

1 of 1 DOCUMENT

Christian Science Monitor (Boston, MA)

October 5, 1982, Tuesday, Midwestern Edition

Flavor of Tokyo: Donkey Kong, Frisky Tom, and sushi

BYLINE: By David Winder

SECTION: Focus; Pg. 2

LENGTH: 694 words

DATELINE: Tokyo

Donkey Kong captures a beautiful woman and carries her to a building under construction. The brave carpenter Mario comes to rescue her following them over the girders. Donkey Kong throws barrels at Mario to stop him.

The object in this 6,000 yen (\$22) Japanese video game, which uses a double screen that folds together like a book, is to knock the girder out from under Donkey Kong so Mario can save the woman.

"Fantastic" was how eight-year-old American Brad Price from Redwood City, Calif., described Donkey Kong on a visit to Tokyo. He says this particular hand-held version of the video game is not available in the United States. His father, Bill Price, a member of an American scientific mission to Japan, confesses a group of his fellow PhDs got hold of Donkey Kong and "they couldn't put the game down."

At a leading Tokyo department store (seven stories high replete with a children's playground and where exotic tropical fish, canaries, and bonzai are sold on its spacious roofgarden) counters in the toy department bulge with video games. Prices range from 3,800 to 6,000 yen (\$14 to \$22) and include such American-named games as Frisky Tom, Las Vegas Casino, and Snoopy Tennis. Most electronics buffs, however, head for Akihabara area, one of about six main shopping centers in Tokyo, and reputedly the world's largest electronics bazaar.

Such items as video recorders, digital watches, air conditioners, and miniature solar calculators the size of a woman's compact fill some 400 shops in the area.

American, Taiwanese, and South Korean tourists are prominent among those flocking to the Akihabara area where prices are usually 15 to 20 percent lower than suggested retail prices.

Although world recession has slowed the growth of Japan's economy, Tokyo stores show no sign of the Japanese holding on to their yen although there are indications that they may be questioning rising materialism in their lives.

Sales of portable computers - a cross between a full personal computer and a pocket calculator - are booming. Officials at Yamagiwa, an electronics company, reports sales have doubled since last year for hand-held computers.

Electronics is not the only industry that is scoring well right now in Japan.

The combined sales of 26 department stores in the metropolitan area totaled \$460 million in August, up 3 percent from a year before, according to the Japan Department Stores Association.

It would be difficult for a shopper not to be enticed by the bright lights of Tokyo.

Paris-style pastry shops stand next to sushi (raw fish) and noodle shops where Japanese businessmen loudly slurp their noodles because, as every Japanese knows, this is the only way to get the real flavor of noodles.

One of the largest cities in the world, Tokyo has shopping areas that are a jumble of soaring vertical neon lights and giant garish commercial signs, which provide a blaze of high intensity color and light.

To the Western eye the undecipherable Japanese characters on the many neon signs move like acrobats in mass gymnastics, while the sidewalks and (on Sundays) the closed streets resemble the perpetual dispersion of crowds after a big football or baseball game in the United States.

Yet while Japanese electronics promise such exotic possibilities for the future as laser-based audio disc recorders which will make record players obsolete, Japanese consumerism may well be on the wane.

An annual government survey released in August shows an increasing number of Japanese people seeking to spiritually enrich their lives. Some 45 percent of those polled gave more weight to richness of mind than material goods. This was the highest figure recorded in the last 10 years, and continues a rising trend for the last four years.

Asked to comment on the apparent conflict in values between a more spiritual past and today's rampant Japanese materialism, Migio Nachai, a former education minister and current senior adviser to the rector of the United Nations University in Tokyo replied:

"I'm ready to predict a battle will come within a year on value judgments. As to what the outcome will be I will restrain my judgment."

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

COPYRIGHT 1982 THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE PUBLISHING SOCIETY