstream media sites, and this reignited the passion around the machine. Even decades later, there's plenty of interest in the system; it's very much like the Sony Walkman and iPhone in that it will always be remembered as a trailblazing piece of hardware, whereas other handheld systems are largely forgotten."*

Given that Nintendo, over the last few years has resurrected its NES and SNES systems via 'Classic Edition' micro-consoles, could we see the Game Boy get the same treatment? *"I would absolutely love to see Nintendo do something new with the Game Boy line,"* says Lynch, no doubt echoing what a great many other fans of the console will be thinking. *"Whether that's creating a 'Mini' machine for modern times or releasing an anniversary line of the old 'Play It Loud' series, I'd love to see it happen. Anything they do with the Game Boy name, they'll be sure to have a massive amount of interest in it. Personally, I'd like to see a new version with a whole raft of titles on the system, with the option to play older carts as well as being able to hook it up to the TV to play in HD."*

Haucourt feels it's only a matter of time, given the weight the Game Boy name still holds even today: *"Regarding the success of the 'Mini' Nintendo consoles, it would be a mistake not to make a Game Boy version. There has been lot of talk about it but nothing confirmed yet; still, I am confident that we'll see it released one day! To attract as many people as possible, it will have to be easily portable, with a screen large enough to play all games and, of course, backlit. Also, I'd want a rechargeable battery inside and the ability to play all Game Boy games, from the original monochrome titles, right the way up to the Game Boy Advance titles."*

Even so, surely there's a limit on how long the Game Boy can remain in the memories of players and retro addicts? As the older generation fades away, surely the Game Boy will go with it? *"I think there'll always be a few nostalgic players that will still occasionally take out their Game Boys to remember some memories of their childhood,"* says Haucourt. *"But I guess it will more be a fashion accessory than something they will play. Because the early '90s kid gamers we all once were will have other occupations in the future, and our children will be more interested in their own technologies than in an antique handheld they've never heard about! But who knows, if the Game Boy community grows and the interest of people around it remains, we could perhaps dream of a Game Boy museum in the future, and make sure the legacy lives forever."*

Lynch feels the same way. *"I have no doubt there'll still be interest in the Game Boy in years to come. It takes up so little room; even if you have a huge collection of games, they're sturdy little carts and can be stored in a variety of ways. The Game Boy fits in the pocket, a drawer, or just sat on a shelf. You can take it anywhere and the battery life to this day puts a lot of modern tech to shame. It's an iconic system; I don't think the Game Boy is going anywhere anytime soon."*

3 Choume no Tama:
Tama and Friends 3 Choume Obake Panic!!

3丁目のタマ TAMA and FRIENDS 3丁目お化けパニック!!

Tom Create (1994)
Genre: Miscellaneous

Based on a media franchise established by Sony Creative Products in 1983, *Tama & Friends* focuses on the exploits of a group of animal pals led by the feline protagonist Tama. Gameplay in this handheld adaptation consists of top-down exploration sequences, where the aim is to avoid getting mown down by passing cars. This is combined with puzzle sections triggered by entering houses, as well as conversational sequences with the many characters that populate Tama's world. Animated TV series using these characters continue to be produced in Japan; the latest, entitled *Uchi Tama!? ~Uchi no Tama Shirimasen ka?~*, made its debut on Fuji TV in January 2020.

Tama and his pals dominate this super-cute cover image, with Momo, Pochi, Tora, Beh, Kuro, Gon and others looking rather anxious – presumably due to the spooky goings-on hinted at in the game's subtitle, *3rd Street Ghost Panic!!*
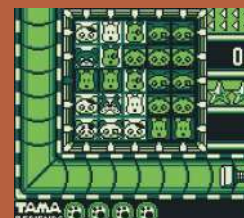
3-pun Yosou:
Umaban Club

3分予想 馬番倶楽部

Hect (1992)
Genre: Horse racing

Horse racing is big business in Japan, and the Game Boy – thanks to its portable nature – became home to several 'betting prediction' games during its lifespan. The idea was that keen horse racing fans could take the console to their local racecourse, enter information on odds and the like, and see a prediction of who would win. How accurate these games were is open to debate, but *3-pun Yosou: Umaban Club* is a pretty good example of the genre. Outside of the attractive title screen artwork, everything else is simply text, making this a pretty dull experience for non-Japanese players (and those who aren't into horse racing, of course).

While the game itself is functional at best, at least the cover artwork for *3-pun Yosou* catches the eye. Amusingly, it shows a selection of cartoon horses crowded around their betting sheets and Game Boys, presumably placing bets on their own performances – an ethically questionable practice, it has to be said.

Aero Star

エアロスター

Vic Tokai (1991)
Genre: Scrolling shooter

A common theme in most shoot 'em up titles is the ability to fly around the screen, and the lack of that aerial freedom is what makes *Aero Star* such a unique experience. Flight is possible, but only for short periods of time; for the majority of the game, you'll be stuck on terra firma, only taking to the skies to leap to new platforms or avoid obstacles. This innovation is aided by some particularly nice presentation; the design calls to mind Hudson's Star Soldier series, and the bosses are impressively proportioned, given the limitations of the Game Boy hardware.

Given how action-packed and exciting the game is, *Aero Star*'s cover artwork is surprisingly restrained, with the titular craft set against a glittering space background, its design reminiscent of a Japanese anime show. The all-new cover for the Western version – published by Sunsoft – was created by Lawrence Fletcher and is much more complex, with a more traditional sci-fi feel.

Aguri Suzuki
F-1 Super Driving

鈴木亜久里の
F-1スーパードライビング

LOZC (1992)
Genre: Racing

One of Japan's most famous Formula One drivers, Aguri Suzuki took part in over 80 Grands Prix, with his best result being a 3rd place finish, fittingly secured at the 1990 Japanese Grand Prix. Since retiring, he has owned two teams – Super Aguri F1 and Team Aguri – but with gamers, it's perhaps his line of F1 simulations which make him most memorable. Taking inspiration from the 1992 Super Famicom title of the same name, this portable outing lacks the smooth Mode 7 track rotation of the home console edition, but attempts to make up for its visual shortcomings by allowing players to use a go-kart as well as an F1 car.

Rather than use a specially-created piece of artwork for the cover, *Aguri Suzuki F-1 Super Driving* opts for a photo of Suzuki in the cockpit of the Larrousse-Lola LC91, which he drove during the 1991 F1 season. The image is complemented by the bold, airbrushed metallic logo.

Akazukin Chacha

赤ずきんチャチャ

Tomy (1995)
Genre: RPG

Serialised in the manga magazine *Ribon* between the years 1991 and 2000, Min Ayahana's *Akazukin Chacha* – which literally translates as 'Red Riding Hood Chacha' – was adapted for television in 1994, a move which inspired Tomy to produce this video game outing for the Game Boy the following year. A side-scrolling RPG adventure boasting a wide selection of characters and plenty of Japanese text, it's little wonder that *Akazukin Chacha*'s charms have been mostly lost on audiences outside of Japan; the manga and anime's lack of impact in the West will also have played a part in keeping this one obscure, despite the promise of enhanced Super Game Boy support when played on the Super Famicom.

Akazukin Chacha's pale pink cover artwork exudes a simple charm, with Chacha – the heroine of the series – front and centre. She's joined by Shiine on her left and Riiya on her right; the former has magical powers, while the latter can transform himself into a wolf. They are love rivals, both desperate to ultimately win Chacha's affection.

Akumajou Dracula:
Shikkokutaru Zensoukyoku Dark Night Prelude

悪魔城ドラキュラ
漆黒たる前奏曲
(ダークナイトプレリュード)

Konami (1997)
Genre: Action adventure

More than six years separate the release of *Dracula Densetsu 2/Castlevania II: Belmont's Revenge* and the third Game Boy instalment, *Akumajou Dracula* (known as *Castlevania Legends* in the West). Released after the arrival of the groundbreaking *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* on the Sony PlayStation, this action platformer doesn't come close to matching its majesty, nor can it compare to the quality of the aforementioned 1991 Game Boy sequel. Sonia Belmont – the first female lead of the series – takes centre stage this time around, although the events of the game were later marked as non-canon by former franchise producer Koji Igarashi.

While the game was something of a disappointment, the cover for *Akumajou Dracula* is excellent. The artwork features great use of colour to separate protagonist Sonia Belmont in the foreground from Dracula and his intimidating fortress, which recede into the eerie blue of the night.

Akumajou Special:
Boku Dracula-kun

DMG-DFJ

悪魔城すぺしゃる
ぼくドラキュラくん

Konami (1993)
Genre: Action

This cute spin-off from the Castlevania series sees Dracula's young son Alucard – rather than Vlad himself, as the Western title of *Kid Dracula* implies – facing off against the evil Galamoth. This bouncy platformer is actually a remake of the 1990 Famicom title of the same name, which didn't see a Western release at the time but has since been included as part of a special Castlevania digital collection on modern consoles, such as the PS4 and Nintendo Switch. For that reason, the Game Boy port is more famous among Western players, and its connection to the Castlevania series has ensured that its value has skyrocketed in recent years.

Akumajou Special's cover artwork is as adorable as the game itself, with bold cartoon images of Alucard and the game's various characters. While his 'super-deformed' appearance looks a million miles away from his *Castlevania* persona, Alucard retains the same recognisable shock of white hair.

Alien vs. Predator:
The Last of His Clan

Activision (1993)
Genre: Action

The concept of bringing together two of cinema's most famous xenomorphs was first tabled in a 1989 comic book written by Randy Stradley and Chris Warner – a crossover which, over the decades, would result in a whole host of successive entries, including a much-maligned movie series. However, long before Hollywood decided to put these two deadly enemies together on screen, we were graced with a host of video games based on the premise. This Game Boy outing takes the form of a 2D action platformer with exploratory elements, and places you in the role of a particularly well-animated Predator, tasked with hunting down Alien enemies across a wide variety of stages.

The Western artwork for this title is truly memorable. While Japan had to make do with a rather generic composite image using photos from the movies, the Western edition benefited from a much more appealing piece of bespoke artwork which shows the two movie monsters locked in deadly combat.

Alleyway

アレイウエイ

Nintendo (1989)
Genre: Arcade

Alleyway is a rare case of Nintendo slavishly copying another company's idea rather than coming up with its own take; the company has something of a legacy when it comes to cloning Atari's 1976 arcade classic *Breakout*, and *Alleyway*'s Japanese subtitle of 'Block Kuzushi' references one of Nintendo's pre-Famicom home consoles from the '70s. *Alleyway* tasks the player with picking apart a wall of bricks, piece by piece, by bouncing a ball off a controllable paddle. The game was unfortunate to arrive after Taito's *Arkanoid*, which enhanced the *Breakout* theme with power-ups and vastly improved presentation.

Alleyway's cover represents the player's paddle as a spaceship, with an astronaut manning the controls, valiantly steering the ship in the direction of the incoming ball. Sensing an opportunity to link the game with its famous moustached mascot, Nintendo created a similar image for the Western release, replacing the spaceman with a just-recognisable image of Mario.
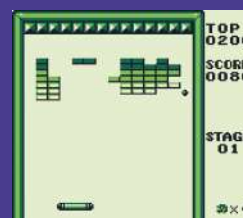
Animal Breeder

あにまるぶりーだー

J-Wing (1997)
Genre: Simulation

At the same time that *Pokémon* fever was gripping Japan, the thematically-similar *Animal Breeder* series hit the Game Boy. However, rather than nurturing fantasy creatures like fire-breathing dragons and electric mice, this series is more concerned with raising 'normal' animals (although it is possible to mix different species, thereby creating some rather peculiar beasts). Never released outside of Japan, the Animal Breeder franchise serves as a notable counterpoint to *Pokémon*'s 'gotta catch 'em all' approach. In total, four entries appeared on Nintendo's Game Boy and Game Boy Color systems.

Animal Breeder keeps things simple when it comes to cover artwork, with a gaggle of creatures neatly framed within the gaping jaws of a heavily stylised lion (the lead character in this edition). Subsequent covers in the series would become noticeably more elaborate.

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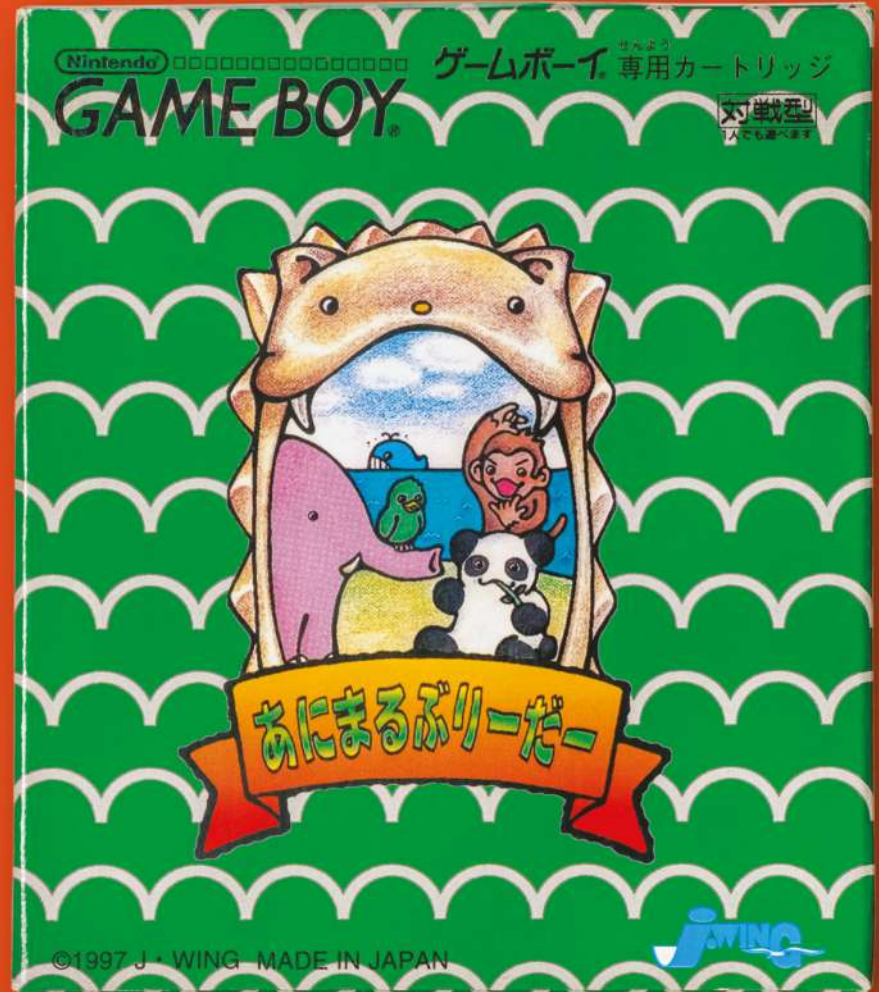
Animal Breeder II

あにまるぶりーだー2

J-Wing (1998)
Genre: Simulation

Like its direct forerunner, *Animal Breeder II* is essentially a pet simulator which allows you to breed, raise and nurture a wide range of different real-world species. In-game activities such as feeding and playing help boost your creature's stats, and once the animal is old enough, it can be released into the wild to find a mate. A hallmark of the series is its open-ended nature and relaxed atmosphere, making this a much more sedate alternative to Game Freak's world-beating Pokémon series. That's perhaps why it, along with the other entries in the franchise, was never released outside of Japan.

While the original *Animal Breeder* boasted a rather simplistic, almost abstract cover, its sequel packs in a lot more visual identity, with a selection of human characters joined by a horde of comical animals. Below this menagerie sits the game's colourful logo, which was no doubt designed to appeal to young children.

Animaniacs

Konami (1995)
Genre: Action

Following its success with the Tiny Toons series of video games, Konami once again collaborated with Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment and Warner Bros. Animation on a video game adaptation of *Animaniacs*, which launched on the SNES, Mega Drive and Game Boy between 1994 and 1995. Uniquely, the Game Boy version is based on the Mega Drive edition rather than the SNES one, although only three of the four stages seen in the SEGA version make the cut due to memory constraints, and the stages that remain are truncated slightly. German code house Factor 5 – of *Turrican* fame – handled the port to Nintendo's handheld console.

Tom Ruegger's Warner Siblings – the lead characters of the animated series – are predictably the cover stars of *Animaniacs* on the Game Boy. Framed within the famous Warner Bros. shield, Yakko, Wakko and Dot embody the crazy nature of both the series and the game. Cheery-faced with arms stretched wide, they implore the viewer to join in the fun.

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Aoki Densetsu Shoot!

蒼き伝説シュート!

Banpresto (1995)
Genre: Simulation

Based on the Toei anime series which ran from 1993 to 1994 – which, in turn, was based on the manga *Shoot!* by Tsukasa Ōshima – *Aoki Densetsu Shoot!* focuses on the dream of Toshihiko 'Toshi' Tanaka to follow in the footsteps of his idol, Yoshiharu Kubo. Like so many Japanese football simulations of the period, the game mixes tactics with anime-style cutscenes, which generally appear when something exciting or noteworthy happens. This approach may feel like it's a million miles away from the slick action of *Sensible Soccer* or *Kick Off*, but it does a neat job of directly referencing the original source material.

A suitably dynamic image graces the cover of *Aoki Densetsu Shoot!*, with our hero Toshihiko Tanaka taking pride of place in the middle. He's flanked by Kazuhiro Hiramatsu – master of the 'Double Heel Shoot' – and goalkeeper Shiraishi Kenji. Cheering them on is Kazumi Endo, who serves as the team's manager as well as a love interest for both Tanaka and Hiramatsu.

Aretha III

アレサ III

Yanoman (1992)
Genre: RPG

Released at a time when *Dragon Quest* and *Final Fantasy* were selling millions of copies on the Famicom, Aretha – developed by Japan Arts Media and published by Yanoman Corporation – attempted to bring the same brand of turn-based adventuring to the small screen of the Game Boy. The original *Aretha* was successful enough to earn two Game Boy sequels, as well as a Super Famicom remake, which was co-developed by Game Arts, of *Lunar* and *Grandia* fame. *Aretha III*'s map is impressive in size and scope, while the top-down visuals use perspective and shading to good effect, also boasting detailed locations and cute sprites. Sadly, the relative obscurity of Japanese RPGs meant it never saw a release in the West.

Aretha III's cover shows the bikini-clad Materia – the heroine of the series – standing alongside the spellcaster Doll. The bold knight Sybil – a companion in previous Aretha outings – is not present. It's a bold and colourful anime-style composition that reaffirms the franchise's reputation for stylish cover artwork.

Armoured Police Metal Jack

機甲警察メタルジャック

Takara (1991)
Genre: Strategy

Based on the short-lived 1991 anime series of the same name, *Armoured Police Metal Jack* is a tactical combat title featuring a team of cybernetically enhanced police officers, who are able to don massive mech-style suits – called 'Jack Armours' – in their fight against organised crime in Tokyo in the year 2015. While an action-oriented Super Famicom title arrived at the same time, this Game Boy outing instead opts for turn-based strategy, in which players manoeuvre their powerful Jack Armours around various grid-based maps. Cutscenes based on the anime help set the mood.

The three heroes – Ryo Aguri (Silver Jack), Ken Kanzaki (Red Jack) and Go Goda (Blue Jack) – are given pride of place on the game's cover. Yoshihisa Uchida handled the character design while Yukihiro Makino was responsible for the sleek look of the powerful Jack Armour suits. The brushed-metal logo and background texture neatly mirror the mech theme of the game.
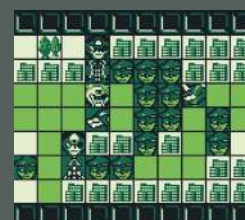
Bakuchou Retsuden Shou:
Hyper Fishing

爆釣烈伝 翔
〜ハイパー・フィッシング〜

Starfish (1998)
Genre: Sports

Not to be confused with Konami's *Bakuchou Retrieve Master* – which was released the same year – this fishing title from Starfish mixes role-play elements with the thrill of landing the biggest catch of the day. The usual RPG tropes feature here; you can converse with NPCs, explore a map and acquire items and gear, but the main focus is reeling in the largest possible fish during the game's action sequences. Super Game Boy support consists of an attractive border image when played on a SNES/Super Famicom console.

Fishing can hardly be described as the most dynamic of sports, but the ebullient cover art for *Bakuchou Retsuden Shou: Hyper Fishing* does its level best to make the whole thing seem exciting. From the bright yellow flash effect to the excited expressions on the faces of the three protagonists, this cover strives to make as much of an impact as possible.

Bart Simpson's
Escape from Camp Deadly

Acclaim (1991)
Genre: Action

Released when *Simpsons*-mania was just beginning to grip the world, *Bart Simpson's Escape from Camp Deadly* has the distinction of being the first Simpsons game on a handheld console. It takes the form of a side-scrolling platformer in which Bart and Lisa attempt to liberate themselves from the titular 'Camp Deadly', a summer holiday site run by Mr. Burns' sadistic nephew Ironfist Burns. Players assume control of Bart as he navigates several side-scrolling stages while taking down evil camp counsellors and bullies using projectiles such as spitwads and boomerangs. There are thematic similarities between the plot of the game and the narrative of the 1992 Simpsons episode 'Camp Krusty' – although it's worth noting that the latter came out a year after the former hit store shelves.

The cover for *Escape from Camp Deadly* uses the unmistakable art style of show creator Matt Groening. Bart and Lisa finally make good their getaway, while Ironfist Burns and his team of 'counsellors' (and a grizzly bear) look on with angry expressions.
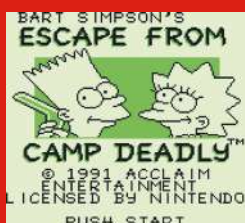
Baseball

ベースボール

Nintendo (1989)
Genre: Sports

Based on the NES title of the same name, which originally launched in Japan in 1983, *Baseball* is, as you may suspect, a virtual representation of a sport which has proven to be incredibly popular in Japan over the decades. The game's origins as a title from the early '80s are painfully apparent when you play the single-player mode, which skews the odds in favour of your AI opponent. *Baseball* truly comes alive when played against a human opponent, using the Game Boy's link cable accessory; the mechanics are deep and enjoyable enough to ensure players will have plenty of friendly slugfests on the road.

The Japanese cover for the game uses cartoon-like characters with oversized feet and gangly limbs, creating a light-hearted feel which is slightly at odds with the rather traditional sporting gameplay. The Western editions feature a different image, which includes Mario as the pitcher – it was clear to Nintendo that its mascot was a big draw for overseas players.

Baseball Kids

ベースボールキッズ

Jaleco (1990)
Genre: Sports

Better known in the West as *Bases Loaded*, *Baseball Kids* is an early attempt to create the ultimate slugger simulation for Nintendo's portable console. The cute visuals suit the console's screen, although the movement of the ball is somewhat jerky, making landing a hit harder than it should be. Other elements of the gameplay are reasonably solid, however. Interestingly, despite being a Jaleco title and using the *Bases Loaded* branding in the West, this isn't actually part of the Moero!! Pro Yakyuu franchise that forms the basis of that series; the gameplay mechanics and presentation are totally unique.

The Western version uses a more mature image alongside the *Bases Loaded* moniker, but in Japan, *Baseball Kids* came with cover artwork more in keeping with its title. The comic book-style image depicts a player clattering into the pitcher with the word 'Splurp!!' denoting some kind of unfortunate collision.

Batman

Sunsoft (1990)
Genre: Action

Based on the smash-hit 1989 movie directed by Tim Burton and starring Jack Nicholson and Michael Keaton, this rather cute action platformer was just one of several adaptations published by Japanese developer Sunsoft; the NES and Mega Drive editions are entirely different games. While all of Sunsoft's Batman titles took liberties with the source material, the Game Boy entry deviates the most enthusiastically, yet it's still considered one of the finest early releases for the handheld. The fast-paced action, tight control and excellent music combine to create a memorable early release for the system, not to mention a decent movie tie-in.

The cover for *Batman* is simplistic yet striking, employing the iconic airbrushed black-and-gold logo from the movie poster. Despite the image gracing Game Boy game packaging, someone still felt it necessary to add 'The Video Game' under the logo, presumably to avoid clueless parents getting confused at the point of purchase.

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Batman Forever

バットマン フォーエヴァー

Acclaim (1995)
Genre: Action

Developed by UK studio Probe and based on Joel Schumacher's much-maligned 1995 superhero movie of the same name, *Batman Forever* uses digitised sprites in a manner similar to that seen in *Mortal Kombat*. The action takes place across side-scrolling locations based on scenes from the movie, with the player taking on the role of the titular Dark Knight. It's worth noting that this title has nothing to do with *Batman Forever: The Arcade Game*, which hit arcades around the same time and used SEGA's 32-bit Saturn-based ST-V 'Titan' board.

Utilising the same image seen on the movie poster, the cover for *Batman Forever* showcases Jim Carrey as The Riddler, Tommy Lee Jones as Two-Face, Nicole Kidman as Dr Chase Meridian, Chris O'Donnell as Robin and Val Kilmer as Batman himself. This Japanese release tones down the famous Bat-Signal in favour of its own vivid green logo.

Batman
Return of the Joker

Sunsoft (1992)
Genre: Action

Sunsoft chose to follow up its successful video game adaptation of the Tim Burton movie with an all-new action platform adventure, which borrows heavily from the original comics rather than the Dark Knight's cinematic exploits. (Konami and SEGA would ultimately secure the rights to the second film, *Batman Returns*.) As in Sunsoft's previous release, each system got a different version of the game. This Game Boy edition is totally different from its siblings, and boasts detailed levels and big, bold sprites.

While the Japanese cover artwork for *Batman Return of the Joker* simply features Batman in three different poses, the Western release chooses to focus on our hero's arch-nemesis. The Joker's rictus grin, presented in a distinctive comic book style, dominates the image, the Bat-Signal clearly visible in his yellow eyes. It's a powerful and slightly unnerving piece of pop art imagery.

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Battle of Kingdom

バトル オブ キングダム

Meldac (1991)
Genre: Miscellaneous

This unique fusion of RPG and board game never saw a release outside of Japan, but it showcases some interesting ideas beneath its esoteric presentation. The player selects cards, which grant access to monsters, who are then used to defeat enemies on each tile of the board. Powerful units cost more points to buy, but you can earn points by successfully claiming tiles. Underpinning all of this board game action is a storyline involving fantasy kingdoms, and this is strengthened by some appealing sprite and background artwork, as well as jaunty music. In 2017, fans finally translated the game into English.

The busty harpy – one of the main units you command in *Battle of Kingdom* – is the game's cover star. It's a simple but rather arresting treatment, which no doubt stood out among the busier Japanese game art on the shelves.
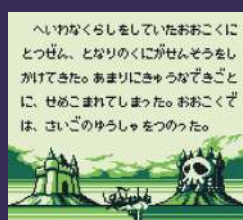
Balloon Kid

Nintendo (1990)
Genre: Action

Pitched as a sequel to the arcade and NES game *Balloon Fight*, *Balloon Kid* is unique in that the action scrolls from right to left. The player controls a girl called Alice who uses balloons to float through each level, while avoiding enemies and other hazards. Balloons can be popped by foes or at will, while a fresh pair can be inflated when Alice is located on a flat surface. *Balloon Kid* was remade for the Famicom in 1992 and released in Japan as *Hello Kitty World*. It was then converted to the Game Boy Color in 2000 as *Balloon Fight GB*, a Japan-exclusive downloadable title available from Nintendo Power kiosks.

Alice is shown drifting along quite happily in the colourful cartoon box art for *Balloon Kid*, despite the fact that the landscape is on fire and a hungry fish is waiting for her to land in its mouth. Alice's two balloons neatly complete the game's logo.

Battletoads

TradeWest (1991)
Genre: Scrolling beat 'em up

Battletoads was UK studio Rare's attempt to beat the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* at their own game – a cartoon series was even planned at the time. Designed by Rare owners Tim and Chris Stamper, along with Gregg Mayles, the game's trio of green-skinned protagonists – wonderfully realised by artist Kev Bayliss – became instant fan favourites and went on to star in numerous sequels. The wildly varied gameplay mechanics include brawling sections, vertical and horizontal shooter levels and even a jetski race. While this Game Boy version shares a name with the NES edition, it's actually an entirely new adventure that is totally exclusive to the system.

Bayliss' amazing artwork brings Rash, Zitz and Pimple vividly to life. Despite showing the trio on the cover, Zitz is the only Battletoad playable in-game. The cover is rounded off brilliantly by the game's distinctive logo.

Battletoads
in Ragnarok World

TradeWest (1993)
Genre: Scrolling beat 'em up

Battletoads in Ragnarok's World is, in fact, a port of the NES original, minus some of the stages and the two-player mode. The gameplay is the traditional *Battletoads* melting-pot of genres, including side-scrolling fighting with a wide range of attacks, lots of action platforming and even tense, vehicle-based challenges. For those fans who purchased the first Game Boy outing and were disappointed that it wasn't based on the home console release, this would have served as the ideal tonic. The Game Boy was also treated to a third Battletoads game – *Battletoads & Double Dragon* – which arrived in 1993.

With a cartoon-like art style similar to the original game, the cover for *Battletoads in Ragnarok's World* gives Rash, Zitz and Pimple a second chance to shine. It's arguably a more compelling image, and one that remained exclusive to this particular version of the game.
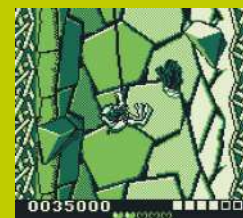
Bikkuri Nekketsu Shin Kiroku!:
Dokodemo Kin Medal

びっくり熱血新記録!
どこでも金メダル

Technōs Japan (1993)
Genre: Sports

Derived from the 1992 Famicom release, this action sports title is part of the Kunio-kun series, which is tangentially related to titles such as *Double Dragon*, *Renegade* and *River City Ransom*. Activities include the 400-metre hurdles, swimming, hammer throwing, jumping over rooftops, and good, old-fashioned brawling. Released on the NES in the West under the title *Crash 'n' the Boys: Street Challenge*, the Game Boy port sadly remained exclusive to its native Japan, which is a shame, as the portable edition rebalances some of the gameplay to make the title more appealing. No additional games were localised under the Crash 'n' the Boys banner, despite plans by developer Technōs Japan to do so.

Delinquent bad boy Kunio is predictably the star of the game's cover artwork, which possesses the same colourful, cartoon-like aesthetic that has become a hallmark of the series since the '80s. The frame device and patterned background would also become a recognisable part of the brand.

Bionic Commando

バイオニックコマンドー

Capcom (1992)
Genre: Action

Capcom was a huge fan of overhauling its arcade hits for home conversion, often retaining the core idea but offering up new levels, stages and enemies. *Bionic Commando* on the Game Boy is no exception; it's based on the NES version of the game, which was a sequel to the arcade original from 1987. In the handheld edition, the action shifts from the present day to the future – a move that better explains the high-tech gear the player character is blessed with. There's no jump command in *Bionic Commando*; instead, you use your robotic arm to grapple onto platforms above you.

The new, futuristic setting is showcased brilliantly by *Bionic Commando*'s cover artwork, which portrays our hero (named Rad Spencer in the Western version) clad in an anime-style suit as the sinister Weizmann looms large in the background. This malevolent character was renamed Director Wiseman in the Western edition of the game.

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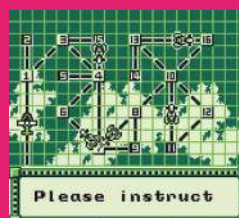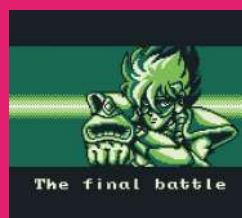
Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon

美少女戦士セーラームーン

Angel (1992)
Genre: Action

Developed by Arc System Works and based on the timeless shoujo manga series created by Naoko Takeuchi, *Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon* is an action role-playing adventure in which the player assumes the role of Usagi Tsukino – the titular 'Sailor Moon' character – and follows the events of the '90s anime series based on the original comic. The majority of the game is spent exploring and conversing with NPCs, but there are action sections and a mini-game in which Sailor V has to defeat a giant hamburger – a scene which actually appears in the anime series.

Bubbly heroine Usagi Tsukino is joined on the game's cover by Mamoru Chiba (also known as Tuxedo Mask) and Luna the cat, her devoted feline companion. The vibrant illustrations are lifted directly from the massively successful anime series, which was airing around the time of release.

Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon R

美少女戦士セーラームーンR

Angel (1994)
Genre: Action

Based on the second anime season of *Sailor Moon*, *Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon R* no longer limits the player to just controlling Usagi Tsukino, although the gameplay is very similar to the first outing. Navigating locations and speaking to characters is important, and these sections precede the action portions of the game, which culminate with a boss fight. During the action segments, it's possible to collect hearts and cakes to reclaim some health, and a tiara which bolsters your attack power. The player can, if they so choose, opt to play only the action sections by selecting the game's Arcade mode at the beginning. Several mini games – including Slide Puzzle, Match Game and Fortune Telling – are also included.

As befits the ensemble nature of this sequel, the cover features Usagi Tsukino flanked by the other Sailor characters, each rendered in a 'chibi' style, which gives them short limbs and large heads. It's an adorably cute and colourful cover.

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Bitamiina Oukoku Monogatari

ビタミーナ王国物語

Namco (1992)
Genre: RPG

Released in the West under the title *Great Greed*, *Bitamiina Oukoku Monogatari* is a rather unusual Japanese RPG with an overtly environmental theme. The player character is transported from our world to a fantasy realm plagued by rampant pollution. Gameplay alternates between top-down exploration segments and turn-based combat, which, unlike other examples of the genre, is limited to fighting solitary enemies rather than groups of foes. Uncommon for the time was the ability to experience multiple endings depending on which of the king's five daughters – named Gum Drop, Cup Cake, Citrus, Candy and Truffle – you decide to marry.

While the cover for *Great Greed* has a nondescript muscular hero facing off against a disgusting sludge monster, the Japanese artwork adopts an anime style which shows the game's cast of characters braced for battle. It's certainly a more appealing and characterful image.

Blades of Steel

Konami (1991)
Genre: Sports

Based on the 1987 arcade game of the same name, *Blades of Steel* is a fast-paced ice hockey simulation featuring fictionalised teams and plenty of violence. Konami – publishing via its Palcom subsidiary – was just one of many developers at the time that had spotted the average professional hockey player's penchant for fisticuffs, and introduced this element into the gameplay. During matches, it's common to see players drop their sticks and trade blows on the ice. Practice, Exhibition and Tournament options are available, and the game benefits immensely from a two-player link-up mode, using the Game Boy's link cable. In Japan, the game is known as *Konamic Ice Hockey*.

Adapted from the cover of the NES version, Tom duBois' artwork retains the image of the two players chasing the puck, but omits the background image of a pair of individuals fighting, due to the change in box format. Instead, the background is crudely replaced by a slab of black.

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Bomber Boy

ボンバーボーイ

Hudson (1990)
Genre: Action

An adaptation of Hudson's iconic bomb-dropping multiplayer classic, *Bomber Boy* offers a single-player mode which sees you tackling various levels and unlocking power-ups, which are carried over as you progress through the story. As well as this exclusive mode, a more traditional Bomberman experience is also included, which follows the gameplay seen in other instalments in the franchise. In Europe, the game was retitled *Dynablaster* but kept the Japanese box artwork, while in North America it was called *Atomic Punk* and featured an entirely different character on the cover.

Bomber Boy's box art has to rank among the best on the Game Boy, showcasing a wonderfully dynamic image which likens the lead character to an American Football player, relentlessly bumping enemies out of the way. With its acid-yellow border and superb use of colour, there was little chance of missing this game on Japanese store shelves back in 1990.
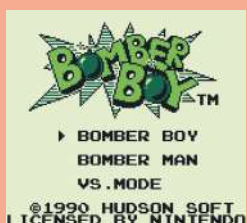
Bomber King:
Scenario 2

ボンバーキング シナリオ2

Sunsoft (1991)
Genre: Action

Developed by Aicom, this action title is an off-shoot of Hudson Soft's Bomberman series, with the player able to destroy parts of the scenery with bombs, as well as shoot enemies with a blaster. Items can be collected that enhance your powers, while boss fights neatly break up the exploration sections. Derived from the NES title *RoboWarrior* – released as *Bomber King* in Japan – publisher Sunsoft positioned the game as part of the Blaster Master franchise, even going as far as to re-tool the hero as Jason, the protagonist of that series. Known as *Bomber King* in Japan, it was rebranded as *Blaster Master Jr.* in Europe and *Blaster Master Boy* in North America.

The relatively crude artwork for *Bomber King* shows the hero posing in front of an enormous explosion which has enveloped several of the game's monstrous enemies. The dumpy nature of the protagonist and the playful, comic-like logo lend the cover a light-hearted feel.

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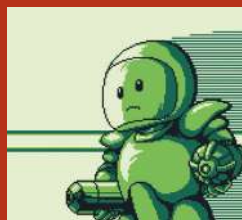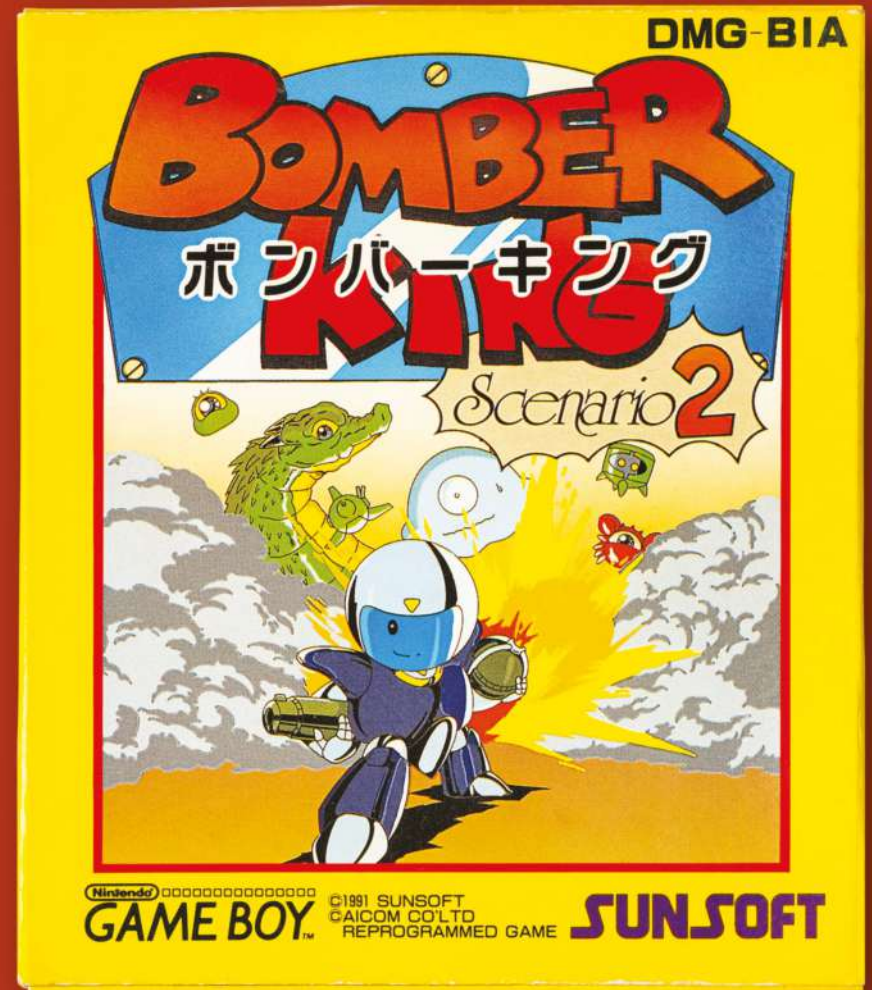
Bomberman Collection
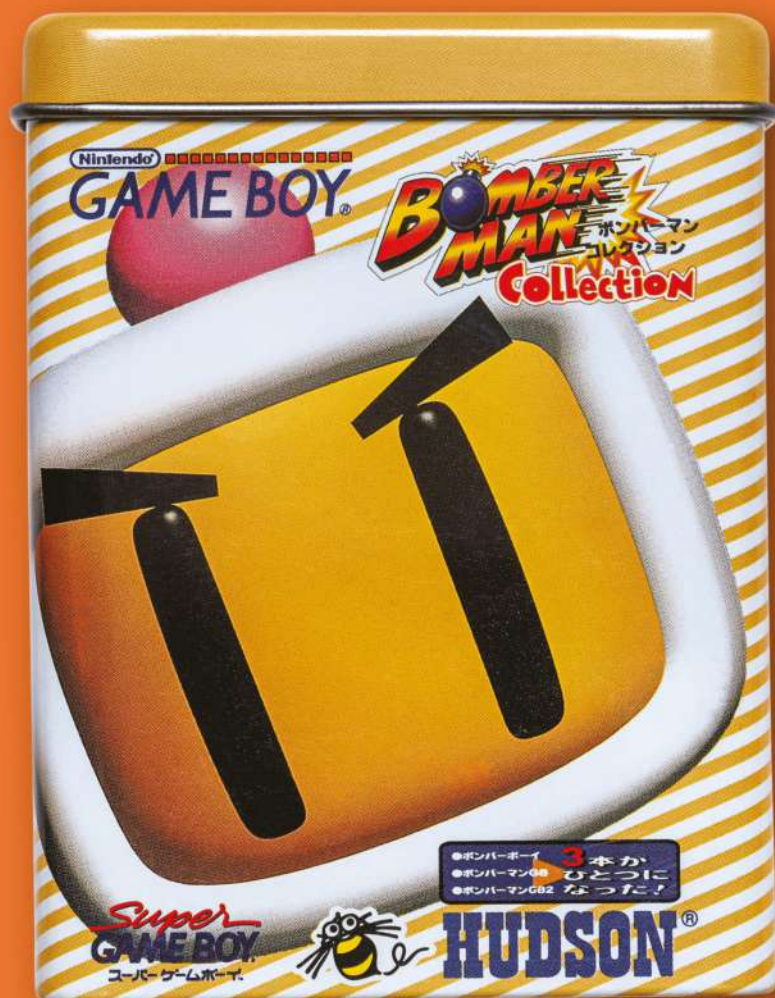
ボンバーマンコレクション

Hudson (1996)
Genre: Compilation

Veteran Japanese company Hudson Soft published a series of Game Boy games in metal tins – not entirely unlike those used to store sticking plasters – during the height of the console's post-Pokémon 'second wind' of popularity in the mid-'90s, with this neat, three-title Bomberman compendium being one of the nine releases. Included in this Japan-exclusive collection are *Bomber Boy*, *Bomberman GB* and *Bomberman GB 2*, all games which had previously been available as standalone products. Support for the Super Game Boy is present, with colourful borders added when played on a SNES/Super Famicom.

Hudson's tin containers are certainly different from your typical Game Boy packaging, and are predictably popular with collectors due to their unique appearance. The artwork on the tin features a striking CG render of Bomberman himself, alongside a new logo created specifically for the collection.

Bomberman GB

ボンバーマンGB

Hudson (1994)
Genre: Action

The first in a trilogy of Bomberman titles exclusively for the Game Boy, *Bomberman GB* is a single-player adventure, in which the player – assuming the role of the White Bomberman – clears stages of enemies with the aim of liberating his prized possessions from the evil Black Bomberman and his motley crew of followers. Nintendo picked up the game for release in the West, changing the lead character to Wario and retitling it *Wario Blast: Featuring Bomberman!* While the game lacks multiplayer support on the Game Boy itself, playing on the Super Game Boy opens up a bonus four-player mode if the Super Multitap accessory is used.

The heroic White Bomberman is shown riding his trusty motorbike, a scene which takes place at the start of the game, while the Black Bomberman's gang looms ominously over a tropical sunset. The rich colour palette, vivid yellow border – echoed in the lighting – and dynamic design make this a really eye-catching cover.
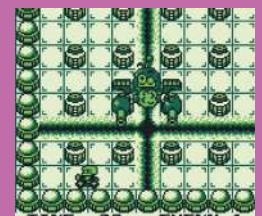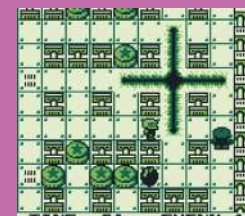
Bomberman GB 2

ボンバーマンGB 2

Hudson (1995)
Genre: Action

In keeping with the single-player theme of the original *Bomberman GB*, this sequel boasts a more robust solo story than your typical Bomberman outing, with Indy Bomber – a parody of Indiana Jones – assuming the lead. While hunting for a legendary treasure, Indy Bomber finds himself trapped in a cave and must blow his way out. Because the first *Bomberman GB* was released as *Wario Blast: Featuring Bomberman!* in the West, the '2' was dropped from the name when it launched in North America and Europe. Game Boy link cable support is included this time around, for up to four players.

Indy Bomber certainly lives up to his name on the stylish cover of *Bomberman GB 2*, attired in Indiana Jones' signature fedora and brandishing his iconic whip. He's flanked by White Bomber on his left and Pretty Bomber on his right, both of whom are available as playable characters in the game's Battle Mode.

Bomberman GB 3

ボンバーマンGB 3

Hudson (1996)
Genre: Action

The 11th planet of Bomber Nebula, Owen, is hit by an earthquake which releases the Evil Bomber from his captivity. Evil Bomber takes this chance to steal the Bomber Capsules, forcing White Bomberman and his allies to rise up and reclaim them. While the core Bomberman gameplay is present and correct, *Bomberman GB 3* adds mission objectives to the mix, as well as a shop where special abilities can be acquired. Collecting gems is another key focus in the game; should the player collect enough of these shiny objects prior to making their way to the world's boss fight, they can acquire special items which will aid them in the upcoming battle.

Like *Bomberman Collection*, *Bomberman GB 3* was released in one of Hudson's special metal tins. This time, White Bomberman is shown riding a hoverbike, while his nemesis, Evil Bomber, lurks in the background. It's another visually arresting entry in the series, with bold line art and a vibrant colour scheme.

Boulder Dash

First Star Software (1990)
Genre: Action puzzler

Originally released for the Atari 8-bit home computer in 1984 by First Star Software, *Boulder Dash* was created by just two people – Canadian developers Peter Liepa and Chris Gray – and would go on to inspire a legion of 'falling rock' clones over the course of the next decade. The Game Boy port is relatively faithful to the original, and adds some extra features, such as the ability to select the world to play in. Still considered to be one of the best games ever, *Boulder Dash* continues to see updates and sequels even today.

Protagonist Rockford has been portrayed in a variety of ways over the years – the original Atari 8-bit cover shows him as a red-faced boy in his iconic stripy jumper – but the Game Boy version opts for a more cutesy character resembling a traditional miner, shown gleefully clutching a valuable diamond. The NES version, released the same year, takes a very different approach, with bold, graphic novel–style artwork.

Bubble Bobble

Taito (1991)
Genre: Action platformer

The brainchild of Fukio Mitsuji, *Bubble Bobble* is one of Taito's most beloved coin-op creations and has been ported to countless home systems in the decades since it hit amusement arcades in 1986. The simple yet engaging premise – enemies can be trapped in bubbles and then popped into oblivion – has generated legions of fans over the decades, and the single-screen gameplay works surprisingly well on Nintendo's monochrome handheld, although the display does have to scroll slightly in order to fit the whole arena in. Thankfully, this doesn't take away from the game, although it can sometimes make it tricky when an enemy suddenly appears as the screen shifts.

The classic cover art for *Bubble Bobble* shows the two 'Bubble Dragon' heroes Bub and Bob, who have been transformed into their current forms by the evil Baron Von Blubba. Despite escaping from the effects of the curse at the end of the game and starring as humans in *Rainbow Islands* and *Parasol Stars*, Bub and Bob retained their dragon-like forms for subsequent spin-offs, like the Puzzle Bobble series.

Bubble Ghost

FCI (1990)
Genre: Action

Based on Christophe Andreani's home computer title of the same name, *Bubble Ghost* sees the player controlling a spirit tasked with guiding a delicate bubble through a haunted house. Should the bubble collide with any of the hazards in each room – such as candles and fans – a life is lost, but the player can interact with said obstacles by making the ghost blow on them. Japanese studio Opera House handled the conversion to the Game Boy, and Hitoshi Sakimoto – later of *Final Fantasy Tactics*, *Final Fantasy XII* and *Radiant Silvergun* fame – composed the soundtrack as one of his first projects.

This charming illustration for *Bubble Ghost* does a great job of communicating the main hook of the game: a ghost blowing a bubble around a haunted mansion. The friendly, curvy logo rounds off the image, complete with a cheery representation of the player-controlled spirit.

Burai Fighter Deluxe

無頼戦士デラックス

Taito (1990)
Genre: Scrolling shooter

Based on the NES version, which was released as plain old *Burai Fighter*, this handheld port plays similarly to Capcom's *Forgotten Worlds*; while it's undeniably a side-scrolling shooter, you control a humanoid figure (portrayed as a robot on the Japanese cover, but a human being on the Western one) who is capable of firing in eight directions. The challenge comes from negotiating the force-scrolling screen and ensuring that your direction of fire is accurate enough to take down both minor enemies and the fearsome boss characters. The game was later released on the Game Boy Color as *Space Marauder*, which was called *Burai Fighter Color* in Japan.

The Japanese love their robots, and the Gundam-style mech which graces the cover of *Burai Fighter Deluxe* – propelled towards the viewer by booster rockets, all guns blazing – will certainly have convinced a few players to hand over their precious cash.

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Capcom Quiz:
Hatena? no Daibouken

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DMG-HHJ

**カプコンクイズ
ハテナ?の大冒険**

**Capcom (1990)
Genre: RPG/Quiz**

Capcom was one of the first Japanese companies to see the benefit of pulling together its diverse IP into a single game, and *Capcom Quiz: Hatena? no Daibouken* is a fine example of how totally unconnected franchises can work together in relative harmony. It's a quiz game that challenges the player with answering a series of multiple-choice questions, and features game boards based on *1943*, *Final Fight*, *Strider Hiryuu*, *Kamen no Ninja Hanamaru*, *Rockman/Mega Man* and *Makaimura/ Ghosts 'n Goblins*, and has the distinction of being the first game that Shinji Mikami worked on after joining the company. Mikami went on to greater fame as one of the creators of the *Resident Evil/ Biohazard* series.

Although the included franchises all have their own unique look, their characters are rendered in a coherent comic book style on the cover. Highlights include Damnd from *Final Fight*, Red Arremer from *Makaimura/Ghosts 'n Goblins* and Dr. Wily from *Rockman/Mega Man*.
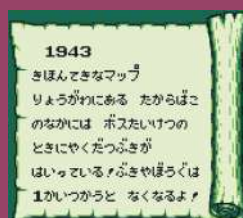
Captain Tsubasa VS

キャプテン翼VS

Tecmo (1992)
Genre: RPG/Sport

Created by Yoichi Takahashi in 1980, Captain Tsubasa has starred in comics, TV shows and numerous video games over the decades. The most famous examples of the latter were found on the Famicom, the first of which was released in the West under the name *Tecmo Cup Soccer Game*, with the Tsubasa licence removed. Unlike your typical football game, *Captain Tsubasa VS* – which serves as a prequel to the first Famicom game – features RPG-style elements, such as issuing text commands to your on-field players.

Tsubasa Oozora – the Captain Tsubasa of the title – dominates the cover for this Game Boy outing. He's shown wearing the kit of Nankatsu Soccer Club, a team made up of the best players from Nankatsu Elementary, Shutetsu Institute, Nishigaoka, Yamabuki and Mizukoshi. Takahashi stated that he was influenced by Kazuyoshi Miura when it came to conceptualising the character. At the time of writing, Miura is still playing in the Japanese league at the ripe old age of 52.

Castelian

Triffix (1991)
Genre: Action

Created by John M. Phillips and published by Hewson Consultants on the C64, *Nebulus* was ported to other platforms – including the Game Boy – under the title *Castelian*. The objective is to avoid the enemies which block your path and plant a bomb at the top of eight smoothly-rotating towers; this neat visual effect is one of the key reasons the game is still so fondly remembered. Scaling the towers presents a stern challenge, with each one having its own theme and varied enemies. A rather cumbersome side-scrolling platform section awaits at the top, where you collect diamonds to gain a time bonus. Sadly, the lack of shading on each tower – seen on the home computer versions – means that the 3D effect is slightly less effective on the Game Boy. In Japan, *Castelian* was released under the title *Kyoro Chan Land*.

The frog-like player character is the focal point of *Castelian*'s cover artwork; originally called Pogo in the home computer versions, he was rechristened as Julius in the Game Boy port and Kyoro Chan in the Japanese edition of the game. The character is shown scaling one of the unique rotating towers that have become the game's trademark.

Cave Noire

カーブノア

Konami (1991)
Genre: RPG

The modern-day games market is flooded with 'Rogue-like' and 'Rogue-lite' adventure games, so-called because they borrow the concepts of randomly-generated levels and 'permadeath' from the seminal 1980 computer title *Rogue*. Played today, *Cave Noire* holds few surprises or shocks, but it's vital to remember that this game was released way back in 1991, when the genre wasn't anywhere near as fleshed-out. It offers bite-sized quests, loads of equipment and some detailed visuals, presenting a Rogue-lite experience which stands up surprisingly well today. Sadly, no Western release ever took place.

