

= Game Gear =

The Game Gear (????? , G?mu Gia) is an 8 @-@ bit handheld game console released by Sega on October 6 , 1990 in Japan , 1991 in North America and Europe , and Australia in 1992 . The Game Gear primarily competed with Nintendo 's Game Boy , the Atari Lynx and NEC 's TurboExpress . The handheld shares much of its hardware with the Master System and is able to play its own titles as well as those of the Master System , the latter being made possible by the use of an adapter . Containing a full @-@ color backlit screen with a landscape format , Sega positioned the Game Gear as a technologically superior handheld to the Game Boy .

Though the Game Gear was rushed to market , its unique game library and price point gave it an edge over the Atari Lynx and TurboExpress . However , due to issues with its short battery life , lack of original titles , and weak support from Sega , the Game Gear was unable to surpass the Game Boy , selling 10 @. @ 62 million units by March 1996 . The Game Gear was succeeded by the Genesis Nomad in 1995 and discontinued in 1997 . It was re @-@ released as a budget system by Majesco in 2000 , under license by Sega .

Reception of the Game Gear was mixed , with praise for its full @-@ color backlit screen and processing power for its time , criticisms over its large size and battery life , and uneven reception over the quality of its game library .

= = History = =

Developed under the name " Project Mercury " , the Game Gear was first released in Japan on October 6 , 1990 , in North America and Europe in 1991 , and in Australia in 1992 . Originally retailing at JP ¥ 19 @, @ 800 in Japan , US \$ 149 @. @ 99 in North America , and GB £ 99 @. @ 99 in Europe , the Game Gear was designed to compete with the Game Boy , which Nintendo had released in 1989 . The console had been designed as a portable version of the Master System , and featured more powerful systems than the Game Boy , including a full @-@ color screen , in contrast to the monochromatic screen of its rival . In order to improve upon the design of their competition , Sega designed the Game Gear with a similar shape to a Genesis controller , with the idea being that the curved surfaces and longer length would make the Game Gear more comfortable to hold than the Game Boy . Despite the similarities the Game Gear shared with the Master System , the games of the latter were not directly playable on the Game Gear , and were only able to be played on the handheld by the use of an accessory called the Master Gear Converter . The original Game Gear pack @-@ in title was Columns , which was similar to the Tetris cartridge that Nintendo had included when it launched the Game Boy .

With a late start into the handheld gaming market , Sega rushed to get the Game Gear into stores quickly , having lagged behind Nintendo in sales without a handheld on the market . As one method of doing so , Sega based the hardware of the Game Gear on the Master System , albeit with a much larger color palette than its predecessor : the Game Gear supported 4096 colors , compared to the 64 colors supported by the Master System . Part of the intention of this move was to make Master System games easy to port to the Game Gear . Though the Game Gear was designed to be technologically superior to the Game Boy , its design came at a cost of battery life : whereas the Game Boy could run for more than 30 hours on four AA batteries , the Game Gear required six AA batteries and could only run for three to five hours . With its quick launch in Japan , the handheld sold 40 @, @ 000 units in its first two days , 90 @, @ 000 within a month , and the number of back orders for the system was over 600 @, @ 000 . According to Sega of America marketing director Robert Botch , " there is clearly a need for a quality portable system that provides features other systems have failed to deliver . This means easy @-@ to @-@ view , full @-@ colour graphics and exciting quality games that appeal to all ages . "

= = = Release and marketing = = =

Before the Game Gear 's launch in 1990 , Sega had had success marketing its 16 @-@ bit home

console , the Genesis , by advertising it as a " more mature " option for gamers . In keeping with this approach , Sega positioned the Game Gear as a " grown @-@ up " option compared to the Game Boy . While Sega 's marketing in Japan did not take this perspective , instead opting for advertisements with Japanese women featuring the handheld , Sega 's worldwide advertising prominently positioned the Game Gear as the " cooler " console than the Game Boy .

