N64 Rumble Pak Retro Features

Feature: Taking A Look Back At The Nintendo 64 Rumble Pak

The little peripheral that shook things up in a big way

Martin Watts

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IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 1

Nintendo has always been a video game manufacturer renowned for innovation. From revitalising the video game console industry with the NES back in 1985 right
opening it up to the mainstream with its Wii and DS systems in the mid-2000s, the Japanese company has continued to have a major impact as a result of its never
creativity.

However, it was one of Nintendo's smallest innovations that arguably had the biggest impact of all (and quite literally, too). The Rumble Pak — which was released a
world in 1997 for the Nintendo 64 — may be a small device that clips into the bottom of everyone's favourite three-pronged controller, but the role it played in shapin
was considerable. What was at the time a novel and perhaps gimmicky force-feedback add-on for the system soon became an industry-wide standard.

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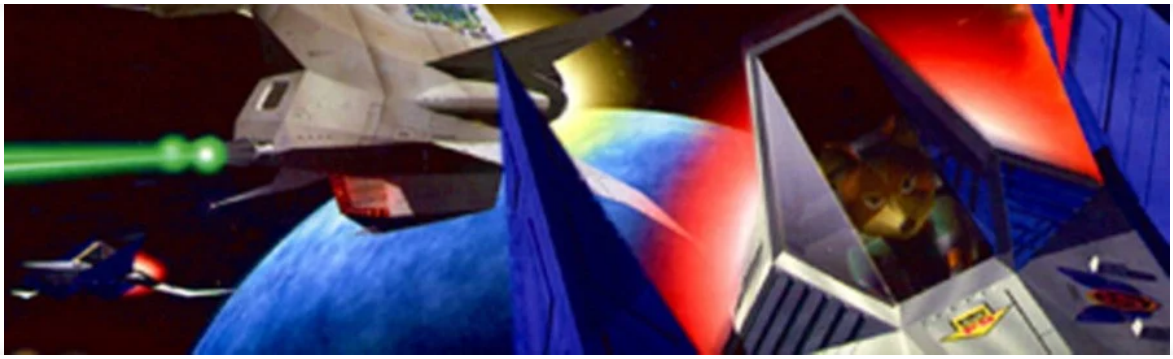
Fast-forward to the present day and every major video game console manufacturer offers force feedback functionality as standard. It's a feature that is now expect
consumers. In fact, Sony found this out all too painfully when it launched the PlayStation 3 in 2006 *without* a force-feedback controller (although this later changed
release of the DualShock 3 pad). Rumble may seem like a minor additional feature, but it's something us gamers have grown to love and — strangely enough — our
don't feel the same without it.

The Rumble Pak wasn't perfect, but it was a first great step. Moreover, its flaws were excusable given that it was released over 16 years ago. The biggest issue was
official Rumble Pak required 2 AAA batteries (some third-party packs used the system's power, but they never quite provided the same kick). This made the Rumble
expensive to use, especially because the battery life wasn't very long. Otherwise, adding a big chunk of plastic with two batteries in it into the bottom of the controll
whole pad feel heavier. The weight isn't uncomfortable by any means, but it's certainly noticeable. Needless to say, these very minor flaws didn't hinder most players
the peripheral. It was hugely supported by both Nintendo and third-party developers, meaning that unlike some other add-ons for the system, it was much easier to
down your hard-earned cash for one.

The Rumble Pak may now be a relic of the past that has been superseded by far superior vibration-feedback controllers, but it deserves an honourable mention. Jus
system it was designed for, the peripheral brought us an exciting new experience, and one which – incredibly — has remained a core part of gaming even to this day

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 2

Our Favourite Rumble Pak Moments



Star Fox 64 — or **Lylat Wars** as it was known in Europe — was the first game to use the Rumble Pak and was clearly designed with the peripheral in mind. As you zip Lylat system in your Arwing, you can feel every hit, collision and crash along the way (although you are meant to prevent such things from happening!). For a game t cinematic at the time, the rumble effect really helped with the immersion. It's a bit like one of those 4D rides you get at theme parks and attractions, albeit with a les setting.

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 3

Firing a gun in **GoldenEye 007** was a glorious experience as a result of the Z-button, which oddly enough was also pretty ahead of its time. Adding a Rumble Pak to
such moments even more epic. Whether it was the sudden recoil after firing your PP7 or the continuous judder of an RCP-90, firing a virtual gun had never felt so go
point in time.

Unfortunately, most gamers in the West never got to experience the Japanese exclusive, **Wave Race 64 Rumble Version**. Released in July 1997, it's surprising how r
difference the Rumble Pak made to the experience. Even without the Rumble Pak, **Wave Race 64**'s physics are so impressive that they inexplicably make you feel ev
wave you come up against. But when you also throw in the vibrating peripheral, the whole experience gets even more realistic, and it's fair to say that this is without
definitive version of the popular Jet Ski racing game.