Cave Noire's stylish cover mixes Japanese design with Western fantasy art to create a box which is more eye-catching than you'd expect, considering it's limited to the logo and a few items found within the game itself. These elements are neatly framed within a shield-like device, set against a white background that enables the art to really stand out.

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Chachamaru Panic

茶々丸パニック

Human (1991)
Genre: Action

One of the more obscure releases in the Japanese Game Boy catalogue, *Chachamaru Panic* places you on an ice-like arena surrounded by tiles. The objective is to bounce into the tiles and knock them into the water surrounding the stage, all the while avoiding a series of AI-controlled characters that try to get in your way. The catch here is that should you accidentally fall into the water, you have to restart the entire level. Up to four players can take part, thanks to link cable support, which turns this unassuming game into a quite chaotic multiplayer marvel. Everything's in English, too.

Chachamaru Panic's artwork is unashamedly flamboyant, with a lurid colour scheme and exaggerated perspective. The image shows the player character gleefully dashing around the arena with a host of tiles blocking his way. The bouncing ball and floor-sweeping characters are also shown, as is a rather sinister-looking monster towering overhead.

Chiki Chiki Machine Mou Race

チキチキマシン猛レース

Atlus (1992)
Genre: Racing

Based on the famous Hanna-Barbera cartoon *Wacky Races*, *Chiki Chiki Machine Mou Race* is a Japan-exclusive top-down racing title developed and published by Atlus. Oddly, given the emphasis racing games place on pure speed, *Chiki Chiki Machine Mou Race* is notable for having a sluggish pace, mainly because its gameplay revolves around collecting items, taking alternate routes, and occasional combat between rival vehicles. Series favourites such as Muttley and Dick Dastardly are of course present, but their Japanese names are used.

Penelope Pitstop, Dick Dastardly and a rather down-in-the-dumps Muttley – arguably the three most famous members of the *Wacky Races* cast – are the cover stars of the game, alongside Pitstop's Compact Pussycat and Dastardly's Mean Machine. While the composition is a bit clumsy, the overall image is saved by the striking red and gold colour scheme.

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Chiki Chiki Tengoku

チキチキ天国

J-Wing (1995)
Genre: Puzzle

Developed by Nacoty and published by J-Wing, *Chiki Chiki Tengoku* sought to capitalise on the popularity of puzzle titles on the Game Boy. The game tasks the player with matching together items – such as bells, harps and crowns – in groups of three or more, to turn them into stars, which are then removed from the playfield when they form complete lines, *Tetris*-style. It's a unique setup, which helps set the game apart from the legions of similar titles released around the time, but it also adds layers of complexity which bog down the whole experience, making it less compelling than the likes of *Columns*, *Puyo Puyo* and – of course – *Tetris* itself.

The stars which clog up the playfield in *Chiki Chiki Tengoku* are magically transformed into fairies once they're formed into lines, and these cute winged creatures are a big focal point for the game's bright and cutesy cover art. A Virtual Boy semi-sequel called *Virtual Lab* arrived in 1995.

Choplifter III

Ocean (1993)
Genre: Shoot 'em up

Dan Gorlin's 1982 Apple II release *Choplifter* spawned several sequels and spin-offs, with this Game Boy port – developed by Teeny Weeny Games – launching alongside a version for the 16-bit Super Nintendo home console. As before, the objective is to liberate hostages, guiding your military helicopter around a selection of dangerous war zones; these include claustrophobic caves, dense jungles, bustling cities and even a military ship bristling with weaponry. Thankfully, you're not entirely defenceless in this role; your chopper is capable of returning fire and taking out the various hostile forces which impede your valiant rescue mission.

Released after the success of *Desert Strike*, *Choplifter III*'s cover artwork features the same AH-64 Apache chopper made famous by that particular title – a stylistic change perhaps influenced by the popularity of EA's game, as previous *Choplifter* covers showcased a craft similar to the Bell UH-1 Iroquois 'Huey'. It's nice artwork, and a real shame the Game Boy Game Pak logo is so poorly positioned over the image.
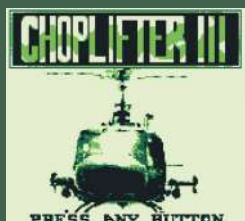
Chou Mashin Eiyuuden Wataru:
Mazekko Monster 2

超魔神英雄伝ワタル
まぜっこモンスター2

Banpresto (1998)
Genre: Simulation

Developed by Alpha Unit and published exclusively in Japan by Banpresto, *Chou Mashin Eiyuuden Wataru: Mazekko Monster 2* is based on the anime series of the same name. It takes more than a little inspiration from the likes of *Pokémon* and *Tamagotchi*, with players hatching creatures from eggs and then raising them. A heavy reliance on Japanese text makes this almost impenetrable to anyone who doesn't understand the language, which goes some way to explaining why the series is virtually unknown in the West. A shame, as this title boasts some gorgeously detailed graphics for a Game Boy release.

Bursting with colour and detail, the lovely cover artwork for *Mazekko Monster 2* shows hero Wataru Ikusabe surrounded by some of the animals he can hatch and raise in the game. As a matter of note, the TurboGrafx-16 title *Keith Courage in Alpha Zones* is based on the same anime series.

Chuck Rock

Sony Imagesoft (1993)
Genre: Action platformer

A platformer from an era when the lead protagonist didn't always have to be a cool, muscle-bound superstar, *Chuck Rock*'s hero is a pot-bellied, balding caveman, who uses his stomach to attack enemies – which include all manner of dinosaurs, woolly mammoths and even ferocious sabre tooth tigers. When Chuck's impossibly attractive wife Ophelia is kidnapped by love rival Gary Gritter (a pun which arguably worked better in the early '90s), he has no choice but to fight his way across prehistoric stages to rescue her. While the original game was created by *Tomb Raider* studio Core Design, the Game Boy version was handled by Spidersoft and published by Sony Imagesoft.

For the Game Boy release, Sony Imagesoft decided against using the cover artwork seen on either the home computer or Virgin Interactive console releases, and instead used an entirely new image, which makes Chuck look even more primitive and thuggish. The same artwork is used on the SEGA Mega CD version of the game.

Contra Spirits

魂斗羅スピリッツ

Konami (1994)
Genre: Run and gun

Based on the Super Famicom/SNES title of the same name (retitled *Contra III: The Alien Wars* in North America and *Super Probotector: The Alien Rebels* in Europe), *Contra Spirits* was ported to the Game Boy by Western developer Factor 5. While it's missing some elements – such as the spinning attack and the ability to toggle between two weapons – it's remarkable how much of the game has survived the transition to humbler hardware. Even the overhead stages – which used the SNES' Mode 7 graphics – have made the cut, albeit without the smooth rotation seen in the 16-bit version.

The artwork used on the cover of *Contra Spirits* is the same as for the Super Famicom version. The main character appears to be based on Arnold Schwarzenegger as seen in the poster for the 1986 action movie *Raw Deal*. Along with Sylvester Stallone, Schwarzenegger was used as the basis for many action hero game covers in the late '80s and early '90s.

Cosmo Tank

コスモタンク

Atlus (1990)
Genre: Action

This early Game Boy release is quite an ambitious one, mixing top-down action stages with first-person levels that attempt to give the impression of 3D. Landing on a series of alien planets, the player-controlled tank must take down hordes of enemies before driving into a series of caves, at which point the perspective shifts to a cockpit view. Masami Satō is credited with designing the 2D overhead stages, while Hidehiko Harada is the person responsible for the 3D sections. A link-cable mode is included, so two players can compete to see who is capable of destroying the alien boss first.

Cosmo Tank's cover highlights the unique nature of the gameplay, with a somewhat fanciful depiction of the game's cockpit perspective. The tank itself is a fearsome beast, adding huge, oversized cannons and a sleek, futuristic look to the basic modern-tank design.

Cult Jump

カルトジャンプ

Bandai (1993)
Genre: Quiz

This quiz title sees a host of characters from the pages of *Weekly Shōnen Jump* comic, including Jotaro Kujo (*JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*), Son Goku (*Dragon Ball*), Taluluto (*Magical Taluluto-kun*) and Maeda Taison (*Rokudenashi Blues*). The aim is to rescue the king of 'Jump World' by answering a series of questions about the famous characters from the comic. Fifty stages lie between you and this objective. The Japanese focus of the game ensured it never got localised, but in recent years, we've seen other *Shōnen Jump* titles come to the West.

Cult Jump's crossover nature is made clear by the montage of famous faces which grace its cover, all of which are rendered by different artists, giving the image a rather inconsistent feel. It's all held togther by the bold logo, which apes that on the cover of *Weekly Shōnen Jump*.
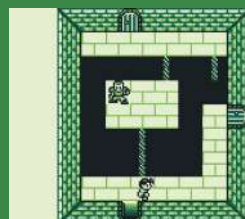
CutThroat Island

Coded by Software Creations and based on the 1995 box-office bomb starring Geena Davies and Matthew Modine, *CutThroat Island* is an action-platformer set in the pirate-packed Caribbean, which only very loosely follows the plot of the much-maligned movie. Unlike other versions, Morgan Adams (Davies) is the only playable character; her quick-witted accomplice William Shaw – played by Modine in the film – doesn't feature in the Game Boy edition. The film was a critical and commercial flop and the final venture for Carolco Pictures before it filed for bankruptcy; as such, the video game adaptation was almost doomed to failure from the outset, despite releasing on the Game Gear, Mega Drive and SNES, as well as the Game Boy.

Drew Struzan's excellent artwork for the movie is used on the Game Boy cover. Struzan, now retired, is one of Hollywood's most prolific artists, and has created iconic posters for dozens of movies, including *Blade Runner*, *Back To The Future*, *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones*.

David Crane's
The Rescue of Princess Blobette

Absolute (1996)
Genre: Puzzle platformer

A sequel to the NES title *A Boy and His Blob: Trouble on Blobolonia*, *The Rescue of Princess Blobette* sees our two heroes attempting to rescue royalty from the clutches of the Antagonistic Alchemist. Controlling the boy – who lacks the ability to jump or swim – the player must make use of the Blob's talent of transforming into useful objects – such as a trampoline that allows the boy to reach higher platforms – when fed delicious jelly beans. Like its predecessor, *The Rescue of Princess Blobette* is the work of the legendary game designer and co-founder of Activision, David Crane, who also made classics such as *Pitfall!*, *Little Computer People* and *David Crane's Amazing Tennis*.

Compared to the cartoon-like cover for its NES-based forerunner, *The Rescue of Princess Blobette*'s cover artwork is somewhat grim and foreboding. It simply shows the Royal Castle set against a moody sky, and relegates our heroes to a small graphical element at the bottom.

Dead Heat Fighters:
Garou Densetsu 2: Aratanaru Tatakai

熱闘 餓狼伝説2
─あらたなるたたかい─

SNK (1994)
Genre: Fighting

This pocket-sized port of SNK's popular 1992 coin-op – known as *Fatal Fury 2* in the West – takes the roster of fighters – including Terry Bogard, Andy Bogard, Joe Higashi, Big Bear, Jubei Yamada, Cheng Sinzan, Kim Kaphwan and Mai Shiranui – and shrinks them in size to create a super-deformed brawler that manages to convey at least a little of the arcade original's core appeal. The simplified input system, where a tap registers a weak attack but a long-press executes a strong one, works well enough, and the four boss characters – Billy, Axel, Laurence, and Krauser – are playable with a special code.

Set against a blazing red background, the cast of fighters poses for the appreciation of the viewer, with cap-wearing series icon Terry Bogard front and centre. With their exaggerated proportions and massive, anime-style eyes, the roster appears more cute than deadly, but it all combines to produce a vibrant, potent cover.

Dead Heat Fighters:
Real Bout Garou Densetsu Special

熱闘 リアルバウト
餓狼伝説SPECIAL

SNK (1998)
Genre: Fighting

Known in the West as *Real Bout Fatal Fury Special*, this brawler is a continuation of the series that began life way back in 1991, and made its arcade debut in 1997. This pared-down Game Boy port predictably dials things back in terms of content, with a reduced roster of characters, less animation and smaller sprites. On the upside, this marks the one and only time that *The King of Fighters* star Iori Yagami has appeared in the Fatal Fury series on the Game Boy.

In keeping with the artwork seen on Takara's other SNK conversions for the Game Boy, the cover renders its cast of fighters in a colourful manga style. Series hero Terry Bogard takes centre stage, while the mysterious Iori Yagami appears in silhouette at the top of the image, with his trademark crescent moon crest on his back.

Dead Heat Fighters:
Samurai Spirits

熱闘 サムライスピリッツ

SNK (1994)
Genre: Fighting

Takara's efforts to condense SNK's epic one-on-one fighters into portable form didn't always find favour with fans, but until the NEOGEO Pocket came along later in the decade, these titles – released under the Dead Heat Fighters label – were your best bet if you wanted to do some brawling on the go. Smaller sprites suit the Game Boy's screen, and the speed is actually pretty impressive; all in all, it's not a bad stab (if you'll excuse the pun) at bringing this weapons-based classic to the mobile masses.

All of the games in the Dead Heat Fighters series have amazing cover artwork, and *Samurai Spirits* is certainly no exception. Series mascot Haohmaru is placed in the middle of the group, flanked by a cast of varied and appealing combatants, all illustrated in typical stylised fashion. As is the case with many of the later Game Boy titles, the Super Game Boy logo denotes special graphical enhancements when played on a SNES.

Dead Heat Fighters:
Samurai Spirits: Zankurou Musouken

熱闘 サムライスピリッツ
斬紅郎無双剣

SNK (1996)
Genre: Fighting

Loosely based on *Samurai Shodown III*, which launched on SNK's NEOGEO console in 1995, *Dead Heat Fighters: Samurai Spirits: Zankuro Musouken* is a weapons-based one-on-one brawler set in feudal Japan. This pared-down port removes the fighters Kyoshiro Senryo and Gaira Caffeine from the roster, but includes Jubei Yagyu as a hidden final boss – an exclusive feature for this version. Super Game Boy support is another big draw for fans thanks to the inclusion of three bonus borders and additional audio and visual tweaks. Sadly, despite all of the hard work, the game was only released in Japan.

As is traditional for the Dead Heat Fighters series of fighting games, the characters featured on the cover are illustrated in more of a cute 'chibi' style. This is in stark contrast with the tone of *Samurai Shodown III* on the NEOGEO, which has come under fire over the years for being too dark, and omitting popular fighters.
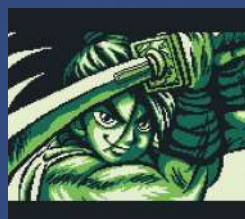
Dead Heat Fighters:
The King of Fighters '96

熱闘 ザ・キング・オブ・
ファイターズ'96

SNK (1997)
Genre: Fighting

Reimagined with condensed fighter graphics and simplified animation, this handheld interpretation of the NEOGEO brawler might not look as impressive as the original, but it does a commendable job of capturing its spirit. The roster of fighters is cut from 29 to 17, although it does boast several additional characters – including Orochi Iori and Orochi Leona from *The King of Fighters '97* – and at least the three-on-three team mode made famous by the The King of Fighters series made the cut.

The game's huge cast packs the cover for *Dead Heat Fighters: The King of Fighters '96*, with series hero Kyo Kusanagi striking a pose in the middle of the image. In the top-right corner, Mr Karate is shown in silhouette; this is the role Takuma assumed in the NEOGEO title *Art of Fighting*.

Dead Heat Fighters:
Toshinden

熱闘 闘神伝

Takara (1996)
Genre: Fighting

Takara's Toshinden series – known in the West as Battle Arena Toshinden – is perhaps best remembered for helping to launch the PlayStation console with a bang; released in the very early days of the system in 1995, its amazing 3D visuals showcased the kind of power Sony's new console was packing. The Game Boy edition is predictably less impressive from a visual standpoint; the action is resolutely 2D in nature and the characters are rendered in a super-deformed style. Given the status of the original as an early PlayStation fighter with impressive 3D visuals, this pint-sized port will certainly have benefited from the hype. Super Game Boy support rounds off the package neatly.

The cover artwork for *Dead Heat Fighters: Toshinden* is almost worth the price of admission alone. The cast of fighters fills the front of the box, all nicely illustrated in wide-eyed anime style. It's a colourful and dynamic montage that works hard to sell what is an otherwise average game.
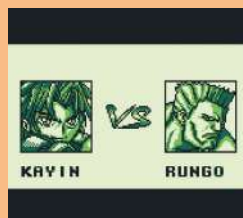
Desert Strike
Return to the Gulf

Ocean (1995)
Genre: Shoot 'em up

Released at a time when the smoke from Operation Desert Storm had barely dissipated, *Desert Strike* proved to be a critical and commercial smash hit for Electronic Arts, thanks to its detailed visuals, addictive gameplay and realistic military setting. Despite some critics claiming it was in poor taste to release the game so soon after the Gulf War had ended, creator Mike Posehn and his team actually began work on *Desert Strike* prior to Operation Desert Storm taking place. Ported to the Game Boy by Malibu Games, this scaled-down handheld edition manages to retain much of what made the SEGA Mega Drive original so compelling. Sequels *Jungle Strike* and *Urban Strike* would also be converted to Nintendo's portable console in the fullness of time.

Keith Birdsong's superb artwork for the SEGA Mega Drive version of *Desert Strike* is redeployed to excellent effect here, and depicts an Apache helicopter lowering its ladder to rescue a soldier, while all hell breaks loose around them. In the game, it's possible to liberate troops in the same fashion.
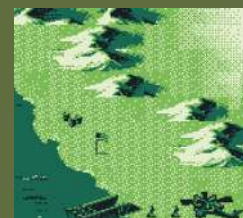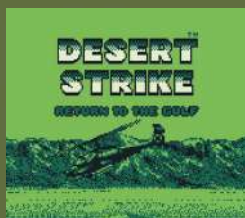
Detective Conan:
Chika Yuuenchi Satsujin Jiken

**名探偵コナン
地下遊園地殺人事件**

**Bandai (1996)
Genre: Adventure**

Gosho Aoyama's Detective Conan manga series began life in 1994 and has been running ever since. It has inspired not just an animated TV series and several films, but also a range of video games. *Detective Conan: Chika Yuuenchi Satsujin Jiken* is the first of these interactive adaptations, and takes the form of an RPG adventure. In the West the series is known as Case Closed, due to legal issues with the name *Detective Conan*, which is how the franchise is best known to its hardcore English-speaking followers.

In reality, Conan Edogawa is actually high school sleuth Shinichi Kudo, who was transformed into a child thanks to the side-effects of the poison APTX 4869. His dapper character looms large on the cover, addressing the viewer directly, while key supporting characters from the series also make an appearance.
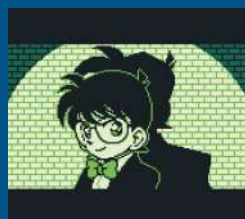
Dino Breeder

ディノブリーダー

J-Wing [1997]
Genre: Simulation

Dino Breeder is one of the many titles that appeared in the wake of *Pokémon*'s astonishing success in Japan in 1996. As you can probably glean from the title, it involves hatching a dinosaur from an egg and then carefully raising it to maturity. Adorably cute visuals are present and correct, as are the usual chats with a cast of peripheral characters. The series clearly found a receptive audience in its homeland as several sequels followed on both the Game Boy and Game Boy Color; sadly, none of them made it to the West.

Subsequent sequels would push the human characters to the forefront, but the cover for the first *Dino Breeder* title keeps its focus firmly on the creatures you'll be hatching and nurturing. The rather unusual design combines an abstract background with cute illustrations of what appears to be the same dinosaur, resting contentedly on a bed of straw.
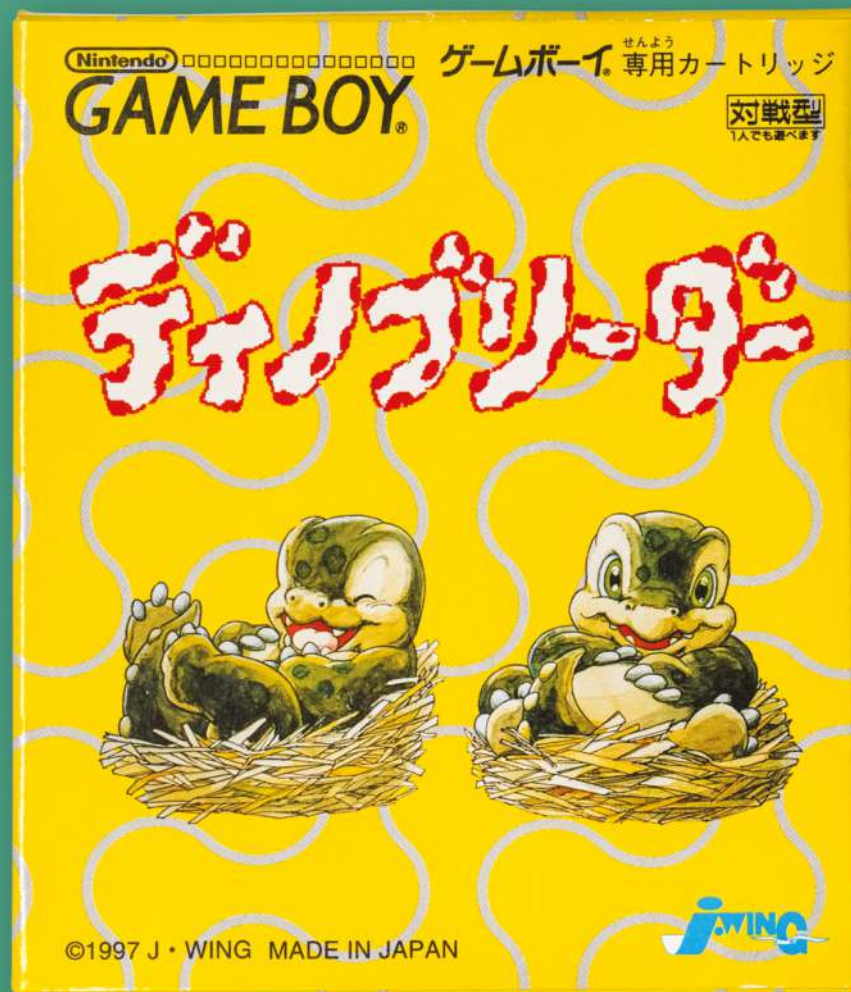
Disney's Aladdin

Virgin Interactive (1995)
Genre: Action platformer

Disney's Aladdin was the recipient of not one but two major video game adaptations at the time of release; one was released by Virgin Interactive for the SEGA Mega Drive, while the other was created by Capcom – unsurprisingly, both are side-scrolling action platformers. This Game Boy port is based on the SEGA edition, which was originally developed by David Perry's team, with assistance from Disney's own animation department. (Perry later founded the Earthworm Jim studio Shiny Entertainment.) Porting duties here were handled by NMS Software rather than Virgin's internal games division. The game mixes platforming action with a level that allows the player to ride on a magic carpet to escape a collapsing cave, just like in the animated film.

The gorgeous cover art for *Disney's Aladdin* on the Game Boy recreates one of the key moments from the 1992 movie, showing our titular hero escaping that lava-filled Cave of Wonders on a magic carpet. It's the perfect image to link the game back to its source material.
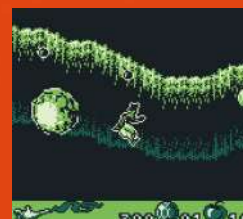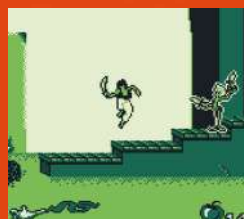
Disney's DuckTales

Capcom (1990)
Genre: Action platformer

Based on the Disney TV series of the same name, *DuckTales* was Capcom's first licensed title and would go on to sell over three million copies on the NES and Game Boy. Produced by *Mega Man*'s Tokuro Fujiwara and featuring the contributions of Capcom luminaries such as designer Keiji Inafune and sound programmer Yoshihiro Sakaguchi, it has gone down as one of the best platform titles of all time, and was recently remastered in HD. Scrooge ventures across five different landscapes during the game, using his trusty cane both to attack enemies and as a pogo stick to bounce around the levels. The Game Boy port features slightly revised screen layouts to accommodate the console's low-resolution display.

As you'd expect, the cover of *DuckTales* is of typical Disney standard, with wonderful character work and a sumptuous colour palette. Here, Scrooge McDuck is joined by blundering helicopter pilot Launchpad McQuack, who you meet during one of the game's subterranean levels.

Disney's DuckTales 2

Capcom (1993)
Genre: Action platformer

Capcom followed up the success of the original *DuckTales* with this 1993 sequel, which retains the non-linear level structure but expands the gameplay by allowing Scrooge McDuck to interact with various environmental elements, as well as ride rafts across stretches of water. It's possible to return to previously-completed levels to obtain more cash and items, something that wasn't possible in the first game. Despite these enhancements, *DuckTales 2* is less famous than its forerunner – although this could have more to do with the fact that the accompanying NES version launched so late in that system's lifespan.

Treasure maps play a huge role in *DuckTales 2*'s storyline, so it makes sense that our hero Scrooge should be seen brandishing one in the game's cover artwork. Scrooge's arch-enemy Flintheart Glomgold looms in the background, while a ghostly suit of armour and sinister wizard attempt to attack our treasure-obsessed hero, who is blissfully unaware of their advances.

Donkey Kong

ドンキーコング

Nintendo (1994)
Genre: Arcade

A loose remake of the 1981 arcade title that turned Nintendo into a video game sensation almost overnight, *Donkey Kong* is not to be confused with *Donkey Kong Country*, Rare's CG-based revival which launched on the SNES in the same year. Instead, this Game Boy outing begins with levels lifted directly from the coin-op original, before tasking the player with beating 97 all-new stages packed with enemies and puzzles, with Mario's objective on each stage being the acquisition of a key required to unlock the exit. While Rare's aforementioned SNES title placed Kong in a *Super Mario*-style world, this portable outing evolves the gameplay the character is most famous for.

Donkey Kong's detailed cover artwork comes courtesy of long-time Mario illustrator Yoichi Kotabe, and shows Kong kidnapping Paulie while a disgruntled Mario gives chase with a mallet. Donkey Kong Jr. can also be seen tagging along for the ride.
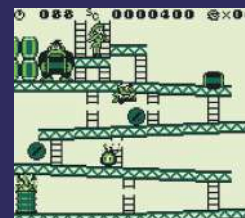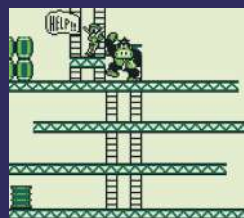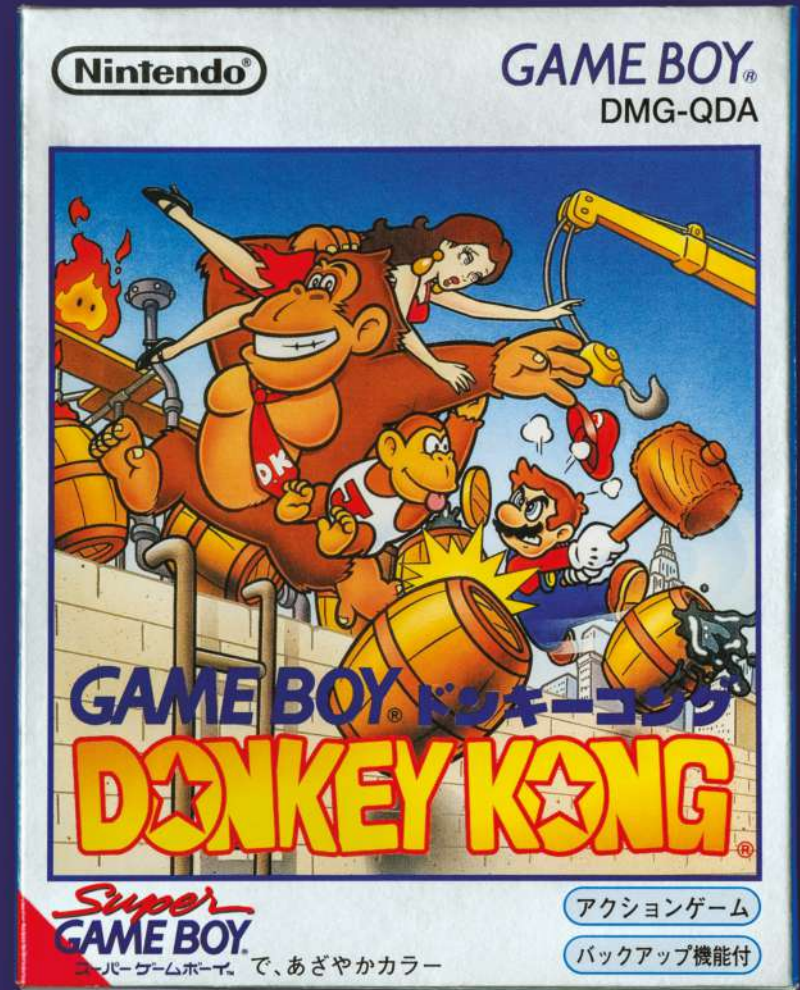
Donkey Kong Land
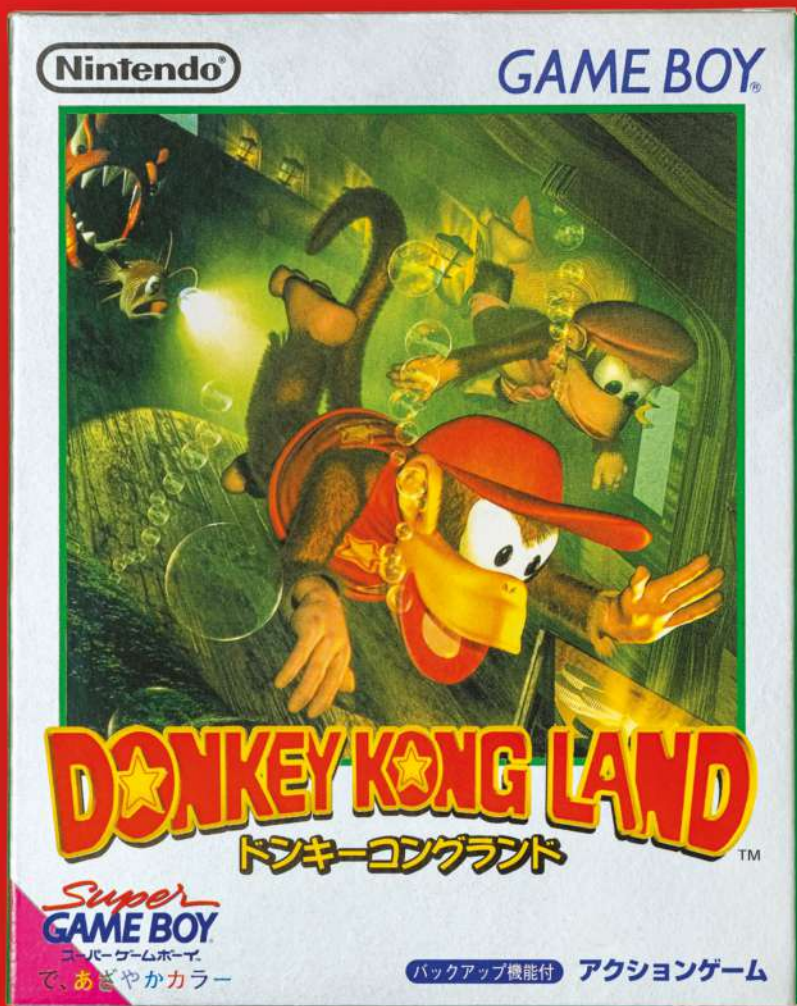
ドンキーコングランド

Nintendo (1995)
Genre: Action platformer

Known as *Donkey Kong Land 2* in the West (the first game was called *Super Donkey Kong GB* in Japan), this 2D platformer places the diminutive Diddy and Daisy Kong in the lead roles. The game is based on the 1995 SNES title *Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest*, but showcases entirely new level designs, while retaining the same character and enemy sprites. Downsizing the incredible CG visuals of the SNES game to the Game Boy can't have been easy, but Rare's talented artists and developers pulled it off in superb fashion, creating what must surely rank as one of the best-looking titles on the system.

Created using Alias PowerAnimator on state-of-the-art Silicon Graphics workstations, the cover image for *Donkey Kong Land* features Diddy Kong and Dixie Kong as they swim through the wreckage of a pirate ship, relentlessly pursued by some particularly menacing fish. Computer-rendered box art, like this early example, would soon become the norm.
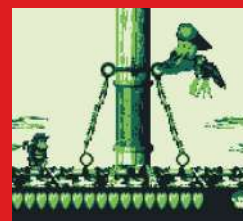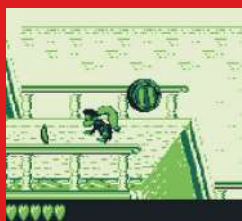
Donkey Kong Land III

Nintendo (1997)
Genre: Action platformer

Developed by Rare as part of its Game Boy-exclusive Donkey Kong Land series, this handheld platform adventure is notable for the fact that Donkey Kong himself doesn't make an appearance. Instead, Dixie Kong and her little cousin Kiddy Kong are the main protagonists. Platforming action forms the meat of the experience, but at certain points you'll take control of one of the pair's animal helpers in order to navigate the game's varied levels; one example involves guiding a fish around a twisting underwater maze. *Donkey Kong Land III* was later ported to the Game Boy Color as a Japanese exclusive under the revised title *Donkey Kong GB: Dinky Kong & Dixie Kong*.

For the box art, Dixie and Kiddy are, unsurprisingly, shown in computer-rendered form. This example is notable for the presence of CG fur on Kiddy's arms and head and Dixie's fringe – although it appears transparency was probably still too challenging, hence the mirror-like reflections on the water.

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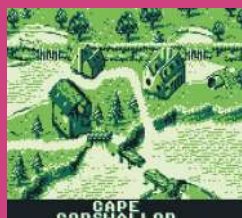
Doraemon Kart

ドラえもんカート

Epoch (1998)
Genre: Action

Super Mario Kart kick-started an entire genre of cute racing games when it appeared on the SNES in the early '90s, and an assortment of different companies jumped on the bandwagon, including SEGA (*Sonic R*), Hudson (*Bomberman Kart*) and Rare (*Diddy Kong Racing*). Japanese Game Boy owners were also graced with *Doraemon Kart*, a 1998 release based on the long-running manga and anime series created by Hiroshi Fujimoto and Motoo Abiko. Given the young audience the series attracted (and continues to attract to this day), the rather crude nature of the on-track action can perhaps be forgiven.

Robotic feline Doraemon is shown leading the pack in this cheery cover art, with other characters from the series – including Suneo Honekawa, Takeshi Goda and Shizuka Minamoto – left in his wake. The familiar *Doraemon* logo is displayed at the top of the box, along with 'Kart' rendered in a similar, bubble-like font.

Double Dragon

双截龍(ダブルドラゴン)

Technōs Japan (1990)
Genre: Scrolling beat 'em up

Released in arcades in 1987, *Double Dragon* was a defining moment in the side-scrolling brawler genre and would spawn countless clones and imitators. Like the NES version before it, the Game Boy iteration of *Double Dragon* differs from the arcade original and offers all-new stage and enemy designs; in fact, the handheld version is significantly different from the NES port it's based on, offering fans yet another take on Billy and Jimmy's quest for revenge – although it's worth noting that the main story mode is sadly a single-player affair, and Jimmy only makes an appearance in the two-player versus mode. The removal of mid-stage checkpoints – as seen in the still-difficult NES version – makes this a painfully hard challenge, too.

Double Dragon on the Game Boy features exclusive artwork by Kazumi Kakizaki, which reflects the fact that the main campaign only supports a single player; in the image, Billy is shown defending a petrified Marian. However, the Western version portrays both brothers.

Double Dragon 3
The Arcade Game

Acclaim (1992)
Genre: Scrolling beat 'em up

While the early entries in the Double Dragon series managed to strike the right balance between enjoyment and challenge, fans consider the third arcade title – also known as *Double Dragon 3: The Rosetta Stone* – as the straw that broke the camel's back. Coded by external studio East Technology rather than series creator Technōs Japan, the coin-op is infamous for giving players the option to purchase in-game items using actual money – one of the earliest examples of in-game microtransactions. This Game Boy port was developed by The Sales Curve, and, unlike the NES version, is based on the arcade original.

Perhaps the most famous siblings in arcade game history – with the possible exception of Mario and Luigi – Billy and Jimmy Lee are the focal point of *Double Dragon 3*'s cover artwork. Reminiscent of a 1980s movie poster, the pair stand poised for action, while in the background a whole host of scraps are already underway.
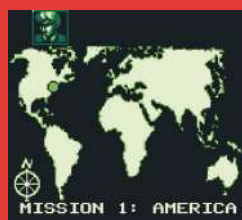
Double Yakuman II

ダブル役満 II

VAP [1993]
Genre: Mahjong

A tile-based board game conceived in China during the Qing dynasty, mahjong's popularity has grown globally since the dawn of the 20th century; virtual representations are especially abundant on the Game Boy. The console launched alongside Intelligent Systems' *Yakuman* in 1989 – a Japanese exclusive – but this later release from 1993, despite having a similar title, is not related. The 'Yakuman' in the name actually refers to a pattern in a mahjong hand. The original *Double Yakuman* was released in the same year, as did *Double Yakuman Jr.*, a variant aimed at younger players.

Perhaps it's the rather dry nature of the game of mahjong, but many video game recreations of the pastime use the female form to draw players in. *Double Yakuman II*'s cover features a photo of a woman's chest covered in a lacy top to attract attention, despite the fact that all of the in-game characters are rendered in a cute, child-like style.
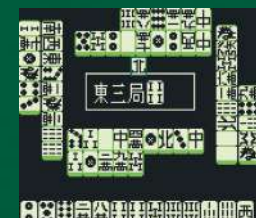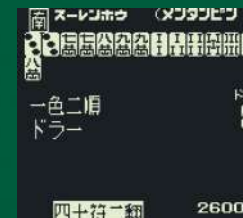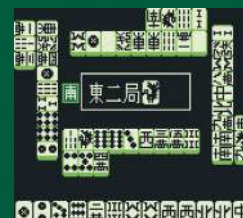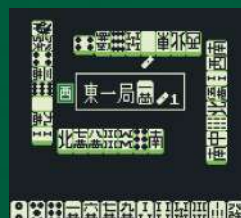
Downtown Nekketsu
Koushinkyoku: Dokodemo Daiundoukai

ダウンタウン熱血行進曲
どこでも大運動会

Technōs Japan (1992)
Genre: Sports

Technōs Japan's popular Kunio-kun series saw its fair share of spin-off titles – including dodgeball (*Nekketsu Koukou Dodgeball Bu*) and soccer (*Nekketsu Koukou Soccer Bu: World Cup Hen*) – and a sporting theme is also present in this instalment, which is based on the Famicom title *Downtown Nekketsu Koushinkyoku: Soreyuke Daiundoukai* from 1990. Players compete in teams, with the aim being to score as many points as possible in events such as cross country and hurdles – as well as good, old-fashioned fighting. The Game Boy version lacks the ball-breaking minigame from the original but makes up for it by including two brand-new minigames.

Technōs Japan was clearly skilled when it came to creating engaging cover artwork, as *Downtown Nekketsu Koushinkyoku: Dokodemo Daiundoukai*'s box is just as colourful and detailed as those of its stablemates. The pink patterned border works surprisingly well.

Dr. Franken

Kemco (1992)
Genre: Action adventure

Dr. Franken is an example of a 'Metroidvania' title before such a term was used; like *Super Metroid* and *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*, it showcases a non-linear structure that encourages back-tracking around the enormous haunted house which provides its backdrop. The lead character – a surprisingly large sprite clearly based on Mary Shelley's Frankenstein's monster – must collect the body parts of his beloved girlfriend, Bitsy. The game was also released on the Super Nintendo, and ports for the NES and SEGA Game Gear were apparently in development, but never officially released.

While the in-game sprite of Franky closely resembles the traditional Frankenstein's monster we know from the movies starring Boris Karloff, the game's cover depicts a more bumbling, vulnerable rendering of the infamous creature. It's a nice piece of art, the circular black border adding a sense of claustrophobic unease.

Dr. Franken II

Elite (1997)
Genre: Action adventure

One of the last monochrome Game Boy releases, *Dr. Franken II* arrived in 1997 and was developed by MotiveTime, the studio responsible for the SNES version of the original game. The visuals are vastly improved this time around, with some of the most detailed backgrounds seen on the handheld, while Franky himself animates smoothly. This time around, he must collect pieces of a golden plate in order to stave off debt collectors. While much of the action is focused around a massive gothic castle – as was the case in the original – at points the player will be able to explore pyramids in Egypt and undersea locations.

In sharp contrast to the rather alarmed figure he presented on the cover to the original game, Franky now possesses a rather more jovial expression. He's shown taking a magic carpet ride over several of the locations lifted from the game's open-ended map. The black border is retained for brand consistency, but is slightly less effective this time around.

Dr. Mario

ドクターマリオ

Nintendo (1990)
Genre: Puzzle

Tetris was a massive commercial hit for Nintendo and was instrumental in selling the Game Boy to millions of players, but there was a catch – it wasn't a Nintendo-owned IP. However, the company had a clear indication that addictive puzzle titles were a good fit for the system, and *Dr. Mario* – which was produced by the legendary Gunpei Yokoi and designed by Takahiro Harada – could be seen as the company's home-grown answer to the Game Boy's killer app. Instead of clearing lines, players have to use pills to remove harmful viruses from the field of play. A NES port was also released, and the series has continued into the modern era thanks to *Dr. Mario World*, a 2019 smartphone release.

Dressed in his doctor's uniform, Mario does his best to educate players about the content of the game in this suitably clinical-looking box art. Clipboard in hand, he points out that capsules are used to eradicate the 'enemy' – a trio of dangerous, ugly-looking virus baddies.

Dracula Densetsu

DMG-CVJ

ドラキュラ伝説

KONAMI

Nintendo GAME BOY

© KONAMI 1989

ドラキュラ伝説

Konami (1989)
Genre: Action adventure

Konami, as one of the earliest third-party supporters of the Game Boy, ensured that it had some of its biggest titles available when the console hit store shelves at the end of 1989. One such release was *Dracula Densetsu* – known as *Castlevania: The Adventure* in the West – a spin-off of the popular vampire-slaying franchise that had proven so successful on the NES. Despite the famous name and the involvement of Masato Maegawa – who would go on to found the legendary Japanese studio Treasure – this portable entry remains something of a disappointment; it runs slowly, is awkwardly tricky in places and lacks the iconic sub-weapons seen in the NES instalments.

While the game might be lacking, the same cannot be said for the deeply atmospheric cover artwork, which shows the heroic Christopher Belmont striding valiantly towards Dracula's castle, while a vision of the evil count looms large. It's a wonderfully evocative image that was also used on the North American and European versions of the game.

Dracula Densetsu II

ドラキュラ伝説II

Konami (1991)
Genre: Action adventure

Castlevania's 1989 debut on the Game Boy suffered from technical and gameplay issues, but Konami would not make the same mistake with its sequel. *Dracula Densetsu II* (also known as *Castlevania II: Belmont's Revenge*) is a vast improvement in every possible way, offering tighter controls, faster gameplay, inventive level designs and some of the best music ever heard on the Game Boy. Once again, Christopher Belmont is the hero of the hour, and is tasked with rescuing his son Soleiyu, who has been transformed into a demon by Dracula himself. Sub-weapons are reinstated, and players can choose the order in which they face each of the game's opening four levels.

The cover artwork for *Dracula Densetsu II* places Christopher Belmont in the centre of the piece, flanked on one side by his possessed son Soleiyu, and on the other by Dracula's ominous abode. An eerie vision of the evil count dominates the background. While the composition isn't quite as strong as the cover for the original Game Boy outing, it still sets a suitably forbidding tone.

Dragon Quest Monsters
Terry no Wonderland

ドラゴンクエスト
モンスターズ
テリーのワンダーランド

Enix (1998)
Genre: RPG

The first instalment in Enix's popular Dragon Quest Monsters sub-series, *Terry no Wonderland* is compatible with both the original Game Boy and the Game Boy Color – despite being released a month before the latter console was available in Japan! Starring younger versions of *Dragon Quest VI* heroes Terry and Milly, the game takes some degree of inspiration from the popular Pokémon franchise, although the breeding mechanics are arguably more robust in Enix's game. The player is able to tempt monsters with meat during combat, and it's possible to breed two beasts together in order to create an enhanced creature.

Akira Toriyama's unmistakable artwork brings the cover of *Dragon Quest Monsters Terry no Wonderland* to life, with protagonist Terry proudly leading a pack of the fearsome beasts he has tamed. The composition is encased within an eye-catching, rainbow-coloured picture frame, a clear nod to its support for the Game Boy Color.

Dragon Slayer I

ドラゴンスレイヤーI

Nihon Falcom (1990)
Genre: RPG

Designed by Yoshio Kiya and developed by Nihon Falcom, *Dragon Slayer* was originally released in 1984 for Japanese home computers such as the PC-8801 and PC-9801. It quickly became a best-seller and was duly ported to the MSX computer by Square the following year, making it one of the first games to be published by the company that would soon find global fame with *Final Fantasy*. The gameplay mixes inventory management (only one item can be wielded at once) with real-time movement; the aim is to explore a dungeon while fighting enemies and collecting items and treasure. The series would endure and see sequels in a multitude of formats, including the SNES, Mega Drive, PC-Engine and Dreamcast.

While later entries in the *Dragon Slayer* franchise adopted the trademark anime style that so many JRPGs employ, the cover for the original game has a very Western feel to it, calling to mind the work of acclaimed fantasy artist Frank Frazetta. The Game Boy artwork is taken directly from the Japanese home computer release from 1984.

Dragon's Lair:
The Legend

Sony Imagesoft (1991)
Genre: Action

Created by Rick Dyer and Don Bluth, *Dragon's Lair* was one of the first arcade games to leverage the power of the Laserdisc optical media format, giving players cartoon-like animation but very limited interaction. The success of the game led to home versions in many different formats, but this Game Boy edition takes only the lead character and setting from the arcade original – it is, in fact, a re-skin of Elite's 1985 ZX Spectrum title *Roller Coaster*. As a result, the theme park motif is still plain to see, despite the altered visuals. There are no enemies to fight, and the player's objective is instead to collect all 194 parts of the Life Stone. Dirk is the only character present from the Dragon's Lair series.

The wonderful promotional artwork from the original arcade release is reused for the Game Boy box art, showing Dirk the Daring, his beloved Princess Daphne, and titular dragon Singe in the background. Sadly, this is where any resemblance to the classic coin-op series ends.

Earthworm Jim

Playmates (1995)
Genre: Run and gun

Originally developed for the SEGA Mega Drive in 1994, *Earthworm Jim* was the first game from the newly-formed Shiny Entertainment, whose founder, Dave Perry, had previously worked on the acclaimed *Disney's Aladdin*. Hero Jim is a normal worm who finds himself in possession of a powerful super suit, and must rescue the amusingly-titled Princess What's-Her-Name from the clutches of the deranged enemies that populate the game's varied levels. Boasting gorgeous 2D visuals and intense action in its 16-bit form, it was never going to be easy to shrink down the experience for the Game Boy, but Eurocom gave it a shot regardless. The presentation predictably takes a hit, but at least the 3D bonus stage made the cut.

There's nothing particularly noteworthy about the cover for the Game Boy port of *Earthworm Jim* – it's similar those seen on other formats. But Doug TenNapel's gorgeous, painterly artwork is still an absolute joy to behold.

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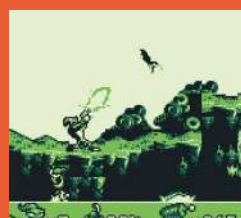
F-1 Spirit

F-1スピリット

Konami (1991)
Genre: Racing

Konami's top-down racing series began life in 1987 and includes *F-1 Spirit: The Way to Formula-1*, *A1 Spirit: The Way to Formula-1* and *F-1 Spirit 3D Special*, but the 1991 Game Boy outing is, to date, the last in the lineage. Despite running on a less powerful console, it manages to retain the majority of the features present in previous editions, including Formula 3, Formula 3000 and Formula 1 class cars, with 25 different international tracks to race on. It was released in North America as *World Circuit Series* and in Europe as *The Spirit of F-1*.

Sporting a similar art style to *Konamic Golf*, *F-1 Spirit*'s cover uses sweeping brush strokes to effectively simulate the incredible speed of a Formula 1 race car. While the vehicle in question has a Konami logo on the side, it's clearly based on the title-winning McLaren-Honda MP4/4 – driven by world champions Alain Prost and Ayrton Senna, and today regarded as one of the most successful F1 cars of all time.

F1 Boy

F1ボーイ

Lenar (1990)
Genre: Racing

Developed by Lenar, the studio behind the superb *Tenjin Kaisen* (*Mercenary Force* in the West), *F1 Boy* was released mere months before Nintendo published *F-1 Race* alongside the four-player link cable – which could potentially account for the fact that it has been somewhat forgotten over the decades. It's a likeable top-down racer that gives the player the chance to pick from a multitude of cars, divided into automatic and manual classes. Sunsoft picked up the game for European distribution and renamed it *Sunsoft Grand Prix*, with Ocean handling the publishing duties in that region.

Colourful and cute, the cover artwork for F1 Boy shows a female racer pulling over the line in celebration, with her helmet already removed – something we doubt the motor racing authorities would approve of! The car she's driving is based on the championship-winning McLaren MP4/5B, albeit with the sponsors' names subtly changed. The car pulling up behind is based on the Tyrrell 019, which helped the team finish 5th in the 1990 season.

F1 Race

F1レース

Nintendo (1990)
Genre: Racing

Like *Golf*, *Baseball* and *Tennis*, *F1 Race* on the Game Boy is based on the NES/Famicom title of the same name. However, it's a very loose adaptation and features significant changes, which make it feel more like a sequel than a port. New modes are included and the tracks are different, while the gameplay has been altered to allow for skidding around corners. Furthermore, Nintendo has retro-fitted its famous cast of characters (many of which didn't exist in 1984) into the game; Mario, Luigi, Donkey Kong, Peach, Toad, Bowser, Link, Samus and Pit all appear, making *F1 Race* feel like a spiritual forerunner to the popular Mario Kart series.

The dinky, super-deformed cars shown on the cover of *F1 Race* are exaggerated versions of the kind of vehicles which were contesting the Formula One championship in real life at that time. The image is complemented by a golden logo and a reminder that the game supports the Game Boy's four-player adapter, which was included in the box outside of Japan.

Famista

ファミスタ

Namco (1990)
Genre: Sports

Namco's *Famista* – or 'Family Stadium' – series is one of Japan's longest-running sports franchises, having started life in 1986 on the Famicom – and it's still getting entries up to the present day, with the most recent being for the Nintendo Switch. This handheld instalment is arguably better than Nintendo's own *Baseball* effort from the same time period, giving you a fine degree of control over elements such as your stance when batting and your pitch type when throwing the ball. *Famista* was actually released in North America by Bandai under the title *Extra Bases*. While more Famista entries would arrive on the Game Boy, this was the only one to make it out of Japan.

The Famista series is famous for its characterful, cartoon-style covers, and this instalment is no exception. The artwork combines nicely with the logo, making for a clean yet dynamic image. Extra points for spotting the sneaky inclusion of Xevious and Pac-Man logos...

Final Reverse:
Saigo no Gyakuten

ファイナルリバース
最後の逆転

Toei Animation (1991)
Genre: Shoot 'em up

Thematically similar to Toei's 1990 title *Volleyfire*, *Final Reverse* is a head-to-head action title where you and your opponent face off against one another over either a vertically- or horizontally-arrayed battlefield. The aim is to destroy your rival, but you're restricted to a set pathway and must avoid other threats, as well as collect pick-ups along the way. It's an interesting premise, but one that is perhaps more convoluted and intricate than it needs to be, which could be why the game never found a larger audience.

The most notable element of *Final Reverse*'s cover is the grid-covered pathway, representing the evolving tracks that appear in-game, and referenced on the cover as 'Saigo no Gyakuten' which translates as 'Last Minute Twists'. It's a really stylish and well-rendered piece of art, which might just as easily sit on the front of a sci-fi novel.
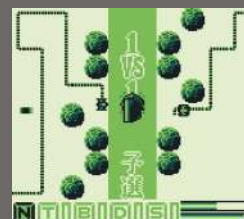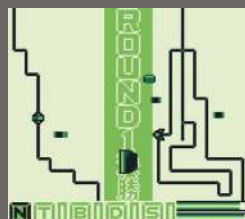
Final Fantasy Legend II

Square (1991)
Genre: RPG

Originally released as *SaGa 2: Hihou Densetsu* in Japan (*SaGa 2: The Treasure Legend*), the Western edition was re-branded as a Final Fantasy game to capitalise on the franchise's popularity. It follows the typical FF RPG format, with sprawling maps and random turn-based battles, but has more of a sci-fi slant, featuring robots and mutants as playable characters. It also has a relatively short 10-hour quest, more befitting the portable format. *Final Fantasy Legend II* was generally well received, and special note has to go to the soundtrack, composed by Kenji Ito and Nobuo Uematsu, which rates as one of the best on the Game Boy. The game was remastered for the Nintendo DS in 2009, with an expanded storyline, new character abilities and impressive cel-shaded graphics.