In North America , marketing for the Game Gear included side @-@ by @-@ side comparisons of Sega 's new handheld with the Game Boy , and likened Game Boy players to the obese and uneducated . One Sega advertisement featured the quote , " If you were color blind and had an IQ of less than 12 , then you wouldn 't mind which portable you had . " Such advertising drew fire from Nintendo , who sought to have protests organized against Sega for insulting disabled persons . Sega responded with a statement from Sega of America president Tom Kalinske saying that Nintendo " should spend more time improving their products and marketing rather than working on behind @-@ the @-@ scenes coercive activities . " Ultimately , this debate would have little impact on sales for the Game Gear .

Europe and Australia were the last regions to receive the Game Gear . Due to the delays in receiving the new handheld , some importers paid as much as £ 200 in order to have the new system . Upon the Game Gear 's release in Europe , video game distributor Virgin Mastertronic unveiled the price of the Game Gear as £ 99 @. @ 99 , positioning it as being more expensive than the Game Boy , but less expensive than the Atari Lynx , which was also a full @-@ color system . Marketing in the United Kingdom included the use of the slogan , " To be this good takes Sega " , and also included advertisements with a biker with a Game Gear .

= = = Decline = = =

Support for the Game Gear by Sega was drastically hurt by its focus on its home console systems . In addition to the success of the Genesis , Sega was also supporting two peripherals for its home system , the Sega CD and the 32X , as well as developing its new 32 @-@ bit system , the Sega Saturn . Despite selling 10 @. @ 62 million units by March 1996 , the Game Gear was never able to match the success of its main rival , the Game Boy , which sold over ten times that number . The system 's late sales were further hurt by Nintendo 's release of the Game Boy Pocket , a smaller version of the Game Boy which could run on two AAA batteries .

Plans for a 16 @-@ bit successor to the Game Gear were made to bring Sega 's handheld gaming into the fifth generation of video games , but a new handheld system never materialized for Sega , leaving only the Genesis Nomad , a portable version of the Genesis , to take its place . Though the Nomad had been released in 1995 , Sega did not officially end support for the Game Gear until 1996 in Japan , and 1997 worldwide .

Though the system was no longer supported by Sega in 2000 , third @-@ party developer Majesco released a version of the Game Gear at US \$ 30 , with games retailing at US \$ 15 . New games were released , such as a port of Super Battletank . This version was also compatible with all previous Game Gear games , but was incompatible with the TV Tuner and some Master System converters . Over ten years later , on March 2 , 2011 , Nintendo announced that their 3DS Virtual Console service on the Nintendo eShop would feature games from Game Gear .

= = Technical specifications = =

A handheld game console , the Game Gear was designed to be played while being held horizontally . The console contains an 8 @-@ bit 3.5MHz Zilog Z80 chip for a central processing unit , the same as the Master System . Its screen was 3 @. @ 2 square inches in size , and is able to display up to 32 colors at a time from a total palette of 4096 colors , at a display resolution of 160 x 144 pixels , . The screen is backlit in order to allow gamers to play in low @-@ lighting situations . Powered by 6 AA batteries , the Game Gear has an approximate battery life of 3 to 5 hours . In order to lengthen this duration and to save money for consumers , Sega also released two types of external rechargeable battery packs for the Game Gear . The system contains 8kB of RAM and an

additional 16kB of video RAM . Audio is supplied by the Texas Instruments SN76489 PSG , which was also used in the Master System . However , unlike the Master System , stereo sound is able to be supplied through an output for headphones . Physically , the Game Gear measures 209mm across , 111mm high , and 37mm deep .

Several accessories were created for the Game Gear during its lifespan . A TV Tuner accessory plugged into the system 's cartridge slot , and allowed one to watch TV on the Game Gear 's screen . Released at \$ 105 @. @ 88 (\$ 186 in 2016) , the add @-@ on was expensive but unique for collectors and contributed to the system 's popularity . Another accessory , the " Super Wide Gear " , was an accessory that magnified the Game Gear screen to compensate for its relatively small size . Also released was an adaptor (known as the Game Gear Car Adaptor) that plugged into cars or cigarette lighters to power the system while traveling , and the " Gear @-@ to @-@ Gear Cable " , an accessory that established a data connection between two Game Gear systems using the same multiplayer game and let users play against each other .

