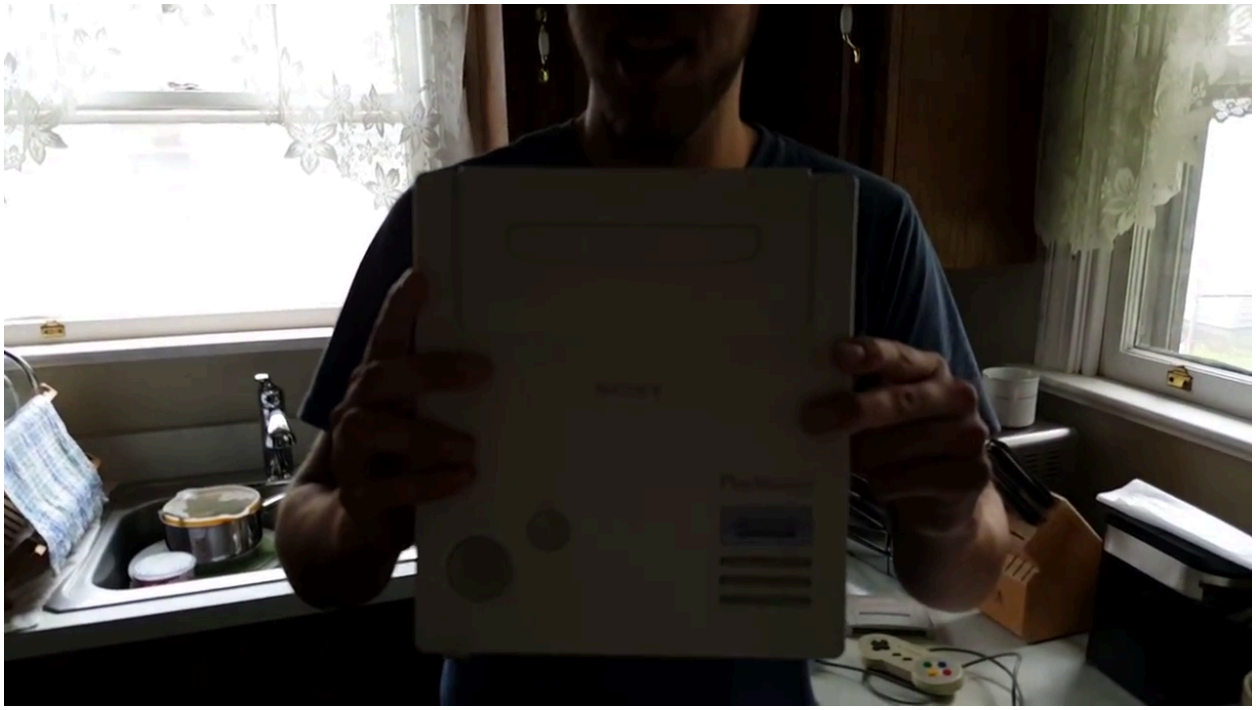
The Hidden History of the Nintendo PlayStation



June 3rd, 1991 sequestered within a cramped press room at the annual Consumer Electronics Show, the world's leaders of interactive entertainment all convened in one place. Chafing his elbows against a cabal of computer wizards and tech giants in the muggy swelter of a Chicago summer, Ken Kutaragi, a young Sony engineer, patiently awaits the fruits of his labor.

You see, since 1988 Kutaragi had spearheaded a lucrative new partnership between Nintendo and his parent company to develop an all new Sony system. Primed with the dual capabilities of playing both Super Nintendo cartridges as well as dedicated CD based games, the system would be called the "Nintendo PlayStation". And it was announced only twenty four hours prior to Howard Lincoln, then Executive Chairman of Nintendo, rising to the stage of that cramped press room to debut Nintendo's newest project: a collaboration with the European technological titan Philips, not Sony but Sony's penultimate rival at the time, to produce the SNES-CD addon.

A swell of confusion surged through Sony's upper echelons, seething with frustration and armed with a bevy of lawsuits. The young engineer, Ken Kutaragi, however, instead of abandoning his vision as Nintendo had with Sony, began developing a weapon of his own.



Reddit user 'analogueboy' (Daniel Diebold) hold's the "Nintendo Super Disc"; Pardon the picture's pixels

July 3rd, 2015 over twenty four years later Daniel Diebold (known by his handle analogueboy), in the midst of preparing more than likely highly patriotic Fourth festivities, rummages through his father's attic in Philly after posting to reddit boasts of his father owning a "Super Disc" system.