For its Western outing, the *SaGa 2* artwork was ditched in favour of a simpler, more obviously Final Fantasy treatment – indeed, it doesn't get more obvious than a huge Final Fantasy logo and gleaming sword. It's not very exciting, aesthetically, but there's no mistaking the brand.

Franky, Joe & Dirk On the Tiles

Elite (1993)
Genre: Puzzle

This rather unusual puzzler features three totally unrelated characters – Franky from *Dr. Franken*, Joe from Data East's *Joe & Mac: Caveman Ninja* and Dirk from *Dragon's Lair* – simply because Elite Systems had published those titles on home formats; the trio literally have nothing to do with one another outside of that fact. The objective is to slide around more than 30 jumbled-up tile puzzles until they form the correct image, with some variety being introduced via special tiles, such as a bomb tile and one which automatically solves the puzzle. Four difficulty levels are available and each puzzle is set to a strict time limit.

The game's cover artwork shows our three heroes on what appears to be a night out drinking, if Joe and Franky's bizarre expressions are anything to go by. 'On the tiles' is presumably a pun, denoting the tile-based puzzles and the common British expression for a night out dancing and boozing. The circular black border motif has been borrowed from the *Dr. Franken* packaging.

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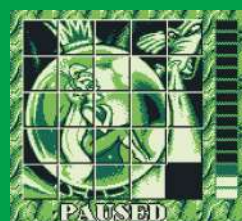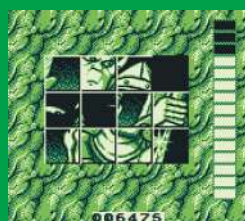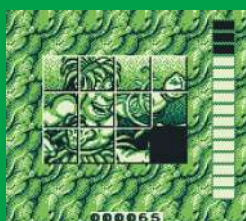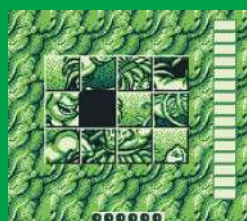
Funny Field

SNK (1990)
Genre: Puzzle

Funny Field serves as a reminder that SNK, despite being active in the arcade and home console arenas in the early '90s, was still producing games for other systems at the same time – including the Game Boy. This puzzler features a 56-tile arena, which the player must turn from light to dark by flipping each tile. Enemies bar your progress across the 30 different stages, which become increasingly more difficult as time goes on. The game was released in North America under the title *Dexterity*.

The bright and cheery artwork for *Funny Field* shows the two players (a link-up mode is available) turning tiles on the game board, which is covered with monster enemies. The North American version replaced this image with airbrushed artwork featuring a slightly more obvious depiction of the tile-flipping gameplay.

115
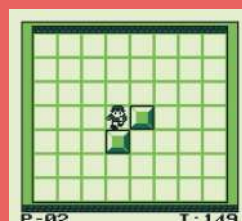
Fushigi no Dungeon:
Fuurai no Shiren GB Tsukikagemura no Kaibutsu

**不思議のダンジョン
風来のシレンGB
月影村の怪物**

**Chunsoft (1996)
Genre: RPG**

The term 'roguelike' is thrown around pretty freely these days, but back in the '90s, the genre was less well defined. Chunsoft's *Fushigi no Dungeon* was developed in parallel with the Super Famicom version of the game, and is the second entry in the Mystery Dungeon series, following the 1993 *Dragon Quest* spin-off *Torneko no Daibouken: Fushigi no Dungeon*, which Chunsoft developed on Enix's behalf. Like other entries in the series, the gameplay involves exploring a randomly-generated dungeon with turn-based movement and combat. SEGA later brought this title to the West via the Nintendo DS remake *Mystery Dungeon: Shiren the Wanderer*.

The cover of *Fushigi no Dungeon* is dominated not by character artwork, but by the game's stylish and colourful logo. Our hero, Shiren the Wanderer, is relegated to the background, with a cute appearance that was replaced by a more mature demeanour in later sequels and remakes.
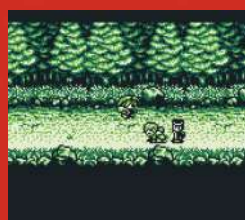
Game Boy Gallery

ゲームボーイギャラリー

Nintendo (1997)
Genre: Compilation

Prior to the Game Boy, Nintendo's Game &
Watch range of LCD-based handhelds was
arguably the go-to brand for portable players,
and in the middle of the '90s the company
decided to pay homage to this legacy by
creating a series of collections that pulled
together notable Game & Watch titles.
This compilation consists of *Manhole*,
Fire, *Octopus* and *Oil Panic*, all of which are
considered to be seminal releases in the
range. A museum section is also present,
which shows screenshots of other Game
& Watch titles, including *Flagman*, *Vermin*,
Mario Bros. and *Mario's Cement Factory*.
This pack follows an earlier (1995) collection
which was only released in Europe and
Australia, also entitled *Game Boy Gallery*.

Curiously, *Game Boy Gallery*'s cover does
nothing to advertise the fact that it contains
classic Game & Watch titles, and instead relies
on the fame of Mario, Luigi, Yoshi, Princess
Peach and Bowser to sell the package.
The characters are shown emerging from
a Game Boy screen, possibly leading to
further retail-related confusion.

Game Boy Gallery 2

ゲームボーイギャラリー2

Nintendo (1997)
Genre: Compilation

This selection of classic Game & Watch titles includes *Parachute*, *Helmet*, *Chef*, *Vermin*, *Donkey Kong* and *Ball* (the last of which is an unlockable bonus) – the multi-screen *Donkey Kong*, thanks to the use of instantly-recognisable characters, is arguably the highlight of the entire package. Each game is presented in 'classic' and 'modern' forms; the former presents the visuals seen in the LCD originals, while the latter replaces the key characters with individuals from the Super Mario universe. There's also a museum section which features information on other classic Game & Watch titles from the handheld series.

Like the original game, the cover for *Game Boy Gallery 2* is home to some of the Mushroom Kingdom's most famous faces. This time around they're joined by Wario and Toad, and a classic Game & Watch LCD is displayed in the middle, helping to clarify the game content.
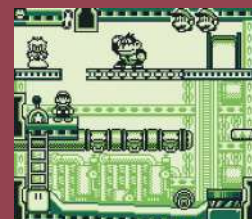
Ganbare Goemon:
Kurofune Tou no Nazo

がんばれゴエモン
黒船党の謎

Konami (1997)
Genre: Action adventure

Konami's Goemon series can chart its life back to 1986 with the arcade release *Mr. Goemon*, but is perhaps best known in the West via *The Legend of the Mystical Ninja* on the Super Nintendo, a localised version of *Ganbare Goemon: Yukihime Kyuushutsu Emaki*. This Game Boy adventure is closest in tone to the Super Famicom title *Ganbare Goemon 3: Shishi-Juurokubei no Karakuri Manji-gatame*, and was published outside Japan as *Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon*. Goemon, Sasuke and Ebisumaru are the main protagonists, and use both melee and ranged attacks to make their way through five stages in order to save Yae from the sinister Black Ship Gang. This title launched around the same time as the N64 version, which used the exact same name in Europe and North America.

The game's ensemble cast graces the cover, which is bursting with colour, character and fun. It's little wonder, then, that Konami opted to use the same artwork for the Western release.

Ganbare Goemon:
Sarawareta Ebisumaru

がんばれゴエモン
さらわれたエビス丸

Konami (1991)
Genre: Action adventure

With gameplay inspired by the Famicom title *Ganbare Goemon! Karakuri Douchuu*, *Ganbare Goemon: Sarawareta Ebisumaru* is the first portable entry in the franchise. The action is viewed from a top-down perspective, with protagonist Goemon attacking enemies with weapons and ranged attacks. While subsequent instalments in the series see the lead character joined by companions, Goemon is the sole playable option here, and the story focuses on his attempt to liberate the kidnapped Ebisumaru – 'sarawareta' means 'kidnapped' in Japanese. The game was localised for Western release as part of Konami's GB Collection series, ending up on *Volume 3*.

Compared to other Goemon game covers, the artwork for *Ganbare Goemon: Sarawareta Ebisumaru* appears to be somewhat restrained, with only a single character on display. However, it mimics the traditional art style of feudal Japan to excellent effect.

Gargoyle's Quest

Capcom (1990)
Genre: Action adventure

Part of Capcom's beloved Ghosts 'n Goblins series, *Gargoyle's Quest* takes the character of Firebrand of the Ghoul Realm – who is actually an enemy in the original arcade game – and makes him the unlikely hero of the story. Despite being a very early Game Boy release, *Gargoyle's Quest* remains a firm favourite with players thanks to its unique mix of light RPG gameplay and side-scrolling 2D action; players can power-up Firebrand by collecting special items, and there are even random encounters when exploring the top-down overworld map. A NES prequel appeared in 1992, which fleshes out the story, and in 1994 Capcom gave the character a 16-bit outing in the form of *Demon's Quest* on the SNES.

While the Japanese version boasts a more ominous and slightly abstracted design, the Western cover for *Gargoyle's Quest* keeps things as light-hearted as possible, with bright colours and cartoon-like enemies.

Gauntlet II

Mindscape (1991)
Genre: Action adventure

Ed Logg's 1985 arcade smash hit *Gauntlet* – a four-player top-down dungeon crawl through a swords-and-sorcery fantasy setting – was a considerable critical and commercial success for Atari Games at a time when it was still reeling from the effects of the video game crash of '83. A sequel was quickly put into production for the following year, and the fact that it was still getting home ports as late as 1991 is testament to its enduring popularity. Mindscape is responsible for both this handheld conversion and the NES edition. Unlike its NES sibling – which benefited from the Four Score multiplayer accessory – the Game Boy edition only offers two-player support via a link cable.

Mindscape commissioned a bespoke piece of artwork for its home ports of *Gauntlet II*, showing the four playable characters – Warrior, Valkyrie, Wizard and Elf – poised for action on a windy hilltop, with lightning striking in the background. It's an evocative image which, when combined with the game's classic logo, creates a suitably effective cover.

GB Genjin Land:
Viva! Chikkun Oukoku

**GB原人ランド
ビバ!ちっくん王国**

**Hudson (1994)
Genre: Compilation**

While the vast majority of PC Genjin's (known as Bonk in the West) adventures have taken place in the realm of 2D platformers, he did occasionally venture off the beaten path, as this text-heavy fusion of platform-jumping and board-gaming attests. There are moments of traditional PC Genjin action – involving him hitting enemies with his massive head – but these are sprinkled alongside a host of other mini-games which break up the action quite dramatically. A Western release sadly never took place, making this a Japanese exclusive only the keenest PC Genjin fan is going to want to investigate.

Thanks to its lurid green background and bold, smiling protagonist, the cover for *GB Genjin Land: Viva! Chikkun Oukoku* certainly stands out. He's joined by Chikkun (known in the Western versions as Henry Hatchet), one of the series' most iconic enemies.

DMG-R9J

Gekitou Power Modeler

激闘パワーモデラー

Capcom (1998)
Genre: Fighting/RPG

A unique hybrid of RPG and fighting game, *Gekitou Power Modeler* sees the player controlling a young boy who dreams of entering a tournament where model robots face off against one another. Developed by Japan System Supply and published in Japan by Capcom, it boasts some of the most detailed graphics seen on the monochrome Game Boy. Localised for North America by Sunsoft under the title *Power Quest*, a key difference between the two regional versions is that the Japanese original was released on the black and white Game Boy, while the Western version was released with Game Boy Color support.

The cover for *Gekitou Power Modeler* puts aside the story of one boy's dream of becoming a robot master and instead focuses on celebrating the title's mechanical marvels. The anime-style artwork, set against 'computerised' robot blueprints, certainly sets a suitably high-tech tone.

Genjin Collection

原人コレクション

Hudson (1996)
Genre: Action platformer

Published in 1996 and presented in one of Hudson's unique metal tin cases, *Genjin Collection* pulls together three previously-released Game Boy titles – *GB Genjin*, *GB Genjin 2* and *GB Genjin Land* – and bundles them together on a single cartridge, complete with Super Game Boy support. In the West, the character was rechristened as 'Bonk' in reference to his ability to attack enemies with his head. While the term 'have a bonk' has no humorous connotations in North America, in the UK it most certainly does, and the character's name therefore generates unintentional amusement in that part of the world.

Our cheerful caveman hero makes for a bold cover star thanks to his massive head, striking line work and bold use of colour. The apparent use of corrugated card and layered paper elements produces a pleasing 3D effect, and the packaging as a whole is really successful.
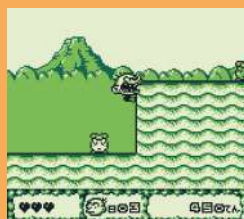
Genjin Kotts

原人コッツ

B-AI (1995)
Genre: Action platformer

You might assume that *PC-Genjin*, *Chuck Rock* and *Joe & Mac* have the monopoly on caveman-based action platformers, but the little-known Japanese exclusive *Genjin Kotts* is a worthy addition to this tiny sub-genre. The mop-haired hero of this prehistoric epic is animated very well indeed, and Super Game Boy support makes things look even nicer when played via that particular accessory. The cute visuals and atmospheric soundtrack round off something of a hidden gem in the Japanese Game Boy library.

Genjin Kotts has a cover that suggests it was released much earlier than 1995; the crude yet cute artwork has all the hallmarks of an '80s release, but it's certainly not without its charm. The bold lines and striking colours deliver a memorable piece of artwork, and what's especially pleasing is how the character design remains consistent on both the box and within the game itself.

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Ghostbusters 2

ゴーストバスターズ2

HAL Laboratory (1990)
Genre: Action

Based on the 1989 action-comedy of the same name, *Ghostbusters II* showcases super-deformed versions of Peter Venkman, Ray Stantz, Egon Spengler and Winston Zeddemore as they fight spooks in a series of top-down environments in order to save New York City from a supernatural apocalypse. Despite looking very similar to the NES game *New Ghostbusters II*, this portable version has entirely new levels and music. Because Activision also released its own *Ghostbusters II* game on the NES at the same time, only Japanese and European home players got to play HAL's arguably superior take on the concept. This portable outing is therefore the only version to see release in Japan, North America and Europe.

The Japanese cover uses the same main image that graces the movie poster and all other versions of the game, as well as the NES edition (both Activision's and HAL's). The 'busters are all primed and ready for action, set against Michael C. Gross' iconic logo.

Go! Go! Ackman
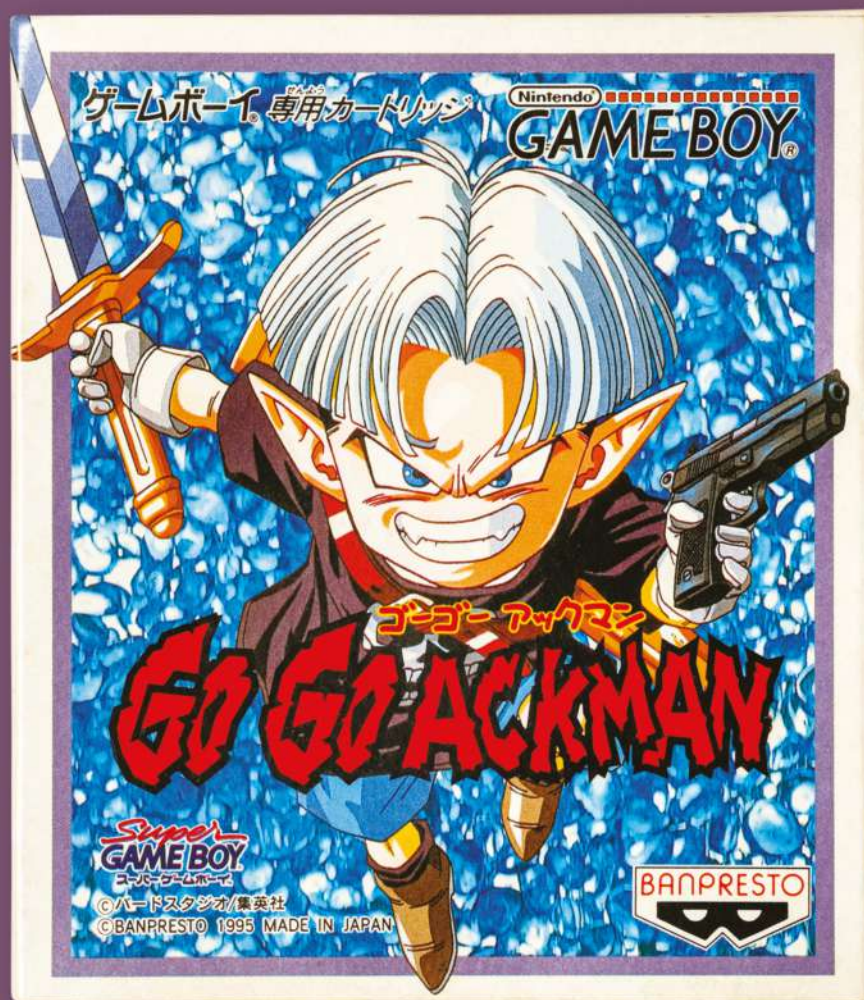
ゴーゴーアックマン

Banpresto (1995)
Genre: Action

Go! Go! Ackman is a manga series written and illustrated by Akira Toriyama, who is most famous for illustrating the Dragon Quest franchise. Its lead character is a demon named Ackman who devotes his life to collecting souls for the Great Demon King. While Ackman stars in an action platformer for the Super Famicom, this Game Boy outing is more akin to *Pac-Man*, taking place in a series of maze-like levels. The aim is to collect all of the flame icons in each level while punching enemies to remove them from play. Taking damage reduces your 'flame' stock, so careful movement is a must.

It's perhaps only fair that Ackman is the sole point of interest on the cover of a game bearing his name; outside of Akira Toriyama's typically polished artwork and a bold logo, there's little else of note – although the presence of the title's exclamation marks seems to be somewhat variable.

Golf

ゴルフ

Nintendo (1989)
Genre: Sports

Loosely based on the 1984 Famicom release of the same name, *Golf* is one of the earliest attempts at replicating the popular sport on a handheld games console, and as such is reasonably successful – as long as you take into account that its foundations are rather old and creaky these days, especially when it comes to real-world authenticity and realism. The action takes place across two courses – U.S.A. and Japan – made up of 18 holes apiece. The solo gameplay modes are limited, but the link cable-based two-player mode extends the game's longevity more than you might imagine.

The character in the game is believed to be Mario, although the sprite bears only a passing resemblance. The link is confirmed by the game's Western cover artwork, which clearly shows Mario taking a swing, while on the Japanese version, Nintendo's mascot is replaced by a selection of colourful, if rather nondescript, characters. It's an odd piece of art, by Nintendo's usually high standards.

Gremlins 2:
The New Batch

Sunsoft (1991)
Genre: Action platformer

Released to coincide with the launch of the movie sequel to the 1984 smash-hit *Gremlins*, this Sunsoft-developed side-scrolling platformer places you in the role of Gizmo the Mogwai, the cute-and-cuddly MacGuffin of the cinematic series who, when he comes into contact with water, spawns several other Mogwai, which eventually turn into the harmful Gremlins of the title. Outside of the detailed sprites and surprisingly faithful static cutscenes, the game actually has very little to do with the films, and plays like your typical 2D action platformer; you must successfully navigate your way through four surprisingly long stages, defeating enemies and fighting boss characters. Bonus rounds offer the chance to earn an extra life, but only if you're able to hit the punch bag 100 times in ten seconds.

In the West, a photo of a sinister-looking Gremlin is used for the cover, but in Japan, it's a line drawing of the adorable Gizmo that graces the packaging. Both covers are reasonably effective, although the Japanese version is clearly aimed at a younger audience.
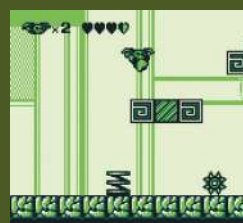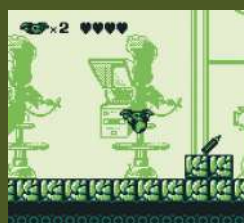
Hatris

ハットリス

Bullet-Proof Software (1991)
Genre: Puzzle

Following the astounding success of Alexey Pajitnov's *Tetris*, it was obvious that all eyes would be on any subsequent puzzle title that he produced, and 1990's *Hatris* gained a fair amount of media attention as a result. While it's not as compulsively playable as Pajitnov's block-clearing magnum opus, *Hatris* is still eminently enjoyable, with headgear taking the place of the tetrominoes. The aim is to stack five hats of the same type – there are six on offer, including clown, bowler, baseball cap and top-hat – to remove them from play. The fact that each hat type has a different height adds some challenge, and the catchy musical score keeps your attention.

In stark contrast to the Western release, which is rather clean and sedate, the Japanese box artwork for *Hatris* is a bold explosion of colours and shapes, looking more like an '80s music album cover. At first glance, it appears to have little to do to with the subject matter within, although the headwear elements are present if you look hard enough.

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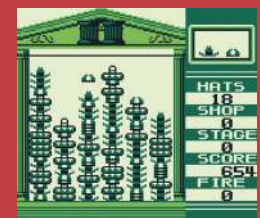
Head On

ヘッド-オン

Tecmo (1990)
Genre: Action

One of the earliest examples of a 'maze game', SEGA's 1979 coin-op *Head On* calls upon the player to drive around a maze collecting dots, while avoiding other, AI-controlled, vehicles, which are also picking up said objects. While Namco's *Pac-Man* is perhaps the most famous example of the genre, SEGA's title pre-dates it by almost an entire year. This Game Boy port predictably showcases improved visuals, and Tecmo was responsible for the conversion, rather than SEGA itself. In North America, it was renamed *Power Racer*, and the credit to SEGA on the title screen was removed.

An explosion of joyful colour and imagery, the Japanese cover for *Head On* is certainly one of the better entries in the Game Boy canon. It's an almost perfect combination of eye-catching logo, appealing character design and composition. And all the elements of the game are present – if not entirely as they appear during play.
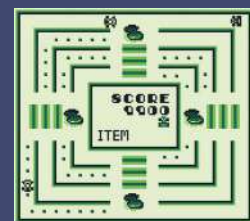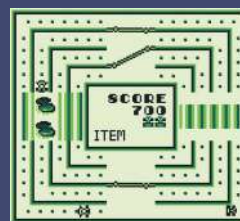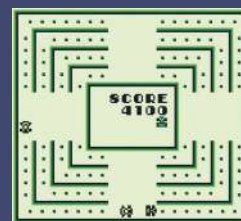
Hiryuu no Ken Gaiden

飛龍の拳外伝

Culture Brain (1990)
Genre: Scrolling beat 'em up

Developed by Culture Brain, the Hiryuu no Ken series can chart its existence back to the arcades of the mid-'80s, with *Hokuha Syourin Hiryuu no Ken* – entitled *Shanghai Kid* in the West – being the first entry. The game features side-scrolling exploration sections, where you can hurl fireballs and collect items, as well as *Street Fighter*-style one-on-one battles with other warriors; both modes showcase surprisingly large sprites for such an early Game Boy title. *Hiryuu no Ken Gaiden* was released in the West under the title *Fighting Simulator: 2 in 1 - Flying Warriors* – the '2 in 1' portion of the title denotes the two different play styles available when you boot up the game. Two Game Boy semi-sequels would follow in the form of *SD Hiryuu no Ken Gaiden* (1995) and *SD Hiryuu no Ken Gaiden 2* (1996).

While the Western box art aimed to hype up the game's one-on-one fighting action, in order to capitalise on the popularity of Capcom's *Street Fighter II,* this Japanese cover instead focuses on the mystical nature of the game. This striking illustration makes clever use of black to contrast the main protagonist against the multicoloured background.

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Hokuto no Ken:
Seizetsu Juuban Shoubu

北斗の拳 凄絶十番勝負

Electro Brain (1989)
Genre: Fighting

Known in the West as *Fist of the North Star*, Yoshiyuki 'Buronson' Okamura's post-apocalyptic manga and anime series has been a mainstay in its native Japan for decades, and has predictably spawned several video game adaptations across a wide range of formats. *Hokuto no Ken: Seizetsu Juuban Shoubu* holds the distinction of being the Game Boy's first one-on-one fighting game and features three game modes: Normal allows you to face off against AI opponents, while Vs. supports the Game Boy's link cable for multiple players. Finally, Team gives you the opportunity to assemble your own fighting unit and take down the opposition. The game was released in the West under the brilliant title *Fist of the North Star: 10 Big Brawls for the King of the Universe*.

Series protagonist Kenshiro looms large on the cover, and also appears below, facing off against his former brother-in-arms Raoh, who challenges Kenshiro for the succession of the deadly art of Hokuto Shinken. The images are lifted directly from Toei Animation's TV series.

Honou no Toukyuuji
Dodge Danpei

炎の闘球児 ドッジ弾平

Hudson (1992)
Genre: RPG/Sports

Yet another Game Boy title licensed from a manga – in this case, Tetsuhiro Koshita's dodgeball epic, which ran between 1989 and 1995, and was also turned into an anime series – *Honou no Toukyuuji Dodge Danpei* was one of many different video games based on the brand that were produced around the same time. Hudson Soft handled the development of this Game Boy edition, which mixes RPG elements with action segments to replicate the drama and tension of the original comic and TV show. The main view shows the dodgeball court, complete with dinky little sprites who scramble and jockey for position, while shots and spikes are accompanied by detailed anime-style intermissions which create a great atmosphere.

The bold characters, which typified the manga and anime series, are used to excellent effect for the cover of *Honou no Toukyuuji Dodge Danpei*. A minimal palette combines reds, blues and yellows to generate an eye-catching, if slightly frantic, piece of artwork.

Hoshi no Kirby

星のカービィ

HAL Laboratory (1992)
Genre: Action platformer

Kirby has gone on to become one of Nintendo's most recognisable characters, and it's almost hard to believe that his story began on the humble Game Boy, rather than one of the company's home consoles. Designed by Masahiro Sakurai, *Hoshi no Kirby* – known as *Kirby's Dream Land* in the West – is a polished and surprisingly accessible 2D platformer, in which the lead character can swallow enemies and spit them out as projectiles, or gulp air and float through the sky. While it's possible to beat in the space of an evening, it remains one of the most polished and likeable Game Boy platformers. Interestingly, despite being rendered in a white shade in early Western promotional materials, Sakurai always intended Kirby to be pink – although Nintendo's Shigeru Miyamoto originally wanted him to be yellow.

With his cheerful smile and fetching pink shade, Kirby is undoubtedly the focal point of the game's curiously restrained cover. Leaves, stars and coloured orbs populate the textured background. Although pleasant enough, the sequels offer more visually arresting images.

Hyper Lode Runner:
The Labyrinth of Doom

Bandai (1990)
Genre: Puzzle platformer

Doug Smith's seminal 1983 Apple II title *Lode Runner* was a hit all over the world, including Japan. Published by Brøderbund, the game was quickly licensed by Japanese companies for release on home consoles, with Hudson's Famicom port being perhaps the most famous. Bandai licensed the property for release on the Game Boy in 1989, with the North American release arriving the following year. Due to the limitations of the console's screen, *Hyper Lode Runner* has a scrolling playfield – in the original game, the entire level was shown on-screen. Still, 50 levels are on offer, and there's even a level editor so you can create your own stages; it's also possible to compete with another player via the console's link cable functionality.

The cover for the Japanese version of *Hyper Lode Runner* boasts a cute protagonist which befits the dumpy in-game character, but for the Western release, the decision was made to toughen things up a little. As a consequence, the hero has more realistic proportions and is shown laying waste to a horde of skeletal enemies.

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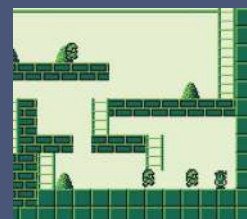
Ikari no Yousai

怒りの要塞

Jaleco (1991)
Genre: Action

Released in the West under the title *Fortified Zone*, *Ikari no Yousai* – which literally translates as 'The Fortress of Fury' – is a top-down shooter which allows the player to switch between protagonists Masato Kanzaki and Mizuki Makimura during their quest to infiltrate a heavily-defended base. Kanzaki can access more powerful weapons but can't jump, while Makimura cannot use special weapons but is capable of leaping. The action takes place across four levels – Field, Jungle, Caves and finally Complex – each comprised of multiple rooms. A Japan-only sequel followed on the Game Boy, but the SNES instalment fared better and was localised for North America under the title *Operation Logic Bomb: The Ultimate Search & Destroy*.

The cover for *Ikari no Yousai* adopts a Western comic book art style, making Masato Kanzaki look more akin to Hollywood star Arnold Schwarzenegger. The sequel adopted a rather more traditional anime-style aesthetic.

Initial D Gaiden

頭文字D外伝

Kodansha (1998)
Genre: Racing

Shuichi Shigeno's long-running manga and anime series *Initial D* has become something of a multimedia sensation in Japan, spawning albums, merchandise and even a live-action adaptation. *Initial D Gaiden* holds the distinction of being the first attempt to capture the illegal street racing antics of Takumi Fujiwara and his friends in video game form; it showcases four courses, 11 cars and 14 characters from the series. Released in 1998, it remained exclusive to Japan – an understandable move when you consider that the series hadn't quite broken through in the West at that time.

While Takumi Fujiwara's sullen appearance is perfectly replicated on the cover artwork, it adopts a 'super-deformed' style, which gives the characters oversized heads. This design choice extends to the vehicles, too; Fujiwara's iconic Toyota Sprinter AE86 Trueno GT Apex is also portrayed in a 'chibi' fashion. The cars in the game itself share the same oddly-proportioned look.
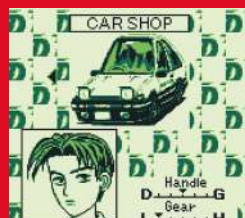
J.League Live 95

Jリーグ ライブ95

Electronic Arts (1995)
Genre: Sports

Developed by Graphic Research and published by Electronic Arts Victor in Japan, *J.League Live 95* is the sequel to 1994's *J.League Winning Goal,* and employs the same visual style and general gameplay as its forerunner; the ability to mix long balls and precision passes means you can get quite tactical with your approach, while the pitch feels wide and roomy, which encourages intricate passing strategies. Fourteen different teams are available, including Cerezo Osaka and Kashiwa Reysol, both of whom had been promoted from the Japan Football League that season. The 1995 campaign was also notable for introducing a revised point system, with three points for any win, one point for penalty kick loss and zero points for a regulation or extra time loss.

The game's cover features the club mascots of the 14 J.League teams of the 1995 season. It's an unusual approach for a soccer game, but the J.League name is no doubt enough of a draw in itself.
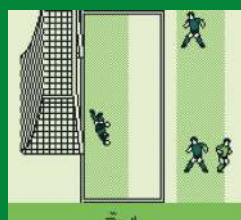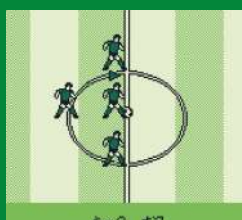
J.League Winning Goal

Jリーグ ウィニングゴール

Electronic Arts (1994)
Genre: Sports

Electronic Arts may be the champion of the soccer arena today, with its long-running FIFA series, but back in 1994, it was only just starting its quest to rule the genre – and part of that plan was publishing an officially-licensed J.League outing, developed by Graphic Research. Showcasing Exhibition, Season, Playoff and Practice modes, *J.League Winning Goal* features 12 different teams to play as, and has a few unique ideas of its own – including players who roll around on the floor theatrically clutching their legs whenever they are tackled – a fairly accurate portrayal of the sport, some might argue.

The focal point of *J.League Winning Goal*'s cover is the motion-blurred football flying across the stadium, while the 12 official team mascots cement the game's J.League credentials. This release was one of the first to include Júbilo Iwata and Bellmare Hiratsuka, both of which were promoted to the top tier in 1994.

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James Bond 007

Nintendo (1997)
Genre: Action adventure

Developed by Saffire Corporation, *James Bond 007* was released on the Game Boy after Rare's iconic N64 game *GoldenEye 007* had made the British super-spy famous amongst '90s gamers. It's not based on a film or book from the series, but does include famous characters, such as Oddjob and Jaws, while the main antagonist, General Golgov, is an entirely new creation for this game. While the pint-sized adventure isn't in the same league as Rare's genre-defining first-person shooter, its cute visuals and unique card-based mini-game make it feel grander than your typical lazy movie cash-in. Despite launching in 1998, the game was too early to capitalise on the additional power afforded by the Game Boy Color, which didn't come out until later in the same year. It did, however, offer *Super Game Boy* support on the SNES.

As 007 boasts some of the most recognisable imagery in cinematic history, Nintendo wisely opted to copy the iconic opening credits sequence used in the James Bond movie series, complete with the famous secret agent silhouetted beneath the equally famous logo.

Jelly Boy

Ocean (1995)
Genre: Action platformer

Featuring a gelatin-based lead character who can change his shape by picking up various power-ups, *Jelly Boy* is a European-exclusive platformer in which the player tries to escape a sinister toy factory by collecting a series of valuable objects; our morphing hero wishes to gain his freedom by gaining an audience with the person in charge of the factory. Attacking involves Jelly Boy turning his stomach into a fist, while ducking to avoid threats literally transforms him into a duck. Collecting 100 musical notes gains you an extra life, but if you get hit you'll lose them all, just like Sonic loses his rings in SEGA's famous platforming series. *Jelly Boy* was also released on the SNES, but a Mega Drive port was cancelled before release. The game wasn't published outside of Europe.

A suitably gooey-looking Jelly Boy is shown using his attack ability, with a series of bubbles displaying some of his amusing transformations. The logo continues the playful jelly theme with a rounded, balloon-like font. The same artwork also appears on the SNES release.

Jikuu Senki Muu

DMG-H1J
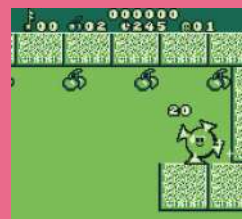
時空戦記ムー

Hudson (1991)
Genre: RPG

This is Hudson Soft's take on the tried-and-tested *Dragon Quest* formula, complete with a plucky young hero, turn-based battles and plenty of NPC characters to chat along with. Your goal is to explore the overworld and the various towns, villages and dungeons dotted around it, with enemy encounters taking place entirely at random and without warning (as is the tradition for Japanese RPGs) on a predominantly blank screen. Items can be purchased from vendors and it's possible to gain more powerful weapons by wisely investing the coin gained from battle. Despite following the JRPG blueprint closely, *Jikuu Senki Muu* was never localised for release outside of Japan.

Jikuu Senki Muu's cover is fairly generic in the realm of Japanese RPGs, but it nonetheless boasts a lovely hand-painted aesthetic – albeit with some fairly unremarkable character design. The game may be eminently forgettable, but at least the box is nice to look at.

Jimmy Connors
Pro Tennis Tour

ジミーコナーズの プロテニスツアー

Misawa (1993)
Genre: Sports

Considered to be among the greatest tennis players of all time, Jimmy Connors is one of the many sporting celebrities to lend their name and likeness to a video game – in this case, a series of tennis titles across a wide range of formats, including the Game Boy. The big selling point with this particular outing is the large, smoothly-animated sprites – they go a long way to making up for the rather slow pace of the action (a deliberate choice, perhaps, to prevent too much screen blur on the Game Boy's LCD display).

In stark contrast to the Western version of the game, the Japanese cover is a vibrant cartoon-like affair, with the players battling for control of the court; Connors himself is conspicuous by his absence – perhaps due to the fact that he was less well-known in Japan than in North America.

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Jinsei Game Densetsu

人生ゲーム伝説

Takara (1991)
Genre: Board game

Based on the Japanese board game released by Takara in 1967 – which, in turn, is based on the American game originally launched in 1860 by Milton Bradley as *The Checkered Game of Life* – this Game Boy title reimagines the original premise as a traditional Japanese RPG, using fantasy imagery to add some additional glamour to proceedings. The action takes place on a board and dice throws push the gameplay forward; land on a square with a skull and you'll have to do battle with a fantasy-style monster. Takara was prolific when it came to leveraging the fame of the board game, releasing it on the SEGA Saturn, Super Famicom and Nintendo 64, as well as several other notable home consoles.

Jinsei Game Densetsu is blessed with a nicely evocative cover, with some solid artwork of players grabbing loot, framed by an eye-catching border. It's just a shame the logo partially obscures the giant blue dinosaur lurking in the background.

Jungle Wars

ジャングルウォーズ

Pony Canyon (1991)
Genre: RPG

Developed by Atelier Double and published by Pony Canyon, *Jungle Wars* is an RPG adventure which places you in the loincloth of a Tarzan-style hero striving to protect his natural habitat from the encroaching evil forces that wish to exploit it. The game adopts a top-down view, like famous JRPGs such as *Dragon Quest* and *Final Fantasy*, and features a similar focus on exploration, conversing with NPCs, and turn-based combat. Battles feature surprisingly detailed enemy sprites, while the various locations in the game are packed with detail. A sequel was released on the Super Famicom in 1993, but neither title made it outside of Japan, which is a shame – this makes a neat change of pace from the typical 'sword and sorcery' titles that populate the genre.

A glorious explosion of bright colours, smiling faces and stampeding animals, the cover artwork for *Jungle Wars* certainly packs a punch. From the stylish logo to the grinning monkey in the foreground, it's a downright adorable composition.

Kaeru no Tame ni Kane wa Naru

カエルの為に鐘は鳴る

Nintendo (1992)
Genre: Action RPG

Also known under the title *For the Frog the Bell Tolls*, this Japan-exclusive action-adventure appears to use the same game engine as *Zelda: Link's Awakening*, and was developed by Nintendo R&D1 and Intelligent Systems, the latter famous for its Famicom Wars and Fire Emblem franchises. As was the case with *Link's Awakening*, the action is split between top-down and side-scrolling sections, and the player gains the ability to change from human form into those of a frog and a snake. While no Western release was forthcoming, an excellent unofficial English translation is available.

The game's hero – Sablé Prince – takes centre stage in this vibrant and highly detailed cover art. An ethereal image of the missing Princess Tiramisu appears behind him, and at his feet sits a horde of frogs – in reality, humans transformed using magic – while the snake Lord Delarin lurks in the background. Bursting with colour and character, it's a lovely piece of artwork.

Kaisen Game:
Navy Blue

海戦ゲーム NAVY BLUE

USE Corp (1989)
Genre: Strategy

The Navy Blue series takes the classic game of *Battleships* and adds a few ideas of its own, namely a time limit to add tension, weapons that allow you to hit multiple tiles at once, and radar to scout for enemy ships. As the action plays out, hits and sinkings are accompanied by animated sequences showing missiles being deployed or battleships on fire. *Navy Blue* doesn't exactly reinvent the wheel, as far as the core game of *Battleships* goes, but it's a neat enough interpretation of the idea. Ironically, this version would be published with the *Battleships* branding in the West.

The cover artwork for *Navy Blue* combines a combat-hardened admiral rendered in a cartoon-like style, which sends conflicting messages. Subsequent entries continued this theme, although *Navy Blue '98* opts for what would have been an in-vogue CG cover at the time, which is a lot less attractive or engaging.
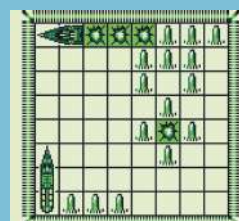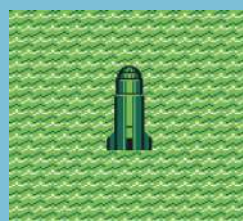
Kakomunja

かこむん蛇

Naxat Soft (1990)
Genre: Action

Released in the West under the less-extravagant title *Serpent*, the concept of *Kakomunja* will be familiar to anyone who has played '*Snake*' on an old Nokia mobile phone – you must guide your snake-like spaceship (your character is actually shown leaping into the cockpit on the game's title screen) around an enclosed arena whilst trying to trap your opponent's similarly serpent-like craft in your long, segmented tail. What makes this take on the idea so interesting is that the player can fire missiles, and it's possible to link-up with a second Game Boy for multiplayer action. Atsuhiro Motoyama's surprisingly moody soundtrack helps add to the tension, and the single-screen setting suits the Game Boy hardware perfectly.

Boasting an airbrushed metal snake, coiled and ready to strike, the cover for *Kakomunja* exudes a strong '80s vibe. The art was deemed good enough to be used on the Western version, released in North America in November 1990.

Karakuri Kengou Den
Musashi Road

からくり剣豪伝ムサシロード

Yutaka (1991)
Genre: Action adventure

Based on Studio Pierrot's 50-episode anime series, which aired on Japanese television between October 1990 and September 1991, *Karakuri Kengou Den Musashi Road* is an adventure title that takes place in a feudal setting where humans coexist with robots. The Musashi of the title faces off against his bitter rival Kojirō – which is a reference to the struggle between Miyamoto Musashi and Sasaki Kojirō, two legendary swordsmen from Japanese history. A version was also released on the Famicom, and neither game made it out of Japan.

The hero Musashi is depicted in the centre of the cover, surrounded by a host of other robot samurai. The image is based directly on the artwork seen in the TV show upon which the game is based, and boasts a unique mix of armour styles, fusing feudal Japan with robotic designs.

Kenyuu Densetsu Yaiba
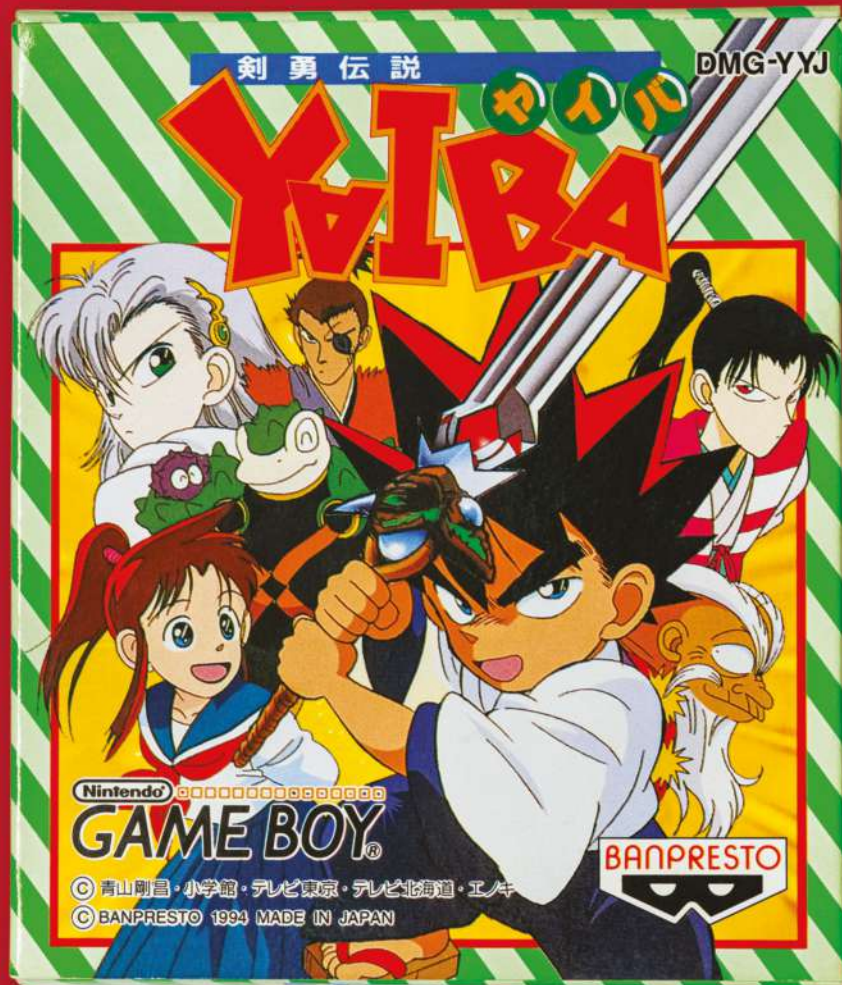
剣勇伝説YAIBA

Banpresto (1994)
Genre: Action platformer

Gosho Aoyama's manga series *Yaiba* began life in the pages of Shogakukan's *Weekly Shōnen Sunday* way back in 1988, and would inspire an animated cartoon series called *Kenyuu Densetsu Yaiba* in 1993. This, in turn, would spawn a Game Boy title of the same name focused on the protagonist Yaiba, a boy samurai who finds himself in the big city, fighting a whole host of enemies. While there are numerous RPG-style sections where you chat with characters from the show, the bulk of the gameplay takes the form of a reasonably accessible action platformer.

Various cast members from the *Kenyuu Densetsu Yaiba* anime grace this striking cover of the Game Boy title. It makes sense to use instantly recognisable characters, so Banpresto used a similar approach for the Super Famicom and SEGA Game Gear adaptations of the series.

Killer Instinct

Nintendo (1995)
Genre: Fighting

Originally launched in the arcades in 1994, *Killer Instinct* utilised Silicon Graphics workstations to create its iconic CG characters, and would later be ported to the SNES, while the Nintendo 64 would get the updated *Killer Instinct Gold*. With this ambitious Game Boy conversion, UK developer Rare attempted to take a cutting-edge arcade game and miniaturise it for portable play, and the results aren't entirely successful. The characters Cinder and Riptor have been removed, and the controls are simplified to accommodate the Game Boy's two-button setup. Despite the cuts, it's impressive that *Killer Instinct* even exists on the console, let alone in a playable and enjoyable state. *Killer Instinct* was later revived for Microsoft's Xbox One console in 2013, with Double Helix Games and Iron Galaxy sharing development duties with Rare.

The finely-rendered Fulgore graces the box for *Killer Instinct*. Designed by Kev Bayliss, this fearsome cyborg has become one of the franchise's most recognisable stars; it's just unfortunate that the in-game visuals can't match this compelling cover.

Kinin Koumaroku Oni

鬼忍降魔録 ONI

Banpresto (1990)
Genre: RPG

The first instalment in Banpresto's long-running Oni series takes the form of a fairly typical RPG adventure in which you, as the hero, must explore an eastern fantasy setting, partaking in turn-based battles and chatting with friendly characters. Like the other titles in the Oni franchise, the action is set in feudal Japan and features a varied and interesting selection of ninjas, samurai and monsters to battle – a welcome change from the western fantasy settings seen in most RPGs of the period. In 2015, this particular instalment was translated into English by fans under the revised title *Oni Chronicles: Genesis*, as none of the original series ever made it out of Japan.

Heroes, monsters and a damsel in distress form the basis for *Kinin Koumaroku Oni*'s anime-infused cover. While the detailed imagery is far more advanced than the crude visuals contained within, it does a good job of setting the scene and getting potential players interested.

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Kinnikuman:
The Dream Match

キン肉マン
ザ☆ドリームマッチ

Yutaka (1992)
Genre: Sports

Created by Yoshinori Nakai and Takashi Shimada, the Kinnikuman series began in the late '70s, and is perhaps best known in the West for inspiring the M.U.S.C.L.E. line of tiny rubber figures that were very popular during the '80s. In keeping with the wrestling focus of the manga and anime, *Kinnikuman: The Dream Match* takes place in a ring where competitors are expected to wear down the health bar of their opponent using a series of blows, grapples and throws. Movement isn't restricted to a single plane, as is the case in games like *Street Fighter II*; you can manoeuvre around your rival in order to line up the best attack. The visuals are impressively detailed for such an early Game Boy title – the fanciful backgrounds are a real highlight.

The cover art depicts the heroic Kinnikuman pile-driving a goon into the mat. It appears to be a still from the animated series, rather than a bespoke piece of artwork created for the game.

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Kirby no Kirakira Kids

カービィのきらきらきっず

HAL Laboratory (1997)
Genre: Puzzle

Better known as *Kirby's Star Stacker* in the West, this puzzle game by HAL Laboratory challenges the player to earn as many stars as possible by matching pairs of blocks shaped like Kirby's animal pals from the mainline series of 2D platformers; the stars can be added to your score by sandwiching them between two matching blocks. Four modes are available: Round Clear is the main mode – divided into five difficulty levels – while Vs. allows you to play with another person using the link cable and a single cartridge. Challenge is an endless mode, while Time Attack tasks you with getting rid of as many stars as possible in the space of three minutes. An updated version of the game was released in Japan in 1998 for the Super Famicom home console, but due to the late nature of this release, a Western version never happened.

The cover shows Kirby riding a star from the game, set against a background of blocks rendered in an attractive pencil sketch style. The game's colourful logo gives the Kirby character a second chance to shine.

Kirby no Pinball

カービィのピンボール

HAL Laboratory [1993]
Genre: Simulation

HAL Laboratory's third pinball game following *Rollerball* (MSX, NES) and *Revenge of the 'Gator* (Game Boy), *Kirby no Pinball* – known as *Kirby's Pinball Land* in the West – takes the pink blob hero and places him inside a pinball table, with predictably addictive results. Three tables – Whispy Woods, Kracko and Poppy Bros. – are included, each comprised of three screens. The aim is to get Kirby to the top screen so he can defeat the table's boss character. Despite the blurry Game Boy display, this is one of the most enjoyable examples of pinball released on the system.

Kirby games are famous for their colourful and appealing cover designs, and *Kirby no Pinball* is certainly no exception to this rule. Kirby sits in the centre of the image, brandishing an umbrella, while the other characters – including King Dedede, the game's final boss – all become part of the pinball table motif. Kirby appears in the logo, too, which is a wonderful piece of graphic design in itself.

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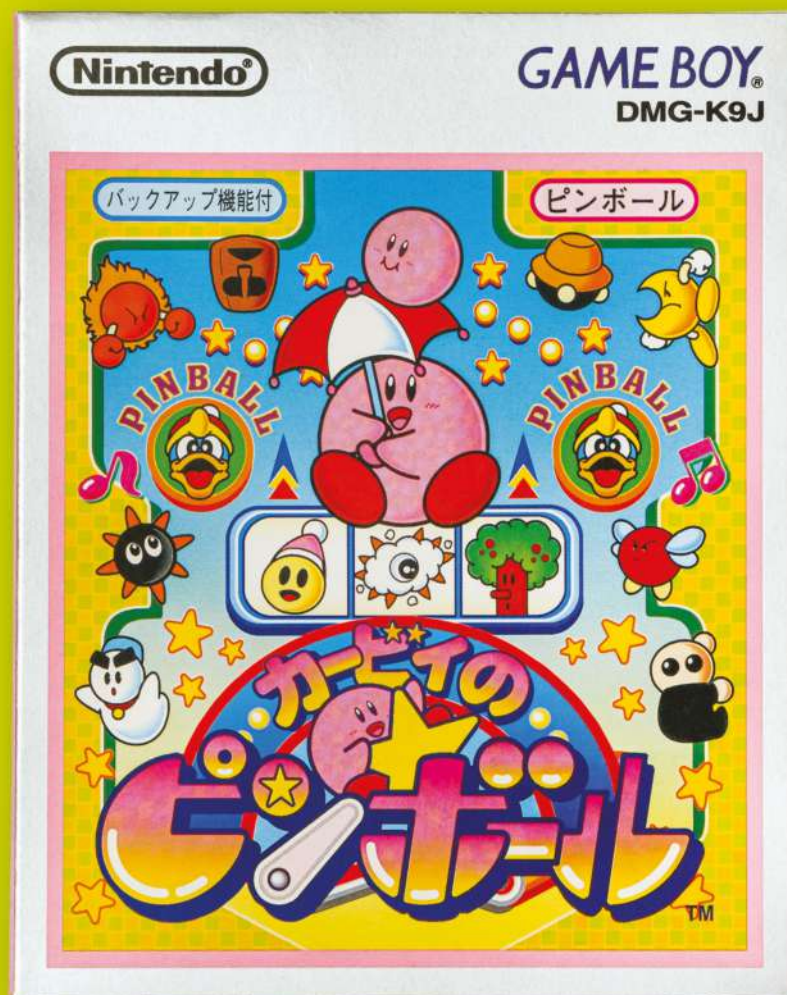
Kizuchi da Quiz da Gen-San da!

木づちだ クイズだ 源さんだ!

Irem (1992)
Genre: Quiz

During the '90s, it became fashionable for publishers to create quiz games that leveraged their stable of characters, and Irem was no exception. This digital board game showcases Gen from *Daiku no Gen-San* – better known in the West by the name *Hammerin' Harry* – and his noble quest to rescue his beloved partner from the clutches of evil forces by taking on a host of foes in a game of brains rather than brawn. The player needs to answer a series of questions as quickly as possible to avoid losing health, while a small selection of mini-games grant the chance to earn money, which can be used to purchase items, boost your HP or even get a free pass on questions you cannot answer.

