

Sandra Knowles, *Founding Editor*

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HOLIDAY ISSUE

Sensational Gifts for horses and their owners!



*B*aroque*E*questrian.com

"Let us never forget one thing....this whole thing started with a *mouse*."
-Walt Disney

SPONGEBOB

is everywhere this season! I purchased my SpongeBob



SquarePants "rollerball" Mouse from **RadioShack** a couple of months ago and it's had quite a workout. Now available in optical for only \$19.95, what could be a better stocking suffer? By Kidzmouse, a product development company for computer peripherals and education products, it comes with a small CD previewing the Game, **SpongeBob SquarePants Employee of the Month** {or *Make a Krabby Patty for the

Hungry Customer} developed by AWE Games.

I like my clock radio, too -- you can get it, and



many other SpongeBob items from **Giftapolis**.



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Handhelds: Nintendo DS

-by Jeff Lindsay

Staff Writer, Game Programmer



You've probably heard about the Nintendo DS by now. In fact, you've probably seen at least one of the three commercials for it. What was mostly perceived as a gimmick is now proving to be quite a quality product, and provides innovative features that could inspire fresh new handheld games unlike anything before.

I was actually sort of confused about the DS up until recently. It did seem a bit gimmicky to me, but also, Nintendo had announced somewhere along the line that it wouldn't compete with its Gameboy product line-that it would represent a new tier in their product family. Maybe this is true, but most people just see it as "the new Gameboy." In any case, it does have the all the technological advances that would logically show up in a new Gameboy, and it's compatible with all Gameboy Advance games, but it also has some other features that, to some, might seem a bit... weird.

Shall we start with the most obvious? Let us look to the product name. You might have guessed it, but DS stands for dual screen. Not only are there two screens, but one of them is a touch screen. The DS is also the first mainstream handheld gaming system to boast wireless connectivity and a built in microphone.



Before we get ahead of ourselves with all these crazy new innovations, let's cover some of the simpler, more logical advances the \$150 Nintendo DS has to offer over last year's Gameboy Advance (GBA) SP. The screen is probably the most important aspect of a handheld system, and the primary DS screen is nearly 20% larger than the GBA and has true backlighting. While the GBA had backlighting, it was really "bottom lit" backlighting and didn't have the clarity and brilliance the DS has.
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Nintendo DS Review: Continued

The audio for the DS is in full stereo, giving you sound quality unheard of in handheld gaming. What's more is that immediately allows game developers to push emulated surround sound. Surround sound... in a handheld? Yes! The only issue with the audio (and maybe the entire system) is when you want to turn it up to full volume; it doesn't seem to handle that very well and probably isn't too good for your speakers.

Battery life is comparable to the GBA and like most modern gadgets, there's no need for buying batteries... ever! The DS has a fully rechargeable battery and the charger is included. You can play while it charges and continue playing for eight hours away from a power outlet.

But what about this touch screen business? Well, one of the goals of the Nintendo DS was to create a platform that will inspire new types of game designs in an attempt to further the evolution of games. Nintendo's attitude is "if we build it, they will come." So far, the games released, which include games such as Mario DS 64 and Metroid Hunter, are using the secondary screen to display a map and using the touch screen aspect as a sort of analogue controller. Nintendo hopes that game designers will take advantage of these new features to create new types of gameplay, but only time will tell.



Another new feature the DS boasts is a built in microphone. The built in microphone hasn't had much use in this first wave of games, but coupled with some voice recognition software, it may prove to be powerful input mechanism for new games.

The DS is also equipped with Bluetooth technology, allowing you to wirelessly connect to other DS systems for quick and easy multiplayer sessions. They say the range is 100 feet, but most are reporting a range closer to 25-30 feet. While the range isn't all it's cracked up to be, the feature alone is quite impressive. No more special connectors to buy, no more worrying about how many players your connector can support... it's just turn it on and go!

Nintendo really takes care of you with the DS. The system comes with Metroid Hunter right out of the box, a game that really shows the graphical power of the DS. You get several styluses for precision marking on the touch screen. The AC adapter you use to play at home or charge the battery is also included. The system itself is less than 10 ounces and is about the size of a checkbook. It's big, but not too big.