It's the kind of playground babble reminiscent of "my father works at Nintendo" that one kid at every recess would always spout about the schoolyard in the rosy eyed bragging of yester years. Yet, within the hour, images of the supposed unit flooded the site, and later that afternoon, the following video.

Nintendo Playstation Superdisc

Yellowed from years of attic roosting, Diebold unearths a greyish rectanguloid that resembles a hybrid of 90s era toaster x projector, complete with a "Sony PlayStation" branded controller, a Super Famicom cartridge (Japanese SNES equivalent) sparingly scrawled in kanji, and an unlabeled (and yet un-pictured) CD. Like your editor after a bad slice of raw SF pizza, it was viral overnight.


SONY
PlayStation
SONY
SONY
PlayStation
SELECT
START


LEVEL
SONY


RFU DC OUT
NEXT
R AUDIO L (MONO)
VIDEO
S VIDEO
LINE OUT
MULTI OUT
DC IN 7.6V


SONY
SONY
SONY
PlayStation
SELECT
START
X
A
Y
B


SONY
Nintendo®
SUPER Famicom®
CONTROLLER
MODEL NO. SHVC-005
MADE IN JAPAN
EJECT
REMAIN


'92 10.6.



Daniel casually carries the only known survivor of 200 prototypes that were purportedly manufactured then subsequently destroyed after Sony's infamous falling out with Nintendo nearly a quarter of a century ago. His father, Terry Diebold, hadn't worked for Nintendo as classroom tykes once gossiped and giggled, but as a maintenance serviceman at Advanta Corporation. What is ostensibly an enterprising loan company, otherwise utterly detached from video gaming, since 1998 Advanta had been heralded by none other than its storied CEO, Olaf Olafsson.



A polymath in his own right, Olaf Olafsson would directly precede over the Nintendo PlayStation

A studied physicist, and critically acclaimed novelist, before Olaf Olafsson presided over Advanta he was CEO of Sony Interactive Entertainment. Facilitating its founding in 1991, under Olafsson's stewardship, the division would come to bridge the Sony and Nintendo collaboration.

Olafsson, having intimately guided both the development of the SNES-CD addon and Nintendo PlayStation, in some undisclosed act of future hocking or silicon sentimentalism, must have privately saved a single unit, locking it away for over two decades. Locked it away so well in fact when Advanta filed bankruptcy and shuddered in 2009, Terry Diebold, tasked with trashing any loose articles, finally found the unit and salvaged it, says his son, storing it in a listless attic bound box ever since.

What the Diebold's hold is not only the first and potentially only known Nintendo PlayStation prototype, but a piece of never released hardware that would come to redefine the industry then and what we play today, gaming as a whole. The Nintendo PlayStation is the story of the greatest betrayal, revenge, and rebellion in gaming, the dawn of a new console war. The rest is history.





Ken Kutaragi, the Father of the PlayStation

In the mid-80s, Japan was experiencing a golden age akin to the roaring 20s, except trade America's flappers and bathtub gin with sake tray toting geisha girls. Betwixt a booming bubble economy of Japanese automobile tycoons like Honda and Toyota burning rubber on roads and global markets, screenings of AKIRA with its harrowing visage of the post apocalypse making actual Tokyo E X P L O D E, and probably some Yakuza game cutscenes happening somewhere in a neon-bathed back alleyway, engineer Ken Kutaragi, coming home from his workplace at the equally booming Sony, happened to walk in on his young daughter playing her Family Computer, or Famicom.



The Nintendo Family Computer (Famicom) it had a "disc" addon too, Floppy discs!

The Famicom (or Nintendo Entertainment System internationally) was Nintendo's latest and largest foray into the home console space, a new niche that, by that time, was already inhabited almost entirely by the once hanafuda card creator turned profitable game maker, now printing money instead of cards. Kutaragi, having purchased a Famicom for his daughter, couldn't help but hear the system's audio output and wince. Though impressive for a home experience at the time, it was understandably pixels behind graphically from arcade machines with a mere 8bit display, and utterly inferior to arcade machine stereo in the sound department.