Gen appears in the foreground with his trusty hammer strapped to his back, and the background artwork is rendered in pastel shades to create a sense of depth, while maintaining focus on the hero. It's a wonderfully detailed piece of artwork, which makes the lack of a worldwide release all the more disappointing.

Klax

KLAX

Hudson (1991)
Genre: Puzzle

Developed by Dave Akers and Mark Stephen Pierce during their tenure at Atari Games, *Klax* is one of the many puzzle titles that emerged following the global success of *Tetris*. Like the famous Russian title, the concept behind *Klax* is simple: coloured blocks slide down a conveyor belt and the player has to catch them using a paddle, before arranging them in a way which removes the different colours in groups of three or more. A major arcade hit for Atari, it used its home brand Tengen to bring the game to consoles. The Game Boy port naturally suffers from a lack of colour; instead, each block has a pattern to differentiate it from the others, which makes it slightly harder to parse than other versions.

Hudson stepped in to publish *Klax* in Japan, and blessed both the Game Boy and Famicom versions with the same bespoke cover, which differs wildly from the more abstract images seen in the West. The attractive computer-rendered artwork turns the falling tiles into *2001*-style monoliths, giving the game a slightly misplaced sense of grandeur.

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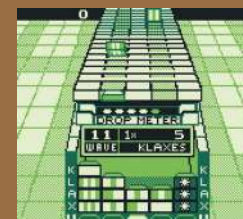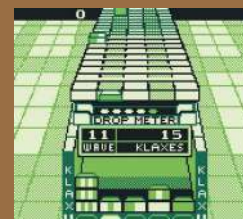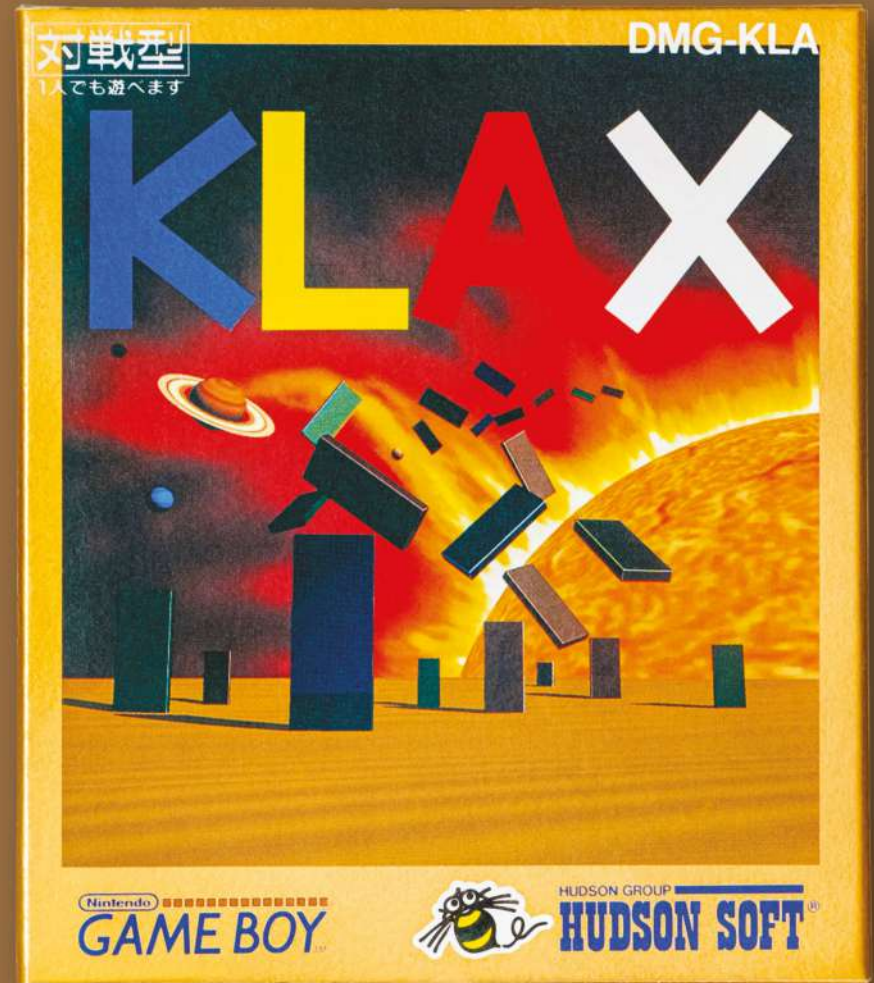
Knight Quest

ナイトクエスト

Taito (1992)
Genre: RPG

Following the amazing success of Enix's *Dragon Quest*, an almost limitless flood of clones appeared in Japan, and even veteran developers like the mighty Taito tried to jump on the bandwagon. *Knight Quest* shares many similarities with the best JRPGs of the period, showcasing top-down exploration segments and side-on, turn-based combat (the techniques are, strangely, based on birds, such as Swallow, Sea Gull, Falcon and Eagle). However, the gameplay is hugely derivative and repetitive; while you have separate quests, they all follow the same basic pattern. Despite its shortcomings, *Knight Quest* was one of the few games of its kind to be granted a release outside of Japan.

Will, the heroic 14-year-old protagonist of *Knight Quest*, graces the game's cover with a cheerful look on his face; he clearly hasn't spotted the massive dragon looming over the castle behind him. It's a rather naive piece of artwork, but still better than the clumsy airbrushed Western version, which is pretty awful by comparison.
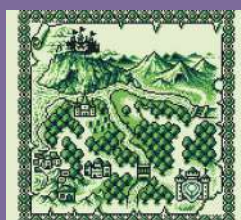
Koi Wa Kakehiki

恋は駆け引き

Pony Canyon (1991)
Genre: Puzzle

This puzzle title roughly translates as 'Love is the strategy' and the game involves creating a solid pathway between two lovers on a grid-like board; it's yet another game that takes advantage of the Game Boy's suitability for single-screen brain-teasers. Levels are solved by using the sliders on the top, bottom and sides of the playfield – reminiscent of the sliding puzzle toys that were popular during the '80s and '90s – but be wary of simply moving them at random; if you pair up one of the potential lovers with a sunglasses-wearing thug in one of the corners, you'll lose the round. While the premise is reasonably easy to grasp, *Koi Wa Kakehiki* was never granted a Western release.

In artwork that looks like it's from the '70s, an attractive anime-style lady is the main focus, playfully toying with two prospective male suitors. The title and grid-like pattern in the background hint at the game's puzzling nature.

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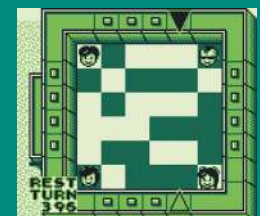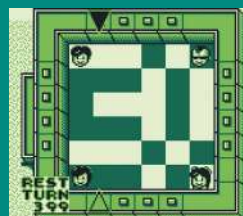
Konami GB Collection Vol. 1

コナミGBコレクション Vol.1

Konami (1997)
Genre: Compilation

Released to capitalise on the renewed popularity of the Game Boy following the success of *Pokémon*, this collection saw Konami repackaging some of its early handheld hits in four different collections, the first of which arrived in 1997. This debut pack contains *Gradius* (*Nemesis*), *Dracula Densetsu* (*Castlevania: The Adventure*), *Konami Racing* (*F1 Spirit*) and *Contra*. All of the games come with Super Game Boy support for additional on-screen colors, and the cast of Konami's dating sim *Tokimeki Memorial* is on hand to provide instructions. When the packs were released in Europe (no North American launch took place), the *Tokimeki Memorial* content was removed.

The packaging for *Konami GB Collection Vol. 1* features the original box artwork for the four bundled titles, set against a vivid orange background, which is really eye-catching. The individual pieces of cover art are all of Konami's usual high standard.
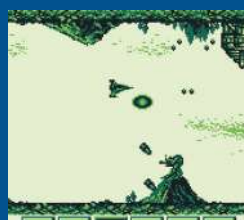
Konamic Golf

コナミックゴルフ

Konami (1991)
Genre: Sports

Released under Konami's Ultra Games label as *Ultra Golf* in North America and *Konami Golf* in Europe, this relatively early sports title showcases two different courses to tee off on, as well as a tournament mode that expects you to win on both courses, one after the other, to be crowned champion. If that sounds like a tall order, rest easy – a practice mode is also included, which allows you to hone your skills without any pressure. While American players only had to wait until 1992 to get their hands on the game, the European release didn't take place until 1994.

Beautifully rendered in pencil strokes, the cover art for *Konamic Golf* does a superb job of giving the impression of dynamic movement. You can almost hear the 'thwack' of club on ball, the camera about to whip-pan across the course to follow the shot. It's a great example of a brave style of Japanese box artwork that was rarely seen in the West.

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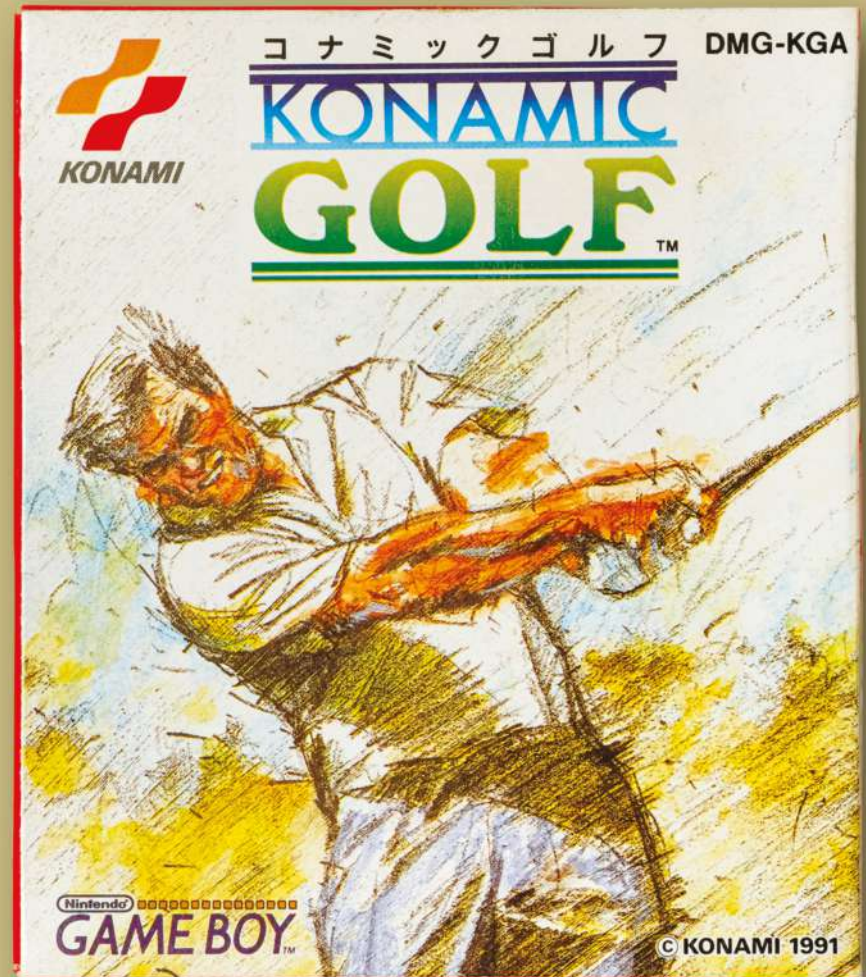
Koukiatsu Boy

高気圧ボーイ

Konami (1998)
Genre: RPG

Launched quite late in the Game Boy's lifespan, *Koukiatsu Boy* is a card-battling RPG title in the same vein as *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, another card-based property from Konami. Featuring a cast of cute anime-style characters and equally adorable monster designs, the game must have been perfectly poised to ride the same wave that carried the likes of *Pokémon* and *Digimon* into the public consciousness, but *Koukiatsu Boy* didn't quite catch on, remaining exclusive to Japan without any form of Western localisation.

Koukiatsu Boy's vibrant, colourful cover does a good job of communicating the visual appeal of the game, with its trio of heroes dominating the foreground of the image, while a selection of monsters occupies the middle distance. In the background looms a rather sinister-looking character, a lone central eye staring alarmingly at the viewer.
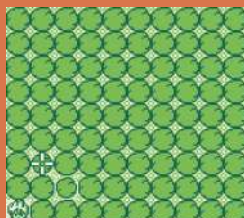
Krusty's Fun House

Acclaim (1993)
Genre: Puzzle platformer

One of the many *Simpsons*-based video games released in the early '90s, *Krusty's Fun House* actually began life as *Rat-Trap* on the Commodore Amiga. Created by Fox Williams for British company Audiogenic, the game was licensed to Acclaim, which then retro-fitted it with Krusty the Clown and a host of other *Simpsons* characters – including Bart, Homer, Corporal Punishment and Sideshow Mel. Like DMA's famous *Lemmings*, the aim is to guide a series of creatures – in this case, rats – through each level, but here you're sending them to their grisly demise via an extermination chamber. *Krusty's Fun House* was released on practically every console of the period, including the SNES, Mega Drive and Master System.

All versions of *Krusty's Fun House* have the same Matt Groening-style artwork, although the direction Krusty is looking varies depending on the system. Bart is also present on each cover, but on the SNES version, he's holding a switch, while on the Game Boy edition, he's hiding a mallet behind his back.

Kwirk

Acclaim (1990)
Genre: Puzzle

Despite being a relatively early release for the Game Boy, maze game *Kwirk* is surprisingly accomplished; the object is to reach the staircase in each level by negotiating a series of obstacles ranging from turnstiles to holes in the floor. Another mode tasks you with running through a succession of puzzle rooms in order to obtain a high score, and there's even a two-player mode thrown in for good measure. While the Western version goes by the name of *Kwirk* – and features a sunglasses-wearing tomato in the lead role – the original Japanese title is *Puzzle Boy*, the sequel to which would make its way to the West as *Amazing Tater*, with its cast of vegetable heroes remaining entirely intact.

Kwirk's cooler-than-cool cover is a typical slice of '90s-style artwork, which stands in stark contrast to the more muted, cutesy Japanese original. Acclaim clearly knew that street cred was a key selling point for Western audiences.
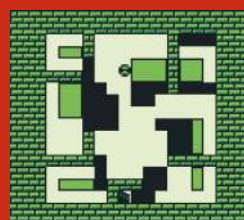
Lemmings

Ocean (1994)
Genre: Strategy

Coded by Scottish studio DMA Design, *Lemmings* – like Bullfrog's *Populous* – was one of those games that seemed to gain global appeal effortlessly. Much of this is down to the simple aim: to guide as many of the titular creatures to the exit of each hazard-packed level as possible. Originally released on the Commodore Amiga in 1991, and built by a core team of Mike Dailly and David Jones, *Lemmings* was swiftly ported to pretty much every game system of the period (Jones later said after 20 ports, he stopped keeping count). Sadly, the Game Boy conversion isn't as successful as it could be; it's hindered by the console's small screen and the imprecise nature of the controls, which predictably lack the finesse of the mouse interface seen on the Amiga.

Adrian Powell's famous cover artwork for the Amiga version of *Lemmings* arguably helped it gain mainstream appeal all over the world; it conveys the frantic nature of the gameplay as well as showing the various Lemmings in their iconic 'jobs' – such as floaters, miners and blockers.

Lock 'n' Chase
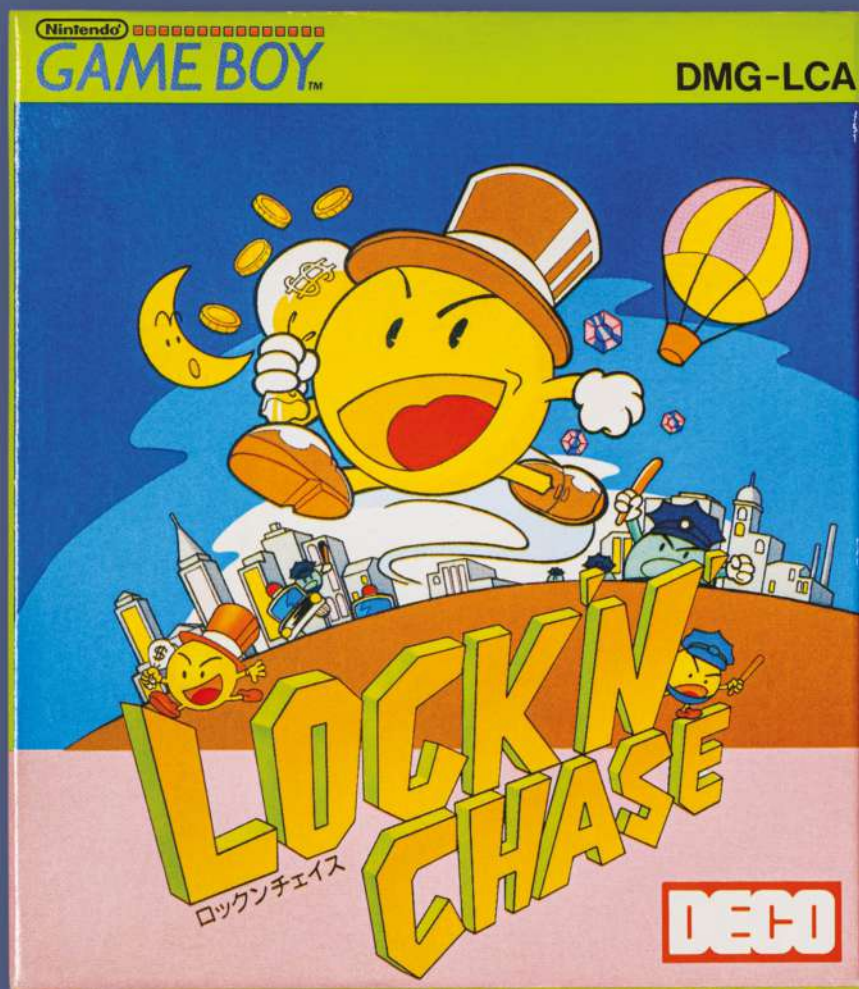
ロックンチェイス

Data East (1990)
Genre: Action

Produced in response to Namco's phenomenally successful *Pac-Man*, 1981's *Lock 'n' Chase* takes the maze-based format and adds a unique spin by placing you in the shoes of a thief who must infiltrate a vault, grab the loot and escape without running into the four policemen, named Stiffy, Scaredy, Smarty and Silly. Doors can be used to keep said law enforcement officers at bay, but only two doors can be shut at any one time. The Game Boy port benefits from noticeably enhanced visuals.

Data East's artists were sailing close to the wind when they designed the cover for the game; the lead character is a dead ringer for Pac-Man, the only real difference between the two being the addition of a top hat and the fiendish grin of someone who's evaded capture and is making off with a sackful of cash. The simple line art is basic but effective.

Mach GoGoGo

マッハGoGoGo

Tomy (1997)
Genre: Racing

Tatsuo Yoshida's *Speed Racer* (or *Mach GoGoGo*, as it's known in its homeland) was one of the earliest Japanese media properties to make the leap from East to West. It started life as a manga in 1966, before being adapted into a successful cartoon series, and – in 2008 – a live-action film from the Wachowskis, creators of *The Matrix*. This Game Boy title is based on the short-lived *New Mach GoGoGo* TV series, and takes the form of a top-down racer that gives players the chance to upgrade the famous Mach 5 car. Given that it's from 1997, it shouldn't come as a shock to learn that it also features Super Game Boy support.

The Mach 5 and Shooting Star – Racer X's vehicle – are the main focal points of the cover for *Mach GoGoGo*, with Gō Mifune's car the more prominent of the pair. However, the sleek, hyperealistic CG renders do seem a bit at odds with the rather ostentatious logo.

Magical Taluluto-kun

まじかる☆タルるートくん

Bandai (1991)
Genre: Action platformer

Magical Taluluto-kun is one of the many Japanese manga and anime series adapted into Game Boy releases. Created by Tatsuya Egawa, it was published in Shueisha's *Weekly Shōnen Jump* comic between the years of 1988 and 1992, and was also adapted into a TV series and three full-length movies. This action platformer places the player in the role of hapless and downtrodden schoolboy Edojou Honmaru, whose life takes an unexpected turn when he meets the Magical Taluluto-kun of the title. The player controls Edojou, who is aided by Taluluto-kun as he jumps and punches his way across a series of side-scrolling stages. The sprites are easy on the eye, and the music is surprisingly infectious.

Honmaru and Taluluto-kun star on the cover, alongside the famous *Magical Taluluto-kun* logo and against a somewhat psychedelic background. It's a delightful example of Japanese character art, exuding a sense of fun and excitement.

170
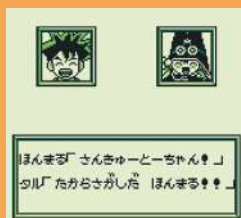
Magic Knight Rayearth 2nd:
The Missing Colors

**魔法騎士レイアース2nd
ミッシングカラーズ**

Tomy (1995)
Genre: RPG

Set after the events of the first story arc of all-female manga studio Clamp's Magic Knight Rayearth series, this *Final Fantasy*-style RPG adventure sees the player attempting to restore colour to the fantasy world of Cephiro by taking down the evil Color Thief. Strategic turn-based combat, tricky puzzle solving and in-depth conversations with NPCs are all present and correct, making this something of a treat for fans of the wider Magic Knight Rayearth series. While a Western release never happened, an unrelated SEGA Saturn entry arrived in North America in 1998, courtesy of Working Designs.

The three heroes of the series – the tomboy Hikaru Shidou, quick-witted Umi Ryuuzaki and demure Fuu Hououji – fill the game's box artwork, swords at the ready. The detailed artwork of Clamp's famous franchise really shines on this cover design, which is unusual in its landscape (rather than portrait) orientation.

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Makaimura Gaiden:
The Demon Darkness

魔界村外伝 THE DEMON DARKNESS

Capcom (1993)
Genre: Action adventure

Like the original game – which was released in the West as *Gargoyle's Quest* – *Makaimura Gaiden: The Demon Darkness* is neatly divided into two sections. In the RPG-style overhead portion of the game, you explore the Ghoul Realm and converse with NPCs, while the side-scrolling action sections allow you to utilise your myriad magical powers and test your reflexes. Originally released on the NES, the Game Boy version has two new levels and, unlike the home edition, was never released outside of Asia. A North American launch was planned for 1993, but was later cancelled.

Bright, detailed and superbly eye-catching, the cover artwork for *Makaimura Gaiden: The Demon Darkness* is a real gem, and improves massively on the rather staid cover used for the original game in Japan. The comic-style art is of sumptuous quality, and works in harmony with the cleverly constructed logo.

Makai Toushi SaGa

魔界塔士 サ・ガ

Square (1989)
Genre: RPG

This is a game of firsts: not only was it
the first instalment in the long-running
SaGa series – a series which continues to
get entries and updates to this day – it
was also notable for being the very first
role-playing title for the Game Boy, launching
in Japan in 1989. As was common in the genre
back then, battles are turn-based and the
members of your party can belong to one
of three character classes, each offering
its own upgrades and skill levels. Rebranded
as *The Final Fantasy Legend* for its Western
release, it's also famous for employing the
talents of composer Nobuo Uematsu. Two
Game Boy sequels followed, both of which
received a release in the West under the
Final Fantasy banner.

The varied themes within the game are hinted
at on the cover by a mixture of fantastical
creatures and sci-fi weaponry. Detailed
monochrome line art set against a colourful
gradient is an unusual treatment, which would
be reused for the sequel, *SaGa 2*. An opulent
gold border and bold logo round off a unique
but satisfying package.

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Marble Madness

Mindscape (1991)
Genre: Action

Developed by Mark Cerny – who would later find fame as the chief system architect of the PlayStation 4 – *Marble Madness* was one of Atari's most notable arcade hits of the post-crash '80s. The aim is to guide your marble to the bottom of the level while negotiating various obstacles and hazards. With its distinctive isometric visuals and trackball controls, it gained legions of fans, and home ports followed for a wide range of systems, including the Game Boy. The graphics have naturally taken a hit when compared to the arcade version, and the lack of trackball control is a problem, but this handheld conversion remains a fine port.

The unique features of *Marble Madness* – its isometric, grid-based worlds and shiny marbles – are faithfully captured on the game's distinctive cover. The same airbrushed artwork (with a few minor variations) appeared across the many formats the game appeared on, and across different territories. Sometimes the simplest, most obvious solutions are the best.

Marchen Club

メルヘン倶楽部

Naxat Soft (1992)
Genre: Strategy

You could easily argue that the blurry screen of the Game Boy is better suited to methodical, slow-paced titles, and the console was blessed with these in abundance. However, a lot of these complex strategy titles never made it out of Japan, due to the amount of text to translate, and the fact that more cerebral games were seen as somewhat niche in the West. Naxat Soft's *Marchen Club* is one such example; it's relatively obscure even in its homeland, which is a shame, because the mix of grid-based action, RPG-style combat and cute fantasy setting make it stand apart from other titles of this ilk. A Western release would have been welcome, but it sadly wasn't to be.

Marchen Club's cover consists of a selection of fantasy-style cartoon characters poised for battle on a grid-like playing surface – which is a fair summary of the game's strategic gameplay. The artwork is neat, if rather sedate, and certainly enhanced by the colourful logo.
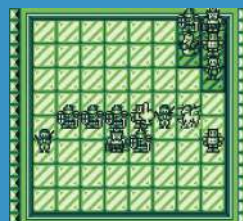
Mario & Yoshi

Nintendo (1991)
Genre: Puzzle

Mario & Yoshi (the game's European designation) is a falling-block puzzle title involving some of Nintendo's most famous characters, coded by Game Freak, the studio that went on to create the hugely popular Pokémon series. The aim is to clear monsters from the on-screen playing field by swapping and moving the stacks around so that monsters collide with identical monsters on the top of each stack, thereby removing them from play and preventing the stacks from reaching the top of the screen. Released in Japan as *Yoshi's Egg* and in North America as plain old *Yoshi*, the game also launched on the Nintendo Entertainment System.

While the Japanese and North American versions of the game were content to rely solely on the appeal of Yoshi to sell copies, Nintendo decided to enlist the help of its famous plumber mascot to bolster the standing of the European release. It's a jolly enough cover, but the art isn't quite up to Nintendo's usual standards.

Mario no Picross

マリオのピクロス

Nintendo (1995)
Genre: Puzzle

While Mario's name is on the box, and the famous plumber features in-game via a series of animated sequences, *Mario no Picross* has precious little to do with the exploits of Nintendo's beloved mascot. Instead of stomping Goombas, the player has to chip away at a grid of blocks to reveal an image below. Numerical hints are arrayed around the edges, and the time limit is eaten away at with every incorrect block removed. *Mario no Picross* struggled in the West, and subsequent sequels remained exclusive to Japan.

In keeping with Mario's other adventures, the package for *Mario no Picross* retains many of the design elements seen elsewhere. His looming visage dominates the image, only slightly obscured by the game's colourful logo. While the image is slightly different on the Western version, the same basic concept is used, with Mario's familiar face being the main focus.

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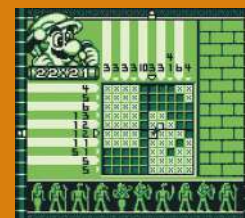
Masakari Densetsu:
Kintarou Action-Hen

マサカリ伝説
金太郎アクション編

Tonkin House (1992)
Genre: Action

Not to be confused with *Masakari Densetsu: Kintarou Role-Playing-Hen* – which features the same characters and setting but in an RPG environment – *Masakari Densetsu: Kintarou Action-Hen* is an action platformer inspired by the Japanese folk hero Kintarou, which roughly translates as 'Golden Boy'. Just like in the legend, this superhuman youth has a special connection with animals and can summon them to help overcome each stage. While there are some RPG-style sections, the main focus of the game is navigating each level and taking out hostile creatures.

A cute version of the Kintarou character adorns the cover, riding into battle with his trademark axe on the back of a tame bear – both elements lifted from the original Japanese legend. It's a wonderfully comical image, full of fun, attitude and character, and a great advert for the game within.

Medarot:
Kabuto Version

メダロット カブトバージョン

Imagineer (1997)
Genre: RPG

Better known in the West by the title *Medabots*, this is the first title in Natsume's robot-battling RPG franchise. Players create AI-based robots and pit them in battle against other droids, picking up improved parts and upgrades along the way; as they do so, the game's story draws in a host of other characters, both friendly and aggressive. Taking a leaf out of *Pokémon*'s book, Natsume and publisher Imagineer decided to release the game in two versions – *Kabuto* and *Kuwagata* – which encouraged fans to buy both in order to gain access to all of the available robot parts and experience all of the storyline. An enhanced port called *Medarot Perfect Edition* was released on the Bandai Wonderswan console in 1999, and this was also published in two different editions.

Based on the Japanese rhinoceros beetle, the Kabuto-class Medarot is the cover star of this particular version of the game. The alternate version boasts the Kuwagata robot – based on a stag beetle – set against a black background, providing a neat visual contrast between the two editions.

Mega Man:
Dr. Wily's Revenge

Known as Rockman in the West, Capcom's Mega Man series is one of its most popular and enduring creations. It began life on the NES before making its way to a wide range of other formats, including the SNES, Mega Drive and PlayStation. This first portable outing wasn't actually developed by Capcom, but by the little-known Minakuchi Engineering; it combines elements of the first two NES games to create an adventure that isn't totally new, but still plays brilliantly, and perfectly retains the core spirit of the franchise. Players must negotiate a series of challenging stages packed with traps and enemies before taking on a Robot Master in a tricky boss battle.

Keiji Inafune's artwork for the early Mega Man games is the stuff of legend, and this stylish European artwork adapts his famous character designs – unlike the North American cover, which has an all-new image that is markedly inferior.

Megami Tensei Gaiden:
Last Bible

女神転生外伝 ラストバイブル

Atlus (1992)
Genre: RPG

While it's part of the wider Megami Tensei RPG series, *Megami Tensei Gaiden: Last Bible* is aimed at younger players and therefore features more appealing characters and milder-looking monsters. Unlike the mainline games in the Megami Tensei franchise, the action in *Last Bible* takes place in a medieval fantasy world plagued by fantasy beasts rather than scary demons – however, as is the case in other games in the lineage, it's possible to converse with said monsters and, if the correct line of conversation is followed, recruit them to your party. While the original Game Boy release was exclusive to Japan, the subsequent Game Boy Color update was localised for the West as *Revelations: The Demon Slayer* in 1999.

The game's status as a child-friendly RPG is evidenced by the appealing, anime-style cover, which features no demons or monsters, and instead allows the game's three heroes to take centre stage. However, the uncluttered look of the image and serious nature of the characters still suggest a relatively mature title.

Megami Tensei Gaiden:
Last Bible II

女神転生外伝
ラストバイブルII

Atlus (1993)
Genre: RPG

Like its forerunner, *Megami Tensei Gaiden: Last Bible II*, while part of the Megami Tensei series, is aimed mainly at younger players. Unlike the first Last Bible entry, however, it never received a localisation outside of Japan. Focused on the exploits of a young boy named Yuri – who happens to have been raised in the Demon Kingdom – the gameplay is similar to that in the first game, based around exploration, NPC interaction and the traditional random, turn-based battles with a host of fantasy monsters. However, this time around, the player can augment the capabilities of their captured monster allies by giving them items and accessories. *Last Bible II* was later ported to the Game Boy Color, in 1999, with a number of visual enhancements.

The game's cover shows the hero Yuri flanked by Safia on the left and Esua on the right, with an assortment of monster allies in the background. This artwork is much more suited to the intended age of its audience, with more of a cool, anime feel than its predecessor.
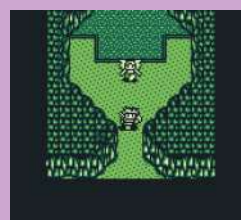
Metroid II:
Return of Samus

Nintendo (1991)
Genre: Action adventure

It's an indication of Nintendo's confidence in the Game Boy system that it chose the handheld console to host the sequel to its critically- and commercially-acclaimed NES title *Metroid*. Bounty hunter Samus Aran is the protagonist once again, and must rid the galaxy of the life-sucking, parasite-like Metroid aliens before the evil Space Pirates can get their hands on them for nefarious purposes. A host of Metroids must be destroyed as the player navigates the game's underground levels. Gunpei Yokoi – the man who came up with the concept for the Game Boy – served as producer, and the game is notable for introducing the world to the iconic Varia Suit, the round-shouldered costume that Samus still wears to this day. A 3DS remake named *Metroid: Samus Returns* – co-developed by Spanish studio MercurySteam – was released in 2017.

Crouched on an alien landscape with her blaster ready for action, Samus Aran makes for quite an intimidating sight on the cover of her Game Boy debut. The same artwork – which is a little naive, but does the job – was used for the Japanese release of the game.

Michael Jordan One on One:
Jordan vs. Bird

マイケル・ジョーダン
ONE ON ONE
JORDAN VS BIRD

Electronic Arts (1993)
Genre: Sports

As the title suggests, this is a one-on-one basketball simulation featuring just two players, but they're two of the most famous to ever step onto the court: Michael Jordan of the Chicago Bulls and Larry Bird of the Boston Celtics. In addition to seeing which of these two legendary ballers is best, there are mini-games, which include a three-point shootout with Bird and a slam dunk contest with Jordan.

With two such notable sporting stars signed up, EA wasn't going to waste an opportunity to plaster their faces all over the game's cover. The photo is taken from the perspective of the net itself, with Jordan and Bird leaping up to contend possession of the ball. The same image was used on the C64, MS-DOS, NES and Mega Drive versions of the game.

Mickey Mouse II

ミッキーマウスII

Kemco (1991)
Genre: Puzzle platformer

Developed by Kemco, this Disney-themed puzzle platformer tasks Mickey with collecting keys to unlock the gateways to each stage. There are 28 levels in total, patrolled by famous Disney characters. The game's origins lie in the 1989 Famicom Disk System game *Roger Rabbit*, which was ported to the Game Boy under the title *Mickey Mouse* in Japan, and as *The Bugs Bunny Crazy Castle* in the West. Initially released as *The Bugs Bunny Crazy Castle 2* in America, this portable outing would be released a second time in the latter region with the Danish 'Hugo' licence attached to it.

Mickey and Minnie Mouse are the cover stars of *Mickey Mouse II*, placed in the middle of a bright sunburst design that practically radiates happiness and good cheer. The background helps, but it would be hard to take Disney artwork and not make a decent-looking cover out of it.
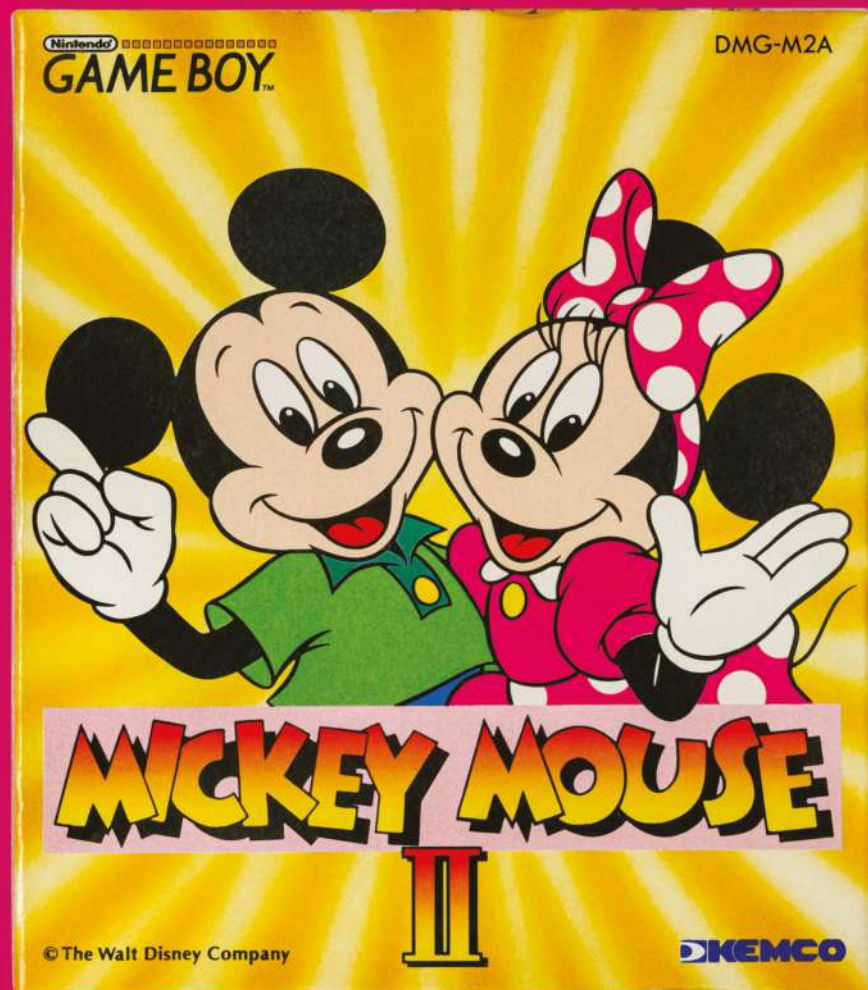
Mickey Mouse IV:
Mahou no Labyrinth

ミッキーマウスIV
魔法のラビリンス

Kemco (1993)
Genre: Puzzle platformer

This puzzle platformer requires the player to collect a series of stars to open the door to the next level; digging holes and picking up keys are also focal points of the gameplay. While it's still part of Kemco's long-running Crazy Castle series, *Mickey Mouse IV* has one of the most complex release stories of any video game. Only the Japanese release features Mickey and his friends; the European version uses Jim Davis' *Garfield*, while the North American edition is based on the animated series *The Real Ghostbusters*, and has bonus levels not present in the other versions. All three games are based on Traveling Bits' Amiga title *P.P. Hammer and his Pneumatic Weapon*, although it has been suggested that Kemco did not ask for permission.

A joyful Mickey Mouse is shown chasing a swirl of golden stars on the cover. *Garfield Labyrinth* – the European version of the game – uses a similar, though less polished piece of art, starring the eponymous cat and his chum Odie.
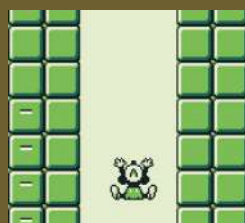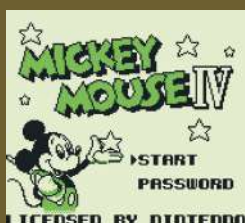
Mickey Mouse V:
Mahou no Stick

ミッキーマウスV
魔法のステッキ

Kemco (1993)
Genre: Puzzle platformer

Kemco's Crazy Castle series continues with this Game Boy entry, once again featuring Disney's iconic Mickey Mouse character alongside a host of friends, including Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck and Goofy. To save his pals, Mickey has to wave his wand over crystals that hide the picture pieces essential to their liberation. On finishing each portrait, the player is given the chance to save the character in question, by defeating a boss enemy. Although it was released in Japan in 1993, *Mickey Mouse V* didn't arrive in North America and Europe until 1998, where it was known as *Mickey Mouse: Magic Wands*.

The cover artwork for *Mickey Mouse V: Mahou no Stick* is identical to that used in the West, and shows Mickey confidently striding towards the viewer, portraits of his captured friends hanging in the background. It's an unusual perspective, not often used for Mickey, and one in which his pose looks slightly awkward.

Micro Machines

Kids of the '80s and early '90s will no doubt remember Galoob's range of Micro Machines toys very fondly; these pocket-sized vehicles took the world by storm, selling millions of units globally and turning pre-teens into hardened collectors. The notion of creating a video game based on these tiny cars, boats, helicopters and even tanks – and having them race around real-world environments like tables and bedroom floors – was pure genius, and the resultant product went on to become one of the most famous games of the era. While it naturally lacks the colour visuals seen in the NES, Mega Drive and SNES versions, the Game Boy port is surprisingly faithful. The link cable mode will have made it even more appealing to players in the '90s.

One of the most instantly recognisable covers in '90s gaming, the box for *Micro Machines* on the Game Boy uses a bespoke piece of art depicting a pair of F1-style cars dashing around a pool table. The Micro Machines logo – famous to millions of fans the world over – is surprisingly small, given the popularity of the brand.

Mini Yonku GB Let's & Go!!

ミニ四駆GB Let's&Go!!

ASCII (1997)
Genre: Strategy

Based on Tetsuhiro Koshita's *Bakusou Kyoudai Let's & Go!!* – which first appeared in the pages of Shogakukan's *CoroCoro Comic* magazine in 1994 and inspired an animated series and movie – *Mini Yonku GB Let's & Go!!* is part of a series of games that also includes *Mini 4WD Shining Scorpion Let's & Go!!* on the Super Famicom and *Bakusou Kyoudai Let's & Go!! Eternal Wings* on the PlayStation. The gameplay in this handheld offering involves racing your customisable remote-control car around a series of twisting, Scalextric-style tracks, while characters from the series provide both advice and a stern challenge. A link-cable option enables you to share the fun with a second player, and Super Game Boy support delivers a spot of colour.

Mini Yonku GB Let's & Go!! comes in a special collectible tin, which sets it apart from other Game Boy titles of the era. Included in the tin is a mini Airfix-style kit of a gearbox to work with model maker Tamiya's Mini 4WD range. The central image of the ensemble cast is a typical slice of great Japanese character art.

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Moguranya

モグラ～ニャ

Nintendo (1996)
Genre: Puzzle

Developed by Nintendo EAD and Pax Softnica and produced by none other than Shigeru Miyamoto himself, *Moguranya* – or *Mole Mania* as it's known in the West – is a unique puzzle title that places you in the role of Muddy the Mole, who has to guide a ball through a series of levels, with the ultimate aim of freeing his beloved family from the clutches of the nefarious farmer, Jinbe. Digging underground plays a huge role in the gameplay, as Muddy must often rely on his ability to tunnel in order to get around obstacles in the landscape. A relatively late release in the Game Boy's lifespan, *Mole Mania* is widely recognised as one of the console's hidden gems.

Moguranya's cover artwork shows the sunglasses-wearing hero emerging from a hole with a rather confused look on his face, while his arch-enemy Jinbe rages in the background. This colourful and charming piece of artwork was used in all regional releases.
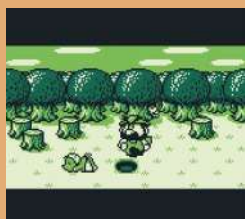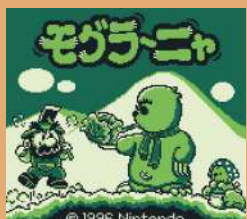
Momotaro Dengeki:
Momotaro Thunderbolt

桃太郎電劇

Hudson (1993)
Genre: Action platformer

Hudson's Momotaro or 'Peach Boy' series began life in 1987 as a role-playing franchise based on a tale from Japanese folklore. It proved to be very popular in its native land – so popular that Hudson released spin-off titles such as this 2D platformer, which was successful enough to warrant a sequel in 1994. During gameplay, it's possible to don different animal suits that augment the lead character's abilities, a concept that's not entirely dissimilar to SEGA's Master System title *Psycho Fox*. Despite the universal nature of the gameplay, neither Momotaro Thunderbolt title was ever released outside of Japan.

The colourful cartoon cover shows our hero in his natural state, as well as his three animal suit transformations: cat, bird and monkey. The decision to use a white background really makes the image and logo pop, and creates an aesthetically appealing package overall.

Money Idol Exchanger

マネーアイドル
エクスチェンジャー

Athena (1997)
Genre: Puzzle

Originally created for the NEOGEO arcade system by developer Face, *Money Idol Exchanger* (*Money Puzzle Exchanger* in the West) is a surprisingly addictive title, which sees the player combining coins of different values to clear them from the ever-filling playfield. While this Game Boy port – coded by Athena Co. Ltd. – loses the bright visuals of the arcade original, it retains the same addictive currency-matching gameplay and even factors in some detailed character portraits for interstitial scenes. When played on the Super Game Boy, colourful border art is displayed.

Atsuko Ishida of *Magic Knight Rayearth* fame is responsible for *Money Idol Exchanger*'s cute cast; as you might expect, these glamorous, glassy-eyed females dominate the game's cover artwork. The characters all have pretty unusual names, such as Exchanger, Coquetry, Cherrybeiter, Everyworker, Debtmiser, Eldylabor, Macker and Mightdealer.
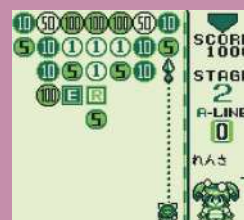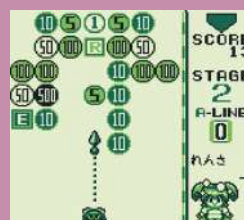
Monster Max

Titus (1994)
Genre: Action adventure

Developed at UK studio Rare by the legendary duo of Jon Ritman and Bernie Drummond – the team responsible for *Batman* and *Head over Heels* on the ZX Spectrum – *Monster Max* is an isometric, puzzle-based adventure which spans an incredible 600 rooms over 29 levels, and was hailed as one of the Game Boy's best titles upon release – despite performing poorly in terms of sales. Ritman revealed some years later that Nintendo offered to publish the game, but wanted the lead to be replaced with a character from the Super Mario universe; Ritman declined and French company Titus ultimately handled publishing duties. Sadly, this only applied to Europe – North American and Japanese players would miss out on the game.

Monster Max's musical theme is obvious from the game's box artwork, which shows the titular character brandishing his guitar. The bold logo and unique character design certainly result in a striking cover image, although it doesn't provide many clues to the isometric adventure gameplay within.

193
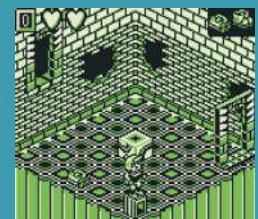
Monster Race

もんすたあ☆レース

Koei (1998)
Genre: RPG

Koei's attempt to cash in on the burgeoning Pokémon craze was this unique RPG, which sees you training up beasts in order to race – rather than fight – with them. Overhead sections are very reminiscent of the Pokémon series and see you exploring towns and talking to other characters, while the races themselves take place from a side-on 2D perspective that shows the various beasts dashing around the track. The title was clearly successful enough to encourage Koei to develop a sequel for the Game Boy Color, but the series has remained exclusive to Japan.

A rather rag-tag selection of odd-looking creatures forms the cover for *Monster Race*, all dashing towards the viewer and leaving dust clouds in their wake. Sadly, the artwork and character design are pretty poor – which is something of a rarity among Japanese releases.
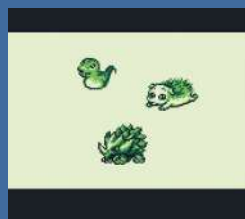
Mortal Kombat
& Mortal Kombat II

モータルコンバット&
モータルコンバットII

Midway (1998)
Genre: Fighting

Released in 1992, Midway's *Mortal Kombat* was one of the many arcade games that sought to capitalise on the incredible popularity of Capcom's *Street Fighter II*. The hook was that Midway's offering employed digitised actors and gory special moves – a tactic which predictably endeared it to the blood-hungry, arcade-loving youngsters of the early '90s. The Game Boy ports – both handled by UK-based Probe Entertainment – were never going to be close to the originals, but they were clearly deemed successful enough to be bundled into a double pack, which also made it to Japan.

The Japanese cover art for *Mortal Kombat I & II* takes the main image of the Western version – the two overlapping dragon logos – and replaces the doom-laden background with a bright yellow design, along with illustrations of the various fighters. It's a fusion that doesn't quite work, but has more detail than the Western variant.

195
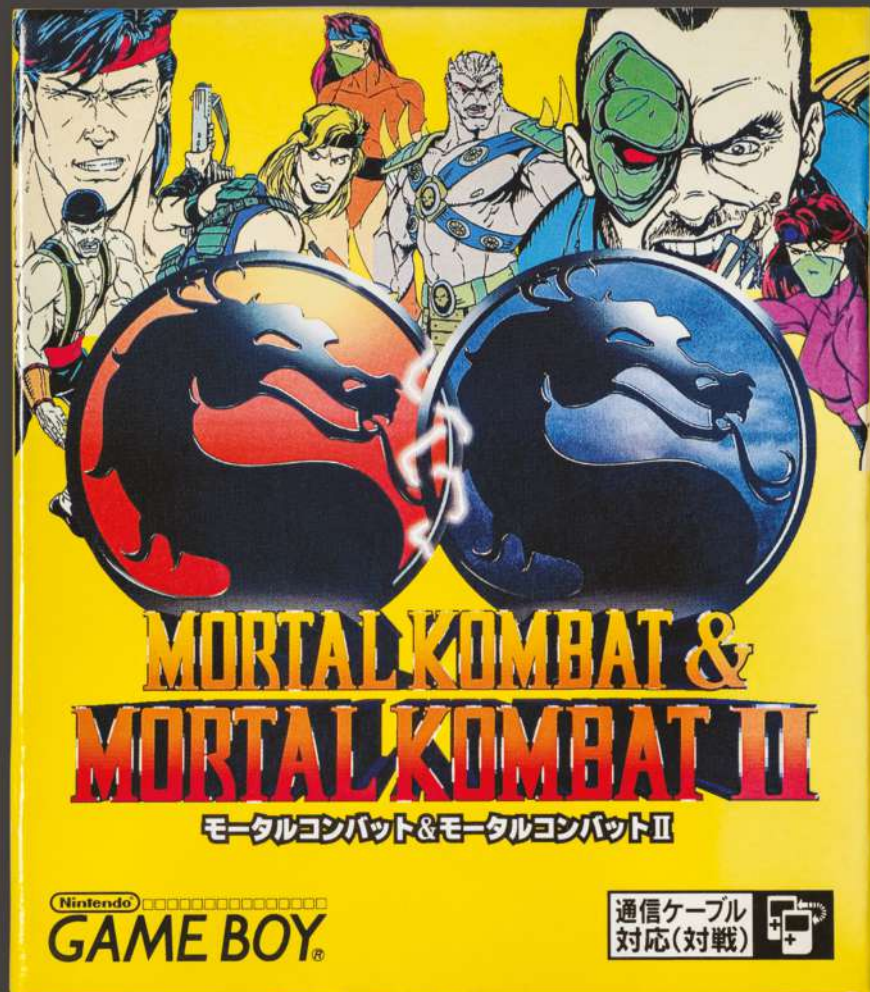
Motocross Maniacs

Konami (1990)
Genre: Racing

The conceptual and visual similarity with Nintendo's *Excitebike* might lead you to assume that *Motocross Maniacs* is very much a straight race to the finish, but this is more of a cross between a racer and a platformer; speed is still of the essence, but you're also contending with a wide range of obstacles and hazards, all while keeping an eye on your positioning to avoid bailing after a poor landing, an event which will rob you of precious seconds. Despite being an early release, *Motocross Maniacs* has impressive depth and replayability. There was clearly a trend for games featuring dirt bikes back then; home computer titles *Kikstart* and *Kikstart 2* are similar takes on the same concept.

The cover for *Motocross Maniacs* has a very '80s vibe to it, with its combination of bike and rider plus abstract graphical elements. The same image was also used for the Japanese release, but the move to have it partially cut out against a whte background, with a smaller logo, is arguably a much more pleasing solution.

Namco Classic

ナムコクラシック

Namco (1991)
Genre: Sports

Like Nintendo, Namco (via its domestic arm, Namcot) was quick to see the benefit of porting over existing titles from the Famicom to the Game Boy, and duly released the golf game *Namco Classic* in 1991. Based on the home version from 1988, it features a single course on which you can play against a friend or take on the computer for cash prizes, the latter option using the game's Tournament mode. Despite its age, *Namco Classic* is easy to pick up and features surprisingly detailed visuals, making it a solid early rival to Nintendo's own *Golf* title.

Namco Classic uses the same main cover image as its Famicom forerunner, a nice depiction of a female golfer taking a massive swing against a backdrop of lush trees and a deep blue sky, an elongated ball illustrating the power of her shot. Perhaps less successful is the array of arrows around her body, perhaps meant to signify movement, but which are just oddly distracting.

Namco Gallery Vol. 1

ナムコギャラリーVOL.1

Namco (1996)
Genre: Compilation

Totally exclusive to Japan, the Namco Gallery series – which came in three volumes, containing four classic titles apiece – offered a great way to reconnect with seminal titles from the company's illustrious past, some of which were also already available as standalone releases in the Game Boy library. This opening collection contains *Mappy*, *Galaga*, *Battle City* and the golf title *Namco Classic*. Super Game Boy support is included in all three volumes, with colourful visuals and special border designs spicing up the action when playing on a SNES/Super Famicom home console.

In keeping with the 'gallery' theme of the series, the cover for *Namco Gallery Vol. 1* places artwork from all four bundled games within an ornate picture frame, as if hanging in a prestigious museum of gaming. It's a colourful composition, even though the four images don't really sit comfortably together.
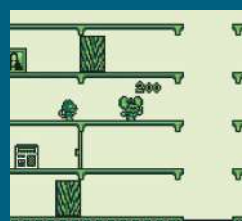
Namco Gallery Vol. 2

ナムコギャラリーVOL.2

Namco (1996)
Genre: Compilation

The initial *Namco Gallery* collection must have been a reasonable success as the company quickly followed it up with a second compendium the very same year, pulling together ports of arcade hits *Galaxian*, *Dig Dug* and *The Tower of Druaga*, as well as baseball title *Famista 4*. The selection will have represented astonishing value for money for the hordes of new Game Boy owners who purchased the system in the wake of *Pocket Monster*'s success. As before, Super Game Boy support means that players benefit from visual enhancements when playing on the SNES or Super Famicom home console.