Over the course of its lifespan , the Game Gear also received a number of variations . Later releases included several different colors for the console , including a blue " sports " variation released in North America bundled with World Series Baseball ' 95 or The Lion King . A white version was also released , sold in a bundle with a TV tuner . Other versions included a red Coca @-@ Cola themed unit , bundled with the game Coca @-@ Cola Kid , and the Kids Gear , a Japan @-@ only variation targeted toward children .

= = Game library = =

Over 300 games were released for the Game Gear , although at the time of the console 's launch , there were only six software titles available . Prices for game cartridges initially ranged from \$ 24 @. @ 99 to \$ 29 @. @ 99 each . The casings were molded black plastic with a rounded front to aid in removal . Some titles for the system included Sonic the Hedgehog , The GG Shinobi , Space Harrier , and Land of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse , which was considered the best game for the system by GamesRadar . Later titles took advantage of the success of the Genesis , Sega 's 16 @-@ bit video game console , with games released from franchises originally released on the Genesis . A large part of the Game Gear 's library consists of Master System ports . Because of the landscape orientation of the Game Gear 's screen and the similarities in hardware between the handheld console and the Master System , it was easy for developers to port Master System games to the Game Gear .

Due to Nintendo 's licensing practices during the lifespan of the Game Gear , few third @-@ party developers were available to create games for Sega 's system . This was a contributing factor to the large number of Master System ports for the Game Gear . Likewise , because of this , the Game Gear library contained many games that were not available on other handhelds , pulling sales away from the Atari Lynx and NEC TurboExpress and helping to establish the Game Gear 's position in the market . While the Game Gear 's library consisted of over 300 titles , however , the Game Boy 's library contained over 1000 individual games .

Several Game Gear titles were released on the Nintendo 3DS 's Virtual Console service on the Nintendo eShop . The emulator for the Virtual Console releases was handled by M2 .

= = Reception = =

Game Gear surpassed the Atari Lynx and NEC TurboExpress , but lagged far behind the Game Boy in the handheld marketplace . Retrospective reception to the Game Gear is mixed . In 2008 , GamePro listed the Game Gear as 10th on their list of the " 10 Worst @-@ Selling Handhelds of All Time " and criticized aspects of the implementation of its technology , but also stated that the Game Gear could be considered a success for having nearly 11 million units sold . According to GamePro reviewer Blake Snow , " Unlike the Game Boy , the Game Gear rocked the landscape holding position , making it less cramped for human beings with two hands to hold . And even though the Game Gear could be considered a success , its bulky frame , relative high price , constant

consumption of AA batteries , and a lack of appealing games ultimately kept Sega from releasing a true successor . "

GamesRadar offered some praise for the system and its library , stating , " With its 8 @-@ bit processor and bright color screen , it was basically the Sega Master System in your hands . How many batteries did we suck dry playing Sonic , Madden and Road Rash on the bus or in the car , or in the dark when we were supposed to be sleeping ? You couldn 't do that on a Game Boy ! " By contrast , IGN reviewer Levi Buchanan noted the Game Gear 's biggest fault was its game library when compared to the Game Boy , stating that " the software was completely lacking compared to its chief rival , which was bathed in quality games . It didn 't matter that the Game Gear was more powerful . The color screen did not reverse any fortunes . Content and innovation beat out technology , a formula that Nintendo is using right now with the continued ascendance of the DS and Wii . " Buchanan later went on to praise some parts of the Game Gear 's library , however , stating " Some of those Master System tweaks were very good games , and fun is resilient against time . " Retro Gamer praised Sega 's accomplishment in surviving against the competition of Nintendo in the handheld console market with the Game Gear , noting that " for all the handhelds that have gone up against the might of Nintendo and ultimately lost out , Sega 's Game Gear managed to last the longest , only outdone in sales by the Sony PSP . For its fans , it will remain a piece of classic gaming hardware whose legacy lives on forever . "