Portrait of Norio Ohga, widely credited with the proliferation of the CD format

(http://media-1.web.britannica.com/eb-media/39/154739-004-CBBDEF43.jpg)

Unimpressed by its weak audio aspects, Kutaragi, preeminently aware his employer would have halted any efforts had he consulted them prior, immediately put solder to iron in secret. Primarily funneling its resources in other electronic capital like personal radios or T.V. monitors, Sony had nearly non-extant interest in the early video game industry, still nascent and barely afloat from the stigma, the E.T. sized crater of the 1983 video game crash abroad in the United States (http://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/excavating-the-video-game-industrys-past).

The result of Kutaragi's sub-rosa soldering surfaced in the form of an audio chip far superior than the one on board Famicoms. When time came to reveal his progress, Sony's chairs were infuriated at the prospect, especially his actions in hiding, they ready to axe Kutragi on the spot had not Sony's CEO Norio Ohga directly intervened (http://www.britannica.com/biography/Norio-Ohga).

Always spurring for innovation, Ohga was curious to enter the games space in some fashion and Kutaragi provided the perfect start. He personally permitted the engineer cart Blanche to refine his work and eventually pitch it to Nintendo in Sony's first substantial interaction with the company. Nintendo initially denied Kutaragi's early draft for floppy disk drives (which would ironically be instituted, though differently as an addon later) but insisted their interest in utilizing a Sony sound processor in their next generation system, what is known today as the Super Famicom, or Super Nintendo.



The Nintendo S-SMP or SPC700 audio chip implemented in every SNES and designed by Ken Kutaragi

Bolstered with blistering processing speeds (clocked in at 24.576 MHz) and a dynamic depth of audio unprecedented amongst any would be competitor (i.e Sega's MegaDrive/Genesis), the SPC700 chip Kutaragi designed was more than well received by Nintendo, and entered production as an essential chipset in every Super Nintendo System.



Super Famicom (Super Nintendo elsewhere) looks much better than the humped heap us westerners got imo

With the advent of the Super Nintendo came so too unparalled profit margins for the game company, with pennies on the dollar scraped off to Sony. Perhaps it was this rapid river of revenue raging into their koopa troopa piggy banks like their plumber mascot's brick boxing coin collecting, or perhaps it was rare misight, or lack thereof that caused Nintendo to make one of their gravest missteps in the company's over 125 year history.



Hiroshi Yamauchi (pictured center), longtime CEO of Nintendo, casually plays his favorite boardgame, GO, with Bill Gates (yes that Bill Gates)

Hiroshi Yamauchi, inheriting his rank as CEO of Nintendo long ago after his grandfather's reign, was more than entrepreneurially gifted, but had the courage to make decisive, bold new directions. An intrepid innovator, he had singlehandedly steered the toys and novelty powerhouse of Nintendo, once its unspoiled bread and butter, into the largest video game company by the late 80s with commissioned arcade hits like *Donkey Kong* (http://www.classicgaming.cc/classics/donkeykong/game_flash.php), whilst resuscitating the withering console business, giving it a second life, a literal 1up, with the introduction of the Famicom.

With a sixth sense for business, and a seventh for innovation, Yamauchi knew all too well the future of video games would be Compact Discs, CDs. A new medium at the time, CD's would be able to store unrivaled audio, video, music, movies, and more importantly game data, within its digital folds, ten times that of a 16bit cartridge in fact, and at tenth the asking price. Already an expert with the format and in league with Nintendo, Yamauchi saw Sony as the perfect partner, and little did Yamauchi know, Sony did too. With the gleam of their compact disc future glinting in his specs, like so many times before, Yamauchi moved the company forward.

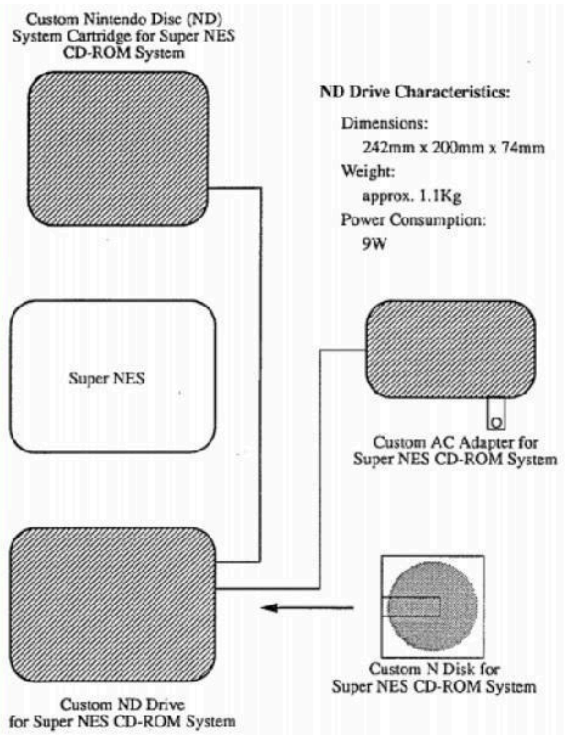
With the success of the Nintendo-Sony sound chip, their partnership persuaded both companies to evolve their involvement so much so that by 1988 Sony eagerly penned a contract to which