The games selected for *Namco Gallery Vol. 2* are widely different from one another, which makes the cover artwork even more disjointed than that of its predecessor. The unorthodox blue and green border is also less successful as a framing device. But, despite the tonal inconsistency, it's still a reasonably attractive package.

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NBA All-Star Challenge 2

NBAオールスター チャレンジ2

Acclaim (1993)
Genre: Sports

A Game Boy-exclusive sequel to the multi-format *NBA All-Star Challenge* from the previous year, this basketball simulation was coded by Beam Software, the same team responsible for its predecessor. It's odd that the sequel wasn't also produced for the more powerful SNES or Mega Drive consoles – both of which received the original version – but lucky Game Boy owners nonetheless benefited from a basketball outing that was improved in terms of gameplay and visually easier on the eye than its direct forerunner. Furthermore, it was deemed worthy of a Japanese release.

The cover image is almost identical to that of the Western version of the game, showing a composite selection of photos of real-world NBA stars in action, superimposed over the image of a basketball. The iconic NBA logo – signifying that this is an officially-sanctioned product – takes pride of place in the top-right corner.
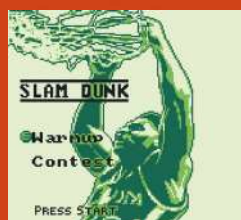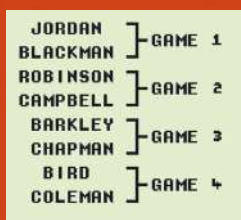
NBA Jam:
Tournament Edition

Produced for arcade release by Midway and boasting an official NBA licence, this fast-paced, two-on-two basketball title has become one of the most famous sports games of all time, thanks to its accessible action and over-the-top moves, which include players spinning through the air for dunks and even frying the basket with flaming shots. The Game Boy wasn't quite up to the task of hosting such an epic sporting event, and the port lacks that bombastic quality that makes the other versions so compelling, but the gameplay is present and correct and the ability to use the link cable for two-player matches is a bonus.

A photo of a basketball emblazoned with a golden NBA logo is shown ripping through the front of the game's box design – a bold visual statement if ever there was one. The official NBA logo is also present, assuring buyers that this is very much the real deal.

Nectaris GB

ネクタリスGB

Hudson (1998)
Genre: Strategy

Hudson's turn-based strategy series never really gained the kind of audience it deserved outside of Japan. Released on the TurboGrafx-16 under the title *Military Madness*, it received a sequel in 1994 on the PC-Engine CD, which never saw release in the West. *Nectaris GB* (1998) is the first entry in the franchise to launch on non-NEC hardware, and follows the same template, with the player waging war in the distant future using a wide range of sci-fi hardware. Battles take place across a grid-style map, with units being moved around and engaging in combat, one after the other. A Western launch sadly never came, most likely due to the fact that the series had faded from view by this point.

An array of deadly machines doing battle on the moon leaves the viewer in no doubt about the subject matter of the game contained within. One extra element of note is the 'GB Kiss' support, which enabled players to download data from the Internet using an IR port built into the cartridge itself.

Nekketsu Kouha Kunio-kun:
Bangai Rantou-Hen

熱血硬派くにおくん
番外乱闘編

Technōs Japan (1990)
Genre: Scrolling beat 'em up

The first Kunio-kun game to be released on Nintendo's handheld console, this serves as a sequel to *Nekketsu Kouha Kunio-kun*, but is notable for adopting the comical graphical style of *Downtown Nekketsu Monogatari* – better known as *River City Ransom* in the West. The side-scrolling action sees you unleashing a combination of punches, kicks and throws on thugs, while pressing A and B together causes your character to kneel before delivering a mighty rising uppercut. Despite plans by developer Technōs Japan to release the game in the West under the title *The Renegades*, this game would ultimately become part of the Double Dragon franchise outside of Japan and was published by Acclaim as *Double Dragon II* in 1991. Despite sharing the same name, it had no relation to the second *Double Dragon* game released in arcades.

Kunio and Riki – sworn enemies in previous games – are shown as partners on this stylish cover; a trend they would continue in several sequels over the years. While the subject matter might be dark and violent, the cover art is colourful and engaging.

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Nekketsu Koukou Dodgeball Bu:
Kyouteki! Dodge Soldier no maki

熱血高校ドッジボール部 ～強敵！闘球戦士の巻～

Technōs Japan (1991)
Genre: Sports

This Kunio-kun spin-off first hit arcades in 1987, and would find its way onto the Famicom the following year, eventually coming to the West as *Super Dodge Ball*. While the basic rules of dodgeball are observed, the whole thing is given a Kunio-kun twist by allowing characters to take multiple hits and execute powerful super-shots. The chunky character design from the Kunio-kun franchise is also carried over, giving the game a fun, cartoon-like feel. Combine these elements with tight controls, engaging action and surprisingly detailed locations, and what you end up with is one of the better sports titles in the Game Boy's library.

This release marks yet another outstanding piece of cover artwork for Technōs Japan; the striking green border instantly grabs your attention while the main illustration exudes plenty of character and attitude.

Nekketsu Koukou Soccer Bu:
World Cup Hen

熱血高校サッカー部
ワールドカップ編

Technōs Japan (1991)
Genre: Sports

This cartoon-like portable soccer title borrows many elements from its Famicom forerunner, but also tidies up some of the cheaper ways of scoring goals, making for a more balanced and enjoyable experience – although it's still wise to expect dirty players to come out on top here, as tackles and shoulder barges leave the unfortunate victim prone on the ground. *Nekketsu Koukou Soccer Bu: World Cup Hen* was picked up for Western localisation by Nintendo and released as *Nintendo World Cup*. But while the comical Kunio-kun visual style is intact, that version makes no reference to the famous character.

Kunio is predictably the hero of the game's stylish cover artwork, and is shown booting a soccer ball with his trademark gusto. The red border peppered with white stars gives the package its own identity, while tying it in with Technōs Japan's other sports titles.

Nemesis

ネメシス

Konami (1990)
Genre: Scrolling shooter

Konami's *Gradius* is one of the most influential shooters of all time, introducing the concept of the iconic 'Weapon Bar' which allows you a greater degree of strategic control over the weapons you obtain. Konami chose to use the international name – *Nemesis* – when releasing the series on the Game Boy, with this 1990 entry using the title in all regions, even Japan. Like *Contra* and *Castlevania: The Adventure*, this is not a port but an entirely new outing, which borrows elements from the main series, as well as coming up with its own ideas – such as multi-level missiles – that aren't present in the original *Gradius*.

While the Western versions of *Nemesis* portrayed the Vic Viper ship using a less sophisticated art style, the Japanese cover is based on the wonderful flyer art for the original 1985 coin-op. This classic piece of video game imagery – very much in the style of sci-fi artist John Berkey – was also used on the Famicom, NES and PC Engine versions of the game.

Nemesis II

ネメシスII

Konami (1991)
Genre: Scrolling shooter

As was the case with many of Konami's Game Boy sequels, everything was improved in *Nemesis II*. The visuals, audio and in-game action were all noticeably superior to the already excellent forerunner, presenting fans of the series with yet another unique and exclusive offering. Five levels packed with Bacterion enemies await the player, and the famous 'Weapon Bar' makes a welcome return – the key difference here being that the player can choose between one of three settings for missiles, double shots and lasers before starting a new game. While the release was simply called *Nemesis II* in Japan, it was retitled *Gradius: The Interstellar Assault* in North America and *Nemesis II: Return of the Hero* in Europe.

Konami may have opted to give this entry three different titles, but it used the same image for all three boxes – and it's a striking piece of art, showing the Vic Viper hurtling towards the viewer, its distinctive shape clearly on display. It's not quite up to the standard of the 1985 coin-op art, but is a great representation of the game.
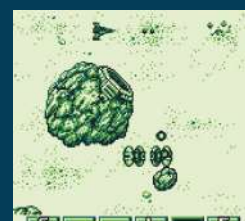
Nigel Mansell's
World Championship Racing

Gremlin Graphics (1992)
Genre: Racing

Officially endorsed by the moustached legend himself, and based on the events of the 1992 Formula One season – the only world championship-winning campaign of Mansell's career – Gremlin's first-person racer actually began life on the Commodore Amiga and PC before being ported to consoles, including the SNES and Game Boy. Players can participate in a Driving School mode, race on a single track or even sample the fictional 'Mansell Circuit', as well as take part in a full season (a password system retains your progress). What's most impressive is the large car sprites, making this feel more immersive than rival first-person racers on the Game Boy, which tended to use quite small cars.

The cover for *Nigel Mansell's World Championship Racing* features an action photo of the Williams FW14B car in which Mansell claimed the 1992 world driver's title. Boasting advanced features such as automated manual transmission, active suspension and traction control, it was so successful that Williams' next car, the FW15, was never used in the 1992 season, despite being finished and available.
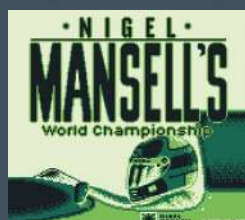
Nintama Rantaro GB:
Eawase Challenge Puzzle

忍たま乱太郎GB
えあわせチャレンジパズル

Culture Brain (1998)
Genre: Puzzle

Ajia-do Animation Works' *Nintama Rantaro* anime series began life in 1993, and is based on the manga *Rakudai Ninja Rantaro*, written and illustrated by Sōbe Amako. This *Soukoban*-style puzzler places you in the role of various characters from the ninja-themed series, with the primary objective being to complete each puzzle as fast as possible. Unlike *Soukoban*, however, you can move rows of blocks rather than single blocks at a time. In the West, the franchise goes by the name Ninjaboy Rantaro, and the anime holds the distinction of being the second longest-running anime series of all time behind *Sazae-san*, which was first broadcast way back in 1969.

The schoolboy ninja of the title predictably claims the main spot on this rather spartan composite cover, accompanied by images of the supporting cast – some as mock photobooth pics – and coloured blocks. The overall package gets a much-needed lift from the vivid yellow background.

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Nippon Daihyou Team:
Eikou no Eleven

日本代表チーム
栄光のイレブン

Tomy (1998)
Genre: Sports

Developed by Jupiter Multimedia, this soccer title was released around three weeks prior to the start of the 1998 FIFA World Cup in France, and is essentially a moderate update of Tomy's previous football simulation, *J.League Big Wave Soccer*, based on the Japanese domestic football league. The key difference is that this revised version includes international teams and allows you to pick a side and qualify for the World Cup finals, as well as playing the prestigious tournament itself. World Cup fever will no doubt have resulted in plenty of interest.

This somewhat rudimentary watercolour shows a Japanese national team member leaping to avoid an incoming sliding tackle from an opposition player. The World Cup trophy itself can be glimpsed in the background, weirdly bearing a set of angel-like wings. For such a big event-based release, the game's packaging is woefully undercooked.
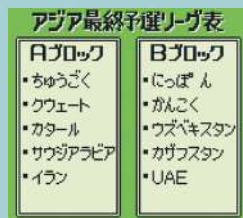
Oddworld Adventures

GT Interactive (1998)
Genre: Action platformer

The groundbreaking 2D platformer *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee* made quite a splash when it arrived on the Sony PlayStation in 1997, so much so that a Game Boy port was commissioned. As you might expect, Nintendo's handheld – almost a decade old by this point – wasn't capable of hosting a totally faithful conversion, so sections of the game are totally absent and much of the storyline is lost. Gamespeak is reduced to four basic commands – farting, a high whistle, a low whistle and a chant – while the save option is replaced by a password feature. Still, the animation is impressive and it must have been commercially successful, as a Game Boy Color sequel quickly followed in 1999.

Abe – the Mudokon slave you assume control of for the duration of the game – makes for a somewhat unorthodox cover star, but that was all part of the Oddworld games' charm. The artwork is a little brighter than the cover used on the PlayStation original, which helps to make Abe appear friendlier, and therefore more appealing, to younger gamers.

Oni III:
Kuro no Hakaishin

ONI III 黒の破壊神

Banpresto (1993)
Genre: RPG

The third entry in the long-running Oni series, *Oni III: Kuro no Hakaishin* is set in Feudal Japan, and features the usual RPG tropes of NPC conversations, town exploration and turn-based battles with enemies – the latter showcasing some refreshingly large character sprites trading blows with one another. The action alternates neatly between detailed locations such as villages and settlements, and overworld navigation, and there are items and weapons you can discover, to increase your chances of success. In total, five Oni instalments would be released for the Game Boy, with 1995's *Oni V: Oni o Tsugumono* being the final entry on the system, but not the final one on a Nintendo platform; that honour falls to 2007's *Oni Zero: Sengoku Ransei Hyakkaryouran*, developed by Compile Heart for the DS.

With its purple, red and blue colour scheme, and highly detailed anime-style characters, the cover for *Oni III: Kuro no Hakaishin* certainly grabs the attention; it feels like the poster for a kinetic kids' TV show. Incidentally, the name 'Oni' is taken from Japanese folklore, and denotes an ogre or troll.
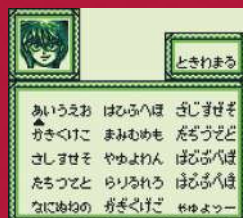
Pac-Man

One of the most famous video game characters of all time, Namco's Pac-Man needs little in the way of introduction, and it was almost inevitable that he would appear on the Game Boy at some stage; in the '80s and early '90s, the pizza-shaped mascot had graced pretty much every gaming platform known to man. While the lack of colour does diminish the experience somewhat and, by default, the screen has to scroll in order to show the full maze (pressing 'Select' forces the maze to fit in the screen, however), the pill-gobbling, ghost-munching gameplay is carried across more or less intact, making this one of the first truly comprehensive portable conversions of the 1980 classic.

The cover for the Japanese version of *Pac-Man* is unique in that it places the character in a totally unrelated setting; our hero is seen roller-skating down a city street listening to music on a personal stereo – an attempt to link the art with the portable nature of the game itself, perhaps?

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Pachi-Slot Kids 3

パチスロキッズ3

Coconuts Japan (1995)
Genre: Simulation

Spawned from Coconuts Japan's Pachi-Slot Adventure franchise on the Nintendo Famicom, the Pachi-Slot Kids series fuses together pachinko and slot machine mechanics in an RPG-style environment, where the main character has to play a range of Pachi-Slot machines in order to progress through the story. Incredibly popular in Japan, pachinko could be described as 'vertical pinball': multiple steel balls are dropped into the top of the board, with the object being to catch as many as possible when they fall to the bottom. This third Pachi-Slot adventure outing – along with its forerunners – never made it out of Japan, which isn't exactly a big shock, given that Pachi-Slot has never really taken off in the West.

A huge Pachi-Slot machine takes up the majority of the cover, which will no doubt have made it an attractive proposition for Japanese Pachi-Slot fans back in the early '90s. The artwork is fairly crude, and even by Japanese standards, the main character's eyes are disturbingly large.

Pachinko Data Card:
Chou Ataru-kun

パチンコデータカード
ちょ〜あたる君

Boss (1999)
Genre: Simulation

Pachinko may be something of an acquired taste outside of Japan, but in the Land of the Rising Sun these machines are big business, as evidenced by the fact that Boss Communications decided to release a cartridge for the Game Boy in 1999 that allows pachinko fans to record their performance on real-world machines by inputting scores and results. It's all done by hand; there is no physical connection between the game and the pachinko machine. So it goes without saying that, unless you can read Japanese and happen to frequent pachinko parlours on a regular basis, this cart is all but useless to you.

Despite the rather strange nature of the cartridge inside, *Pachinko Data Card: Chou Ataru-kun* is blessed with a particularly pleasing piece of cover art, featuring a pachinko-obsessed monkey keying in his performance on a Game Boy.

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Pachinko Time

株式会社ココナッツ・ジャパン

パチンコ タイム

DMG-PTJ
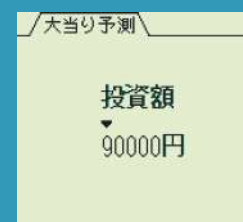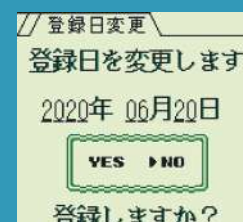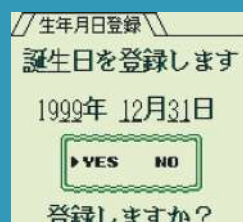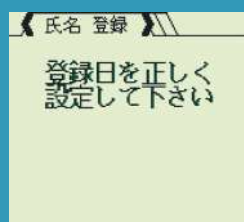
パチンコ タイム

Coconuts Japan (1989)
Genre: Simulation

Developed by Marionette and published by Coconuts Japan, this is a simulation of the popular Japanese pastime of pachinko, where ball bearings are dropped into the top of a board covered in nails with the aim of getting them to fall into the holes at the bottom and not the gutter, thereby earning a prize. *Pachinko Time* succeeds in transferring the appeal of the game to a handheld console, but with the ability to earn physical rewards naturally removed. The lack of real-world prizes clearly wasn't an impediment for Japanese players, as there are numerous other pachinko releases on the Game Boy.

The selection of characters on *Pachinko Time*'s cover – including a schoolgirl, a businessman, a cat and even a dinosaur – is perhaps intended to illustrate the title's appeal to people of all walks of life. They're crowded around a humanised pachinko ball who is, presumably, hooked on the game itself (although we wouldn't be surprised if it's actually *Tetris* slotted into the handheld).

Palamedes

パラメデス

Hot B (1990)
Genre: Puzzle

Thematically similar to other notable puzzle titles of the period like *Magical Drop* and *Money Puzzle Exchanger*, Taito's *Palamedes* sees the player hurling dice up the screen – the numbers on which can be altered with the push of a button – to match them with other dice dropping downwards from the top of the playfield. The concept works better on home consoles, thanks to the ability to differentiate the blocks via their colour; the Game Boy's monochrome display makes this process significantly harder, which sadly relegates *Palamedes* to the lower tier of handheld puzzle titles. Hot B later released *Palamedes 2: Star Twinkles* on the Famicom in 1991; it remained exclusive to Japan.

Palamedes' box art is rare in that it features an entire Game Boy running the actual game. However, the pale pink background with gold and green logo produce a cover that's memorable for all the wrong reasons. The European version retains the logo, but exchanges the Game Boy for a rather generic mulleted superhero who's supposed to represent the dumpy in-game character.

Paperboy

Mindscape (1990)
Genre: Action

As the title suggests, this handheld port of the Atari 1985 classic places you in the role of a newspaper delivery boy tasked with getting the day's paper to as many subscribers as possible. You need to do this across seven days of the week without crashing, or damaging the property of paying customers. However, those who aren't subscribers are fair game, and you're actively encouraged to vandalise their homes. The action scrolls diagonally, and an obstacle course waits at the conclusion of your daily run. While the physical handlebar interface of the coin-op is obviously missing, *Paperboy* translates perfectly well to traditional D-pad control. *Paperboy* was ported to pretty much every home system of the period.

The cover of *Paperboy* is identical to the 1985 coin-op flyer art, complete with original logo. However, for the Game Boy and NES versions, the red backdrop was replaced by a sky blue, while our hero's blue bike has been switched to a red one. On balance, the colour change probably works more harmoniously with the Western Game Boy packaging.

Parodius Da!

パロディウスだ!

Konami (1991)
Genre: Scrolling shooter

First released on the MSX computer in 1987, Konami's side-scrolling shooter series Parodius gleefully pokes fun at the company's Gradius franchise, replacing the hordes of alien invaders with penguins, bees and moai statues – the latter being a common feature in other Konami titles, including the aforementioned *Gradius*. This Game Boy version is based on the second title in the series, *Parodius! From Myth to Laughter*, which launched in arcades in 1990 and was also ported to the SNES, PC Engine and Sharp X68000 computer.

Parodius' cover montage features both playable characters and bosses; along the bottom of the image are TwinBee, Octopus, Pentarou and Vic Viper, while the background has enemies such as the Cat Battleship, Chichibinta Rika, Eagle Washi Sabunosuke and Captain Penguinovski the 3rd. Konami's franchise is famed for its colourful, cartoon nature, and this cover art does an excellent job of communicating that appeal.

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Penguin-kun Wars Vs.
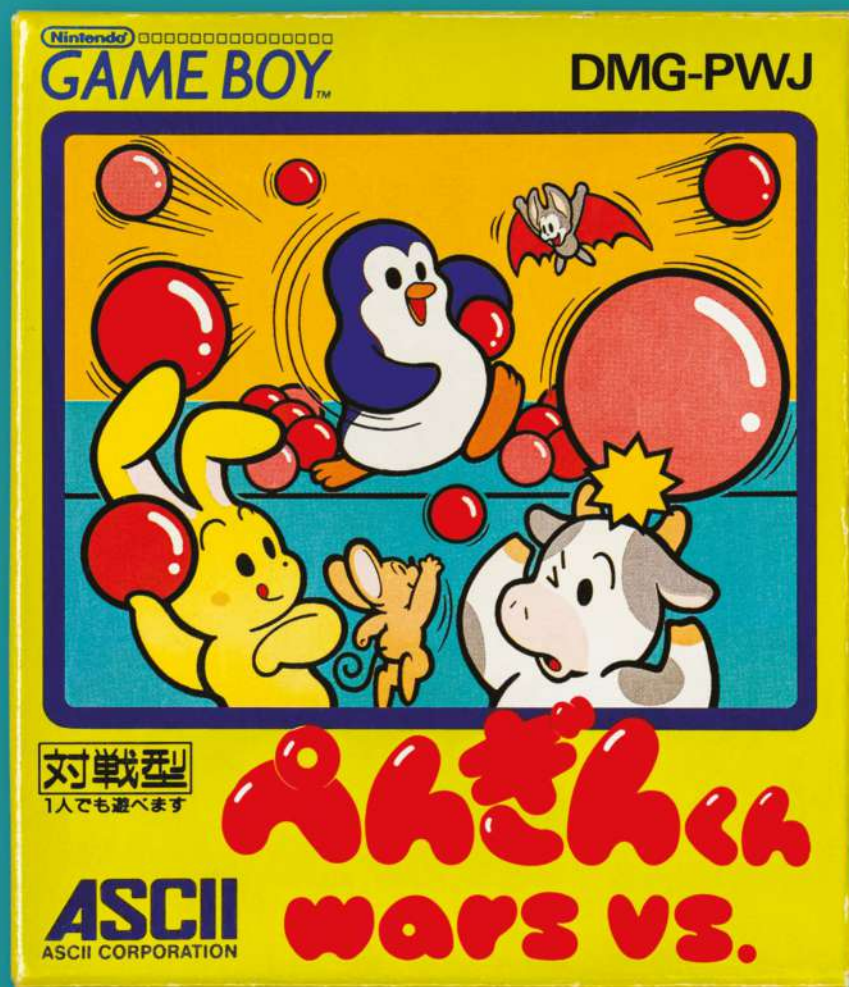
ぺんぎんくんwars vs.

Ascii (1990)
Genre: Action

Originally released in arcades in 1985 by UPL, *Penguin-kun Wars Vs.* is a competitive title in which players assume the role of a penguin, whose task is to fire all ten available balls over to an opponent's side of the playing field. The balls can stun either animal temporarily, granting their rival the opportunity to get all of the other balls over to the opposite side of the table, and claim victory. The North American version of the game launched under the title *Penguin Wars*, while in Europe it was known as *King of the Zoo*. The game is best played via the Game Boy link cable.

The game features a number of different animals, each of which has its own play characteristics. These are depicted on the cover, which neatly encapsulates the dodgeball-style gameplay. This undeniably cute image was removed from the Western release in favour of more traditional airbrushed video game artwork.

Picross 2

ピクロス2

Nintendo (1996)
Genre: Puzzle

Mario Picross didn't perform too well in the West, so this sequel was exclusively released in Japan. As before, the aim is to methodically uncover an image on a grid, using numerical clues arrayed across two of the sides. Mario is joined by his rival Wario, and each has his own set of nonogram puzzles for players to solve. The twist is that with Wario's puzzles, the player isn't told about any mistakes, nor are they given any hints. Super Game Boy support goes beyond the call of duty here; playing the game on a SNES reveals full-colour visuals and a two-player mode.

The cover for *Picross 2* really plays up the competition between Mario and his nefarious enemy, Wario, artwork of the two characters eyeballing one another producing a simple yet striking cover. Banking on the recognisability of its mascots, Nintendo felt safe enough to remove Mario's name from the title.
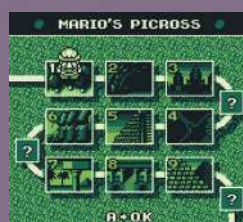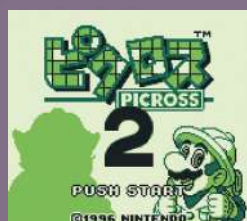
Pinball Dreams

GameTek (1993)
Genre: Simulation

Much-loved on the Commodore Amiga in 1992, *Pinball Dreams* was successful enough to make the leap over to other formats – most notably the SNES, Game Gear and Game Boy, with all three ports handled by GameTek (original developer Digital Illusions would later become DICE, and was purchased by Electronic Arts in 2006). The colourful tables naturally suffer in the conversion to Nintendo's monochrome handheld, but all four are included – Ignition, Steel Wheel, Beat Box and Nightmare – although the latter is renamed 'Graveyard' in this version of the game. Sequels followed on other systems, including *Pinball Dreams 2*, *Pinball Mania* and *Absolute Pinball*.

The Game Boy port of *Pinball Dreams* uses different – and one would argue better – artwork to the Amiga original, while publisher GameTek has chosen to frame the image with a bright yellow border, which really makes it pop. Unlike most pinball game artwork, it's a surprisingly literal representation, but works well enough.
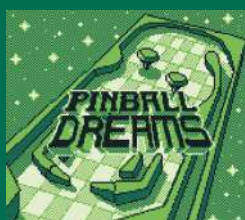
Pinball:
66 Piki no Wani Daikoushin

ピンボール
66匹のワニ大行進

HAL Laboratory (1989)
Genre: Simulation

One of the earliest examples of a pinball game on the Game Boy, *Pinball: 66 Piki no Wani Daikoushin* (known as *Pinball: Revenge of the Gator* in the West) is a single-table affair which divides the playing field into three screens, each positively festooned with alligators. Some of these will aid your progress by temporarily blocking the bottom of the screen so your ball can't drop into the lower section of the table, but any ball that does drop will be hungrily devoured by a gator waiting underneath the lowest drain area of the table. Despite its age, this is one of the more unusual console-based pinball games, and still stands up surprisingly well, even by modern standards.

Boasting somewhat cute-looking gator characters and a colourful table design, the Japanese cover artwork for *Pinball: 66 Piki no Wani Daikoushin* keeps things light-hearted, despite the rather ravenous nature of the subject matter.

Pipe Dream

パイプドリーム

Bullet Proof Software (1990)
Genre: Puzzle

Coded by UK studio The Assembly Line – perhaps most famous for coding the Bitmap Brothers-designed *Xenon II* – *Pipe Mania* was a sizable hit on home computers in 1989, and was quickly snapped up for North American distribution by Lucasfilm Games and retitled *Pipe Dream*. The simplicity of the concept – the player places randomly-appearing sections of pipe to ensure a steady flow of liquid – works brilliantly on the Game Boy, with the fast-paced puzzle gameplay perfectly suited to the monochrome display. Bullet Proof Software, the same company as ported *Tetris* to the Game Boy, picked up the Japanese rights and duly transferred the game to Nintendo's handheld.

The rather crudely rendered plumber in the artwork for *Pipe Dream* is similar to the character on the Western releases, but the pose is actually lifted from the original Amiga loading screen. It's a nice enough cover but the logo lacks any real impact.

Pit-Fighter

THQ (1992)
Genre: Fighting

One of the first games to employ digitised actors instead of traditional hand-drawn sprites, Atari's *Pit-Fighter* caused quite a stir when it hit arcades in 1990. Unlike Capcom's *Street Fighter II* – which would cause a much bigger sensation soon afterwards – *Pit-Fighter* allows relatively free movement around the arena, as well as neat touches, such as the crowd pushing you back into the fray should you try to retreat from your opponent. The console ports lack the coin-op's amazing visuals, and the Game Boy version is predictably the weakest of the bunch, but this oft-overlooked brawler still has its dedicated fans.

Lifting the photograph used to promote the original arcade release, the cover for *Pit-Fighter* shows Buzz (played by Bill Chase) laying out Chainman Eddie (Eddie Venancio), while in the background Ty (Marc Williams) squares up against a female fighter. Needless to say, the sprites in the actual game weren't a close match to this full-colour image.

Pocket Bass Fishing

ポケットバスフィッシング

Bottom Up (1998)
Genre: Sports

The aim in this cartoon-like fishing simulation is to land the biggest catch across three different lakes. Several different perspectives are on offer to make the experience as authentic as possible, and the game does a good job of recreating the movement of the water surface using 2D visuals. Link cable functionality allows you and a friend to go head-to-head, making this a potential choice for two-player fish-related battles. As it was released quite late in the Game Boy's lifespan, no Western version was forthcoming.

Pocket Bass Fishing's goofy, cartoon-like cover belies the level of authenticity contained within. Two characters are shown on the lakeside, surrounded by animals such as a tanooki, duck and dog – the latter of which is exclaiming his delight at the size of the catch.

Pocket Bomberman

ポケットボンバーマン

Hudson (1997)
Genre: Action platformer

Thanks to its medieval setting and side-on perspective – the latter of which makes it feel more like a traditional, side-scrolling platform adventure – this ranks as one of the more unusual entries in Hudson's long-running and highly-esteemed Bomberman franchise. The action takes place across five distinct worlds – Forest, Ocean, Wind, Cloud and Evil – and the game was later re-released as a Game Boy Color launch title, in order to benefit from improved graphics. Outside of the main campaign, there's a Jump Mode mini-game, which takes place on Easy, Medium or Hard courses, with the aim being to guide a constantly-leaping Bomberman to safety.

Pocket Bomberman was one of a selection of titles published by Hudson in Japan that shipped in tins, making them both desirable and collectible. The artwork displayed on the front reinforces the fantasy theme, showing our bomb-throwing hero dressed in a suit of armour.

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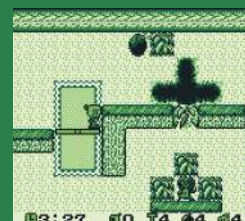
Pocket Family GB

ポケットファミリーGB

Hudson (1998)
Genre: RPG

One of the few games to make use of the unique 'GB Kiss' infrared connection for sharing game data, *Pocket Family GB* places you in the role of a friendly and dutiful little robot who must ceaselessly cater for the everyday needs of a demanding human household. Due to the inclusion of the aforementioned GB Kiss tech, the game cartridge is significantly taller than a normal Game Boy game, which means it sticks awkwardly out of the top of the console when inserted. A Game Boy Color sequel followed shortly afterwards, and the series also made its way to the Sony PlayStation in 1999, complete with support for that console's fancy PocketStation accessory. Sadly, none of the games made it out of Japan.

The cute and friendly robot protagonist of *Pocket Family GB* is the main focal point of the cover, with a sepia-toned photograph of the household he's caring for. This unusual and inventive approach is typical of Japanese box art that eschews the more obvious motifs of Western packaging.

Pocket Love 2

ポケットラブ2

KID (1998)
Genre: RPG

Like its forerunner, *Pocket Love 2* focuses on dating various wide-eyed females who attend the same high school as your character. The game follows the course of a school term, and you need to select various activities each day to boost your stats, and eventually catch the eye of a prospective partner. Most of the adventure takes place on screens packed with text, but players are also rewarded with dialogue sequences showing conversations with their girl of choice.

A bevy of anime-style beauties gaze out from the cover of *Pocket Love 2*, waiting for the player to pick up the box and begin a dubious quest for affection. The green laurel background hints at the game's competitive nature, while the glowing logo, with rosy heart, adds an air of romance. This special edition contained the game cart and an audio CD.

Pocket Monsters Midori

ポケットモンスター 緑

Game Freak (1995)
Genre: RPG

Released alongside *Pocket Monsters Aka* (*Pokémon Red*) in 1996, this title is almost single-handedly responsible for reviving the ailing Game Boy's fortunes. *Pocket Monsters* – or *Pokémon* as it is more commonly known in the West – is an RPG adventure in which you capture and nurture a selection of monsters, with the aim of becoming the region's most talented trainer. This release spawned a multimedia franchise which, in the present day, is bigger than it has ever been, and gave owners of Nintendo's console a valid reason to dust off their battered consoles and find where they'd left their link cable – a vital accessory that enabled players to trade and battle with their *Pokémon*. *Pocket Monsters Midori* (*Pokémon Green*) was remade for the Game Boy Advance in 2004.

Framed within the game's circular logo, Venusaur makes for a memorable cover star. The character art is nice enough, but it's the combination of graphic elements – artwork, logo, colour and type – that produces something greater than the sum of its parts.
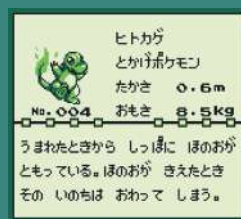
Pocket Monsters Pikachu

ポケットモンスター
ピカチュウ

Game Freak (1998)
Genre: RPG

Following the astonishing success of *Pokémon Red* and *Green*, it was a given that sequels would follow – but before jumping into 'Gen 2', Game Freak revisited the original release with *Pocket Monsters Pikachu* (*Pokémon Yellow* in the West), an 'enhanced' edition that reflected the popular cartoon series' focus on Pikachu. Additions to the core game are minimal; players can interact with Pikachu to form a stronger bond, and there's a Surfing Pikachu mini-game thrown in for good measure. While it's hardly a massive step up from the original, *Pocket Monsters Pikachu* is arguably the definitive Gen 1 outing, and a perfect starting point for those hitting the franchise totally fresh.

Mimicking the design of *Pocket Monsters Aka*, *Midori* and *Ao*, *Pocket Monsters Pikachu* showcases the cute and cuddly Pikachu as its cover star. Ken Sugimori's engaging illustration gives the character an approachable, appealing feel; in contrast, the Western version featured Pikachu in a more aggressive stance.

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Pocket Stadium

ポケットスタジアム

Atlus (1990)
Genre: Sports

Baseball is one of Japan's most popular sports, and as a result we saw a host of digital representations of the pastime on Nintendo's monochrome handheld. This early effort from Atlus would have gone up against Nintendo's own *Baseball* title, and is similarly equipped when it comes to modes. The visuals are basic – which helps avoid excessive blurring when things get busy – but the game adopts a unique system where you select how you pitch or bat before the ball is actually thrown. This allows you to decide how your character will swing in response to the incoming ball – or the direction and throw type of ball if you're the pitcher. The animation which plays afterwards simply shows the result of your choice.

With its unique 'baseball as a Game Boy' design and stylish logo, the cover artwork for *Pocket Stadium* is certainly quite eye-catching, even if it lacks the dynamic action seen on the cover for Nintendo's own *Baseball* title for the handheld.
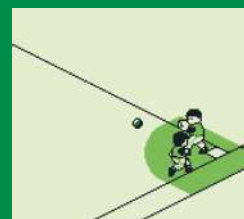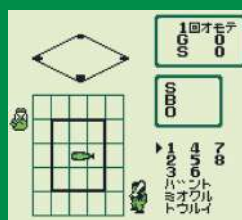
Pokémon Blue

Game Freak (1998)
Genre: RPG

For the Western release of the insanely popular Pocket Monsters franchise, the decision was made to neatly contract the title from two words into one, creating the term 'Pokémon'. Just as it had done in Japan, this monster-collecting RPG series had a restorative impact on the waning Game Boy market in the West, giving the ageing console a shot in the arm that would trigger a very welcome commercial revival. It's worth noting that *Pocket Monsters Midori* (*Green*) wasn't released in the West; instead, Nintendo picked *Red* and *Blue* as the 'base' versions for the game, followed by *Pokémon Yellow* (*Pocket Monsters Pikachu*).

Ditching the box design seen in the Japanese version of *Pokémon Blue* (*Pocket Monsters Ao*), the cover is mostly swallowed up by the huge Pokémon logo and its now-iconic catch phrase (designed, presumably, to shift both versions of the game). With large character art of the mighty water-type Pokémon Blastoise, the Western release is arguably more potent than the oriental original.

Popeye
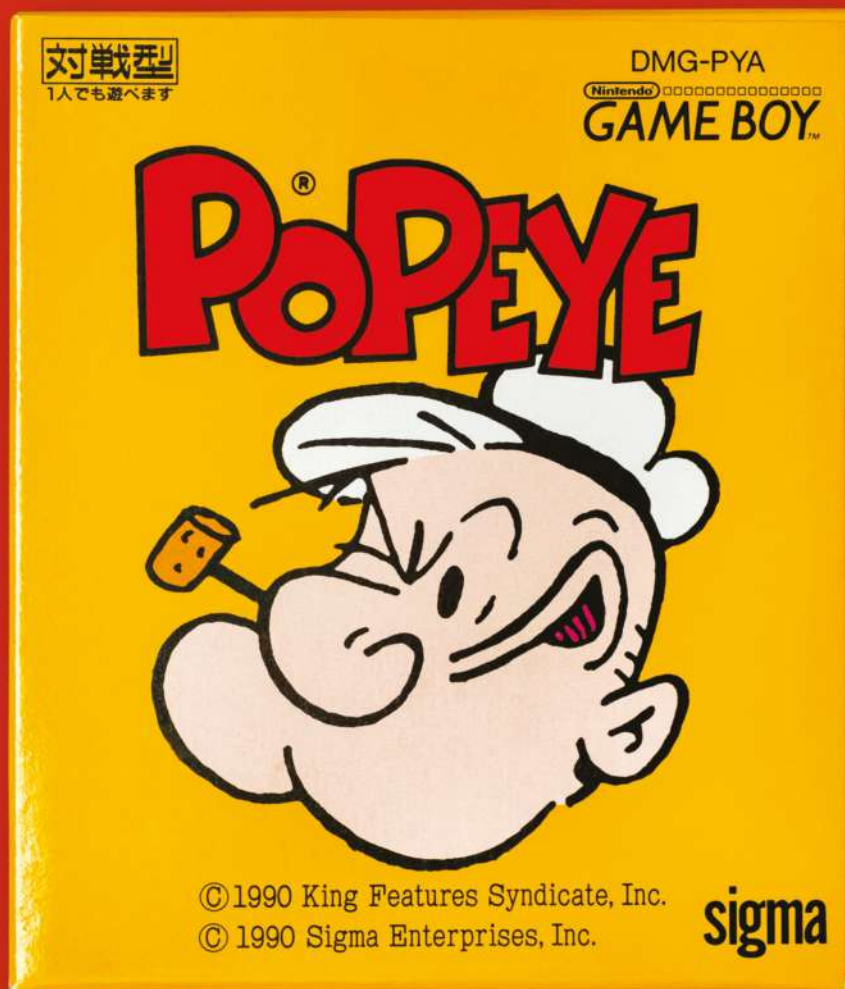
ポパイ

Sigma (1990)
Genre: Action

Popeye has had a long connection with Nintendo – the company created an arcade game based on the character in 1982 – but this early Game Boy maze title was created by Sigma Enterprises and is unrelated to Nintendo's efforts. The objective is to track a series of hearts in a maze, liberate Olive Oyl and rescue the baby Swee'Pea, all within a strict time limit, while hindered by the actions of Bluto and the hamburger-spewing J. Wellington Wimpy. A multiplayer mode – in which Popeye's arch-enemy Bluto is playable – is also included, and naturally requires the Game Boy link cable.

The cover artwork for *Popeye* keeps things simple by using a mugshot of the famous sailor, as illustrated by Elzie Crisler Segar, along with the famous comic strip logo. It's very much a case of less is more; additonal artwork may well have lessened the overall impact, while adding only limited interest.

Populous

Imagineer (1993)
Genre: Strategy

Populous is a significant game in that it created an entire genre; Bullfrog's isometric strategy title is credited as being the first 'God Game', placing you in the role of a deity who must ensure their followers emerge triumphant in an epic battle against the hostile forces of a rival god. A best-seller on home computers, it was picked up for Japanese launch by Imagineer and quickly secured a large following in that part of the world as well. UK studio Enigma Variations handled the conversion work; co-founder Mark Greenshields has since confirmed that the 'Connor MacLeod' credited on the title screen is a pseudonym – the name is lifted from the Highlander movie series.

David John Rowe's iconic cover artwork is carried over from the home computer and Mega Drive versions of the game, and depicts a landscape in flux as gods battle for supremacy. It's arguably one of the best pieces of game art of the era.
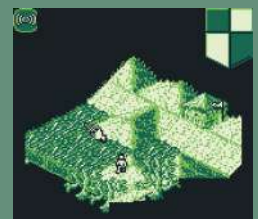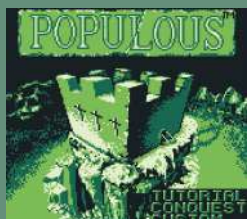
Pri Pri:
Primitive Princess

プリプリ PRIMITIVE PRINCESS!

Sunsoft (1990)
Genre: Puzzle

This single-screen puzzle title may be named after a princess, but you actually control the hairy caveman Totom, who has to collect a jewel in each stage to progress to the next, all while avoiding the many angry dinosaurs blocking his path. Totom's main tool is his hammer, which can be used to cause blocks to fall downwards, opening up new pathways and taking out enemies in the process. It's quite hard to spot which blocks can be hammered, but the promise of 50 different stages to conquer should keep dedicated puzzle players entertained. No Western release was forthcoming, making this another Japanese curiosity.

Totom might be the hero of the game, but he's not as visually alluring as a pretty, anime-style princess, hence the unusual composition of the cover art. The Tower of Nubo, where the action takes place, lies in the distance, circled by pterodactyls.
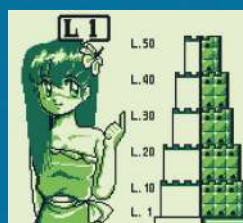
Primal Rage

Time Warner (1995)
Genre: Fighting

By 1994, the demand for one-on-one fighters had reached its zenith, thanks to the incredible popularity of Capcom's *Street Fighter II*. Atari – once the toast of the arcade industry – pushed *Primal Rage* into this sector, a brawler showcasing massive monsters and gruesome finishing moves (the latter clearly inspired by Midway's *Mortal Kombat*). The game's huge digitised sprites taxed the home consoles of the period, so it's hardly surprising that the Game Boy struggles to replicate the detailed visuals. Even so, the gameplay remains intact and reviewers at the time praised the astonishing technical competence of the conversion. However, something had to give: the arenas lack human characters while combatant Vertigo is absent.

The cast of *Primal Rage* is a pretty mean bunch, but the ape-like Blizzard is perhaps the closest thing the game has to a 'hero' character – hence his starring role on the cover. Rather than showcase the coin-op's unique visuals, Time Warner Interactive chose to use an airbrushed rendering of the monster instead.

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Prince of Persia

Jordan Mechner's 1989 classic *Prince of Persia* is one of those games that simply took the world by storm; originally published on the Apple II, it found its way onto practically every computer and gaming platform of the era, thanks to its amazing rotoscoped animation and simple-yet-challenging premise; you have to rescue the princess before the time limit expires by negotiating the palace and engaging in thrilling sword fights with enemies. The Game Boy version does an admirable job of replicating the eye-catching visuals and tight controls, and is notable for being the first title to showcase the musical talents of famed composer Tommy Tallarico. Virgin Games was responsible for the port, with the publication of the Japanese release handled by Masaya.

It's not always the case that Western covers are superior to those seen in Japan, but with *Prince of Persia*, the art Western players got was unquestionably the better of the two. It's similar in composition to the image on the Brøderbund home computer release, but the original art is better still.

Pro Wrestling

プロレス

Human (1990)
Genre: Sports

Better known in the West as *HAL Wrestling* – despite the fact that HAL had nothing to do with the development of the game – *Pro Wrestling* is considered to be part of Human's famous Fire Pro Wrestling series, which made its debut on the PC Engine in 1989 and is considered by many to be the gold standard when it comes to Japanese wrestling games. As such, *Pro Wrestling* tries to replicate the feel of real-world sports entertainment as accurately as possible (for the early '90s, at least), and places a strong focus on tactical grappling and throws. It's not in the same league as *Fire Pro Wrestling*, but it's a nice enough take on the concept.

For the cover of *Pro Wrestling*, Human commissioned a piece of artwork which comes across as goofy and rather comical – a strange choice when you consider the relative drive for realism within the game. Even so, the riot of colour and extreme viewpoint are visually engaging.
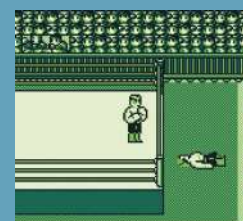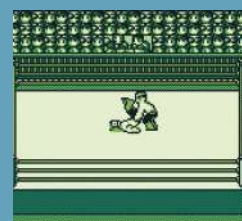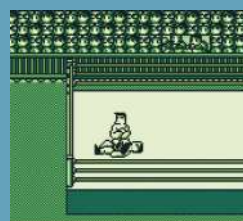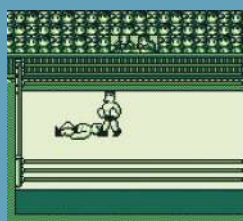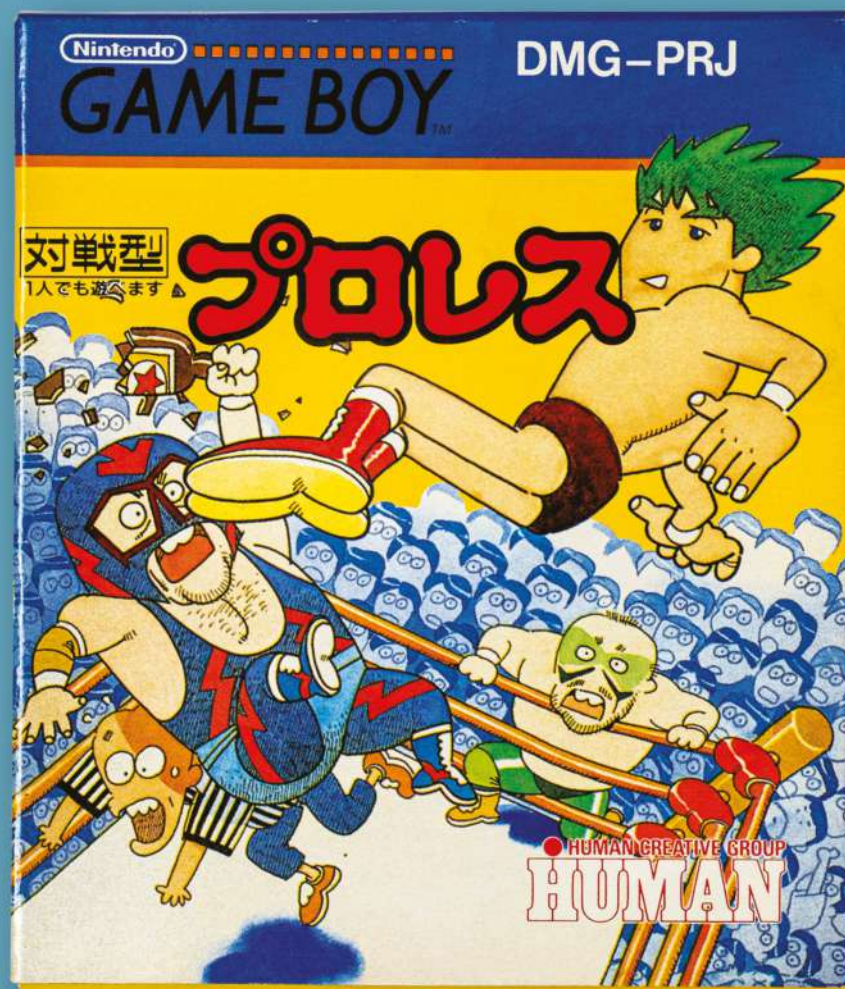
Probotector 2

Konami (1994)
Genre: Run and gun

Released in North America and Japan as *Contra III: The Alien Wars* and *Contra Spirits*, respectively, this remarkable port of the SNES game of the same name was handled by Factor 5, and includes most of the content seen in the 16-bit version (some levels are cut, as is the ability to switch weapons and perform the spinning shot attack). In Europe, early Contra titles were localised under the Probotector brand, with the burly soldiers replaced by Japanese-style robots in order to circumvent strict censorship laws in Germany, which prohibited the sale of violent video games to minors. Konami decided to call the game *Probotector 2*, to directly reference the first Game Boy title, rather than use the European name of the SNES game, *Super Probotector: Alien Rebels*.

The superb cover artwork for the SNES release is reused on the Game Boy cover, showing the two robot heroes of the game. Recycled artwork is hardly a big issue, however; it's a brilliant image and arguably cooler than the Japanese and Western artwork for *Contra III*, the former of which is clearly based on the movie poster for Arnold Schwarzenegger's *Raw Deal*.

Puyo Puyo

ぷよぷよ

Banpresto (1994)
Genre: Puzzle

Created by Compile in 1991, the Puyo Puyo series has gone on to become one of the longest-lasting puzzle franchises in the world of video games. Players must match together three or more blobs as they descend from the top of the screen, to remove them from play and prevent them from filling the screen. The Game Boy port followed conversions for the Mega Drive, Game Gear and Super Famicom, but is hamstrung by the lack of a colour screen – a big part of *Puyo Puyo*'s gameplay is quickly matching coloured 'puyo' blobs. Compile didn't handle this handheld port, which instead was converted by Winkysoft and published by Banpresto.

This glorious cover art shows Arle Nadja leapfrogging a puyo blob, while the Dark Prince – the game's antagonist – spies on her comically (if somewhat disturbingly) from behind a tree. The vivid red of the puyo, border and glossy logo make a nice contrast with the image of Arle and the pastel-coloured background.
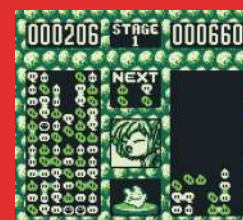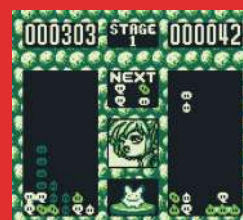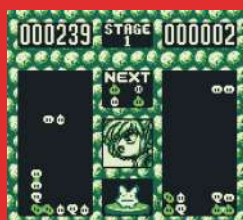
Puzznic
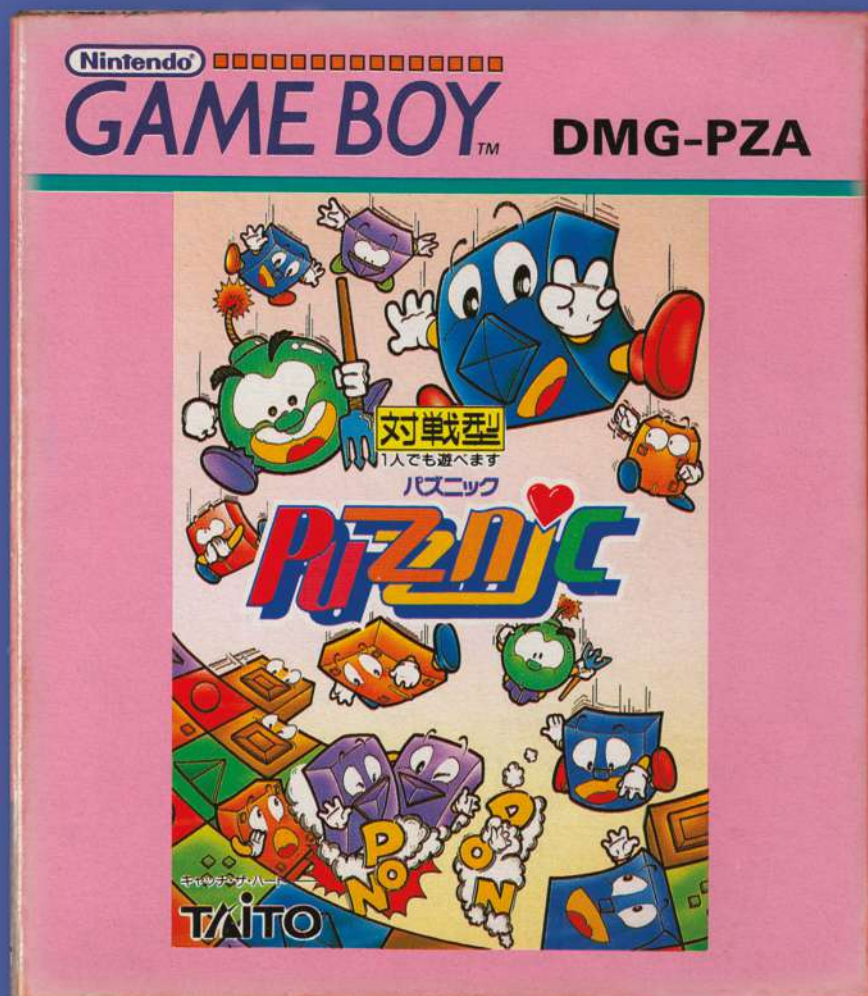
パズニック

Taito (1990)
Genre: Puzzle

Released in arcades at the close of the '80s, *Puzznic* is a tile-matching game where the objective is to clear the play area by matching blocks with one another. The catch is that blocks can only be moved left or right; they're also subject to the laws of gravity, so they drop when pushed over an edge. As with other colour-based puzzle titles which were ported to the Game Boy, the developer has had to rely on symbols to differentiate tile types. While it's not quite as intuitive as the colour versions, the game is still perfectly playable regardless. Sadly *Puzznic* never received a Game Boy release outside of Japan.