The DS has a built in operating system that gives you a clock, a calendar and PictoChat, a wireless chat program that lets you use the touch screen to draw and send messages to other nearby DS users. The interface is simple and stylish, and makes it easy to jump into your game.

For \$150 you get a handheld system with graphical power equivalent to the Nintendo 64 console system, loads of functionality, and Metroid Hunter. Nintendo is putting a strong focus on the game library for the DS; however the first wave of games is rather weak. Don't let that get you down because within the next year, a flood of new games should be coming out, as well as different colored DS systems in case you're not into metallic grey.

Written by: **Jeff Lindsay**,
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Progrium Software

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Bargain Hunting Online or, "why didn't I see that coupon?"

Having decided to do my Christmas shopping online this year, I discovered the wacky but wonderful world of Coupons and Promo codes. Be a savvy shopper -- at every website you plan to order items from, do a search for coupons at their site, and ALSO at coupon sites, search engine sites, etc. You can save a bundle of \$\$ if you do.

I searched for a new litter box and fell for the 'Cat's Rule' model. [My cat USED it on the 1st night, too.] On the shopping cart page



there was a place to enter a coupon, so I searched for one at the Petco site and happily copied and pasted the code for 10% off. I purchased more items to obtain free shipping, noticing that at CHECKOUT there was another place for an additional coupon or Promo Code. I was wishing I had one. After completing the transaction I returned to my original search page at google.com and right there, on the right-hand side, was an additional **PETCO** coupon code that would have saved me *another* \$15%. Ughhh ---

PC Magazine has a feature article on bargain hunting at:
<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1759,1728741,00.asp>

I tested several COUPON sites and these are the best:

Deal of the Day
Cool Savings
FreebieCat
KeepCash.com
CouponCabin.com

Digitally Cool



CNET Courses in Wireless Notebook Computing:

All your questions answered ;-). Created for consumers of all types, this free online course helps you understand your notebook options and highlights all of the many ways a notebook can benefit you. To be notified of next class:

Click [HERE](#)

READING EMAIL HEADERS

Do you receive a lot of SPAM like I do? In order to understand the circuitous routes email comes from, it is helpful to study these excellent primers and tutorials on email headers from this page of links provided by the Academic Communications and Computing Center:

Sites I found most helpful:

Fleet Help Desk's Email Headers
pobox.com's Reading Email Headers
Reading Email Headers
MAPS Mail Abuse Prevention System
DShield.org's Whois lookup page

Organizations:

ScamBusters.org
Spam Recycling Center
SpamCon Foundation

Books: Anti-Spam Tool Kit
Absolute PC Security and Privacy

Digital Times

The online digital news



This year I obtained a second computer and of course, needed a monitor for it. Footprint was important to me, as well as style, clarity, sound, etc. I found exactly what I wanted after looking at BestBuy, Home Depot, Circuit City, Ultimate Electronics, Sears, etc.

I found it at Fry's Electronics. Their online store is 'The Outpost.' To check this baby by Samsung out, follow this LINK. The monitor is everything I'd hoped for, and has gone up \$100.00 since I bought it... how's *that* for a good decision?

-editor

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The information contained in Digital Times is a combination of original editorial content and information pulled from wire services, research and various online

HOLIDAY ISSUE

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Yahoo to distribute offline digital information search tool for free.

Forget the lame 'search for files' function in Windows!

Yahoo, based in Sunnyvale, Calif., is revealing an offline search engine product for Windows computers. The application can sift through more than 225 different data types, including many formats that Google's desktop search can't index yet.

The product, licensed from a pioneering startup named X1 Technologies, will be available in *January* and seeks to make it as quick and easy to find digital information offline as it has become online. X1 has established itself as a frontrunner in desktop search. The private Pasadena-based company has been charging \$74.95 for its search software and plans to continue to license its products to businesses even as **Yahoo** distributes a **version** for **free**.

Both Yahoo and X1 believe it makes sense to maintain a dividing line between hard-drive search and Web search because one quest focuses on recovering old information while the other strives to discover new information. "**The ultimate vision is to create a dashboard to help people manage their digital lives,**" said Yahoo's spokesman.

Source: **TechReview**