Nintendo would hastily sign, a contract that would become the preamble to the declaration of a new console war, both the beginning and end of the Nintendo PlayStation.



(http://i.imgur.com/MWh1UzY.jpg)



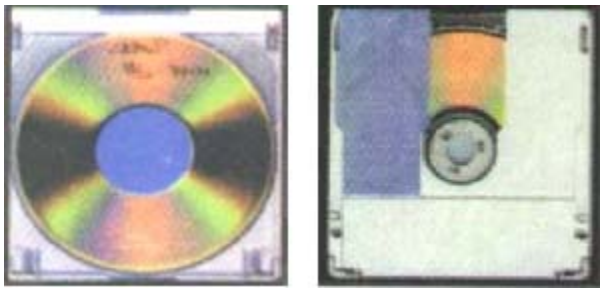


Prototype of the unreleased SNES-CD addon (but not necessarily Sony's…keep reading!)

Nintendo's video game business strategy had always been iron clad. A seemingly seamless system of stringent regulations, they wielded a stranglehold on both the production of systems, and software licensing to third party developers. They maintained both strict control of the hardware manufacture but so too would reap massive yields of profit from selling licenses to these developers. Nintendo going so far as to limit developers on quantities of titles able to be released per year, litigiously demanding royalty pay outs, and drafting a much maligned

non-compete clause (http://www.investopedia.com/terms/n/noncompete-agreement.asp) which dictated game exclusivity to Nintendo. This clause essentially barring on the most contractually captive scale any developers from publishing games on non-Nintendo platforms in an era when Nintendo sold the most, in due part to these factors and more, which the company could proudly boast.

That's why when in 1988, the contract with Sony to produce a SNES-CD addon to usher in a compact future for Nintendo, the company, and Yamauchi for that matter, failed to read the fine print. Having tasted the highly lucrative nectar of the still blooming games industry, Sony swiftly advanced its own stakes, eyes on the market. CEO Norio Ogha finally saw the chance to realize his plans for Sony: to fully immerse itself in the console space with its own system.



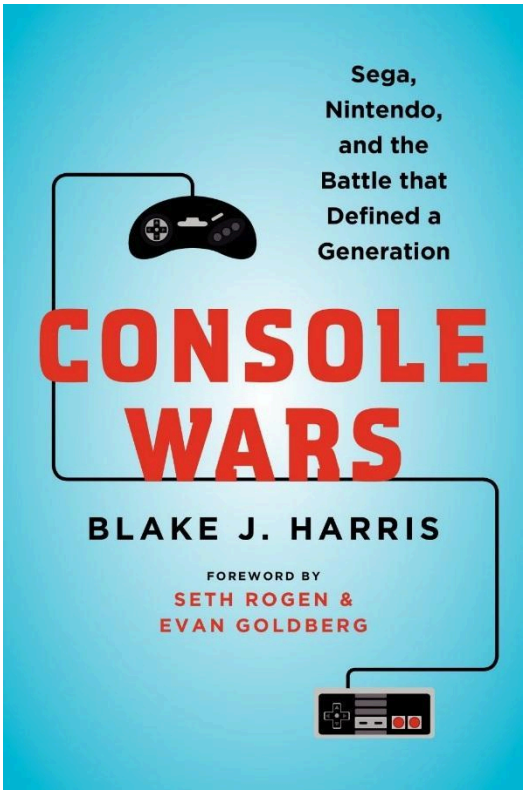
Originally Nintendo designed and desired SNES-CD games to be in custom caddy-style shells for DRM and lockout chips built in to the CD's to prevent illegal pirating or software. Sony's contract, however, allowed otherwise, rather standard CD's with lockouts built into CD-ROM drive controller instead.