Cute characters based on the in-game tiles populate the game's cover. The bright logo and excellent use of colour make this a really appealing piece of box art – so it's a shame that they weren't expanded to fill more of the box real estate.
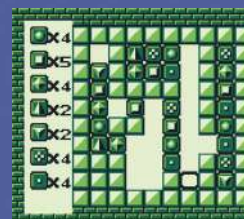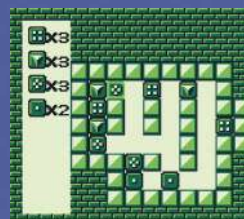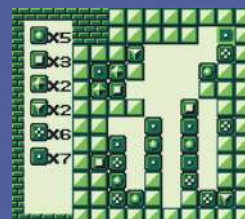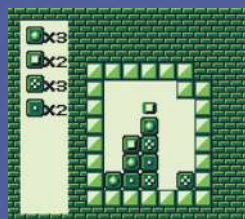
Q*bert

キューバート

Jaleco (1990)
Genre: Action

Created for the arcades in 1982 by
Warren Davis and Jeff Lee, *Q*bert*'s use
of an isometric playfield made it stand
out from other coin-op titles of the period
– as did the lead character's incoherent
speech, which was made to look like
swearing on the arcade cabinet's side art.
The lack of colour hurts Jaleco's Game Boy
port and the action is no longer contained
to a single, static screen (like many other
Game Boy conversions, a scrolling viewpoint
is required to show all of the action), but it
is otherwise fairly faithful to the addictive,
yet incredibly challenging, original.

Jaleco wisely decided against taking
*Q*bert*'s cover artwork in a radical new
direction, and instead used imagery that
sticks closely to the arcade original – right
down to utilising the same logo. It's not
the finest piece of game art, to be honest,
but was deemed good enough to grace
the Western release as well.
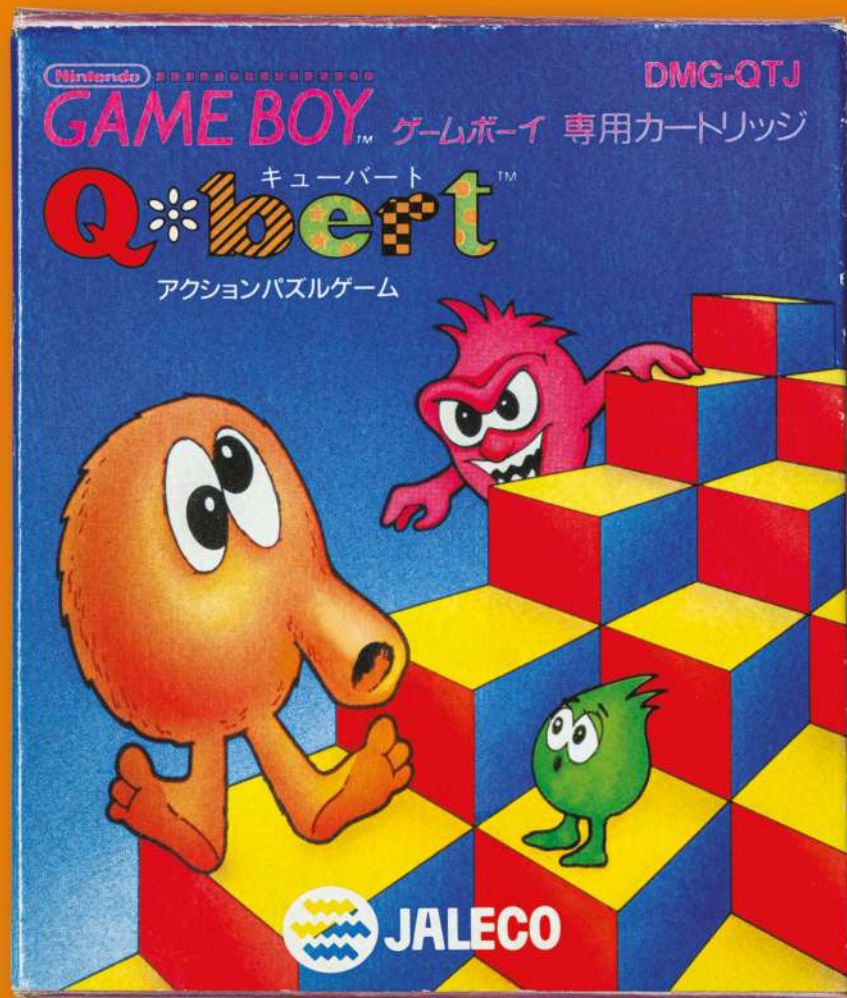
QBillion

キュービリオン

Seta (1989)
Genre: Puzzle

This fiendishly addictive logic puzzler tasks you with reducing stacks of tiles to the same height by pushing them around a fairly plain-looking grid. Stack height is displayed by the number on top, removing the need for the Game Boy to display complex 3D-style visuals. This results in a game which is easy to comprehend and extremely accessible, but despite the instantly engaging premise, *QBillion* didn't really catch on like other Game Boy puzzle titles. A remake was released in 2014 by LTD Interactive, which introduced HD visuals, online play and a level editor.

The dapper, player-controlled mouse is the star of *QBillion*'s cover artwork – although his skateboard is a bit of artistic licence; the in-game action never gets that thrilling. However, the clean line work with contrasting grey and red colour scheme really helps bring the cover to life.
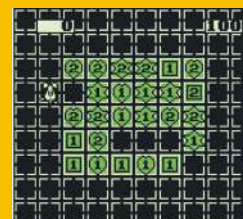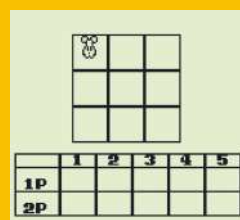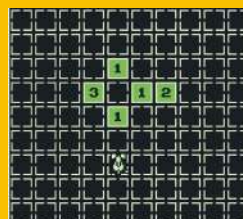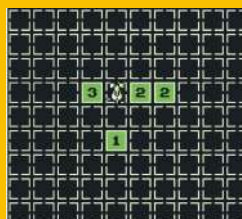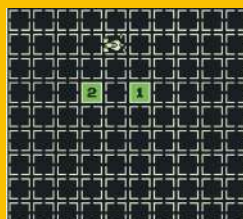
Qix

クイックス

Nintendo (1990)
Genre: Puzzle

Taito's *Qix* is one of those ubiquitous '80s arcade titles that seemed to be everywhere during the entire decade; not only did it inspire numerous clones, it also spawned sequels, as well as this Nintendo-published Game Boy edition. There's no storyline as such – you simply have to carve up as much of the playfield as possible while avoiding the titular Qix – but Mario, Luigi, Peach and an army of Toads appear, should you gain the best possible ending (a score of 500,000 points or more). Scores below that total show Mario in a variety of regional costumes, including a rather questionable 'blackface' version for Africa.

Despite shoehorning Mario and chums into the game, the cover for *Qix* makes no connection with the residents of the Mushroom Kingdom, and instead shows a dynamic representation of the in-game action. It's compositionally similar to the Western box art, but uses a different perspective and a more literal representation of the player's ship.
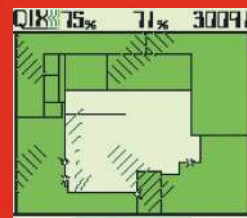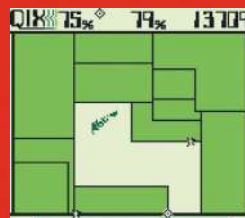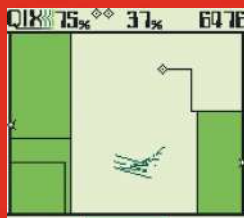
Quarth

クォース

Konami (1990)
Genre: Puzzle

The influence of *Tetris* can be felt rather keenly in Konami's puzzle/shooter hybrid, *Quarth*. A series of blocks falls from the top of the screen, and you have to shoot single blocks at them to create squares or rectangles, which then removes them from play. Should the blocks reach the bottom of the screen, it's game over. Known in North American arcades as *Block Hole*, the original coin-op version benefits massively from a taller vertical playing field; on the Game Boy, the square screen means the game becomes challenging a little too quickly. However, a superb competitive two-player link-up mode just about makes up for this shortcoming.

The block-shaped patterns on the cover for *Quarth* certainly make you think of *Tetris*, although the cube-firing cannon carried by cherubs hints at Konami's previous shooters, such as *TwinBee*. Throw in the sun and moon, both blessed with human-like faces, and you're left with a bizarre but intriguing image that must have caused some head-scratching at the point of purchase.

R-Type

アール・タイプ

Irem (1991)
Genre: Scrolling shooter

R-Type was hailed as an instant classic when it hit arcades in 1987, but it would be the host of home conversions that truly cemented its status as a seminal work in the shmup genre. Of all those ports, the Game Boy ranks as one of the most impressive; amazingly, Irem didn't do the work itself, but instead enlisted UK studio Bits to handle the work. That a three-man team – composed of Jas Austin (programming), Mak Jones (graphics) and David Whittaker (music) – managed to cram a cutting-edge coin-op into the monochrome handheld is astonishing, even today.

The heavily stylised cover art for *R-Type* showcases the iconic R-9 Arrowhead fighter, blasting off to tackle the threat of the sinister Bydo alien forces. The artwork was changed for both the North American and European releases, the latter of which was an oversaturated, almost cartoon affair.

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R-Type II

アールタイプ・2

Irem (1992)
Genre: Scrolling shooter

Blasting off to fight the evil Bydo Empire in your improved R-9 Custom 'War-head', *R-Type II* takes the core concept of the original 1987 arcade title and adds two new weapons – the 'Search' and 'Shotgun' lasers – as well as an additional charge level for the iconic wave cannon. The visuals are also improved, but the famous 'Force' orb is retained, and is just as fun to use as ever. The Game Boy port – handled by Bits Studios, the same company that converted the original game to the handheld – is drastically scaled back when compared to the coin-op, with a whole level missing. But even with these limitations, it's impressive that such a powerful arcade game was replicated on the humble hardware of the Game Boy.

R-Type II uses the same cover artwork as the Japanese Super Famicom version of the game, showing a face-on view of the level one boss, Dobkeratops Remains, a heavily-armoured version of the iconic Giger-esque guardian from the original game. The art style echoes that of *R-Type* on Game Boy, as the Western versions do with their predecessors.
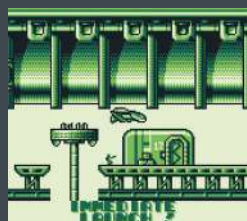
Race Days

GameTek (1994)
Genre: Racing

Released in North America and Europe in 1994, this double pack includes Jaleco's *Dirty Racing* (previously exclusive to Japan) and Gremlin's *Jeep Jamboree: Off-Road Adventure* (previously exclusive to North America). *Dirty Racing* is perhaps the more interesting of the two; it adopts a top-down perspective similar to that seen in Codemasters' famous *Micro Machines*. It features Formula One-style cars and the ability to upgrade parts between races; the 'dirty' part of the title comes from the fact that the game is packed with scantily-clad ladies, who tend to make their presence felt on the many option and stat screens which appear in-game.

The cover for *Race Days* makes it clear that you're getting two games for the price of one, with an image split between *Jeep Jamboree: Off-Road Adventure* at the top and *Dirty Racing* at the bottom. Both are tidy bits of art, which aptly sell the package's overall value – if not quality.

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Racing Damashii

レーシング魂

Irem (1991)
Genre: Racing

The PC Engine version of this motorcycle racing game is perhaps the most famous, but the scaled-down Game Boy edition does an excellent job of replicating the thrill of two-wheeled motorsports. Boasting a selection of Japanese courses and the ability to fine-tune your bike, this is a surprisingly authentic reproduction of real-world motorcycle racing; while the sprites are a little on the small side, the sense of speed is excellent and everything moves incredibly smoothly. A championship season mode – complete with password save – is included, and you can hook up with a second player using the link cable. To cap it all off, all of the text is in English.

Racing Damashii's cover pictures the Team Irem bike, which actually contested the Suzuka 8 Hours Endurance race between the years 1990 and 1993. The bike itself is a Honda VFR750R RC30. The PC Engine version uses a hand-drawn interpretation of the same photo.

Radar Mission

Nintendo (1991)
Genre: Strategy

While Nintendo's family-friendly focus ensured that titles like *Super Mario Land* and *Balloon Kid* were early additions to the Game Boy's cute-and-cuddly software line-up, the company was keen to also mix in more 'mature' examples of portable entertainment, to draw in older players – such as *Radar Mission*, which neatly combines the spirit of the iconic board game *Battleship* with a first-person action mode based on submarine warfare and some lovely, immersive cutscenes. The ability to link two consoles really makes *Radar Mission* sing; when played alone, its longevity is arguably quite limited.

Radar Mission's duality is made clear by some really dynamic artwork, which cleverly includes both submarine and battleship combat in one image, while suggesting at the explosive nature of the gameplay. The inclusion of the targeting reticle means you're under no illusion as to the type of action involved.

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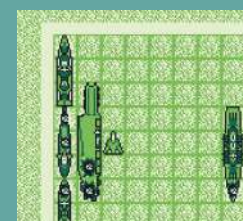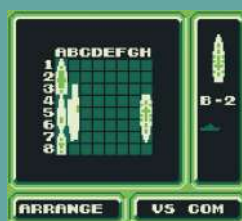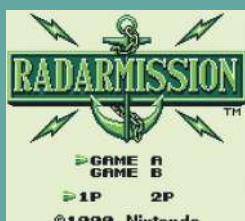
Rampart

ランパート

Jaleco (1992)
Genre: Strategy

Originally released in arcades by Atari, *Rampart* is one of those games that shows there was ample room for experimentation in the '90s coin-op era. The aim is to use your trusty cannon to destroy enemy units, but that's only half the game – for certain periods, you're using a *Tetris*-style block-dropping system to rebuild your assailed castle and plug any gaps created by hostile fire. The Game Boy port is extensively altered from the arcade original, showcasing three unique characters to play as, fantasy-style foes to slay, and an overhauled combat system.

The Japanese version of *Rampart* uniquely employs a medieval theme, so while it borrows the North American logo, the bespoke artwork features heroic, anime-inspired characters and an attacking dragon. This handsome art is a far cry from the various other cover incarnations, but is arguably the best of the lot.

Ranma ½:
Kakugeki Mondou!!

らんま1/2 格劇問答!!

Banpresto (1993)
Genre: RPG/Quiz

A unique hybrid of traditional RPG and quiz game, *Ranma ½: Kakugeki Mondou!!* places the player in the role of gender-swapping series protagonist Ranma Saotome, who dutifully explores his home town of Furinkan, while fighting deadly enemies in turn-based battles and engaging in brain-teasing quiz sections. The latter sections consist of fiendish questions relating to actual events witnessed in the incredibly popular *Ranma ½* animated TV series, making this an adventure for hardcore, Japanese-speaking fans only (it was never released in the West). Success in these contests of strength and wisdom enables Ranma to level-up and enhance his/her abilities. 'Kakugeki Mondou' can be roughly translated into English as 'Character Q&A.'

The cover for *Ranma ½: Kakugeki Mondou!!* does an impressive job of cramming in as many famous characters from the TV series as possible, with Ranma's iconic male and female forms taking the lead. This busy but engaging montage is neatly contained by the patterned yellow border.

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Ranma ½:
Kakurenbo Death Match

らんま1/2
かくれんぼデスマッチ

Banpresto (1990)
Genre: Action puzzler

Apparently built using the same game engine as Banpresto's *SD Lupin The Third: Kinko Yaburi Daisakusen* (Nova Games was the developer of both), *Ranma ½: Kakurenbo Death Match* is based on Rumiko Takahashi's manga and anime series, which features a lead character who magically switches genders when exposed to water (cold water changes him to female, while hot water returns her to her original male form). This interesting premise is factored into the gameplay, as male Ranma can push, and female Ranma can pull, in-game objects. Switching between them using hot water found in kettles and cold water in buckets is essential to success, and this mechanic makes for a much more appealing game than *SD Lupin The Third*.

The game has a great piece of manga-style art, with our hero Ranma Saotome facing off against his long-term friend and love rival Ryoga Hibiki, with Akane Tendo – the object of both Ranma's and Ryoga's affections – looking on pensively.
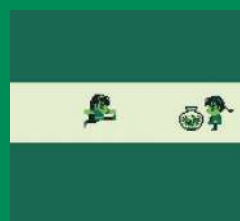
Ranma ½:
Netsuretsu Kakutouhen

らんま1/2 熱烈格闘編

Banpresto (1992)
Genre: RPG

While the first two Ranma ½ games are puzzle adventure and quiz games respectively, *Ranma ½: Netsuretsu Kakutouhen* takes the form of an RPG adventure with light combat elements, which reflects the battles seen in Rumiko Takahashi's popular manga and anime series. The action is divided between 2D, horizontally-scrolling sections with impressively large and well-animated sprites, and conversational sequences in which you interact with various characters from the series. Locations can also be visited using the overworld map. Fans of the franchise will find plenty to like here, but the sheer amount of Japanese text makes it tricky for non-speakers to understand what's going on.

Like those of the other Ranma ½ entries, this box features a mix of characters – all taken from the animated TV series – set against a bold background texture. However, the mish-mash of art isn't as controlled, and the colour palette is less appealing.

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RoboCop

Ocean (1990)
Genre: Action

The story of the *RoboCop* video game is a convoluted and fascinating one: UK publisher Ocean Software obtained the rights from Orion Pictures before the film had even gone into production, and Japanese company Data East sub-licensed the rights to create the iconic arcade version – which was then ported to some home systems by (you guessed it) Ocean. While Sakata SAS Co. handled the NES conversion, Ocean itself ported the title to the Game Boy, complete with a hauntingly serene theme tune by Jonathan Dunn, which has gone on to become a famous piece of video game music in its own right. The side-scrolling action of the coin-op translates fairly well to the Game Boy, with the cyborg law-enforcement officer alternating between punches and gunfire to deal with the flood of enemies.

The cover for *RoboCop* keeps things simple by reusing the film's main poster artwork, showing RoboCop – played by Peter Weller – stepping out of his police car. The cyborg's metal frame is dramatically lit by the lights on the roof of the car, creating a truly iconic cinematic image.

Rock'n! Monster!!

ろっくん! もんすたぁ!!

Hori (1994)
Genre: Puzzle

Looking very similar to Nintendo's own *Dr. Mario*, puzzle title *Rock'n! Monster!!* challenges the player with matching together falling blocks into four of the same type, which causes them to vanish from the play area – a tall, thin space surrounded by magical books – and puts you one step closer to bettering your current high score. By cleverly combining blocks, it's possible to trigger massive chains that remove multiple block types in a single move. The accessible gameplay, appealing visuals and addictive two-player link-up mode sadly didn't succeed in securing a Western release for the game, and as a consequence, Hori's likeable puzzler remains exclusive to Japan.

Rock'n! Monster!!'s vibrant and characterful cover does little to educate potential players about the puzzle-based gameplay contained within, but its anime-style cast and eye-catching design still hold obvious visual appeal.

257
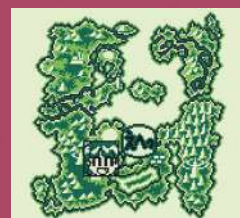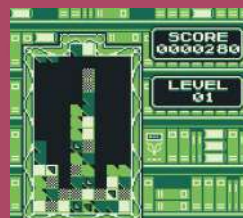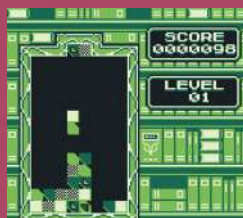
Rockman World 2

ロックマンワールド2

Capcom (1991)
Genre: Action platformer

Given the stature of the character, and his enduring success on the NES, it was inevitable that Capcom would give Rockman another portable outing. As was the case with the original *Rockman World*, the game combines elements of previous NES titles and is the work of an external studio – in this case, Japan System House. The results are not as pleasing this time around – series artist Keiji Inafune has since hinted that the developer's lack of knowledge of the series was to blame – but the game's time-travelling storyline, which sees our robotic hero foiling Dr. Wily's plan to resurrect some of his most deadly creations (both past and present), provides a solid reason to play, as does the new robot adversary, the mysterious Quint.

Rockman World 2's cover is the work of series artist Keiji Inafune, who depicts Rockman with his canine companion, Rush, being accosted by multiple assailants. A brilliant illustrator, Inafune rarely fails to deliver, and this action-packed image doesn't disappoint.
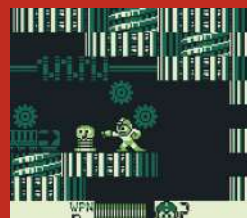
Rockman World 3

ロックマンワールド3

Capcom (1992)
Genre: Action platformer

Following the somewhat lukewarm response to the second *Rockman World* game, Capcom decided to return to Minakuchi Engineering, the company that created the first Game Boy game, for this third escapade. A hallmark of the series, *Rockman World 3* took eight evil 'Robot Master' bosses from two games in the franchise – in this case, *Rockman 3* and *Rockman 4* on the Famicom – and combined them in a single portable adventure. Reinstating Minakuchi Engineering was a shrewd move, as this third outing is a glorious return to form for the beloved character.

Rockman series artist Keiji Inafune returns to lend his illustrative talents for *Rockman World 3*'s vibrant and exciting cover. In contrast to the previous two outings, Rockman is more confident and determined this time around, and is shown inflicting fatal damage to one of Dr. Wily's nefarious Robot Masters.

Rockman World 4
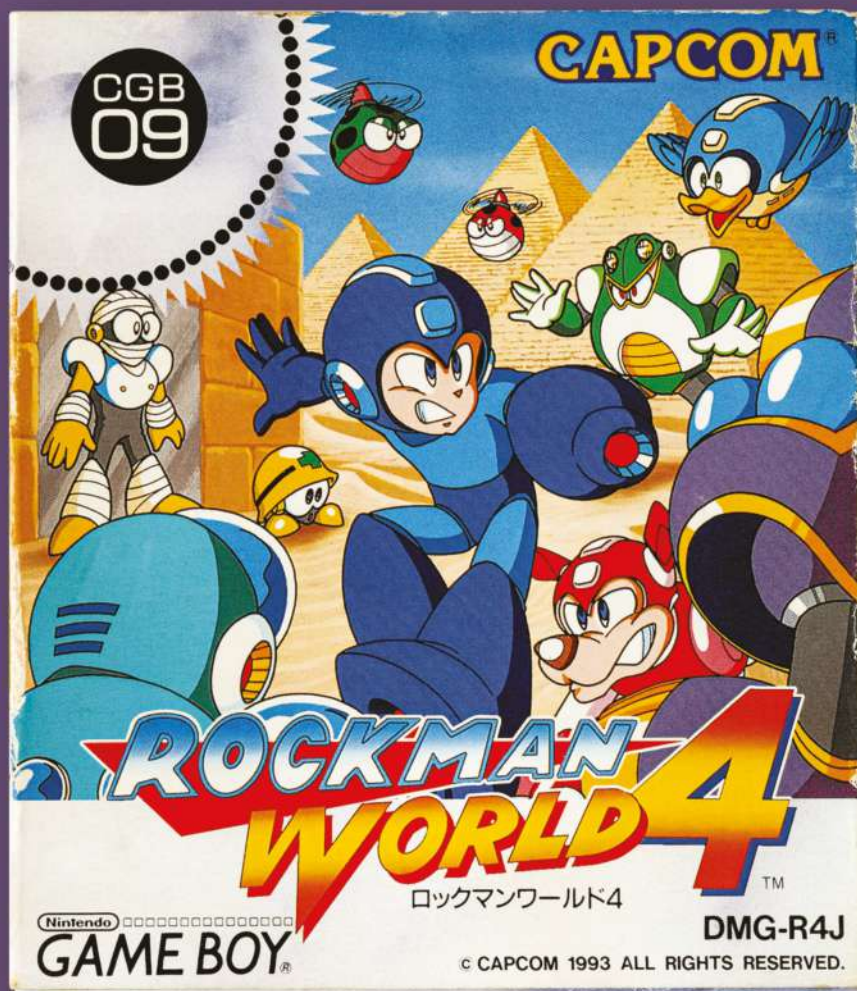
ロックマンワールド4

Capcom (1993)
Genre: Action platformer

Now fully entrusted by Capcom with the keys to the Rockman franchise on the Game Boy, external contractor Minakuchi Engineering took things to the next level with *Rockman World 4*, upping the ante with incredibly detailed visuals, great music and intense, action-platforming gameplay. Series antagonist Dr. Wily is up to his old tricks again, and has used a radio signal to activate an army of dormant robots and make them cause havoc around the world. In addition to this threat, a new 'killer' robot – named Ballade – was introduced in this instalment, and famous end-of-level bosses from the Famicom outings *Rockman 4* and *Rockman 5* are also featured.

Set against a row of sandy pyramids, the cover for *Rockman World 4* once again showcases our steely-eyed hero locked in battle. Keiji Inafune's unmistakable art style is still in evidence, but is slightly more restrained, helping to showcase the varied cast of enemy robots.
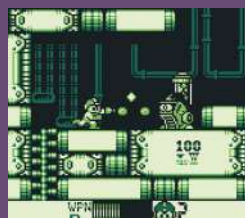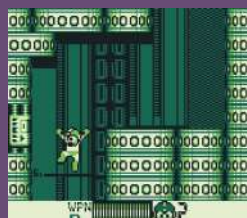
Rockman World 5

ロックマンワールド5

Capcom (1994)
Genre: Action platformer

This is the fifth and final Rockman World instalment on the Game Boy, and it's arguably one of the best of the bunch. Minakuchi Engineering – the same external developer that created the first, third and fourth Game Boy entries – returned to the fold, this time coming up with totally unique 'Robot Master' bosses rather than recycling them from existing NES outings. Known as 'Stardroids', these enemies are accompanied by a new default weapon called the Mega Arm, as well as Tango, a new helper for Rockman to use. Super Game Boy support is included, providing a custom colour scheme and screen border.

Keiji Inafune's evolution as an artist is clear to see when you compare the five covers of the Rockman World series. In this, the most polished and assured, our android hero is shown deploying his new 'Mega Arm' weapon, which he uses to battle the Stardroid enemies.
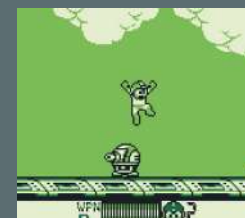
Rolan's Curse

Sammy (1990)
Genre: Action RPG

With its screen-by-screen movement, fantasy setting and top-down perspective, it's clear where *Rolan's Curse* – or *Velious Roland no Majuu*, as it's called in Japan – gets its inspiration from; this is very much an action-adventure in the Zelda mould, but it sadly lacks the depth of Nintendo's famous series. While the two-player link-up mode is interesting, the shortness of the experience and lack of a battery save (you have to use cumbersome passwords instead) relegates *Rolan's Curse* to the lower tier of the action RPG genre. Still, it was successful enough to warrant a sequel, and both games were released in the West, which is more than could be said for many other Game Boy role-playing titles.

The cover artwork for *Rolan's Curse* is a real gem, showcasing some detailed character design. It's the same illustration that was used on the Japanese version of the game, which launched a year before Rolan made his North American debut. Given the game's RPG leanings, the logo could have been a bit more lavish, though.

SaGa 3:
Jikuu no Hasha Kanketsu-Hen

時空の覇者 サ・ガ3 ［完結編］

Square (1991)
Genre: RPG

Released under the name *Final Fantasy
Legend III* in the West, *SaGa 3: Jikuu no
Hasha Kanketsu-Hen* is similar to other
entries in this series, in that it mixes
fantasy and science fiction elements to
create a setting that would, over time,
become something of a hallmark for
Square's wider Final Fantasy franchise.
In *SaGa 3*, the player character is whisked
back in time in order to prevent a flood
from wiping out all life on the planet.
In 2010, the game was remade for the
Nintendo DS under the title *SaGa 3
Jikuu no Hasha: Shadow or Light*.

Robots, dragons, jet fighters and
Japanese warriors come together for
SaGa 3's eclectic cover artwork. The
image manages to make a considerable
impact, despite the use of detailed
monochrome linework against a pastel
background – a common theme with
box art for the SaGa series.

SD Command Gundam:
G-Arms Operation Gundam

SD Gundam Command Series — from the box art:

SD GUNDAM COMMAND SERIES
G ARMS
オペレーションガンダム

The popular Mobile Suit Gundam series was introduced to a whole new generation when Bandai created the 'Super Deformed' sub-series, which focused on cute and dumpy recreations of the most popular robots from the franchise. *SD Command Gundam: G-Arms Operation Gundam* might look like an RPG – and later entries did indeed slot into that particular genre – but this handheld offering is primarily concerned with shooting action and has you stalking various battlefields in search of enemy Mobile Suits to vaporise.

Two armies of Mobile Suits face off against one another on the cover. Weapons at the ready, they certainly look dead set on causing some damage; a hallmark of the SD Gundam series is the focus on giving its robot protagonists some human personality, as evidenced by the determined expressions in their eyes.

SD Hiryuu no Ken Gaiden

SD飛龍の拳外伝

Culture Brain (1995)
Genre: Fighting

The Hiryuu no Ken series can trace its roots back to the arcades in the middle of the '80s, and has seen instalments across a wide range of systems, including the Famicom, SNES, Game Boy Color, Nintendo 64 and Sony PlayStation. As the title suggests, this Game Boy outing from 1995 uses 'Super Deformed' characters, which are arguably better suited to the console's diminutive display. Special moves and combinations are used to good effect, and it's possible to dizzy your opponent with a flurry of successive blows, leaving them open for an even more devastating attack. Like so many of the other games in the series, *SD Hiryuu no Ken Gaiden* was never released outside of its native Japan.

A flurry of colour and detail, the box art for *SD Hiryuu no Ken Gaiden* is something of a knockout; loads of attitude, lots of eye contact, and it's all rounded off nicely by the sumptuous red and gold logo.

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SD Lupin the Third:
Kinko Yaburi Daisakusen

**SDルパン三世
金庫破り大作戦**

**Banpresto (1990)
Genre: Puzzle**

A legendary manga and anime series from Kazuhiko Katō – better known by his pen name of Monkey Punch – *SD Lupin the Third* follows the shady exploits of the grandson of Maurice Leblanc's fictional cad Arsène Lupin. While Lupin has famously been adapted into the popular animated movie *The Castle of Cagliostro* by Hayao Miyazaki, and has also inspired multiple live-action films, his sole outing on the Game Boy has little to do with the series at all, outside of using its characters in a puzzle-based environment. Players can stomp on certain tiles to reconfigure the layout of the level, and finding keys to open doors is integral to finishing each stage.

In keeping with the 'Super Deformed' theme, the cover for *SD Lupin the Third* renders Lupin, Daisuke Jigen, Fujiko Mine, Goemon Ishikawa XIII and Inspector Koichi Zenigata as cute and squat versions of their typically gangly selves.
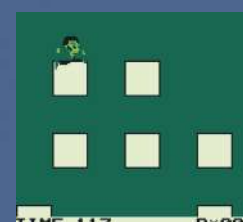
Seaside Volley

シーサイドバレー

Tonkin House (1989)
Genre: Sports

Volleyball video games may be few and far between today, but back in the late '80s and early '90s they were all the rage, and *Seaside Volley* was one of many that appeared on Nintendo hardware around this time. The fast-paced nature of the action – combined with the Game Boy's small screen – makes for a rather frustrating game, but Activision clearly thought highly enough of the game, as it picked up *Seaside Volley* and published it under the title *Malibu Beach Volleyball* in North America. The vertical-oriented court is quite unique, as most other volleyball games opt for a side-on, horizontal perspective. The bikini-wearing female referee is well-rendered, too.

In contrast to the North American box art for *Malibu Beach Volleyball* – which features a photo of two burly, tanned players in the middle of a heated match – the artwork for *Seaside Volley* is a little more restrained. It uses the same knockabout comic style seen on the covers of Tonkin House's other sports titles for the system.

Seiken Densetsu:
Final Fantasy Gaiden

DMG-FFJ

聖剣伝説 ─ファイナルファンタジー外伝─

Square (1991)
Genre: RPG

Fantasy RPG *Seiken Densetsu* – or 'Legend of the Sacred Sword' – was released as *Final Fantasy Adventure* in North America and as *Mystic Quest* two years later in Europe, piggy-backing on the popularity of Square's franchise in North America. However, the game is actually the first instalment in the Mana saga, and the forerunner of the much-loved SNES title, *Secret of Mana*. The game – which melds RPG, adventure, action and puzzle elements – sees two unnamed characters on a quest to defend the legendary Mana tree. In spite of not being a true member of the Final Fantasy family, *Seiken Densetsu* remains one of the best – and most accessible – RPG adventures on Nintendo's handheld.

In keeping with some of Square's other releases, the cover art aims for simplicity and cleanliness, with a single-word logo intertwined with a heavily stylised sword. However, by adding 'Final Fantasy Gaiden' – or 'Final Fantasy Side Story' – Square still hedged its bets, even in Japan.

Selection:
Erabareshi Mono

セレクション 選ばれし者

Kemco (1989)
Genre: RPG

Known in the West as *The Sword of Hope*, *Selection: Erabareshi Mono* is a classic tale of a dysfunctional father-son relationship. The hero is a Prince whose father has become corrupted by power, killed the Queen and enslaved the kingdom. The prince was whisked away from the castle as a child, but having reached manhood, decides to put his father's tyranny to an end. The RPG action takes place from a first-person perspective, with much of the screen taken up by text and numbers; commands such as 'Look', 'Use' and 'Open' can be used to interact with elements of the environment. Meanwhile, turn-based battles occur randomly as you explore the game world, giving you the chance to level up and acquire items.

The cover may be rendered in a naive, cartoon style, but it's surprisingly evocative, the hero striking a dynamic pose while his evil father looms large over the royal castle. A sequel entitled *Selection II: Ankoku no Fuuin* arrived in 1992, and both games were bundled together in 1998.

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Sensible Soccer:
European Champions

Sony Imagesoft (1993)
Genre: Sports

Sensible Software's *Sensible Soccer* is widely regarded as one of the finest virtual representations of the sport from the '90s, and its success on the Commodore Amiga was followed by a flood of ports to other platforms, including the key consoles of the period. The Game Boy port was handled by UK studio Enigma Variations, which created a fairly accurate replication of the game – even if the small sprites and fast-paced action don't suit the Game Boy's small screen all that well. Despite this, the Game Boy version shapes up well when compared with other versions of the game, offering Friendly, Cup and Tournament modes, as well as the ability to tinker with match length, weather and even crowd noise.

While the Amiga version of *Sensible Soccer* showcases the famous Dutch player Ruud Gullit on its cover, the console versions had to make do with a close up of a football being kicked – presumably to avoid any legal ramifications with the player himself. On the Game Boy cover, that image is cropped further due to the square box design. Thankfully, the game's famous name and logo remain intact.

Shinseiki GPX Cyber Formula

**新世紀GPX
サイバーフォーミュラ**

**Varie (1992)
Genre: Racing**

Set in a future where Formula One racing has reached its logical conclusion, and the technology in the car is so smart it can understand commands and human emotion, Hajime Yatate's 1991 anime series *Shinseiki GPX Cyber Formula* is perfect fodder for video game adaptations. This Game Boy outing is just one of the many titles that have been released over the years since the show made its debut on Japanese television. Viewed from a top-down perspective, players control Hayato Kazami in his futuristic racing car, the Asurada, named after the advanced Cyber System AI that powers it.

The rather crudely-rendered cover for *Shinseiki GPX Cyber Formula* shows Hayato Kazumi standing next to the championship-winning Asurada, which would undergo several transformations throughout the course of the TV series and subsequent OVA movies.

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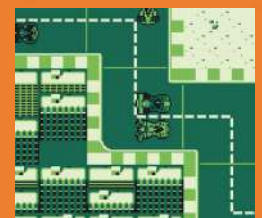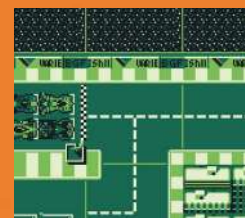
Shin Nihon Pro Wrestling:
Toukon Sanjuushi

新日本プロレスリング
闘魂三銃士

Varie (1993)
Genre: Sports

Shin Nihon Pro Wrestling – better known in the West as *New Japan Pro Wrestling* – was founded in 1972 by Antonio Inoki and is the country's biggest wrestling organisation. As has been the case with WWF (later WWE) in the West, the federation has been subject to numerous video game adaptations over the decades, and this Game Boy release is one of the earliest. Despite its age, the game boasts large sprites and a wide range of famous grappling moves; the ability to play as some of the most beloved characters of the period will have gone down well with fans, too. Varie also released titles in the series on the Super Famicom, before the likes of Tomy and Hudson Soft picked up the licence in later years.

A trio of photos of famous New Japan wrestlers forms the focal point of the game's cover, with the federation's emblem and game logo taking up a large portion of the box.

Skate or Die:
Bad 'n Rad

Konami (1990)
Genre: Action

A Japanese-developed spin-off from Electronic Arts' Skate or Die series, *Bad 'n Rad* capitalises on the early '90s love of skateboarding, and divides its action between horizontally- and vertically-scrolling stages, complete with enemies and boss characters to fight, with the ultimate aim being the liberation of Miss Aerial from the clutches of the strangely-named ElRad the Evil One. Seven stages lie between the player and his goal, while point-scoring pick-ups include ice creams and cans of soda. Konami's European shell subsidiary Palcom handled publishing duties for the game in that region.

While the original *Skate or Die* was focused on pulling off stunts and tricks, *Bad 'n Rad* is more fantastical in terms of content – as the inclusion of a helicopter and dragon attests. It's a classy piece of artwork, spoiled by the large slab of black; it's not present on the North American release, yet the logo reads just fine without it.
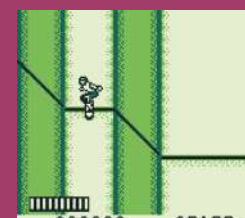
Sneaky Snakes

TradeWest (1991)
Genre: Action platformer

Rare's *Snake, Rattle 'n' Roll* was a critically-acclaimed smash on the NES, so few eyebrows were raised when the company began work on a sequel. However, *Sneaky Snakes* – which features the titular reptiles Genghis and Atilla on a quest to save their friend Sonia Snake from the evil Nasty Nibbler – abandons the eye-catching isometric perspective of the original for a more traditional side-on view, turning this into a more straightforward scrolling action platformer. While the revised viewpoint means the action is slightly less immersive and enjoyable, there's still plenty of challenge on offer – especially if you want to uncover all of the secrets – and mastering the surprisingly realistic physics is a rewarding process.

Despite their heroic intentions, Genghis and Atilla are portrayed in a sinister fashion on the cover of *Sneaky Snakes*, mercilessly chasing a group of terrified fish. However, the artwork is splendid – beautifully realised, with lovely use of colour and shade – so we'll forgive them their piscine predilections.

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Soccer

GameTek (1994)
Genre: Sports

Based on Rage Software's popular *Striker* from 1992, *Soccer* gives the player the chance to control one of 24 different national sides, and take them all the way to World Cup glory. This Game Boy port was developed by Denton Designs and is based on the SNES update *World Cup Striker*; GameTek published it in North America as *Elite Soccer*, while in the Land of the Rising Sun it was distributed by Coconuts Japan alongside a vital endorsement by famous Japanese player and manager Yasutaro Matsuki. The player sprites are large and well animated, while the angled, vertically-scrolling pitch gives a good sense of depth; arrows floating above each player's head helpfully show the direction in which the opposition goal lies.

The basic design of *Soccer*'s cover is based on the original *Striker* artwork from 1992 – the big difference being that the player is now wearing the kit of a national side, as opposed to the club kit seen in the original. The character is surrounded by American imagery, due to the World Cup taking place there in 1994.

Solar Striker

ソーラーストライカー

Nintendo (1990)
Genre: Scrolling shooter

Keen to show what its shiny new handheld was capable of, Nintendo turned its hand to multiple genres in the early days of the Game Boy. Puzzlers, sports, platformers and even board games – with the *Battleships*-like *Radar Mission* – nothing was off-limits. Nintendo even dabbled in the vertically-scrolling shooter genre via 1990's *Solar Striker*; developed as a collaboration between Nintendo R&D1 and Minakuchi Engineering, it at least proves the console is capable of hosting this style of game, even if it does look rather primitive compared to later examples of the genre. You fly your ship over a wide range of stages – some of which take place on Earth, despite the space-like nature of the game's title – and collecting power-up icons boosts the attack strength of your lasers.

The heavily airbrushed artwork is a bit of an oddity as Nintendo artwork goes, looking more like an '80s budget computer game. The Western release fared slightly better, with a slicker, more impactful image and nicer logo.

Solomon's Club

Tecmo (1991)
Genre: Puzzle

Based on the 1986 Tecmo coin-op *Solomon's Key* and coded by Graphic Research Co., Ltd., this Game Boy port retains the puzzle-based action of the arcade original. You assume the role of a magician who can summon and dismiss solid blocks at will, using his trusty wand. The aim is to obtain the key which unlocks the exit from each single-screen level, while avoiding enemies and using your block-creating powers to reach higher parts of the stage; you can also vanquish enemies by destroying said blocks as they walk onto them. The game was also ported – under its original moniker – to a wide range of other systems, including the C64, NES and SEGA Master System.

This cartoon-style cover renders the hero Dana as a cheeky, elfish character, which is radically different from the mysterious robed individual on the cover of the more literal Japanese edition. It's a great example of how the respective territories' marketing teams handled releases for their home audiences.

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Space Invaders

Tomohiro Nishikado's 1978 arcade hit *Space Invaders* is one of the most famous video games ever created, and was ported to pretty much every viable platform during the '80s and '90s. Given that the coin-op version was displayed on a monochrome screen, the Game Boy's lack of colour isn't as big a drawback as you might expect – however, the console's square display means that the playfield feels squashed compared to the original. Super Game Boy support is included, and this Western release is notable for including a full 16–bit bonus version of *Space Invaders* which can only be accessed using the Super Game Boy adapter, and is coded expressly with the SNES hardware in mind; in Japan this version appeared as a standalone Super Famicom release.

The cover for *Space Invaders* certainly aims to appeal to your sense of nostalgia, with the original arcade logo and a close-up of one of the iconic sprites from the 1978 coin-op, complete with CRT raster lines.
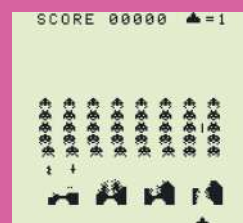
Spartan X

スパルタンＸ

Irem (1990)
Genre: Scrolling beat 'em up

One of the earliest examples of a side-scrolling beat 'em up, Irem's *Kung-Fu Master* graced arcades in 1984 and inspired countless imitators. Released in Japan under the title *Spartan X* to tie in with the Jackie Chan movie *Wheels on Meals* (which was retitled *Spartan X* in that country), it received this Game Boy sequel in 1990. While the core gameplay remains largely unchanged, the setting and characters have been altered to give it a grittier urban aesthetic, which would presumably have been more in keeping with the likes of *Double Dragon* and *Final Fight*. It reverted to the title *Kung-Fu Master* when released in the West, and laughably re-named the hero as 'Bruce Leap', martial artist and part-time camel racer.

Spartan X's cover boasts some rather basic hand-drawn artwork, showcasing the new boss characters in the game. These include a hockey mask-wearing foe brandishing a chainsaw – a close match for the antihero of Namco's Splatterhouse series.

Spider-Man and the X-Men
in Arcade's Revenge

LJN (1993)
Genre: Action platformer

This Game Boy outing sees Spider-Man teaming up with the Uncanny X-Men to take on the sinister Arcade, who imprisons his victims in 'Murderworld', a virtual simulation intended to torture and eventually kill those who are forced to play. The player controls a different comic book character in each stage, with Spider-Man, Wolverine, Gambit and Cyclops all getting the chance to tackle one of Murderland's many sinister challenges in a range of tricky action-platforming levels; each hero has his own skill, with Gambit throwing playing cards as projectiles and Wolverine using his sharp claws to defeat foes. Versions of the game also exist for the SNES, Mega Drive and Game Gear.

The box art features the full cast of playable characters, with Arcade grinning down from a monitor in the background. As you'd expect, the artwork is of typical Marvel standard, with wonderful line work, dynamic poses and loads of colour. And the image works well, despite the fact that it's cluttered up with *seven* logos!

Spot

スポット

Bullet Proof Software (1990)
Genre: Strategy

Bizarre marketing crossovers were all the rage in the late '80s and early '90s, with *Spot* – the Pac-Man-style mascot representing drinks brand 7 Up – becoming one of the most notable examples. While the character is perhaps most famous for the excellent platformers *Cool Spot* and *Spot Goes To Hollywood*, his official video game debut actually took place in this hastily-rebranded, board-based strategy title, which went under the name *Infection* before the licence was applied. Here's a fun fact: the original designer was Scotsman Graeme Devine, who later worked on such seminal PC titles such as *The 7th Guest*, *The 11th Hour* and *Quake III Arena*.

While it launched under the title *Spot: The Video Game* in the West, Japan got the simply-titled *Spot*. The cover is unusual in clearly portraying the game board, with its multiple players. Although it might seem odd, speech bubbles with English phrases are typical of Japanese game packaging.
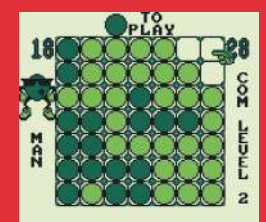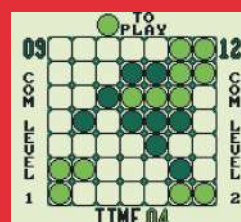
Star Wars

Nintendo (1992)
Genre: Action platformer

Despite concluding almost a decade earlier with 1983's *Return of the Jedi*, the Star Wars trilogy continued to grip the imaginations of video game players in the early '90s. Australian code house Beam Software developed an action platformer for the NES in 1991, which was then skilfully ported to the Game Boy a year later by NMS Software. The game loosely follows the events of the first Star Wars movie, *Episode IV: A New Hope*, via a series of side-scrolling 2D platforming stages – the desert planet Tatooine and the Imperial Death Star providing the backdrops for two of the levels. Top-down sections where the player hops into a landspeeder are also included, and it's even possible to pilot the legendary Millennium Falcon.

Star Wars on the Game Boy shipped with two different cover images. The North American release shown here uses Tom Chantrell's 'Style C' poster for the 1977 release of the original movie, while in Europe, Ubisoft used the Steinar Lund artwork previously seen on Domark's home computer port from 1987.
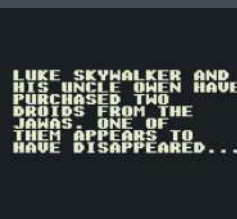
StarHawk

Accolade (1993)
Genre: Scrolling shooter

While this scrolling shooter can hardly be considered one of the crown jewels of the Game Boy library, it has become something of a collector's item in recent years, mainly due to its low production run. As storylines go, it's pretty standard for the genre; you command the titular spaceship as it flies off on a solo mission to destroy the evil Empire of Axtar, whose forces are composed of half-organic, half-technological monsters. Developed by NMS Software and published exclusively in Europe, *StarHawk* boasts some of the most impressive parallax scrolling on the console, while the level design is as varied as you could expect; stages range from dark caves to high-tech fortresses, with enemies coming in all sorts of grotesque forms.

The game's fantastic artwork depicts the StarHawk ship hurtling down a canyon towards one of the Axtar Empire's many biomechanical monstrosities. Sadly, the overall impact is diminished by the bland *StarHawk* logo, which looks more like the opening title of an '80s U.S. soap opera.

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StarSweep

スタースイープ

Axela (1997)
Genre: Puzzle

Even by 1997, the flood of *Tetris* clones on the Game Boy had yet to show any signs of slowing down, but this rather obscure Japanese puzzler is one that may have slipped under the radar of many players. Like *Tetris*, the action takes place in a thin playfield with blocks dropping in from the top. The objective is to match the symbols at the end of each block with those on other blocks, thereby removing them from play and adding points to your score. The game was also released on the Sony PlayStation as well as in arcades, and comes with Super Game Boy support, adding a splash of colour to proceedings.

StarSweep has a really attractive cover, thanks to some gorgeous anime-style artwork and a lovely rainbow logo. The tiles in the background hint at the puzzle gameplay, while the cast of cute, elf-like characters are your opponents in the game's single-player campaign mode. If only all Game Boy boxes were this good.

Street Fighter II

Capcom (1995)
Genre: Fighting

One of the most popular coin-op titles of all time, Capcom's *Street Fighter II* revitalised interest in the one-on-one combat genre and triggered a gold rush that saw multiple clones appear in a wide range of formats. The Game Boy port is, unfortunately, a noble failure, in that the console lacks the six face buttons required to cover the arcade original's three punch and kick strengths. The visuals and audio are, understandably, also heavily compromised. Still, the fact that Game Boy owners got a port at all is something to celebrate, and goes to show how popular the handheld was at that point in time.

Rather than using an entirely new piece of art, the Game Boy version of *Street Fighter II* recycles the same artwork as seen on the cover of the best-selling SNES version, created by North American artist Mick McGinty. It's a great depiction of the iconic characters Blanka, Chun-Li and Ryu in action.

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Street Racer

Ubi Soft (1996)
Genre: Racing

Positioned as a rival to *Super Mario Kart* that mixed in elements of *Street Fighter II* for good measure, *Street Racer* launched on practically every system of the era, including the Mega Drive, SNES, PlayStation and – of course – Game Boy. While the Game Boy's humble hardware isn't really up to the task at hand, the controls are respectable and the game's wacky cast is rendered reasonably effectively; the monochrome system even does a relatively solid job of rendering the smoothly-twisting track that runs beneath your wheels. With no *Mario Kart* of its own, this is perhaps the next best thing on the Game Boy.

Street Racer's cover 'pays homage' to two major properties: with a cast of *Street Fighter II*-style characters, and a logo that's brazenly reminiscent of *Speed Racer*. Despite this obvious cribbing, it's an eye-catching cover, if slightly oddly framed; a tweaked version of the artwork appears on the SNES packaging, which works better, due to the landscape format.

Super B-Daman:
Fighting Phoenix

スーパービーダマン
ファイティングフェニックス

Hudson (1997)
Genre: Action

Based on Takara's B-Daman toy line – which also inspired Coro Coro Comics' manga series *Burst Ball Barrage!! Super B-Daman* and an animated TV series – *Super B-Daman: Fighting Phoenix* takes the marble-shooting mechanics of the toys and transplants them into a video game setting. The aim is to destroy a series of bombs, using your shots to create a chain reaction of explosions, or making use of strips of touchpaper which can trigger secondary explosions elsewhere on the screen. A version was also produced for the Nintendo 64 under the title *Super B-Daman: Battle Phoenix 64*, but neither game ever made it out of Japan.

Another of Hudson's tin-packaged titles, *Super B-Daman: Fighting Phoenix* was released in a highly desirable metal container that – along with the striking artwork and graphics – makes it incredibly appealing to hardcore Game Boy collectors. The feisty characters from the cartoon are shown overshadowed by a huge robot.

Super Bikkuriman:
Densetsu no Sekiban

スーパービックリマン
伝説の石板

Yutaka (1992)
Genre: Action platformer

Based on a long-established Japanese chocolate confectionery containing 'seal' stickers that children can trade with one another, Bikkuriman has spawned manga, anime and a wide range of associated merchandise, including a range of video games across systems including the PC Engine, Famicom and – of course – Game Boy. In this handheld outing, protagonists Phoenix and Tiki are sent back in time by a magic lithograph which must be restored in order to return the world to normal and take down the ultimate enemy, Black Phoenix. The most recent Bikkuriman title – *Bikkuriman Collector's Battle* – launched on smartphones in 2013 but only lasted a year before the plug was pulled.