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 4

While getting punched or kicked in real life isn't usually the nicest experience, it's simply awesome in **Super Smash Bros.**; every blow sends your controller into an al
If anything, having the Rumble Pak in is advantageous, because in this frantic game the force feedback acts as a great indicator for when you've been sent flying! O
most satisfying moment is when you win a match and your controller rumbles just a split-second before all is revealed on-screen. Feeling that controller shake is re
probably because it's also gently massaging your fingers and thumbs after an intense battle.

What are your fondest force feedback memories? Share your thoughts with us in the comments section below.

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IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 5

Comments 45

Squashie

Ah... The Rumble Pak. Can I say much more?

SteveW

I never understood the whole rumble appeal and never liked using it, I always turned that off in my Wii games as well.

bonham2

Ocarina of Time is the first game that comes to mind when talking about the rumble pak. The fishing mini-game and sword battles came to life thanks to the periph
was just another reason why OoT was so amazing for it's time.

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 6

tchaten

Love the Rumble Pak - something satisfying about clicking it into place - love its use on Rogue Squadron - nothing quite like crashing in glorious deat
rumble and audio sensations.

OCTAGON

Can't say more,but Super Smash Bros. is awesome!

unrandomsam

I am not bothered either way I don't turn off the rumble though on wii games.

(If using the classic controller is better though I use it. I hate the propeller Mario motion control.)

Mk_II

One word of warning: if you are prone to RSI complaints, do not use Rumble as it adds a great deal of stress to your muscles and nerves.

HaNks

i loved it. the rumble pak was expertly used in lylat wars and also was a big part in bringing goldeneye to life. the way different guns genuinely felt diff
rumble was fantastic.

it's a shame that rumble isn't considered much these days beyond on/off for the most part. the gamecube controller had a weaker rumble, though mo
across the entire pad. the wii U gamepad is weaker still and not satisfying at all, more like a buzz. can't really do much given the size of the pad.

the 360 pad has a really strong rumble than i enjoy. playing bayonetta recently, the use of rumble is so well done it's giving me those lylat wars feels. rez HD is anot
you can have 4 controllers rumbling together just for the fun of it. anyone care to comment on the wii U pro controller compared to the others?

technotreegrass

I originally thought the rumble pack was just a stupid gimmick. I wanted Star Fox 64 regardless but I quickly fell in love with it, and I was thrilled when
bought in the future used the pack. I cry whenever I have to turn off the rumble feature in Gamecube games today though. My controllers work perfec
the poor rumble pack gives off a whine and a super weak rumble being so worn out.

Emblem

@tchaten Lol i agree!

element187

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 7

I loved the rumble pack on the N64.. I was maybe 20 years old when that came out, yeah i'm an old gamer.

@HaNks Games don't feel right without it. I notice it on the Wii U gamepad quite a bit, but not exactly intense, but I think the rumble is much better on controller (which is understandable, its probably harder to make the bigger gamepad rumble with the same intensity)

Nintendo has always led the change/innovation in the video game market... something the Nintendo haters hate to admit.

BoFiS

Was the rumble pack not bundled with Star Fox 64 in the UK like it was here in the US? That's the only reason I had one really, it came in the huge Star

ricklongo

"Biggest impact of all", really? The NES certainly had a way bigger impact, as did the first Super Mario Bros, or Mario 64. I'm not trying to downplay the pack, but it's merely a nice add-on. Nintendo has had way more vital innovations.

daveh30

Loved the use of the rumble pak in 1080 Snowboarding... so good.

Williaint

I didn't get a Rumble pak until I got one that was bundled with a Memory thing. Mad Katz, or something. It was a good deal

Xeno_Aura

Never liked the Rumble Pak much, the whole needing batteries thing ruined it for me.

As a note, the PS1 had rumble support before the N64, the Japanese version of the PS1 Dual Analog controller (released 3 days before the Rumble Pa had vibration feedback.

MegaWatts

@Jenraux unless the information I've researched is wrong, I think you're looking at the release date for the PS1 Dual Analog controller and not the Dua controller; the former was released a couple of days before Star Fox 64 in Japan, but did not feature rumble. The DualShock controller (which did feat arrived later that year, after Star Fox 64's release.

Whopper744

I remember getting my first rumble pack with Star Fox 64 back then. It was so cool. I miss those days.

Xeno_Aura

@MegaWatts the Japanese dual analog did feature vibration feedback, but it was removed from the European and American releases, and reserved fo shock.

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 8

Doma

Didn't care much for this. The only pad peripheral that ever got any usage from me, was the Transfer pak (as a kid obsessed with Pokemon).

MegaWatts

@Jenraux right you are! Silly thing is I had read that previously! Funny how Sony beat Nintendo to market, although I imagine the considerable lack of
to mention Nintendo having to wait for Star Fox, before it could be released, didn't help!