The contract of 1988, which we might as well dub "the preamble to the CD wars" not only commissioned Sony to furnish an SNES-CD addon to compete with Sega CD/Mega CD (which had plans to release in the winter of 1991) but slyly, or what others may recognize as skillfully, put ink to words, to Nintendo's ultimate fears. The rhetoric of the contract went like this: Sony will forge a SNES-CD addon to enhance existing SNES systems with CD capabilities (a "Super Disc Drive" as it was known and referred to by Diebold decades later), but the contract also enabled Sony to independently forge their very own system, one built with both innate Super Famicom 16 bit game cartridge support as well as CD games. Not only this, the contract dictated their ability to license **all** CD based games and software for the system. In other words Sony had control over both domains Nintendo thrived from: the hardware, and the software licensing. A clause that Nintendo and Yamauchi must have looked over and scrambled to rebut. Because, by at the 1991 Consumer Electronics Show, Nintendo had already prepared a rebuttal, an escape, a countermeasure to play in that cramped Chicago press room when Sony Announced the Nintendo PlayStation.



Early conceptual prototype of the Nintendo PlayStation that looks eerily similar to the Diebold's model

June 3rd, 1991, CES, Olaf Olafsson sits pleased in a journalist snuffed conference room where he expects Nintendo to tout their partnership as he had only a day earlier at Sony's own conference. Olafsson was still riding high on the rippling waves Sony had crashed onto the industry when they announced their official plans to enter the games console business. One Ken Kutaragi, under oath of his boss Ogha, had himself selected Olafsson to head their new division, Sony Interactive Entertainment, dedicated to the development of games and more prominently the R&D of their newly debuted console, the Nintendo PlayStation.



Console Wars by Blake J. Harris, as the eponymous title implies is a comprehensive book on all things 90s console war and recounts what happened next, the narrative best as Howard Lincoln, Nintendo's then longtime legal liaison and now Executive chairmen to address the crowds and finally reveal Nintendo's next project to the world.

"Compact discs will play a key role in Nintendo's vision for the future." Lincoln finally announced, now ready to reveal the plans for Nintendo's new CD unit. Olafsson stirred in his seat as the crowning moment inched closer. "And who better to partner with than the company that invented the audio compact disc: Philips Electronics."

Wait, what? A tremor of shock and confusion swept through the room as journalists raced to take note that Lincoln had said Philips and not Sony. After Lincoln said it again, confirming that his words were not a slip-up, all eyes turned to Olaf Olafsson, who tilted his head and furrowed his brow. Was he shocked, appalled, furious?

In truth, he was none of those things. He was merely plotting his next move."- *Harris, Blake J. (2014-05-13). Console Wars: Sega, Nintendo, and the Battle that Defined a Generation (p. 135). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.*

Nintendo had been plotting their next move since discovering the fine print of Sony's contract and their plans to release a system of their own devices. The Nintendo PlayStation would have bereaved Nintendo of their revered total control over hardware and their curated software licensing that had them achieve success. Let alone, with the Nintendo PlayStation basically a standalone SNES plus SNES CD machine, the irony Nintendo would be competing against themselves with their own internal hardware gutted and repackaged in a grey box by Sony.

To preserve their highly guarded business structure, their digital demesne over hardware and software, Nintendo couldn't sit idly to Sony's wayside and watch twenty years of corporate status quo abruptly falter. On an express flight Yamauchi covertly sped off to the Netherlands to meet the biggest fish in Sony's pond, Philips Electronics.



The creators of the compact disc also had a console, the Philips CD-i, but the result was less than… pretty

Though hesitant to potentially compete with their own CD based console, the Philips CD-i, to be released commercially that same year, with the promise of lending some of Nintendo's most landmark franchises and characters to the fledgling European born box, Nintendo and Philips entered a partnership behind Sony's back. With this new partnership, Nintendo agreed to allow Philips access to develop games autonomously from its stable of already classic recognizable IP's like Mario(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nS956FdMPfc) and Zelda(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TN8-Pdz-ns8), in return Philips would produce a SNES-CD addon for Nintendo, this time Nintendo ensuring they maintain full dominance over any and all software licensing. It's the deal they wanted back in 1988, and Nintendo finally had it, without Sony.