The cover for *Super Bikkuriman: Densetsu no Sekiban* shows Phoenix and Tiki standing in front of the lithograph which serves as the game's key focus. The Bikkuriman logo is the same one featured on the chocolate treats that inspired the series.
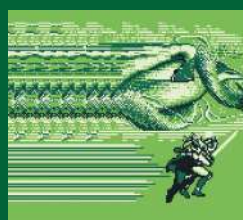
Super Blackbass Pocket

スーパーブラックバスポケット

Starfish (1996)
Genre: Sports

With the collapse of Hot B in 1993, all of the firm's properties were picked up by Starfish, a company formed by ex-Hot B employees. The Blackbass series – one of the most popular fishing simulations of the period – was one of the first to be resurrected, and *Super Blackbass Pocket* arrived on the Game Boy in 1996, complete with Super Game Boy support. The aim, as you might expect, is to land the biggest catch, and you'll need to use the right lure and equipment to bag the heavier, more aggressive fish. It was followed by two sequels in the same 'Pocket' sub-series, while the mainline franchise would endure until 2011, with the release of Super *Blackbass 3D* on the Nintendo 3DS – the most recent entry at the time of writing.

The cover for *Super Blackbass Pocket* is an odd one, in that it holds together as a compelling composition despite the fact that it features a cap-wearing fisherman with tight, '80s-style shorts – presented in a somewhat unflattering rear view – and looking in the wrong direction.

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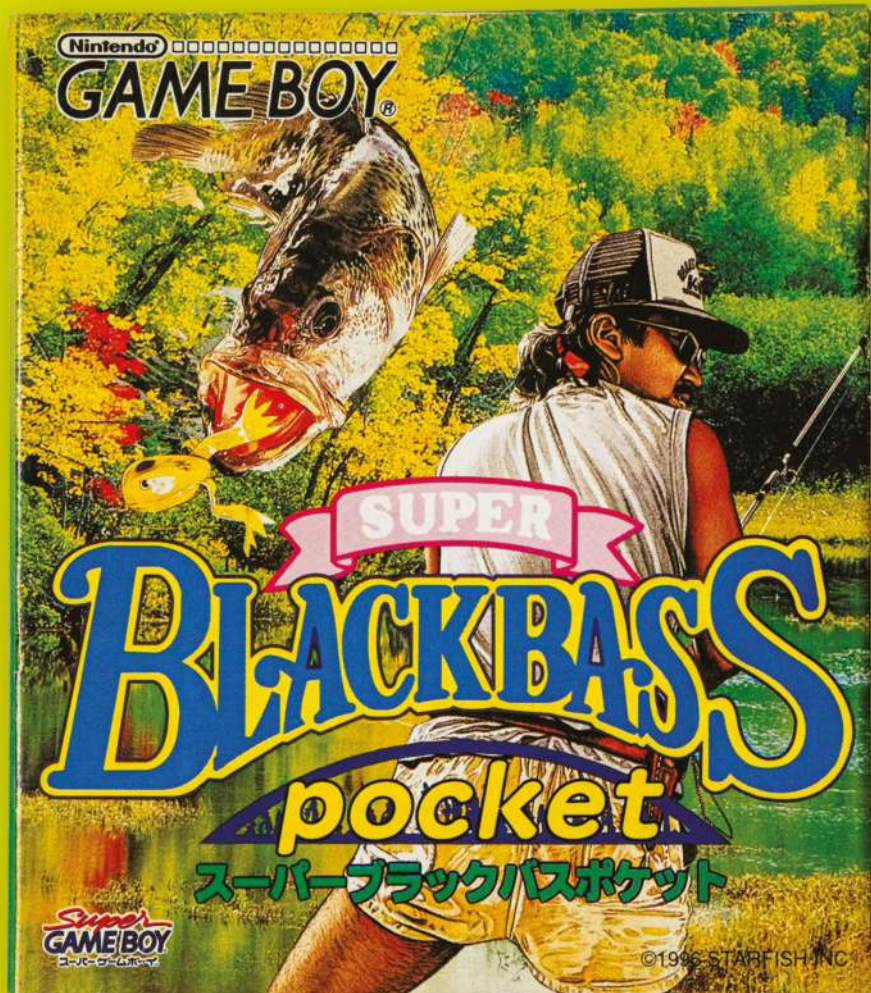
Super Chinese Fighter GB

スーパーチャイニーズ ファイターGB

Culture Brain (1996)
Genre: Fighting

The Super Chinese series' origins lie in the arcades, with the 1984 release *Chinese Hero*, known as *Kung Fu Heroes* in the West. Developed by Nihon Game – which would later change its name to Culture Brain – the franchise later moved to home systems such as the Famicom and Super Famicom, and some of these entries were released outside of Japan under the titles *Ninja Boy* and *Little Ninja Brothers*. This 1996 Game Boy offering takes inspiration from *Street Fighter II* and features 12 different combatants to choose from – including the undisputed heroes of the series, Jack and Ryu. The game rather helpfully lets you know when you've landed a multi-hit combo, by counting your blows and briefly displaying them under your life bar.

Jack and Ryu – the lead characters of the Super Chinese series – are flanked by the ten other selectable fighters in this bright and appealing montage. The detailed portraits closely resemble the in-game characters in this visually accomplished beat 'em up, which also boasts Super Game Boy support.

Super Chinese Land

スーパーチャイニーズランド

Culture Brain (1990)
Genre: Action

Culture Brain's Super Chinese series made its Game Boy debut with this early top-down '90s action title. Assuming the role of Jack the Ninja, you must rescue a kidnapped princess by defeating a number of foes to unlock the level's exit. Unlike later entries in the franchise, which would skilfully alternate between top-down and side-on perspectives, here, the world is viewed entirely from above. *Super Chinese Land* was so successful that it spawned two more related entries on the Game Boy, and was localised for the West under the title *Ninja Boy*, receiving a release in both North America and Europe.

The red-suited ninja hero Jack swallows up the majority of *Super Chinese Land*'s cover, framed by a circular banner emblazoned with the words 'Culture Brain Fan Club'. Dotted around the frame are various supporting characters, including the hapless princess that Jack aims to liberate. It's a bold and compelling image that engages directly with the viewer.

Super Chinese Land 2:
Uchu Daibouken

スーパーチャイニーズランド2
―宇宙大冒険―

Culture Brain (1991)
Genre: Action

The second Super Chinese Land title on the Game Boy takes a leaf from the book of *Little Ninja Brothers* on the NES – known in Japan as *Super Chinese 2* – by incorporating light RPG elements to expand the depth and appeal of the otherwise action-oriented gameplay. The game's storyline takes a futuristic twist by tasking our heroes Jack and Ryu with repelling an alien invasion; to do this, they must tirelessly travel to a series of local planets in order to construct the spaceship required to fight the nefarious invaders. *Super Chinese Land 2* was released in North America under the title *Ninja Boy II* in 1993.

Super Chinese Land 2 mimics the cover art of the original game by positioning its characters in front of a circular frame – only this time, it displays the inky blackness of space, hinting at the title's unusual sci-fi setting. It's an almost perfect combination of elements, with great character art and terrific use of colour.

Super Chinese Land 3

スーパーチャイニーズランド3

Culture Brain (1994)
Genre: Action

Super Chinese Land 3 retains the action-RPG formula laid down by its direct forerunner, but, due to its late release (the Game Boy was five years old in 1994), it was passed over for localisation outside of Japan, and remains something of a mystery to Western players. That's something of a shame, because Culture Brain had the template pretty much nailed down by this third outing; what we have here is a neat mix of side-scrolling platform action and light role-playing elements, the latter of which helps to get players more invested and motivated. All three entries in the series were compiled in a single collection for the Game Boy in 1996, which was exclusive to Japan.

The circular frame motif seen in the previous two titles reappears for *Super Chinese Land 3*, but is slightly less potent this time around. Lead characters Jack and Ryu are rendered as compellingly as ever, but the cover treatment lacks some of the attitude and dynamism of its forerunners.

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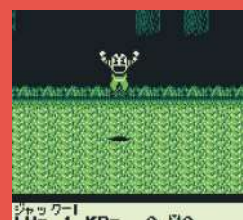
Super Donkey Kong GB

スーパードンキーコングGB

Nintendo (1995)
Genre: Action platformer

A loose sequel to *Donkey Kong Country*, the groundbreaking SNES hit of 1994, *Super Donkey Kong GB* proved that UK studio Rare could adapt its CG visuals for the less powerful hardware of the Game Boy. Some of the impact is obviously lost in the transition to monochrome hardware, and the console is pushed to its limits to accurately replicate the feel of the 16-bit version's engaging, Super Mario-style, platforming action. In the West, the game was released under the title *Donkey Kong Land*, and would spawn sequels in 1996 and 1997. The game is unique in that it comes on a banana yellow cartridge.

Donkey Kong and Diddy Kong are shown dashing towards the viewer, which is a close – but not identical – match to the image used on the North American and European releases. The CG rendering, which at the time was state of the art, is still effective, but feels charmingly crude by today's photoreal standards.

Super Kick Off

Imagineer (1991)
Genre: Sports

A hit on home computers in 1989, Dino Dini's *Kick Off* is one of the most well-regarded soccer simulations of the period, second only to *Sensible Soccer* in terms of fan adoration. Its brand of fast-paced, pinball-like action and the swiftly-scrolling top-down viewpoint cemented its position as one of the leading football games of the '90s, and it was duly ported to consoles under the moderately more exciting *Super Kick Off* moniker. Players can select from Practice, Friendly, International and Events modes, while the options enable you to alter the weather, the wind speed and even the referee in charge. As you might expect, the Game Boy's screen is less than ideal for the fast-moving soccer action, and it becomes quite difficult to see both the players and the ball itself when things get hectic.

Super Kick Off's cover art is borrowed from the Amiga release *Kick Off 2*, and does a good job of portraying the glamour and passion of association football. The hand-drawn artwork, used across Nintendo packaging, was reworked in a more vibrant, airbrushed style for SEGA releases.
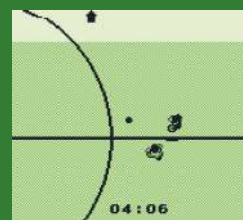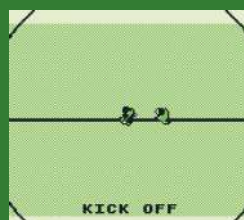
Super Mario Land

スーパーマリオランド

Nintendo (1989)
Genre: Action platformer

An important early release for the fledgeling Game Boy system, and the first Super Mario Bros. outing on a handheld console, *Super Mario Land* is often seen as the black sheep of the series, not just because it deviates so drastically from the existing template (two of the levels are shoot 'em up sections) but also because series creator Shigeru Miyamoto was not involved. Instead, Gunpei Yokoi's Nintendo R&D1 was tasked with the development and Satoru Okada (chief director of *Metroid* and *Kid Icarus*) steered the project. Set in the all-new world of Sarasaland, *Super Mario Land* also marks the debut of Princess Daisy, and would go on to eclipse even the mighty *Super Mario Bros. 3* in terms of sales, shifting a staggering 18 million copies.

The striking cover image, created by Yoichi Kotabe, was the first in the franchise to be used in Japan, North America and Europe. It shows a particularly determined Mario rushing to avoid the attention of a whole host of enemies, many of which remain totally exclusive to this game and have never been seen in the series since.

Super Mario Land 2:
6-tsu no Kinka

スーパーマリオランド2
6つの金貨

Nintendo (1992)
Genre: Action platformer

While the original *Super Mario Land* has its fans, few would argue that it pushed the Game Boy hardware to its limit – but the sequel is a different matter entirely. Larger sprites, an expansive overworld map and the ability to save your game to battery back-up memory all make *Super Mario Land 2: 6-tsu no Kinka* (*Super Mario Land 2: 6 Golden Coins* in the West) a much more epic adventure in terms of scope. But it was also notable for introducing the world to Mario's new nemesis, Wario, who went on to take the lead role in the third *Super Mario Land* title on the Game Boy.

The game's stylish cover shows Mario with his new 'Bunny' power-up, leaping high above Mario Land, the location he must liberate from the malevolent Wario and his army of hostile minions. As ever, Yoichi Kotabe's lively artwork does an excellent job of drawing the player in. The fisheye lens-style perspective is an interesting technique, although it bears little relation to the staunchly 2D platform action within.

Super R.C. Pro-Am

Nintendo (1991)
Genre: Racing

A follow-up to the critically-acclaimed NES title *R.C. Pro-Am*, this handheld racer was developed by UK studio Rare, and allows up to four players to compete in a dash to the finish. Oil slicks will reduce your grip and must be avoided, but other features – such as the speed boost – can be the difference between success and failure, if used properly. The remote-control vehicles drive brilliantly and animate extremely smoothly; it's only the Game Boy's small screen that holds the experience back a little, as it's sometimes tricky to parse objects on the track. Still, it sold well enough to become part of Nintendo's prestigious Player's Choice series, made up of games that sold over a million copies.

Racing remote-control cars might not seem like a particularly dynamic or thrilling pastime, but the cover for *Super R.C. Pro-Am* does a fantastic job of communicating the speed and urgency of the game itself. The forced perspective and neat motion-blurring effect do a good job of portraying a sense of pace and drama.

Super Robot Taisen

スーパーロボット大戦

Banpresto (1991)
Genre: RPG

Known in the West as *Super Robot Wars*, this long-running strategy series continues to see fresh instalments even today, but the franchise began life on the humble Game Boy, way back in 1991. You control a series of units across a grid-based map, engaging in turn-based combat with hostile robots. While the series – which showcases cute, 'super deformed' versions of famous Japanese robots – has grown to incorporate characters from a wide range of famous anime properties, only mechs from the Mobile Suit Gundam, Mazinger and Getter Robo series are represented in this debut release. The game was remade in 2014 for the PlayStation 4 and Vita.

The cute, wide-eyed drawings of iconic robots that grace the cover of *Super Robot Taisen* laid down the foundation for an entire franchise, and the same basic look has been retained in subsequent instalments, right up to the present day. The RX-78-2 Gundam is the focal point of the illustration; it's arguably the most famous of all Japanese robots.

Super Star Wars:
Return of the Jedi

Black Pearl Software (1995)
Genre: Action platformer

Based on Sculptured Software's SNES title of the same name, this handheld adaptation was reimagined by Realtime Associates in a slightly less detailed form. It is, of course, based on the 1983 Star Wars movie, which concluded George Lucas' epic original trilogy, and sees you controlling multiple characters through stages based on events from the film. Luke gets to use his lightsaber during some of the platforming sections, and there's a thrilling 3D speeder chase through the forests of Endor, viewed from a third-person perspective. *Return of the Jedi* was also released on the SEGA Game Gear, with noticeably superior visuals, although the Game Boy edition does benefit from Super Game Boy support when played via a SNES home console.

The cover for *Super Return of the Jedi* uses Kazuhiko Sano's artwork from the original movie poster. It features Luke Skywalker – now a Jedi Master – alongside Han Solo and Princess Leia, in her alluring Tatooine bikini. An image of the malevolent Darth Vader lurks ominously in the darkness of space.

T2: The Arcade Game

LJN (1992)
Genre: Shoot 'em up

James Cameron's sci-fi blockbuster *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* was one of the biggest movies of the early '90s, and predictably received numerous video game adaptations. In turn, Midway's impressive arcade-based light gun game was converted for pretty much every console at the time, even the Game Boy. Fitting in the large, smoothly-scaling sprites of the coin-op was naturally out of the question, so this portable edition had enemies slide in from the edges of the screen instead. A bridge too far for the Game Boy? Perhaps, but we'd imagine it sold robustly enough at retail to justify the effort, and the core gameplay is fun enough to justify its existence.

The sinister T–800 Terminator robot is the main focal point of *T2: The Arcade Game*'s cover, with the original coin-op cabinet shown on the right-hand side, complete with Arnold Schwarzenegger's famous character on its side. It's a rather clumsy combination of elements, but includes all the major selling points.

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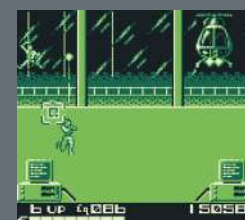
Taito Chase H.Q.

タイトーチェイスH.Q.

Taito (1991)
Genre: Racing

Taito's 1988 arcade title is a quintessential coin-op classic, which places you in the role of cop Tony Gibson, in a super-sleek sports car that looks very much like a Porsche 928. Gibson – along with partner Raymond Broady – must chase a series of dangerous criminals in order to ram them off the road. The player begins each run a fair distance from the target and has to carefully negotiate traffic in order to reach the criminal. Given that in the late '80s Taito's game was considered to be reasonably cutting-edge, the Game Boy port has to sacrifice an awful lot of visual fidelity to run acceptably on the hardware, but the fun 'cat and mouse' nature of the coin-op still shines through regardless.

While the game might not be up to much, *Taito Chase H.Q.*'s box art is a lot more agreeable. It's a 'super deformed' take on the original arcade art, complete with dumpy versions of Gibson and Broady, as well as comically scaled-down interpretations of the vehicles.

Taito Variety Pack

タイトーバラエティーパック

Taito (1997)
Genre: Compilation

Like rivals Konami and Namco, Taito was quick to realise that the extended lifespan of the Game Boy meant that it was possible to take older releases and repackage them for a new wave of consumers. The *Taito Variety Pack* consists of four titles: *Bubble Bobble*, *Elevator Action*, *Taito Chase H.Q.* and *Sagaia* (also known as *Darius*). By the time it launched in 1997, all four of these games would have been considered ancient history by players, but, with the possible exception of *Chase H.Q.*, they are arguably classics which have aged better than most Game Boy releases – making this astonishing value for money.

Curiously, Taito opted to use the Western artwork for *Elevator Action* and *Chase H.Q.* on the cover for this compilation – which is something of a shame, as the original Japanese artwork for both is far superior. Irrespective of the images chosen, it's the game's massive, gold-effect logo that utterly dominates the cover.

Taiyou no Yuusha Fighbird GB

太陽の勇者ファイバードGB

Irem (1991)
Genre: Action

Known to English speakers as *The Brave Fighter of Sun Fighbird* and directed by Katsuyoshi Yatabe, this 1991 anime series is perhaps most famous today for inspiring the "Is this a pigeon?" Internet meme, but there's more to it than mild amusement. Based on the exploits of a Space Police Force seeking to defend the Earth from evil invaders, it was adapted for the Famicom as a vertically-scrolling shooter, and later came to the Game Boy in the form of this action title. Developed by Irem, of *R-Type* fame, it's a fairly standard example of the genre, which is clearly aimed at younger fans of the anime series.

There's something undeniably appealing about giant Japanese robots, so the cover artwork to *Taiyou no Yuusha Fighbird GB* predictably hits its mark. Depicting the three transforming mechs of the series – Baron Team, Fighbird and Guard Team – it ticks all the boxes for robot-loving Japanese gamers.
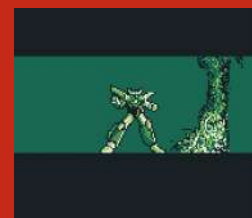
Takahashi Meijin
no Bouken-Jima II

高橋名人の冒険島II

Hudson (1992)
Genre: Action platformer

The original *Adventure Island* is, in reality, an officially-sanctioned conversion of the SEGA coin-op *Wonder Boy*. The rights to this 1986 coin-guzzling classic, which was developed by Escape (later known as Westone), would be snapped up by Hudson, which duly changed the lead character to Takahashi Meijin, the company's spokesperson at the time (the protagonist was known as Master Higgins in North America and Master Wiggins in the UK). This Game Boy debut is actually based on the second Takahashi Meijin no Bouken-Jima entry, but was confusingly released as plain old *Adventure Island* in the West.

A massive part of *Adventure Island*'s appeal stems from the fact that famed Japanese artist Susumu Matsushita – who produced countless covers for video game magazine *Famitsu* over the decades – is responsible for the box artwork. So it's odd they didn't lose the green border and focus in on the gloriously detailed imagery instead.

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Tamagotchi

Bandai (1997)
Genre: Simulation

Bandai's Tamagotchi 'virtual pet' keyrings took the world by storm in 1996, selling millions of units and inspiring a wide range of clones. *Game de Hakken!! Tamagotchi* – known simply as *Tamagotchi* in the West – takes the same base concept as the original toy and adds in extra features to elevate it. Extra mini-games are included, as well as contests and background music. The visuals also take a predictable bump when compared to the relatively crude images displayed on the Tamagotchi keyring; if played using the Super Game Boy accessory, the graphics are enhanced even further.

Based on the packaging used on the physical Tamagotchi 'virtual pet' keyrings, the artwork for *Tamagotchi* on the Game Boy is wilfully crude in order to be consistent with the wider range of toys. The cheery, crayon-drawn panels are identical to those on other Tamagotchi products, which will have made it more recognisable to prospective customers.

Tecmo Bowl GB

テクモボウルGB

Tecmo (1991)
Genre: Sports

Before EA's *Madden* came along and dominated the world of American football games, titles like *Tecmo Bowl* provided players with accessible gridiron action in both the arcade and at home. The NES version is considered to be a classic sports title, despite its advanced years, and was converted to the Game Boy by North American company Sculptured Software, which later found fame after porting *Mortal Kombat* and its sequel to the SNES. While it's hardly the ideal platform for a densely-packed game of American football, the Game Boy port is nonetheless well-respected by dedicated fans.

Tecmo Bowl GB is one of those rare instances where the cover artwork is the same across regions and systems. The photo of a particularly mean player was used on the NES and Game Boy editions; even in Japan, this image remains in place.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

DMG-NTJ

ティーンエージ ミュータント ニンジャ タートルズ

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES®

KONAMI

Nintendo GAME BOY™
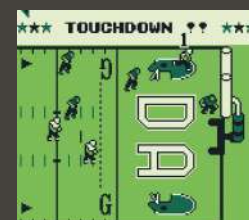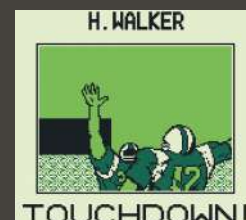
ティーンエージ ミュータント ニンジャ タートルズ

Konami (1990)
Genre: Action

Created in the '80s by Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles started life as an underground cult comic hit before going mainstream with a cartoon show, toy line and Hollywood movie series. Konami was fortunate enough to secure the video game rights to the characters, and would turn out some stellar arcade titles as well as a best-selling NES release. This is the first of three monochrome Game Boy outings, and was known as *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Fall of the Foot Clan* in the West. The large sprites and engaging side-scrolling action make this an enjoyable romp, even by modern standards.

The cover art is borrowed from the Archie Comics adaptation of the live-action 1990 *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* movie and was drawn and coloured by Kevin Eastman himself. The same image was also used for the Western version of the game, albeit with a different background.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II:
Back from the Sewers

Konami (1991)
Genre: Action

While the side-scrolling action remains largely unchanged from *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Fall of the Foot Clan*, Konami cranks everything else up a notch in this sequel. This time, each turtle plays slightly differently, and they all look a lot closer to their TV show counterparts. There's a little more variety in the gameplay, too, and it's possible to rescue captured turtles when you lose a life. Konami also made a greater effort to tie the game into the events of the show, including a wide range of enemies, such as Baxter Stockman, General Traag and Granitor The Stone Warrior.

Inked by comic book artist Steve Lavigne, the four heroes are shown entering a sewer on the game's cover, as if to reinforce the game's subtitle – which, incidentally, is given more real estate on the game's box than the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* logo itself.

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Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III:
Radical Rescue

Konami (1993)
Genre: Action

This is the third and final Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles game on the Game Boy, and it ranks as the most ambitious. Instead of the typical level-by-level side-scrolling approach seen in the first two outings, this third game adopts a 'Metroidvania' design, which sees the player control Michelangelo, who is tasked with rescuing his brothers from the clutches of the evil Shredder. Once liberated, each Turtle can use his unique ability to reach the conclusion of the adventure; these range from the ability to levitate to entering small passageways the other turtles cannot reach. Boss characters also block your way, requiring special tactics to defeat.

In contrast to the Japanese artwork for the game – which shows our half-shelled heroes deep in discussion about what step to take next – the Western release boasts a darker, more mature illustration by Tom Dubois (who did many other Konami covers, such as *Contra 3*, *Axelay* and *Castlevania IV*), portraying a rather irate Leonardo bursting through a wall.

Teke Teke! Asmik-Kun World

てけてけ!
アスミッくんワールド

Asmik (1989)
Genre: Action

Part of the same genre that includes the likes of *Lode Runner* and *Space Panic*, *Teke Teke! Asmik-Kun World* sees the player controlling the pink dinosaur (and Asmik mascot) Asmik-Kun, who must climb a tower by negotiating a bunch of maze-like levels, while trapping enemies in holes and collecting various items. A total of 32 stages are included, although it's necessary to play through them again in reverse order once you reach the top of the tower. The game launched in North America in 1990 under the title *Boomer's Adventure in ASMIK World*, but the subsequent sequel never made it out of Japan.

Asmik-Kun and a selection of stunned enemies form the basis for the game's cover, continuing a popular Japanese trend of the era for creating box artwork in physical form, using either Plasticine or clay. The end result is funny, charming and distinctive – which is just what you need amid a sea of similar-looking games on shop shelves.

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Tenchi o Kurau

天地を喰らう

Capcom (1994)
Genre: RPG

Based on the manga of the same name – which, in turn, takes inspiration from the classic Chinese novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* – *Tenchi o Kurau* (The Devouring of Heaven and Earth) is a Final Fantasy-style RPG with a strong focus on tactical battles between warring generals. A Famicom version with the same name exists, but this Game Boy port – handled by Japanese studio Sun L, rather than an internal Capcom team – is an entirely different game that merely uses the same basic role-playing setup, dropping the five-on-five battles for more simplistic three-on-three encounters. A Western release never happened, despite the Famicom original getting ported to the NES as *Destiny of an Emperor* in 1990.

The artwork of Hiroshi Motomiya – creator of the original *Tenchi o Kurau* manga from the '80s – adorns the cover for this game. This manga ran between 1983 and 1984 in Japan's *Weekly Shōnen Jump* and inspired other games from Capcom, including a Super Famicom instalment in 1995.

Tenjin Kaisen

天神怪戦

Meldac (1990)
Genre: Scrolling shooter

Despite its historical setting, this isn't an RPG or an action-adventure, but rather a force-scrolling horizontal shooter quite unlike any other example of the genre. Shogun Tokugawa, fearful for his kingdom's safety, decides to hire a group of mercenaries armed with different attributes, and march them across the landscape to take out the forces of the sinister Lord of Darkness. The mercenaries act like a spaceship in your typical shooter, albeit one which can change its formation to better tackle incoming hazards. Despite its overtly Japanese tone, *Tenjin Kaisen* received a Western localisation under the title *Mercenary Force*.

This possibly ranks as the most stripped-back of Japanese Game Boy covers, consisting of just the game's title and an ornate image of a fish, plus the usual logos and catalogue number. Despite its simplistic nature, *Tenjin Kaisen*'s cover is undeniably classy and evocative.

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Tennis

テニス

Nintendo (1989)
Genre: Sports

Like fellow sports title *Baseball*, *Tennis* on the Game Boy is loosely based on the NES/Famicom release of the same name, which launched in 1984 in Japan. The visuals are noticeably more impressive, despite the monochrome display, but by modern standards, it remains a cute, if rather crude, replication of the sport, with limited scope for tactical play and a rather cheap AI opponent. Thankfully, the responsive controls and enjoyable two-player link-up mode make up for its shortcomings. As was the case in *Baseball*, Mario has a cameo in this title; he sits in the umpire's chair, passing judgement as the match progresses.

The Japanese cover for *Tennis* paints a dramatic scene – slightly at odds with the rather sedate nature of the game itself – with a John McEnroe-style player smashing the ball past his opponent. The Western version has cuter-looking players, as well as Mario sat in the umpire's chair.

314
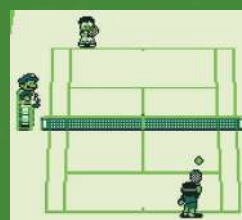
Terminator 2:
Judgment Day

LJN (1992)
Genre: Action

Not to be confused with the arcade light gun game, which was also ported to home consoles under the title *T2: The Arcade Game*, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* is a 2D action platformer based on the events seen in the blockbusting 1991 action movie starring Arnold Schwarzenegger. Developed in the UK by Bits Studios, the game initially places the player in the role of John Connor, before switching over to the T–800 he's reprogrammed and sent to the past to protect his younger self. A sprinkling of mini-games help break up the side-scrolling action.

With its iconic artwork of a robotic Arnold Schwarzenegger and the metallic font used on the title, the cover for *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* doesn't try to do its own thing, but instead leans heavily on the imagery created for the movie itself – which isn't a bad policy when your game is reliant on brand recognition for sales success.
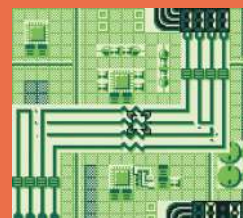
Tetris

テトリス

Nintendo (1989)
Genre: Puzzle

Alexey Pajitnov's *Tetris* is indisputably one of the greatest video games of all time, but it owes a lot to the version released on the Game Boy in 1989. This was very much a reciprocal arrangement; the very definition of 'killer app', *Tetris* was incredibly well-suited to the limitations of Nintendo's system, and turned the console into a global phenomenon. The simple art of dropping blocks and clearing lines has since been recognised as a means of exercising the brain and coping with stress, and what better way could there be to play than on the go, via the Game Boy? For many, this remains the definitive version of Pajitnov's puzzle classic.

In contrast to the Western artwork, which features colourful blocks falling from the sky, the Japanese box artwork adopts a stark red-and-blue colour scheme and features a stylised version of Moscow's iconic Saint Basil's Cathedral, a Russian cultural symbol that leaves the player in no doubt regarding the game's origins.

Tetris Flash

テトリスフラッシュ

Nintendo (1993)
Genre: Puzzle

The insane success of *Tetris* naturally
meant that Nintendo would want to
explore the idea of sequels, but *Tetris
Flash* – known as *Tetris 2* in the West –
failed to live up to the name. While those
familiar tetrominoes continue to fall from
the sky, they are now divided into shaded
blocks and the aim here is to link together
three or more of the same blocks to
remove them from play. It's like a cross
between *Dr. Mario* and *Tetris* that sadly
doesn't quite work – the annoying music
and sluggish controls only make matters
worse. NES and SNES versions also exist;
the Game Boy edition was programmed
by Japanese studio Tose.

Ignoring the Russian theme seen on
the cover of the original Game Boy *Tetris*,
Tetris Flash instead uses a series of colourful
blocks – one of which is flashing in the
middle of the image – to entice gamers
to part with their cash. The abstract image
is colourful but fairly meaningless, and the
cover isn't helped by all the space given
to mundane copyright notices.

Tetris Plus

テトリスプラス

Jaleco (1996)
Genre: Puzzle

While *Tetris* is perhaps the title with which the Game Boy is most closely associated, Nintendo was by no means the only company that leveraged the fame of Alexey Pajitnov's creation. In 1996, Natsume created an arcade edition called *Tetris Plus*, which was published by Jaleco; the latter also ported the game to a wide range of consoles, including the Game Boy. Classic mode plays like traditional *Tetris*, but the game's Puzzle mode is perhaps its most unique offering; the game also boasts battery-based data saving, so your best scores are retained even after the console is turned off – something that was sorely lacking in the original Game Boy version from 1989.

Despite the action being displayed in monochrome, *Tetris Plus*' cover retains the colourful blocks of Natsume's original arcade version. Also present are the two characters introduced in the game: a dumpy, moustached explorer and his nubile assistant.

The Amazing Spider-Man

LJN (1990)
Genre: Action platformer

Developed by UK studio Rare, *The Amazing Spider-Man* is one of the earliest examples of a comic book adaptation on the Game Boy. When Peter Parker's wife Mary Jane is kidnapped, he sets off to track down the villains responsible, trading blows with the likes of Mysterio, Green Goblin, Scorpion, Rhino, Dr. Octopus and Venom during the game's horizontally- and vertically-scrolling 2D stages. The player is alerted to incoming danger by Spider-Man's trademark 'Spider-Sense', which is manifested by a buzzing effect around his head, just like in the original comics – handy when ascending buildings while enemies hurl objects in Spidey's direction.

The importance of the world-famous Spider-Man brand was clearly recognised when it came to designing this cover, which looks as if it has been ripped straight from the front of a Marvel comic book. The instantly-recognisable web-slinger is the sole point of focus, complemented by the bright and striking Spider-Man logo.

The Battle of Olympus

Imagineer (1993)
Genre: Action RPG

Originally developed for the Famicom in 1988 and released on the NES in the West the following year, *The Battle of Olympus* is an action RPG set in ancient Greece, in which players step into the legendary sandals of Orpheus. The Famicom version marked the debut of Japanese studio Infinity, with designer Yukio Horimoto citing *Zelda II: The Adventure of Link* as a key source of inspiration. However, the subsequent Game Boy port – which was exclusive to Europe – was handled by Canadian studio Radical Entertainment; the smaller screen of the Game Boy means that less detail can be displayed at any one time, and the music isn't quite as strong.

The hero Orpheus is nowhere to be seen on the cover of *The Battle of Olympus*; instead, the stage is given to the mythical creatures Ladon, Hydra and Cerberus – just some of the monsters you must overcome in your quest to save your beloved Helene. The nicely-rendered image is very much in the fantasy style that was popular in the '80s and '90s.
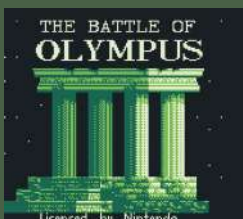
The Bugs Bunny Crazy Castle

Kemco (1990)
Genre: Puzzle

Kemco's Crazy Castle series has quite a convoluted history behind it, to say the least. The Famicom Disk System original was released in Japan as a tie-in to the Hollywood movie *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, before being adapted for release in the West on the NES as *The Bugs Bunny Crazy Castle*. The Game Boy version followed in 1990, but in Japan, it was released under the title *Mickey Mouse*, with an official licence from Disney. In the game, it's impossible to jump, and the player must instead utilise various objects to defeat enemies and locate the exit. Three more handheld sequels would follow over the years.

Using the same cover art as the NES version, this dynamic image shows our buck-toothed hero alongside fellow Loony Toons stars Daffy Duck, Yosemite Sam and Sylvester the Cat. It's an odd composition, seemingly designed to leave white space, which they then had to fill with things like carrots and a random shield. The sequels fare much better in the art stakes.

321
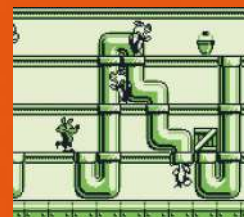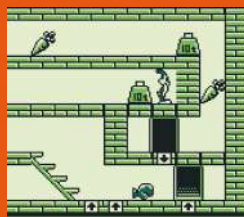
The Humans

GameTek (1992)
Genre: Strategy

Originally conceived by Imagitec Design employee Rodney Humble as a *Lemmings* clone for the Atari Lynx handheld, *The Humans* was the first in a series of puzzle platformers in which players must utilise the skills of their caveman army to meet a series of objectives; these range from slaying a dinosaur or locating a certain tool to simply getting a human to the level's exit. The game spawned several sequels, including *The Humans: Insult to Injury* (1992), *Humans 3: Evolution - Lost in Time* (1995) and *The Humans: Meet the Ancestors!* (2009). Now-defunct publisher GameTek handled this Game Boy port.

In contrast to the goofy home computer cover art used on the Mirage-published version of *The Humans*, the Game Boy edition boasts a lovely piece of cartoon imagery, portraying the rather cute in-game characters squaring up against a host of worried-looking dinosaurs. In a nice touch, two of the humans are seen holding the GameTek logo.

The Incredible Crash Dummies

LJN (1992)
Genre: Action

Designed by David McDonald and Jim Byrne, and manufactured by Tyco Toys, The Incredible Crash Dummies have to rank as one of the oddest action figure lines of the '80s and '90s – which is saying something when you consider we also got Captain Planet *and* Toxic Crusaders around the same time. Intended to alert people to the dangers of not wearing a seatbelt, they spawned a TV show and – of course – a range of video games for the relevant systems of the period, including the Game Boy. Unlike the home console versions, this handheld outing is more stunt-based – with the characters driving cars, skiing and even leaping from tall buildings – and is thereby more in keeping with the animated show.

Slick and Spin – the crash dummies of the title – are shown on the Game Boy cover doing what they do best: crashing and being thrown about. The use of bold colours and checkered graphics really helps the image stand out, while the key message of the brand – buckle up for safety – appears in the top-right corner.

The Kick Boxing
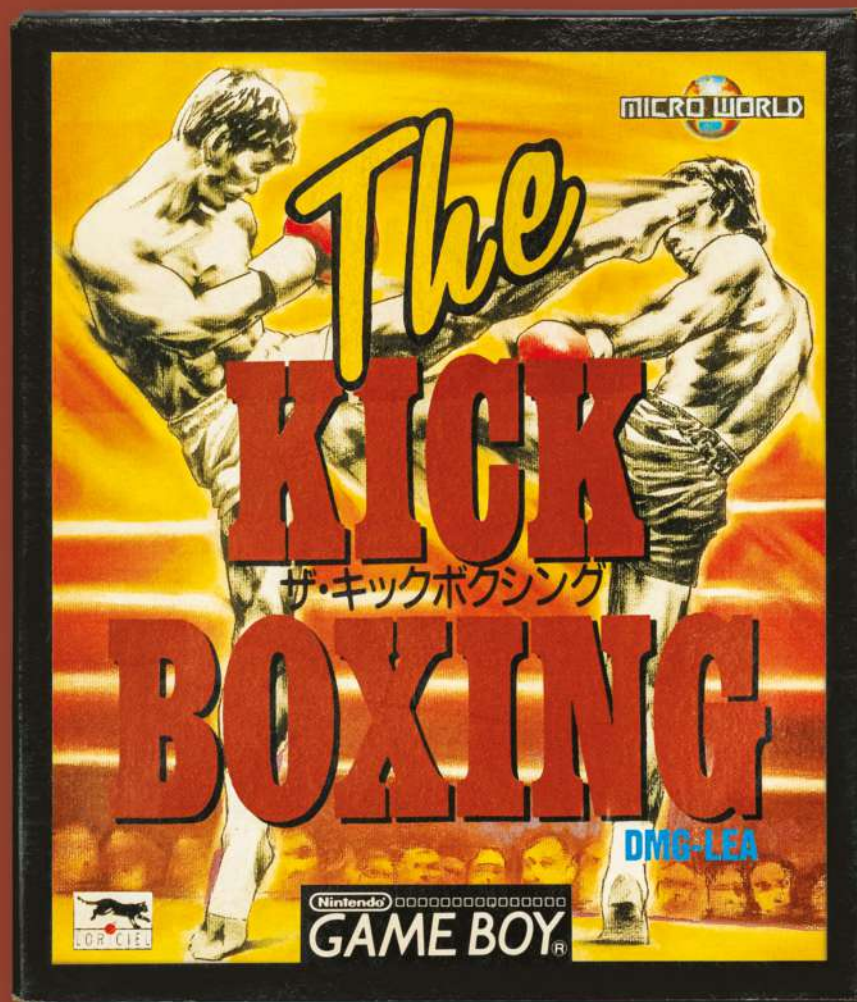
ザ・キックボクシング

Micro World (1992)
Genre: Fighting

Released elsewhere in the world under the titles *André Panza Kick Boxing* and *Best of the Best: Championship Karate*, *The Kick Boxing* places you in the role of a Black Belt kickboxer and was, at the time, praised for the degree of realism it brought to the fighting game genre. In fact, American martial artist and actor Ron Yuan – who has starred in movies such as *Double Dragon*, *Red Dawn* and, most recently, Disney's live-action *Mulan* – stated in a 1994 interview that he felt it was the best fighting game from a "purely technical perspective", despite it not getting much notoriety amid the fame of titles such as *Street Fighter II* and *Mortal Kombat*.

The imagery for *The Kick Boxing* is surprisingly muted, with its monochrome, hand-drawn characters and cosy red and yellow palette. The vibrant artwork which featured on the Western release is way less subtle, but far more effective, at selling the martial arts combat within.

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The Lawnmower Man

SCI (1993)
Genre: Action

Released in 1992, *The Lawnmower Man* movie caused quite a stir, thanks to its virtual reality storyline and ambitious CGI 'cyberspace' sequences. Given the context of the film, it's easy to see why a video game adaptation made sense, but while the CD-ROM editions benefit from interactive movie segments, the Game Boy version is a pretty straightforward action platformer interspersed with 3D VR segments that deliver a surprising degree of immersion, given the humbleness of the hardware involved. The end result is a lot like the movie on which it is based – full of promise but ultimately flawed in execution.

A CG render of Cyber Jobe – the malevolent VR version of Jeff Fahey's character Jobe Smith, the titular Lawnmower Man – grins menacingly from the cover of the Game Boy game. The image is lifted directly from the movie itself, which has since become infamous for its cringe-inducing cybersex segment.
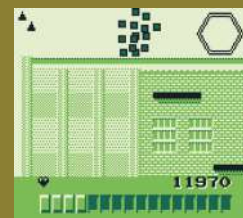
The Legend of Prince Valiant

While this strategy title has Hal Foster's popular comic book hero Prince Valiant on the cover, it's actually based on a totally unassociated game released in North America as *Kingdom Crusade*. Ironically, despite being based on the long-running American comic (the first strip appeared way back in 1937 and it is still in print today), the Prince Valiant licence was not secured for that particular region. The aim is to defeat a rival kingdom in battle by either besting all of their units in real-time action sequences, or capturing all of the available castles on the map. Development was handled by Sculptured Software, while Ocean handled publishing duties.

The popularity of the 1991 *Prince Valiant* cartoon series in Europe could account for the fact that the game was retrofitted with the licence in that territory. The game's cover shows our hero, flanked by Merlin, Arn and Rowanne of Bridgesford. It's an attractive image that will surely have tempted fans of the comic and show. A Hollywood movie arrived in 1997, which was a commercial and critical flop.
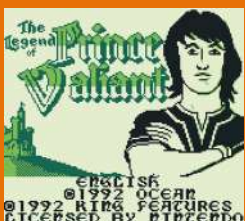
The Mobile Police Patlabor:
Nerawareta Machi 1990

機動警察パトレイバー
狙われた街 1990

Yutaka (1990)
Genre: RPG

One of the most popular anime series of the late '80s and early '90s, *Mobile Police Patlabor* was created by Masami Yūki, Mamoru Oshii, Kazunori Itō, Yutaka Izubuchi and Akemi Takada, operating under the collective name Headgear. The show is set in a future where humankind is reliant on robots for construction (referred to as 'Labors') and uses a police force (Patrol Labors, or 'Patlabors') to make sure these droids aren't used for nefarious purposes. This 1990 adventure takes the form of a rather simplistic RPG, in which the player has to clear the map of rogue robots. Combat is turn-based and boasts detailed sprites based on the designs seen in the manga and anime series.

Showcasing a still from the animated adaptation of Masami Yūki's original manga, the cover for *The Mobile Police Patlabor: Nerawareta Machi 1990* will surely appeal to hardcore mecha fans. The stylish hardware is a fine example of Japanese sci-fi design.
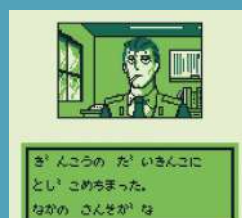
The New Chessmaster
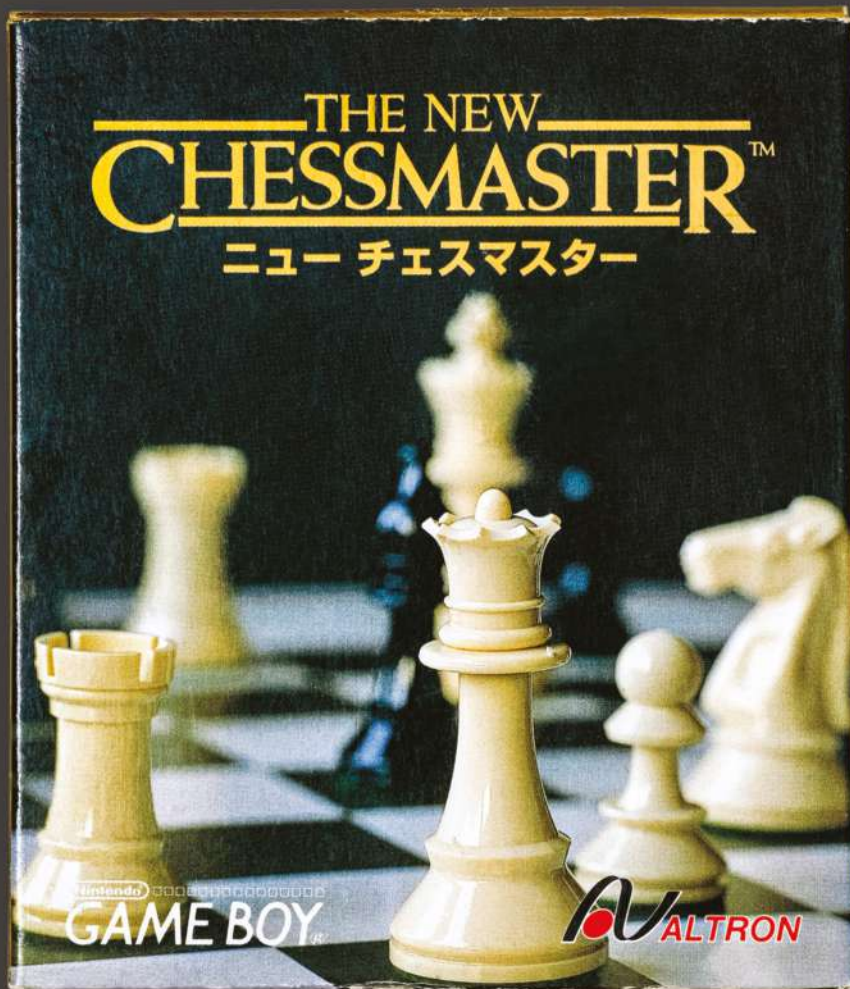
ニューチェスマスター

Altron (1998)
Genre: Board game

The Chessmaster series began in 1986, when Software Toolworks released *The Chessmaster 2000* (the name wasn't date-related, but instead referenced the game's Elo rating of 2000, a method for calculating the relative skill level of players). Based on David Kittinger's chess engine, this updated Game Boy port (a previous version, simply entitled *Chessmaster*, launched a few years earlier) was lauded at the time of release for its smart AI and innovative Teaching Mode, which allows novices to see potential moves they might have missed and thereby improve their overall game. It's also possible to 'undo' moves you later regret.

Rather than use the famous photo of the 'Chessmaster' pondering his next move (played by actor Will Hare, most famous for his brief role as Old Man Peabody in the first *Back to the Future* movie), the Japanese cover for *The New Chessmaster* instead uses a classy photo of chess pieces on a board. In fact, it's almost identical to that used for the Japanese release of 1990's *Chessmaster* on the console.

The Real Ghostbusters

Activision (1993)
Genre: Action platformer

We're not sure you'll find a video game with a more convoluted history behind it than *The Real Ghostbusters*. Developed by Kemco and released in its native Japan as *Mickey Mouse IV: Mahou no Labyrinth*, the game was attached to the Garfield franchise when launched in Europe, while in North America the animated *Real Ghostbusters* series – based on the smash-hit Hollywood movie – was used. In all cases, the basic gameplay is the same: you explore a series of levels from a side-scrolling perspective, collecting items such as stars, keys and bombs on your way to unlocking the exit to the next stage.

A concerned cartoon version of Peter Venkman is the only Ghostbuster featured on the game's cover – which makes sense as he's the only one present in the game, too. Interestingly, the actor who provided Venkman's voice in the series, Lorenzo Music, also voiced Garfield (who appears in the European release of the game) in his animated show. Even more interesting is the fact that Venkman in the movie was played by Bill Murray – who, in 2004, voiced the live-action version of Garfield.

The Simpsons:
Bart & the Beanstalk

Acclaim (1994)
Genre: Action platformer

On paper, the idea of fusing *The Simpsons* with the famous fairy tale of *Jack and the Beanstalk* might seem clever, but this is yet another example of a lucrative licence being squandered on a sub-par game. Bart explores a fantasy world and must use his trusty catapult to dispatch all manner of weird and wonderful enemies. While the visuals are certainly above average for a Game Boy release, the cramped screen and frustrating difficulty make this an exercise in annoyance – even if there are more than a few laughs for truly dedicated Simpsons fans along the way.

While *Bart & The Beanstalk* might be forgettable, the box artwork leaves a more lasting impression. Bart, despite being the hero of the hour, is dwarfed by his father Homer, who assumes the role of the giant in this retelling. The logo is rendered in an 'olde worlde' style which really adds to the piece.

The Simpsons:
Bart vs. the Juggernauts

Acclaim (1992)
Genre: Action platformer

On paper, you can see why it made perfect sense to combine two of the biggest TV shows of the early '90s – *The Simpsons* and *American Gladiators* – in a single game. Developed by Imagineering and released at the height of Simpsons-mania, *Bart vs. the Juggernauts* is made up of several different events, with the player assuming the role of Bart himself. These events range from sports to combat with the titular Juggernauts, but the highlight is arguably Dr. Marvin Monroe's 'Hop, Skip and Fry', which tasks the player with negotiating a tiled floor that randomly becomes electrified.

The vibrant cover for *Bart vs. the Juggernauts* features a determined-looking Bart holding a pugil stick similar to the one made famous by the *American Gladiators* TV show. In the background are two of the Juggernauts, standing atop cooling towers in a sea of radioactive waste – no doubt a reference to Mr. Burns' pollution-spewing power plant.

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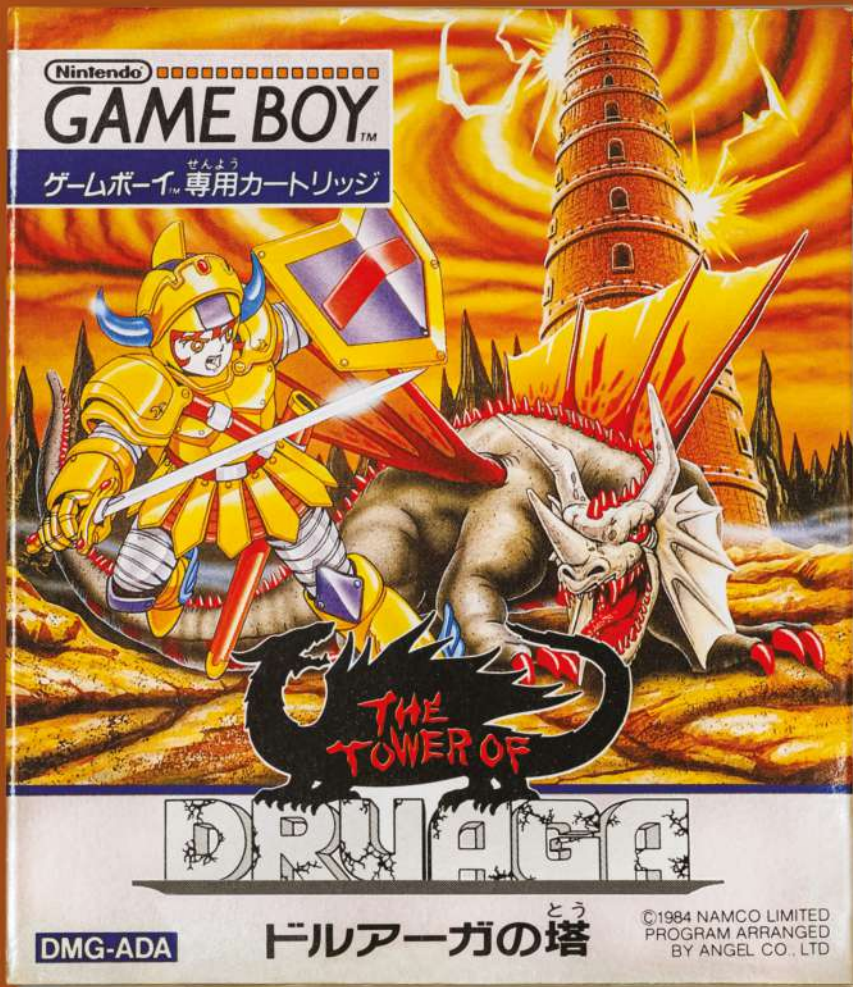
The Tower of Druaga

ドルアーガの塔

Namco (1990)
Genre: Action RPG

Inspired by tabletop role-playing games like *Dungeons & Dragons*, Masanobu Endo's *Tower of Druaga* is a seminal release in the history of Japanese action adventures. While it began life in arcades in 1984, it spawned a series that would find a receptive audience in home formats. Endo's desire was for players to share hints and secrets with one another, which results in some elements of the game being almost unfathomable unless you have the right information. The Game Boy port loses some visual detail, but adds a life bar, cut-scenes and all-new boss encounters that appear every ten stages.

The heroic, gold-armoured protagonist Gilgamesh is shown facing off against a monstrous dragon, the titular 60-floor tower in the background. Like so many of Namco's covers from this period, it's a solid piece of illustration work – a tad clichéd perhaps, but bright, bold and atmospheric.

