

Nintendo's 3DS: First-hand impressions

Jason Lomberg, Technical Editor



At the 2010 [Electronic Entertainment Expo](#) [1] (E3), Nintendo [officially unveiled](#) [2] the 3DS. And from the media's reaction, you'd think Nintendo reinvented the electron. The 3DS uses autostereoscopy to produce 3D images without the need for special glasses—or so claim their marketing gurus. Does it live up to the hype? Read on for my first-hand impressions.

I previously demoed this technology at [SID 2010](#) [3]. A parallax barrier creates the illusion of 3D without the need for special glasses. It's a neat effect, but inherently limiting—the tech is single-user, and you must be in the “sweet spot” to perceive 3D. Deviating too far in any direction breaks the autostereoscopy. The tech works for small electronics, but is wholly unsuitable for anything larger than a Game Boy.

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**Nintendo's 3DS from their booth at E3 2010.
Special thanks to Andrew Maiman.**

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The [3DS](#) [4] sports two screens: a 3.02-inch touchscreen (bottom) with 320x240 pixel resolution, and a 3.53-inch 3D screen, with 800x240 pixel resolution (400 for each eye). The system is based on the PICA200 graphics processor from [Digital Media Professionals](#) [5] (DMP). Wisely, Nintendo included a “3D Depth Slider” to allow adjustment of the 3D effect. Turn it all the way down and the screen switches to 2D.

A number of people suffer from “stereoblindness”, or the inability to perceive stereoscopic depth. I’m *not* among them, and yet I had difficulty with the 3DS’ autostereoscopic 3D. At their booth, Nintendo showcased a number of titles for the 3DS—mainly, non-playable demos. And while first-party titles like “[Mario Kart](#) [6]” looked great in 3D, others required constant adjusting to “work” properly. With “[Resident Evil](#) [7],” I played around with the Depth Slider, and had to tilt the system about 10-20° to perceive 3D. Even Hideki Konno, the 3DS Hardware Director, has [admitted](#) [8] that “There’s a sweet spot of 3D for each person.” But the “sweet spot” could vary wildly, not simply from person to person, but for each game.

The reaction of the mainstream “gaming press” has been ecstatic to say the least. Without a trace of hyperbole, Craig Harris from IGN [wrote](#) [9] that, “I’ve been gaming on handhelds for pretty much 20 years now, and this is the first time in a long time I said ‘holy ****’ after experiencing a portable system.” Justin Calvert, Senior Editor of Gamespot, [said](#) [10] that, “Not only does it work, but I think the effect of the 3D is just as good as that on the PlayStation 3, which requires an expensive TV and a pair of glasses.” Numerous publications like [Gamepro](#) [11] and [1UP.com](#) [12] named the 3DS “Best of Show.” It makes me wonder whether we saw the same demo.

Release dates haven’t been announced, though it’s rumored to be sometime next year. This means there’s still time to clean up some of the kinks. In this editor’s opinion, much will depend on price. I’m unimpressed by the autostereoscopic 3D, but one could simply turn it off, and play the 3DS as a 2D system.

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[1] <http://www.e3expo.com/>

[2] <http://www.gametrailers.com/video/e3-2010-nintendo-3ds/101511>

[3] <http://www.ecnmag.com/Articles/2010/06/SID-2010/>

[4] <http://e3.nintendo.com/3ds/>

[5] http://www.dmprof.com/release/20100621_3DS_EN.html

[6] <http://ds.ign.com/articles/109/1098453p1.html>

[7] <http://ds.ign.com/objects/077/077738.html>

[8] <http://uk.ds.ign.com/articles/109/1099199p3.html>

[9] <http://ds.ign.com/articles/109/1098014p1.html>

[10] <http://e3.gamespot.com/story/6266572/gut-reactions-nintendo-3ds->

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[11] <http://www.gamepro.com/article/features/215596/e3-2010-the-best-of-e3>

[12] <http://www.1up.com/do/feature?pager.offset=2&cid=3179985>