Sony, on the other hand, was still buffeting from a betrayal the likes of the ides of march for gaming, *(I imagine Burt Reynold's cast as Cesar/Sony, and Mickey Rourke as Brutus/Nintendo)*. The company almost quit their gaming initiatives outright from the furor and would terminate all 200 remaining prototypes of their bitter deal but Ken Kutaragi, perennially Sony's wildcard, merely scrapped the Nintendo PlayStation project for another, building it chip by chip, pixel by pixel.



The Sony PlayStation, if you look closely, you can barely make out a vestigial Nintendo tail, I call it the Yamauchi

(http://blog.fore.mx/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/PSone.png)

The SNES-CD addon from Philips (or any for that matter) never saw release. Nor did the prototyped Nintendo PlayStation in any form till Daniel Diebold's discovery. The PlayStation, however, would release in 1995 globally. It would go on to sell 102 million consoles (http://web.archive.org/web/20110722094946/http://scei.co.jp/corporate/data/bizdataps_e.html). The Super Nintendo, Nintendo 64, and GameCube would sell a combined total of 103 million(http://www.nintendo.co.jp/ir/en/sales/hard_soft/index.html). The rest is and was, history.

July 3rd, 2015
The Deibold's discover and showcase the only known Nintendo PlayStation



June 3rd, 1991
Nintendo announces partnership With Philips to produce The SNES-CD addon



June 2nd, 1991
Sony Announces The Nintendo PlayStation



1995
The Sony PlayStation Releases worldwide



1988
Sony and Nintendo sign contract to produce the SNES CD addon (& The Nintendo PlayStation)



Unspecified mid-1980s
Ken Kutaragi develops the SPC700 sound chip for Nintendo



The Nintendo PlayStation Timeline

A ~~terrible~~ timeline by yours truly! (Hint: ZOOM IN)

The Specs

DISCLAIMER: The following specifications are reconstructed from the very limited available documents of what is ultimately unreleased hardware. They are by no means the end all be all denotations of the Nintendo PlayStation console specs. Where no available information could be recovered, specifications are defaulted to the nearest, most likely equivalent (Philips CD-i). In other words this is for fun and most definitely full of inaccuracies!



Console wars, and their respective warriors live and die by the specs sheet. In the cart wars of the Super Nintendo and Sega Genesis waged in the backyards and playgrounds of the early nineties, the two consoles were hardly a match in regards to technical prowess. The Super Nintendo obliterated the genesis in raw speed, colors, and sheer power in every facet save for one, processing speed (BLAST PROCESSING https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zlulSyBI2aY).

With an aggressive and undeniably effective advertising campaign the underdog that was Sega would rise to become a genuine threat to Nintendo's once unchallenged supremacy over the living room. In other words power meant nothing.

Which is why even with the reconstructed stats pictured, even though the Nintendo PlayStation would have undeniably trounced or had parity with the Sega CD and Philips CD-i in every category, there's no telling whether these performance superiorities would have ensured superior software. Then again this is all speculation anyways, but believe me there's still lots to be telling. What's more enticing is the details of the hardware we can glean from a surface level view of Diebold's uploaded images.



I know some of these pictures are repeating but, hey, gotta work with what little we have, its more fun that way

Consciously choosing not to deviate from the SNES dogbone-like pad, Sony's Nintendo PlayStation, illustrates its compatibility with Nintendo's games with its Super Famicom cart slot, but additionally with its ejecting CD drive it so too has the universal button set of any competent CD enabled device. Play, pause, skip forward, skip back, stop and an lcd interface more than likely to display CD information/track titles. The implications speaks to Sony's audiophile legacy but so too a visible, inherent effort to expand video game consoles, well, beyond gaming.



To the left of the logo'd "Super Disc" drive, there appears to be another washed out LCD screen, more than likely again used for supplementary info display or disc read status

Front and center to the player one port, audio playback controls are drilled directly into the machine's façade. A 3.5mm headphone jack and volume level dialer, similar to the Sega Genesis Model 1, emphasizes the imperative of CD audio experience. It serves to directly highlight what we can reasonably speculate was Sony's ultimate goal with the Nintendo PlayStation: to build a multimedia game machine for use in the home. One that plays the best software, any contemporary audio CD and, inspecting the unit's belly, an even grander gateway to potential features that would have catapulted Sony and the industry years ahead.