Tiny Toon Adventures:
Babs' Big Break

Konami (1992)
Genre: Action platformer

Babs Bunny wants nothing more than to be a movie star, but the cruel Montana Max has decided to put a stop to those dreams – and there's nothing left but for Buster Bunny, Plucky Duck and Hamton J. Pig to put an end to his nefarious scheme and ensure that Babs gets her name in lights. As one of the first games based on the *Tiny Toon Adventures* animated series, you might assume that low expectations are in order – but this is one of the finest 2D platformers available on the Game Boy, with tight controls, excellent visuals and great music. The way you can alternate between the three main characters, as well as call upon other famous Tiny Toons, gives the game some welcome variety. Konami produced equally amazing games based on the property for the SNES and Mega Drive.

The box cover wisely uses the *Tiny Toon Adventures* logo and circular rainbow graphic for instant brand recognition. The image focuses solely on Babs and Buster, even though Plucky Duck and Hamton J. Pig are also playable characters.

Titus the Fox

Titus (1993)
Genre: Action platformer

Originally released on personal computers in France as *Lagaf': Les Aventures de Moktar — Vol 1: La Zoubida* (featuring French comedian Lagaf' as the hero), this 2D platformer was reskinned as *Titus The Fox* for release in the rest of the world, and tasks the player with shepherding the titular omnivorous mammal through a series of Arabian-themed stages, hurling objects at enemies to keep them at bay. The title was later ported to the Game Boy Color with improved visuals, but the ability to throw enemies was removed.

Titus – a character based on the logo of developer and publisher Titus Games – has all the hallmarks of an early '90s cartoon mascot. He's an animal, he looks cool and he sports a permanent smile on his face. However, the Arabian theme of the cover artwork betrays the game's origins as a vehicle to promote the Lagaf' novelty song *La Zoubida*, which told the story of a young North African girl and claimed the top of the French charts for three months in 1991.

Tokio Senki:
Eiyuu Retsuden

トキオ戦鬼 〜英雄列伝〜

Human [1992]
Genre: Strategy

Tokio Senki: Eiyuu Retsuden is one of the many slow-paced strategy titles that were produced for the Japanese Game Boy market, no doubt influenced by the fact that the methodical gameplay suited the console's small and somewhat blur-prone LCD display. Packed with plenty of Japanese text that makes it hard to digest for Western players who don't know the language, *Tokio Senki: Eiyuu Retsuden* takes place in a post-apocalyptic setting where various armies clash to achieve dominance over a ruined world. Navigating the map – which is filled with important, interconnected locations you'll need to contest – you must marshall your forces effectively to come out on top.

Despite the downbeat nature of the strategy action contained within, *Tokio Senki: Eiyuu Retsuden*'s cover is relatively colourful and cartoon-like in tone, with its cast of battle-hardened warriors looking somewhat less intimidating than your typical *Mad Max*-style warriors.

Tokyo Disneyland:
Fantasy Tour

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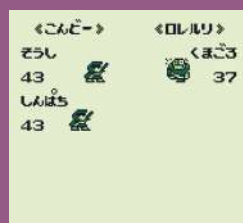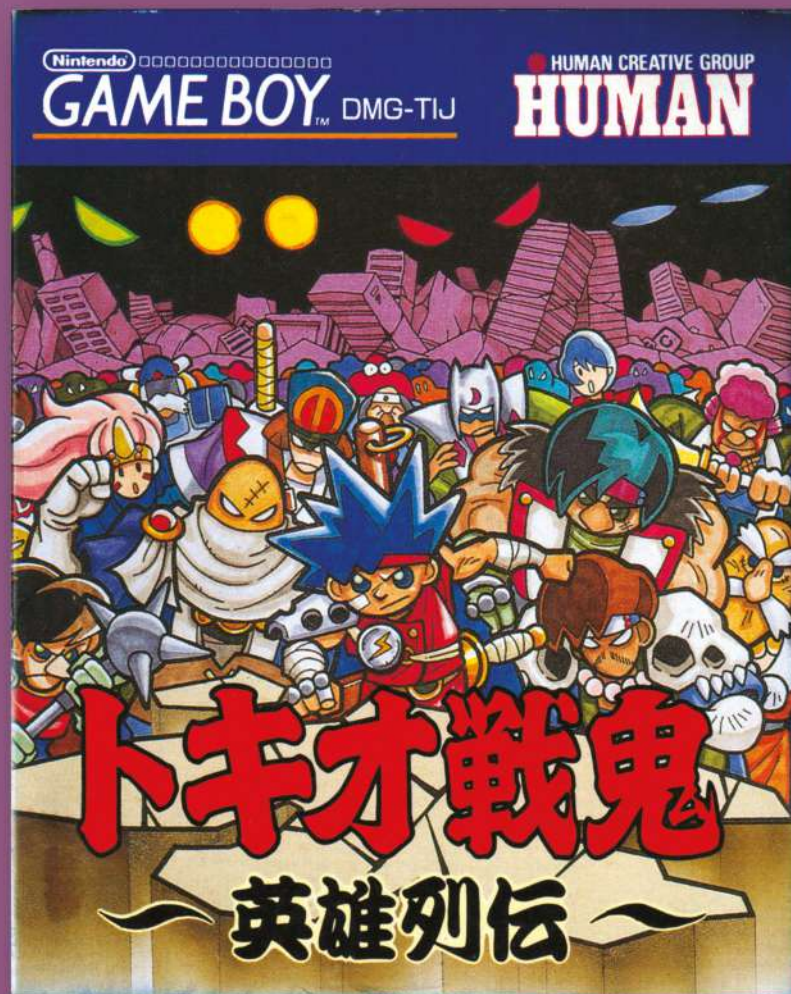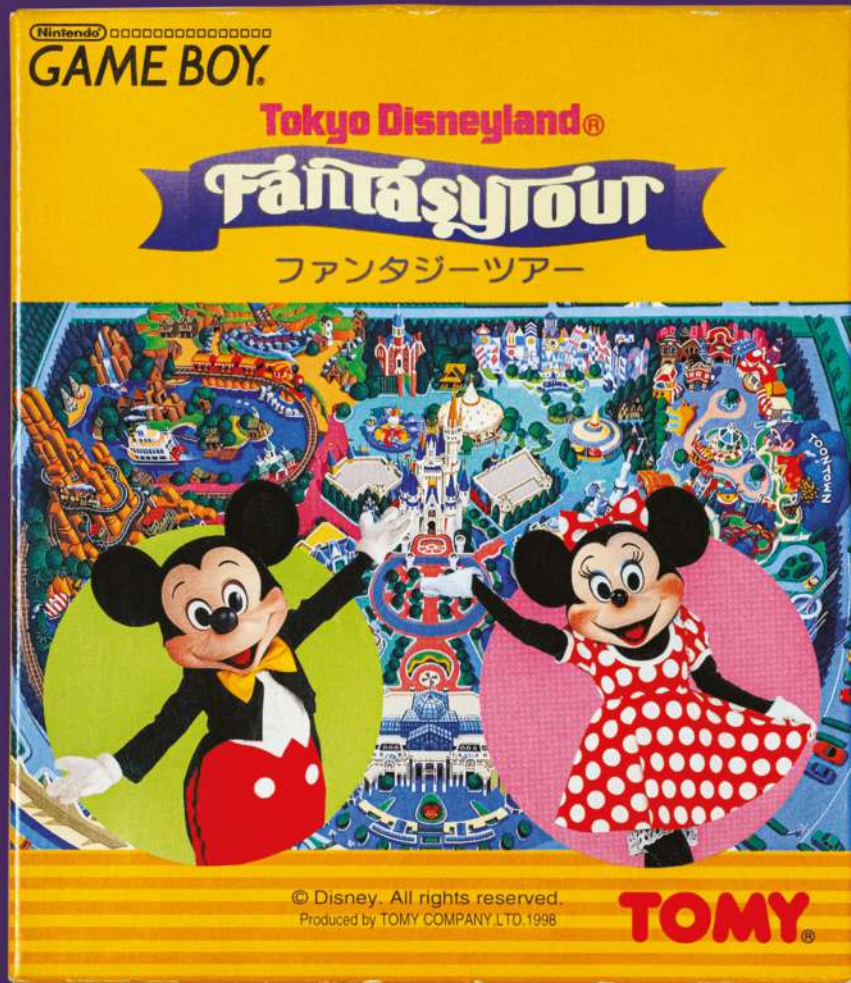
**東京ディズニーランド
ファンタジーツアー**

**Tomy (1998)
Genre: Action**

A title that was intended to promote the lavish Disneyland Tokyo resort in Japan, this collection of addictive mini-games – each based on a different ride from the park, including famous names such as Pirates of the Caribbean, Splash Mountain, Haunted Mansion and Goofy's Bounce House – was developed by famed Japanese studio Tose and published by Tomy. In total, 15 attractions are on offer, with Mickey, Minnie and Goofy hosting five each. Needless to say, the title was never released outside of Japan; it was presumably created to increase awareness of the attraction, rather than to score global fame with players.

The internationally famous Mickey and Minnie are shown in photographic form on the cover of *Tokyo Disneyland: Fantasy Tour*, superimposed over a painting showing the magical theme park in its entirety. It resembles the cover of a theme park brochure, as befits its purpose.
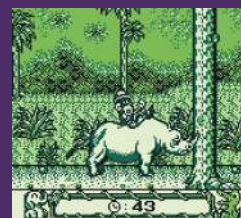
Top Ranking Tennis

Nintendo (1993)
Genre: Sports

Nintendo's early attempt at replicating the sport of tennis was a 1989 launch release with basic gameplay and crude visuals, but – with the assistance of developer Pax Softnica – it produced a more authentic example in the shape of 1993's *Top Ranking Tennis*. The presentation is massively improved, thanks to well-animated sprites and even some sampled speech, while the challenge of scaling the rankings to become the world's number one tennis player means there's plenty of longevity on offer. Up to four players can link up for competitive play using the appropriate adapter, which further extends the game's appeal.

Just as the core game looks to set itself apart from the original Game Boy *Tennis* title, the cover artwork exudes a maturity that presumably made it more appealing to older players. From the bouncing-ball logo to the motion-blurred action, it's a lively, exciting image full of movement.

Toy Story

As Pixar's first full-length feature film, *Toy Story* holds a special place in cinematic history, but the Game Boy adaptation – released in 1995 alongside versions for the Mega Drive, SNES and PC – is remembered less kindly. Coded by Tiertex Design Studios and published by Black Pearl Software, it attempts to recreate the gameplay seen in the superior 16-bit versions, with little success. You assume the role of Woody, as he searches for Buzz, and it's possible to ride on Rex the dinosaur and fly through the air in Buzz's grasp at certain points. While the side-scrolling gameplay isn't as successful as it perhaps could have been, the animation is nonetheless very impressive for a Game Boy game, and the characters are all instantly recognisable.

Using CG assets lifted straight from the movie, the cover for Toy Story is faithful to the source material, and it's easy to imagine how it convinced many a Game Boy-owning fan to part with their cash back in the '90s. The now world-famous logo helps to draw the attention, too.

True Lies

LJN (1995)
Genre: Action

Following the box office bomb that was *Last Action Hero*, Arnold Schwarzenegger needed a sizable hit to prove that he still had what it took to get bums on seats, and this was emphatically provided by the 1994 James Cameron action-comedy *True Lies*. A video game adaptation was inevitable, and LJN duly stepped in to acquire the rights. Adopting a top-down perspective, it sees you controlling Schwarzenegger's Harry Tasker through a series of locations, fulfilling various objectives. While the Game Boy port is simplified compared to the other versions, it still packs in an impressive amount of content.

The cover for *True Lies* is a composite image, which uses the poster for the movie alongside multiple shots from the film. It's a frantic and slightly awkward arrangement that proves that less is often more when it comes to cover design. However, the film licence and Arnie's face will no doubt have shifted a few copies back in the day.
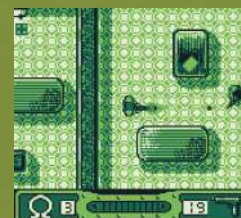
Trump Boy

トランプボーイ

Pack-In-Video (1990)
Genre: Card game

Video games based on card games like Poker are pretty common on the Game Boy – at least in Japan – and *Trump Boy* is one of the earliest examples. It is comprised of three sub-games – Millionaire, Speed and Nervous Breakdown – and boasts a link cable option, which enables you to rope in a second participant, assuming they're willing to play and also happen to own a copy of the game. Despite the Millionaire game being between five competitors, the other three players will always be computer-controlled, as *Trump Boy* pre-dates the Game Boy's four-player link cable adapter.

With his grinning face and typically '90s fashion sense, the cheery character shown on the cover of *Trump Boy* certainly does a good job of making the package look attractive, but the actual game itself is totally devoid of characterisation; you're basically staring at cards the entire time.
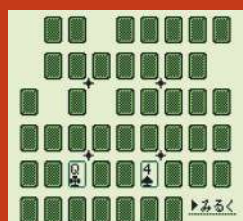
Trump Collection GB

トランプコレクションGB

Bottom Up (1997)
Genre: Card game

Like the similar-sounding *Trump Boy*, *Trump Collection GB* is a virtual recreation of a series of card games and includes two-player support if you happen to own a Game Boy link cable – and you also happen to know someone else with a copy of the game who is willing to take you on. A relatively late release for the console, *Trump Collection GB* hit Japanese store shelves in 1997 and never saw a release worldwide. It's one of many similar games launched on the platform which, unsurprisingly, remained exclusive to their native Japan. This is something of a shame, as the lively character artwork included within does a lot to make proceedings more accessible and appealing.

A hand of cards forms the basis for *Trump Collection GB*'s simplistic cover, with traditional King, Queen and Jack sitting alongside a cartoon cat – one of the many characters which add some welcome variety to the game's otherwise plain visuals.
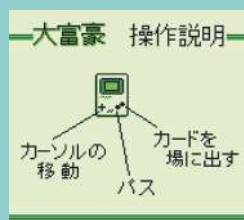
Tumblepop
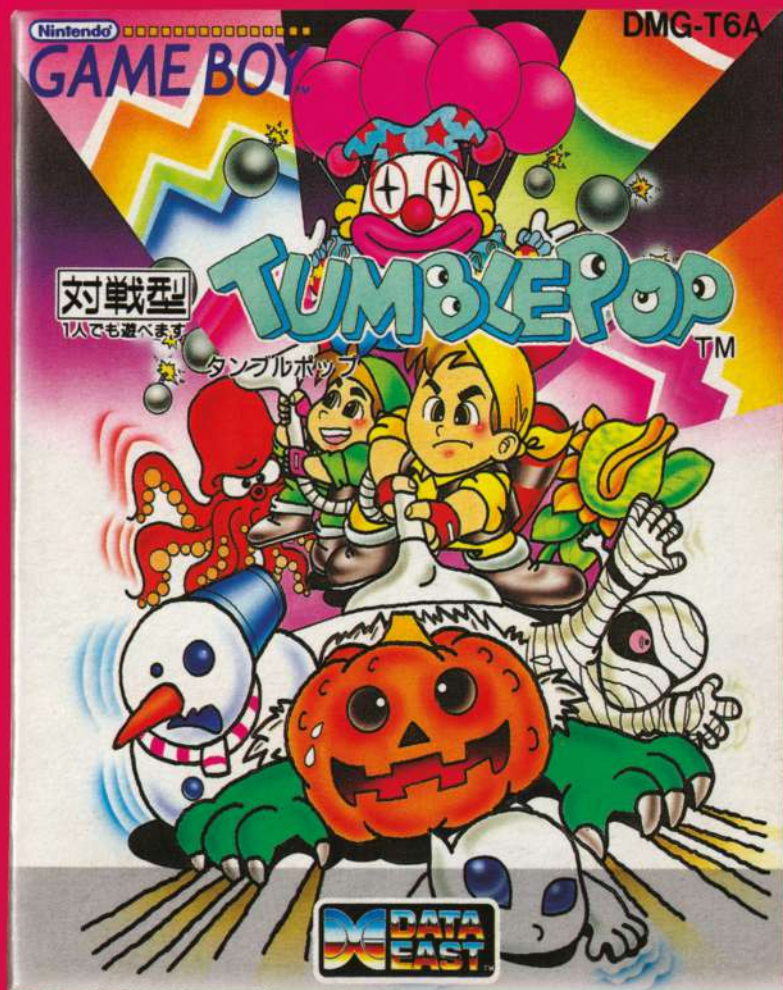
タンブルポップ

Data East (1992)
Genre: Action

This curious mix of Mitchell Corp's *Pang* and Taito's *Bubble Bobble* graced arcades in 1991, where it failed to make quite the same impact as those two notable titles. Assuming the role of a ghost-busting hero with a vacuum cleaner attached to their back (something Nintendo would later imitate with the first *Luigi's Mansion* game a decade later), a player can suck up ghosts and spit them back at other enemies to remove them from play. The Game Boy port adds a world map and handy password save system, as well as the ability to purchase items from an in-game shop to improve your chances of survival.

Using the same artwork as seen on the arcade version's promotional material, *Tumblepop* boasts a suitably fun and lively cover. Despite the quality of the art, it was removed from the Western release in favour of some gaudy airbrushed artwork, with far less character and impact.
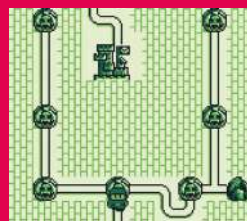
Turok:
Bionosaurs no Tatakai

テュロック
〜バイオノザウルスの戦い〜

Starfish (1998)
Genre: Action

Based on the cult American comic book series starring a time-travelling Native American warrior who happens to hunt dinosaurs, *Turok: Bionosaurs no Tatakai* was released around the same time as the acclaimed first-person shooter *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* on the Nintendo 64 home console. While the N64 version impressed with its immersive perspective, amazing weapons and intense 3D visuals, this Game Boy outing was predictably a more sedate affair; the 2D viewpoint means it's less striking technically, but the focus on exploration remains, which means it mimics its home console sibling to a degree. The Japanese version was released several months after the North American launch.

While the heroic Turok graces the cover of the Western release, he's given no such courtesy on the Japanese edition, which instead focuses on one of his dinosaur enemies. The creature is wonderfully drawn in a loose, comic book style, complete with sinister red eyes. A supremely stylish Turok logo rounds off this cracking cover.

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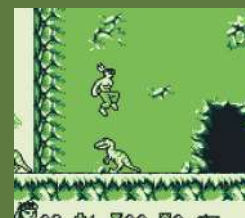
TWIN

TWIN

Athena (1992)
Genre: RPG

This Japan-exclusive RPG takes inspiration from a wide range of sources; it has the top-down overworld and dungeon sections and turn-based combat of the Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest franchises – the two biggest names in role-playing games at the time – as well as side-scrolling platform segments lifted from *Zelda II: The Adventure of Link*. Never released in the West, *TWIN* is one of many JRPGs which arrived perhaps just a few years too soon to be seriously considered for a Western release; as the '90s progressed, the genre became much more popular outside of Japan.

TWIN boasts cover artwork that aspires to be every bit as epic as the quest contained within; the enigmatic image of four glowing figures contemplating an illuminated orb is beautifully realised. Despite being a Japanese release – and an exclusive one at that – the cover bears no Japanese text whatsoever.
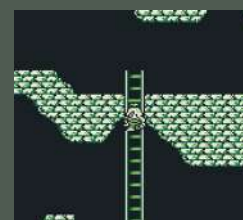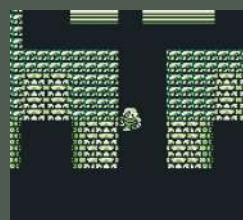
TwinBee Da!!

ツインビーだ!!

Konami (1990)
Genre: Scrolling shooter

A handheld sequel to the original 1985 arcade release *TwinBee*, this shoot 'em up sees you controlling either TwinBee or WinBee over six vertically-scrolling stages packed with cute enemies. An updated version of the same game was included in *Konami GB Collection Vol. 2*, which boasts Super Game Boy support, while the Western version was confusingly retitled *Pop'n TwinBee*, presumably to bring it into line with the SNES game of the same name. *TwinBee Da!!* would later receive a full remake by Japanese emulation specialists M2 for the PlayStation Portable release *TwinBee Portable*.

TwinBee and WinBee – the heroic androids of the series – are the stars of this bold artwork, their creator Dr. Cinnamon looking on wistfully. The pastel-hued bells in the background are a recurring motif in the TwinBee franchise, while the chromatic logo adds a lovely splash of colour to proceedings.

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Uchuu-Senkan Yamato

宇宙戦艦ヤマト

Interbec (1992)
Genre: Action

Penned by Yoshinobu Nishizaki and directed by famed artist Leiji Matsumoto, *Uchuu-Senkan Yamato* is a classic of Japanese animation that continues to receive new instalments to this day. The original 1974 series sees humankind on the brink of extinction due to alien attack; it places its trust in the mighty space battleship 'Yamato', an advanced warship built inside the remains of the real-life World War II ship. The Game Boy adaptation takes the form of a turn-based strategy title; the basic visuals and rather tinny music make it hard to enjoy, but anime fans will appreciate it all the same.

The cover lifts an image directly from the famous anime series, showing the powerful craft – humanity's last hope – drifting majestically through the cosmos. The shape of the original 'Yamato' battleship is clear to see, but the massive Wave Motion Gun at the front – the ship's most potent weapon – gives it a futuristic appearance. The series was released in the West under the title *Star Blazers*.

Universal Soldier

Accolade (1992)
Genre: Action platformer

While this action platformer claims to be associated with the 1992 Jean-Claude Van Damme movie *Universal Soldier*, it is in fact built on the foundations of *Turrican II: The Final Fight*, which found critical and commercial fame on the likes of the C64 and Commodore Amiga. Publisher Accolade – which held the console rights to the Turrican series – enlisted British developer The Code Monkeys to transform *Turrican II* into *Universal Soldier*; many of the sprites were changed, and new levels based on scenes from the film replaced the three scrolling shooter sections, but the bulk of the game is identical. You play as reanimated super-soldier Luc Deveraux (Van Damme) as he tries to track down and subdue his former ally, Andrew Scott (Dolph Lundgren).

Unsurprisingly, the cover image is lifted directly from the original movie poster, showing Van Damme (foreground) and Lundgren (background). The stark, three-colour scheme is striking, and – purely coincidentally – fits perfectly with the Game Boy's Western brand palette. Accolade's marketing team probably couldn't believe their luck.

UNO 2 Small World

UNO2 スモールワールド

Tomy (1995)
Genre: Card game

Created by Ohio resident Merle Robbins in 1971, *UNO* involves using a 108-card deck to score 500 points before your fellow players, a feat which is achieved by being the first to play all of your own cards and subsequently scoring points for the cards still held by your rivals. Blessed with Super Game Boy support, *UNO 2 Small World* adds in a bunch of player characters to give the title some much-needed personality. A four-player link-up feature means the social element of the original card game is neatly retained.

As the name suggests, *UNO 2 Small World* has a global feel, with each character representing a nation or country – although some of the regional stereotypes might seem a little on the nose to a modern audience. Outside of the illustrations, the cover is light on other visual elements, relying instead on brand awareness of the card game itself.

VS Battler

VSバトラー

Use Co. (1990)
Genre: Action

First-person action titles were quite rare on the Game Boy, and with good reason – the system simply wasn't built with that kind of gameplay in mind. That didn't stop some brave developers from adopting the perspective, however, although not all of these ventures were successful. *VS Battler* – released as *Bionic Battler* in the West – is one such failed experiment. The ranged combat is sluggish, so you're forced to rely on your robot suit's fists – which means you've just as much chance of getting hit as your enemy. A noble attempt to broaden the Game Boy library, but one that ultimately doesn't succeed.

While *VS Battler* might not function all that effectively as a piece of entertainment, it does at least feature some attractive artwork on its cover. Japan loves hulking mechs, and these cutely curvaceous creations don't disappoint. In contrast, the North American cover for *Bionic Battler* is a truly awful example of game box art.

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Wario Land:
Super Mario Land 3

Nintendo (1993)
Genre: Action platformer

While it would have been easy for Nintendo to stick to the rules with its third Super Mario Land outing on the Game Boy, the company took the brave decision to supplant the heroic plumber with his nemesis, Wario – the same Wario who caused so much trouble in *Super Mario Land 2*. The change of protagonist also resulted in a shift in gameplay focus – Wario is capable of jumping or barging enemies and then using them as projectiles, and he can also equip helmets to increase his powers. *Wario Land* also subverts conventions by using coins as actual currency, to open doors and trigger checkpoints in each stage.

Yoichi Kotabe returns for the third Super Mario Land cover, even if Mario himself is nowhere to be seen (he does, however, have a small cameo during the game's ending). The ever-grinning Wario and members of the Brown Sugar Pirate gang star in this beautifully rendered artwork, packed with comic detail and rich colours.

Wave Race

Nintendo (1994)
Genre: Action platformer

While the N64 sequel is perhaps the most famous game to bear the Wave Race name, this 1992 Game Boy outing marks the official debut of a franchise that would also make it onto the GameCube in the form of *Wave Race: Blue Storm*. The handheld original adopts a top-down perspective for its high-speed, water-based racing action, and allows four players to race competitively with the adapter accessory. Despite being developed in Japan by Nintendo EAD and Pax Softnica, *Wave Race* was only ever released in North America and Europe.

Some game covers manage to perfectly encapsulate the look of the period in which they were released, and the box art for *Wave Race* is one such example. From the airbrushed main image to the yellow, pink and blue colour scheme, this is unmistakably a cover from the early '90s. Despite this, it's an effective advert for the game and still looks striking even by modern standards.

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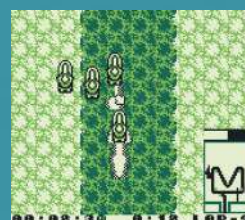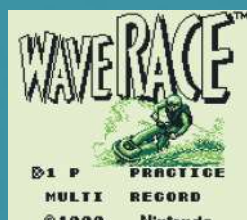
Wedding Peach:
Jamapii Panic

ウェディングピーチ
〜じゃ魔ピーパニック〜

KSS (1995)
Genre: Puzzle

This Japanese exclusive is based on a popular manga and anime series of the period. *Wedding Peach: Jamapii Panic* takes its name and characters from the series written by Sukehiro Tomita and illustrated by Nao Yazawa, which was originally printed in Shogakukan's *Ciao* magazine between 1994 and 1996. The puzzle-based gameplay focuses on flipping tiles on a grid while avoiding the unwanted attention of various enemies. You assume the role of the adorable Jamapii, a small devil who was purified by Momoko Hanasaki, the heroine of the series; Jamapii subsequently becomes her loyal servant.

The adorable Jamapii is very much the focal point of the cover, with the female characters relegated to the corner of the box. The vibrant chequerboard background is a nod to the tile-based game mechanic, while adding blocks of colour. It's borderline garish, but somehow manages to work.
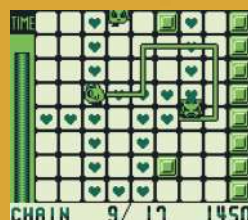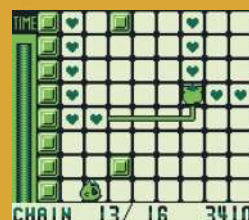
Wizardry Gaiden 1:
The First Episode: Suffering of the Queen

ウィザードリィ外伝I
女王の受難

ASCII (1991)
Genre: RPG

Created by Andrew C. Greenberg and Robert Woodhead while they were still students at Cornell University, *Wizardry* would evolve into one of the most famous Western RPGs of the '80s, spawning numerous sequels across both computers and consoles. Ironically, while the series has faded from view in the West, it remains popular in Japan to this day, and a number of Japanese-made spin-offs have appeared over the years. This Game Boy outing was one of the first, appearing towards the close of 1991; it neatly condenses the appeal of the original games for handheld consumption and features some seriously impressive full-screen, first-person dungeon sections. Sadly, no Western launch ever took place.

The cover retains the Western design sensibilities of the series; it's a classy, uncluttered image which is given additional appeal thanks to the use of metallic foil blocking on both the main art and the classic Wizardry series logo.

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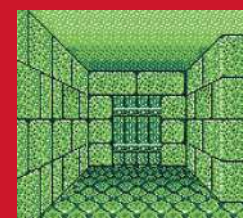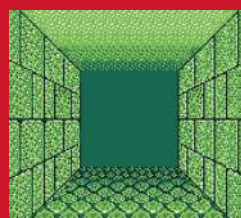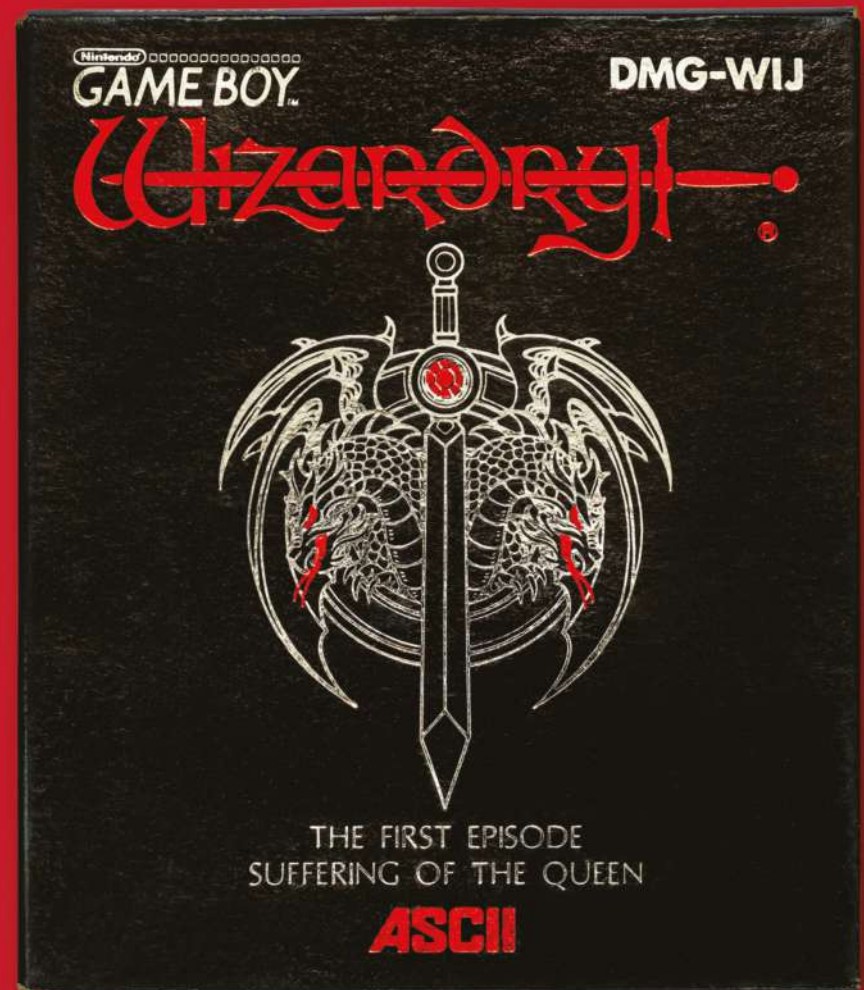
Wizards & Warriors X:
The Fortress of Fear

Acclaim (1990)
Genre: Action platformer

Developed by UK studio Rare, *Wizards & Warriors X: The Fortress of Fear* is the third game in the Wizards & Warriors series, despite the 'X' featured in the title – this would cause considerable confusion at the time of release, as some reviewers assumed they had somehow missed the subsequent chapters between 1989's *Ironsword: Wizards & Warriors II* and this 1990 Game Boy outing. The player once again assumes the role of the noble Kuros as he journeys out to conquer the titular Fortress of Fear, the stronghold of his mortal enemy, the dark wizard Malkil. Using your trusty sword, you must defeat various enemies while negotiating some seriously demanding stages, packed with hazards and bottomless pits.

While the in-game sprite for Kuros is shown in a full suit of armour in all of the Wizards & Warriors games, the covers of all three titles in the series depict him bare-chested and Conan-like, with long flowing hair and muscles to spare. The rather amateur artwork for *Fortress of Fear* isn't a patch on that used for the original NES outing.
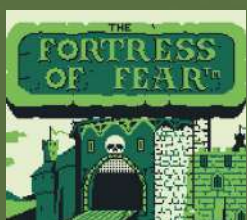
Wordtris

Spectrum HoloByte (1992)
Genre: Puzzle

A word-based successor to *Tetris*, *Wordtris* was designed by Sergei Utkin, Vyacheslav Tsoy and Armen Sarkissian, the latter of whom happens to be the President of Armenia at the time of writing. The aim is to construct words of three letters or more using the word tiles that drop from the top of the screen, very much like the blocks in *Tetris*. Doing so removes the tiles from the playfield, giving you valuable breathing room. While it gained positive reviews at the time, *Wordtris* – like fellow off-shoots *Hatris* and *Welltris* – didn't come close to matching the popularity of the original Russian puzzler; in truth, few console puzzle games ever have.

The cover for *Wordtris* is thematically very similar to that of *Tetris*, with the same falling-block motif. The logo even sports the Cyrillic 'R' that was used on many of the home computer versions of *Tetris*. The imagery is competent enough, given the abstract nature of the puzzle gameplay, which has no doubt confounded many artists over the years.

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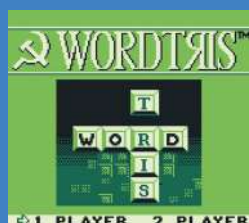
World Ice Hockey
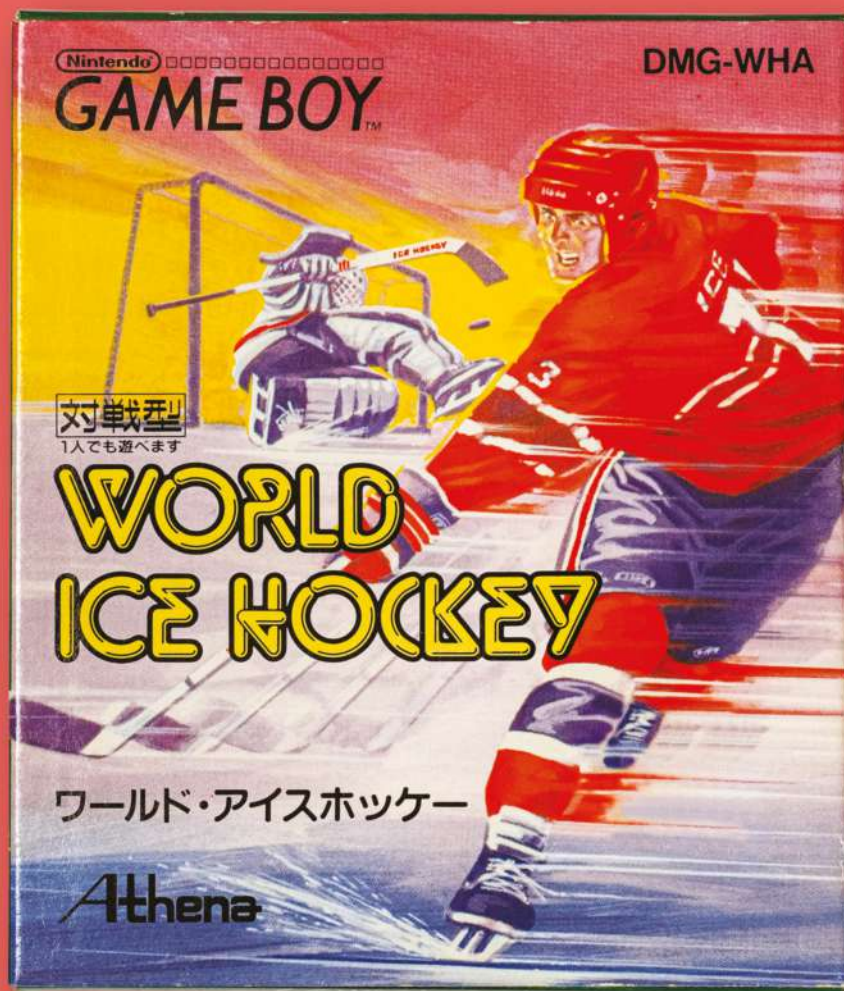
ワールド・アイスホッケー

Athena (1991)
Genre: Sports

This lesser-known sports title from Japanese company Athena has the distinction of being the first ice hockey game to ever be released on the Game Boy, and offers both a single-match exhibition mode and a more fleshed-out tournament mode, which is perfect for longer, more demanding play sessions. While real-world domestic hockey teams aren't included, due to the lack of any official licence, national teams for the Soviet Union, Canada, Finland, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, United States and Japan are available for selection. A worldwide release never happened, despite the relatively universal appeal of the subject matter, making this an unlikely Japanese exclusive.

The stylish, hand-painted artwork for *World Ice Hockey* presents an effective impression of movement and dynamism, but is let down by the dated and incongruous yellow typeface. The artwork's use of colour is remarkable, and with a nicer logo this could have been a really classy, impactful cover.
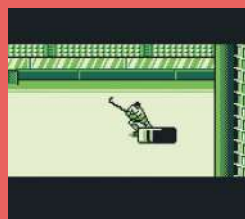
Worms

Ocean (1995)
Genre: Strategy

Developed by amateur coder Andy Davidson for the purposes of a programming competition in *Amiga Format* magazine, *Worms* went on to become one of the most notable Amiga releases of all time, and was predictably ported to any format that was capable of hosting a decent conversion – including the Game Boy. A turn-based artillery competition that pits one player against another, *Worms* is famed for its uniquely British sense of humour and bizarre arsenal of weapons, which range from banana bombs to deadly exploding sheep. The stop-start nature of the gameplay makes it surprisingly well-suited to the Game Boy.

Two intimidatingly tooled-up worms star on the game's cover, which is the same as that used on the Amiga original. Weirdly, and despite there being plenty of space to play with, the game's famous logo – complete with CG grenade – is placed quite low, leaving lots of empty blue sky, and spoiling the overall composition.

WWF King of the Ring

LJN (1993)
Genre: Sports

The third Game Boy WWF title after *WWF Superstars* and *WWF Superstars 2*, *WWF King of the Ring* gives players the option to earn the titular award by taking part in an eight-man elimination tournament. A roster of eight different wrestlers is included, with Hulk Hogan, 'Macho Man' Randy Savage, Bret 'The Hitman' Hart, Shawn Michaels, Razor Ramon, Yokozuna, Mr. Perfect and 'The Narcissist' Lex Luger offering a fairly balanced picture of the company's talent line-up at that point in time.

Like previous games in the WWF series, the cover for *WWF King of the Ring* is composed almost entirely of photographs, with Bret 'The Hitman' Hart enjoying top billing. He's joined by smaller images of 'The Narcissist' Lex Luger, Hulk Hogan, and the sumo-style Yokozuna (real name Rodney Agatupu Anoa'i), presumably to appeal to Japanese gamers – although in real life, Anoa'i was Samoan-American.
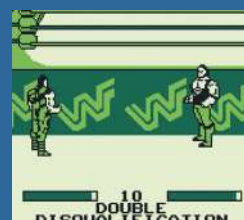
WWF RAW

LJN (1994)
Genre: Sports

Also available on the SNES, Mega Drive, Game Gear and even SEGA 32X, WWF RAW in its Game Boy port is an exercise in compromise. The Bedlam, Royal Rumble and RAW Endurance modes seen in the home console versions are missing, and the roster is reduced from the 12 seen in the SNES and Mega Drive editions (the 32X port had 13) to just eight. These are Bret 'The Hitman' Hart, The Undertaker, Shawn Michaels, Razor Ramon, Yokozuna, Diesel, Lex Luger, and Doink the Clown, who has to rank as one of the worst characters the WWF has ever produced. During the mid-'90s, the organisation was being overshadowed by the rival WCW brand, and much of its talent jumped ship.

The Game Boy version of *WWF RAW* shares the same cover artwork as other versions of the game, depicting The Undertaker, Yokozuna, Lex Luger, Razor Ramon, Bret 'The Hitman' Hart, Diesel and Luna Vachon inside a suitably distressed logo. Vachon was not actually part of the game's final roster, however.
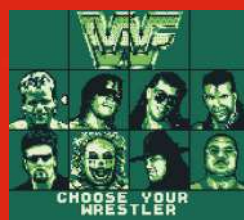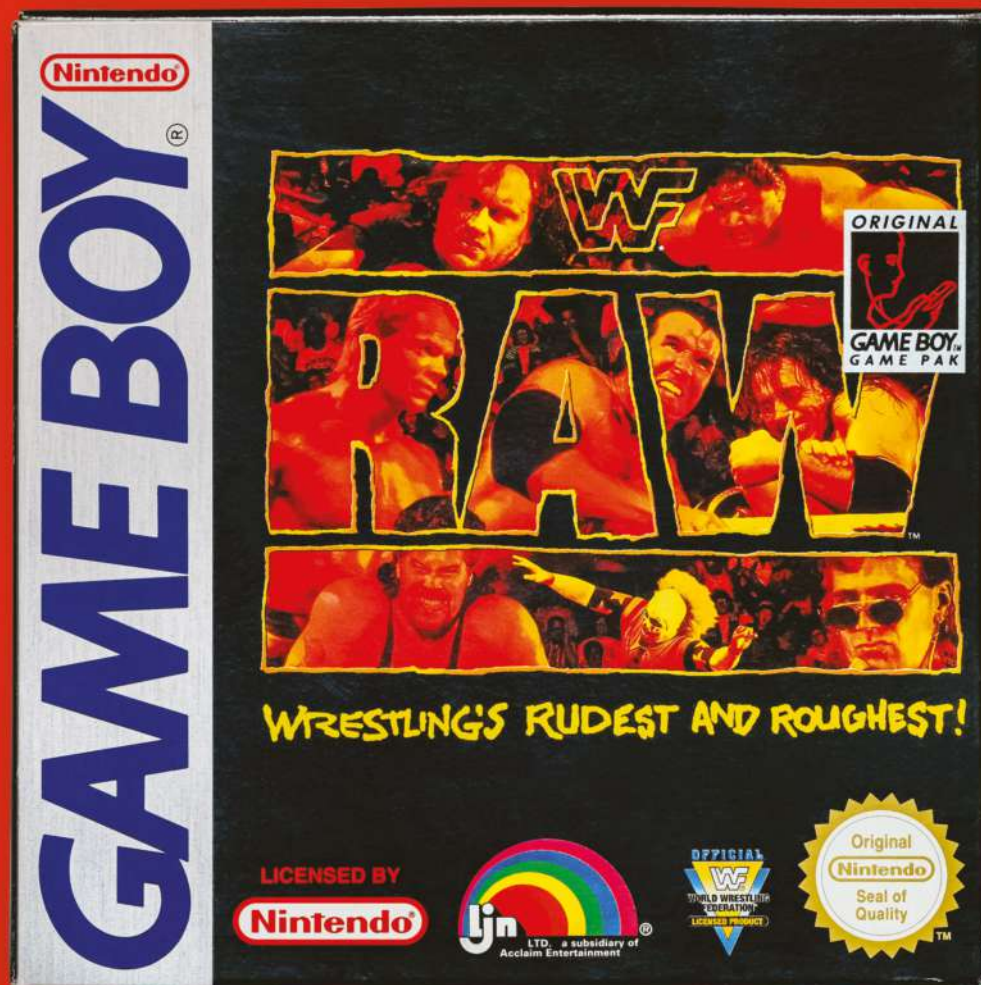
WWF Superstars

WWFスーパースターズ

Hot B (1992)
Genre: Sports

The first World Wrestling Federation title for the Game Boy, *WWF Superstars* features five of the company's most famous wrestlers: Hulk Hogan, 'Macho Man' Randy Savage, The Ultimate Warrior, 'The Million Dollar Man' Ted DiBiase, and Mr. Perfect. (Depressingly, three out of those five are now deceased.) While the action is rather basic, the game controls well and boasts an excellent soundtrack, courtesy of legendary British composer David Wise. Programmed by Rare in the UK and published by Acclaim in the West, the title was picked up for Japanese distribution by Hot B.

While the Japanese cover uses the same photos of Hogan, Savage and The Ultimate Warrior as seen on its Western equivalent, it adds in images of Mr. Perfect and Ted DiBiase to fully reflect the game's complete roster. The stars and stripes of the American flag make for a fitting backdrop, and the cover is arguably more striking than the one used elsewhere in the world.
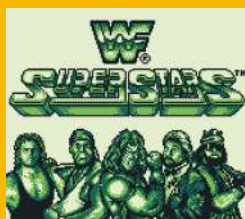
WWF Superstars 2

Rare wasn't invited back to create the second entry in the WWF Superstars series, with North American code house Sculptured Software instead taking on the programming duties. A total of six WWF wrestlers are included: Hulk Hogan, 'Macho Man' Randy Savage, The Undertaker, Sid Justice, Jake 'The Snake' Roberts, and The Mountie. Three gameplay modes are featured this time around, with One-on-One, Tag Team and Tournament being the options. One-on-One matches can be fought in a cage, if you so wish, giving the game some degree of parity with *WWF WrestleMania: Steel Cage Challenge*, which launched on the NES, Master System and Game Gear in the same year.

The sinister Undertaker is shown choking The Mountie in the cover photo for *WWF Superstars 2*, flanked by portraits of Hulk Hogan and Randy Savage. The only other element of note is the yellow star, excitedly promoting the inclusion of 'Steel Cage And Tag-Team Action' – clearly key selling points for this sequel.

X

X (エックス)

Nintendo (1992)
Genre: Simulation

Noteworthy for being the first 3D game on any Japanese portable, *X* was designed by Dylan Cuthbert, a UK developer who was employed by Argonaut Software at the time and would later work on the seminal *Star Fox*. Inspired by Argonaut's Starglider series, *X* sees the player piloting a 'space tank' around a wireframe 3D landscape, taking out enemy units, escorting cargo runs and defending friendly bases from attack. Plans to release *X* in the West – *Eclipse* and *Lunar Chase* were two of the names mooted – never came to fruition, and the game would go down as one of the Game Boy's most influential Japanese exclusives. A sequel called *X-Scape* (*X-Returns* in Japan and *3D Space Tank* in Europe) arrived on the DSiWare service in 2010, with Cuthbert's studio Q-Games handling design and development.

X's cover showcases the wireframe visuals that make the game so special, set against some colourful landscape and explosion effects, though these were sadly beyond the abilities of the Game Boy hardware.
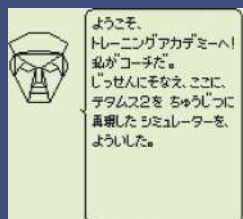
Yoshi no Panepon

ヨッシーのパネポン

Nintendo (1996)
Genre: Puzzle

Developed by Intelligent Systems – the studio behind *Fire Emblem* and *Advance Wars* – *Yoshi no Panepon* is a reskin of the puzzle title *Panel de Pon* that removes the fairy theme of the original and replaces it with characters from the Yoshi series. The game asks the player to match blocks in horizontal and vertical rows. It was released as *Tetris Attack* in the West, despite not being connected to that series, and subsequent versions have been released in the West under the title *Planet Puzzle League*.

Bursting with colour and packed with recognisable faces – including Nintendo bad-boy Bowser – the cover art for *Yoshi no Panepon* simply cannot fail to grab your attention. The multi-hued blocks ape the look of the tiles in-game, while the promise of Super Game Boy support – which adds a welcome splash of on-screen colour – only makes this package even more appealing.
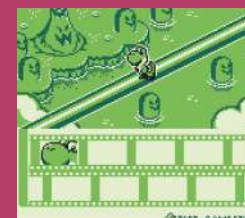
Yousei Monogatari:
Rod Land

妖精物語 ロッド・ランド

Jaleco (1993)
Genre: Action platformer

When Taito's *Bubble Bobble* arrived in arcades and turned the single-screen platformer into the genre of choice, it was inevitable that a raft of clones would follow. Jaleco's *Rod Land* was one such example, with the twist here being that the player character can incapacitate enemies by hitting them with a magic wand before smashing them into the ground to remove them from play. Another wrinkle in the core gameplay is the inability to jump between platforms; instead, players must make use of the many ladders which are scattered around the screen in order to ascend and descend between platforms. The cute visuals and engaging gameplay make this something of a hidden gem in the Game Boy's library.

This charming cover is simply bursting with colour and character. The cute, wand-holding fairies pictured are Tam and Rit; sadly, they are illustrated a little more crudely on the game's Western home computer versions.

Yu Yu Hakusho Dai 2 dan:
Ankoku Bujutsu Kai Hen

幽☆遊☆白書 第2弾
暗黒武術会編

Tomy (1993)
Genre: Fighting

A classic manga and anime series of the early '90s, Yoshihiro Togashi's *Yu Yu Hakusho* was adapted into several video games around the same time, including an excellent brawler on the SEGA Mega Drive, created by Treasure. This Game Boy entry is rather more tame, but retains the franchise's focus on intense martial arts action between various muscle-bound and angry-looking protagonists. Interestingly, characters can use elevated terrain to gain an advantage over their opponents, and in between fights you can relax with a bonus mini-game, where you have to catch items thrown from the top of the screen.

This moody cover montage is distinctly different from the cover for the previous Yu Yu Hakusho outing on the Game Boy, which was an explosion of bright colours. That said, the more mature imagery on display here better suits the brutal in-game action.

Yu-Gi-Oh!:
Duel Monsters

遊☆戯☆王
デュエルモンスターズ

Konami (1998)
Genre: Card game

Kazuki Takahashi's *Yu-Gi-Oh!* manga and anime franchise exploded onto the scene in the late '90s, giving the likes of *Pokémon* and *Digimon* a run for their money. The main focus of the series is battling your opponent with a totally customisable deck of special cards, and this key mechanic is retained for the Game Boy game. Card artwork is naturally reduced in detail, but this is otherwise a solid way for newcomers to learn the ropes – the sheer volume of different cards is incredible, and knowing how and when to deploy them is something that takes time. Sadly, it was denied a Western release, but subsequent titles did make it outside of Japan.

Series protagonist Yugi Mutou is shown brandishing a magical card on the game's cover; the sinister characterisation and colour scheme are in stark contrast to the cheery entries of the series' competitors. Konami has continued to release Yu-Gi-Oh! outings up to the present day.
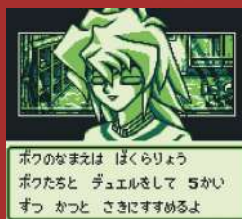
Zelda no Densetsu:
Yume o Miru Shima

ゼルダの伝説 夢をみる島

Nintendo (1993)
Genre: Action adventure

Originally conceived as a scaled-down port of the SNES title *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past*, this portable adventure would evolve thanks to the efforts of Takashi Tezuka, Yoshiaki Koizumi and Kensuke Tanabe. The action takes place on Koholint Island, rather than in the mythical land of Hyrule, and while it shares a great many similarities with *A Link to the Past*, it's a more light-hearted and irreverent adventure; many of the enemies are lifted from other Nintendo games, such as Piranha Plants from *Super Mario* and Mr. Write from the SNES version of *SimCity*. Tezuka later said that it felt like they were crafting a parody of the series, rather than an actual mainline entry.

The cover artwork retains the breezy feel of the game, showing Link leaping skywards as Marin and her father Tarin look on. The Western version – *The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening* – adopted a simpler approach, with the game's logo set against a gold cover, continuing a trend that began with the NES originals.

Zettai Muteki Raijin-Oh

絶対無敵ライジンオー

Tomy (1991)
Genre: Fighting

This robot-themed fighting game is based on the early '90s Japanese animated series of the same name, and is focused on a series of massive mechs piloted by school children in an effort to defeat the evil Jaaku Empire. During combat you can pull up a menu to change weapons, and your victories are rewarded by detailed cutscenes inspired by scenes from the original TV series. While *Zettai Muteki Raijin-Oh* is relatively unknown outside of Japan – none of the games were localised for the West – its robot cast has since appeared in Banpresto's Super Robot Wars franchise.

While the cover montage features some of the appealing mech designs seen in the TV series, the composition leaves something to be desired – it has a rather 'thrown-together' look, which was common with licensed titles of the period. But despite the rough edges, the brightly coloured elements still generate a fairly memorable cover.

ZOOP

Viacom New Media (1995)
Genre: Puzzle

Released in the wake of *Tetris'* astonishing global success, Viacom's *ZOOP* was one of many puzzlers from the period that sought to emulate the addictive brilliance of the Russian title – but the fact that developer Hookstone reportedly had issues communicating the game's appeal to the higher-ups at Viacom says a lot about *ZOOP*'s accessibility. It's a fun and engaging puzzler, but it lacks the effortless elegance that makes *Tetris* so compelling and accessible. Still, that didn't stop Viacom from releasing it on practically every system available. The Game Boy port is notable for being the only one to feature multiplayer support; sadly, the sacrifice of colour graphics does harm the visuals quite a bit.

While the abstract nature of puzzle games has resulted in many covers of variable quality, Viacom smartly opted to avoid the problem. *ZOOP*'s simple yet distinctive artwork has a very '90s vibe to it, consisting of the game's logo on top of a black-and-white striped background. The same imagery was used for the Japanese release of the game.

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