Mr-DNA

I remember getting the promotional VHS in the mail telling me all about the Rumble Pak. It had some embarrassing skits featuring a pair of witless sp
Sony and Sega trying to get the dirt on Starfox 64.

I also got a promo VHS for Banjo-Kazooie, narrated by Jon Lovitz. I wish I still had those stupid things. Some collector would love to have them, I'm su

Marioman64

@SteveW ...games without rumble? why would anyone do that? loud sounds create bass effects in your speakers and your ears FEEL that, so why car
the same factor of immersion for game events that shake?
personally I love the added weight the rumble pack adds, and then I go to play with it off and I'm like "omg it's too light"

SCRAPPER392

I had 4 of these things with rechargeable AAA batteries. I liked the rumble, and got used to the weight. I didn't want to play without it after having it on
while.

SteveW

@Marioman64 To me, the rumble feels too fake, it feels more like a motor spinning around inside the controller than anything realistic related to what
in the game.

Hetsumani

@SteveW I agree with you everything's fake, videogames feel like just light coming out of a box with a piece of glass on the front, and sound is just vib
caused by magnetic rings moving back and forth very fast

JuanitoShet

I bought the Rumble Pack (without the battery cover, unfortunately) on one of my many trips to the local swapmeet over half a year ago, I think, and it'
I've only used it a couple of times, but it cost me next to nothing (30 Pesos; that's about two dollars), so I think it was definitely worth the purchase. Es
since most of the titles I own for my Nintendo 64 support it.

bezerker99

Wheel of Fortune was awesome with the Rumble Pak! Spinning the big wheel caused the entire controller to shake. It really added some personality to an otherwise

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 9

game.

mercurio2054

@Hetsumani hahahahahahaha

JebbyDeringer

Best part is you can hack them to require no batteries. I'm not sure if the battery reason was ever solved but it may have to do with there not being en available for 4 controllers with rumble-packs but there is enough voltage.

SteveW

@Hetsumani Aaaarrrgghhh! Don't spoil it all for me!

But seriously... the lights and sounds coming from my Screen change quite often, not so much for the same rumble rumble... shoot a gun... rumble... rumble... pick nose... rumble...

NESguy94

I liked the idea Stone of Agony in OoT. You could only find certain secrets if the rumble pak was inserted.

GamerZack87

I never had the chance to use the Rumble Pak. It only came bundled with Metroid Prime Pinball in Australia, and I never got around to getting...whuzza

talking about the *Nintendo 64* Rumble Pak! I thought you said "Nintendo DS-teefour"...whatever that is.

Anyway, I remember the good times playing Lylat Wars with the Rumble Pak, the rewarding vibration that came with blowing up the Sarumarine or pre Independence Day from being filmed on Katina. I also wanted to try out the rumble features in Ocarina but I never figured out how to find the Stone of Agony.

Araknie

Never without.

elstif

I liked the rumble pack feature but it makes the controller quite big and heavy because of it. I loved when I saw this integrated on the gamecube contr

@GamerZack7

I bought the rumble pack after finding the stone of agony on OOT, I didn´t wanted to miss anything of the game, but I enjoyed it more on other games. You get the stone of agony after colleting 20 gold skultullas

@JebbyDeringer

That´s right, you can modify it so it works without batteries, I have one modified and works like a charm. But running more than 2 controllers like that on an N64 at t could potentially overload it and break it (I only use one). I guess that´s why Nintendo force the batteries on it

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 10

TromaDogg

The Rumble Pak was excellent. I got mine bundled with Lylat Wars (Starfox 64) but it really came into it's own for me when I started using it to play Go actually felt like you were holding and firing some of those guns, Rare got the force feedback pretty much spot on for every weapon

The only problem is that it ate batteries almost as quickly as a Wii Remote

Doma

@Mikau94 Actually, that was one of the few games that gave it a more worthwhile purpose. Same for Majora's Mask too, right?

Lobster

When I think Rumble Pak I immediately think OoT. Reeling in those fish! And bombing and everything else. My friend got it with Star Fox so when I play his house before I ever got an N64, I knew right away I needed a Rumble Pak the minute I finally got one of my own. (And OoT, of course, which to this favorite game of all time.)

NESguy94

@Doma Yes, but you in Majora's Mask you started the game with it.

Mr-DNA

@SteveW I'm actually with you on this, Steve. I think there's nothing more immersion-breaking than the **whizz-whizz** of a motor over the sounds in a g some of us have to have the volume low enough to be able to hear a rumble pak once in awhile.)

RodSD64

QUAKE PACK FTW!!

TheAdrock

Good times.

navonod18

The RUMBLE PAK!! lol (vhs for those who remember)

DarkEdi

I hate that the classic controller Wii doesn´t has rumble. Lazy Nintendo.

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 11

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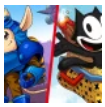

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IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 12

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IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 13

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 14

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 15

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 16

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 17

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 18

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 19

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 20

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 21

IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 22

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IPR2024-00568
Sony EX1028 Page 23