The white sticker with “2/z” is a common to electrical safety precaution, signifying quality checks, it looks more and like a projector every picture

Located below the system's underbelly, Daniel Diebold unclips a plastic tab to uncover an unmarked port. Back in the day, the Super Famicom (and even the first Famicom had a modem addon, though primitive, at least it had horse betting) had an accessory attachment, the Satellaview.



The Satellaview addon granted Super Famicom's a radio program called St. GIGA, which although is an abbreviation for station, only elicits imagery of a saintly gigolo mascot for the company, they did make love hotels back in the day afterall

Exclusive to Japan, the Satellaview was an addon for the Super Famicom well before widespread internet infrastructure existed. Reaching its terminal peak with one hundred thousand subscribers, the Satellaview was replete with a rotary of extra functions. Radio, downloadable exclusive games, detailed financial stocks and trades, it was well ahead of anything offered in the States. Perhaps Sony's prototype had such an addon in mind with the inclusion of the bottom EXT (extension) port ala the SNES Satellaview system. Or maybe this was only one of many planned venture, addons to even further the system beyond a games device. Addons that would

enable an array of multimedia functions to bolster its gaming capacities and attraction in the home, to seize Ohga, Kutaragi, Sony's vision to have both the best game console, but the best multimedia device ever crafted, a legacy to come.



P.S. Look-I know-I know- I didn't talk about the NEXT port, located on the consoles sweet rear end. More than likely this fulfilled one of two functions.

-ONE: a Console link cable port (like the original PlayStation Serial I/O port) to link two Nintendo PlayStation systems (or more) to play local multiplayer sessions without pesky split-screen or that damned friend who always screen cheated the notable cons in this case would be the need for duplicates of each part. E.g. you would need two of everything, systems, game, t.vs.

-TWO: The second theoretical purpose of the NEXT port could have its roots as an Auxiliary port for developer use to connect with a NeXT machines. NeXT PC's were a very common pc DEBUG computer to build game software at the time (Steve Jobs even founded corporation after he was exiled from Apple in the 80s!) COOL FACTS.

The Legacy



Released in November, 2013, over twenty years after the unveiling of the original Nintendo PlayStation, it is the fourth PlayStation console but magnitudes forward for the industry

Observing today's landscape it's not a difficult stretch to see whether Sony achieved their ultimate goal, what with the PS4's social media SHARE button built into the controller, PlayStation Plus (remind you of the St. GIGA subscriptions…no?) magnanimity, and other app infused sorcery at your stubby thumb swabs of fingertips.

With the Nintendo PlayStation, Sony began their sojourn into the video game industry even if it was never released. The prototype and death of Nintendo PlayStation with the ensuing console wars indelibly chiseled the course of history. If a whim of corporate capriciousness, or the wrong wind blew thru Sony, then maybe the Nintendo PlayStation might have been the only PlayStation. Thanks to a cast of enterprising individuals, Ogha, Olafson, even Yamauchi, Krazy Ken Kutaragi's once surreptitious soldering rose from the ashes of their failed partnership. The eventual PlayStation not only coming to fruition but succeeding in exceeding the threshold of

gaming and multimedia each successive console generation, games still at the heart, been and always will (hopefully) be PlayStation's priority.

While still cautious to wantonly insert any plugs, the Diebold's are still deliberating on their next step with the system. Whether it sells at auction or rests in a museum, they have a cartridge (labeled in Kanji and roughly translated to "Demo Oct 92") a CD and a system that, if we're lucky (and I usually bet on my odds), has the potential to reveal the only known Nintendo PlayStation game. As their once partner turned competitor, Nintendo, garner's its namesake, for now we must "Leave luck to heaven".

Whether it powers on or doesn't work at all, the Nintendo PlayStation remains not only the only potential prototype of its kind, but the prototype of an idea, a new direction that would redefine gaming. A living legacy, the story of the Nintendo PlayStation remains the greatest revenge, rebellion, renaissance in gaming ever told.

Imagine if Sony had quit the console biz and never entered games at all? What if the world was never graced by Crash Bandicoot, Spyro the Dragon, or Bubsy 3D!? What if it was your editor here's 21st birthday! Wait what am I doing with my lif-- let's talk about it, you and me on the Twitterverse (https://twitter.com/HaydenRobel), or right 'ere in the comments, I promise I'll only nibble, I'm just a bit famished.